PLAYS BY JACINTO BENAVENTE

FOURTH SERIES

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

The School of Princesses
A Lady
The Magic of an Hour
The Field of Ermine

PLAYS BY
JACINTO BENAVENTE

PLAYS, FIRST SERIES:

His Widow's Husband, La Malquerida, The Evil Doers of Good, The Bonds of Interest

PLAYS, SECOND SERIES:

No Smoking, Princess Bébé, Autumnal Roses, The Governor's Wife

PLAYS, THIRD SERIES:

The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books, Saturday Night, In the Clouds, The Truth

PLAYS, FOURTH SERIES:

The School of Princesses, A Lady, The Magic of an Hour, Field of Ermine

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

PLAYS

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TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

AUTHORIZED EDITION

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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ON THEATRE AND ANTITHEATRE

Of all the conventions which are implicit in the process of living, perhaps none is more arbitrary than that of knowledge and culture as it exists from day to day among the informed. The interests of the modern world are so various, the body of accredited science and literature is so considerable, as to stagger even the most redoubtable mind. Clearly, here is occasion for economy, inasmuch as there are limits to acquisitiveness, so that a convenient division of knowledge is of necessity accepted in educated circles into that which is and that which is not known. The knowledge which is known is that current customarily among the more advanced peoples, the nations which move in the van of civilization, and in literature and the theatre these include France and Russia, the English-speaking and Central European countries, together with portions of Scandinavia, more or less undefined. Naturally, the harvest is richest and most abundant where activity is most intense, while it is reasonable to suppose that what is produced elsewhere will be merely of secondary, derivative importance, safely to be set down as a foot-note in the history of art. Only occasionally, an artist of exceptional brilliance and originality appears in an unexpected quarter and compels, in the light of more complete knowledge, the rewriting of the history of a period of years.

When the first volume of these translations was published in 1917, the name of Benavente had scarcely passed beyond the boundaries of Spain and Spanish America. Granville Barker and John Masefield, it is true, had hinted vaguely of a new, cryptic figure which had risen to prominence in the Spanish theatre, and a rumor as of something impending had been echoed in a modest way by the London Stage Society. In Italy, a country closely associated with Spain by virtue both of race and geographical position, many of the plays had long been familiar, while "The Bonds of

Interest" had been acted successfully in Russia by the Moscow Art Theatre. Casual translations had also appeared in other languages. Yet, when Dean Chandler of the University of Cincinnati brought out his comprehensive "Aspects of Modern Drama" in 1914, a work of standard erudition, it contained no allusion of any sort to the chief of the modern Spaniards, nor was the omission supplied by Doctor Ludwig Lewisohn in his illuminating volume "The Modern Drama," issued during the course of the ensuing year. It will, therefore, not be untimely, upon the occasion of the publication of this "Fourth Series," to point out certain gaps which occur in the usual accounts and summaries of the drama, as well as to indicate very briefly the direction in which familiar judgments hitherto obtaining must be revised by future writers who do not wish to convict themselves of laches in dealing with the commonplaces of to-morrow.

We may turn for the moment to the realistic tradition, more particularly as it is exemplified by Tchekoff, who has properly been regarded as a proponent of its finer, less primitive phase. Realism, in general, is of two kinds. There is first the grosser, crass realism of Zola, represented in Spain by certain of the novels of Baroja, which consists of an iteration of veritistic detail, commonly repulsive or sordid in nature, in reaction against the tendencies of a florid romanticism. This realism is the language of fact, but fact has also its eloquence, which, with the passage of time, we have come to command—a higher, cumulative realism, so to speak, in which the detail is composed in such fashion as to acquire meaning through position, through the suggestive power of an environment which has been perfectly realized, so that it creates its own perspective and takes on universal significance, as in "The Cherry Orchard," without falsification of the superficial values. "The Cherry Orchard" was produced in 1904. Six years previously, however, a play of almost identical theme, "The Banquet of Wild Beasts," was acted at Madrid. There is in both the same reckless heading for disaster, the same passion for lavish entertainment, indulged even when ruin threatens at the door, the same collapse before creditors, the same abandoned, desolate house. Benavente's play, moreover, reveals itself to be a model of that

very synthesis of mute detail so admirably contrived by the Russian, but which gains in delicacy and effect with the touch of the Latin hand. This was in 1898. As a work of art, "The Banquet of Wild Beasts" is not inferior, and assuredly it is no less veracious as a representation of life. It would indeed be remarkable if Spain, the genius of whose literature has always been realistic, and whose masterpieces both in literature and painting have been hewn from the realistic vein, had, after the fading of Galdós and Palacio Valdés, failed to continue the movement as it reached its culmination. Ten years after "The Banquet of Wild Beasts," or four years subsequent to the performance of "The Cherry Orchard," Benavente made another and final venture in this field, composing that strangely imaginative, most insubstantial of realistic plays, "Señora Ama," beyond question one of the boldest as it is one of the most original contributions to the modern theatre. The historian of the future, as he checks up his chronology, will take account of this drama in appraising the achievement of realism. Doctor Goldberg is as yet the only critic writing in English who accords it passing mention.

In the psychological and psychoanalytical drama, prior to the coming of Pirandello, who has been rather a metaphysician expounding his ideas upon the stage than a dramatist or an innovator in dramatic theory, no name has attracted more attention than that of Arthur Schnitzler, the Viennese physician, a fellow citizen of the terrible Freud, the popularizer of the subconscious. With the passage of time the work of Schnitzler seems, perhaps, somewhat anæmic and pale, yet he was among the pioneers in the field of subtle, ironic comedy written in disregard of the formulas of the well-made play, a graceful wit and a stylist, and as such he has been hailed upon occasion as the consummate master of the one-act form. He was also an experimenter in the half-lights of illusion and the phenomena of suppressed desires, which exerted a strong attraction upon him from the beginning, and to which he owes the greater part of his reputation. "All his favorite motives," says an authoritative critic, "appear in his earliest dramatic work, the group of one-act plays called *Anatol*," collected and published in 1893.

Like Schnitzler, Benavente began his career with the writ-

ing of short sketches and dialogues, which were first collected in a volume entitled *Teatro fantástico*, or "Plays of the Imagination," published in 1892. They were pleasing in form and limpid in style, graceful, ironic, probing, too, the mysteries of the unconscious and the unexplored, and, like the dialogues of "Anatol," they had already appeared separately in periodicals of the day. The *Teatro fantástico* does not centre upon a single personage, and lacks in consequence that unity of character which fuses "Anatol" into a single whole, but the two volumes are similar in temper and tone, while the approach of their authors to the theatre presents many points of identity. There is, nevertheless, a preoccupation with æsthetic theory, very noticeable in the Spaniard, which is replaced in the Austrian by a serious prepossession with sex. Reservations are always dangerous to the satirist, and they are prone to prove fatal. In attacking the conventions, there cannot be too many conventions which he accepts. To take the entire Viennese erotic mythology at its face value, and then to fall victim to the blight of the calling mistress—mistresses call without let or stay in Schnitzler's plays, than which nothing could be more devastating to the reputation of a dramatist—is to fail in penetration. A fundamental lack of sincerity, of the willingness to follow through, leads inevitably to a misplacing of the dramatic action, an error so basic as to be the root of all bad theatre. A reading of "Countess Mizzi," performed at Vienna in 1909, together with "Love Shocks," played in 1907 at Madrid, leaves little doubt as to where the hegemony rests in the lighter, one-act style. Artificiality breeds artificiality. It is not only that satire must be relentless, the workmanship of the dramatist must be relentless as well. After an interval of two decades, it does not seem credible that a drama as soundly conceived, as sophisticated, and as modern as "Saturday Night" should have been first presented in the same year as, and actually some months prior to, so inconclusive an experiment as "The Lonely Way."

A chance observer, indeed, might be pardoned the impression that the younger playwrights have kept more thoroughly abreast of the progress of the drama, wherever manifested, than have the critics and the reviewers. Certainly no re-

proach attaches to Austria or Hungary in this connection. These countries, in addition, have maintained political and dynastic relations with the Spanish monarchy during more than three centuries. Only yesterday, one of the younger Hungarians removed from Budapest to Barcelona, from which city, under the pen name of Lorenzo de Azertis, he exported his "Casanova" in the guise of a Spanish play. Such contacts are by no means peculiar to the lesser men. One recalls the names of Hartzenbusch and Böhl de Faber in the history of Spanish letters. From the days of Grillparzer, the more important Austro-Hungarians have been assiduous students of the Madrid stage. As recently as 1919, Ferenç Molnar rendered a striking tribute to the Spanish master, reproducing in "The Swan" the color and movement of "The School of Princesses," acted and published ten years previously. "Immortality to an author," said Mr. Benavente, speaking at an American university, "is to blossom in so many future works that his own will be remembered no more." Molnar, an adept in the theatre, a playwright unquestionably the peer of any now active in northern or central Europe, has been exceedingly happy in the preservation even of the minor details of dramatic incident and effect, both serious and humorous, through which the action of the plays is maintained. A comparison of his comedy with Benavente's will illustrate most illuminatingly the difference in the results which may be achieved in the treatment of identical material by the deftest of stage artificers and an equally deft master of profound dramatic art.

"I have thought it best," writes Mr. Montrose Moses in his introduction to his "Representative Continental Dramas, Revolutionary and Transitional," "to give, in the present volume, no examples of the most recent type of dramaturgy, as exemplified in the Capeks' 'R. U. R.' and 'The Insect Comedy,' or in Molnar's 'Liliom,' for I believe that Expressionism at the present is more clearly defined in methods of stage production than in technique of writing. It may be, as it has been in the past, that the elements of treatment for expressionistic drama will be more definitely understood after the novelist has essayed them; though now it appears as though the artist in the theatre is doing more creatively,

than either the novelist or the dramatist, to spread the doctrine." If Expressionism is to remain a vital force in the drama, undeniably it must look to the dramatist rather than to the designer and the decorator. All great drama, as a matter of course, moves in the mind and the heart. From these it is unable to escape, no matter what the mode of expression employed, because they are fundamental in character and in life and admit of no substitutes, whether ingenious or new. The Expressionism which is familiar in England and America is that which has been developed by the northern peoples, among whom it has a pronounced pictorial bias, tending, whenever possible, to transfer the situation from the actor to the eye, from the play to the set. In a curious drama, *Más allá de la muerte*—to translate literally, "Beyond Death"—first performed at Buenos Aires during the American tour of his company in 1922 and 1923, Benavente has created an example of dramatic expressionism. In opposition to the device of generalizing the action until it becomes so simple that it is possible to present it as a visual symbol, he has generalized the action by generalizing the characters. They are broadened in scope and gain in power of suggestion as the personal and objective attributes are brushed aside, while, instead of a shifting of situation from the actor to the scenery, there is a recession or sinking of situation into the mind. In other words, the purely dramatic and subjective elements serve to convey the generalizations of the play. *Más allá de la muerte* is a most stimulating work, vague, menacing, illusive, treacherous as is the unknown, and in it the possibilities of intensive drama in this style are deeply probed. All innovation to-day is not confined to the scene-shifters and stage-managers of central Europe. It is well to remember that Picasso, the inventor of Cubism, is a native of Malaga, while the epoch-making discovery of the mechanism of the association of ideas was due to the Spanish histologist Ramón y Cajal.

"The School of Princesses," the title play of the present Series, intrigues the attention as excellent theatre. A model of accomplished dramaturgy, it might quite as ap-

propriately have been called "The School of Playwrights." In range and imagination, in cunning mastery of all the tools commonly to be found in the dramatic workshop, it is wholly admirable, while the wealth of its characterization, the glamor of its shimmering dialogue, and the prodigality of its ideas are blended in a sparkling sequence of mood and situation, with unflagging comic invention. The luxuriance and brilliance of Benavente's art have nowhere been seen to better advantage than in his royal comedies, with their panoply of kings and princesses at once so lofty and so simple, so icily aristocratic and so bluntly human. It is a type of drama that Benavente has made distinctively his own, in which the decorative elements, for all their opulence and arresting qualities, whether of dialogue or characterization, are yet all integral parts of the dramatic structure, through whose successive variations the action is carried on. The satiric unity of the comedy, too, is complete, especially in the skill with which scenes that might appear to be incorrigibly serious have been subdued to the comic spirit. The hero, Prince Albert, the Perfect Pedantic Knight, the prince of the fairy tale from the farthest-off land, sums up all the virtues, and in him the fundamental truths of conduct and character are made articulate, the store of wisdom and aspiration which are the solace of men who have not been born princes. In this impeccable royal hero, who visits the court of a friendly kingdom as the personification of the moral ideal, Benavente has succeeded in satirizing what is above all satire. The satiric conscience, if the term may be allowed, has never been exercised more scrupulously, nor extended with a nicer, more impartial taste from the vagaries of the extravagant and the absurd to what is most vital and precious to man. When the content is beyond ridicule, the humor retreats to the form. Satire which is so penetrating, so inclusive becomes, rather, confession and discloses itself as a harmonizing force, so that the very imperfection of our humanity appeals to the spectator as an endearing charm. Benavente has fixed upon the most elemental of comic motives, the inherent contradiction of theory and fact, of the real and the ideal, and has enhanced with a sympathetic smile the ingratiating absurdity of the ideal when it has been reduced to the concrete.

"The School of Princesses" may properly be regarded as the epilogue to the great cycle of phantasmagoric dramas which present the problem of the adventure of life and the quest for its meaning—the realization of the soul's ideal. It offers, furthermore, an explicit statement of Benavente's ethics, and in greater degree than any other work will afford a key to the problem offered by his vast and often seemingly miscellaneous production. To this cycle "Princess Bebé," acted a few months prior to "The School of Princesses," provides the prologue.

"A Lady," a stark sister of this royal comedy, is pure emotional drama of the middle class. It is not only pure, it is austere. Having mastered the instruments of his art, the playwright here renounces all adventitious aids, relying solely on the bare force of drama. In this singular tragedy he deprives himself even of the assistance of the usual literary formulas. Not a metaphor obtrudes upon the dialogue; it is equally innocent of wit, except, perhaps, for a few faint flickerings, whose futility only makes the pervading darkness more keenly felt. Contrast and antithesis, whether verbal or otherwise, are conspicuously absent, although both have been considered indispensable to the framing of a play. There is no description of material objects—in his later works, Benavente fails at times even to indicate the scene, preferring to leave the ambient to be gathered from the dialogue—nor is there any display upon the visual side. The personnel is neither humble nor eccentric enough to share the attraction of the picturesque. Of action, in the physical sense, there is none. Rather, there are three points or occasions of emotion, carefully distinguished and patiently prepared. When the third has come, there are no more. That is all. The irremediable poverty of Spanish life, whose relentlessness in its unhappier phases defies overemphasis, offers a fitting milieu for the uncompromising simplicity of the theme. The dreary monotony of the surroundings amid which the play unfolds, however, is merely the reflection of the deadening monotone of hopelessness and despair. Yet, as it proceeds, this pitiful story of desertion and neglect detaches itself from its environment, so enfeebled and sparsely given, and rises above the sordidness which envelops it through

the unaided power and dignity of masterful emotion, until its eloquence becomes that of the loving heart, condemned always to suffer as it loves, always giving, never asking, defenceless forever in its unselfishness, writing at each untoward moment the universal tragedy of the helplessness of love. In boldness of outline and intensity of feeling, "A Lady" must rank as great tragedy, freed from dependence upon verse, circumstance or show. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, so-called emotional dramas abounded upon the stage, but this dramatic novel, as it has been designated by its author, is a unique example of a strictly emotional play, in which the action is confined exclusively to the emotions, and from them projected upon the boards.

Antitheatre has been defined by a Spanish critic as a system of playwriting in which the action, together with its climaxes, which were formerly the end of dramatic composition, have been reduced to the position of means. "A Lady," possessing no external action, is therefore a perfect example of antitheatre, inasmuch as the mutation of values is complete, and the drama has been transferred entirely to the minds of the characters. Its simplicity, however, while affording, possibly, the most favorable introduction to the style, precludes that conflict between the outward and the inner or subjective actions, together with the successive adjustments between them, which in the majority of instances are its most salient characteristics. These occur in all their complexity in "Field of Ermine," a drama written especially for María Guerrero, now the most distinguished of living actresses, and Fernando Díaz de Mendoza, who appeared in it in company with their son Fernandito, at that time making his début at the Teatro de la Princesa. Only the exceptional play can dispense with objective plot. Drama is action, and must be built up through movement, through vivid incident, without which it would be impossible to convey the activity and intricacy of a highly organized society. When dealing with material of this nature, the method of antitheatre suffers a transformation, and the outward course of the plot is paralleled by an independent development of the inner theme. At the same time the plot undergoes certain modifications which affect its character most radically.

Ostensibly, "Field of Ermine" is a story of aristocratic life in Madrid, against a background of the underworld, with its army of courtesans, parasites, rogues, and extortioners. There is a noble lady and her family; an old friend of many years' standing, in habits, it may be, none too regular; a child of ingenuous charm, a natural centre of sympathy, whom she takes to herself and delivers from his evil surroundings. On the other side, there is a courtesan and her entourage, now frivolous, now sinister. What is the development of this situation in the theatre? Obviously, it becomes a conflict between love and avarice, a joining of issue with the forces of evil, bitter and prolonged, relieved, perhaps, by spectacular, unexpected features, and yet, after all, remaining essentially commonplace, whether ending with victory after preternatural hardships, or, should the playwright so elect, in defeat. The heart of the drama is the struggle between the two women. Let us now consider Benavente's treatment of this theme, summarizing the action for the purpose in its broadest, universal terms, in those aspects in which it is most fully divorced from the personal implications of the outward story.

Human nature, which is noble, visits the world, which is a house of ill-fame, and there encounters innocence, and is attracted by it. Prompted by the heart, it takes it to itself. For all its generous impulses, however, human nature is inconstant and weak, and it contains within itself the same passions, the same meannesses, the same vices, the same avarice that exist outside in the world. So innocence fares no better at home than it did in the brothel or on the street. Finally, it is driven out, through its own imperfections and ours, and nothing is left worth the having. But the heart still lives, and the heart again turns to that which is lost, and, chastened by experience, by the bitter realization of its own insufficiency and emptiness, it humiliates itself and learns to forget itself in another. What had been caprice now becomes renunciation, in whose light the spirit is born, to-day as truly as it ever was on the threshold of the centuries, in the eternal mystery of love and redemption.

In this story what has become of the plot? Where is the clash between heroine and villains, the fanfaronade of mu-

tual defiance, the protestations of virtue and vice? All have disappeared. The exposition, of course, remains the same, but with the beginning of the action in the second act the element of intrigue is subordinated and no longer maintains a position of prime importance. The outward story and the situations through which it progresses are thereafter of significance only in so far as they converge upon the inner action and contribute to the decision in which it culminates, or in so far as, after this subjective climax has been arrived at, they body forth the consequences which follow upon it. In whatever capacity, they are of importance not because of their position in the apparent plot, but because of the meaning which they acquire in relation to the inner action which they promote, and which is the play. The conflict is in the will, from which it is objectified in the outer sequence of events. It is imperative to remember that in drama of this type the subjective action is never formulated in words nor independently expressed. The symbolism is not abstract nor arbitrary, but follows from the logic of the situation by a natural process of induction. The emphasis is shifted from the outer to the inner plane, and, as this is done, the mood of the central character asserts itself over the scenes, dominating the incidents and imparting to them vitality and intelligibility. There is a broadening of ideas, an insistence upon their human rather than their personal associations, and, at climactic moments, a sublimation of the action through which the opposing motives of the dramatic conflict become directly apparent, often visually, as in the contrasting tableaux of the Judgment of Paris in the second act, a personification of the earthly and material forces which beleaguer the natural man, and of the Immaculate Conception, with which the play ends, supreme in the dignity of quiet beauty. "Field of Ermine" is a powerful drama, realistically considered, moving, rich, and various. But it is much more. It is a dramatization of the spiritual birth, with the breadth of the grand style, its lift and its gesture, subdued, however, to the vocabulary and naturalness of to-day.

In the little comedy "The Magic of an Hour," a parable of life has been condensed into a play. Very properly, the symbolism of the parable is direct. The fantastic and realis-

tic interpretations of the story will suggest themselves at once to the reader without further explanation. Dramatically they are identical and necessitate the maintenance of no divided action. The piece is the earliest of Benavente's collected plays, having been included in his first volume, the *Teatro fantástico*, published in 1892. The style is already mature, while the philosophy of life and of art is that which has informed all of his later work. Finished craftsmanship such as this is responsible for the legend that Benavente passed through no period of apprenticeship, but came to literature and the theatre already an accomplished artist. Sixteen years intervened between the publication of the play and its initial performance.

Drama which places its trust in implication and inference must make exceptional demands upon the actor. The finer, more fugitive meanings do not readily distil their bouquet. The further we penetrate into the modern theatre, the less frequently we encounter the time-honored effects, while those which remain are treated pictorially, or for their secondary, atmospheric values. The visual side of the stage, naturally, is that to receive attention in the beginning, not only because the work of the designer and decorator is more obvious, but it lends itself quite readily to the enthusiasms of the group spirit, and its results may be quickly and easily achieved. Much of it, moreover, is more impressive when written about than seen, so that its adequacy is not fully open to question until it has been put to an actual test. The problem of the dramatist, on the other hand, is always immediate and direct; it must be met in the manuscript, or it will reassert itself afterward on the printed page and in the theatre. And when the dramatist has solved his problem, his success before the public is dependent upon the intelligence with which its corollaries are solved by the actor.

The Benaventian theatre, because of the brilliancy of its surface and its wide range of situation and technique, conceals unsuspected pitfalls for the unwary. In approaching it, all realistic preconceptions must be avoided, or it will appear baffling and elusive, untrenchant when considered as a

whole. This is because, except in rare instances, it is not realistic drama, but purely subjective, the principle of its unity lying in the emotions and the will. The conventional routine of the actor will no more convey the subtleties of subjective drama than the traditional methods of mounting will embody the more radical conceptions of the scenic artist. Nor is the embarrassment diminished by the fact that the precise nature of the problem has been none too clearly defined. Whatever the conditions elsewhere, the English-speaking countries are as yet but little experienced in the drama of shifting planes. In its performance of "The Bonds of Interest," the Theatre Guild confronted unusual difficulty in attempting to stage the play, or, perhaps, to put it more accurately, to place it in the proper focus. It proved an impossible task to induce the actors to pass from the external to the inner scheme, so that the integrity of both might be clearly perceived, and in this respect the Jewish Art Theatre, in a subsequent production in New York, as also the Everyman Theatre, in staging the play in London, were equally deficient, although enjoying in both instances the advantage of careful preliminary study of the performance of the Theatre Guild. In the actors' hands the comedy appeared to suffer a pernicious anæmia, and a satiric presentment of the setting forth of youth into life, where it acquires mastery first of the external world, and then of the heart and the will, through the power of love and of sacrifice, shrank to little more than an amiable romantic trifle, innocent of harm. A company especially organized for the production of "Field of Ermine," met with little better success in Boston and Chicago, although experienced actors, who had played acceptably in the rude peasant tragedy "La Malquerida" ("The Passion Flower"), were employed in the leading rôles. The more delicate and subtle the work, the surer the touch of the artist must be. To hesitate, to falter even momentarily, is to create a feeling of bewilderment and thwarted effort, of blind groping for some object imperfectly understood, or wilfully concealed. Art is all clarity. Art deprived of clarity is art deprived of meaning.

To have mastered the newer stage, however, is to have prepared to master the newer theatre. The problem which

confronts the actor, when viewed in due perspective, is relatively simple when compared with that which has been solved by the playwright. The mastering of its secret lies primarily in the manner of attack. Subjective drama, drama which does not reside in situation, must, of course, be envisaged from within. The actor must consider not how he will look in the part, but how he is going to feel. What situation brings to the actor in the usual play, where it first suggests and then supports his effects, the actor here must first bring to character. The equivocation in drama of this type arises specifically from the fact that, contrary to all precedent, the situation is of no assistance to the actor until the character has been created, because the genesis of the situation, as well as its explanation, derives ultimately from the character. The situation pales when the character is not correctly conceived. The actor must orient himself in the major theme, as it is given in the subjective play. When he has done this, his next task is to adjust himself to the double focus which is necessitated by the double action with which he has to deal. He must correlate the subjective action, which determines the motives of his conduct, with the more literal facts of his impersonation. He must conjure a body into the clothes. The real significance of the play, as it is never under any circumstances formulated directly in words, can transpire only through the nicety and perfect poise of the performance, its sensitiveness to the finer values, its breadth, sincerity, and imaginative spell. The actor must contrive his performance so as to be the individual and the type, emphasizing now one and now another facet of his rôle, yet confining himself always within the modesty of nature. More succinctly, he must pass continually from the universal to the particular and from the particular to the universal, which, after all, is no more and no less than the orbit of all art, for, considered dispassionately, what is this antitheatre, this theatre in which externals are the means and in which character, man's never-ending struggle within himself, is the end, but good theatre, great and true theatre, where the sensational and the spurious are put away and relegated to their proper place, to become again what they had never any right to cease to be, the instruments and servants of the real play, which is intelligent, which

is sentient, which thrills and which feels, and which only because it is and it does is of any possible interest or consequence at all?

Benavente has summarized the cardinal principles of his dramatic creed in an article entitled "The Playwright's Mind," contributed to the *Yale Review*, an abridged version of which will be found in Mr. J. Middleton Murry's "Adelphi." The Spanish text has been incorporated in his *Conferencias*, a volume made up chiefly of lectures delivered in North and South America during the past two years. Wide circulation has also been given an announcement, distributed from New York, that in the future he will write plays for publication, and not for the theatre. The printing of plays prior to performance is certainly not unusual. It is a custom which has been followed by Shaw, and, upon occasion, by Benavente himself, notably in the case of "Princess Bebé." In adopting it, the dramatist is exercising a newer freedom. When he is at liberty to choose his own subject, and to develop it according to its own requirements, assigning the play to the company to which it may be suited, instead of fitting the play to the company, he owes no divided allegiance to his art. Eighty-six plays by Benavente have been acted, and to these must be added four monologues, together with seven translations, chiefly from the English and French. The *Teatro fantástico* and other early volumes contain further nineteen sketches, or brief dialogues in one act, besides a sequence of six scenes dealing with Madrid life, entitled "The Summer Season," and a two-act fantasy, *Cuento de primavera*, or "Spring Song." A translation of "King Lear" has also been published, making the total of Benavente's dramatic works of all descriptions one hundred and nineteen. A new comedy, *Lecciones de buen amor*, is at present being performed at the Teatro Español.

In spite of his long career in the theatre, Benavente is an uncompromising advocate of the reading of plays. "The only way in which a play may be appreciated thoroughly is by being read. I have written more than a thousand parts, yet of that number I can recall perhaps five which I have recognized as being truly the characters I had conceived, when they stepped upon the stage. I have not even seen

some of my plays." A performance cannot be otherwise than a compromise, an accommodation between the play and the actor. Only by recourse to the play itself can its precise quality be ascertained, apart from the refracting influences of accident and personality. If, as has been maintained, a play is not a play until it has been acted and has received the approval of an audience, and it is the duty of the playwright to act as his own stage-manager, selecting and training the actors, and shaping the performance so that approval may be assured, then beyond question an equal responsibility rests upon him with regard to his audience, and it is his duty to educate it. In other words, he must become his own press-agent. The truth would seem to be that the intervention of the playwright at rehearsals, as well as in the other preliminaries, is in reality a very practical measure of insurance, employed when it appears especially desirable to guarantee a good performance, and insisted upon more or less vigorously in proportion to the royalties which are in prospect. Conditions will doubtless prove most propitious to dramatic art when playwright, actor, director, and designer, each in his own field, brings sympathy, skill, and understanding to the fulfillment of the common purpose.

In the succeeding volumes of this edition, "Our Lady of Sorrows," "Beyond Death," "The Law of the Children," "The Evil That Men Do," and other plays illustrative of strictly contemporary phases of the modern movement, will be presented preferentially, and as promptly as may be possible, without prejudice, however, to such established classics as "Señora Ama," "The City of Gaiety and Confidence," "Stronger Than Love," "The Banquet of Wild Beasts," "His Proper Self," and "The Graveyard of Dreams." When read in conjunction with the contents of the four series already translated, these works should provide an adequate basis for the appraisal of the Benaventian theatre.

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THE SCHOOL OF PRINCESSES

COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

First Presented at the Teatro de la Comedia, Madrid, on the Evening of the Fourteenth of October, 1909.

CHARACTERS

Princess Constanza
Princess Felicia
Princess Eudoxia
The Duchess of Berlandia
The Ambassadress of Suavia
The Ambassadress of Franconia
Princess Alicia
Princess Miranda
King Gustavus Adolphus of Alfania
Prince Albert of Suavia
Prince Maximo
Prince Silvio
Duke Alexander
The Ambassador of Suavia
The Ambassador of Franconia
The President of the Ministry
Courtiers, Ushers, and Attendants

THE SCHOOL OF PRINCESSES

THE FIRST ACT

Salon in the Royal Palace of Alfania.

As PRINCESS FELICIA *plays the piano, the* DUCHESS OF BERLANDIA *turns the leaves of the illustrated papers.*

FELICIA. Beautiful sonata, is it not? But difficult! Ah, Beethoven!

DUCHESS. [*Preoccupied*] He certainly has an intelligent face. And the face is the mirror of the soul, as has been said by the philosopher.

FELICIA. Are you sure that it was said by a philosopher?

DUCHESS. All the great truths have been said by philosophers.

FELICIA. You are so scrupulous that you decline to appropriate any of them. Whenever you speak, or oblige with a choice remark....

DUCHESS. Thank you.

FELICIA. You invariably add "as has been said by the philosopher," unless you happen to remember the name. You are too conscientious.

DUCHESS. I am not accustomed to deck myself in other persons' jewels. My great passion has been reading; the length of my memory is my distinguishing characteristic, and it is a vanity with me to allow my reading and my memory to appear. Moreover, Beethoven has never convinced me that he was entitled to rank among the philosophers of whom we have been speaking.

FELICIA. He has not?

DUCHESS. No, his music is democratic. I cannot understand how your Highness fails to see that it is so. It breathes revolution. Give me Mozart! That is Court music—music of the *grande dame*, previous to the "Marseillaise." All music is divided into two periods——

FELICIA. Is this said by a philosopher?

DUCHESS. No, the idea is my own, although it may seem preposterous. Music is divided into two great periods—before the "Marseillaise" and after it. When music went upon the streets, it ceased to be music.

FELICIA. But then Wagner?

DUCHESS. Oh, Wagner! Imperial music. Surely you have learned by this time that emperors are parvenus among royalty? Empires have never convinced me; they are nothing but republics turned upside down. However, as I was remarking, Prince Albert has an intelligent face—that is, unless his pictures flatter him. I have never seen him myself. I did not accompany their Majesties to the Court of Suavia last summer. When Princess Constanza visited Marienbad to meet the Prince, I was excused from attending her, on account of my affection.

FELICIA. Yes, neurasthenia.

DUCHESS. Neurasthenia is the modern term, but it never convinced me. In the old days we always called it affection, and it was, usually. Queen Carlotta died of one on the eighteenth of February, eighteen hundred and sixty-two. It never snowed as hard as it did that day—all the ponds were frozen over. We could not go skating, because the Court was in mourning. However, we were speaking of something else....

FELICIA. You were slandering Beethoven.

DUCHESS. No, indeed! Who cares about Beethoven?

Ah, to be sure! As I did not have the honor of accompanying Princess Constanza, I did not make the acquaintance of Prince Albert of Suavia. Now his picture is in all the papers; they all contain the announcement of his approaching marriage with the Princess Constanza. I pray the Princess may not refuse at the last moment. She is so visionary and impractical that one can never be certain what she may do next. I have not closed my eyes for three nights in anticipation of it. The scandal would be cataclysmic. What does your Highness think?

FELICIA. Highnesses never think. We cannot even dress as we like; we are obliged to encourage the national industries. As to my sister, she prides herself upon being a woman of ideas and resolution. Pshaw! In the end she will accept the match which the King and the Government have arranged—shall we say through diplomacy?

DUCHESS. I may not express myself precisely, but that is not my idea of the Princess Constanza's way.

FELICIA. Oh, no, she is just like me, only she is in love, or she thinks she is; and somehow lovers always lose the family air. They are just like other lovers.

DUCHESS. This entire love affair is impossible.

FELICIA. No, not the love affair—although marriage may be impossible. And marriage is not so impossible, either. Duke Alexander is descended from kings.

DUCHESS. But he is a subject! If subjects, however royally descended, are to elevate themselves by making love to princesses, what will become of decorum? The Court will be a hotbed of intrigue, of jealousy. To-day the Duke pursues the Princess Constanza; to-morrow some other upstart will aspire to your Highness.

FELICIA. To me? He will be wasting his time. I am more exacting, more imaginative than my sister. I prefer a

husband who comes from a distance, from a great way off—some unknown country, if possible—a mysterious Lohengrin; and you may be certain that my curiosity will never destroy the enchantment of his secret.

A military band plays a march outside.

FELICIA. Ah, revolutionary music!

DUCHESS. The daily guard mount.

FELICIA. Don't you recognize the music? Duke Alexander's regiment. It is a signal that the Colonel visits the Palace to-day, and—my sister! Silence—or, rather, music. In an embarrassing situation there is nothing like music.

[*She resumes playing.*

PRINCESS CONSTANZA *enters and goes directly to the balcony.*

CONSTANZA. Do stop, sister! I wonder how you can hear yourself play. Such discords are terrible.

FELICIA. Yes, Court music and street music never agree. The street music drives out the Court music. That regiment certainly has an abominable repertory.

CONSTANZA. Has it? What regiment mounts guard to-day?

FELICIA. Oh, I wonder! [*Pretending ignorance*] Duchess, what regiment mounts guard to-day?

DUCHESS. Your Highness cannot be so disingenuous as to wish to implicate me.

CONSTANZA. Oh, you do know, then?

FELICIA. I don't know the regiment; I merely know the Colonel.

CONSTANZA. Oh! Duke Alexander's regiment?

FELICIA. Duchess, by any chance can it be Duke Alexander's regiment?

DUCHESS. Princess Felicia amuses herself.

CONSTANZA. No, how can she? Is she laughing at me?

I have decided not to temporize any more, and I shall certainly not permit others to trifle with me. I have had a conference with the King, and I am positive that I have made an impression.

DUCHESS. Upon the King?

FELICIA. A State conference? Was it serious?

CONSTANZA. Oh, very! I have made my attitude clear. Either I shall marry Duke Alexander or I shall never marry. My heart is not a pawn of politics. After all, there are no political necessities. Marriage means absolutely nothing among princes nowadays. It is not worth the trouble of sacrificing oneself. If a *casus belli* were to arise between Alfania and Suavia to-morrow, does anybody imagine that a quarrel would be less likely if I were married to Prince Albert?

DUCHESS. The nation, my dear, may be regarded as one great family.

CONSTANZA. Possibly, from the vantage point of kings and of heirs-apparent, but what do I amount to, internationally considered?

DUCHESS. You are his Majesty's niece, related to him precisely as is the Crown Prince; you will become heir should Prince Michael die without issue—without legitimate issue. As yet the Prince manifests little disposition to marry, which is most embarrassing.

FELICIA. Apparently it does not embarrass him.

DUCHESS. A prince is not susceptible to embarrassment.

FELICIA. Evidently our cousin is a model prince.

DUCHESS. Evidently.

FELICIA. He is not susceptible to embarrassment. Can the bankers say the same, to whom he owes everything?

DUCHESS. You exaggerate. Naturally, the Prince inclines to extravagance; it is expected in his position. His Majesty

attends only the more important Court ceremonies. Besides the state of his health, the disappointment of having been a widower twice, and all, as one might say, for nothing.... The Prince is the real sovereign. He has visited all the Courts of Europe. He has travelled twice around the world.

FELICIA. Whenever marriage is suggested, he is off on a journey, as he declares, to bid good-by to the single life, but in the end it is good-by matrimony. Now that he is threatened with an imminent match, he is investigating the latest improvements in aviation. When marriage is next mentioned, and the aeroplane has been perfected, he will fly off the planet for—which is the nearest feminine planet?

CONSTANZA. The nearest? The Ambassadress of Franconia is the nearest. She is the fashionable Court star.

FELICIA. She has too many satellites.

CONSTANZA. Of whom Silvio is the nearest.

DUCHESS. I am surprised that such gossip should be repeated in the Palace, where, assuredly, it is out of place. Prince Silvio has never regarded the Ambassadress of Franconia. She is doubly respectable, as an ambassadress and as a married woman.

FELICIA. Her country may not be in a position to demand reparations, nor her husband, either.

DUCHESS. I am disgusted at this flippant tone.

FELICIA. We all know that Prince Silvio is an industrious cultivator of international relations, especially on the feminine side, which is the more influential.

DUCHESS. Prince Silvio cultivates everybody, which is all that may be said. Your Highness should not speak of him so disparagingly. It suggests jealousy.

FELICIA. Jealousy? On the contrary, my cousin's adventures are invariably amusing. I have been his confidante, not to say his accomplice, in some most delicate affairs.

DUCHESS. Oh, you have the coquetry to appear worse than you are! Prince Silvio was destined to be your Highness's husband while, as yet, you were both in the cradle.

FELICIA. Well, I trust he will complete his tour of the world in his own way first. It will not be necessary for him to travel as much as Prince Michael.

CONSTANZA. Duchess, have you the programme for the day?

DUCHESS. We have nothing to-day. To-night there is the ball at the Embassy of Suavia in your honor.

CONSTANZA. Oh, no! The invitations have surely been recalled....

DUCHESS. It seems incredible.

CONSTANZA. Really, the King has taken my part. He is awfully fond of me—he has always been so kind and good-natured, and especially with us, as we have been in his care since we were children. As soon as he saw that I was crying, he promised that unless the Ministry should make a cabinet question of my marrying Prince Albert, he will not oppose my engagement to Duke Alexander. The King thinks very highly of the Duke; his father was a pillar of the throne.

DUCHESS. Yes, the King is too weak. This will invite a crisis with Suavia. Your marriage with Prince Albert has been discussed all over the world. Positively, your Highness should read the papers. They all contain pictures of the Prince and of your Highness.

CONSTANZA. But my photograph has often appeared in the papers with Duke Alexander's.

DUCHESS. Yes, in revolutionary papers, which are eager to promote a scandal because of your position, and the undignified attitude of your Highness.

CONSTANZA. Duke Alexander was cheered by the students this morning, as he rode by at the head of his regiment.

DUCHESS. Three or four little boys....

CONSTANZA. I receive dozens of letters and verses every day, urging me to follow the impulses of my heart. Evidently my engagement to Duke Alexander will be extremely popular. Even the King is convinced that it might be policy once to please the people. During the past few years they have been alienated too consistently. The Government ought to realize it, too, although, of course, governments make a fetich of dissatisfying the people.

An USHER *enters.*

USHER. Their Highnesses, Prince Maximo and the Princess Eudoxia.

FELICIA. Ah! We are receiving ambassadors!

PRINCE MAXIMO *and the* PRINCESS EUDOXIA *enter.*

CONSTANZA. Eudoxia!

EUDOXIA. My dears! And the Duchess!

MAXIMO. Well, how are the precious healths and the precious youth of my two dear nieces?

CONSTANZA. We are well, Uncle, very well.

MAXIMO. My dear Duchess, a favored spot in my heart is reserved for you. Where is the Duke? I have not seen him recently.

DUCHESS. He has been ill.

MAXIMO. Too bad! And to think I did not know it! Eudoxia, the Duke of Berlandia has been ill. How is it that we did not know it?

EUDOXIA. We certainly did know it, my dear. We have sent to inquire for him every day.

MAXIMO. No one said anything to me, Eudoxia. How is it that no one said anything to me?

EUDOXIA. So as not to alarm you. You no sooner hear

of a disease, than you are convinced that you have it yourself.

MAXIMO. I look better than ever, yet nobody can tell what is the matter with me. I have made up my mind to find out. The day that I am taken with a regular illness will be a happy day for me.

FELICIA. But you are well, Uncle; your cheeks are rosy. You look younger every day.

MAXIMO. The color is not natural, that is what distresses me. I seem so robust. Nobody takes my illness seriously. The physicians laugh at me, they do not study me. They say it is nothing but nerves. Well, then, let them cure my nerves. They say it is monomania. Well, then, let them cure my monomania.

CONSTANZA. But you must!

MAXIMO. It is more insidious, more deep-seated. When I die, I have promised myself one satisfaction. I am going to leave them my body to convince them. After a while, then, they will pay attention to me.

EUDOXIA. Possibly.

FELICIA. Uncle, how disgusting!

EUDOXIA. You do not know your uncle. He mortifies me, stopping the carriage in front of every apothecary's. Naturally, the passers-by are attracted by us, the proprietor comes to the door to inquire courteously what we wish, whether we are indisposed. And all the while, there sits your uncle in perfect ecstasy before the bottles, as if they were veritable *objets d'art!* "My dear, a new specific! I wish you would try one of these pills. Ah, what preparations!".... Run your hands through his pockets. He is stuffed full of them.

FELICIA. Now confess, Uncle.

MAXIMO. You will be disappointed. I have nothing but samples to-day, that is all. If they are disagreeable, I don't take them.... Yes, these are sweet.... No disagree-

able medicines for me; the disease is disagreeable enough. Well, hand them back and let me have your sympathy. Felicia, Duchess, pardon us.... We have been intrusted with a mission to our dear niece Constanza.

FELICIA. Pray do not apologize. This is a day of consultations.

DUCHESS. Do you hear? Their Highnesses have been intrusted with a mission to the Princess Constanza....

FELICIA. Yes, I hear. Come, Duchess.

MAXIMO. We shall not be long.

FELICIA. [*To the* DUCHESS] Drop the curtains as you pass out; we can listen behind them.

DUCHESS. No, indeed. Close the doors. An ear to the ground is a step toward salvation.

PRINCESS FELICIA *and the* DUCHESS OF BERLANDIA *go out.*

MAXIMO. What time is it?

CONSTANZA. Is it as important as that?

MAXIMO. No, but——

CONSTANZA. Half past eleven.

MAXIMO. Time to take a pill.

CONSTANZA. Yes, but without water, Uncle? Let me ring....

MAXIMO. No, no, water is not necessary; natural dilution. Sit down, Eudoxia. You sit here by me.

EUDOXIA. I might suggest opening those doors.

MAXIMO. No!

EUDOXIA. Why not?

MAXIMO. They will wish to listen behind them. If we open them, they will be deprived of the pleasure.

EUDOXIA. We might ask them in, if you like.

MAXIMO. No! Women never understand.... What difference does it make whether they hear or not? What I

object to is giving them a chance to talk. With four women arguing and discussing, we should never make any progress. I do not intend to be late for luncheon.

EUDOXIA. Very well! In that case, you may do all the talking yourself, as you have such singular ideas of women. Utterly ridiculous!

[*Rising, she seats herself at the farther end of the room.*

CONSTANZA. Don't desert me, Eudoxia.

MAXIMO. Never fear; she's jealous. She loses her temper three or four times a day—yes, at me! Now don't be surprised at what I say, pay no attention. If I grow serious, attach no importance to it. You have just had a stormy interview with the King.

CONSTANZA. Stormy? No, indeed! He was most caressing and affectionate.

MAXIMO. To be sure! That is the reason he feels he ought to call it stormy. He should have been severe, he should have grown violent. My dear, good brother! He is just like me. If it lay within our power, we should make everybody happy. Ah, people do not appreciate what they miss through not enjoying the benefits of absolute monarchy. Kings and princes are anticipated in their intentions to-day by the vulgar activities of deputies and cabinet ministers.

CONSTANZA. But you lunch at twelve, don't you, Uncle? Yes, you do....

MAXIMO. Don't bother about me. I shall be done at ten minutes to twelve. In three minutes more, we shall be home. Well, the King fears you may have interpreted his weakness as consent, which he is in no position to give. The matrimonial negotiations have been made public in both countries. The Prince will arrive presently. The Government considers this marriage to be a guarantee of friendly feeling, which should always exist between two countries

whose very situation makes it inevitable that they should be at odds with one another. Remember that you are second in line of succession to the throne; remember that you cannot marry a subject of this kingdom, however noble he may be, without provoking jealousy and discord in nobility itself——

CONSTANZA. I am not impressed by your logic. A foreign prince has been preferred to a nobleman of our own country. I am asked to marry a man whom I have seen only once in my life, whom, possibly, I may see three or four times again before I marry him, in common decency....

MAXIMO. What has that to do with it?

CONSTANZA. Everything, my dear Uncle. There can be no sympathy between us.

MAXIMO. What has that to do with it?

CONSTANZA. What do I know of Prince Albert? What does he know of me? Officious, official information.

MAXIMO. My dear niece, now listen to me. After a few years of married life, all husbands are the same, while during the first few weeks, why, any one will do. You don't think you know Duke Alexander, do you, because you have been acquainted for years, because we have been brought up at Court here together since we were children? Well, the day after you are married, he will be as much of a stranger to you as any prince from the farthest-off land. Love lays seven veils over our eyes, my dear, but marriage is a sort of dance of the seven veils. Before the honeymoon is over, which is the dance, there is not left so much as one veil. You may rely upon my experience.

EUDOXIA. [*To* CONSTANZA] I hope you notice that it is the ladies who prolong conversations indefinitely?

CONSTANZA. How perfectly absurd, Eudoxia! Do come and sit here by me....

MAXIMO. No, I am done now. One word more, and I

have finished. Don't let your aunt suspect that I have taken your part; I am on your side. You know what she is—a slave to etiquette, an admirer of the *grand siècle*, as she calls it. She has planned an entertainment in your honor, a fête *à la Versailles!* Let her think I have scolded you severely. You know I am with you. Yes, my daughter, insist upon having your way. The lives of princes ought not to be all sacrifice. Ah, I should have been a prince in a fairy-tale! My ideal would have been a shepherdess—and your aunt is no shepherdess, though I have been a sheep all my life. Now, listen to your dear aunt; she will tell you the same things that I have. A princess must sacrifice herself to the interests of the Crown, of the nation. Well, you heard what I said.... Now, your aunt will tell you the same things that I did.

EUDOXIA. [*Calling* CONSTANZA *to one side*] My dear, take a chair.... You have been listening to your uncle? Pay no attention to what he says; I am with you. It is infamous to attempt to sacrifice your heart, as years ago they sacrificed mine. Insist upon having your way.

CONSTANZA. Then you advise me....?

EUDOXIA. Dissimulate. Your uncle must not suspect. You know what he is—a slave to etiquette. I suppose he reproved you severely?

CONSTANZA. Yes, he was very severe.

EUDOXIA. Never take him seriously. The King is almost convinced. Both his marriages were unhappy, and he is extremely fond of you. The people are enthusiastically in favor of Duke Alexander, who is so gallant, so engaging, so highly esteemed in the army, in society. We shall easily persuade the King and the Ministry, too. The diplomatic situation we can handle between ourselves. You will be happy, my daughter!—some one in the family ought to be

happy. Don't look so cheerful; pretend I am giving you advice.

CONSTANZA. But you are.

MAXIMO. She is making her cry. Eudoxia! Eudoxia! Remember, she is a child....

EUDOXIA. Take my advice. A princess does not live for herself. We are not able to do as we please——

CONSTANZA. I will. I am very unhappy!

MAXIMO. There is no occasion to cry. Courage! Marriage is like war to women; it is an opportunity to exercise their heroism. Ten minutes to twelve, Eudoxia.

EUDOXIA. My dear, I have spent the morning waiting. [*Aside to* CONSTANZA] You will be happy, very happy! [*Aloud*] The Prince arrives next week. I have planned a fête in your honor, a pastoral *à la Versailles*, in the manner of the *grand siècle*.

MAXIMO. A masquerade.

EUDOXIA. Promise not to detract from the brilliancy of the entertainment by appearing without a mask. You will make the loveliest Watteau shepherdess!

MAXIMO. Oh, my shepherdess! And am I to be a shepherd?

EUDOXIA. Only the ladies and the young men. Hurry, or we shall be late to luncheon, and you will insist that it is all my fault.

MAXIMO. My dearest niece.... [*Aside*] I trust your aunt's advice has not made the slightest impression whatsoever? [*Aloud*] Never forget it! A princess, a princess....

EUDOXIA. My dear, why repeat? We have made sufficient impression already. You are too severe.

MAXIMO. Probably. The King will be overjoyed at the success of our interview.

EUDOXIA. Beyond question he will.

[*They go out.* FELICIA *and the* DUCHESS *reappear.*

FELICIA. Is the conference over?

CONSTANZA. Yes, just over. Oh, I am so happy! So fortunate!

DUCHESS. I can imagine what took place. Prince Maximo, a character out of a novel, if ever there was one, and Princess Eudoxia, who has always dripped romanticism, were enchanted with your love story. Instead of offering you advice, they have given you wings.

CONSTANZA. All, all have who love me! Even the King!

DUCHESS. With due respect to the King, he displays lamentable want of character.

CONSTANZA. Duchess, I must request you to refrain from speaking disrespectfully of his Majesty in my presence. You are the only person who will persist in offering disagreeable advice. I deserve better of you.

DUCHESS. Because I do not flatter you, because I decline to humor you, because I place first the sacred interests of the dynasty, of the nation....

CONSTANZA. Duchess, you are at least two centuries behind the times.

DUCHESS. Concede me that justification for living. If we do not respect the traditions, how shall we require others to respect them? Do you imagine that you can enjoy the privileges of your rank without assuming its responsibilities? A charming idea! Most convenient!

CONSTANZA. All I ask is to be happy and to live my life openly, before the world, and not to be like some other persons who sacrifice themselves to propriety in public, only to snap their fingers at it afterward in private, making an exhibition of themselves, of propriety, and everybody.

DUCHESS. I am at a loss to conjecture whom your Highness may mean. Certainly, you cannot refer to me.

CONSTANZA. Who would ever suspect you? You have made a nightmare of propriety, an achievement which I admire, but do not envy you.

FELICIA. Constanza! Duchess! Is the difference very great? We are women whose future does not lie in our own hands. Our happiness or misery will depend upon a royal decree. After all, whether it is the King's command or our own desire, does it matter greatly in the end? Who can say but that when we think we are shaping life most freely to our purposes, we are not acting in blind obedience to destiny and fate?

CONSTANZA. You are entirely too ready in your submission to fate; then you will not have yourself to blame for any mistakes you may make. Besides, you know what your fate is beforehand: Prince Silvio.

FELICIA. It is not so easy to read in the book of fate. I may be a visionary, yet, somehow, I cannot quite read that name in my book.

An USHER *enters.*

USHER. His Highness Prince Silvio.

CONSTANZA. Fate answers to his name. Do you believe in signs?

FELICIA. In unexpected ones; but this was not unexpected. The Ambassadress of Franconia is taking luncheon at the Palace.

PRINCE SILVIO *enters.*

SILVIO. My adorable cousins! Now, don't you laugh! I am not lunching at the Palace to-day.

FELICIA. We did not say anything.

SILVIO. No, but I understand the language of smiles. Are these the thanks I receive for hurrying with the most thrilling, the most extraordinary news?

CONSTANZA. Really? Do tell us quickly.

SILVIO. Nobody has been more deeply interested than I in your happiness, nor in your love affair with my excellent friend. It has been a remarkable love affair.

FELICIA. Yes, but you said you brought news?

SILVIO. A complete upset, a revolution!

FELICIA. A revolution? This will be too much for the Duchess.

DUCHESS. No, I am fully prepared. I am dizzy; my head goes round....

SILVIO. I believe I was the first to discover it.

FELICIA. You draw your information, of course, from an impeccable source.

SILVIO. Now, if you will insist upon thinking evil, I shan't say a word.

CONSTANZA. No, indeed! Tell us the news, and we promise to ignore the source.

SILVIO. Why insist upon the source? I learned it by accident, by the merest chance....

FELICIA. Chance, chance, thy name is woman!

CONSTANZA. We must not embarrass him. He may be capable of holding his tongue.

FELICIA. I can answer for his indiscretion.

SILVIO. Now I shan't say a word.

CONSTANZA. Oh, pay no attention to Felicia!

SILVIO. Who does pay attention to her?

FELICIA. Ah! An ardent admirer!

SILVIO. The news concerns you quite as much as it does Constanza.

FELICIA. It does? Then let us have the news.

CONSTANZA. Why, the man is simply fascinating!

SILVIO. The King has summoned the President of the Ministry....

FELICIA. To administer the arguments you retailed to the King.

SILVIO. He is unwilling to sacrifice your heart to motives of policy.

CONSTANZA. Oh, how kind of the King!

SILVIO. So the President has suggested a compromise.

CONSTANZA. A compromise?

SILVIO. That Felicia should be the one to marry the Prince of Suavia.

CONSTANZA. An excellent idea! Really, do you know the President is a remarkable man?

FELICIA. Really! He can count upon my admiration.

SILVIO. But first you will have to renounce your right to the Crown in favor of your sister.

CONSTANZA. Splendid! I should like nothing better.

FELICIA. But I cannot consent to have you do it!

CONSTANZA. Yes, you must, my dear sister! You must, to oblige me. You do not suppose that I wish to be Queen?

FELICIA. But neither do I.

SILVIO. How touchingly disinterested! I should not argue, however. Neither of you is likely to have the opportunity. Prince Michael is young, his health is still excellent, and they have advised him to marry. In fact, he has been telegraphed to return to Court....

FELICIA. A night letter in praise of marriage? He will reply that he is on his way to the Pole, to verify its discovery.

SILVIO. Well, aren't you going to thank me for my news?

CONSTANZA. Unless it is subject to correction....

SILVIO. Not upon my part. But upon yours? And yours?

FELICIA. Oh, I suppose I shall resign myself! Duchess, be so kind as to hand me those papers.

DUCHESS. He certainly has an intelligent face.

CONSTANZA. Oh, he is charming! Isn't he, Silvio? You have heard him talk. Is he not intelligent? And he has never been involved in scandal of any sort.

SILVIO. No, he is a good boy—a trifle stiff, perhaps, but he has a fine figure. He waltzes well, he dresses well, he has great talent for languages. It would be difficult to find another prince with so many advantages.

CONSTANZA. Well, Duchess? Oh, I am happy, blissfully happy! And you, my dear sister? Are you as happy as I am?

FELICIA. As you are? I don't know. But I am happy to see you happy. If I really have to sacrifice myself, I prefer that it should be for you.

CONSTANZA. Thank you, sister, thank you! You are all so kind and good. Thank you, Silvio, you are perfect! How can I ever thank you for all your kind wishes?

DUCHESS. It is an ungracious task to play the evil prophet, but I must say that all this appears sufficiently irregular to me. What! Renounce the throne? Disturb the line of succession? And who is to say whether Duke Alexander will consent?

CONSTANZA. How absurd! Fortunately, I am able to answer for his disinterestedness. Duke Alexander is not vulgarly ambitious.

DUCHESS. To aspire to a throne is not a vulgar ambition.

CONSTANZA. Many, many times he has suggested this very solution to me, so that there might be no question of his disinterestedness. This complication about the Crown was a positive menace to our happiness. You must discover some other way to torment me, Duchess.

DUCHESS. I shall not trouble your Highness further. Today, I present my resignation.

CONSTANZA. Why do foolish things? You should be satisfied with saying them.

DUCHESS. My heart presages unhappy days for the faithful followers of the Crown.

SILVIO. On the contrary, days of rejoicing, gala days—wedding on top of wedding, the Princesses, the Prince! I shall be permitted some respite.

FELICIA. Yes, it will turn out that you are the happy one after all. All danger of me is removed.

SILVIO. Danger? There never was any. Now confess that you detested me. I may say, without false modesty, that I am not in the class with the Prince of Suavia. He will be a faithful husband, while I....well, I am capable of all the virtues, but that is how I know fidelity is not a virtue: I do not feel myself capable of it. All women are adorable!

FELICIA. Especially foreigners.

SILVIO. No, no more than the others; they are all adorable. Only foreigners have this advantage—after a while they go home. And memory is a great idealizer. Besides, I am a confirmed traveller, and it is pleasant to pick up souvenirs. One becomes horribly bored on a journey, when, suddenly, in comes the subject of an old flirtation; an attachment which began in London is continued in Vienna, a forgotten infatuation in a sleeping-car reappears on an ocean liner. Oh, these revivified passions are irresistible! There is more poetry in memory than in hope, just as ruins are more poetic than the plans of an edifice which we have in prospect.

FELICIA. There can be no question, however, as to your preference for ruins.

DUCHESS. Your Highness, the conversation, I fear, is verging upon dangerous ground. The veil of the proprieties does not permit us to expose our thoughts freely. I must

beg the Prince to remember who is present, and to discriminate.

SILVIO. I beg your pardon—I forgot that you were here.

FELICIA. [*Aside*] The habit of not respecting ruins.

DUCHESS. I am not the one to be considered; consider their Highnesses.

SILVIO. Quite right, but then I need to have you always with me *pour me remonter la morale*—to reinvigorate my moral tone. I am wound up for a very short time. However, it isn't my fault. Women are all adorable! Who invented the idea of an ugly woman? The ugly ones are the most fascinating. How they do know how to make love!

FELICIA. Probably to desperation.

SILVIO. As I am forbidden to become demoralized, I shall retire. The conversation will languish. Constanza, Felicia.... Now, don't I deserve a reward? *Embrassez votre petit cousin, mes chères.*

CONSTANZA. *Volontiers! Tiens, de tout mon cœur.*

DUCHESS. Highnesses!

CONSTANZA. Oh, we always kiss at Court ceremonies.

DUCHESS. That is not the same.

CONSTANZA. I assure you that it is. Isn't it, Silvio?

SILVIO. No, the Duchess is right this time, it is not the same. But since you are going to be married.... Well, it is not the same.

The Princesses laugh.

DUCHESS. Your Highnesses are disarmed by his audacity.

SILVIO. The Duchess will end by ejecting me. Call on me at any time, little ones. [*He goes out.*

CONSTANZA. How perfectly adorable!

FELICIA. How naïve!

CONSTANZA. He is a lovely boy.

FELICIA. So ingenuous!

DUCHESS. Ingenious. Your Highnesses overestimate his simplicity, not to mention his forward qualities. The implication——

An USHER *enters.*

USHER. His Majesty will receive her Highness the Princess Felicia in his cabinet. [*Retires.*

CONSTANZA. This is a momentous day for you, too.

FELICIA. I never dreamed it when I awoke.

CONSTANZA. You know what the King will say to you. What will you say to the King?

FELICIA. Can't you guess? I shall accept the Prince. He may not come from very far off, but the uncertainty will more than make up for the distance.

CONSTANZA. You will be very happy.

FELICIA. Yes, I shall be everything that you do not want to be.

CONSTANZA. But I shall be happy, too—not happier than you are, no, but just as happy. We shall both be happy!

FELICIA *goes out.*

CONSTANZA. Why sit there and look virtuous? The world is not coming to an end with its monarchies. I am not the first princess who has married for love.

DUCHESS. You certainly are not. But as I run over the histories of all those unhappy women in my mind, I can recall nothing but disaster. Remember *La Grande Mademoiselle*, remember the three marriages of the unlucky Mary Queen of Scots, remember, not to go farther back, the terrible experience of your great-grandmother, the Princess Margarita Eugenia, with an officer of the hussars, and that of Princess Carolina Alexandra with the leader of an orchestra!

CONSTANZA. History does not repeat.

DUCHESS. Unhappy marriages do, every day.

CONSTANZA. I am not convinced by the comparison. The

Duke is a nobleman; royal blood flows in his veins. You are more solicitous about my dignity than I am myself.

DUCHESS. You have stated the fact precisely. I shall advise you no further. If your Highness will permit, I shall prepare for luncheon....

CONSTANZA. Please do not be angry with me. I am so happy! This is the happiest day of my life—the precursor of many, many happy days!

DUCHESS. I don't know what philosopher said that there was only one happy day in our lives, and to-day is never the day.

CONSTANZA. It isn't? When is it?

DUCHESS. When we are on the eve of it. [*She goes out.*

PRINCESS CONSTANZA *seats herself at the piano and begins to play. A brief pause. Presently* DUKE ALEXANDER *enters.*

ALEXANDER. Constanza!

CONSTANZA. How imprudent! Have you been seen....?

ALEXANDER. No, I came by the outer gallery. Nobody saw me. Of course, all our friends did; that is, those who were there. There is no occasion for secrecy any longer; everybody knows. My comrades in the regiment have congratulated me. The Royal Guard smiled as it saluted to-day, most significantly. Even the ushers smiled when they saw me come in.

CONSTANZA. Yes, they are all happy in our happiness. I cannot stop playing, as the Duchess is in the next room. She might suspect. But I can hear you, I am listening.... What bliss, my Alexander! What perfect bliss!

ALEXANDER. We have endured torments, though.

CONSTANZA. I suffered more than you did. You had your friends to confide in, while I had nobody; I had nobody but enemies. Then, this eternal etiquette, with a horrible mar-

riage staring me in the face.... It doesn't seem possible! It is all unreal, remote as a dream.

ALEXANDER. Shall I tell you what gratifies me the most? Your renunciation of the right to the Crown.

CONSTANZA. Are you serious? Is the Crown, then, nothing to you?

ALEXANDER. To me? Do you doubt it? You always insisted that it was making a coward of me. It might have been thought that I loved you because you were a princess, when, in fact, that was the only obstacle to our happiness. I should gladly have conquered a kingdom in order to have removed it, which would have been mine, then, to share with you.

CONSTANZA. [*Stops playing*] It is useless, I cannot play. I hear some one....

ALEXANDER. Yes, I had better go. This will be the last of our secret interviews.

CONSTANZA. The anxiety has been terrible. How did we ever deceive everybody?

ALEXANDER. Fortunately, everybody sympathized with our predicament.

CONSTANZA. Except that dragon of a Duchess. I had almost begun to hate her.

ALEXANDER. Indulge yourself, if you like. She is a constitutional enemy of our house.

CONSTANZA. Never fear! I shall take care that she is attached to the train of my sister. Sh! Hurry.... No, wait.... It is Felicia. The King sent for her. Now we shall hear.

FELICIA *enters.*

FELICIA. Duke!

ALEXANDER. Highness!

FELICIA. Am I interrupting promised privileges?

ALEXANDER. No, a farewell, rather, to past embarrassments.

CONSTANZA. What did the King say to you? What did you say to the King?

FELICIA. I suppose it is no longer a secret. A telegram has been received from Suavia accepting the alteration in the marriage plans, as a matter of course. I could not possibly have felt more insignificant if they had rejected me.

CONSTANZA. They couldn't do that.

FELICIA. Fancy! The Prince was fascinated with the idea of marrying you.

CONSTANZA. Purely, of course, with the idea. His ideas will change much more rapidly than my feelings.

FELICIA. The Prince arrives at the end of the week, he will remain another week, or sufficient to make it appear that we have fallen madly in love, and then, after one or two months, he will return to remain permanently—at least, that is the arrangement.

CONSTANZA. But what about me? About us? What do they say?

FELICIA. Both weddings are to take place on the same day—I believe at the suggestion of the Minister of the Interior. Ah! And though of course everybody knows it, and the people are as delighted as if it had been one of themselves, the Government has requested that it all be kept secret. Nobody is to breathe a hint of it, the papers are to remain silent, and no living being is to seem to have heard so much as one word.

ALEXANDER. I wonder why governments are so addicted to these mysteries?

CONSTANZA. Nothing so hides the vacuous as the mysterious.

FELICIA. Nothing so abhors the light of day as an ugly woman or a bad government.

ALEXANDER. We are ungrateful to criticise it.

CONSTANZA. Yes, but we owe it no thanks. Public opinion was with us.

ALEXANDER. Neither the King's wishes nor public opinion are taken into consideration by any government.

FELICIA. My dear future brother-in-law, now that I am to be the head of the family, I am in a position to dictate. This interview has continued long enough.

ALEXANDER. True. Let us not destroy the delicious flavor of the forbidden as yet. Highness!

FELICIA. We shall dispense with formality at the very first opportunity.

ALEXANDER. Highness!

CONSTANZA. Alexander!

FELICIA. Oh!....with her, I assume no dispensation is necessary.

The DUKE *goes out.*

CONSTANZA. I am blissfully happy! How can I ever forget that I owe my happiness to you?

FELICIA. My name will remind you.

CONSTANZA. But you? Aren't you happy? Why are you so dreamy, so abstracted? You are looking far-away....

FELICIA. Do you remember? Which of my pictures did we send to the Court of Suavia?

CONSTANZA. Oh, they are all excellent likenesses! Absurd!

FELICIA. You saw him at Marienbad last summer. Does the Prince really look like these pictures?

CONSTANZA. He is much better looking. He has a fine figure.

FELICIA. I am so glad. We are even, then—two fine fig-

ures. As for heart, intellect, moral qualities, no doubt one of us will be as well off as the other.

CONSTANZA. Scarcely. I know the man I love, he has no secrets from me. I have loved as a woman, not as a princess.

FELICIA. My poor, dear sister! Who would be a woman when she can be a princess? If we are deceived, it is going to be as women, not as princesses.

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

A Garden illuminated for a fête.
PRINCE SILVIO *enters with* DUKE ALEXANDER.

SILVIO. What a horrible fête!—in the Princess Eudoxia's best vein. This sort of thing is her specialty.

ALEXANDER. It is not for any want of attractions.

SILVIO. There are too many attractions, *trop de fleurs*, as the priest says in "*La Belle Hélène*." I don't know where my aunt picked up her idea of the *grand siècle*. It was not my notion that they bored themselves so horribly in their entertainments. This fashion of a set programme, a concert of the period, with sentimental songs, and the guests obliged to listen all the while in complete silence, with separation of the sexes....

ALEXANDER. That is the trouble with you.

SILVIO. Afterward, dances of the epoch, gavottes, minuets, pavans; afterward, participation in a pastoral, entirely as spectators.... There are no means of escape. When you deprive these nocturnal festivals of the incitement of the dark, of the ability to rove where you like....

ALEXANDER. The illumination could scarcely have been more discreet. Did you wander out to the Grotto of Neptune? All is darkness there, mystery.

SILVIO. Yes, I know, but you cannot rely on it. They have set up a reflector on the belvedere, which changes color and direction continually. No sooner are you settled comfortably in the grotto than, paff!—the Loie Fuller! Another of the charming ideas of my aunt's. They have illuminated

me twice; I have no intention of flashing in the pan another time. No more of your grottoes for me!

ALEXANDER. I can imagine the picture—a magic transformation scene. The light surprised you both times in good company.

SILVIO. Yes, the light surprised us and one husband. Thank God, though, he could not be surprised at anything.

ALEXANDER. A little light conceals, a great light dazzles.

SILVIO. Is that a proverb? But you didn't come here to talk with me. You are dancing with Constanza——

ALEXANDER. No, she is with the Prince. Naturally, it is not the same; we have all our time to ourselves. She is devoting the evening to our distinguished guest.

SILVIO. Have you talked with Prince Albert?

ALEXANDER. Yes—very affable. The situation was delicate, but the Prince carried it off with exquisite tact, with the utmost grace in the world.

SILVIO. He certainly is engaging. We are all delighted; I am charmed on my cousin's account. It would have been a pity to have married her to me. I love her so much that I should have made her very unhappy.

ALEXANDER. Yes, if she had loved you, and had worried over your infidelities.

SILVIO. Yes, and if she had not loved me and not worried over them, then I should have been the one who worried. I should have found myself in a most uncomfortable position, for no matter how little a man may think of his wife....

PRINCE MAXIMO *enters, dressed as a shepherd of the period of Louis XIV.*

MAXIMO. No, don't look at me. At my time of life, with my infirmities, these diversions may seem out of place. But to please Eudoxia.... She was angry because you wore your uniforms. She says that you have spoiled the bril-

liancy of the fête; you mar the ensemble. She is furious.

SILVIO. But, my dear uncle, how absurd——

MAXIMO. You don't have to convince me.

SILVIO. On the other hand, the ladies are divine, they are irresistible.

MAXIMO. Enchanting! One yearns to frisk like a young lamb at the sight of all those pretty shepherdesses. Ah, but such sports are for the young! The Ambassadress of Franconia has arrived.

SILVIO. At last? I thought she was not coming, she was indisposed——

MAXIMO. Not at all; her gown had to be let out. The modiste was working over her until the last moment. You can see that she has been crying; yes, indeed! But she is beautiful! Her entrance was a sensation—in a sedan chair, a genuine antique, carried by four negroes in colored liveries—so appropriate. She inquired immediately for you. Ah! And Eudoxia asked me to caution you. You know—decorum, no occasion for any talk. You understand. Don't mind what I say, you know how I feel; but Eudoxia.... Well, I have given orders to have the Greek fire put out. I told Eudoxia that it was discomposing. A most unfortunate idea!

SILVIO. Most imprudent.

MAXIMO. The Grotto of Neptune will be more comfortable now, only better cough before you go in, because the same idea never occurs to only one at a time.... Ah! Eudoxia.... Seem depressed. Pretend that I am giving you advice. Yes, Silvio, never occasion any talk. A prince....

EUDOXIA *enters.*

EUDOXIA. What obligingly attentive gentlemen! You not only present yourselves at my fête in uniforms—which are scandalously improper on this occasion—but then you run

away and hide from the ladies. You prefer these detestable cigarettes. The Duchess of Berlandia was right! The cigarette has put an end to gallantry.

SILVIO. Gallantry lies interred with the gold-enamelled snuff-box. How is that? My uncle just warned me—upon your behalf—to be more discreet in my gallantries, to conduct them in the pure style of Louis XIV. You are not consistent.

EUDOXIA. Gallantries? Atrocious modern flirtations! However, pay no attention to what your uncle says—you know him. The Ambassadress of Franconia has been inquiring for you. She certainly is gowned magnificently. Although Ambassadress of a republic, she conserves all the traditions of the *grand siècle.*

SILVIO. So thoroughly that she can afford an occasional modern flirtation.

EUDOXIA. [*Diplomatically*] You know your uncle's attitude in these matters. He is extremely puritanical.

SILVIO *retires.*

EUDOXIA. Duke, you may slight my fête, although I had planned it rather in your honor than in that of the Prince. I had hoped to emphasize your betrothal, but....

ALEXANDER. I should be sorry to be thought a jealous lover. Princess Constanza's duty to-night is to our illustrious guest.

EUDOXIA. I agree with you that the Prince is fascinating. Constanza ought certainly to devote herself to him after having rejected him so unceremoniously. You have all your time to yourselves. When you appeared in public to-day with your fiancée, I am told that you were cheered enthusiastically by the people.

ALEXANDER. Yes, the demonstration was notable, spontaneous, sincere.

EUDOXIA. The public is incurably romantic.

MAXIMO. We are all romantic.

EUDOXIA. The King was applauded, too, a thing which had not happened for years. It was a political *coup* to consent to the marriage of our niece with one of our own nobility.

MAXIMO. It has satisfied everybody. Ah, my dear brother is just like me—we are willing that everybody should be happy. The fact is this match has brought the Crown and the people much closer together. The Government takes the credit, as if it had had the idea, whereas everybody knows that it never has any ideas. There never was a luckier Government. No, sir! No sooner does it begin to fall, than these matrimonial combinations occur to set it up again. It will never repay you what it owes you, my dear Duke.

ALEXANDER. On the contrary, I am the one who is under even deeper obligations. I owe the King and I owe your Highnesses a great debt, not to speak of the Princess Felicia, who has co-operated so obligingly, although, I believe, she had no idea of marriage at the time. In fact, the proposal came as a complete surprise to her.

EUDOXIA. Princesses are incapable of surprise, Duke—although I have no reason to complain. Prince Maximo has been a model husband.

MAXIMO. Very kind of you, my dear, very kind, very obliging!

EUDOXIA. I never dreamed of a handsome or intelligent prince. My aspirations have been modest.

MAXIMO. Obliging, my dear, obliging....

ALEXANDER. Highnesses, the King!

MAXIMO. Ah, my good brother! Like a boy, he is the life of the fête!

The KING, PRINCE ALBERT, PRINCE SILVIO, PRINCESS CONSTANZA, PRINCESS FELICIA, *the* DUCHESS OF BERLANDIA, *the* AMBASSADRESS OF SUAVIA, *the* AM-

BASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA, *the* PRESIDENT OF THE MINISTRY, *the* AMBASSADOR OF SUAVIA, *the* AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA, PRINCESS ALICIA *and* PRINCESS MIRANDA *enter.*

The ladies are dressed in the period of Louis XIV, after the shepherdesses of Watteau. The AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA *also dresses in the period. The others are in uniform or in evening dress, wearing sashes and crosses.*

KING. Delightful evening.

EUDOXIA. Delightful.

KING. It is neither cold nor hot. Quite exceptional at this season.

AMBASSADOR OF SUAVIA. What does his Majesty say?

PRESIDENT. It is a delightful evening.

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. The evenings in this climate are always delightful.

EUDOXIA. How do you like my fête?

ALBERT. Only a good fairy could have prepared such a fête for us.

EUDOXIA. Fairies are always propitious to princes who are in love.

SILVIO. [*To the* AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA] Have you just arrived?

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. I feared at first that it would be impossible for me to come; my neuralgia tormented me so horribly. At last, by a superhuman effort, I succeeded in getting into my clothes. And now I feel better.

SILVIO. A successful toilette is an infallible medicine.

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. It obliterates the thought of suffering. The Prince of Suavia is bored frightfully.

SILVIO. Yes, to extinction—like the rest of us. These fêtes of the Princess Eudoxia deserve their reputation.

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. Unquestionably. They are an art in themselves.

SILVIO. The elegances of the *grand siècle* do not sit easily upon the ladies of to-day. But now that you are here, who are incomparable, compared with all the others....

EUDOXIA. [*To the* AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA] You are the most obliging ambassador of the most amiable people in the world—the one gentleman who has not come to my fête improperly clothed. I had hoped that we might be transported to-night into the *grand siècle*, into *plein Grand Trianon*——

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. I had not imagined you would care to go so far. A Court is too conservative. In a republic, of course, the suggestion of those days makes a general appeal.

CONSTANZA. [*To* DUKE ALEXANDER] He certainly is attractive. And he is so direct in his conversation! He told me at once that he would never cease to deplore the political necessities which had obliged me to renounce my rights to the Crown. I assured him that we were only too glad to renounce them.

ALEXANDER. Especially as it will be so easy to get them back.

CONSTANZA. Who ever heard of such a thing?

ALEXANDER. Not that we should consider it; no, indeed! But the people and the army will never submit to a foreign prince. When we were cheered this morning, it was more than admiration, than a tribute to our courage; it was a salvo to hope. On the other hand, not a single cheer for the Prince; respectful bows, that was all.

CONSTANZA. I am disgusted to hear you talk. We should be thinking of ourselves, of our happiness.

ALEXANDER. And of the happiness of our beloved people. I never realized until to-day how much we owe them. Those spontaneous cheers moved me profoundly.

CONSTANZA. And they did me. I cried for joy. But they awakened no ambition in my heart.

ALEXANDER. No more than they did in mine; only the desire, the determination to serve this generous, this noble people to the utmost of my ability. They deserve a glorious destiny.

CONSTANZA. Yes, of course. But why talk so much about it? Even your voice takes on a different tone.

ALEXANDER. Doubtless you would prefer some frivolous madrigal, appropriate to this fête?

CONSTANZA. No, I should prefer the guests to see how happy we are, and to enjoy ourselves this evening, now that we may do so. I see absolutely no reason why not.

DUCHESS. [*To* PRINCESS FELICIA] He is a most cultivated person, who converses upon art with an air of complete sufficiency. I believe your Highness is to be congratulated. It will be one consolation amid the evil prognostications which afflict my soul.

FELICIA. Yes, the Prince has surpassed my expectations. Do you know what impresses me the most? His voice. It is....it is one of those persuasive voices. It seems as if there could never be any deception in it, as if....as if he ever had to deceive you, he would be so manly about it that you would never even suspect the deceit.

EUDOXIA. I think so, too. Yes, it is a voice....one of those military voices, voices of command. And there is nothing sweeter than one of those voices, accustomed to command armies on the field of battle, when its courage falters, trembling to beg a favor, or too timid to ask for an embrace.

MAXIMO. Eudoxia, my dear, it is growing late.... Several numbers still remain upon the programme.

EUDOXIA. Yes, indeed! The *clou* of the fête.... *L'embarquement pour Cythère.* I must inquire whether the actors are ready. [*She goes out.*

SILVIO. [*To the* AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA] Probably these spectacles do not interest you. You have better at home at the Olympia and the *Folies Bergères.*

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. Oh, no greater spectacles! We are more sophisticated, perhaps, but certainly not more amusing.

SILVIO. You make an exception of me?

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. Your Highness is always amusing—but not alone. You are so redoubtable when you are alone, that expectation gives place to fear.

SILVIO. Is that a reproach? If I have been respectful with any one....

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. It has been with me. But respect is purely relative. It depends upon the ardor of the pursuit and the difficulties which interpose. Your Highness is familiar with the predicament of the fox with the grapes?

SILVIO. Unfortunately, as yet....

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. An abyss yawns between us.

SILVIO. Because I am a prince?

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. Doubtless that may appear abysmal to your Highness, but the abyss I was alluding to is my husband. I am not willing to trust myself over a precipice without, in case of accident, a good parachute.

SILVIO. It all depends upon the point of view—whether you regard husbands as abysses or as parachutes.

AMBASSADOR OF SUAVIA. I observe that Franconia is making notable progress in the extension of her commerce.

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. My Government will surely

excuse my attendance at further conversations of this nature.

AMBASSADRESS OF SUAVIA. Why, it is openly scandalous! She never leaves the Prince. They have achieved the impossible—to give so much occasion to be talked about that nobody thinks to talk.

MAXIMO. [*To* PRINCESS MIRANDA *and* PRINCESS ALICIA] We hope shortly to arrange another fête in your honor, when two handsome young princes arrive to take you.

ALICIA. Oh, surely the Government will not be put to all this trouble upon our account!

MIRANDA. I shall marry for love, like Constanza.

ALICIA. So shall I. I am sorry for Felicia. Imagine being married to a perfect stranger!

MAXIMO. Are you pleased with Prince Albert?

MIRANDA. Oh, he will do! But they should have been intimate beforehand, at least for a year, like Constanza and the Duke.

ALICIA. His figure is not bad.

MIRANDA. I prefer the Duke's.

MAXIMO. Have you intimated it to your cousin?

ALICIA. Men, you know, are men.

MAXIMO. You surprise me.

PRINCESS EUDOXIA *re-enters.*

EUDOXIA. If your majesty is ready.... The artists are waiting. Gentlemen....

KING. I detect a slight breeze. Most exceptional at this season.

DUCHESS. Does your Majesty desire a wrap?

KING. No, I never take cold.

AMBASSADOR OF SUAVIA. What does his Majesty say?

PRESIDENT. He detects a slight breeze, but he never takes cold.

AMBASSADRESS OF SUAVIA. True, the atmosphere has grown chillier, perceptibly.

SILVIO. Are you leaving me? We have not explored the Grotto of Neptune.

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. You are not suggesting that we retire?

SILVIO. How delightful! It is dark there.

MAXIMO. I warn you they are turning on the reflector.

AMBASSADRESS OF FRANCONIA. Prince Maximo may accompany us.

MAXIMO. To the grotto? Certainly, as far as you wish. I have nothing to fear. They can turn the whole rainbow on me if they like.

All go out except PRINCESS EUDOXIA *and the* DUCHESS OF BERLANDIA.

EUDOXIA. One moment, Duchess. You know how highly I value your opinion. What is your impression of my fête? Do you notice an indefinable something which appears to hover in the air, but which, as yet, I cannot bring myself to formulate?

DUCHESS. Have you noticed it, too?

EUDOXIA. In everything and in nothing. How shall I express it? I had planned an intimate fête, informal, familiar if you like, but not so much so. My dear Duchess, I am at a loss to determine whether the fault lies in the programme or in the attitude of the guests; but it is not what I had planned. *Manque de chic:* it lacks absolutely the proper air.

DUCHESS. Your Highness has endeavored to temper the rigors of etiquette with the blandishments of art. The result is a theatrical performance, behind the scenes and everything, not a festival of pure art. Your Highness requested my opinion....

EUDOXIA. We have lost the secret of the *grand siècle*—

correctness in incorrection. To-day we still wear our Court robes with dignity, but we have lost the secret of appearing dignified even in our underclothes. Formerly, the Du Barrys mounted up to us; now, we are the ones who descend to the Du Barrys. Instead of ennobling them with our manners, we mob ourselves with theirs.

DUCHESS. The evil consequences of democracy. Immorality has become diffused. One must be virtuous nowadays in order to be distinguished—a consideration which I recommend to your Highness in the entertainment of your guests.

EUDOXIA. But, with such a limitation, how tiresome my fêtes will become!

DUCHESS. Think what they are without it! Your house has been converted into a *café concert*. Prince Silvio has outdone himself this evening. The Ambassadress of Franconia has not enjoyed one free moment.

EUDOXIA. I fear that her husband will suspect.

DUCHESS. Do you think he is one of those who kill, or who see nothing?

EUDOXIA. I think, rather, of the third variety—who see, but do not kill.

PRINCE MAXIMO *enters*.

MAXIMO. Capital! Capital! What an adventure! Ah! .... Is that you?

EUDOXIA. Well, what are you laughing at?

MAXIMO. Why, my dear....no, no, I cannot tell you. You would be shocked.

EUDOXIA. The Duchess is an old friend.

DUCHESS. Proceed, your Highness, and we may enjoy ourselves—that is, if it amounts to anything. Your Highness accompanied Prince Silvio and the Ambassadress of Franconia?

MAXIMO. Yes, we wandered out to the Grotto of Neptune. I thought it wiser to accompany them——

DUCHESS. I can imagine what they thought.

MAXIMO. No, they invited me. What shall I say? As a spectator, a sort of pendant to Neptune....

EUDOXIA. Purely decorative, I hope. You were right! These couples alarm me.

MAXIMO. It was fortunate that I went. I was surprised. Ha! ha! ha! [*Laughs.*

EUDOXIA. Come! Why don't you tell us? What happened that was so amusing?

MAXIMO. That Silvio! The rascal! You know how near-sighted he is, and he always appears to be more so when he is with the ladies. When sight fails, he is obliged to fall back upon touch....

EUDOXIA. Maximo!

MAXIMO. Duchess, this is all in the purest style of Louis XIV.

DUCHESS. I am prepared for anything.

MAXIMO. Well, he leaned so far over the neck of the Ambassadress of Franconia, no doubt to determine where the silk cloth left off and the silk skin began—a question of texture—when, suddenly, I heard a cry——

EUDOXIA. Maximo!

MAXIMO. Not at all. But Silvio's monocle, deflected from its orbit, had fallen in the neck of the Ambassadress, causing her to emit a by no means diplomatic shriek, when she felt the chill of the glass against her ivory skin.

EUDOXIA. Oh!

DUCHESS. Indecorous, to say the least.

MAXIMO. Fortunately, having struggled so heroically to get into her gown earlier in the evening, no harm was done. A second later, the glass, describing a delicious trajectory,

fell intact and sparkling at her feet, where Silvio and I flung ourselves at the same moment to recover it, as a glorious trophy, and I was the more fortunate, for while I picked up the glass, he, being nearer-sighted and deprived of his monocle, caught hold of and came off with one of Cinderella's slippers, while the Ambassadress, recovering at that instant from her fright, burst out into the most gorgeous, crystalline laugh, and then I don't know just what did happen.... But I laughed! I laughed until I had to cough—you know, my old catarrhal cough? Now an abbot in Latin could not have glossed it more delicately.

EUDOXIA. Duchess, you are right! Oh, my house tonight is no better than a *café concert!* Do me the favor not to mention this to anybody—in the pure style of Louis XIV or out of it.

MAXIMO. But she was the first to run and tell everybody. And the very first person that she told was her husband!

EUDOXIA. Is it possible? What did he say?

MAXIMO. I don't know. But as we have awarded him all the medals and decorations already....

EUDOXIA. The music! The tableaux are about to begin .... Come with me! Give out that you were present; that will mitigate it, if anything will. What will the Prince of Suavia think? What will the special ambassadors think? A Court which is so correct....

DUCHESS. Look, your Highness!

EUDOXIA. No, I do not care to see!

DUCHESS. What, your Highness? Duke Alexander and a group of officers leaving the entertainment.... He is cultivating his popularity. Have you noticed that he has scarcely spoken to the Princess Constanza during the entire evening?

EUDOXIA. An evidence of his taste. Constanza is devot-

ing the evening exclusively to the Prince. They have all their lives for themselves.

DUCHESS. Perhaps the realization of that fact is already destroying the halo of their romance. There may never have been anything to it but its impossibility.

EUDOXIA. Oh, dear no! How cynical!

DUCHESS. Look! Princess Constanza and Prince Albert leaving the performance——

EUDOXIA. With a second group?

DUCHESS. No, by themselves.

EUDOXIA. Ah! Better follow them. These couples alarm me. Duchess, you were right, I have been too tolerant. All the barriers of etiquette are too few to arrest this wave of democracy which threatens to engulf us all.

DUCHESS. Can I believe my eyes? I saw a chamberlain this very minute chuck a maid under the chin in a window of the left wing!

MAXIMO. Too bad! They are all ugly. He has desisted by this time.

They go out.

PRINCE SILVIO *and the* AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA *enter.*

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. Your Highness forgets that the most favored nation clause does not extend to all of our products. My Government is dissatisfied. An alliance with Suavia follows naturally upon the marriage of a prince of that country with a princess of Alfania, but it can be counteracted by a vigorous demonstration of the friendly relations which already exist between us. Your Highness should consult the Suavian papers. Favoring, as your Highness does, intercourse between Alfania and Franconia, it might be possible to interest his Majesty....

SILVIO. Have you consulted the President?

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. Your Highness, the present Government is the tool of Suavia. I am opposing its influence tactfully, as you know, at personal sacrifice. The situation has became ominous——

SILVIO. I beg your pardon, is that Prince Albert? Yes.... I cannot be certain without my monocle.

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. You have not lost it?

SILVIO. No, I am retaining it as a souvenir.

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. Very gracious of your Highness, very....

PRINCESS CONSTANZA, PRINCESS FELICIA, *and* PRINCE ALBERT *enter.*

FELICIA. Oh, Silvio! I was inquiring for you.

SILVIO. How about those tableaux?

FELICIA. Absolutely *ratés.* It is stupid even to mention them. Fancy inflicting us with the National Theatre, that retreat for pensioned ruins! Prince Albert will carry away a pallid idea of our art.

ALBERT. Official theatres afflict us in all countries where boredom has become official. Frivolous theatres do not afflict princes, a sactresses are the principal attraction, and princes know actresses too well.

CONSTANZA. The princes of Suavia have never enjoyed that reputation—at least, if they have, it has not come to our ears.

ALBERT. No, I was jesting. We are judicious, excessively judicious.

FELICIA. So are we, aren't we, Silvio? The Ambassador of Franconia is smiling....

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. No, indeed. I was merely diverted by the agreeable familiarities of your Highnesses.

SILVIO. Do they amuse you? Really? In a republic....

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. Naturally, we are more cir-

cumspect. In a democracy, your Highness, where all men are equal, maintaining one's distance becomes a prime necessity.

FELICIA. [*To* PRINCE SILVIO] You dance the cotillon with me.

SILVIO. Good! [*To the* AMBASSADOR] There is the President. A little reciprocity might interest him.

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. We are including his Majesty.

SILVIO. No, hardly....

AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA. My wife will co-operate whenever she has the opportunity.

PRINCESS FELICIA, PRINCE SILVIO, *and the* AMBASSADOR OF FRANCONIA *go out.* PRINCE ALBERT *and the* PRINCESS CONSTANZA *remain alone.*

ALBERT. I was told of your relations with Duke Alexander a long time ago. We have excellent ambassadors who inform us of everything. In fact, I was the first to suggest the arrangement, which, afterward, the Government of Alfania proposed to us. Naturally, I was interested in your romance, as I was the one who had interrupted it so rudely. Prince Michael is still young. He will soon marry, and then the problem of the succession will be solved. I scarcely feel that a renunciation of the throne upon your part has been a sacrifice.

CONSTANZA. Especially as I am not ambitious.

ALBERT. Ah, I cannot believe that!

CONSTANZA. Why? Do you think that I aspire to be Queen?

ALBERT. You aspire to be a great deal more. You aspire to be happy. Is not that to be very ambitious?

CONSTANZA. I suppose it is; yes. Surely you do not mean to imply that I have no right to be happy?

ALBERT. Oh, my revolutionary Princess! What? Talk-

ing about rights like a people in rebellion? And, like a people in rebellion, expecting to obtain happiness through agitation and turmoil, and means which are purely external!

CONSTANZA. You must have a very strange idea of me. Do I seem to you like one of those romantic princesses you have read about in novels?

ALBERT. No, my Princess, you seem to me just like one more foolish, deluded young woman.

CONSTANZA. In what way? Don't you think that Duke Alexander is worthy of my love?

ALBERT. It is not for us to consider whether others are worthy of our love. We have only to consider whether our hearts are capable of loving worthily. A princess, as you are, a queen, as you may become, you would not invite a sovereign to your palace without first preparing a royal welcome. And if the palace were ready and prepared to receive him, would it not still be a royal palace, although the expected king never came? So we ought to make ready whatever is necessary for happiness in our hearts, although the expected happiness may never come.

CONSTANZA. I did not expect to meet a philosopher in you. I thought that breed of princes had become extinct. Is philosophy the national sport in Suavia?

ALBERT. I come from a country all barracks and all universities, where war is science and science war. We are all soldiers there in one great national army. That is the reason we are prosperous and strong.

CONSTANZA. But are there no deserters from your army, from this rule of discipline and iron?

ALBERT. Oh, yes! Some foolish and some wise men. We suppress the first, or lock them up. The others we banish, and give them to the world that it may admire them. Then, when the story of their achievements is brought home to

our ears, we feel that they are ours again. They are another glory of our country.

CONSTANZA. Do you expect me to believe that, in Suavia, a prince cannot dispose of his heart freely?

ALBERT. Of course he can. You see how I have disposed of mine.

Constanza. Ah! Then you were in love with my sister without knowing her?

ALBERT. I knew myself first. I knew that I was capable of loving her.

CONSTANZA. And does your heart feel sure that it can answer also for hers?

ALBERT. Who anticipates by offering has no fear of being robbed.

CONSTANZA. What sublime confidence you must have in yourself!

ALBERT. In whom should we have confidence if not in ourselves?

CONSTANZA. I have always had confidence in myself.

ALBERT. You ought not to have too much confidence when you put the search for happiness before yourself. When we are sure that we deserve happiness, we do not rush out to meet it, nor run excitedly after it. We await it without impatience, confident that it will come.

CONSTANZA. But if it delays in coming?

ALBERT. It never delays when we await it faithfully. It always delays when we have set our hearts upon a delusion and an idle show.

CONSTANZA. But you don't think that I am in that position? What an idea you must have of me! Now, you see, I am consulting the philosopher.

ALBERT. Philosopher? Oh, no! My philosophy is very simple—to accept my position in life with all its obligations,

to realize that only by fulfilling them completely, that is, of my own free will, can I be happy; that in this way, and this way only, can we, in our unreal station, become the equals of other men who have not been born princes. You must not think that this has cost me no trouble. The government of oneself is a most difficult matter, but when once it is achieved, what splendid liberty! The day that each of us becomes a tyrant over himself, that day all men will become free, without revolutions and without laws.

CONSTANZA. It is easy to see that you have never been in love.

ALBERT. Only with what is worthy of being loved. That is the reason I believe I am worthy of being loved myself.

CONSTANZA. Then, I wonder what you think of me?

ALBERT. I think that this pretty little head has been playing traitor to your heart, that you expect everything of others without ever having learned to expect anything of yourself. My little Princess of Dreams, you have let your heart mount up into your eyes and look out, instead of turning your eyes in, to look down, deep down to your heart.

CONSTANZA. But I am only looking at my heart.

ALBERT. It is too late. There is another image in it already, which distorts everything. You say it is love. What if it should turn out to be only a caprice, a passing fancy that this love, perhaps, may liberate you from the dull round of a princess's life, its governesses and its tutors, the weary ceremonial of the Court, and the continual menace of a marriage for reasons of state? My little Princess of the Foolish Dreams, why did you not learn to wait?

CONSTANZA. What is that? Do you wish me to believe that you.... No, it is impossible! Or, otherwise, you are more of a dreamer than I.

ALBERT. Do you doubt it? I was not looking for love;

it was enough for me to offer it. I had my duty, first, as a prince, which was a certainty, love afterward, perhaps, which was a possibility.

CONSTANZA. But do you really believe that duty can be transformed into love?

ALBERT. Alas for you, my poor princess, when love dies, if you do not find in duty the one reality that is!

CONSTANZA. But I should never consider love to be a duty. That is why I refuse to accept a marriage for reasons of state.

ALBERT. Then you ought never to marry. You ought to be satisfied with love. Why encumber love with laws, if we are to obey no other laws than love?

CONSTANZA. You carry your philosophy too far.

ALBERT. The truth never frightens me; it does you. It is easy to see it. You do not think it discreditable to you as a princess to marry Duke Alexander, but to live with him openly, gladly, you think would be discreditable to you as a woman. You see how the conventions of society always hem us round. And if one of them, no matter what our rank and station, in spite of our efforts, must always unite us to this social chain—which would weigh too heavily upon us all, if each of us did not bear the burden of the links which fall to his lot—why not accept them all as the mere conventions which they are?

CONSTANZA. I do not abdicate my rank as princess by marrying Duke Alexander.

ALBERT. You abdicate your duty—the duty of sacrificing yourself to it. A foolish duty, perhaps, false, conventional if you will, but at least no more false nor conventional than your rank and your titles.

CONSTANZA. Prince Albert, it is not so easy to convince the heart. And you have not spoken to my heart.

ALBERT. Because I had no right to deceive you. I know, too, how one speaks to the heart. But my heart has no right to speak now. It no longer belongs to me.

CONSTANZA. O happy, happy sister, to have conquered it so soon! Oh, these philosophers who accommodate their hearts so easily to their heads! How did you do it? A little while ago, and you were saying to me: "Little Princess of the Foolish Dreams, why did you not learn to wait?" And, now, you are the one who cannot wait!

ALBERT. Oh, Princess, do not exercise the power of your fascinations upon me! I know already that you are a woman. We must each go his own way—you, gazing up into the sky, to suspend a question-mark from every star; I forward, resolutely, my eyes straight ahead, for I have succeeded in making every one of my steps an affirmation—and these with which I now separate myself from you, perhaps the most decisive of my life.

DUKE ALEXANDER *enters.*

ALEXANDER. The cotillon is waiting.

ALBERT. Yes, and so is Constanza. She has sacrificed herself long enough listening to me.

ALEXANDER. Oh, no sacrifice! What else had she to do? I trust you will be present at the manœuvres of my regiment to-morrow. The organization will delight you, although I am permitted absolutely no initiative. However, I have been able to enforce discipline. We have suffered an epidemic of feeble war ministers, but, now, with the support of the official element, of the younger set, who are eager for reform.... I am anxious to consult your Highness....

ALBERT. Whenever you like.

ALEXANDER. I am told that in Suavia....

ALBERT. Pardon—we are forgetting the Princess.

ALEXANDER. Are you coming, Constanza? What! Gazing up at the stars?

ALBERT. Questioning them?

CONSTANZA. Perhaps. Little Princess of the Foolish Dreams, why did you not learn to wait?

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

Cabinet in the Royal Palace. The private apartments of the KING.

The KING *and the* PRESIDENT *in consultation.*

PRESIDENT. I cannot advise your Majesty upon questions of Court etiquette. There must be precedents.

KING. Clearly, but I do not remember any. No unequal marriages have taken place in the royal family during my reign.

PRESIDENT. Pardon, your Majesty: Prince Henry Gustavus and the Countess of Rosemburg.

KING. Who? No, they were never married.

PRESIDENT. Quite so. My mistake....

KING. Manners were much more severe in those days. Had they been married, they could not have appeared at Court.

PRESIDENT. The Countess of Rosemburg's nobility, so to speak, was scarcely as legitimate as Duke Alexander's, nor had Prince Henry the excuse of youth in his favor when.... when it seemed as if he had been married. He did not inspire the same sympathy as the Princess Constanza. Your Majesty has noticed how popular the match is. Without having anticipated it, we have executed a *coup* of far-sighted diplomacy. All parties are satisfied. The public is an overgrown child, your Majesty. A princess insists upon marrying to please herself, without the slightest regard for the wishes of others, yet it is hailed by the people as a triumph of democracy, whereas, rightly considered, it should appear quite the opposite.

KING. Mr. President, since the arrival of Prince Albert, the Court has suffered an epidemic of philosophy. Whatever subject the Prince converses upon, immediately acquires philosophic importance.

PRESIDENT. Prince Albert is impressive philosophically.

KING. Yes, he reminds me of that King James of England who was called The Pedant—unjustly in his case, however. Confidentially, my dear niece may be congratulated upon her deliverance. Princess Felicia, on the other hand, is wholly frivolous. The Prince's arguments will provide her with a continual source of amusement. I had been told that Suavia was a country of philosophers, but I had no idea that its princes had fallen victim to the mania. It is inconsistent with their military training.

PRESIDENT. I am unable to agree with your Majesty. There must be some good in this philosophy since they have become the first soldiers of the world in spite of it. And they are about to become the first people commercially. The two things seem wholly incompatible, and so, no doubt, they are, thanks to this very philosophy which your Majesty is pleased to take so lightly.

KING. Lightly? In what respect? In my opinion everything is sufficiently explained by itself, without the necessity of further explanations, confusing the mind with vague theory.

PRESIDENT. Can anything be more practical than theory? I should advise your Majesty to prefer a people which dreams to a people which sleeps.

KING. What did I tell you? Suavia is too much for us.

PRESIDENT. Certainly the superiority does not lie in force of arms. Now your Majesty must admit that philosophy is not so useless.

PRINCE MAXIMO *enters.*

KING. Enter, my dear Maximo.

MAXIMO. Am I intruding upon grave deliberations, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT. How is your Highness?

MAXIMO. More animated to-day, thank you. I am on a new diet.

PRESIDENT. Ah! Have they hit upon your disease?

MAXIMO. No, not upon the disease; but I have hit upon a remedy.

KING. What remedy?

MAXIMO. An entirely new preparation—extract of kangaroo meat, imported from Australia. Really, the kangaroo is a most remarkable animal. It is wonderful with what leaps and bounds science is advancing in these days, a truly astonishing spectacle. I am making rapid progress already.

KING. But how is it that you are not dressed? Shall you not attend the dinner?

MAXIMO. Impossible—with my diet.

KING. Yes, your diet consists in skipping the Court ceremonies. You are too active for your own good.

MAXIMO. I resent the aspersion. How can you call me an egotist and pay no attention to me? My death will convince you.

KING. Enough of your infirmities, which would be ridiculous if they were not so convenient. The Prince has not studied in Suavia, yet he has acquired this most practical of all philosophies: to behave so that everybody will be obliged to take notice of him, so that he will never be obliged to take notice of anybody.

MAXIMO. What horrible misrepresentation!—when I only summon courage to go on living because of you. If it were not for leaving you....

KING. Yes, live upon our account. Do! We are en-

tangled in a troublesome question of etiquette. You may be able to enlighten us.

MAXIMO. In what way?

KING. How are the guests to be seated at the dinner this evening in honor of Prince Albert and of the betrothal of our nieces? There is no difficulty about the Prince, but what is to be done with Duke Alexander? Shall we concede him a place of honor already, or must he occupy, as formerly, an inconspicuous position at the farther end of the table?

PRESIDENT. Officially, he is a fiancé, but he is no more as yet officially. The situation is a delicate one.

KING. Do you recall any precedent? When Princess Carolina Alexandra accepted attentions from a colonel without title of nobility—as a matter of fact, she afterward did marry him——

MAXIMO. But that was no precedent. The Princess remained at home and dined alone with the Colonel.

KING. Yes; like you, she had her diet.

MAXIMO. In my opinion, in exceptional cases everything ought to be exceptional. Seat the lovers as closely together as possible, or, if it seems advisable, slip some venerable lady in waiting in between. If she receives a stray tap, or is trampled on in the interchange, no harm will be done. It might rejuvenate her.

KING. The matter is not so simple; I am consulting the President.

MAXIMO. I hardly imagine that there would be constitutional complications. However, you might ask Eudoxia. She will be here directly; she merely stopped to dress. She is an authority upon etiquette; I never could understand it myself. Besides, I have an idea that it is of no great consequence whether or not Constanza sits near Duke Alexander.

KING. You may explain that remark.

MAXIMO. Everybody has noticed it. Duke Alexander takes the rôle of prince a great deal more seriously than he does that of lover. Love is all well enough, you know, becoming a prince—that is a fact, by the way—but Constanza, whether she is infatuated with Prince Albert, or for some other reason, and the Prince, for the very same reason, or otherwise because he wants to get even with Constanza for having rejected him—coquetry is no monopoly of women—well, they are always together; they make no attempt to dissimulate. Constanza is sad and the Prince is joyful, while there stands Duke Alexander, for all the world like a husband already, without having the faintest conception of what is going on.

KING. But that cannot be. It is impossible!

MAXIMO. Anything can be, anything is possible. You said the same thing when we discovered that our niece was in love with Duke Alexander and intended to marry him: "It cannot be, it is impossible!" I don't know two more thoroughly discredited expressions. We go to all this trouble to regulate the world, and here is the world all the while quietly regulating us.

KING. Do you ask me to believe that Constanza, now, through a fresh caprice, is determined to undo everything that she has just undone?

MAXIMO. Exactly. Don't you see? She has undone it once, so now to undo it again will be precisely the same as it would have been if she had done it the first time.

KING. But do you know this to be a fact, or is it mere idle chatter, Court gossip? I am not surprised that Constanza should be affable to the Prince. She rejected him, and now she is removing the disagreeable impression. As for Duke Alexander, his taking himself seriously should be a matter of general congratulation. I confess I thought him some-

what unstable, frivolous. But during the recent manœuvres in honor of the Prince, his regiment has been a model of bearing and deportment. He is preparing a monograph upon our military organization; he cultivates the favor of distinguished officials, and busies himself with new and extended plans. All this should be a satisfaction to Constanza.

MAXIMO. Ah, you know very little about women! Constanza loved him because he was a lover, she loved him while he was a lover, and she loved to see him humble, a little in the shade. You have only been loved out of vanity. What do you know of love as a man? You know it as a king. When have you felt the greater satisfaction—while visiting the Court of some monarch more powerful than yourself, whose very courtesy conveyed a consciousness of his superiority, or while sitting here at home in your cabinet, at the very summit of your power, pardoning some condemned criminal, as you have a right to do, the basest, the most despicable of your subjects?

KING. No doubt....

MAXIMO. True love is like a king; it does not rule the world for nothing. A king enjoys himself most when he is most like a king. It is easy to hate those to whom we owe anything, yet, however ungrateful they may be, we always regard with a certain interest persons who owe us anything. The very fact of their ingratitude makes our charity more real. I should consider man the most extraordinary creature in the world if it were not for woman.

KING. How does this justify our niece in changing her mind in two days?

MAXIMO. Mr. President, how long does it take a politician to change his mind?

PRESIDENT. Highness!

MAXIMO. We all know that it is not very long, though it

might be invidious to cite examples. If a politician is in such a hurry, what must be the plight of a lover!

KING. If Constanza imagines that she will dictate to us a second time....

PRESIDENT. To speak plainly, everybody has a right to do one foolish thing; to make an exhibition of oneself once, and to insist upon it may seem like decision, like force of character. But to do it more than once is to have neither decision nor character. Consistency is a virtue, even when one is in the wrong.

MAXIMO. Now I understand the principle upon which you select your ministers.

PRINCESS EUDOXIA *enters.*

MAXIMO. Eudoxia, we were growing impatient.

EUDOXIA. Well, it is a miracle that I was able to come. Congratulations....

PRESIDENT. Highness!

KING. What has happened?

MAXIMO. Something serious?

EUDOXIA. One of those horrid automobiles almost overturned my victoria.

MAXIMO. Do you hear, Mr. President? The Princess was almost overturned in her victoria. How is it that the traffic regulations cannot be enforced more efficiently?

PRESIDENT. I shall speak to the chief of police. Fortunately, the shock was slight....

MAXIMO. Yes, but she is so nervous, poor woman, that she transmits it immediately to me.

EUDOXIA. I regret exceedingly to have kept you waiting.

MAXIMO. We are entangled in a problem of etiquette.

KING. No, I am no longer interested in etiquette. I am interested in verifying your suspicions. They are more important.

EUDOXIA. What suspicions?

PRESIDENT. Your Majesty and your Highnesses desire to to confer alone....

KING. No, this is of public interest. Imagine the complications if our niece should have her way a second time!

EUDOXIA. What do you say? You alarm me.

KING. Maximo has noticed—and if he has noticed it, it must be so——

EUDOXIA. What has he noticed?

KING. Constanza ignores Duke Alexander. On the other hand, she flirts with Prince Albert....

EUDOXIA. Oh, Maximo! Such observation is unworthy of you. We have all noticed it, but surely nobody else has given it such an interpretation. Flirting?.... No, indeed! Making herself agreeable. Constanza is removing the impression that was so unfavorable.

KING. Yes, I appreciate that. But this affability, this assiduity, ought not to be manifested in a direction altogether contrary to her fiancé.

EUDOXIA. Contrary? Why not? It proves her warmth of heart. They are so sure of each other's affection that they are not obliged to offer demonstrations in public, as others are, without the obligation.

KING. What do you mean? This passes comprehension.

EUDOXIA. I mean that Maximo has not the slightest idea of what he is talking about, as usual.

MAXIMO. Thanks.

EUDOXIA. Formerly, he was merely apprehensive about himself, but now he has become so about other people. I am confident that if a single word of what he suspects were true, he would never have noticed the first thing about it.

MAXIMO. I consider that observation unwarranted.

EUDOXIA. It is particularly apt.

KING. No doubt. It takes a woman to understand the ways of other women. Nevertheless, Maximo's observations merely confirm my own. Constanza and the Prince are always together; they seek each other, they find each other. On the other hand, Felicia avoids the Prince, and he her—naturally; they are engaged. But this was not the arrangement. It is sufficiently incorrect. Neither is Duke Alexander in an altogether graceful position. Now I attribute significance to a remark which the Ambassador of Suavia made yesterday, to which at the time I attached no importance whatever.

EUDOXIA. What remark?

KING. I don't remember. Only I know that it meant nothing to me yesterday, and it means a great deal to-day.... Ah, yes! Now I remember: "Ambassadors are superfluous to Franconia; they do it with ambassadresses."

MAXIMO. Oh, no, my dear brother. That remark had a wholly different connection.

KING. It might have meant that a whim of our niece's had overturned our diplomacy once, and that it was about to do so again. But no! Never! I shall not consent.

EUDOXIA. What singular confusion! What groundless alarm! [*To* MAXIMO] This is all your fault.

KING. The proper course is to summon Constanza and to demand at once a frank explanation of her conduct.

EUDOXIA. That will be embarrassing.

KING. No, my dear Eudoxia; frankly, I am disturbed. A woman's heart is not listed among the securities. Constanza is a spoiled child. You have all connived at and encouraged her exactions.

EUDOXIA. I? Never!

MAXIMO. I never have.

KING. When I discovered it—of course after everybody

else—it was too late to oppose her. Public opinion was already on her side. My Government advised the obvious measures, a settlement was arrived at, satisfactory to all parties, and the Government of Suavia assented to it when, clearly, it had been impossible that they should do so. And now, because Prince Albert does not happen to be the monster she had imagined—why, his name could not even be mentioned in her presence without reducing her to tears—now, because he is charming, distinguished, polite, what we knew all the time, what we had no right to expect; and now that Duke Alexander is no longer a piping troubadour, who does nothing but sing about love, now that he has become dignified, that he is proving to be worthy of the exalted station to which he has been called, now we are asked to submit to this silly little princess a second time and to dangle again at her fingertips, as if we were the precious dolls she used to play with in her nursery, and which she threw away, I dare say, not so many days ago!

EUDOXIA. What incoherence! What extravagance! This paroxysm has completely upset me. And this on top of my victoria! I must talk with Constanza. Maximo, bring her to me. Not one word of what we fear! I shall insinuate myself into her confidence. There is no cause for alarm. We wrong Constanza. One cannot change like this in two days. A woman cannot forget, she cannot fall in love so quickly. I wonder where men obtain their ideas of women? Call Constanza.... Leave her to me; I shall deal with her alone. She will open her heart freely.

MAXIMO *goes out.*

EUDOXIA. I cannot imagine why you ever paid any attention to Maximo. You know what he is.

KING. Yes, but I also know my niece. Would it really surprise you if she had fallen in love with the Prince?

EUDOXIA. Surprise me? Quite the opposite! Only I didn't want to say so before Maximo.

KING. I may safely leave her in your hands. You know what to do; you are a woman. But if it should be true, remember.... make her understand!

EUDOXIA. Rely upon me. I shall reprove her severely.

The KING *and the* PRESIDENT *go out.*

PRINCESS CONSTANZA *enters.*

CONSTANZA. Maximo tells me that you wish to see me. Shall I sit down?

EUDOXIA. Oh, my dear.... Why? Did he say anything?

CONSTANZA. No.

EUDOXIA. Perhaps it is as well. He is indiscreet, habitually. My dear, come here by me, and let us have a nice heart to heart talk together, like two good friends.

CONSTANZA. Are there such things? You surprise me.

EUDOXIA. You are right there. Women's friendships are like international alliances—of more annoyance to others than benefit to themselves.

CONSTANZA. Are you planning to annoy some one?

EUDOXIA. No, not at present. I.... Now promise to be absolutely sincere. You know I have always been on your side. I am not easily shocked, like the Duchess of Berlandia.

CONSTANZA. Shall I tell you what you are going to say? I have just left the Duchess, who was horrified, naturally. Everybody thinks I am in love with Prince Albert.

EUDOXIA. Apparently it is the universal subject of conversation. Maximo was right!

CONSTANZA. They say I am already tired of Duke Alexander. I scarcely speak to him, while, on the other hand, I never go anywhere without the Prince. We are inseparable.

EUDOXIA. Yes, that is it exactly. But assuming this to

be so—not that it surprises me, not that I am shocked in the least, oh, dear no! But don't you see, assuming this to be so....

CONSTANZA. It will be the end of the world, will it not? Of our petty, insignificant little world?

EUDOXIA. Now you do begin to shock me! Constanza, open your heart, confess freely. I know the sincerity of your feelings while they last—they are absolutely sincere. I see you on the road to unhappiness.

CONSTANZA. Oh, no, indeed you do not! I have had my way once, and I shall have it again.

EUDOXIA. Now you do shock me! Oh, oh.... It is true then? You do love the Prince?

CONSTANZA. I don't know. It might help to discuss the matter. I may gain a more definite idea of what my impressions have been since I first talked to the Prince without matrimonial preoccupations. Primarily, he seemed to me thoroughly satisfied with himself, as if he alone had come into possession of the riddle of existence. Everything was foreseen, everything was regulated in accordance with some preconceived plan, as if he had had some sort of digest or set of encyclopædias read to him before he was born. He was a trifle ponderous, perhaps, in a word rectilinear, one of those persons who always move in a right line—you have surely met them—obedient to the categorical imperative. This philosophical terminology, of which I suppose I have as yet a superficial idea, occurs to my mind naturally when speaking of him, as being associated with his person, which might more properly be said to be a symbol—the symbol of duty. You understand, of course, that nobody can fall in love with an abstraction?

EUDOXIA. Of course. But this, this—what you were speaking of—this self-satisfaction, is nothing more than lack

of knowledge of the world. It is the way they bring up princes in Suavia, a nation half barracks, half university.... A year in Paris would cure him of all this intellectual excelsior. I can see that he is not sympathetic to you.

CONSTANZA. But have you never felt, in the presence of one of these inflexible, these haughty spirits, which are, or which seem to themselves to be, superior to all emotion, a premonition that, perhaps, he may have a weakness? However little of a woman you may be—and I am a great deal of a woman—you are possessed with an irresistible desire to rise up and subdue him.

EUDOXIA. Now I understand, I understand you perfectly! Samson's hair is always a welcome trophy. But tell me—not so loud—somebody may be listening, one can never be sure. Tell me.... You have been flirting horribly?

CONSTANZA. Not half as much as he has.

EUDOXIA. Ah! You needn't tell me. Our philosopher is getting even for having been rejected! And in this new rôle, tell me—you have no idea how these confidences amuse me—you find him quite a different person?

CONSTANZA. No, he is more serious than ever when he makes love. He is so persuasive!

EUDOXIA. Oh, what a little diplomacy will accomplish nowadays!

CONSTANZA. No, Eudoxia, no; not yet. It is only a dream!

EUDOXIA. Another dream, you mean.

CONSTANZA. I am very unhappy!

EUDOXIA. Constanza!

CONSTANZA. Nobody ever thinks of me! How could I tell whether I loved a prince who came from a great way off, to whom I had never spoken more than once or twice in my life?

EUDOXIA. Who could tell if you couldn't? You could tell whether you loved Duke Alexander.

CONSTANZA. How could I tell whether I loved Duke Alexander?

EUDOXIA. That's so. You couldn't tell.

CONSTANZA. How can I tell anything? What do I know?

EUDOXIA. She is right.

CONSTANZA. And now they intend to marry me in spite of it!

EUDOXIA. What do you say? You never had any other idea.

CONSTANZA. I have an idea that Duke Alexander has changed. He is complacent, he is impertinent! All he thinks of is the public welfare, of being the people's idol, the hero of the army.... He never thinks of me. He talks about tactics and strategy, the social problem. Oh! It is intolerable!

EUDOXIA. Constanza!

CONSTANZA. He never talked about anything but me, he never thought of anything but me. Everybody said he was crazy! At Court he passed for a lunatic, a fool. He was completely insignificant. That is how I came to fall in love with him....

EUDOXIA. I am unable to congratulate you upon your reason. We all prefer him as he is.

CONSTANZA. Yes! You! Other people! And all he thinks about is other people, he never considers me. And he is not a prince yet! He hasn't been clever enough to dissimulate. He imagines by this time that he is doing me a favor to marry me; he is laying his popular laurels at my feet. In a little while he will believe that he is the savior of his country. He is so sure of his own importance that it never even occurs to him to be jealous of the Prince, and you may

well believe that I have given him occasion. I redouble my efforts before him, but nothing happens; he imagines that I am behaving like a princess. For I am nothing but a princess to him! Was it worth my while to go to all this trouble to convince him of it?

EUDOXIA. I see that I shall be unable to offer you advice. It would be superfluous.

CONSTANZA. And now they say that it is I who have changed! I am a silly, unstable girl, one of those princesses without sense, without judgment, who don't know what they want, when I am....when I am the same always!

EUDOXIA. And there you are!

CONSTANZA. Was it worth while to renounce the throne upon his account, when he is planning already to have himself proclaimed king?

EUDOXIA. What wasted effort!

CONSTANZA. He will do anything, anything rather than consider me. I do not count....

EUDOXIA. Silence! Here he comes with Maximo. Constanza, control yourself.

PRINCE MAXIMO *and* DUKE ALEXANDER *enter.*

ALEXANDER. Highness!

EUDOXIA. Duke!

MAXIMO. Constanza, I am bringing Duke Alexander. Yes, my dear Alexander, he does not know how I love him—as I love you, as I love everybody. I may be indiscreet——

EUDOXIA. You most certainly are.

MAXIMO. My intention was to promote rather than to prevent—a maxim of all good government, whether national or domestic—to undo, if possible, misunderstanding, all *mal entendu* between you.

ALEXANDER. The Prince informs me that an impression prevails that a coolness has arisen between us. I have noticed

it only upon your part. Apparently, however, it has occasioned comment at Court. I should like to learn from you directly whether it is mere gossip, or whether there has been any foundation for it in my conduct.

CONSTANZA. Do you hear?

MAXIMO. Discuss the matter freely among yourselves.

CONSTANZA. It is not I, it is Alexander who should be asked for an explanation—unless a man may not only change his mind nowadays, but his entire behavior and character with utter irresponsibility.

ALEXANDER. I? I have changed?

CONSTANZA. Do you hear?

EUDOXIA. Pardon me. My dear Duke, naturally you have no idea how I love you. Men in general have very inadequate notions about women....

MAXIMO. Eudoxia, enough of this psychology.

EUDOXIA. Silence! It isn't his fault. Some women can be won only through their vanity. When they are truly loved, that is to say for something other than their money, their intelligence, their social position, their persons, their charm, then it is difficult for them to say why they are loved.

MAXIMO. It would not be easy.

EUDOXIA. You believe that a woman's love is in exact proportion to the merits of the man. How unfortunate an hallucination!

MAXIMO. Oh, shades of Molière and his Learned Women!

EUDOXIA. True love is the inheritance of the poor. Great men can be reached only through their vanity, and, thanks to their vanity, they do not realize that they have been reached. To be loved it is not necessary to deserve it—surely you have learned that, Duke Alexander. What Constanza loved was the lover, and great lovers have never been great heroes nor great geniuses. Such men are above love. Romeo

was an insignificant whippersnapper without a particle of common sense.

ALEXANDER. And Juliet was a pampered idiot, if possible with even less.

CONSTANZA. Oh! Did you hear that?

ALEXANDER. I appreciate the subtlety of your allusions, although I am not sure that Constanza will recognize that they are intended to be ironical. I understand very readily how the Princess could fall in love with me, or respond to my love, without merit upon my part. I should have imagined, however, that she would have been grateful for an effort to show that, as a matter of fact, there really has been some justification for her conduct.

CONSTANZA. To show others! Yes! Other people! Everybody else! I.... I.... What do I amount to?

ALEXANDER. You amount to enough for me not to be willing to have you appear like a spoiled infant in public, an infant infatuated with me without the slightest realization of my merit.

CONSTANZA. An infant! Oh! Did you hear? He said it twice. Duke, I will not permit you to talk like that.

ALEXANDER. Shall we conduct a scene before your relatives, and indulge in recriminations which, in good taste, should be kept to ourselves?

CONSTANZA. Alexander!

ALEXANDER. Love is a game to you, a sport, a cotillon figure, in which you decide by the favors with whom you dance next.

CONSTANZA. Oh!

ALEXANDER. If it were in your power to change your mind a second time....

CONSTANZA. Yes, if—you are so confident of that if! But you forget that it is in my power. And it will be easier for

me to take back the Crown, I can tell you, than it ever was for me to give it up! A great deal easier!

EUDOXIA. Constanza!

MAXIMO. Yes, a great deal easier. Don't argue with her. Let it rest.

ALEXANDER. By all means; let it rest. If I were the only one to be considered.... Bah! I release her, I release the Princess Constanza from her word.

MAXIMO. Duke!

CONSTANZA. And I take it back!

ALEXANDER. To-morrow I leave Alfania. [*Rushes out.*

EUDOXIA. But this is preposterous!

MAXIMO. But, my dear....I don't understand. It is out of the question.

CONSTANZA. Did you hear what he said? Can such insolence be? Such impertinence? If I could tolerate it, I should have to forget myself first!

EUDOXIA. Oh! Oh! But think of the awful position in which this places us! When the King hears.... And the Prince! And the Ambassadors!

MAXIMO. It cannot be. It is impossible.

CONSTANZA. I am calmer now. A great weight has been lifted from my mind. I should never have believed that all my doubts could have flown away so quickly.

MAXIMO. Doubts did you say? If you would only once make up your mind to a certainty!

EUDOXIA. I run to find the Duke. Not a word of this to anybody—especially not to the Duchess of Berlandia.

[EUDOXIA *goes out.*

MAXIMO. I run to find the King. You never stopped to think! You were insulting, cruel. Reflect....consider.... This will create as much scandal as a divorce—yes, more scandal, for there is always some explanation for a divorce.

But this engagement—people will never believe that you were the one who broke it off, that you did it of your own free will! They will insist that it was a trick of the Government's, a Court plot to deceive the country. The halo of popularity which has hovered above our heads will be dissolved. No man can predict the consequences. The throne itself is in danger!

CONSTANZA. What do I care about the throne? What do I care about anybody? I shall tell them all that it was I.... I did it!

MAXIMO. Yes, and they will be likely to believe you! Shout it down the streets! Who would suppose that we had listened to you, that we let you have your way? Even if they did, this is no game of puss-in-the-corner, and to-day you marry the Prince and the Duke marries Felicia—with the dignitaries of two nations standing by applauding the spectacle!

The DUCHESS OF BERLANDIA *enters.*

CONSTANZA. The Duchess....

MAXIMO. Duchess!

DUCHESS. Not a word! Don't speak to me! I was summoned half-dressed. I am distraught....

MAXIMO. Duchess, this is the time for you to exert your authority.

DUCHESS. Pardon me.... It is terrible! Oh, I was taken aback! The Princess Eudoxia....

MAXIMO. Pardon me.... Don't disturb yourself. I think I can straighten that feather.

DUCHESS. Thanks.... When I heard that Duke Alexander had forgotten himself, that he had refused to marry her....

MAXIMO. No, no!

CONSTANZA. Yes, yes! He did!

DUCHESS. What did I tell you? This will put an end to unequal marriages. You might have become another *Grande Mademoiselle*. My poor, dear Princess! Permit me to unbosom myself.... Nobody knows how I feel....

CONSTANZA. Duchess, I should have been very unhappy!

DUCHESS. Very, very unhappy!

MAXIMO. Oh, oh! I never expected to be present at such a spectacle! Instead of making her realize her predicament, instead of picturing the situation she is in.... Oh! You, who have always been so sensitive that nothing could shock you, apparently, now, you think that this is a proper thing to do!

DUCHESS. I think nothing is proper, nothing is improper—I stop at nothing. The happiness of my beloved Princess is the only consideration with me!

CONSTANZA. Duchess, you are very good and kind to say so. Nobody else has sacrificed so much for me.

MAXIMO. Oh! You are mad, all mad! Where now is your solicitude for the dignity of the Kingdom, propriety, decorum? Now, when they are actually in jeopardy....

DUCHESS. Jeopardy? Your Highness, that aigrette.... You have a vigilant eye. Alas, poor, dear Princess!

MAXIMO. I must warn the King. No——

The KING *and the* PRESIDENT *enter.*

MAXIMO. He is here.

KING. Duchess, the Princess Constanza will remain in these apartments. She will speak with no one until our further command.

CONSTANZA. A prison?

KING. A padded cell.

CONSTANZA. He talks as if I were a lunatic. Oh, Duchess, my soul!

DUCHESS. Oh, Princess whom I adore!

KING. Maximo, summon Duke Alexander. Constanza wishes to apologize for her imprudent words.

CONSTANZA. Oh! No I do not!

KING. Yes, you do. Duchess, you may retire to the next room.

The DUCHESS *and* PRINCE MAXIMO *withdraw.*

KING. Mr. President, address the Princess.

PRESIDENT. I repeat what your Majesty has already heard me say. My Government cannot accept the risks to which not only it but the person of your Majesty will be exposed, should the Princess Constanza decline to marry Duke Alexander. It is not a political match; on the contrary, it is highly impolitic. An acute crisis has been averted by yielding to what, at the time, appeared to be an irresistible inclination on the part of the Princess. But for the friendly cooperation of the Court and Government of Suavia in facilitating an alliance, we should have been exposed to a disastrous conflagration, given the volatile nature of the elements with which we had to deal, the jealousies and suspicions of intercourse, the growing competition for the markets of trade.

KING. Hear!

PRESIDENT. I repeat, this marriage is not a political match, it is a marriage for love. For that very reason it has attracted attention, exciting the sympathy of the people, as has been manifested in a thousand demonstrations of popular applause—applause absolutely spontaneous and sincere, as I am assured by the detective office.

KING. Hear!

PRESIDENT. Who now shall instil into the hearts of the people, this overgrown child, this great romantic——

KING. Good! Hear!

PRESIDENT. The conviction that this has not all been a

plot to defraud it? Matters which, ordinarily, are susceptible of simple explanation, in higher spheres appear strange and incomprehensible. The Government could afford, the Crown could afford to hazard prestige once to gratify the whims and caprices of your Highness, assured in their position by unanimous popular support, but they cannot, they will not hazard it a second time in the absence of such support. We cannot explain, your Highness cannot explain at the bar of opinion what we cannot explain to ourselves. Remember, it is your duty as Princess to preserve the peace, to contribute to prosperity. The population of this great land looks to you. But it is unnecessary to remind you of it. Love of family glows warm in your heart. No more——

KING. Good! I have nothing to add upon my part. You will marry Duke Alexander.

CONSTANZA. Oh!

KING. Or be declared insane, which, in my opinion, is the only rational explanation of your conduct.

PRINCE MAXIMO *and* PRINCE SILVIO *enter.*

MAXIMO. Duke Alexander is nowhere to be found. Silvio saw him leave the Palace.

SILVIO. Yes, I intended to speak, but the Ambassadress of Suavia, who happened to be conversing with me at the moment....

KING. Ah, that reminds me! The Ambassadress of Franconia——

SILVIO. No, the Ambassadress of Suavia.

KING. I thought you said....force of habit! The reformation, when begun, shall be complete!

MAXIMO. It wasn't Silvio's fault; don't be too hard on him. The Ambassadress of Suavia is so deucedly patriotic that she is determined to have a little reciprocity herself, on

the terms that we enjoy with Franconia. Silvio has scarcely a free moment....

KING. Ah! So she is the one now?

MAXIMO. One or the other. Silvio ran immediately in search of the Duke. It is no longer a secret. The Ambassador of Franconia is a lynx except where his personal affairs are concerned; he is so jealous of Suavia that he has probably telegraphed his Government already. This complication comes as an unexpected relief.

SILVIO. Constanza, I am here.

CONSTANZA. I must see Prince Albert. Quickly!

PRINCESS EUDOXIA *enters.*

EUDOXIA. Oh, scandalous! It is only half an hour until dinner! The guests are arriving already. Duke Alexander is nowhere to be found.... The Ambassador of Suavia is in conference with Prince Albert.... The Ambassador of Franconia is in a corner with the Ambassadress of Suavia. Felicia has heard all and wanders about in tears asking whom she is to marry next? We must find the Duke.... We must not let one word of what has taken place be known! We must keep calm! And you, my dear niece, must keep more calm and more cool than the rest! What are you doing, Silvio? Run and find the Duke. And you, too, Maximo! Leave Constanza to me; she will listen to my advice. Mr. President, receive the guests.... Deny the rumors, tranquillize the Ambassador of Suavia. Give me a vote of confidence!

KING. Good! We shall. If Constanza has not recovered her reason within half an hour, the physicians will proceed with their diagnosis.

All but EUDOXIA *and the* PRINCESS CONSTANZA *go out.*

EUDOXIA. Think what is happening to you! You are

losing your mind! Constanza! My child.... Can't you speak? Can't you hear me?

CONSTANZA. They have suggested it themselves. It is the best I can do. I shall pretend I am mad. But my madness shall consist in this—in not saying a word, in remaining silent. Now you can see how unhappy I am. Because I am a Princess I am not allowed to change my mind. I must marry a man I do not even know, who is not of my own class, a vulgar upstart, a tin soldier, I must apologize to him and give him satisfaction. No, never! Never such humiliation! Confinement first, martyrdom, anything.... Felicia can marry the Prince if she wants to—that will be my sacrifice. I can sacrifice myself, too, for others, but sacrifice myself for myself—no! Never! The very idea is ridiculous! Let them all be happy, if they can, in spite of me—with the terrible remorse of having caused my unhappiness!

EUDOXIA. Oh! Oh! If you go on like this, the doctors will be right after all!

PRINCE SILVIO *re-enters.*

SILVIO. Eudoxia!——

EUDOXIA. What is it? I am all upset. What a day! When I left the house, a motor came for me—and there I sat beside myself in my victoria! What day is to-day? I am not superstitious, but it has been a nasty day!

SILVIO. Felicia was asking for you. She is waiting with Duke Alexander.

EUDOXIA. Ah!.... You did find him, then?

SILVIO. No, I didn't. Felicia called him up on the telephone. They are crying.

EUDOXIA. I fly. These tears alarm me!

EUDOXIA *goes out.*

SILVIO. It isn't true that they have found the Duke, but Felicia promised to keep her talking. Do you know, people

seem to gravitate to you naturally? The Prince will be here directly.

CONSTANZA. Thank you, Silvio.

SILVIO. The Ambassadress of Franconia will co-operate. She is a curious creature. I believe the woman is dangerous; she pries into everything. If I hadn't been of a cautious disposition.... Why, all through the manœuvres, she did nothing but ask me questions. She insisted upon knowing the details of our organization. She has such an infernal habit of interrupting with questions. It is terrible! Terrifying! Another man in my place would have quit.

CONSTANZA. But the Prince....?

SILVIO. Really, Constanza, is it true? Has the Prince fallen in love with you?

CONSTANZA. Ah! Is that what they say?

SILVIO. Or that you have fallen in love with the Prince. It is the same thing.

CONSTANZA. No, it is not the same thing.

SILVIO. It is as far as I am concerned; it suits me either way. I have always had a theory that a man could love more than once, that he could love often, and yet love just the same, that the human heart is the only true republic.... Hush! Yes, here he is.... I had better signal. Is there any one near?

CONSTANZA. The Duchess, my keeper. But look!.... She has fallen fast asleep.

SILVIO. I'll warn you of any danger. If I whistle a waltz....

CONSTANZA. I shall not retreat.

SILVIO. You needn't say I am not good to you. Class spirit, eh? The class which does not consider fidelity to be a virtue. It runs in the family.... [*He goes out.*

PRINCE ALBERT *enters.*

CONSTANZA. Albert!

ALBERT. The King is waiting with Duke Alexander.

CONSTANZA. He has permitted himself to be found, has he? I imagined that he had run out and committed suicide.

ALBERT. No, fortunately. You wished to see me, so I hurried at once to come. It will be my privilege to lead you to him by the hand, like this—like a spoiled child who has promised to be good.

CONSTANZA. You! You lead me?

ALBERT. Yes, I. Who could do it more tenderly?

CONSTANZA. Prince Albert, we are trifling with our hearts.

ALBERT. Is there any other way of cajoling capricious children than by diverting them with toys? Would you have learned to understand me if I had not spoken to your heart? I knew how to make myself loved, in order, afterward, to make myself obeyed. Isn't it true, my revolutionary Princess?—you of your own ideas and your own ways, you who are determined to live your own life like a heroine out of Ibsen? But you have not learned yet that all tyrannies end at last in a revolution, and that all revolutions are ended by a tyrant. Which do you think I am, the revolution or the tyrant?

CONSTANZA. I don't know and I don't care. I don't know whether I love you or whether I hate you. I only know that you have ruined my life.

ALBERT. Then I must be the revolution.

CONSTANZA. I know that the very thought of you was hateful to me before I came to know you. I looked upon you as an obstacle to my happiness. When I found that I was free from you, for the first time in my life I felt that I was fortunate. You seemed to me a ridiculous pedant. You talked to me about duties, about sacrifice, about satisfaction of the soul. I laughed as I listened to you, yet,

somehow, in spite of myself, you made me listen. I found that I was growing serious. Then, I began to wonder whether all those solemn lessons were intended to make me love the truth, or to make me love you.

ALBERT. Neither. Their origin was somewhat different. I loved you.

CONSTANZA. Since when? Without knowing me.

ALBERT. Since they first destined you to be my bride. My life had been careless and free. Then, one day, a prince's duty was exacted of me, and I accepted it willingly, without questioning the reason. The friendship of two nations was dependent upon me, perhaps the peace and welfare of two great peoples. From that moment, my mind was illumined by the idea of duty more than it was by your beauty, that, afterward, our common lives together as princes might be illumined by it, of which I had allowed myself to dream.

CONSTANZA. And that life was....?

ALBERT. Not the one of which you were dreaming meanwhile. It was not to wander by ourselves apart, absorbed in our love down the pathway of beautiful flowers which leads to the ivory tower of our imaginings, it was to march along the common highway in the dust and heat, with the lowly and the poor who sap their lives in toil, that we the great ones of the earth, may flourish, and they will pardon us in their humility if they know that our compassion has not forgotten their suffering, such is the bond of pity. It was to embroider with the rare, exotic flowers of our gardens the fields of misery and pain, it was so to live that they should not see in our luxury the insolent ostentation of our vanity, but employment for their hands, bread for their mouths, brightness and joy for their tired and weary eyes; that our culture might not become the selfish toy of our leisure, but the holy instrument of truth, so that our laws might be

made more just, our science more far-seeing and more human, our art more beautiful and pure. It was to live for the common good and love of all, so that all might come in the end to love us.

CONSTANZA. And you dreamed all this—with me?

ALBERT. Your image was the faintest part of my dream.

CONSTANZA. So that it faded out most easily. It was simple for you to change it.

ALBERT. I owed fidelity only to my dream. The Court and Government of Suavia wished to break off the negotiations when they learned that you had refused to accept me. I was the one who first suggested the marriage with Princess Felicia, which your Government would never have dared to do. It was not right that the friendship of two peoples should depend upon the whim of one princess.

CONSTANZA. Do you really believe that we signify so much?

ALBERT. We know very well that we do not. But if we are to signify anything, it will never be by avoiding sacrifice, but by accepting it. The people do not comprehend ideals unless they see them personified. All the treaties and conventions in the world could never give them the same assurance as our marriage.

CONSTANZA. I refuse to believe it. You saw how the people sympathized with me because I insisted upon having my way.

ALBERT. Yes, instinctively. A rebellion upon our part furnishes an excellent excuse for one upon theirs. As soon as we see them turn threateningly upon us, we become indignant, we inveigh against the guilty, without first stopping to inquire who the guilty really are. It is free speech, it is social unrest, it is the newspaper, books, the lack of religious belief, and we fail to see that the match which ignited the conflagration was in all probability some foolish indulgence

of our selfishness as princes; we believed ourselves insignificant, and we set the example of rebellion. Of what use is it to rebel? You see now. You were unwilling to sacrifice yourself to the duties of your rank with the dignity becoming a princess, and now you are obliged to sacrifice yourself to them without dignity, like a poor, misguided woman.

PRINCESS FELICIA *enters.*

FELICIA. Constanza, the King is waiting with Duke Alexander. What has happened will be forgotten, but if you refuse to obey.... Ah, dear sister, if I could only sacrifice myself a second time! But it is impossible.

CONSTANZA. It would be a real sacrifice this time. You love him dearly.

FELICIA. Will you be happy?

ALBERT. Now she may very easily become so. When I was a boy, they gave me a book of fables to read, on which they bring up princes in Suavia, and, in one of them, there was a beautiful princess who sighed so continually after happiness, that her good fairy promised that it should always go with her, if she could once succeed in recognizing it as it passed by her side. And, like beautiful fairies, riches, pleasure, power, glory all passed by, and the Princess thought that they were all the expected happiness, and none of them were. And an old woman passed by, of ruinous aspect, who, with the eyes and appearance of one who had wept much, yet smiled—there could be no doubt of it—very sweetly. "Who are you?" the Princess asked. "If you follow me, you will learn my true name." And the Princess set out and followed her down hard and stony ways, until at last the old woman changed her ruinous aspect into the greatest beauty in the imaginable world. "You are happiness!" "No, happiness does not exist. I am sacrifice....but of all the appearances which take on the form of happiness, I am the most real."

All the others re-enter and remain standing at the rear. The KING *comes forward with* DUKE ALEXANDER.

KING. Constanza, I trust that the indisposition has passed?

ALBERT. She has recovered, happily.

ALEXANDER. Constanza, forgive me. I shall be the man that you loved again.

CONSTANZA. No, forgive me. Be the man that you ought.

ALBERT. And do not forget the fable. It is the best doctrine for princes and princesses, and superior spirits who shine in the high places and believe themselves above this social harmony and scheme, which are impossible without the sacrifice of all. It only ceases to be sacrifice when it is love.

Curtain

A LADY

DRAMATIC NOVEL IN THREE ACTS

First Presented at the Teatro del Centro, Madrid,
on the Evening of the Second of January, 1920

CHARACTERS

Elisa
Doña Susurrito
A Maid
Rosa
Ángeles
Antonia
The Portress
First and Second Women
Don Manolo
Enrique
Feo
Proprietor of a Café
A Waiter
Two Men
Servant

A LADY

THE FIRST ACT

An attractively furnished apartment.
A MAID *enters with* DON MANOLO.

MAID. Walk in, walk in, Sr.—— Sr.——?

DON MANOLO. Don Manolo. Call me Don Manolo. How can you know my name when nobody calls me anything but Don Manolo?

MAID. I might have said Don Manuel, I suppose—if I had thought. I don't know what is the matter with me.

DON MANOLO. All you could think of was Don Manolo; I am no more and no less than Don Manolo, not even Don Manolito. Well, how is she to-day?

MAID. Well.

DON MANOLO. Well and charming.

MAID. I never saw her look more beautiful, sir.

DON MANOLO. But isn't she at home? I am surprised. She scarcely ever goes out, especially not in the mornings.

MAID. She never did last year while we were in Madrid—that is, almost never. But Doña Barbarita is home. I'll call her—if you say so.

DON MANOLO. If she is to be seen, to pass the time of day. She can tell me about the summer, and the reason for your unexpected return. You never did come back so early.

MAID. No, never before the end of October, but day before yesterday the señorita got a letter, and the minute she opened it she said we had to start right back to Madrid, so here we are. We got in this morning. The first thing she did was

ask me to go to your house and tell you she was here, and that she wanted to see you immediately.

DON MANOLO. She can't say that I have lost any time in coming, either, which is contrary to my habits. Such hours for me are unheard of. I can't find my way about the streets, I bump into everybody; the morning light dazzles. Run along now and tell Susurrito—I might say Doña Barbarita, I suppose. Nobody calls her anything but Susurrito.

MAID. Excuse me. [*Goes out.*

SUSURRITO *enters a few moments later.*

SUSURRITO. Dear Don Manolo!

DON MANOLO. My dear Susurrito——

SUSURRITO. I knew it! You came at once.

DON MANOLO. As soon as I received Elisa's message.

SUSURRITO. Did you ever in your life hear of anything so unexpected? I might ask you to sit down....

DON MANOLO. This is entirely unexpected.

SUSURRITO. The quiet, the country air, to be sure, did me good, although I was better, naturally, but now the shock—dear me!

DON MANOLO. Shock? What shock?

SUSURRITO. Don't you know?

DON MANOLO. Not a word.

SUSURRITO. Why, I thought Madrid was full of it?

DON MANOLO. San Sebastián may have been full, but in the summer, you know, Madrid is not in Madrid; it goes somewhere. But you make me anxious. What shock?

SUSURRITO. Oh, really I don't know whether I ought to tell you, or wait for Elisa. You'll hear soon enough, anyway. Since she supposes you know, probably she wants to tell you herself; that is the reason she sent for you. It wouldn't be right for me to say anything first. Poor Elisa! She'll never get over it.

DON MANOLO. Over what? It sounds awful.

SUSURRITO. Oh, Don Manolo, you are a dear old friend, but men are men! They are selfish, they are centred upon themselves, all they think about is their own advantage. You wouldn't believe such a thing possible. Enrique is going to get married.

DON MANOLO. Enrique going to get married?

SUSURRITO. Better whisper. The servants are dying to hear, though I dare say they know, anyhow. All the same, it wouldn't be right to have them hear it from me. Yes, Enrique is going to get married. I had heard talk, of course, but I never believed it—I'd be ashamed to be the first to believe such a thing—although Enrique is the sort of person of whom you could believe anything. Poor Elisa was entirely innocent. He was so loving and affectionate she never suspected till the last minute; that is the way with all deceivers, although I can't say he ever deceived me.... What do you think? It's Utrillo's daughter.

DON MANOLO. No! Utrillo's daughter?

SUSURRITO. Are you surprised? They have money, they're in society. Enrique has made up his mind to get on in politics, he wants to be Minister; and he will be.

DON MANOLO. Yes, bedrooms open conveniently enough into council chambers.

SUSURRITO. I know. Elisa is in the way now, so it's time to get rid of her. He forgets that he owes everything he is to her. She ruined herself for him, and lost every friend that she had. As long as her husband was alive, and, afterward, when she was a widow, you know yourself how well Elisa was thought of—that is, until this talk began about Enrique. When the thing became conspicuous, people just dropped her. Now Elisa doesn't know anybody but men; no woman comes near her. I needn't tell you what I've been through, and the friendships I've lost trying to stand up for her. But

what could I do? Elisa is all the world to me, and now that she is ruined, poor thing, for she hasn't one penny——

DON MANOLO. You don't mean it?

SUSURRITO. No, not one penny. Soon we'll be living on my pension, and that won't last us long. So no wonder I am worried.

DON MANOLO. But I don't understand. I can't believe it.

SUSURRITO. Yes, not one penny. Last winter things took a turn for the worse while we were here in Madrid. Nobody had any idea, not even Elisa's most intimate friends—you didn't, for instance, and you know all about us; but that was just like her. She doesn't want to make other people unhappy. She never thinks of herself. Look at what she did for me. She's been more than a friend, than a sister. I never thought the day would ever come when I would be able to do anything for her. It has, though, more's the pity!

DON MANOLO. Poor Elisa! Why, I had no idea——

SUSURRITO. I had; I saw it coming. Elisa wasn't as rich as people thought. She was so generous, so extravagant, they took it for granted she was a millionaire. You saw how we lived in this house. Everybody was welcome, and she could have afforded it, too, but Enrique—Enrique cost her money. He spent a fortune last election; and then there was that newspaper he had to subsidize, so as to keep before the public. He nearly lamed himself running around Madrid making friends, and getting himself received by the aristocracy. There was so much you had to overlook about that man that nobody ever overlooks except for money. But it didn't discourage him; he was equal to it. Now the poor woman who sacrificed everything she had for his sake is simply nothing. Elisa doesn't deserve such ingratitude.

DON MANOLO. She certainly does not. Elisa made him.

SUSURRITO. When he came to Madrid, all he brought with him was the weather, and a letter to Elisa from one of her husband's relatives—I may be exaggerating at that. I never saw trousers bag so at the knees, though he was well set up; he was pleasant, too, and a good talker. Poor Elisa, after what she had been through with her husband, lost her head over him, and it wasn't long before her case was hopeless. She could have married him then if she had wanted to; the man would have jumped at the chance. To have married Elisa then would have been beyond his wildest dreams, but Elisa wouldn't hear to it, she was too sensitive, too sentimental. "I am too old for him," she used to say. "He is a boy. I could never be the love of his life. Some day I will love him in a different way. He will be happier with some other woman." And she really thought so, she deceived herself. Love is all play-acting. You think you are equal to any sacrifice, that you are willing to grovel in the dust——

DON MANOLO. Caramba, Susurrito! You must have been in love yourself.

SUSURRITO. I? Hardly. I never met any man who was good enough. Besides, who would fall in love with me? I read, though; I keep my eyes open. It's terrible for Elisa; it means the wreck of her life. Poor Elisa!

DON MANOLO. When did she hear?

SUSURRITO. Yesterday, by a mere accident, a piece of carelessness. She made up her mind to come straight to Madrid, and we got in this morning. No sooner had she set foot in the house, than she went out again, very early. I don't know, I suppose I oughtn't to worry.... She may do something desperate.

DON MANOLO. Is Enrique in Madrid?

SUSURRITO. Yes, and so is the other woman. She didn't go away this summer. Elisa may have gone there and have

made a scene. But what good will that do? A woman like that will swallow anything. She must know all about Enrique and Elisa—why, the thing was public property. All she wants is to get married. I hear she's a fright, and common, too, which is worse. I don't see how you men can stand it. Take care now!—here comes Elisa. Unless she tells, don't say anything. She'll tell you, though—I know she wants to talk. You are one of the best friends she ever had.

DON MANOLO. That, certainly, is no mistake.

ELISA *enters.*

DON MANOLO. Well, Elisa! I am glad to see you.

ELISA. You know, don't you? I know you do. I can't bear it.

SUSURRITO. What is the matter? Where have you been?

ELISA. Don't come near me! Don't ask! It's more than I can bear.

DON MANOLO. Come, come, Elisa!

ELISA. Susurrito has told you. You know. It is infamous! Contemptible!

SUSURRITO. Elisa, you mustn't take it so hard. What did you do? Where did you go?

ELISA. Can't you guess? I saw them, I talked to them; I said everything there was to be said. Now they can't make the excuse they don't know what they are doing.

SUSURRITO. But, Elisa, how could you? Don't you see it only makes it worse?

ELISA. What do I care? Could anything be worse than such treachery? To abandon me like that! I expected it—I did often. I always knew this was going to happen, and I thought I was resigned to it. It had to be! But, now, I can't resign myself, I don't resign myself. A woman thinks she deceives her heart, but her heart never deceives her. He was my whole life! I loved him. I loved him with my whole

soul—I love him now! I do love him! That is the only real thing about it—it's as real as his treachery, his deceit.

DON MANOLO. Don't excite yourself. Even if it should be true, Enrique can't forget what he owes you. This is no time to give up; there are plenty of ways to fight back. Other women have come between you before now, to try to take him away, yet you have always been successful in the end.

ELISA. I was able to fight then, to win. Now I haven't the heart to make the attempt. What could I do? I am not young, I am not beautiful any more, and I am poor, miserably poor. I can't appeal to his interest, and I know perfectly well what to expect from his heart.

SUSURRITO. Ah, you ought to know! Enrique never had any heart. All roads look alike to him, so long as they take him where he is going. Those who are in the way can lie down, and be driven over.

DON MANOLO. Yes, men of iron, I suppose we should call them. I don't know whether such men are to be pitied or envied. I was never able to understand them; probably that is why I don't admire them. It has always seemed to me so good to be good. It is more comfortable, anyhow. Come, Elisa; now be sensible. Of course your feelings get the better of you, you can think of nothing else, but there is another side to the matter, which is more pressing, and in the long run, more important. I am a man of the world, and a bit of a sceptic; I have had experience of life. Susurrito tells me—and what you have just said confirms it—you have lost everything, you haven't one penny. Am I right?

ELISA. Yes, everything; I am ruined. It is want, absolute want!

SUSURRITO. Hardly that. I may not have much, but whatever I have is yours. We'll get along somehow, and live. Others live upon less.

ELISA. Thanks. But it doesn't matter; I don't want to live. What have I to live for, whatever way I may live?

DON MANOLO. Perhaps I can answer that question. If it doesn't matter to you, it does to your friends, who are all fond of you. And you know it. If there is anything I can do—but what can I? You will not doubt that I am sincere. You understand my position, the falsity of my life —this typical life of Madrid, a miracle which would be impossible in any other country. There must be some justification for calling this the City of Miracles. The life which I lead presupposes an income of thousands. I dine well, I go to the theatre, I ride in autos and taxis, I am invited out to festivities and entertainments without number; I have credit even for adventures, which it goes without saying must prove expensive. Yet, the reality of my life is a mere pittance, not enough to keep me in the most wretched of boarding-houses. The miracle is this marvellous hospitality of Madrid, the one place in the world where a man has only to make himself agreeable in order to enjoy all the benefits of a large income. Elisa, your house was my fortune; I gloried in it—although I don't want you to suppose that my regrets are purely selfish. However, there are plenty of ways to recover. You have excellent friends. Not all of them are hangers-on, parasites like I am. I can go to them. I can demand, if it becomes necessary. Certainly, you have one friend who will stand by in the hour of need.

ELISA. Nothing can be done; don't deceive yourself. It is all gone; I am ruined. I couldn't accept what I shall never be able to repay. Not of any man!—much less of him, if that is what you mean. You only accept when it is love.

SUSURRITO. That is how he accepted it.

DON MANOLO. He is not going to desert you like this.

ELISA. All I asked was his love; I had it, it was real! I

want no lies from him now out of pity, or because he thinks it is his duty to lie.

SUSURRITO. Elisa, it frightens me to see you there so still; it frightens me more when you give way. I know you, and I am afraid. What are you thinking of? What are you going to do?

ELISA. I wonder. Thinking of? I don't think. I don't admit what I think; I am not awake. My heart fights against sorrow, it protects itself; I must have time to convince myself that my sorrow is real. Why, it seems to me now that it must all be a lie! Here I sit expecting him; he is going to walk in at any moment. He must know by this time that I have been there, he must know that I know, and he will come, yes, he is coming, and the minute I see him I will know that this has all been a lie. One word from him will be enough. "It isn't so, it isn't true!"—that is all. I am not sorry I love him, it isn't that that I mind. What I mind is that I know I shall come to hate him—to hate him! To hate him!——

ENRIQUE *enters.*

SUSURRITO. Elisa!....

ELISA. No, you go! Don't you speak! You go, too....

ENRIQUE. Yes, if you will be so kind. How are you?

DON MANOLO. What?

ENRIQUE. Haven't you the courtesy to be polite?

DON MANOLO. Judge for yourself.

ENRIQUE. Very well.

SUSURRITO *and* DON MANOLO *go out.*

ELISA. Enrique! Enrique! It isn't true! Tell me it isn't true. I will believe every word you say!

ENRIQUE. Let us be calm and talk sensibly. If you can't control yourself to-day, I will come back to-morrow. Nerves

will do us no good, we must talk sensibly. What you have done was foolish, unreasonable.

ELISA. Talk sensibly? Oh, then you will have to do all the talking. I shall sit here and not say one word. I shall look at you, I shall look at you and try to make myself believe that you are the man I know, for I cannot believe it.

ENRIQUE. I am the man, whether or not you believe it. I have kept my head in this emergency, I have done the thinking for us both. I cannot allow you to sacrifice yourself any longer as you have been doing. I intend to save you in spite of yourself. Although you have said nothing, I am familiar with the situation; it has been evident for some time.

ELISA. What do you mean? Oh, no! No! Don't you say that! That excuse makes it worse. I'd rather have believed you hadn't known a thing about it. Now, you are going to tell me that you are sacrificing yourself for me, you are selling yourself on my account, so as to save me. No! Never! Don't you dare to say that!

ENRIQUE. That is precisely what I am doing, though you may not be willing to admit it.

ELISA. It's a lie! You are lying to me. If you loved me, you would never do such a thing. All you would care about would be my love, and we would stand together and fight, we could bear any privation, starvation, even, if it came to that. Yes, because that would have been love; it would have been real. That would have been loving me as I have loved you.

ENRIQUE. In a romantic way, perhaps, that might be all very well, very beautiful, but you would be the one to grow tired of it first. Now calm yourself, Elisa, and think. It is our duty to face the facts, and against the facts we must defend ourselves with other facts. You were just speaking about sacrifice, about standing together. Well, now I am going to

put you to the test. Each of us will have to sacrifice something—what it is, after all, matters very little—so long as it is not our love.

ELISA. What? Say that again. What are you trying to insinuate? That I cannot bring myself to understand?

ENRIQUE. Didn't you always tell me that some day we would love each other in a different way?

ELISA. Yes, I did. And I was right, too, when I said so. You see yourself now that I was right. Did you think that I was looking forward to it? I suppose I never dreaded it in the least? You might as well stab me and then say: "You said you were only living for me." I was—yes, I was! You were all I valued life for, but not to be treated like this, no, not like this. To be cheated, to be betrayed! Not in this sneaking fashion, no.... Kill me with the truth! Tell me that you don't care for me, that the only person that you care for is yourself. Say that I am a burden, a hindrance to your career. If you tell me the truth, then my love may change to hate. You don't want it to turn, do you, to loathing, to disgust?

ENRIQUE. When will it be convenient for me to drop in again?

ELISA. Oh! So you are going, are you? Like this? Like a cur!

ENRIQUE. Elisa!

ELISA. Yes, that is what you are! A deceiver of women! A man who will sell himself is a coward. Ah, you have nothing more to get out of me! I am not able any longer to pay for the lie of your love, so what do you care whether my life is destroyed? Abandon me heartlessly when I have nothing in the world except old age to look forward to, horrible, ugly old age, and poverty, yes, and the scorn of everybody! Oh, to be betrayed by a cur and a coward! Is this what I de-

served of you? Why, I have only lived for your sake! I am the woman who loved you, I loved you....no, I can't, I can't bring myself to say it, I can't say that I loved you—I love you! I love you! I love.... I will always love you, and I forgive you now, and I will forget it all only, only for the sake of one word, one word! Don't leave me, Enrique! Don't you leave me! I will be your slave as I have always been, but don't leave me! Wait, can't you wait? Life flies so fast, the years pass.... In a little while it will all be changed. It won't be so hard; not the same. I will keep on saying to myself over and over every day that it must be, but not yet—not now! I can't bear it! Don't leave me, Enrique!—by all that you love! By your mother, wherever she is! Don't stand there and lie to me! No! Don't you dare! I am nothing to you, nothing, nothing.... Leave me! Get out! Don't try to excuse yourself, don't you lie! I prefer you like this, as you are at this moment, brazen in your selfishness, so that I can learn to hate you more quickly, and then my hate will turn to disgust, and then I shall be done with you—everything will be ended. I may die, I may live, but it will not be my life—it will not be my life unless I love you. Go, go! Leave me!

ENRIQUE. Yes, it will be best. When you recover your self-control, you will look at this very differently.

ELISA. Never! Never! A cur and a deceiver!

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

A very simple room.
DON MANOLO *is calling upon* SUSURRITO.

DON MANOLO. Dying won't help, Susurrito. You are better now. I never saw you look so well before.

SUSURRITO. No, I am not well. I don't like to talk about my troubles, but I feel depressed, low in my mind. My spirit is broken. I have been through so much. Besides, there was Elisa; I had to keep up all the time and pretend to be cheerful, even happy, when I was so weak I hadn't the strength. God knows what I've had to stoop to, because very few of your friends, when you need them, can stand the test. Who comes to see us any more? You, you are the only one; not another soul. We certainly do appreciate it.

DON MANOLO. Yes, people are pretty much as God made them, but Good Lord, it is so easy to be decent! The fact is it is either easy or not done at all. Why, I wouldn't have believed your friends would have deserted you! Think what Elisa's house meant to us. It was home to many a man who never had any other, a real, a genuine home. And the company, too, was so agreeable!

SUSURRITO. Yes, it was. She entertained, she was nice to everybody. People dropped in to supper, to take chocolate, to play a hand of tresillo, perfectly certain all the while that they were never going to be asked for anything. There has been a great change. You don't know what we've been through, or rather what I have, because Elisa, thank God, hasn't any idea but that we have enough for the necessities. She doesn't dream that we are to be put on the street.

DON MANOLO. You are not in earnest?

SUSURRITO. But we are. When I was sick, it was so expensive. You don't know what it cost, you don't know....

DON MANOLO. Upon my word! I can't believe it—no. Poor Elisa! I will see what I can do—yes, and I'll do more. Yet what can I do, what can I? I have nothing, Susurrito. Keeping up appearances only makes it worse. People envy me, they say I am throwing my money away. I am throwing my life away, yes, I am—a little kindness and a little good-nature are expensive luxuries when a man has to live. We must think it over, we must hit on some plan.... Haven't you a friend in the world you can call upon? Don't tell me you have not.

SUSURRITO. Ah, Don Manolo, what haven't I done! Where haven't I been? We couldn't have lived as we have, on my pension alone. I wanted to spare Elisa, to save her. There were so many things she had always had, which seemed nothing before, but which it would have been a terrible hardship for her to have gone without. I did what I could, I did it for her....

DON MANOLO. You are an angel, Susurrito, soft and soothing as your name, Susurrito, which we made up for you when we were so happy, many, many years ago! It is hard to be good like you are. There are good people, and plenty of them—who denies it? I am not such a pessimist—but they are good in such objectionable ways, that at times it is an irritation and at others an offense. Goodness like yours is so much better, like the kind things that you do, soft and soothing, gentle as your name, Susurrito.

SUSURRITO. I don't know whether I am good or not, but I know I am insignificant, because there is so little I can do. I don't mind for myself, but Elisa—Elisa is so good, she has always been so good to everybody. Don't forget what she

did for me. I was alone, and poorer than the poor, and she took me into her house. I owed her everything, yet you would have said that she was accepting a favor of me. She was so kind, so generous. How can I help loving her as I do? How can I help dreading the poverty, the privations which threaten us more for her sake than I do for my own —this miserable coming to less of women who have gone down in the world, and who don't know how, or, rather, who are not able to forget that they were ladies? It is sad, very sad.

DON MANOLO. The more I think it over. . . . I can help, of course, through this emergency to-day, and through the next —a man may not have much but he can manage somehow —but that is not the point. Elisa must be assured some definite means of support, so that you will not come out of one crisis only to find yourselves in another which is worse and more immediate. I don't feel I can talk to Elisa, but I can to you. Why not let me go to Enrique? I haven't seen him since the day I refused to take his hand—but what of it? We pass each other now and then on the street like perfect strangers. But I can go to him, I will make him understand the very real distress that has overtaken Elisa. I am sure that if he really understood. . . . The man can't be so contemptible, so utterly worthless! What do you say? Shall we try? Or are you afraid that Elisa. . . . ? Perhaps he. . . . ?

SUSURRITO. Ah, Don Manolo, I am not afraid! I know.

DON MANOLO. Why? Have you. . . . ?

SUSURRITO. Yes, Don Manolo, I have. Elisa doesn't suspect. God knows what it cost me, but it couldn't be helped. I know as well as you do. I made up my mind long ago that there was no other way. So I wrote to him. He was never any too generous—that is the truth—but I

wrote him a letter, it was a few days ago, and I am going to show you the answer. I want you to see it. Wait.... just wait.... Gracious! What did I do with that letter? I put it where it couldn't possibly be lost, I am sure. With so much on my mind, it might be.... I hope Elisa hasn't picked it up. She was in the room when it came. I tried to look natural, but she may have noticed.... It would be dreadful! He said he wasn't interested; that is what he said. He said he was tired of begging letters.

DON MANOLO. Puppy! Why, the man has no use for half of his money! His father-in-law is a gold mine. Besides, he is headed straight for the cabinet; he is leader of a group already. There may be only twelve in the group, and of course they never do anything but make it unpleasant for others who do; but that is politics. A politician's principal stock in trade nowadays is his nuisance value. Nevertheless, you amaze me.

SUSURRITO. He told me, very politely, that if Elisa should apply herself....yes, he did! He wants her to do it, she must herself....

DON MANOLO. He *is* a gentleman. That man will get on!

SUSURRITO. What did I do with that letter? Where is it? I couldn't have torn it up. It was one of those letters you want to keep always so as to be sure yourself—yes, and so as to convince your friends, if they will believe you—what these people are really like who are so upright and honorable that they are admired in public by all the world to-day.

DON MANOLO. It must be a document! I hear Elisa....

SUSURRITO. Yes, coming from church. At least she has that consolation; it helps with the afternoons. Faith and hope!

ELISA *enters.*

DON MANOLO. Well, Elisa——?

ELISA. I am here.

DON MANOLO. Back from church?

ELISA. Yes, from church. Unless you believe in something, you cannot live. Susurrito, has anybody been in? Who has called to-day?

SUSURRITO. Just our friend. He is the only one who comes to see us any more.

ELISA. Yes, I know. I wish they had all been like him. I was not disappointed in one of them; that is—no, not in him, either. I knew what he was. There is one who loves and one who allows himself to be loved, that is always the way—the fire and the glow, which we try to make ourselves believe is also fire.

DON MANOLO. But that was so long ago! By this time, you scarcely remember that it happened at all.

ELISA. No, no.... I wish I had died when I thought he loved me. I was dreaming, and I should never have waked.

DON MANOLO. Surely you don't mean that you think of him still?

ELISA. No, I think of myself, of what I was when I still believed in him. I try not to think. Well, Don Manolo, you have come to bring us the news. What is going on to-day?

DON MANOLO. I am a poor one to ask; I see nobody. My life, too, has suffered a change.

ELISA. Yes, I know. It has made a great difference to you, too. I have saddened your life, my friend—my dear, my wonderful friend.

DON MANOLO. Your worthless, your good-for-nothing friend. Why not say it?

ELISA. No, if it had not been for you and Susurrito, what would have become of me?

SUSURRITO. Do we have to go into that?

ELISA. I have an account, just the same, to settle with Susurrito.

SUSURRITO. With me?

ELISA. Yes, with you. When we are alone.

SUSURRITO. But you don't mind Don Manolo——?

ELISA. He will not be interested in what I have to say.

DON MANOLO. But you are excusing me—at a time when it isn't convenient for me to go.

ELISA. Don't be angry. Of course I don't mind if you hear what I say. I.... Are you better, Susurrito? Are you stronger now? Promise not to cry or feel badly because of what I am going to say.

SUSURRITO. But what—what is it? You frighten me.

ELISA. You don't know, you don't know what you have done to me.

SUSURRITO. But what have I done?

ELISA. I can't pretend any more, I have tried to say nothing so long! Take your letter. I read it, I read it, I saw what you have done. I know you did it for me, but you ought never to have done it, no, anything rather than that. You ought to have known that anything would have been better—anything! To go to him, to ask him for money.... no, never! Never! I couldn't have forgiven anybody but you. You don't know how you have hurt me.

SUSURRITO. But what else could I do? Don't be angry with me! I feel worse, worse than you. You don't know, you don't know....

ELISA. Yes, I do; want, utter want. But it is better than that. It wouldn't have hurt so much if I hadn't loved him, but in spite of myself, in spite of him, in spite of the horrible things he has done to me, of the degradation of it, I love him, I love him every minute, and if I listened to my heart, I

would go to him now, on my knees, crawling in the dust, and beg him, not for the wretched money for which you were contemptible enough to ask, but for his love, for one look from his eyes—just a crumb! I am ashamed of myself when I think how I feel. I begin to understand how it was he despised me, because I am a brazen, a depraved woman, and his heart turned sick at the shame of me, and he pushed me off. Yes, yes, it was all my fault! I loved him so much that I wanted to humiliate him, I wanted him to owe everything that he had in the world just to me, to be everything in his life—and we were mates. Love that buys and love that sells. Why should I complain? What right have I?

DON MANOLO. Come, Elisa, come. It is foolish to talk like this.

ELISA. He despises me, he despises me with every drop of his blood, which is the way he ought to despise me. That is why he wrote that letter. Why, why did you give him the opportunity?

SUSURRITO. Forgive me, do forgive me! I couldn't bear to see you suffer so. There was no one else to whom I could go. I did it for you, it was for you! And now....oh, Elisa, my darling, do you think that we are poor, living as we do? Do you think this is want, after the way you have lived? It is not want, starvation, not yet. Soon we shall have nothing. We have been told to leave the house, to-day we shall be dispossessed. This poor, shabby furniture no longer belongs to us. How can we ever pay what we owe? It will be real poverty before long, absolute destitution, distress. I don't care for myself, but you, you.... Yes, I know it was wrong! I know it, but, tell me, what else could I do to save us from this?

ELISA. It is awful, awful....

DON MANOLO. And here I sit and don't do one thing! I

am proud of myself, yes, I am. I have thrown my life away; it has been wasted. Ah, it turns my stomach!

SUSURRITO. Elisa, what is the matter? You frighten me, sitting there like that. What is it? Help, help, hold me up, or I can never bear it, I shall not be able to endure it any longer....

ELISA. Poor Susurrito, you have sacrificed yourself for me without one complaint, without a single reproach! Come, forgive me. I have been selfish, I only thought of my love, of what it had been; I hoped, yes, I hoped that perhaps again it might come to be. I was afraid to face the truth. And you have been sacrificing yourself all these years for my sake, to keep the horrible truth of this wretchedness from me!

DON MANOLO. Ah, this is inhuman! I must see, I must do something—what, I don't know. Surely a man must be good for more than this. There is one thing I can do—I have friends, and they were your friends. Friendship cannot be entirely a lie. Is it possible that every one, every single person that called himself your friend, will throw up his hands when he sees me, and say: "You don't mean it! So poor Elisa has lost everything? They have turned her out of the house? She is starving...." And all the while, probably, they are playing poker or tresillo—I have seen it more than once in my experience—and it might be a character in a play or a novel, for all they care, and not a woman who shared all she had with her friends, who trusted to their loyalty, who made them partners in her sorrows and her joys, and to whom they had pledged themselves a thousand times, body and soul, in eternal friendship and service. Oh, what a mockery, what a farce! And I am the worst, the most despicable of them all. I have idled my life away in rich men's houses, and, to-day, at my age, I have

not so much as a miserable hovel in which I can offer you shelter. I have lived as if I had millions, yet now, in the hour of need, I am not able to scrape together a pitiful handful of pesetas. Yet how should I? Money is for the calculators, for cold, designing men, who chatter indifferently over poker or tresillo, and delight in the ruin of their most intimate friends, of the women whose favors they have shared, whose smiles they have won, all the while supreme in the assurance that they have mastered themselves the riddle of existence. "Nothing like that could happen to us." You can see it in their faces. By all that is holy, I may not amount to much, I may be utterly worthless——

ELISA. No, my friend, no; just don't. I know what I ought to do: I must submit, humble my pride. I must forget myself; it is a punishment. I will write to him, yes, I will write to him! Isn't that what he wants? I will do it on my knees——

SUSURRITO. No, Elisa, no! Oh, don't.

ELISA. Yes, I must, I shall! It is life. I must accept it; we have to live. I must be humble. Come, come.... How shall I begin?

DON MANOLO. Poor Elisa!

ELISA. Strange, isn't it? I can't think what to say. Better tell him the truth; be honest.... "Dear sir:...." Do you hear? I feel as if it wasn't he, but a perfect stranger, a stranger. "Dear sir:...." What next? What can I say? Oh, how degrading! No, I can't do it. It is too low, too low! Whatever happens will have to happen. God have mercy on us both! We can beg if we must, but we will do it on the street, of the first passer-by.

DON MANOLO. I can't stand this another minute! You stay here.... I'll be back! [*Rushes out.*

SUSURRITO. Poor man! What can he do? Put it off for

a few days, delay the tragedy that is bound to come. What will we do then, Elisa?

ELISA. Don't cry; you mustn't cry....for my sake! I don't cry. I have no tears any more.

SUSURRITO. That is what frightens me. What are you going to do? Don't look at me like that! I am afraid!

ELISA. Don't be afraid. I am looking life in the face. To face life is to face death.

SUSURRITO. No, don't you talk of dying! No! God will have mercy upon us.

ELISA. Yes, that is what I pray. I am better now. But don't cry, don't you cry. Poor sister—poor, darling little mother, for you are! Now you must be my little girl; I will be the one who takes care of, who protects you. I will fight for us both. I am strong, I can do more than the rest.... I am myself now. But don't cry, don't you cry....

SUSURRITO. I am not crying. It's for you—for you——

ELISA. Yes, you are crying for me—only for me. Why is it that I cannot cry? Why is it? Why am I living to-day?

SUSURRITO. For me!—only for me. I know how you feel. I know what you mean to do—you mean to kill yourself. You are going to leave me!

ELISA. No; no, I am not. Susurrito, my angel! My angel and my saint!

SUSURRITO. Yes, cry....cry with me. I am frightened when you do not cry.

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

A shabby café.
ELISA *is sitting alone when* ROSA *and* ÁNGELES *enter.*

ÁNGELES. Ah, come on in! What's the use of standing in the middle of the street? Looking for more trouble, are you? It won't do any good. The worse you act the worse you'll feel. You can't do a thing with a man but let him alone when he leaves you. He'll come back when you don't want him soon enough. Don't be an ass; let him alone. Come on and sit down. [*Calling the waiter*] Well, what'll it be? I'm talking to you....

ROSA. Me? No, I'm not going to sit down. I can't stay in this place; I've got to see him to-night, and that woman, too. They don't think they can laugh at me, do they?

ÁNGELES. They will just the same. The more you shout the more they'll laugh. Keep away and let them kill each other. He's tired of her by this time and she's tired of him; one's as sick as the other. You're crazy; he beat you, didn't he? Give him three days and he'll be back again.

ROSA. Will you tell me what that man does to me when I see through him as I do, and I've had a good dose of him, too, yet every time I think maybe he's going to leave me.... I can't eat, I can't sleep, I can't lie still all night. All I do is run after him, and follow him all over Madrid; you saw yourself where I ran into them.

ÁNGELES. Yes, a fine row!—nine o'clock in the evening under the clock in the Puerta del Sol. Nobody saw you, of course.

ROSA. Listen! She's pretty well clawed up.

ÁNGELES. A nice job you made of it! Thank Don Remigio, I say, or you'd have spent the night in a cell; they'd have locked you up. Now what? They'll hold you, and if she don't get well in a hurry, you'll be up again before the Judge, that's what.

ROSA. Sooner or later it was bound to come, anyhow. I'll kill them—I'll kill them both!

ÁNGELES. Bring us some coffee.... Take a bite. Come on and eat. You didn't eat any supper.

ROSA. What do I care? I want to die. For God's sake take your hand off me! Let me go, or I'll shout! I know where they are this minute——

ÁNGELES. Don't talk so loud! You can't go. Sit down and keep quiet.

ROSA. To the devil with me if I'm so polite! Why in God's name did I ever meet that man?

ÁNGELES. Shut up! Keep quiet.

ELISA. What's the matter with her?

ÁNGELES. There you are! It's Doña Elisa. How do you do? We haven't seen you for a long time.

ELISA. No, I'm not well; I've been sick. I came to-night because I couldn't help it. They put me out; I'm in the street.

ÁNGELES. God-a-mercy! None of us seems to be safe. Look here, Doña Elisa, not meaning to ask questions, I know you're a lady, I know you've always lived like a lady——

ELISA. A lady? No, I'm a poor woman, just like you—like that one there, crying for her man. When you love like that, the world just isn't anything. We're all women, just women. Tell her not to cry.

ÁNGELES. Haven't you anybody at all to look out for you?

ELISA. Nobody, nobody. Everybody who cared about

me is dead. I went out to the cemetery yesterday. There weren't many—just two; two friends. I feel very sad. I am alone now since they died. I hardly know myself any more. I try to think, and then I think that it's all about some other woman; it isn't I at all. It doesn't matter very much. I often think I am dead. You don't die all at once, you know, you die by degrees; then a day comes when you're not yourself any more. What you cared most about, you don't care for; what hurt you, doesn't hurt; you don't feel the same, you don't think the same, you don't care. You look around and you ask yourself: "Who am I?" I go out and I never think: "Where am I going?" I always think: "What is she going to do?"

ÁNGELES. That talk makes you stop and catch your breath. I could listen to you a whole lot.

ELISA. To me? Why, what is there? Tell her not to cry. What makes her cry? Did your man leave you? Did you love him? I'm sorry for you, then. See what love will do.

ROSA. When you love a man, how can you help loving him with everything that's in you?

ELISA. I know. It's too bad just the same. Some people love—they say they love—and they don't suffer. They love just as much as they think they ought to. Some people can do just what they think is good for them, even with their hearts. I'll love him so much, that will do; I can't afford any more....

ÁNGELES. Maybe she's not a wise old woman!

ELISA. I suppose you think I am old? You'd be surprised if you knew how young I was. It's not years, my child. Wrinkles are just troubles. My face is old.... I might be a hundred!

ROSA. That's no lie. We heard you were rich.

ELISA. Was I? I don't remember; I don't like to think.

I don't know when I was happiest—maybe now, now, because it's all true. To-morrow will be just the same as to-day; now nobody tries to deceive me. A man wants me for what I am....they can see; I'm past deceiving anybody. Nobody could be poorer than I am. You, now what do you want of me? You like to talk to me, to be nice a little now, don't you? You are sorry for me.

ÁNGELES. I say! What you were was good, powerful good; you were too good, that's the reason you are where you are now, eh, lady?

ELISA. I don't know whether I was good.... I loved him. That was wrong. You love a man and you want to do good, and you do wrong. It is very hard to be good.

ROSA. You must have loved him awful much, you must have been through for a man the hell I'am going through with now.

ELISA. Yes, the same as you.... That's why I am so sorry for you. You can yell, though, on the street corners, you can shout what you feel, you can kill him!.... You don't just have to sit still and die of your sorrow....and say nothing.

ROSA. No, that's beyond me, that's certain. Nothing in this world could ever make me keep still.

ELISA. You're a fortunate woman.

ROSA. Go on! You're a lady!

ELISA. You give up so much to be a lady.

ANTONIA *enters.*

ANTONIA. I thought you'd be here.

ÁNGELES. Whoa, Antonia!

ANTONIA. What's this? What's this you've been up to? The town's full of it——

ROSA. Don't blame it on me.

ÁNGELES. Oh, a spat! She was walking like she does

every evening, and out we come from the street by the Post Office into the Puerta del Sol, when what do we do but run plop into him, arm in arm if you please with the other one. No sooner does she lay her eyes on them than she's on top of them like a wild hyena, and God himself couldn't have told which was which.

ANTONIA. They took you up, did they?

ÁNGELES. Did they? Don Remigio was there; that was luck. Now she's looking for another one. I can't grow fast to this chair holding on to her.

ANTONIA. Get out! Don't you know what she is? She's a trouble maker. Don't you mind her. First thing you know, he'll be back again. I saw him a minute ago.

ROSA. You saw him? Alone?

ANTONIA. With a friend; he looked good, too—I mean the one that was with him.

ROSA. Did you say anything?

ANTONIA. What do you think? Can't I talk? Listen! He's outside by the door now, waiting till I tell him it's all right, and you're a fool, too, to take on the way that you do, because he says he don't love the other woman, that's all there is to it, and he never could. It was her fault, anyway, you take it from me. All she does is make other people look bad when they'll let her. Can I tell him to come in?

ROSA. Tell him if he shows his ugly face where I am——

ÁNGELES. You don't hear her, see? All right, tell him; and tell him to come quick.

ANTONIA. Can't she talk? She's the one to tell him.

ROSA. I'll scratch his eyes out.

ÁNGELES. Yes, now when he asks you to forgive him, you won't see him, and ten minutes ago you were clawing round the whole city for a sight of him, aching to get busy.

ANTONIA. It's a cold night to keep a man waiting outside.

ROSA. It won't kill him.

ANTONIA. No, and you'd be the last one who wanted it, either. I can't stay here all night. I'll call him.—Feo! Wart! She's in here.

FEO *enters.*

FEO. How do I look?

ROSA. You're not speaking to me?

FEO. That's no lie.

ROSA. It's no lie when you don't talk. Didn't you swear to God if you ever looked at that trollop again you'd never show your ugly front where I was? Go back and see how she likes it.

FEO. Who is she, anyhow? Don't you know what she is? She's jealous of you, that's all.

ROSA. Yes, jealous of me, so you spend your time with her and hand her what she wants. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, when you know what she is, and how she takes on everybody; no man ever heard yet that she passed up one chance.

FEO. Well, she can do what she likes, do I care? I never lifted a little finger, I'm no fool; I never looked at her. A man can't shut up when he meets a woman on the street, can he, or wherever it is, when she's a friend of his friends?

ROSA. Yes, she is—and of every one of them. Run along now, or she'll cool off waiting. What you'll get won't need any warming over.

FEO. I get it from you, don't I? And there's no sense to it. Ask Antonia.

ANTONIA. She knows.

FEO. Can't you look at a man all night? What's the sense? Buy me a drop, will you? I'm here.

ÁNGELES. No, it's on me to-night. What do you want?

FEO. Take a joke, can't you? Forget it.

ÁNGELES. A joke? Don't make me laugh. Come, let's get out of this and go somewhere that's decent. You, too....

ROSA. Leave me alone, will you? I'm going home.

ANTONIA. You're crazy.

FEO. This'll last us for the rest of the year.

ÁNGELES. You'll give her a sweet chance to forget it. Come along. They're open at No. 47. They'll let us in if they're not. We can have a bite and take a drink. Come on! Don't sour the party. You're dying to look at him and have a good laugh. Stand up, you little hussy, and give him a hug.... Now everybody feels better.

FEO. Silly!

ROSA. I am, am I?

ÁNGELES. How much do we owe?

WAITER. The same. Eh?.... She's asleep.

ÁNGELES. Let her alone, poor old woman. She's no place to sleep. They threw her out. Come, everybody! Good night!

WAITER. Good night!

ROSA. Cover your mouth when you go out. It's cold.

ANTONIA. That's right. Watch him, little pet! Keep your eyes open....

FEO. She won't let me.

ROSA. I won't, won't I?

ÁNGELES. It is cold. Wrap up.

They go out.

WAITER. Hey!

ELISA. Eh?

WAITER. You can't sleep here.

ELISA. I'm not asleep. Where are the girls?

WAITER. They went out. It's time for you, too.

ELISA. Yes, I'm going, I'm going——

WAITER. Where's that money you owe? Three pesetas for three nights. And there's more, too.

ELISA. I'll pay, I'll pay.

WAITER. Yes, next Christmas.

TWO MEN *and* TWO WOMEN *enter.*

FIRST WOMAN. Waiter!

WAITER. Cold night. What will it be?

SECOND WOMAN. Coffee and rolls for four.

FIRST WOMAN. No, bring me a nip of anisette.

WAITER. Yes, lady.

FIRST MAN. Have you the money?

SECOND MAN. Sh! Quiet while we're in here.

FIRST WOMAN. I call that a night!

SECOND MAN. Talk about something else. We'll dip into this later.

SECOND WOMAN. I'll say it's cold.

FIRST WOMAN. Where's that waiter?——

ELISA. Can you tell me the time? As a favor....

FIRST MAN. Twenty minutes to four.

ELISA. Thanks. Waiter, an *aguardiente.*

WAITER. No, not for you. Nothing more.

ELISA. What's the matter? I'll pay.

WAITER. No *aguardiente*— She don't get served. Then she goes to sleep.

ELISA. As a favor. I must....

WAITER. No, and that settles it.

FIRST MAN. Let her have a drop. Why not? I'll pay. Hello, old woman! You're drinking with us.

ELISA. Thanks. Thank you so much.

SECOND MAN. Not a word about this, eh, to Getafe?

FIRST WOMAN. Not a word! We're innocent.

SECOND MAN. Sooner or later he's bound to find out.

SECOND WOMAN. Well, he's been decent, hasn't he?

WAITER. There! She's asleep.... Damn old nuisance!

FIRST WOMAN. Leave her alone, can't you? She don't bother us.

The PORTRESS *enters, bundled up to the ears in a shawl.*

WAITER. What do you want?

PORTRESS. Ah, there she is.... My God, she's asleep!

WAITER. Do you know her?

PORTRESS. I'm the portress of the house where she lived till this afternoon. They put her out. I've been looking for her ever since. Somebody said she used to come here nights. What do you think? A letter came this afternoon, and it must have been important, because a lackey brought it all dressed up, and he said his orders were not to leave it. So after a while he came back, and he's waiting outside now, because he says he has to find out, no matter where she is, and hand her the letter himself. Do you know, it's got money in it? It's manna from heaven for the poor lady! I always said she was a lady. Luck may do any one of us a bad turn some day.... Hello! Wake up, Doña Elisa!

ELISA. Eh? Who?

PORTRESS. It's me, lady, me. You just wait.... Hey, there! [*Calling at the door.*

A SERVANT *enters, wearing an overcoat.*

PORTRESS. This is Doña Elisa.

FIRST WOMAN. Do you hear? Doña Elisa!

SECOND WOMAN. Livery! They're rich....

SERVANT. Doña Elisa? This one?

PORTRESS. Yes, that's her. Why not?

SERVANT. If you say so.... I thought....

PORTRESS. Don't you believe what I'm telling you?

ELISA. What? What's this?.... For me?

PORTRESS. It's a letter, that's all. But something tells me it's the end of all your troubles.

SERVANT. Sign your name, please, on the envelope.

ELISA. What? What?

PORTRESS. Sign your name on the envelope, so they'll know it's been received.

ELISA. This....all this....?

PORTRESS. I say!

FIRST WOMAN. See that?

FIRST MAN. Money!

ELISA. This.... Is this all?

PORTRESS. All, you say?

ELISA. I don't mean the money....no, it's too much. I don't need the money. Just leave the envelope. It's his writing.... Money, money....nothing....money.... money.... [*She falls to the floor, dead.*

PORTRESS. What's the matter? Doña Elisa! Lady!

WAITER. Hello?

FIRST WOMAN. What struck her?

PORTRESS. She's fainted.

SECOND WOMAN. Starving to death. Run quick! Some coffee!

PORTRESS. Wake up, there! Lady!.... She's dead!

WAITER. Let me see.

FIRST WOMAN. You keep out of this.

The PROPRIETOR *of the café enters.*

PROPRIETOR. What's this?

WAITER. She fell off the seat. There she is.... Hello, there! Old woman!

PROPRIETOR. Didn't I tell you not to let her in? See what you've done. Call the police. She's dead. Run!

PORTRESS. She is!....she's cold already. Yes, she's dead! She's dead!

FIRST WOMAN. God! We've got to get out of this!

SECOND WOMAN. Don't lose any time!

PROPRIETOR. Nobody goes! This is a mess. Nobody touches that money! Let it lie.... Lock the door!

FIRST MAN. We're not in this——

FIRST WOMAN. It won't do us any good to get mixed up with the police.

PROPRIETOR. Stay where you are.

SECOND WOMAN. But is she dead?

PORTRESS. Dead as can be.

PROPRIETOR. Did you know her?

PORTRESS. Did I? She was a lady. A lady!

SERVANT. Probably somebody in Madrid. A gentleman gave me that letter at the Casino this afternoon, with the money. They must have been friends once, a long time ago.

SECOND WOMAN. And the poor thing came here to die!

SERVANT. Now I can go and tell him! But this money .... What am I going to do with this money?

PROPRIETOR. Nobody moves! Nobody touches that money! The police have got to see it, and the coroner. The old rag-bag has let me in for a nice fix.

PORTRESS. God-a-mercy! Haven't you any respect for the dead?

PROPRIETOR. Couldn't she go out on the street if she wanted to die?

FIRST WOMAN. So as to oblige you, I suppose?

SERVANT. A nice job to give a man!

SECOND WOMAN. It's worse for her, God knows.

PORTRESS. No, it isn't. She can rest now, and she needs it. Poor Doña Elisa! I always said she was a lady. A lady....! God have mercy on her soul!

Curtain

THE MAGIC OF AN HOUR

DIALOGUE

1892

CHARACTERS

A Merveilleuse
An Incroyable

THE MAGIC OF AN HOUR

A formal drawing-room.

Two porcelain figures standing upon columns are the persons of the play.

As the curtain rises a clock in a distant tower strikes twelve. A clock upon the mantelpiece strikes shortly after.

INCROYABLE. Ah!

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah!....

INCROYABLE Was that a sigh? I am not alone.

MERVEILLEUSE. A groan? I am not alone!

INCROYABLE. Ah, my neighbor! She moves.... The same magic has touched us both. Like me, she stirs to life, of which we have been passive spectators so long. Oh, lovely neighbor! Over there! Can you hear? Can you answer me?

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah! Is it you?

INCROYABLE. What joy! Can you speak? Are you alive, too, like me?

MERVEILLEUSE. Judge for yourself. What supernatural power has touched me to life, I confess I am at a loss to imagine, breathing a soul into me besides, so that I am able to converse intelligently, luminously, and to recall everything that has taken place before me since the day upon which we were fashioned together in the factory at Sèvres.

INCROYABLE. A most singular magic produces a like effect upon me, the cause of which, in spite of all my efforts, I am unable to conjecture. What can it be? A conjunction of

the stars? Or transmigration of souls? Activity of radial light?

MERVEILLEUSE. Peace, pray! And an end to this patter! Shall we squander the few hours this enchantment may endure, cracking our heads in order to discover a reason? Cease your idle prattle and assist me to descend from this pedestal. Surely we were not intended to pass our lives standing on high, like two fools.

INCROYABLE. Who can say? Ideas throng my mind, more deserving, no doubt, of attention than the commonplace objects which flock at my side.

MERVEILLEUSE. Peace! No more of this folly! I burn with a desire to leap and to run; I am brimming over with the fulness of life. Come, climb down from your pedestal, and live a little with me. After all, you are no more and no less than a Sèvres figurine, a poor, ridiculous incroyable, while I am a charming merveilleuse.

INCROYABLE. Ah, mademoiselle! Have a care with your epithets! [*Climbing down from his column*] Ay! But it is difficult. Life is hard. It is an effort even to move.

MERVEILLEUSE. Give me your hand. There.... [*She steps down also.*] What joy! What boundless bliss! To live, to move, to skip, to run!

INCROYABLE. Remember we are porcelain! A shock spells disaster.

MERVEILLEUSE. Less advice, if you please! Porcelain? In your mind are we still porcelain? All this ebullient flood of life, this insatiable longing that stirs in me to know pleasure and joy, to laugh, to see, yes, above everything, to see—to see things that are new and worlds that are strange—surely, it can never all be brought to an end at one blow?

INCROYABLE. Ah!—and forever. Yes, mademoiselle, a still small voice echoes in my ear, and whispers that this en-

chantment cannot last long. Before this night is ended, we shall be again what we were, alas, mute, motionless figures standing upon pedestals, until some rude thrust shatters us into fragments, as it did that negro who smiled at us so good-naturedly with his two rows of shining white teeth, and was swept up not long ago on the opposite side of the room.

MERVEILLEUSE. Why insist upon thoughts that are depressing? However, you need expect no long faces of me. If life is brief, all the more reason for living. Let me have your hand....

INCROYABLE. What are you doing?

MERVEILLEUSE. Singing and skipping around in a ring, like the children, the little ones whom I like best. They are happy and tiny, and as fragile as we.

INCROYABLE. Simple child's play!

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah, I beg your pardon! And were you born a grown man?

INCROYABLE. [*Taking up a book*] A book! I have often wondered what was in a book! I have often marvelled how men could sit for hours and hours, absorbed in the contemplation of this utterly incomprehensible object.

MERVEILLEUSE. [*Looking into a mirror*] I was never able to understand how women could spend hours and hours in rapt attention before this equally incomprehensible piece of glass.

INCROYABLE. [*Looking into the glass also*] A looking-glass!

MERVEILLEUSE. Now I understand! Read—yes, read if you will. No pains were spared in my making. It was an excellent furnace through which I was passed. I am beautiful, more beautiful than any woman I have seen standing before this mirror, admiring herself, coyly adjusting her hair or a jewel. A flower here might add a touch.... [*She takes a flower and places it in her breast*] No, this has the color

.... [*Throwing it away, and taking another*] I don't care for my dress. A change would enhance the effect. My face is fair—I cannot complain of my face; it is lovely. Especially in profile.... I have heard many a woman called beautiful, but not one who could compare with me. My simple friend over there is still reading his book.... I dare say he knows more by this time than that disagreeable old gentleman, who is so ugly, who drops in every evening when supper is served. I might dance, I suppose. I do adore dancing .... [*Singing and dancing*] La, la, la.... I love music and poetry, too. How I do adore music! I wish I could find some poetry. [*Rummaging through the books and selecting one*] Ah! It is a pleasure to read this....for a moment, to pass the time. Quite amusing.... It is brimming over with lovely, with beautiful things. Yes, very beautiful.... Ah, there is too much of it! What shall I do next? I am bored dreadfully. Life is so monotonous! It is tiresome to dance, it is tiresome to read, it is tiresome to look at oneself in the glass, to be smelling forever the perfume of flowers. I might look up at the sky.... [*Throwing open a window, which gives upon a balcony*] The sky is beautiful. It is full of stars, and there I see the moon.... Lovely, it is really.... The stars are like diamonds. A diamond necklace might be becoming, with gems like that big star that is so blue. The moonlight rather flatters me. I could stand here forever, motionless, if it had to be, as my friend over there seems to think, head over ears in his musty old books. [*Looking at him*] Oh, he is yawning, too! Apparently, reading is not the great joy he supposed. Now he is fumbling with the flowers.... What? He is looking at himself out of the corner of one eye in the glass.... He is not having such a wonderful time, either. Hush! Now he is looking up at the sky.... All

he has to do now is to dance, and he will leave off where I began. Ah, my learned friend over there! Monotonous, is it not? Life is empty....

INCROYABLE. Life is beautiful, but we are imprisoned in this miserable room. There are worlds outside, inexhaustible in variety!

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah, my friend, they are all the same! Here, from this balcony, we may see far on every hand. What do we see? Streets which are like this street, lined with houses which are like this house, and in every one of these houses, no doubt, rooms which are like this room, filled with people who are like us, drifting aimlessly, weary of it all, and yearning like us for something better, which needless to say they never will find, either in these rooms, or down the long line of the street, or in the city itself, no, nor in the immensity of the wide world. We had as well stay where we are. We are our own world, and the path of our desires sets out from the heart to the loved one that is near. There the world ends for us. Love which is without an object, and without response, harrows the heart with an infinite longing, as it follows the parallels of the impossible to infinity.

INCROYABLE. Love! Yes, I have stood here upon my pedestal, and I have watched men who have been wretched, unhappy, desperate victims of an unkind fate, outcasts from life, rebellious with discontent, their hands raised against every man, bred to treachery and deceit, devils in crime, cowards in their spites, in their instincts brute beasts, yet in one moment I have seen them transformed, by the magic of an hour, into radiant angels, spirits of light, beautiful even in crime, great in their hours of meanness, luminous with a divine wisdom through all the instincts of the beast.

MERVEILLEUSE. The magic of an hour!

INCROYABLE. The hour of love! All that life yields us in exchange for the sorrows of life. Here we stand, a ridiculous incroyable, a charming merveilleuse, only beginning to live and wearied already of life. We are butterflies fluttering about our brief, our limited space, and what have we found at the last? Emptiness, nothing. If our lives were to cease at this instant, and we to be left standing motionless as before, with only the memory of these few fleeting moments of fictitious existence to remind us of what we were, should we trouble to recall them to eternity? No. Each, by a different path, has come to the same conclusion, to a vague desire, to a longing for something which is not ourselves, and yet which is the breath of living.

MERVEILLEUSE. Now that I feel you near me, I understand you better than when I merely heard you talk. Apart, whatever we did was mere futility, as well as what we thought. All our endeavors were naught but pure weariness, simple fools indeed that we are! Yet here, nestling so close together, we might be the wisest, the kindliest of men. How, indeed, can it be? Out of the weariness of two, springs one diversion!

INCROYABLE. Speak, my darling, speak to me! Tell me all that you have ever felt, all that you have dreamed, since, as a gentle murmur, life first flowed in your veins. How is it possible that we should have been indifferent to each other so long? How could your beauty be reflected from that glass, and yet find no reflection in my eyes?

MERVEILLEUSE. But what was I? All that I did was to repeat what I had seen others do, I thought that was life which lay around me.

INCROYABLE. And did love never draw near? Have you never listened to the words of love?

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah, yes! How many times! I imagined

that love was but another piece of folly, a conversation a little more animated, a little more sprightly than the rest, more amusing as a pastime, as, standing there upon my pedestal, in my satisfaction I looked on. That was all.

INCROYABLE. All? And do you think so still?

MERVEILLEUSE. All? Ah, no! Not now. Now, it is so vital, so real, that it absorbs and fills my life, my love and my own! [*Pointing to the pedestal*] I smiled as I stood there, to see lovers gaze into each other's eyes, and gaze and gaze as we do now, and yet not whisper so much as one word. What amuses the silly children? I used to ask, Now, now.... Oh, look at me, look at me forever as you do now! The spell of this enchantment may be shattered at a sound!

INCROYABLE. Are my eyes more eloquent than my lips, hungry for the splendor of your beauty? They do not wander now, uneasy, avid of the new. You are the beginning and the ending of their world, the far arc of their horizon.

MERVEILLEUSE. Do not come so near! Remember, we are porcelain.

INCROYABLE. Porcelain? Ah, a flame glows within me as intense as that in which we burned in the oven at Sèvres —a longing so fierce, so insistent that it can never be stilled, unless, my love, we are fused and joined in one.

MERVEILLEUSE. No, do not come so near! Remember, I am frail.

INCROYABLE. A kiss! Just one kiss!

[*As he kisses her, he strikes a chip from her cheek.*

MERVEILLEUSE. Oh! What have you done?

INCROYABLE. What have I? Ah....alas! And look! The day! With this first ray of morning light, our little lives are ended!

[*He looks toward the balcony.*

MERVEILLEUSE. Ah, me! And I with a chip out of my cheek! What will become of me now, with this defect, surprised by eternity? I shall make a charming companion for you. I shall be pulled down from my pedestal and be thrown out on the dust-heap, while you—who knows? Another companion, as pretty, as vivacious as I, will smile in my place, and, perhaps, on such another night, touched again by the same magic power to life, you will whisper sweet phrases of love. And then, then.... No, I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it! [*She begins to cry*] Is this life? Is this love?

INCROYABLE. Even if it be no more, has it not been worth all the fret and the sorrow of living? Shall we ever regret this hour? Shall we ever forget this kiss? Come, come again to my arms, and let us fill with joy to overflowing the few instants of life that remain!

MERVEILLEUSE. Will you destroy me utterly?

INCROYABLE. As the light advances, a numbness dulls my senses. Little by little, as it creeps over me, the desire to hold you in my arms is all that tempts me to live. Of all the emotions which have flitted through this futile hour, only the ineffable impress of your kisses, as something precious, seems worthy to survive. Another kiss! Another kiss!....

MERVEILLEUSE. All is ended!

INCROYABLE. Stay, stay by me.... As I hold you in my arms, the imperfection will not be perceived. The mysterious power which gave us life will respect the great love which unites us as we return to our eternal repose. What eye can read the future? This love, which has been the fragrance of an hour of life, may come to be the eternal fragrance of a life which is eternal.

[*They remain motionless, locked in each other's arms.*

Curtain

FIELD OF ERMINE

DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

First Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza at the Teatro de la Princesa, Madrid, on the Evening of the Fourteenth of February, 1916

CHARACTERS

Irene, Marchioness of Montalbán
Carolina, Marchioness of Los Robledales
Natalia
Felisa, Countess of San Ricardo
María Antonia
Beatrice
Demetria
Luisa
Dorotea
Gerardo
Cæsar Estévez
The Duke of Santa Olalla
Paco Utrillo
The Count of San Ricardo
José María
Santiago Solana
Balthazar
Martin
First Servant
Second Servant

FIELD OF ERMINE

THE FIRST ACT

A showily furnished apartment.
LUISA *is manicuring* NATALIA'S *hands.*

LUISA. Of course it's no news to you?

NATALIA. No, my dear, no. Living as I do, I see nobody, I go nowhere.

LUISA. Are you putting on mourning?

NATALIA. Not mourning, exactly. What good would it do? It's awkward enough as it is, and they wouldn't appreciate it. He is beyond all that now—although a woman can't be too careful to keep up appearances.

LUISA. Certainly not.

NATALIA. So it seemed best to stick to the house. It's safest, anyhow, unless you're prepared to be picked to pieces. Yet careful, you know, as I am.... Have you seen the paper? Look what Fantomas says! He mentions no names, but the thing couldn't be plainer. I shall have all I can do before I finish with this.

LUISA. People will be so unpleasant.

NATALIA. Oh, how, you have no idea! Although luckily —but go on with what you were telling me, I oughtn't to do so much talking myself; besides, I am sick of it; it's my business. So go on, do. La Celi and the American....?

LUISA. Have decided to separate. It doesn't seem right.

NATALIA. So I hear.

LUISA. Oh! Did I hurt you?

NATALIA. No, I'm just nervous. You say she is selling the furniture?

LUISA. She is selling everything she has.

NATALIA. But how short-sighted! What will she do then, poor dear?

LUISA. After that, I hear, she's going back on the stage.

NATALIA. Yes, and high time! Does she think the living will remember her? Oh, that dreadful telephone! It's perfectly maddening.... The thing hasn't stopped ringing all morning. Such impertinence! Of course they have seen the papers, and are dying to find out....you'll not catch me taking down the receiver. That's right, louder! Louder! My God, what do they want? Push the bell, if you don't mind. Maybe somebody'll come, then, and answer. If I had my way.... Who is it?

DOROTEA *enters.*

DOROTEA. Señorita?

NATALIA. Don't you hear the telephone? Find out who it is. Say I'm out, say I....

DOROTEA. Probably it's Señorita Julia; she's called up twice this morning already.

NATALIA. Señorita Julia? If it is, you tell her—no, you tell me, because, if it is, you'll never be able to tell her what I'm going to tell you.

DOROTEA. I can tell her anything you like.

NATALIA. Yes, but you won't put the expression in it. Hurry up now, before that infernal clatter drives us all crazy!

DOROTEA *goes out.*

NATALIA. It would have been more sensible, I suppose, if I had left Madrid, but then nobody ever can do what she pleases.

LUISA. I don't see why you should complain; you're a fortunate woman.

NATALIA. That's what they all say. I could tell you a few things, though, myself.

DOROTEA *re-enters.*

LUISA. Well? Is it?

DOROTEA. It is, señorita.

NATALIA. Is it? Excuse me one minute; I've business, important business, to attend to. This impudence has got to stop!

LUISA. You're excited.

NATALIA *rushes out.*

LUISA. She's not herself, to-day.

DOROTEA. Don't you believe it; it's all put on. Who ever heard of such luck? A cool million dropping into her lap—that is, if you're going to believe what they say.

LUISA. But the money all belongs to the boy.

DOROTEA. Watch her till he grows up! He's handsome just the same.

LUISA. Oh! Is he here?

DOROTEA. He came last night with her sister, an old frump from the country, who's had charge of him, and brought him up, so he always lived there with her. Nobody here ever gave him so much as a thought, until now his father's dead, and they've had to send for him, and show him off, so as to get his share of the property.

LUISA. They say, though, he really acknowledged him.

DOROTEA. Acknowledged him? Acknowledged him over and over. Trust her! When he married, the marquis didn't have any children. Now the family'll turn Rome upside down, and Santiago, before you hear the last of it, because this thing runs up into millions.

LUISA. All the same, if he acknowledged the boy, what good is it going to do?

DOROTEA. Search me. They've got money, so why should

we worry? Although if the law gets into this—you know what the law is.

LUISA. Yes, everything gets sort of all mixed up.

DOROTEA. If you take it from her, there's nothing mixed. How can you tell, anyway? Suit yourself. She lived with the marquis, and don't you forget it, though now they do say the poor man was innocent, and it was easy to fool him, and there are people who know. It doesn't worry her, though. Believe me, she has friends, and that helps. Don Santiago isn't a man to be sneezed at.

LUISA. Excuse me. Don Santiago would have been Minister if it hadn't been for her. Think of the scandal, leaving his wife, and then running around in public with this one! I never saw a man more head over heels in love with a woman in my life.

DOROTEA. No, and you don't know half of it. Many a time I've caught him on his knees, creeping around the floor after her, crying like a child. I'd hate to tell you then what she did to him. It isn't my business. Here she comes.

NATALIA *re-enters.*

NATALIA. Sorry to keep you, Luisa. Now maybe they'll give us some peace.

DOROTEA. Did you tell her?

NATALIA. No, really, poor dear! She was awfully sweet. I honestly believe she is fond of me. She told me all about La Celi. I nearly died laughing. Julia is a devil when she strikes something rich. She had the details straight from the American.

DOROTEA. Is that all, señorita?

NATALIA. No—oh! Where is Master Gerardo?

DOROTEA. In the dining-room with his aunt, looking over Rosita's post-cards; I asked her to lend him the album.

Poor boy, he don't know what to do with himself; he feels strange. Rosita's jealous, she can't bear the sight of him; it's a shame the way that child takes on! Eleven o'clock, and she hasn't stirred out of her room yet.

NATALIA. Yes, I have something for her, little pet! Why, it's her duty to love him, and she might as well get used to it. There's nothing worse than brothers and sisters not getting on together, I know that by experience; I've never had anything but trouble with my family all my life. What did you give the boy for breakfast?

DOROTEA. Buns and chocolate. He said that was what he liked.

NATALIA. Oh, buns? Just like his father! He was devoted to them. Many's the one we've had together at *verbenas*, or out somewhere, because when I first met him he was gay and hearty, an honest-to-goodness Madrileño. Later, after we'd had our quarrel, he went off two or three years to travel and came back for all the world like a perfect Englishman. He was English enough, anyhow, to marry that old greyhound, who is so noble and disagreeable. Oh, if a woman only had her life to live over again, and knew as much when she was a young girl as she does when it's too late to be of any use to her! If I had wanted to then, believe me, the Marchioness of Los Robledales would have been nobody but me. Talk about love—the man would have jumped at the chance! You can always tell a gentleman; it sticks out somehow—that has been my experience. Not that he didn't have his faults—all of us have—nor a temper, either; but then blood talks. Somehow it makes a difference.

LUISA. I think so myself. I always prefer persons of quality.

NATALIA. Where did you get the buns?

DOROTEA. Julian brought them. He ate them all right.

NATALIA. Good! As soon as he's ready, feed him lunch. What have you got for dessert?

DOROTEA. I thought maybe I'd give him something sweet.

NATALIA. He'd better eat with his aunt and his sister. I don't know when I'll eat lunch; it depends on my engagements.

DOROTEA. Rosita says she won't budge out of her room.

NATALIA. Is that so? Tell Rosita to look out, or I'll shut her up in a convent.

DOROTEA. I wouldn't, if I were you. It's exactly what she wants you to do.

NATALIA. She does, does she? You can't scare that child with a church. I never saw anything like young people nowadays. God knows how she ever grew up so fussy and disagreeable!

LUISA. I trust the nails will be satisfactory?

NATALIA. Yes, they will do nicely, Luisa.

LUISA. Then I will see you next week—unless there is something else?

NATALIA. Oh, no, Luisa! Dorotea, ask the young gentleman to come in. I'd like you to meet him.

LUISA. That would be lovely.

NATALIA. I suppose, naturally, there's not much going on that you miss?

LUISA. Not in the way of business. One picks up, you know, from one's customers.

NATALIA. After all, it's no secret. In Madrid one just does live in the shop windows.

DOROTEA. Is that what I am to say?

NATALIA. Yes, tell him his mother wants to see him, and discourage the aunt. A boy who is smart ought to get on without her.

DOROTEA. Yes, and pick up a few things a boy ought to know.

NATALIA. Well, it isn't his fault. Holy martyrs, he must be sick of her by this time! She don't give him a chance; she wants the poor boy to love nobody but her. I suppose she thinks she's his mother. Run along now, for I don't hire you to stand there with your mouth open, drinking in every word I say.

DOROTEA. But you were talking to me....

NATALIA. That will do! Luisa has other engagements.

DOROTEA *goes out.*

NATALIA. You'll be surprised to see such a big boy, not that I'm any too pleased; it doesn't make me feel any younger. He's almost grown up, but what of it? He looks good to me. I'm pretty thoroughly disgusted with life as it is, but now I have him, things are different. I hope he loves me. I never had any luck with the girl. Nobody could call her affectionate. Boys love their mothers while girls love their fathers, at least so I hear. What do you think of that? Even in your own family things turn out sort of opposite. Do me a favor, Luisa?

LUISA. With pleasure.

NATALIA. Find out whether La Celi still has that pianola, and if she has, what she'll take for it. It's a wonder!—the first thing that hits you when you enter the house. If it has stood the pace there, I might sell mine, which is worn out, and see what I can do with her instrument.

LUISA. I shall inquire this afternoon.

GERARDO *and* DEMETRIA *enter.*

NATALIA. Well, here he is.

LUISA. How attractive!

NATALIA. Come, come here! Can't you bow? Say something.

GERARDO. Pleasant morning, ma'am.

NATALIA. Pleasant morning? Not at all! Don't be so polite. Anybody could see you were brought up in the country. This is the work of your aunt.

DEMETRIA. Yes, you might teach him a thing or two yourself.

NATALIA. None of your impertinence! Never mind your aunt.

DEMETRIA. Of course not! You don't want him to love me, do you? Me?

NATALIA. Mind your business and shut up! Come, dear.... He really is handsome, don't you think?

LUISA. Yes, he has such an intelligent face. His manners are nice.

NATALIA. It's the family; although.... Good Lord! Who committed that livery? The thing gives me a fit.

DEMETRIA. It's his school uniform. The boys wear it when they're dressed up.

NATALIA. A sweet idea of the school's!

DEMETRIA. It's the best in Moraleda—kept by the Fathers of the Annunciation.

NATALIA. Is that what the poor Fathers keep? He looks as if he'd been turned out of the poorhouse. Send for the tailor this afternoon, and have him make you four or five suits and a few overcoats. It's an emergency.

LUISA. Congratulations. I shan't be able to wait; I still have three appointments. This is a great pleasure. If you need me any time, your mother knows....

NATALIA. Seem pleased. Answer her.

GERARDO. Thanks. The same to you.

LUISA. Madame....

DEMETRIA. Good morning, young woman.

LUISA. I'll let you know about the piano myself. Good morning.

NATALIA. Good morning, Luisa.

LUISA *goes out.*

NATALIA. How do you like it here? What do you think of the house?

GERARDO. Yes, ma'am.

NATALIA. Ma'am? Call me mamma. Mamma, that's it. Be more familiar.

GERARDO. Yes, ma'am.

NATALIA. Ah! Suit yourself. It's just my luck not to have my children love me.

DEMETRIA. What do you expect? How can the boy love you, or make the fuss over you you think he ought? Not in one day! Did he ever lay eyes on you before in his life?

NATALIA. Lay eyes on me? He knows perfectly well why it was I never saw him, why I have sacrificed myself all these years for his sake. If you had talked about me, as it was your duty to talk, things would have been different. But I know you!—not one word about his mother, or if you forgot yourself by any chance, it was only to tell him something rotten. You're a selfish old woman, who thinks she is the only saint in the family, that's what you are, and you impose, too, on outsiders, who don't know any better. When people haven't an idea in their heads beyond living in the country and chasing chickens round a chicken yard, believe me they can be fooled mighty easily.

DEMETRIA. Are we going to have this out right here, without stopping at anything?

NATALIA. Thank God and your sister that I know when to stop!

DEMETRIA. Yes, thank you! That's it! If we once began telling tales——

NATALIA. Do you know anything you haven't told already?

DEMETRIA. I know enough to hold my tongue; that's where you and I are different. I've always respected what you hadn't the sense to respect. He can see with his own eyes what sort of people he is with; he can tell who is who. If you want to know what I think——

NATALIA. Think nothing! He knows I'm his mother—his mother, and that's all he needs to know. Isn't that so? What is the matter with you? Are you crying? What are you crying for?

GERARDO. No, I wasn't crying.

NATALIA. Why should you cry?

DEMETRIA. Give the boy credit for some sense. He's fifteen.

NATALIA. That's no reason why he should cry. Did you think your aunt and I were quarrelling? No, my son, we're not quarrelling, only your aunt is fond of you, and so she's jealous, just like a little child. She's afraid you'll love me more than you do her; she forgets that I'm your mother, and a mother comes before everything else in the world. There's nothing else in the world like a mother. But probably you've heard that before?

GERARDO. Yes, ma'am.

NATALIA. At school, then, it's a safe bet. Don't you call me ma'am again. Call me mamma, or mother, or anything else that sounds appropriate. When you call me ma'am, I'm in a cold sweat.

DEMETRIA. It's your own fault if you feel guilty when your own son calls you a lady.

NATALIA. Look here, Demetria, that's enough from you. If you came up from the country to hand us this performance, you might have spared yourself the trouble. I ought

to have had the sense to send somebody down I could trust to bring up my son.

DEMETRIA. Very well; you needn't worry. I'll go back to-night, then. That's one thing you won't have to shout at me about.

GERARDO. Back to-night? Without me?

DEMETRIA. Yes, I'm in the way here; you can see it yourself.

NATALIA. Let her alone; don't you answer. She'll hang on as long as you can stand it. My God, what a disposition! And to think I was fond of her!

DEMETRIA. Don't he see it?

NATALIA. See it, does he? You're the only one who doesn't see it. I certainly am in luck with my brothers and sisters!

DEMETRIA. The same to you.

NATALIA. Thanks. Who always sacrificed herself for the rest of the family? Why, it got to be a business! Though I've done less for you, that's a fact.

DEMETRIA. You're honest for once if you admit it.

NATALIA. All the same you didn't need me. How about Thomas, how about Pepe? Who got them jobs? Who was it? God a mercy, and not one word out of them, not one mean, stingy little word, going on now four years! They're not in want, that's certain. But it's sad, just the same. Do you ever hear from them?

DEMETRIA. A line now and then.

NATALIA. How many children have they by this time?

DEMETRIA. Thomas has two, a boy and a girl; Pepe four, all of them boys.

NATALIA. My God! This is the first I ever heard of it.

CÆSAR. [*Outside*] Don't argue with me! She is always

at home when I call. If she is not, I remain until she is, which I shall do now....

DOROTEA. [*Outside*] But Don Cæsar.... I....

CÆSAR *enters, followed by* DOROTEA.

CÆSAR. I told you.... My dear Natalia!

NATALIA. Hello, Cæsar! You're up early.

DOROTEA. Señorita.... The señorita's orders....

CÆSAR. Were to admit nobody; clearly. But I am not nobody.

NATALIA. You know I am always at home to Don Cæsar. I never dreamed you would be out at this hour, so, naturally, you fell into the general order of not at home.

CÆSAR. You have guests, I see. Ah!....

NATALIA. My sister, Demetria.

CÆSAR. Worthy lady!

DEMETRIA. How do you do?

NATALIA. And....guess. My Gerardo!

CÆSAR. Oh! How very interesting! I was scarcely prepared....

NATALIA. He is fifteen, Cæsar. Time flies. Speak to the gentleman. He is an old friend.

GERARDO. Pleasant morning.

NATALIA. He is scared to death, poor boy. All he has seen of the world is his aunt's house, and a wretched bad school.

DEMETRIA. Nothing of the sort! The school is as good as any in Madrid.

NATALIA. Don't lie to me! What is there in Moraleda? My poor child! I am going to have him educated by the most fashionable professors. He can study languages, besides other things—what, we can decide later. Do you like to study very hard?

DEMETRIA. Does he? He stood at the head of his class;

the Fathers all loved him. You ought to have heard him speak his piece the day they gave out the prizes.

NATALIA. Well, Cæsar, for once we have something to be thankful for.

CÆSAR. I agree with you. I have come as special ambassador.

NATALIA. No? Not really?

CÆSAR. We must have a long talk at the very first opportunity.

NATALIA. This moment. I am dying with curiosity; but probably you can guess. Gerardo, what do you say to a ride in the automobile? Take a run around Madrid, and look at the Retiro—it will keep you busy till lunch. The Park is lovely. What do you say?

GERARDO. Whatever you do.

NATALIA. No, no, you say.

GERARDO. If you do.

NATALIA. Oh, very well! And take your aunt with you.

DEMETRIA. You don't get me into any of your automobiles, and I don't think Gerardo ought to go, either. Accidents happen to those things every day.

NATALIA. Accidents? Don't be so particular. Don't you mind your aunt....

Meanwhile DOROTEA *has re-entered.*

NATALIA. Is the auto ready?

DOROTEA. It has been since eleven, señorita, as you said.

NATALIA. Better hurry, then! Hurry! Bring the young gentleman's overcoat, and a wrap for the old lady—something dark and inconspicuous. Bring her a hat.

DEMETRIA. God help me! I never wear a hat.

NATALIA. What's that? Ride with a shawl over your head? Not if I know it; it's bad enough as it is.... Oh,

and bring my purse, too, from the dresser—you know the one I mean.

DOROTEA *retires.*

NATALIA. I suppose it's something important and noble?

CÆSAR. Yes and no. I have commissions of all sorts—important, not so important, and unimportant. There is a wide choice.

NATALIA. In that case I'll invite you to lunch.

CÆSAR. Impossible with my diet; I lunch only with Floro Esquivias, who has the same complaint.

NATALIA. Complaint? Why? I hadn't any idea ....

CÆSAR. Yes, the same as Floro Esquivias's. We have the same physician. He prescribes for us.

NATALIA. A diet?

CÆSAR. No, a disease. Floro and I are by nature apprehensive, and Floro has an intelligent physician. One day we suggested a diet, as we were not feeling robust. The doctor inquired our tastes as to food, where we preferred to pass the winter, the summer—in short what sort of life appealed to us most. When we replied, immediately he prescribed an appropriate disease to correspond with our regimen. There can be no doubt but that he hit it, as we improve daily.

NATALIA. I might be interested in that prescription myself. What was the name of the medicine?

CÆSAR. It hadn't any. Why do you ask?

NATALIA. I understood you had been visiting a musical dispensary in the Alley San Ginés, where girls and operetta are dealt out in light doses.

CÆSAR. You picked that up from some other customer.

DOROTEA *enters.*

DOROTEA. Here is everything, señorita. The señorito's cape....

NATALIA. Oh, how I hate to see you in that awful cape!

That school certainly did its worst. [*To* DEMETRIA] Come here! I'm talking to you. Try on this coat. Let me see.... It might pass. The hat next.... Not that way, woman! Ah, you look different! It helps some. How do you feel? [*To* DOROTEA] Tell Julian to drive them around the Park. They can ride awhile, and then get out and visit the wild animals. Gerardo will like it; it may amuse him to watch the monkeys.... Here! Take this.

GERARDO. No; no, thank you.

NATALIA. What's the matter? Don't be an ass. Buy anything you want, whatever strikes your eye.

GERARDO. You keep it for me, Aunt.

NATALIA. No, you keep it. It is time you learned how to spend money; you're a man. Ah! What have they been doing to this poor boy? You go with them, Dorotea.

DOROTEA. This way, please.

NATALIA. Not so fast! Aren't you going to give me a kiss? I love you very, very much. See you later. You can tell me all about it when you get back. You'll like Madrid and the Retiro—they're just wonderful! Say good-by to this gentleman.

GERARDO. Good-by.

CÆSAR. Good-by. I am delighted, señora....

DEMETRIA. Same to you.

GERARDO, DEMETRIA, *and* DOROTEA *go out.*

NATALIA. Cæsar, what do you think?

CÆSAR. I am moved profoundly. You know I have always been a sentimentalist.

NATALIA. Yes, a hot sport, according to La Celi's American. It expresses you exactly. However, you have brains, so you know how to be nice when you feel like it.

CÆSAR. Fortunately, I feel like it repeatedly.

NATALIA. How do you like my son? Does he remind you of his father?

CÆSAR. Yes, yes; he has the air, the distinction. Paco Utrillo may be a rogue, but he comes of good family.

NATALIA. Cæsar, see here. Don't you talk like that, even if you do think it is funny.

CÆSAR. Dearest Natalia!

NATALIA. Nothing of the kind. Not even to be funny—unless you are looking for serious trouble.

CÆSAR. Don't be angry, my dear.

NATALIA. Nothing could be worse than having one's friends encourage such stories, especially on top of what people are going to say. It makes me sick. You know how envious and evil-minded they are. Think what Agustín's family will dig up and invent, so as to keep my son from what rightfully belongs to him, which is his father's property, his real and true father's. Do you hear?

CÆSAR. I hear, my dear: Agustín Pérez de León, Marquis of Los Robledales, scion of families of the most distinguished lineage, and master of one of the proudest fortunes in Spain, who died intestate, without legitimate issue of his marriage with that antipathetic woman who for twelve years embittered his life, leaving no apparent heirs save the aforesaid antipathetic woman, his widow, and this son, his and yours, natural and as such duly acknowledged, the offspring of youth and of love, who is doubtless destined to the most exalted station, like Don Juan de Austria, to mention no more than one of the illustrious bastards who have shed honor and glory upon the name of bastardy. Could you wish me to take it more seriously?

NATALIA. I take you, my boy, my dear boy, as you are. That is why I object to what you just said.

CÆSAR. What did I say? I don't remember.

NATALIA. You do well enough. About Paco Utrillo, because there is not one word of truth in it.

CÆSAR. But confidentially, between us....

NATALIA. Between us? Why should I want to deceive you? The truth is the truth, and it has been recognized legally—as legally as can be. That is all there is to it. They might as well make the best of it, for there it is.

CÆSAR. Which is what concerns us. The actual fact....

NATALIA. The actual fact? But how can you tell? God only knows.

CÆSAR. You are right there. Plays and novels amuse me which unravel with unerring hand the mysteries of paternity. As you say, in these cases, the legal truth should be assumed at least to be legitimate.

NATALIA. Since he acknowledged it, he must have had reasons; more than anybody else he was in a position to doubt. As a mother, speaking for myself, even if I thought otherwise, it would be my duty of course to believe what was best for my boy. But what about that mission? If your business is unpleasant, you had better save it till some other day. This is no time when I feel like being sober.

CÆSAR. I told you that it was assorted, pleasant and unpleasant. While we are on the subject, I have a message from Paco Utrillo.

NATALIA. I thought so.

CÆSAR. He is passing at present through one of his periodic crises, as you may have heard.

NATALIA. Yes; he will survive it.

CÆSAR. However, in spite of the fervor with which you anticipate his taking off, you will scarcely deny that you loved him enthusiastically. You went to great lengths in his company.

NATALIA. I may have stretched it a little. What is the

use of denying it? I have all my life. I loved him as a woman never loved a man. That is why I hate him so cordially. What has he been telling you? What has that bandit in mind?

CÆSAR. He has....he has you in mind, so he says. He cannot forget you, and he has kept all your letters, which he reads every day.

NATALIA. That explains it.

CÆSAR. Among the letters, so he says, are one or two which might appear indiscreet. You assure him that he is the father of your child—his only true father. You say that poor Agustín was deceived. Did you ever write such a letter?

NATALIA. I was so mad over him that, even if there had been no occasion for it, I would have been perfectly willing that there had.

CÆSAR. Usually, when you write letters, which are apparently innocuous, a man cannot be certain of one word that you write. But these letters are not only grammatical, they are orthographical, so as to preclude all shadow of doubt.

NATALIA. By which I am to understand that that wretch intends to sell me or to sell my letters? To the highest bidder? Am I right?

CÆSAR. Unquestionably. To the one who offers most. When it comes down to figures, you know, he has always been visionary—the last of the romantics.

NATALIA. If I had only myself to consider, I'd attend to his case, but the thing isn't so simple. For instance, what about Santiago? You cannot shock me, but there is a man who finds everything shocking.

CÆSAR. Yes, the object of life according to your Don Santiago is to be appointed Cabinet Minister, and as he has been disappointed so long, as he believes quite unjustly, he

has developed a persecutory monomania; he is beginning to believe that the rest of mankind has conspired to cut short his career.

NATALIA. Yes, he blames me for it! He throws the thing in my face. "It is all your fault," he tells me every day. "You have ruined my career. I shall never occupy the position politically which is my due. Men amount to nothing in this country. What a man needs is to be supported by the ladies, and to ladies, of course, I am Natalia's friend."

CÆSAR. Rank ingratitude. Why, he first attracted attention in Madrid by running after you. When he came up from the provinces, his pockets bulging with money, his head empty, and his manners more ordinary than his money, what distinguished, what made him conspicuous? Your reputation as a beauty. Everybody said: "Natalia's friend." It was his stock in trade. He might have felt some embarrassment, possibly, while his wife was alive, but now that he is a widower, why doesn't he marry you? Other men have done the same. Politics is a question of timeliness, of seizing the proper moment. Neither ministers nor ministresses are expected to qualify in ancient history.

NATALIA. No, that is some comfort. But don't you mention marriage to me. Besides, by this time, the thing has lost its attraction, as you probably realize. My duty is to my son.

CÆSAR. Bravo! That brings me at once to the most important of my messages. Behold in me the Envoy Extraordinary of a noble house.

NATALIA. Agustín's family? I knew it all the time. Offers or threats?

CÆSAR. Not a suggestion of a threat on the part of my principal; on the contrary, flattering advances. I represent Agustín's younger sister, the Marchioness of Montalbán,

who desires to meet your son—her brother's son. If you have no objection, she will come to the house.

NATALIA. To my house? That lady? But doesn't she know? Hasn't she heard about me?

CÆSAR. She has, she understands perfectly. It is characteristic of the Marchioness of Montalbán. What else shall I say? If you knew her as well as I do, nothing that she did would surprise you in the least.

NATALIA. Well, I have heard of her. That is the reason I am surprised. She is proud; she never married because she is proud. She could never find anybody who was noble enough in her sight.

CÆSAR. Well, because she is proud, and sure of herself, she dares do anything, with the certainty that she will suffer no imputation of wrong. Her brother loved her dearly, and she adored her brother, but she detests her sister-in-law, without getting on any too well with the rest of the family, except her uncle, the Duke of Santa Olalla, a gentleman of the old school, most engaging, almost eccentric, according to present standards, as he makes a practice of saying aloud whatever it occurs to him to say.

NATALIA. Do you mean that she wants to see my son?

CÆSAR. Perhaps more. What was your idea? To keep the boy here with you, in this house?

NATALIA. Why not? He is too big to go back to boarding-school.

CÆSAR. Do you feel that your house is a proper place for a boy who is almost a man? As he has not always lived with you, many things will surprise him, and he will ask questions, which you will not always be in a position to answer.

NATALIA. That does not bother me. Life is its own explanation. You get wise to it as you go along.

CÆSAR. True, gradually, without undue shock, if the un-

pleasant discipline begins while we are young. But your son is no longer a child. If he is initiated now, it will not be little by little, but all at once, to the confines of knowledge to boot. You are not yet sure enough of his heart to count upon his affection to counteract the affectionate truths of your life.

NATALIA. I'm sure I don't know what you are driving at. Do you mean me to give him up? Abandon my son, the son of my soul?

CÆSAR. One moment, Natalia. I realize that you are sincere, at the moment, as you always are, at every moment of your life. Yet, as your life is composed of moments, and there are moments for everything, with due respect to this particular moment, I attach no importance to it whatever. Let us pass to another moment, and consider seriously what will be best for you and what will be best for your son, if you do love him at the moment as you have never loved him before at any other moment of your life. The Marchioness of Montalbán is expecting a call on the telephone inviting her to come to your house. She will convince you much more readily than I. She is prepared to assume responsibility for your son, to protect him as a mother. The Marchioness is alone in the world. Her brother Agustín, your son's father, was the one great attachment of her life. True, she had a love affair, so they say, but the man was not her equal. The only man she ever loved, and loved entirely, by birth was beneath her—more than that, he was low-born. Naturally, the family opposed her violently, they even threatened to attack her sanity. The only person who defended her, who took her part against the rest, was her brother Agustín, your Marquis.

NATALIA. Tell me some more about that love affair.

CÆSAR. It ended most unhappily for her. When at last

the family yielded, when she, when she herself, offered her heart, her beauty, her pride of race to that man, the man turned away, afraid, and suspicious, which was worse. The noble lady in love appeared to his miserable eyes but another vulgar dabbler in vice.

NATALIA. Well, wasn't she?

CÆSAR. No, Irene de Montalbán was a revolutionary aristocrat. She sought to restore love to its primitive truth—to turn to health again, to strength, to bodily perfection, which are the truths of love. What have we made of love? What with morality and poetry and literature of all kinds, economic necessities and social conveniences, we have inverted its true values. True love to-day appears to us to be vice, while, on the other hand, we dignify with the name of love a thousand vicious, sentimental perversions, which sadly impoverish our lives. Do you understand now why Irene de Montalbán, revolutionary aristocrat, does not hesitate to visit you, and how it is that she loves your son, without knowing him, her brother's son, yes, who is even more to her, the son that she never shall have?—the dream-child, who, beyond doubt, is the favorite child of every woman, because, although he has never been born, she carries him always with her, wrapped in the secret places of the soul. Believe me, Natalia, and accept my advice, which, even if it were not friendly, at least is disinterested. Renounce all your rights in your son in favor of the Marchioness of Montalbán.

NATALIA. The property, too?

CÆSAR. Pardon! Stifle that cry of the heart, and give yourself no further concern. Your son shall inherit his due. You have nothing to fear from the Marchioness. The other relatives are other relatives. However, with the moral support of the Marchioness, the boy's interests will be more effectively guaranteed. Shall I summon the Marchioness?

NATALIA. First let me catch my breath! No, I cannot refuse to receive her, but.... I can scarcely believe it. I am nervous, I never felt so embarrassed before in my life. Are you sure she will come?

CÆSAR. The moment I call. Her uncle, the Duke of Santa Olalla, will come with her.

NATALIA. A duke in the bargain!

CÆSAR. He is a rare spirit. He will remember you at once, embrace you, and slap you on the back. Then, he will swop stories with you. He is a rare spirit—although I should be sorry for any one who presumed upon his familiarity to attempt the slightest disrespect.

NATALIA. Of course, I could not afford it in my position. By the way, do you like this? Or would something black be more appropriate? Something darker, at least?

CÆSAR. No. Let me get the full effect.... That will do. Well? What do you say?

NATALIA. What is there to say? They can't come too soon to suit me.

CÆSAR. Just a moment....

CÆSAR *disappears and rings the telephone.* NATALIA *touches the bell, and* DOROTEA *enters.*

NATALIA. Take this cast into the other room—the pictures, too. And get rid of these books. Have somebody at the door to open it. A lady and gentleman will arrive in a few minutes. Ask no questions, but show them in at once.

DOROTEA. Yes, señorita. [*Goes out.*

CÆSAR. [*Re-entering*] They will be here in five minutes.

NATALIA. Too bad! Gerardo ought not to be long. Who is that?—Santiago! I thought he had gone shooting. How damned inconvenient!

CÆSAR. It is a complication. But don't you worry. If he is in the way, we will throw him out.

SANTIAGO *enters.*

NATALIA. Good morning.

SANTIAGO. Hum!

NATALIA. Cæsar is here.

SANTIAGO. Oh! I beg your pardon.... Were you going?

CÆSAR. Presently....

NATALIA. I thought you intended to shoot?

SANTIAGO. Shoot? How could I, after that performance last evening? Did you see the article? I am in a ridiculous position. At this rate, I shall be obliged to leave Madrid, I shall be driven from Spain. It is a plot on the part of my enemies.

NATALIA. Nonsense! This is his specialty. I didn't expect you to-day; I give you warning, I am not feeling any too pleasant.

SANTIAGO. Yes, enjoy yourself, laugh, you always do. You are having a good time. Scandal and notoriety are advertising to you.

NATALIA. Listen! I haven't done anything, do you hear? If you don't like what the paper says, believe me, it hasn't made any hit with me, either.

SANTIAGO. It hasn't? You thrive on notoriety, you eat it up. Couldn't you have kept quiet about it, instead of running around, boasting to everybody? Good Lord! Even the servants at the club know, the barbers, the cabmen talk of nothing else. I am not coming in for congratulations, either. We shall have a political issue on our hands before we are through, my enemies will make capital out of it, my name will be dragged into this lawsuit which his family is threatening to bring—an aristocratic family, and the aristocracy will sympathize with them, out of class spirit.

CÆSAR. A catastrophe!

SANTIAGO. Exactly! You have said it. And you enjoy

yourself! As long as men and women exist, we shall have the eternal opera of "Samson and Delilah."

CÆSAR. It fails to interest me. Who cares what goes on in an opera?

SANTIAGO. Cæsar, my friend, you are a man of sense, you have knowledge of the world, you understand character—you are familiar with Madrid, with the difficulties of my position; you go everywhere, you listen to what people say. Am I right? I appeal to you.

NATALIA. But what do you expect me to do? Sit here and wait? Not give up the property, refuse to present my son as his father's heir? Tell me something honest. My son would come running to me the very next day if I did, and ask what I meant by it. And he would be right, too. I have no right to give up what doesn't belong to me. Is that honest? Otherwise, how are you going to prevent people from finding out? It's beyond me. Look here, Santiago, I'm tired of this nonsense. If you don't like the way I behave, get out, go off, for all I care. I don't owe you anything; you don't owe me anything. We can wind it up in half an hour, and be done with it. Then I'll have peace for the rest of my life. They can make you Cabinet Minister seven times over, if they want to, and I'll go to Congress, too, and hear what they call you, and what you answer back, which will be more to the point, believe me.

SANTIAGO. Damn these women! You see what they are. They have no moderation. Life with one is either a tragedy or a farce. Either you are dangling over a precipice or languishing in the stocks.

CÆSAR. If the decision were left to me, you would be elevated to the loftiest pinnacle in the land. Santiago, talk sense. You behave like a child. My health was not good as a boy, and whenever my brothers went walking, or to the

theatre, or to a fiesta, they left me at home. I fussed and I fumed, so they all brought me toys and presents to content me. You are the same. You will never be Minister, but, man, it has gone on now for years! As they always disappoint you, no crisis nor ministerial shift but works out to your advantage; you are made Life Senator, Councillor of This or of That, they award you all the Grand Crosses, besides whatever patronage in the district you desire. All your opponents have been obliged to emigrate, as you have rendered their lives quite intolerable. As a result, your fief to-day is calm and placid as with a pouring of oil on the troubled waters—there may be little oil, but it is all yours. But, oh, when it comes to the calm! What do you care?

SANTIAGO. Yes, laugh! Laugh! All my friends do.

NATALIA. If we could take it as easily as Cæsar does, laughing.... He is right, though, to laugh.

SANTIAGO. That reminds me, to change the subject, any developments? Have you the heir?

NATALIA. What do you care? Is that your business? We can take that up some day when you're good-natured. Now oblige me by getting out; and go down the back stairs.

SANTIAGO. Eh? Anything new?

NATALIA. No, only some society friends are coming to call. The Marchioness of Montalbán and the Duke of Santa Olalla will be here at any moment. Oh, nobody!

SANTIAGO. You don't say so?

NATALIA. Nice people, you see, are not scared off by my manners.

SANTIAGO. [*To* CÆSAR] You have a hand in this.

CÆSAR. I assure you I am innocent.

SANTIAGO. Very likely. This call has some significance. Peace or war?

NATALIA. Pshaw! Do they have to come here to fight? Peace—it means peace.

SANTIAGO. Cæsar, you entertain some opinion. What will the effect be if this gets into the papers? There may be something incorrect at the bottom of this.

CÆSAR. If it is incorrect, we will correct it.

DOROTEA *enters.*

DOROTEA. Señorita! Señorita! A lady and gentleman——

NATALIA. Do you hear what she says?

SANTIAGO. Be careful not to commit yourself.

NATALIA. You were not elected to teach me how to treat the nobility.

SANTIAGO. I rely on your skill.

CÆSAR. It will not be needed. A woman is equal to any emergency. At any time, anywhere....

SANTIAGO *goes out.*

THE MARCHIONESS OF MONTALBÁN *and* THE DUKE OF SANTA OLALLA *enter.*

CÆSAR. Irene! Duke....

NATALIA. Marchioness! This is a very great honor!

IRENE. How do you do?

NATALIA. And you, Duke?

DUKE. We have met before—at Biarritz, perhaps, Paris. I am not certain which. This is not the first time.

NATALIA. Pray be seated. Duke, you were remarking.... But I cannot recall having had the honor.

DUKE. Yes, yes, my dear, I do perfectly. At my age it is inexpedient to mention dates; details are never agreeable. One recalls so many; they elude one.

NATALIA. The Duke will be more comfortable here by me.

DUKE. No, my dear, no. Pardon, if I make myself en-

tirely at home. It is a habit. I am formal only when I am ill-natured. Eccentricity, weakness in an old man.

NATALIA. I trust you will never call me anything but my dear.

DUKE. Where is it that I have seen you? I wonder.... At a fiesta! I recollect perfectly. There were women, music, folly.... Oh, no! You were not the one! I beg your pardon; it was not you at all. What a memory! All beautiful women look alike to me.

IRENE. Speak to my uncle. We are wasting time.

DUKE. To my mind, there are two types of women—beautiful women, who are all pretty much alike, and ugly women, who are not at all like women. Eccentricity, weakness in an old man!

CÆSAR. Duke, if I may interrupt.... Have you dropped in at Hilario's lately? He is exhibiting some magnificent antiques—in particular a choice collection of porcelains.

DUKE. My dear Cæsar, kindly refrain from mentioning antiques in my presence—not after that experience with the enamels. Hilario may deceive others, but he ought not to have the face to attempt me again. Not me! Never!

CÆSAR. I am surprised.... Confidentially, Duke, Hilario....

NATALIA. Marchioness....?

IRENE. I hope you do not mind. As the English say, he is a bit flighty. Sit down. Has our friend Estévez told you....?

NATALIA. Yes, of your wishes. Please excuse me.... [*She rings and* DOROTEA *enters*] Ask Master Gerardo to come in as soon as he returns. Send him here alone.

DOROTEA. With the greatest of pleasure, señorita.

[*Goes out.*

NATALIA. He is motoring, but he will be back shortly. If I had had word....

IRENE. We can wait. Of course, Cæsar spoke also....

NATALIA. Oh, yes, Marchioness, he did. He described how fond you were of your brother.

IRENE. How fond I should be of his son. I shall speak frankly, as our family will contest your claim, and it is important to be prepared. I am the only one who favors your son. I cannot question the facts; my brother had no secrets from me. It would surprise you if I were to repeat intimate details of your life—trifles, which, probably, you have forgotten. My brother was never able to put you out of his mind. Only a few days before his marriage, he brought me his most precious possessions, whose associations lay nearest his heart. Among them were some of your letters, and an occasional photograph.

NATALIA. My God, I tremble to think what those letters may say!

IRENE. They were like other letters of the kind. They were not at all remarkable. I am not shocked very easily. Did my brother never speak of me?

NATALIA. He never referred to his family and, naturally, I asked no questions. I felt that I was unworthy to mention your name, even when we were alone together.

IRENE. It does you credit.

NATALIA. I appreciate this is a great honor, and I should be sorry if anything happened which you didn't approve of. I could have sent Gerardo to your house with Cæsar, or with anybody else who might have been appropriate.

IRENE. No, I prefer it here. I shall not receive him unless he is to remain with me. The first glance will decide—although you need have no fear. You have surely heard of me?

NATALIA. Only what people say in Madrid, but then you hear it about everybody. But I have heard only nice things about you.

IRENE. Possibly. They say I am proud; I am not sure, but I am extremely positive in my opinions, and my judgments are quickly formed, if a woman may be said to have judgment who decides invariably by the first impression. A person who does not attract me at first sight, always remains repellent to me. Perhaps I should say in explanation, that I have very seldom been deceived. An expression of the eye, a chance gesture, an inflection of the voice, wins my sympathy, or arouses my antipathy. At present, I am anxious to be impressed favorably. I am trembling with impatience to see that boy. Nevertheless, if there is one quality in him that I do not like, I shall never be able to overcome my disappointment, and it would be idle to attempt to conceal it. I have not yet learned to lie.

DOROTEA *enters with* GERARDO, *who carries flowers.*

DOROTEA. Here is the young gentleman.

NATALIA. This is my Gerardo.

IRENE. Ah! Yes....

NATALIA. Come here. Say how do you do.

GERARDO. How do you do?

IRENE. Uncle, this is the boy. This is he.

NATALIA. Who gave you those flowers?

GERARDO. I bought them for you.

NATALIA. Your aunt put you up to it. She bought them, didn't she?

GERARDO. No, I did. You gave me the money. I thought they were lovely.... They're for you.

NATALIA. No, don't give them to me. Give them to this lady. This lady loves you very much.

IRENE. Yes, my boy, I shall become very fond of you. Uncle, he is one of our family, is he not?

DUKE. Yes, yes. He might be a Van Dyck, a Vanloo, rather. He reminds me of one of my Vanloos—a little prince of the house of Parma. Fine lines! It is the stock.

IRENE. Is this your school uniform?

GERARDO. Yes, ma'am.

NATALIA. Terrible!

IRENE. No, he looks more boyish in it. Yes, those are his eyes—the same gentle wistfulness. I like him. Give me a kiss. Run along now, run along and play. When I was your age, I always detested visitors. We have tiresome, disagreeable matters to discuss. Look at me again. You are going to be very fond of me.

NATALIA. Run along, Gerardo. Say good-by.

GERARDO. Good-by. God be with you.

[GERARDO *goes out.*

DUKE. Amusingly quaint.

NATALIA. The poor boy is bashful. He doesn't know what to make of it.

IRENE. Has Cæsar told you of my plan?

NATALIA. Yes, Marchioness.

IRENE. Do you accept?

NATALIA. How can I help it? I know I am not good enough to be his mother. Fortunately, he will be happier with you.

IRENE. You must not feel too badly. I shall not separate you from your son. Cæsar will inform you of the arrangements I propose.

CÆSAR. Yes, the details will be satisfactory. Your son may visit you on certain days, which you will be permitted to designate.

NATALIA. Whatever you think best. I make no conditions, I ask nothing.

DUKE. No, let him come once a month, or every week if he likes. Only make it regular. Our idea was that the day should be....how shall I express it? Like a matinée at the theatre—not for men. Do you follow me?

NATALIA. Oh, perfectly!

IRENE. But Uncle!

DUKE. I am extremely plain-spoken. A man had better say what he thinks. Otherwise, it is only laying up trouble. My father always said: "The most uncomfortable truth results in a glorious row, but the cleverest lie brings on a thousand minor disturbances, and, in the end, you have the glorious row." The truth for me, the truth always!

IRENE. I shall expect him, then, immediately—as soon as you have talked with our friend. You see that I am expeditious, although I should not like to impose my impatience on others. However, send him whenever it is convenient. Your duty is to consider the welfare of your son. Good-by.

NATALIA. Good-by, Marchioness. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you!

DUKE. My niece is an angel, great-hearted, too, like my father—like me. Those were other days. Times have changed; now, it is all sordidness, brutality. Other days, eh? Good luck, dear! Enjoy yourself. Irene, are you ready?

IRENE. Are you coming, Cæsar?

CÆSAR. Yes, with you.

All go out.

After a moment, NATALIA *returns, rings the bell and* DOROTEA *enters.*

NATALIA. Send me my son.

DOROTEA *retires.*

GERARDO *enters.*

GERARDO. Did you send for me?

NATALIA. Yes, my son. Can't you call me what I told you to?

GERARDO. Yes, mamma.

NATALIA. My dear boy! How did you enjoy your ride? Did you see everything?

GERARDO. It was lovely—the driving, the streets, and all the houses! I never saw so many people.

NATALIA. Gerardo, I wonder.... What do you think of all this? Do you know what is happening to you?

GERARDO. I don't know. I know what they say—that my father is dead, so you've brought me here, to your house. And I'm not going back to school, nor to live with my aunt any more.

NATALIA. Absolutely true, every word of it. But there is something else you ought to be told, and I am the one who ought to tell you, so you will understand—yes, because you are a man, now, and it's better you should hear it from me. It sounds like a fairy-story.... I was a young thing, and my father and mother were poor working people. We lived very simply. One day the son of some marquises fell in love with me, some very rich people, very noble, like that lady and gentleman who were here just now. You see, I was so poor and he was so rich that his parents didn't want us to marry; but he loved me very much. And his parents—well, we couldn't get married, but then we loved each other, and after a while you were born, without— Anyhow, your father married another woman, but that was later, because his father and mother made him do it, and so I had to send you away, and that was the reason——

PACO UTRILLO *enters.*

NATALIA. You miserable scamp! What are you doing

here? How did you get into my house? Get out! Get out, or I....

PACO. Sh! Don't be violent. I'm not looking for trouble. I come and I go in your house when I please; I have friends in it yet. They have not all forgotten me. I ran in to see your son—our son, though it may be inconvenient.

GERARDO. What does that man say?

NATALIA. Silence, or I will——

PACO. I know what you'll do. Listen! What I'm telling you now, all the world will soon know, and the first one I'll tell——

NATALIA. Shut up! Keep quiet! I'll not have you talk. Silence! Dorotea! Joaquín! Come, everybody!

DOROTEA, DEMETRIA, *and various servants appear at different doors.*

DEMETRIA. What is the matter? What are you doing? ....Gerardo!

DOROTEA. Señorita, what is it? Who is this?

PACO. Don't get excited. I am going. I dropped in to look him over—and I've had a look. No harm has been done. Out of the door, there! [*Disappears.*

NATALIA. Who let this man into my house? Who took his money? Who was it? I'll put you all on the street. Into the street, every one of you!

DOROTEA. I didn't open the door.

FIRST SERVANT. I had nothing to do with it.

SECOND SERVANT. It must have been you.

NATALIA. [*Already outside*] Sold in my own house! No more explanations! That's all I'll take from you. To the street! To the street, every one of you!

DOROTEA. [*Outside*] Señorita, I didn't know....

FIRST SERVANT. I wasn't tending the door.

SECOND SERVANT. I wasn't, either.

Their voices continue to be heard.

DEMETRIA. Did they frighten you? What is the matter?

GERARDO. Why did you bring me here? What sort of a house is this?

DEMETRIA. What sort of a house? It's your mother's house. You know that.

GERARDO. I don't want to stay in this house.

DEMETRIA. That is like saying you don't love your own mother. Is that what you mean?

GERARDO. No, no, I don't! But I don't want to stay in this house, I don't want to stay in this house!

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

A rich and spacious drawing-room.
The DUKE OF SANTA OLALLA *enters with* BALTHAZAR.

DUKE. Do you say she is not at home?

BALTHAZAR. I am not sure, your Excellency; I have just come on. Martin will ask.

DUKE. Most unlikely at this hour....

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. The Marchioness is with the young gentleman's tutors. Will the Duke be so kind as to wait?

DUKE. Very well. With his tutors, eh? Poor boy! His head will be filled with worthless trash, good for nothing. I shall sit here. Have you any papers about?

BALTHAZAR. No, your Excellency, we take no papers. The Marchioness permits none to enter the house.

DUKE. The devil! My inquisitorial niece! I disown her. At one time, as a reading-room, this would have done credit to any club. My niece is given to extremes. Vehemence, excessive ardor.

BALTHAZAR. No indeed, Señor Duke. The Marchioness takes exception to what appears in the papers.

DUKE. Oh, oh!

BALTHAZAR. Perhaps you saw *The Informer* last evening?

DUKE. Last evening? *The Informer?* I must get a copy.

BALTHAZAR. If your Excellency is interested, I may have one here. What did I do with that paper?

MARTIN. Take mine.

DUKE. Ah! I observe that prohibition produces its natu-

ral results, as prohibition has been doing since first it entered Paradise.

BALTHAZAR. Look out for the Marchioness! I beg of your Excellency, not one word to the Marchioness.

DUKE. Trust me. I shall read it later. Where is the article? Where?.... Ah! "Estate of a Marquis Involved. Scandal in Prospect." What do they mean by in prospect? "Bitter Legal Quarrel Impends." To the devil with these reporters!

[*Absent-mindedly, he pockets both papers.*

BALTHAZAR. Your Excellency, if one would be sufficient .... They are duplicates.

DUKE. Quite so. I did not intend to deprive you. No doubt, this literature is in demand below stairs. In my day, servants could not read, and life flowed along much more tranquilly. It would not surprise me to hear that you were able to vote.

BALTHAZAR. I am, your Excellency. The Marchioness commands my vote, and she instructs me always to vote as the Duke does, for the Duke's candidates.

DUKE. Thanks at least for that. I am learning from you.

BALTHAZAR. I should not presume, Señor Duke....

MARTIN. Hush, the Marchioness!

The MARCHIONESS IRENE *enters.*

IRENE. My dear Uncle!

DUKE. My dearest Niece!....

IRENE. Have Master Gerardo's study made ready at once. Has the electrician finished?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, Marchioness.

IRENE. Balthazar, I shall leave the arrangements to you. You will act as Master Gerardo's attendant.

BALTHAZAR. Yes, your Excellency. Does your Excellency wish anything else?

IRENE. Nothing, Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR *and* MARTIN *retire.*

IRENE. It is a long time since I have seen you. Where have you been?

DUKE. Don't ask. Haven't your ears tingled? Conferences, conclaves have been held without number. Gracious, the family is furious!—especially your sister Felisa, and that suave husband of hers, who never interferes, so he says, and is the most dangerous of the family. By this time, he has retained the entire legal profession. Your sister's ready-made vocabulary stands her in good stead; I tell her it is Goyesque, quite Goyesque! Don't overlook that insufferable José María, either; Master Omniscience, he knows it all—attorney-at-law. What an outrage to inflict his uncle's marquisate upon him, the title without the property! As if the title in his hands were not money assured! Now he will ferret out some rich heiress, who simply has to be noble.

IRENE. The title could not have descended to a more undesirable member of the family. However, my dear Uncle, your warning comes too late, although I confess it with not unmixed pleasure. They may be as furious as you say, but they have decided to parley, and they are coming this afternoon to tea.

DUKE. To tea? Here?

IRENE. Yes, Uncle, Felisa, her husband, their daughters, and José María, who are the parties aggrieved.

DUKE. Bearing banners of peace?

IRENE. What choice have they?

DUKE. Don't you trust them. Some Machiavellian scheme of your brother-in-law, Isidoro's. When a frontal attack fails, he beats a retreat, awaits a more favorable opportunity, executes a flanking movement, and returns to the attack. They will never forgive your attitude, which

places them at such disadvantage in bringing the suit. Make no mistake. When you received that boy into your house, you recognized all his rights. Nobody else could have set the doubts and misgivings as to whether he was, in fact, your brother's son so completely at rest. You were your brother's favorite, his confidante, thoroughly familiar with his sentimental adventures. They cannot in decency go to law without you. Now, they will endeavor to convince you by fair means or by foul. Give them time. You will see.

IRENE. To go to law would be a disgrace to us all. What could they accomplish by it? Merely the reopening of old wounds, the discrediting of both the living and dead. Should I have lent myself to an imposture, if I had doubted the facts, merely to gratify a resentment I am supposed to harbor against them? I should have been conniving at open robbery, nothing else. I am the only one who has not traded upon the traditions of our noble birth. All the others have debased it in mercenary marriages, to our humiliation and dishonor. The blot upon our escutcheons is not illegitimacy —at least that is an indication of love. The gold and silver of these marriages of convenience, of dishonest speculation, disgrace and make them illegitimate. The ermine of my shield shall never be sullied except by our own blood, as a new charge. Legitimate or illegitimate, a blood stain upon its whiteness is a symbol either of loyalty or of love, and both are noble.

DUKE. Bravo, niece, bravo! Well said! You are the only one among us who can point with pride to this blazon of our coat of arms: Field of Ermine. The rest of us have spattered it somewhat, and I among the first. However, do not flatter yourself that they have abandoned the suit. My information——

IRENE. Is probably no different from mine. Letters exist which have been offered as irrefutable proofs. Offers of that sort are always suspicious.

DUKE. Nevertheless, it might be well to take them into consideration. The fellow is a rascal, no doubt, but everybody agrees that he was in a position to know something. Poor Agustín was uncommonly innocent. You could do anything with him. The man was confiding.

IRENE. Like all generous souls.

DUKE. Yes; no doubt of that.

IRENE. Nothing is more vulgar than want of confidence.

DUKE. No doubt. I concede it. My father always said: "Suspicion is the weapon of the inferior animal." Nevertheless, notwithstanding, it might be prudent....

IRENE. I have already asked Cæsar to inquire, to investigate. Cæsar knows the man and will talk with him.

DUKE. Cæsar, Cæsar? Good! Very good! Cæsar knows the world. What he cannot investigate.... An excellent idea! The idea is excellent.

IRENE. I do not wish to have it said that I am obstinate, nor that I declined to hear the evidence. If they can prove that I have been imposed upon, I am ready to accept the proofs. If right and justice are on their side, I shall take their side, and defend their rights with them.

DUKE. Admirable spirit! Irene, you have no idea what malice, what slander will invent....you would be surprised.

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. Your Excellency....

IRENE. Who is this?

MARTIN. Don Cæsar Estévez.

MARTIN *retires and* CÆSAR *enters.*

CÆSAR. Irene.... Duke.

IRENE. Cæsar, what have you found? Have you seen the man?

CÆSAR. Yes, I have talked with him.

IRENE. Has he the letters?

CÆSAR. Yes, both originals and photographs. Utrillo is an artist, although it is a branch of art which is becoming vulgarized, thanks to plays and detective stories—and the cinematograph.

IRENE. Tell us, what is your opinion?

CÆSAR. Who can say? We have three alternatives to consider: The letters may be false, they may be genuine, or, which will be more difficult to determine, although genuine, there may be no truth in what they say.

DUKE. Exactly. Excellent, excellent! Women of the sort were deceivers ever. They have two or three lovers, and write the same thing to all of them: "You are the one. It was you." Isn't that your experience? To whom do they tell the truth? Hysteria, false pretense.

IRENE. Yes, I am ashamed that I allowed myself to doubt. What truth could be expected from such an evil source? Cæsar, forgive me. It is enough to look at you to appreciate your disgust.

CÆSAR. No, Irene, the interview proved most interesting, so much so that I should like you to talk with the man.

IRENE. No, I could not do that. We have already done enough. Mere contact with such creatures is degrading.

CÆSAR. Ah, you do not understand! You are the only one who can prevent these letters from falling into other hands. I should advise you to prevent that, at whatever price.

IRENE. You advise me? Why, do you mean....?

CÆSAR. There is no occasion to take it too seriously. The man is reasonable. I shall bring him, and we may talk here,

and, no doubt, arrive at an understanding. At present, he is being prosecuted for debt; time presses, and he asks only what is necessary to obtain his release. We shall have opportunity later to examine the letters, and decide accordingly. Others would not be interested in the truth they contain, but in their potentialities as scandal. Have confidence in me.

DUKE. Yes, you can trust Cæsar. He is a friend, a remarkable friend. There are too few of them nowadays. They do not come.

IRENE. Yes, he is a friend, the most loyal and disinterested of friends.

CÆSAR. Unfortunately for me, I have no other occupation. Practising friendship as I do, clearly everything must be sacrificed to it; and I have sacrificed everything. The very essence of friendship is that it should be disinterested. Consequently, although I know all Madrid, and salute a duke and a pawnbroker as I pass down the street, a bull-fighter, a political personage, a beautiful and modishly dressed woman, and another who may once have been modish, yes, the newsboy and the cabman—although I have interceded with all those above on behalf of all those below, I have never asked anything for myself. I have never quarrelled with any man, and have been peacemaker in all sorts of disputes. I have been confidant of everybody's love affair, and have never known what love was in my life. Many a woman has said to me: "I only wish he were like you!" Yet, although they have all wished he were like me, I have never happened to be he. My life has been like a stroll about life; I have been a stranger at Court. I have drifted down its streets, and into the hearts of its people. Everybody knows me, yet I am known by nobody. They all know who I am, while how I am, concerns nobody. And one of these days, I shall pass by, just the same, and be gone forever. That night, at the

Casino, somebody will look up at bridge or tresillo and remark suddenly: "Do you know whom we buried to-day?" "Yes, Cæsar Estévez. I was sorry not to go; but, frankly, at that hour".... And another will add: "I should have attended with pleasure, myself." It may sound brutal, but it will surely be said. And then silence will fall, not as a tribute to me, but a hush in the presence of death. And the game will go on, and no more will be heard of the friend. After three or four days, who will remember at all? Perhaps the little urchin who pestered him evenings, to beg, who misses his nightly copper, or the peseta upon extraordinary days; and perhaps somewhere, in an out-of-the-way corner of one of our Madrid cafés, a friendly retreat in hours of depression, a poor shaggy dog will miss the lumps of sugar which a kind-hearted gentleman used to feed him, caressing him as he did so, out of fellow-feeling. For him, as for me, the only sweetness of life has been that of the lumps of sugar which have been left over from the happiness of others.

DUKE. Well expressed, Cæsar, well expressed! You know the world, you understand character.

IRENE. Confess, Cæsar, that you are sad to-day, and I am responsible. You have talked with that man, and you have come away with the sinking of the heart that we always feel when we have been brought face to face with degradation. Some evils stir, they exalt our spiritual powers. We yearn to remedy them, and feel that we are equal to the task, in a burst of generous impulse. Other evils are the rooted malice of the soul; they depress us, and our hearts ache because we know they have no cure. Who is this man who would persuade us of a truth to which his conduct gives the lie? He tells us that he is a father, and does not hesitate to discredit his own child. Assuming that I could believe, that I were capable of believing what he says.... But it

is too absurd! My poor boy! There can be no doubt. Now that I have him with me, every day, every hour, he grows more like my brother. He is so gentle, so affectionate!

CÆSAR. You love him so much that that consideration outweighs every other in your eyes. Admit it, Irene.

IRENE. I am certain that if he were not my brother's son, I could not love him as I do.

DUKE. Yes, beautiful idea! Instinct—the call of the blood. However, you are not the only one to be satisfied. Other interests are involved, which are sacred—there is the family honor. Besides, people doubt, and when they doubt they think, and the things they think. . . .

IRENE. What do they think? That my brother was deceived, that I have allowed myself to be deceived, as he was.

DUKE. My poor Irene, my poor dear! How thoroughly like a woman! When you imagine you are cleverest, you are most unmitigatedly the woman. I am afraid to tell you—Cæsar, friend Cæsar, you go everywhere, you hear and you know. Tell Irene what people think, what they have the audacity to say.

CÆSAR. I have not the audacity to repeat it.

IRENE. Why not, Cæsar? Are they talking about me? Probably some slander.

DUKE. Probably they are slandering you. Vulgar persons, as you are aware, even in our own social sphere, which is not without its taint of vulgarity, have built up a legend about your character and name.

IRENE. The legend of my pride.

DUKE. Precisely. And also of a love romance, which had its place in your life—the romance of an unequal, an impossible love. People talk, they piece things together. They deduce this history from that romance. Do I make myself clear? Your brother, who was extremely fond of you, recog-

nized this boy as his son by that woman, who at the time was fond of him, and, naturally, predisposed to deceit, so that, later, the boy might be brought to live with you, in your house, and inherit your property. In short, the boy was—well, you can imagine what he was. They think so, anyhow.

IRENE. Ah! Is that what they think? They say it, do they? He is my son? My son! And they say that I am proud? If he were my son, if he were a child of mine, do they think I would conceal it? What conception have these creatures of pride? I hesitated to accept the facts in spite of myself, but now I am on the point of accepting this slander instead, and of acting upon it as if it were the guiding force of my life, yes, and of confessing it publicly—they will find that it is true—I shall be the first and not the last to believe it. I will bring other children to my house, poor children, abandoned children, criminals' children, and I shall say that they are all my children. I will fill the house with them—a lifetime of hypocrisy and sin, of which you never even dreamed! The truth surpasses your lies. Even in thinking evil you are cowards. I am proud of every one of them! What sort of a woman is ashamed of a child? The world will be shocked at the scandals I create before I am shocked by the slanders of the world!

DUKE. Excitement, exaltation! Cæsar, better agree with her. It is hopeless. She will oppose us all, but persevere.

BALTHAZAR *enters.*

BALTHAZAR. May Master Gerardo see the Marchioness?

IRENE. Certainly. Whenever he likes.

BALTHAZAR *retires.*

IRENE. Cæsar, I have said nothing, yet he never enters my presence without permission. Delicacy which has not been taught, is an index of breeding.

GERARDO *enters.*

GERARDO. Mamma Irene!

IRENE. Gerardo! Gerardo!

GERARDO. Aren't you feeling well to-day?

IRENE. Yes. Why do you ask?

GERARDO. You kissed me as if you hadn't seen me for a long time, as if you were saying good-by.

IRENE. No, quite the contrary. I am very happy. Do you see who are here? Your best friends.

GERARDO. Don Cæsar.... Duke....

DUKE. Duke? Duke? The fact is I am not sure what you ought to call me. By my Christian name? I am too old. Uncle Mauricio? It does not seem appropriate. Grandfather lifts my hair—the thing is entirely too plausible. In short, call me whatever you like.

GERARDO. No, whatever you like.

IRENE. Have you looked over the books?

GERARDO. Yes, all of them. They seem very hard.

IRENE. But you have learned a great deal already. You have studied faithfully. I don't want you to study so hard any more.

DUKE. No, poor fellow! Not at all. Let him exercise, let him shoot and ride horseback.

GERARDO. I know how to ride.

IRENE. Do you? Did you have lessons at school?

GERARDO. No, not at school. One of the boys was the son of the Colonel of the cavalry regiment at Moraleda, and he used to take us to the barracks; we learned in the yard there. A sergeant taught us. Some of the horses were very fine, and they had some bad ones. I always liked to go to the barracks.

CÆSAR. Would you like to be a soldier?

GERARDO. No. They order you about too much.

IRENE. Don't you like to be ordered about?

GERARDO. I don't mind; it is the way they do it. One morning, I remember we were in the *patio*, when all of a sudden we heard the most terrible yells. The lieutenant yelled, the sergeants yelled, everybody yelled frightfully. We felt sure something dreadful had happened, but, when we asked, they were only going to mess. I don't think you ought to yell so much every time you go to mess.

DUKE. Hum, hum! A critical spirit, contumacious. Thoroughly unpleasant!

CÆSAR. You have not learned yet that there are persons who refuse to obey unless they are shouted at and ordered about. Courtesy is mistaken for timidity. The discipline of the barracks, which seems so severe, after all is the best preparation for life. Life is not in the habit of being overnice when it is meting out punishment, or apportioning sorrows for us to bear.

IRENE. Have you ever thought what you would like to be?

GERARDO. I like so many things. I am very fond of machinery, trains, automobiles, and aeroplanes. It would be nice to fly, to fly high.

IRENE. To fly high? I should think you would be afraid.

GERARDO. I don't think so. The sky is different, you know, it isn't at all like it is here on the ground. You don't run into so many people.

DUKE. He is correct there. He will collide with very few of us. To the devil with that boy!

CÆSAR. Does he see his mother often?

IRENE. Occasionally; invariably he returns depressed. If I had only myself to consider, I should forbid his going. Obviously, that is impossible.

CÆSAR. It is of no consequence, anyway. She will lose interest very soon. Now the novelty attracts her, the dra-

matic situation. All these women are alike. Do you expect the family to-day to tea?

IRENE. Yes, they will arrive shortly.

CÆSAR. I presume they have not met the heir? Will you introduce him?

IRENE. Assuredly.

CÆSAR. Anticipating no mishap?

IRENE. Anticipating none but being prepared for any.

CÆSAR. If they decide to go to law, will you allow these letters to fall into their hands? To-morrow may be too late. Am I authorized to obtain a price?

IRENE. You always have my authority.

CÆSAR. I shall act to-day, then, and return immediately.

IRENE. Are you deserting me?

DUKE. I must retire, too, in advance of the regiment. That boy is cleverer than he looks. I questioned him as to what was going on in the other house, and he evaded me. Absolutely!—a sure sign that he is wise. Good-by, niece. God grant you patience to support our beloved relatives, especially Isidoro, the suave one. Oh, Don Suave! The man is beyond endurance. Hurry, Cæsar, come with me. Make your escape.

CÆSAR. Many thanks. Good-by, Gerardo.

GERARDO. Don Cæsar.... Duke....

DUKE. Duke? Look here; let us compromise. Call me Mauricio, plain Mauricio—like two old friends. Nobody will accuse us of having been schoolmates. We must make good our retreat. Adios, Irene. In the bosom of the family, remember: silence and listen. Never speak, always hear!

CÆSAR *and the* DUKE *go out.*

IRENE. What did Uncle Mauricio say to you?

GERARDO. The Duke? He asked about my mother. I

didn't know what to say. The other day, when I was there, I spent the afternoon alone with the servants.

IRENE. Had your mother gone out?

GERARDO. No, she took lunch with us. Mother was dreadfully angry at Rosita because she called me names; she always does. I don't think she likes me. So mother struck her. Rosita isn't nice. She answers back, and thinks of such things to say! Then mother began to cry, and she went and shut herself up alone in her room.

IRENE. But how dreadful!

GERARDO. Rosita says that her father loves her, and he buys her toys and dresses all the time. Maybe he does, or she may be lying so as to make me jealous. I thought Rosita's father was dead? I hear the servants talking about him, too. I don't know what to think.

IRENE. Why do you tell me all these things?

GERARDO. Mamma Irene, there is something about that house that isn't right. It isn't like this, is it? I am sure that you love me. Will you always love me more than they do? Because if you love me, I don't care. But somehow, I am afraid.

IRENE. Afraid? Why should you be afraid?

GERARDO. Maybe you won't love me any more. That's what they tell me. You will, won't you? I love you very much and I mean to be good, so you will always love me. I loved Aunt Demetria when I lived with her, but now she doesn't love me any more.

IRENE. She doesn't love you?

GERARDO. No, the day she went home she fought with mamma. I don't know what it was about, nor what they said.

IRENE. This is too horrible.

GERARDO. So Aunt Demetria said they needn't send me

back to her, because she never wanted to lay eyes on me again. She said I cost her money, and mamma never lets go of one penny.

IRENE. Oh! Was that it? My poor boy! They have set a price upon you. I wonder what you must think of us all? What would have become of you, if I had not taken your part?

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. Pardon, your Excellency. The Count of San Ricardo and the Marquis of Los Robledales.

IRENE. Ask them to come in. I shall send for you later; they will be anxious to see you. The Count of San Ricardo is my brother-in-law, my elder sister's husband, and the Marquis of Los Robledales my nephew; his father was one of my brothers, who died two years ago, and your father's title descended to him.

GERARDO. Yes, I know.

IRENE. Oh! The servants told you?

GERARDO. No, they told me in the other house. Is that all, Mamma Irene?

IRENE. All for the present, Gerardo.

GERARDO *goes out.*

The COUNT OF SAN RICARDO *and* JOSÉ MARÍA *enter.*

COUNT. Hello, Irene!

JOSÉ MARÍA. How are you, Aunt?

IRENE. Where are Felisa and the girls?

COUNT. They are riding. Carolina is bringing them in the auto; she is coming along.

IRENE. Carolina?

COUNT. Yes, she dropped in at our house—her first visit since the death of poor Agustín. As soon as she heard that we were coming, she insisted upon joining us. I advised her strongly to do so. There has been too much misunder-

standing of late, for which we all are responsible. We owe ourselves, so to speak, a demonstration of harmony and goodwill. Of course, I never interfere, I never enter into the affairs of your family, although, in my opinion, every consideration should be sacrificed to family harmony and solidarity. The financial question is purely secondary.

José María. It is, my dear Uncle, I assure you. Who cares for the money? I have suffered most, yet I decline absolutely to regard this as a matter of business. There is another aspect to be considered, which concerns our honor, our family name—which is our spiritual inheritance.

Irene. You will be more comfortable sitting down. How is Carolina?

Count. Much the same. It is her nerves, especially since Agustín's death, which affected her, naturally, and then, on top of it, she read some articles in the newspaper. We feared that they would prove fatal.

José María. The intrusion of the press upon the private life has become scandalous. Our legislation is defective. We entertain a false conception of liberty. Advanced nations——

Irene. I had the impression that the articles had been published through the influence of a member of the family.

Count. Goodness gracious, Irene! It is fantastic to suppose....

José María. Only the Courts are competent to decide a question of such delicacy, which involves the inheritance——

Count. If you love me, do not mention the inheritance. It congeals me.

José María. I was referring to the inheritance of our family honor.

Count. As a favor, José María, do not recur to the subject again. It is depressing. You know how I feel. If you

decide to go to law, it should be by agreement, without acrimony, without disturbing the harmony which exists in the family. We have no right to offer a public spectacle.

IRENE. I think I hear Felisa's voice....

COUNT. Yes, here she comes with Carolina and the girls. I have suggested that the subject be avoided this afternoon. It disconcerts one. However, you know Felisa; she is intemperate, she forgets herself. If her language becomes offensive, overlook it. It is a habit.

IRENE. If her language becomes offensive, I shall not overlook it, I shall reply to it, without becoming offensive, or the slightest hesitation whatsoever. It is my habit.

COUNT. [*Aside to* JOSÉ MARÍA] She declines to be drawn out. Entice her into the open.

JOSÉ MARÍA. Absolutely insufferable.

CAROLINA, FELISA, MARÍA ANTONIA, *and* BEATRICE *enter.*

IRENE. You need not apologize. I have not been to your house for the same reason. I hear you are furious with me.

FELISA. With you? Our friends have been enjoying themselves. We know you well enough by this time not to be surprised at anything you may do.

CAROLINA. Nothing can have been repeated as coming from me. My attitude has been one of neutrality from the beginning.

IRENE. That simplifies the situation. Two are eliminated.

CAROLINA. Two are?

IRENE. You and Uncle Isidoro, who never interferes.

CAROLINA. I hope you do not doubt my word. As it happens, I am not interested. It affects me only morally, and in so far as you are concerned, who of course will be injured. I have trouble enough with my sorrow and the bad health I enjoy. It is a miracle that I am alive. If I

had been told that Agustín would have died before I did, although he had some years the advantage of me, yet he was so strong, so perfectly satisfied with himself.... Nothing ever worried him. He never took me seriously, though at the time I was dying. It was my nerve power that sustained me. Don't you think it is hot? I could never understand how you endure this temperature. The room is stifling.

IRENE. Perhaps you might remove your coat and furs?

CAROLINA. I should not care to take the risk. I prefer to suffocate.

IRENE. If you feel you must....

CAROLINA. Gracious, María Antonia, don't you come near me. That perfume is simply devastating. Rather than diffuse such an odor, I should expire. I should have fainted in the auto if we had had a little more time.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Silly airs.

BEATRICE. How like Aunt Carolina!

FELISA. It is getting hot. Wearing black is always trying to me. We seem to have launched a sort of consecutive mourning. Naturally, I didn't think it was right for the girls, although no doubt we shall be criticised. Do sit down, María Antonia and Beatrice, my dears! I don't see anything to look at that is so interesting.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, mamma. We were just curious. Aunt Irene usually has some surprise for us.

IRENE. They are curious to see their new cousin. Why didn't you say so?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Indeed we are. I can scarcely wait.

BEATRICE. Neither can I.

FELISA. Beatrice and María Antonia! I am ashamed of you.

CAROLINA. No, of course, I don't expect them to consider

me; I am resigned. I have forgiven him by this time. If I could be as certain as you seem to be....

FELISA. Naturally she is! Thank God we have one member of the family who is always right.

IRENE. Although I am willing to listen to your arguments, and to consider them. We should make more progress, perhaps, with less hypocrisy.

COUNT. Are you alluding to me?

JOSÉ MARÍA. Aunt Irene is right. We must face the facts fairly, upon the assumption that Aunt Irene has not acted and would not have acted with the deliberate intention of doing us injury. Rather, she has been carried away by her romantic temperament, which we respect, and for my part I admire it. It becomes our duty, therefore, to convince her of her mistake, or of her simple thoughtlessness.

FELISA. José María, you talk like a lawyer, and before you are done, nobody knows which side she is on. If the time has really come to speak out, I have no intention of biting my tongue, and anybody who wants the truth is going to get it from me, whether or not it happens to wash. The truth is....I can never speak the truth without your being offended by it.

IRENE. Speak as much as you like. I am prepared to make allowances.

FELISA. The fact is you have exploded a bomb in our camp. It struck us in the middle.

COUNT. Felisa, have a little reserve! Do me the favor!

FELISA. We should have gone to law, and we should have won the suit, and don't you forget it, if you hadn't taken it into your head to get maternal all of a sudden, on this high moral plane.

IRENE. I should imagine that you might have maintained yourselves there a little while without me.

FELISA. Do you expect us to snap our fingers in the face of public opinion, yes, treading on your preserve? What would people think of us if we went to law without you?

JOSÉ MARÍA. Morally, we should have lost.

IRENE. You might better lose morally than win in any other way.

JOSÉ MARÍA. The action is exceptionally sound. Uncle Isidoro and I have considered it very thoroughly.

COUNT. No, no! I have not. Excuse me. Do not drag my name into it. At most, I may have listened to you, I may have agreed with your arguments.

JOSÉ MARÍA. We have more than enough proof, and you know it.

COUNT. As you love me! Absolutely, I am ignorant.

JOSÉ MARÍA. We have four decisions of the Supreme Court in our favor, which I have notes of. One of the eighteenth of March, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine; another....

COUNT. January fourteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety-seven.

JOSÉ MARÍA. Correct! Your memory is better than mine.

IRENE. He has a remarkable memory.

JOSÉ MARÍA. I have studied the subject thoroughly.

IRENE. No, I was not admiring you; I was admiring Isidoro. He has not studied it, cares nothing for it, and knows as much about it as you do.

COUNT. I? A mere accident. I am absolutely ignorant. I have no occasion to know.

CAROLINA. Oblige me by dropping the subject; at least have that consideration. If I had had any idea that you were coming for this.... My poor nerves are on edge; they vibrate like a viol.

FELISA. None of your nerves, now, Carolina, nor your viols either. Do you know what you remind me of, with

your nerves? One of those bagpipes. Somebody squeezes it, and then the thing keeps on blowing.

CAROLINA. Is the woman sane? God help us!

FELISA. And enough of your innocence and your airs, and what you don't want to know. Why, you were the one who advised us to go to law, and not to sit down under this outrage. There is nothing about this thing that seems to be legitimate.

CAROLINA. Please! Please! If you have any regard for me! I hope you don't believe one word that she says.

COUNT. Felisa, do me the favor....

FELISA. Oh, give us some peace! This is too much to swallow. You are trembling in your boots this very minute for fear those people are going to come down on you, and blast out some settlement.

CAROLINA. Out of me? How preposterous! You can congratulate yourself that I am not willing to demean myself to answer you as you deserve.

COUNT. Felisa, if you love me, control yourself!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Mamma is enjoying a field-day.

BEATRICE. Aunt Carolina will have an attack.

FELISA. You know perfectly well what those people can do. Look at that boy! They will get into you good and plenty when they have a mind to.

CAROLINA. Please, please! Irene! Take me away, take me away!

COUNT. Come, come, come!

FELISA. You know perfectly well that your dowry, not to speak of the rest of the property, and God knows what else besides, are open enough to question. What do you want us to do? All you ask is the earth, and you expect us to pull your chestnuts out of the fire in the bargain, while you sit here and hand us this song and dance about not lifting a

little finger. I have no illusions as to the virtue of any members of our family.

COUNT. Felisa! Felisa!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Why, mamma!

JOSÉ MARÍA. Aunt Felisa! Carolina!

CAROLINA. I expected this. I saw it coming! As soon as Agustín was dead, I knew you would all turn upon me, like wild animals. You could never bear me, you never even wanted my picture!

FELISA. Yes, you are awful fond of us! If it hadn't been for you, Agustín would have made a will, and then things would have been different. You let him die on your hands without saying one word to us about it.

CAROLINA. Insolence! Oh, oh! My God!....

FELISA. Yes, that's right, lie down and roll over! Shameless schemer!

IRENE. Felisa, Carolina, I must really.... This is my house. This boy is in my house, this poor boy, who has seen, who has heard terrible things in the other house, as he calls his mother's. They have already saddened his heart. Childish impressions remain with us for the rest of our lives. Yet the people in that house are low-born, they have been accustomed to all the meanness and bitterness of life, to hunger, to injustice, and their very meanness, their depravity is their excuse. Only a moment ago, the poor boy said to me in this room: "This house is not like the other house, is it?" What would he say now if he were to hear you? You have not the excuse that those people have. He would say that it is precisely the same—the same passions, the same avarice, the same malice, and, yes, my dear sister, if he were to listen to you, the same language. Spare me, spare yourselves, the mortification of having him say: "Mamma Irene"—for that is what he calls me—"Mamma Irene, your

house is exactly the same as that house." And I don't need to tell you what that house is.

CAROLINA. At least do me the justice to remember that I have never descended to that level. José María, remove me from the scene.

COUNT. Carolina, I regret deeply....

CAROLINA. No, I blame myself for coming, when I knew what your wife was. This exhibition will prove fatal. It is too much for me!

JOSÉ MARÍA. Courage! Stand up.

CAROLINA. I am dying!

IRENE. Mercy, Carolina.

JOSÉ MARÍA *and* CAROLINA *go out with* IRENE.

COUNT. My dear! Oh, my dear!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, mamma! How could you?

BEATRICE. How terribly unfortunate!

FELISA. She may congratulate herself that I was not in a humor to be disagreeable. Can anybody endure that woman? Oh, my poor brother! All he will have to do when he gets to heaven is to say he was her husband, and the gates will swing wide open. It will be paradise. The hypocrite, mincing and simpering there at me, when she is the one who made up that story about poor Irene!

COUNT. Felisa, the children....

FELISA. Where did you get the idea there was anything they didn't know? Yes, she was the one; there is no doubt of it. The hair-dresser says so. She launched it on the very day of the *novena* for the soul of poor Agustín, and I dare say it was in church, too, to show his memory more disrespect. My only regret is I forgot to mention it; but I shall make an opportunity. Neither that woman nor anybody else has anything on me when it comes to making myself unpleasant.

IRENE *re-enters.*

COUNT. Irene, overlook this! Pardon, do forgive her. I had hoped that to-day might consolidate the peace, the harmony which should always prevail in the family. We have presumed upon your forbearance.

IRENE. How could you? One thinks so many things about so many people that one never dares say, that it is a relief to find somebody who has the courage. Felisa is incomparably courageous.

COUNT. Fortunately, your sister understands you. She overlooks the offense.

FELISA. She can't help herself. I am old enough to know what I am doing, and Irene has the sense to know who is right. Suppose now I were to tell her....

MARÍA ANTONIA. We shall never meet our new cousin.

BEATRICE. I promise to sit here until he appears.

IRENE. As we are alone, we may talk quietly. I should like to show you our brother's letters, besides other papers that were left with me. You will appreciate then why I feel as I do, and it should not take us long to agree.

FELISA. All I ask is to be convinced. If this were merely a question of money, wild horses could not drag me to it. What I object to is having this tom-cat palmed off on us for a rabbit. I don't see how you can stand it. If you knew as much as we do, you wouldn't be so awful pleased with yourself, either.

IRENE. If it is as simple as you say, you will have no difficulty in convincing me. I have no false pride. I never vacillate. Either I believe or I do not. Come into my sitting-room, and we shall dispose of the matter very easily.

FELISA. But Beatrice and María Antonia?

IRENE. May have tea. If you care for tea....

FELISA. No, tea means nothing to me.

COUNT. I might suggest a sedative.

MARTIN *enters.*

IRENE. Serve tea for Master Gerardo and the young ladies. Ask him to come at once.

FELISA. Gerardo is....?

IRENE. He is. I wish him to meet his cousins. They are his cousins, although you may be incredulous.

FELISA. To put it mildly. Suppose he is, you had no right to bring him here, and you will regret it. Remember what I say: you will regret it. Wait until his mother finds out this is another case of infatuation, and she will initiate you in the joy of living, make no mistake. You will see. What that brat looks like is nothing to me.

IRENE. Evidently not. Perhaps I ought not to expose him to your conversation too young. While we are gone, the girls will talk to him. I shall introduce them. Youth is more generous, as well as more curious. They will like him, I am certain.

FELISA. God knows! You may stay, then, and tell me about it later. Come, Isidoro! What is the matter with you?

COUNT. I still maintain my position. Every consideration should be sacrificed to harmony, to——

FELISA *and the* COUNT *go out. Meanwhile, the servants have entered to prepare the table for tea.*

IRENE. He is very nice and very friendly, but you must not expect a boy of your own class. Promise not to laugh at him. I know you will be charming.

GERARDO *enters.*

IRENE. Oh, Gerardo! Here are your cousins, María Antonia and Beatrice.

GERARDO. I am pleased to meet them.

MARÍA ANTONIA. This is awfully jolly.

IRENE. They will pour tea for you. You must learn to entertain your young friends. I shall leave you, as I am busy. You are going to be friends. We shall see....

[IRENE *goes out.*

GERARDO. Won't you sit down?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, of course. He is not bad looking, is he?

BEATRICE. For a small town.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Or Madrid, either. I wonder if he can flirt?

BEATRICE. Don't be silly.

MARÍA ANTONIA. We must do something. You never can tell. We are losing a fortune, and it might prove a way out. Anyhow, it is in the family.

BEATRICE. You like to hear yourself talk.

MARÍA ANTONIA. He doesn't dare to look up. I think he is simple. It is time to eat. I am awfully hungry; I always am. Why are you laughing? Do you think it is funny because I am hungry?

GERARDO. Yes, I do.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Why?

GERARDO. Hungry people have nothing to eat. We were hungry at school. But you—you are joking.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, indeed. In society, you know, one is always expected to eat. You really should see Aunt Josefina, the Marchioness of Cañaverales. I say she is an ogress. Aren't you going to take something?

GERARDO. Yes....

MARÍA ANTONIA. Shall I pour you a cup of tea?

GERARDO. I don't like tea. I might take something sweet.

MARÍA ANTONIA. And a sandwich. Take a sandwich, and some Malaga or Port. Which do you like best?

GERARDO. You choose for me.... Is it sweet?

María Antonia. Very. Why, have you a sweet tooth? So have I. I spend my allowance on bonbons and sweets. My sister collects post-cards; she is different.

Gerardo. I am very fond of anything sweet.

María Antonia. You ought to enjoy yourself, then.

Gerardo. Why?

María Antonia. You are going to be rich.

Gerardo. I don't know.

María Antonia. Have another glass?

Gerardo. No, no. I don't want to take too much.

María Antonia. Oh, get drunk? I think it might be funny.

Gerardo. It isn't very nice.

María Antonia. Do you like Madrid?

Gerardo. I do now. I like it better all the time.

María Antonia. Where was it that you lived? I forget.

Gerardo. In Moraleda.

María Antonia. Where is that?

Gerardo. In New Castile.

María Antonia. A village, I suppose?

Gerardo. No, it's a city—a large city. It has a cathedral, and palaces, and a river, and beautiful broad streets. It is different from Madrid, but it is nice there.

María Antonia. What did you do with yourself?

Gerardo. I went to school. They only let us out twice a month.

María Antonia. How awful! It must be pretty lonely for you here, in this melancholy old house, especially with this mourning for Uncle Agustín. We decided not to go into mourning. In a family like ours, when once you begin to lose relatives, you know, there is no end to it. Besides, mamma was dreadfully angry at the impudence of the thing——

BEATRICE. María Antonia!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Dear me! I forgot. I had better have another glass. And you, too. Don't be silly; it won't bite. Does it shock you to see us eat and drink?

GERARDO. No, I eat and drink, too, when I see you do.

MARÍA ANTONIA. You do, don't you? Isn't it dreadfully dull here, living with Aunt Irene?

GERARDO. Mamma Irene? No, she is nice. It isn't dull.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do you call her Mamma Irene?

GERARDO. She asked me to. I would never have dared. I always called her Marchioness.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Marchioness? Uf! Like the servants.

GERARDO. I would be a servant and work in this house, if she wouldn't let me stay in any other way.

MARÍA ANTONIA. You must be easily satisfied. How unambitious! I should like to be—I wonder. Oh, a queen or a princess!

GERARDO. That sounds like a fairy-story.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Does it sound to you like a fairy-story? Don't you like fairy-stories?

GERARDO. Very much. I've read a great many, although the fathers at school never let us read fairy-stories. We could only read what was moral, and had lots of doing good in it.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Piffle! Have another glass.

GERARDO. I'm afraid I'll get gay.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It is better than being stupid. Don't you think so? You see I think you are jolly. Shall we call each other by our first names?

GERARDO. I'd rather not.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Anything else is so dreadfully middle-class. It's all in the family.

GERARDO. I suppose so.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Don't be shy. Which do you like best—Beatrice or me?

GERARDO. Both the same.

MARÍA ANTONIA. How can you? No two things are the same, much less two people. Now decide. You know Uncle Mauricio—the Duke of Santa Olalla?

GERARDO. Yes, I know him. He is a nice old man.

MARÍA ANTONIA. He has a wonderful collection of pictures. In one of them, there is a shepherd standing in front of three ladies, looking at them, with very little on, but he has an apple in his hand, to offer to the most beautiful. He calls it "The Judgment of Paris." Now that is what you have to do. Offer the one you like best—there are no apples. Give her a bonbon.

GERARDO. One for each.

MARÍA ANTONIA. That wouldn't be complimentary. I shan't mind if you don't choose me. Here is your bonbon; it's a chocolate cream. I adore them.

GERARDO. No, no.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Take another glass and you won't feel so modest.

GERARDO. My head goes round.

BEATRICE. No, don't you drink any more. María Antonia! Never mind what she says. Don't drink any more.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Hush! Now decide. Beatrice, come here by me. There! This is the picture—except for the styles. Stand over there, now, like the shepherd, look at us, and try to decide, as he does in the picture. Then, you give the most beautiful——

GERARDO. I.... I couldn't do that.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Well, you can give it to the one you like best.

GERARDO. I might do that.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, to the one you like best.

GERARDO. I give it to her.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Thanks very much! Beatrice, who has never opened her mouth?

GERARDO. That's why I gave it to her. You are laughing at me.

MARÍA ANTONIA. At you? Thanks again awfully!

GERARDO. Yes, you are. Don't you think I can see? You are laughing at me. You gave me the wine to make me feel funny. Now, I am dizzy.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Ha, ha!

BEATRICE. Sit down and drink some tea. Swallow this water. He is pale....

GERARDO. I'm ill.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Ha, ha, ha!

GERARDO. I told you so! You are laughing at me. You are not nice, and I knew it. Don't you laugh at me! Nobody laughs at me!

BEATRICE. What are you trying to do?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Look out! That shows you what he is. Disgusting!

BEATRICE. See what you've done. It's the wine.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Run, hurry! If mamma hears....

BEATRICE. No, we had better call. Lucia! Balthazar!

MARÍA ANTONIA. If I am not careful, it will bite.

BEATRICE. It serves you right. Nobody comes.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It was just beginning to be interesting.

BEATRICE. Ah, now! I hear some one—Aunt Irene! Mamma! Hurry! Quick!

FELISA, IRENE, *and the* COUNT *enter.*

IRENE. Where is Gerardo?

BEATRICE. Over there.

IRENE. Why, Gerardo?

BEATRICE. He isn't well.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It isn't anything. He's had a little too much.

FELISA. How charming and refined!

MARÍA ANTONIA. He tried to strike me—he did, really.

FELISA. Strike you? I never heard of anything so outrageous.

IRENE. Gerardo, what is this? What have you done?

GERARDO. They are laughing.... I'm not well. They are laughing at me....

IRENE. But.... How did this happen? What is the matter with you, Gerardo?

FELISA. This is the result of fishing angels out of the gutter.

GERARDO. Don't be angry, Mamma Irene; please don't be angry. They are laughing at me.

BEATRICE. It was all María Antonia's fault.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I can't see how I am to blame if he doesn't know when he has had enough.

FELISA. His origin sticks out all over.

COUNT. It's not his origin, my dear. This occurs in all families.

BALTHAZAR *enters.*

IRENE. Take this young man to his room and put him to bed. He is not well. Give him a cup of tea. Get up, Gerardo; you may go.

GERARDO. They are laughing.... She did it, she was the one. And I thought she was a lady! You meet such girls on the street.

FELISA. Oh, did you hear that? How degrading!

COUNT. My dear, are you becoming sensitive?

BALTHAZAR *leads* GERARDO *out.*

FELISA. I must say that you have made a fascinating addition to the family. Certainly you held your most enchanting

argument in reserve. You have reason to be proud of your work.

IRENE. Enough indignity! A little more and you will be right. If we descend to this level, we shall be no better than our conversation.

CÆSAR *enters.*

IRENE. Cæsar! Oh....?

CÆSAR. Pardon my entering unannounced. May I see you? It is urgent.

IRENE. I must see you.

CÆSAR. Felisa— Count——

COUNT. Welcome, you are indeed welcome! We are leaving, ourselves.

FELISA. Good-by, Irene. Remember, count upon us at any time, for anything....

COUNT. At any time, anywhere. My dear Cæsar....

MARÍA ANTONIA. I hope you don't think less of me because of our cousin's attack?

IRENE. No, I am not so uncharitable.

COUNT. We retire in good order. Adios!

They go out, leaving IRENE *with* CÆSAR.

IRENE. Cæsar, what have you found? I am alarmed for the first time.

CÆSAR. Fortunately, I can reassure you. Your nephew, José María, the new Marquis, and your brother-in-law, Don Suave, who takes no interest—I pay my respects to the Duke of Santa Olalla—would you believe it? They are in negotiation with that man. Only a trifle prevents the letters from falling into their hands. Happily, I was in time. You must see the man, you must talk with him. I have brought him with me, and he is waiting in the steward's office. There can be no objection. He is an experienced fellow, who will

conduct himself in a manner that would do credit to a diplomatist. May I bring him in?

IRENE. Sit down. [*She rings*] In the steward's office? [MARTIN *enters*] A gentleman who came with Don Cæsar is waiting with Don Andrés. I will receive him. Bring him here. [MARTIN *retires*] Have you seen the letters? Do you know the facts?

CÆSAR. No, Irene, the man is not confiding, although he will trust you. He believes that you have a deeper interest than any one else in discovering the truth.

IRENE. What is the truth?

CÆSAR. We can scarcely expect to find it, but we can prevent a scandal and avoid public ridicule, while all danger of a lawsuit on the part of your relatives will be eliminated. Circumstantial evidence has little influence with the courts when it is proposed to deprive a child of his legal rights. The acknowledgment was in due form; there can be no question as to its authenticity. Fraud will be difficult to prove, or coercion—whether material or moral. Almost impossible!

IRENE. Suppose we have been deceived? Suppose we have——?

CÆSAR. It is too late to save the property, but you will not have delivered yourself into the hands of the family out of a generous impulse, which, in the end, may be your only excuse.

IRENE. My heart, my loyal heart may have deceived me. At this moment, I am ready to believe anything possible. My heart has been spattered by the mire of the gutter, the taint of a mongrel, a plebeian blood.

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. This way, please.

PACO UTRILLO *enters.*

CÆSAR. Come in, Utrillo. Come in! [MARTIN *retires*]

Señor Utrillo, the Marchioness of Montalbán—whom you doubtless know.

PACO. The Marchioness's humble servant.

IRENE. Sit down. Our friend has repeated your conversation. We shall arrive at an understanding very quickly.

PACO. [*Taking a bundle of letters from his pocket, and placing it upon the table*] They are on the table, Marchioness. Is that quick enough to suit you?

IRENE. Oh!

PACO. My friend knows that I only do this for the Marchioness, for my friend's sister. Yes, Marchioness, I was a good friend of your brother. I was his good friend in spite of it. That woman—what the devil! That woman ruined me. She brought me where I am. Our friend knows I was a man of honor. I am a gentleman yet, when I can afford it. My family is known in Madrid. The Marchioness has surely heard of my uncle, Don Eulogio Utrillo, the senator, State Councillor? My friend Agustín, the Marchioness's brother, had to do with that woman—not that I want revenge, Marchioness. The Marchioness understands that my interest, my true interest would be to see my son——

IRENE. Your son?

PACO. Yes, Marchioness, my son. He would inherit a fortune. The next day, I would say to him: "I am your father; you owe your position, everything you have in the world to me, to my closing my mouth." I could not be party to such deceit. My conscience would not permit. I may have fallen low, but I am a man of honor. It is not easy to forget what a man has been.

IRENE. Very well. You do not have to convince me. These letters——

PACO. Read them. They are from that woman, from her brothers. Her brothers were accomplices, parties to the

cheat. Letters from your brother.... Compare dates. Your brother was away when I lived with that woman; he was travelling. Later, the birth was set back. Her brothers threatened; your brother was mad over the girl. More than that, he was good-natured; he had no experience of the world. The whole story is there; there can be no doubt. The Marchioness recalls the hand....

IRENE. Yes, too clearly. A few moments ago, I was reading other letters, other letters which seemed to speak the truth.

PACO. I sat there and saw them written. But nobody dictated these. They are what they are—naked truth. Don Cæsar will tell you the Marchioness's family offered yesterday——

IRENE. I know already.

PACO. I know how fond you were of your brother. You are the one who ought to own these proofs. You can decide, then, whether to defend the property or prevent the suit; it might lead even to action which would be criminal. There is ground here for anything. Whatever you do, you will know what you are doing. You will not be open to blackmail, to be exploited by that woman, as you surely would be, by her brothers....

CÆSAR. Good, Utrillo, good. I shall explain our arrangement to the Marchioness; I am sure that she will find it reasonable.

PACO. If circumstances had been different, but, you know, circumstances oblige a man....

CÆSAR. Of course, friend Utrillo! Of course! You shall have the money to-morrow; then go somewhere.

PACO. And start—start all over again!

CÆSAR. Meanwhile, you may need these until morning.

PACO. No, I don't need them; you insult me. I cannot

doubt the Marchioness, my best friend's sister. He never knew how I loved him. He ought to have taken my advice. Poor Agustín! That man had a heart. He always helped me out, as you are doing. He proved it often. I am fated to owe money to this noble house.

IRENE. Take him away, Cæsar.

PACO. Marchioness, you know me, what I am. If you ever need a man——

IRENE. Thanks.

PACO. [*To* CÆSAR, *as he goes*] If you could make it the first figure, I'd appreciate it. It is nothing to the Marchioness, but to me it's salvation. Otherwise, I should not have been obliged——

CÆSAR. To sell so cheap?

PACO. No, my dear Don Cæsar. To sell at all.

CÆSAR *and* PACO *go out.*

IRENE, *alone, reads several letters, with visibly increasing emotion.*

CÆSAR *re-enters.*

CÆSAR. It is not a relaxation.

IRENE. How can a woman fall so low? Oh! Read these letters—read them! Can this be true? Yes, yes; there can be no doubt of it. Read them—read these letters from that woman to this man, to her brothers. It is as clear as day. Fraud, deceit! Oh, my poor brother! And for his sake, to respect his memory, because he loved that woman, who here insults his name and befouls it with filthy words.... Ah, no! Never! When I first saw that creature a moment ago, as he is, blood of the brothel, blood of that woman who traffics with her body, blood of that man who barters his child, it was a warning sent from heaven! And they would have played with me, would they, as they played with my brother? With me, who considered myself proud to be

slandered, yes!—for the slander was motherhood! It was love! [*She strikes the bell.*

CÆSAR. Irene! Irene! What are you going to do?

IRENE. Purge my house and my heart of this defilement, which, like a wave, engulfs our good name!

BALTHAZAR *enters.*

BALTHAZAR. Did the Marchioness ring?

IRENE. Where is that—Gerardo? Answer me.

BALTHAZAR. Master Garardo? On the bed; he did not undress. He cries all the time. Pardon, Marchioness, I—he....

IRENE. That will do. Get him up at once—no matter. Call a cab, and drive him to his house, you know where that is—to his mother's house. To his people! Do you hear? Instantly! Do as I tell you!

BALTHAZAR. If he asks....

IRENE. Say nothing. Say nothing there, either. Do as I tell you.

BALTHAZAR. Yes, Marchioness. [*Goes out.*

CÆSAR. Irene! Irene!

IRENE. You knew the truth, did you not? Did you know it?

CÆSAR. What was I to do? The boy is not to blame.

IRENE. He is not. Nor am I. I have protected my house and my name.

CÆSAR. I am not so sure.

IRENE. I am. And you know it.

CÆSAR. I don't know it. I am not sure.

IRENE. Then you will have to swear it! This time I shall not repent what I have done. You are the only one who can set my conscience at rest. Do not make me doubt you, when I doubt all the world beside, yes, I even doubt myself, I doubt my heart, which, until now, has never deceived me.

The truth! Tell me the truth, by all that is dear to your soul!

CÆSAR. Yes, it is the truth, the sad, the humiliating truth. Your conscience may rest clear.

IRENE. Thanks....that is all. Thanks.... I have been cheated, betrayed....

CÆSAR. Yes, but the boy was not to blame.

IRENE. What else could I do? When the guilty are punished, the innocent must suffer, too.

CÆSAR. Man's justice!

IRENE. What else could I do? My conscience is clear. It seems cold. Don't you think it is cold? The fire is out.

CÆSAR. No, it is warm, very warm.

IRENE. I think it is cold.

CÆSAR. Perhaps....

IRENE. No. Will you see?

CÆSAR. Seventy-two. Of course!

IRENE. Then.... Then I am cold.

CÆSAR. Yes, Irene. Among these tapestries and rich curtains, with velvet carpets beneath your feet, and with a clear conscience, you are cold when it is seventy-two. It is the chill of justice, the chill of the truths of this world. There is another truth, which is above this truth and this justice—the truth of the heart.

IRENE. Oh, my heart! My poor, proud woman's heart! I had dreamed that it was strong!

[*She bursts into tears.*

CÆSAR. This is the truth, I know.

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

The scene is the same as in the Second Act.
MARÍA ANTONIA *and* BEATRICE *are sitting with* IRENE.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Are you asleep, Aunt Irene?

IRENE. No....

MARÍA ANTONIA. You must find us awfully dull. Have we ruined the afternoon?

IRENE. No, my dears. It was good of you to come. You must find it dull.

BEATRICE. No, indeed.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I have enjoyed myself immensely. It was wonderful to see all those lovely things—the fans and the laces, the Manila shawls and the miniatures. You have the sentiment to preserve them. We have absolutely nothing at home ourselves, because mamma is forever making changes, and invariably for the worse. I do adore these beautiful, old things; that is why I am so devoted to Uncle Mauricio, although Uncle Mauricio declares that he is going to leave everything to a museum. Do you believe that he really will?

IRENE. It would prevent his heirs from imitating the example of your mother.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Tastes are so different. I could never part with such treasures. If noble houses are stripped of their memories, which are holy relics, for they are——

IRENE. Yes, they are our relics.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Isn't it dreadful to feel that they may pass into strangers' hands?

IRENE. Yes, it is. It would be very dreadful indeed.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I enjoyed the stories you told us even more than I did the things themselves; these laces that my grandmother wore, and my mother wore them afterward on her wedding-dress; these, that were used on the dress in which my brothers and sisters and I were baptized. The Queen Regent gave this fan to my great-grandmother, and this is the handkerchief my mother waved at the troops when they returned from the African War. Associations like these are the perfume of things. They provide background, which fades when they pass out of the family, and no one any longer remembers what they mean.

IRENE. Yes, they continue as history, but the poetry is gone. María Antonia, it surprises me to hear you talk.

BEATRICE. She read every word of it in a novel.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I don't think that is at all nice. Besides, I don't read novels.

BEATRICE. Don't you? I read it myself. The perfume was there, the relics, and everything.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Are you trying to persuade Aunt Irene that my taste is no better than yours, collecting post-cards? I wish you could see the post-cards! The colors are horrible. She prefers them with tinsel, and snow glued on.

BEATRICE. Oh, you say that to annoy me! I have exactly three, which my old nurse gave me on my birthday, poor dear! Imagine what they look like! Of course I was pleased. I shouldn't dream of throwing them away.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I told you you had bad taste.

BEATRICE. I am not as clever as you. Whenever it is Wagner night at the Opera, you prick yourself with a pin all evening so as to keep awake and appear intelligent, which you have an idea is quite remarkable.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Not to say ingenious. Perhaps I should

follow your example, and spend my time fishing for compliments, or ransacking the audience for resemblances to my friends.

BEATRICE. At least I enjoy myself. I have no intention of doing penance when I am having a good time.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It is no penance to you to sit all day reading Sherlock Holmes.

BEATRICE. It isn't any to you either, provided there is nobody around. When you can be seen, at the beach in the summer-time, or on the street, or when we are travelling, your taste is something grand and spectacular: "Don Quixote," "Paradise Lost," or "The Divine Comedy." I tell her she has been nurse-maid to all the great writers.

IRENE. Nurse-maid? No, not really?

BEATRICE. Yes, she has trotted them all out without caring for one of them.

MARÍA ANTONIA. You fairly scintillate to-day. Mamma impressed it upon us to be sure to make ourselves amusing, so after all she is only complying with instructions. What do you suppose can have happened to mamma? She promised positively to stop for us before it was dark.

BEATRICE. Probably she is having a discussion with Aunt Carolina.

IRENE. I didn't know that they were on speaking terms?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, yesterday Aunt Carolina wrote mamma a letter of apology.

IRENE. Aunt Carolina did?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, of course she knows that he is no longer with you. She was so glad; we all were. It would be silly to pretend anything else—not that we care, but on your account. The responsibility would have been terrible.

BEATRICE. I am awfully sorry, though, for the poor boy.

IRENE. Are you sorry for him?

BEATRICE. Yes, it wasn't his fault. I wonder what will become of him?

MARÍA ANTONIA. I don't see that he requires any sympathy. After all, he gets the property. Mamma is simply furious.

IRENE. Who cares about the property? It is the name, our name.

BEATRICE. Just the same.... Yes, now I hear mamma. Who is with her?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Uncle Mauricio.

FELISA *and the* DUKE *of* SANTA OLALLA *enter.*

MARÍA ANTONIA. Hello, Uncle.

DUKE. Good evening, my dears. Hello, Irene!

FELISA. Have you recovered? I hope you haven't had too much of the girls.

IRENE. No, I was sorry for them. They have passed a dull afternoon.

FELISA. That makes no difference. I would have sat with you myself, if I had had time; I would have been better off than where I was. Besides, I should have spared myself a terrible row.

IRENE. A row?

FELISA. Yes, I have just had a row with Carolina.

IRENE. I thought you had just made up?

FELISA. We had. That was how the trouble began. Uncle Mauricio was there. He can tell you.

IRENE. I am surprised.

DUKE. Unpleasant, thoroughly unpleasant!

FELISA. Carolina is simply impossible; it is useless to attempt to get on with her. Would you believe it? She expected me to sit still and listen to all the grudges she ever had against our family, and that, too, before she married our brother,

IRENE. She has no occasion to reproach me upon that account.

FELISA. You are the one she blames most. Now I come to think of it, I got into trouble taking your part.

IRENE. I do not recognize the obligation.

FELISA. I appeal to Uncle Mauricio.

DUKE. No, no, leave me out of it. You have exhausted the subject, no more remains to be said. Carolina, at least, employs a classical vocabulary, half historic, half literary. She called you Marcolfa, Doña Urraca, and Street-Walker. But you! What you called her would not have been allowed on the street!

BEATRICE. Why, mamma!

MARÍA ANTONIA. How perfectly shocking!

FELISA. I can't see it. If I made any mistake, it was in being too conservative. I have finished with Carolina; that woman enrages me. I am only thinking of you. You seem more cheerful to-day. It must have been a bitter pill for you to swallow, with your headstrong, supersensitive disposition. I know you. You were wrapped up in that boy. It couldn't have been worse if he had been your own son; you were beginning to think so already. Oh, you don't know what it means to have children! When they are your own, they are more trouble than they are worth. Talk about pleasure! However, we have made up our minds to do exactly as you say. Méndez Alonso had a talk with José María yesterday. He advises us to go on with the suit.

IRENE. And invite a scandal? You will accomplish nothing else.

FELISA. Nonsense! Méndez Alonso is positive that we have more proof than we need, and he has not heard one-half. I wonder when it would be convenient for him to look over those letters? He is making a thorough investigation of the subject.

IRENE. I will think it over, and let you know.

FELISA. What will people say if we stand by and allow those mountebanks to walk off—I had almost said clean-handed—if we stand by and encourage them to carry off in their filthy paws what rightfully belongs to us, to our family?

IRENE. Nobody cares about the money.

FELISA. My dear, you may not care about it, because you have saved all you ever had, yes, and you have added to it, what is more; besides, you have nobody but yourself. But I can tell you that our family is in a very interesting situation, what with Isidoro's business affairs, which always turn out the other way, somehow, and, then, with what we have been obliged to put into politics. Politically speaking, I tell Isidoro that he is little better than a politic ox.

DUKE. Politics aside, however, I should not think it politic to tell him that.

FELISA. I have my reasons. The plain fact is, we are not in any position to make sacrifices. It is our duty, our sacred duty, to protect what is ours, what belongs to us. We are stretching a point, too, by not prosecuting Carolina. Why, she made him sign a receipt for what she had when she married him, when we all know she never had anything, except three or four old rags that still hung together, and her jewels, and half of those must have been rented, to judge by what we have seen of them since. Nevertheless, she was his wife, and as long as he was satisfied.... But these cut-throats! Are we going to allow them to rob us not only of our money, but of our name, our family name? If every hussy that walks the streets takes it into her head to give out that her children are our husbands' or our brothers', where are we going to stop? With a day-nursery? Why don't you take any interest in the conversation? All you do is stand there and look innocent.

DUKE. Yes, exactly. With a day-nursery! Why drag me into it? Am I invited to contribute? Lend me a term out of your polite vocabulary. What do you expect me to do? Keep the nurse? You must have great faith in my innocence.

FELISA. That does not sound amusing to me.

DUKE. Probably not, but as the world goes, things are not to be tossed off so lightly. Irene will think it over. She will take her time, and look into the matter. When a probability, at least, has been arrived at....

FELISA. Well, I see no objection, although it is only putting off the inevitable. Why not drop in at our house to-morrow? Come for luncheon. Méndez Alonso and José María will be there. We can talk quietly and enjoy ourselves. You might as well come. What do you say?

IRENE. I will think it over.

FELISA. Think it over? Yes, you are a likely one to think! You are a changed woman; I don't know you. You have jumped at conclusions all your life.

IRENE. Girlish impulsiveness.

FELISA. I envy you; yes, I do. Very well, we must hurry off ourselves; we have guests to dine. Say good-by to your aunt. If you change your mind, you can telephone. Gracious, Irene, you know how we all love you! You ought to be convinced by this time that there is nothing in the world like strong family feeling. If we do not stand together in a crisis like this.... Well, I'll see you to-morrow, anyway. Now don't forget! You stay a while, Uncle Mauricio.

DUKE. Yes, I shall remain with Irene.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Good afternoon, Aunt Irene. Thank you so much.

IRENE. Thank you, too. Good-by, Beatrice.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Good-by, Uncle.

DUKE. My dears, adios.

FELISA, MARÍA ANTONIA, *and* BEATRICE *go out.*

DUKE. Peaceful days are at an end. I wax prophetic.

IRENE. Yes, no relatives were ever more attentive. This morning Carolina sent a basket of flowers, the choicest in her conservatory, and José María Agustín's picture, which he values highly. Then, as a crowning sacrifice, Felisa detailed the girls to spend the afternoon with me.

DUKE. Such altruism exceeds the limit. What is your plan of defense?

IRENE. I don't know; I have not been able to think. My disappointment, my mortification are too keen. It has been a real grief to me. My last illusion, to which I had clung to justify a wasted life, has been taken from me. My soul has returned to its solitude, to remain there, and wither.

DUKE. You have always lived happily in the loneliness of your pride.

IRENE. No, it was a lie, a lie entirely. A lonely spirit may be great, it may be proudly great, as you say, but its greatness is like the sea's, great in itself, while all about lie rocks and sand and salt sterility. Only by what we do, can we be conscious of what we are. God was solitary, alone, in his omnipotence, yet he created worlds and other beings by his will, that he might realize his existence in all the immensity of his power, in all the life which he had called to be. I, a poor woman, will never know my true self, because I have never lived in the lives of those around me. Love is the breath of the body, the spark of the spirit. If our love adds nothing to life, how then is life worth the pain of being lived? Our minds and our hearts become as sealed coffers, storehouses of treasures from which life might have been enriched, but when we retain them for ourselves, it is as if others had been robbed. We are guilty as the lost sinner, who shall never have hope of mercy,

because he has sinned against the spirit itself, and the treasure we hold in our guilty hands is God's spirit, the spirit which God has breathed into us.

DUKE. Exaltation, mysticism! All this has a simple explanation. Sooner or later the heart asserts itself, and exacts what it has been denied, out of policy, out of pride, yes, or out of cowardice—out of selfishness, in one word. Irene de Montalbán, Field of Ermine like your shield, a fierce love consumed your heart, and rather than sear its whiteness, you have destroyed your heart!

CÆSAR *enters.*

CÆSAR. Irene! Quick! Where is Balthazar? Ring at once. He must know....

IRENE. Why? What is the matter? Are you serious? You alarm me!

CÆSAR. Yes, Irene. This is serious.

IRENE. What? What is serious?

DUKE. Yes, don't be so deliberate! Tell her, it is the only way.

CÆSAR. Of course.... But first ring for Balthazar. He took Gerardo. He took him to his mother's house, did he not?

IRENE. Who? Gerardo?

CÆSAR. He is not there. They have heard nothing of him; they have no idea—I thought it best to say nothing myself.

IRENE. But.... Go on! Go on! Don't keep us in suspense.

CÆSAR. Pardon. I forgot.... Imagine my surprise! I haven't yet recovered from the shock. I called at his mother's this morning, anxious to learn how they had received it, and what Gerardo had said; also, I must confess, to bring you some word, for I was confident that you had not ceased to be interested in the poor boy. To my astonishment

—fortunately, I asked no questions—I saw at once that my visit aroused no special interest. Nothing was said about matters as to which, naturally, they should have questioned me. It was not long before I discovered that Gerardo was not there, that they had absolutely no news of him, nor the remotest suspicion that he was no longer at your house.

IRENE. But, then, what has become of the boy? Gracious! Where is he? Where did he go?

DUKE. Most extraordinary.

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. Did the Marchioness ring?

IRENE. Where is Balthazar? Send him to me immediately.

MARTIN *goes out.*

IRENE. Did you say nothing there?

CÆSAR. No, not a word. Imagine the situation if I had told them that Gerardo had disappeared! They would have jumped to the conclusion that the poor boy had been murdered. Such minds are fertile in suspicion and melodrama, accustomed as they are to cheap literature. I pretended unconcern and made my escape. Without loss of time, I telegraphed to Moraleda, to the aunt with whom the boy had lived. It seemed natural to suppose that he had gone back to her. The telegram was marked urgent, the reply was prepaid, and a moment ago the answer was handed to me at the Club. Here it is. "Gerardo not here. Advise further details. Greatly alarmed."

IRENE. It is two days, two days since that boy——

BALTHAZAR *enters.*

BALTHAZAR. Your Excellency?

IRENE. Come here, no, come here to me. When I told you to take Gerardo, Master Gerardo, to his mother's, did you go with him yourself direct to the house?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, Marchioness. I called a cab, as the

Marchioness wished. The....the young man was not feeling well. He cried all the time. We drove to the house, and stopped at the door——

IRENE. Did you go up with him to the door of the apartment? Did you ring? Did somebody open the door, some servant or....?

BALTHAZAR. Marchioness, the....the young man wouldn't let me go up-stairs with him.

IRENE. You did wrong, very wrong. That was not what I told you to do.

BALTHAZAR. Pardon, your Excellency. He insisted on my leaving him as soon as we got to the house. He didn't want to say that the Marchioness had turned him out; he wanted to tell them that he had run away. Coming with me, presumably.... I didn't like to leave him, but he had set his heart on it; and he cried so hard. Then, as the Marchioness said to answer no questions, and they would be sure to ask questions as soon as they saw me, I.... I am sorry, Marchioness. Has anything happened to....to the young gentleman?

IRENE. No, nothing. But you have done wrong, very wrong.

BALTHAZAR. Pardon, your Excellency. I....

IRENE. That is all.

BALTHAZAR. Yes, your Excellency. [*Goes out.*

IRENE. Cæsar! Cæsar! Find that boy! Do whatever may be necessary, spare no expense. Stop at nothing!

CÆSAR. To be sure. There is no occasion for alarm. I made inquiries of the police before leaving the Club, I telephoned the various shelters and hospitals, but nothing had occurred that could possibly have referred to him. He has no friends in Madrid; he does not know Madrid well enough to be able to hide successfully. Had he any money?

IRENE. I don't know. It could not have been much; I never gave him any. He never went out alone.

CÆSAR. His mother—his mother gave him money whenever he went to her house. He must have had money. I will run at once to the chief of police. The police will be able to put their hands on him.

DUKE. To the devil with that boy!

IRENE. Poor little fellow! Rather than return to his mother, he.... We have ruined his life. Cæsar, lose no time! Take the servants, anything! Everything!

CÆSAR. No, it won't be necessary. I shall go alone. But don't be impatient. I shall telephone from the Prefecture. No accident has happened; that at least is certain.

IRENE. Hurry, Cæsar! Hurry! Ah! Where can he be?

CÆSAR *goes out.*

DUKE. Probably I could not make myself useful.

IRENE. No, we must wait. It was I, I did it!

DUKE. No, Irene. Why reproach yourself? Nobody could have anticipated this. Not but that there may have been a measure of precipitation upon your part, but merely as to form, the manner was hasty, that was all. Once the facts had become known, that boy could not have remained in your house.

IRENE. What would I give now if he had never left it? I loved him, yes, I loved him! I had learned to love him with my whole heart. What miserable creatures we are! What did I care that he was not of my race or my blood? He was human, like me. I loved him because he was innocent, because he was unfortunate, and he should have appealed to me as the more unfortunate the lower I believed his birth to have been. Yet, at the first shock, an instinctive loathing crept over me, like a physical repulsion; yes, I was swept up by a sudden passion and lost control of myself, I was unable

to forget, unwilling to forgive, like a lover, who sees the living image of his betrayal floating always before his eyes—of eyes which look into other eyes, and lips which kiss other lips, until he is overwhelmed with all the horror of promiscuousness. I felt as if I had seen a stranger drinking out of my own cup. That is how I felt, in the instinct of my race, jealous of the purity of our noble blood. When we read in books, or hear in the theatre, of the falsity, the unreasonableness, the absurdity of a thousand things which we recognize to be mere conventions, empty social formulas, we imagine that we are superior to all prejudice. We applaud, and add our protests; but when we return to life, and reality imposes itself upon us, it is not long before we realize that what we had believed to be conventions, mere empty social formulas, the very ideas and feelings which had appeared the most absurd, are in truth deeply rooted in human nature. Reason is for the spectator, who looks at life calmly from without; but when we become actors in our lives, then it is the heart, then it is instinct which governs us, and drives us before it at the mercy of a blind force which, in our human pride, we presume to call will.

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN. Your Excellency....

IRENE. What is it? Oh!....

DUKE. A letter.

IRENE. Why....

MARTIN. If there is no answer.... It was delivered personally, your Excellency, and an answer is requested. The boy is waiting at the door, the boy the Marchioness....

IRENE. Who? Gerardo? Is this from Gerardo?

DUKE. Virgins and martyrs!

IRENE. One moment—no, hurry! Don't let him go!

Do you hear? He is to wait for a reply. I shall ring when I am ready. [MARTIN *retires*] Great God!

DUKE. I suggest opening the letter. It might prove more informing. Read it; read it....

IRENE. [*Reading*] "To Her Excellency the Marchioness."

DUKE. It begins well.

IRENE. "Respected Marchioness."

DUKE. Respected? Good! Poor fellow!

IRENE. "I should be pleased to have this find you in excellent health, wishing the same to all your respected family."

DUKE. He includes me. Good! Perfectly simple.

IRENE. "This is to beg your pardon for having made you turn me out of your house, although I know you had other reasons for it. I saw everything that was there, and I am very sorry that you cannot be to me any more what you were. I have nobody now in the world; because I cannot go back to live with my mother. But I know you have a kind heart, and you will take pity on me, and help me to get work to do, or put me in some asylum where I can learn, and be able to earn my own living. It was not my fault, respected Marchioness. You are so good that I know you will have pity. I went into a church to pray before I began this letter, and all the time I was praying all I could think was that you were the only one who could help me. Respected Marchioness, I will be your slave; but please don't make me go back to the other house, by all that is dear, and I won't trouble you any more. Your humble and respectful servant. Respectfully, *Gerardo*."

DUKE. Amusing letter. Very. So amusing it makes me cry.

IRENE. Poor childish scrawl, with its cramped, schoolboy hand, yet clear and fine, as the heart of this simple child! And in this hand, which he has learned writing platitudes

and compliments in his copy-books, to tell of his games and his play, this poor boy pours out his sorrows, and begs my charity.

DUKE. Well, what is your answer?

IRENE. Don't you know?

DUKE. Yes. I shall leave you; it is better that you be alone. I would not detain you, nor is it for me to urge you on. Your heart will decide; listen to your heart. I must find Cæsar, and discontinue his investigations before they become known. I shall return, then, and bring him with me, and we shall all be much happier. [*The* DUKE *goes out.*

MARTIN *enters.*

IRENE. This is my answer.

MARTIN. Yes, Marchioness.

[MARTIN *goes out. A pause.*

GERARDO *enters.*

IRENE. Gerardo! My Gerardo!

GERARDO. Mamma Irene!—Marchioness! Will you forgive me?

IRENE. Come, come to me. Sit down. You are pale. Your hands are cold.... Where have you been? What have you done? Tell me, tell me all about it. You are worn out, hungry. You are ill....

GERARDO. No, no.... I am well; I had plenty until today. This morning.... I had no money.

IRENE. Oh, you are hungry?

GERARDO. No, I am just tired out.

MARTIN *enters.*

IRENE. Bring a cup of bouillon and some meat, fruit, sweets, a glass of sherry—whatever is ready. [MARTIN *goes out*] Where did you go? What did you do? How could you? I shudder to think of it. Alone in Madrid—lost! Where did you sleep? Where did you eat?

GERARDO. In a sort of inn.

IRENE. Didn't they ask any questions? They must have been surprised to see a boy like you, all alone.

GERARDO. No, nobody said anything. I was afraid, but they didn't ask any questions. They just asked me a peseta to spend the night.

IRENE. It must have been horrible. A wretched bed! Who else slept there with you?

GERARDO. No, really, the bed wasn't bad. There wasn't anybody else—except the rats.

IRENE. Where did you eat?

GERARDO. I don't know. When I was hungry, I went into the first place I saw, until last night, when I had only money enough to pay to sleep. As soon as it was light, I got up, I went out into the street. I could hardly stand, so I sat down on a bench, in a plaza that was there somewhere, a plaza that had trees and a fountain in it. A man was asleep on a bench near by. After a while, a policeman came and shook him, so as to wake him up. So he got up; I thought he was drunk. When he got up, some coppers fell out of his sash, and pesetas, too, so he began trying to pick them up; but one peseta rolled out that he didn't see. I saw it, though, and the man was looking for it, but he didn't see it, though the sun was shining on it all the time.

IRENE. What did you do?

GERARDO. I hoped he would go away, and nobody come by, so I could pick up the peseta; and he did. I know it was wrong, but I was hungry.

IRENE. A day of your life that is every day to many a man and woman!

GERARDO. I picked up the money and went into a café. I ate a roll and drank a glass of milk. I rested there a long time. Then I went out again and walked and walked and

walked. When I was passing a church, all of a sudden I remembered what Father Bernardo used to say at school. He was very good, and he used to say: "My son, now remember; promise me what I am going to ask. God knows what will become of you when you go out into the world. Some day you may be so unfortunate as to lose even your faith; you may no longer be a good Christian. But remember this: though you may not have the faith you do now, when trouble comes, or whenever a great sorrow enters your life, pray, pray, and say over the prayers you used to say when you were a boy, and you will find comfort." So I remembered, and I went into the church, and I knelt down to pray. And I had no sooner begun when—I don't know just how—it seemed as if somebody was whispering in my ear, and all I could hear was: "The Marchioness, the...." No, that wasn't it: "Mamma Irene, Mamma Irene! Go back to Mamma Irene!" That was all I could think of, so I went back to the café. I had seen a gentleman there writing a letter, and I thought I could write one, too. So I asked, and they said yes, so I wrote this letter, I don't know how. We used to write letters at school, but we copied them out of books; they were different letters. I had never written such a letter. I don't know whether what I said was right; I didn't know what to say. I don't remember what was in it.

IRENE. My boy, your heart was in it. [MARTIN *enters*] Set the table by me. Leave everything. Sit here, Gerardo. You shall have whatever you wish. First, take a little bouillon.

GERARDO. Ah!

IRENE. Are you cold? I was cold, too, although this room is so close and warm. It is foolish of us to be cold. Light the fire.

MARTIN. Is there no heat, Marchioness?

IRENE. Yes, but light the fire. It will be more cheerful. You will see. We shall light a great fire, as they do on the country hearths, when the farmers say:

"Hearth alight
Makes body warm
And soul bright."

Take a sip of wine.

GERARDO. No, no wine. I shall never taste wine any more.

IRENE. Do you still remember that?

GERARDO. I was terribly ashamed. But that wasn't the reason you sent me away.

IRENE. You don't know.

GERARDO. Of course I do. I know all about it. That wasn't the reason.

IRENE. No, rest; rest.... You can tell me when we are alone.

MARTIN. The fire, Marchioness.

IRENE. Throw on more wood. Yes, that will do. What a beautiful fire!

MARTIN *goes out.*

IRENE. Come by me, come by the fire. My father used to spend long seasons in the country, in the mountains and pastures surrounding our house. He often took me with him. How he did love these fires on the great, open country hearths! I used to sit with him beside the fire, while all the servants and farm-hands gathered about. We went there many years to spend Christmas Eve. My father liked best to spend it in the country. He said that it always seemed to him, among those people, and before those blazing fires, as if it really were the night on which Jesus had come into the world. When I was a little girl, one year they dressed me as an angel, and I spoke the Annunciation to the Shepherds there. I

had on a white tunic, embroidered all over with stars, and on my back I wore golden wings. As soon as they were all together, I appeared suddenly between bright lights, and spoke the verses of the Annunciation. The poor, simple peasants laughed and cried, and they sang their simple carols all night long, and my father, too, sang with them. We really felt that night that not far away, but very near, the Son of God had been born, and he was very near to all our hearts. This fire reminds me of those country fires, and the memory shall not be in vain. Gerardo, throw all this into the fire.

GERARDO. I?

IRENE. Yes, with your own hand. I want it to be you. You! Now it is done. What a world of treachery and shame is burning in those flames! If envy and passion and evil thoughts had form, we should see them there at this moment, burning red, like little devils, writhing in the flames, yes, like tongues of fire that lick the paper up, livid parasites, devouring all they touch! They are gone, gone.... In God's name! And you will never know.

GERARDO. I know; I know all about it. I did all the time. Only I didn't want to talk. I was ashamed. That is why I never want to go there any more.

IRENE. Never?

GERARDO. Never, no, never. If you can't do anything for me, maybe I can do something for myself. I might go back to Moraleda and ask them to let me be a servant at the school. I don't know what I could do, but I will never go back to that house. Never!

IRENE. She is your mother; she may require it. She may demand it.

GERARDO. No, I couldn't do it. I'd die first, I'd kill myself. Nothing could be worse than that. It is the most terrible thing that could be in the world.

IRENE. What is so terrible? What do you mean?

GERARDO. Just that. Because I know; yes, I do. Mamma Irene, tell me if I am not right. There were bad boys at school, and whenever they quarrelled with the other boys, they called them ugly names; and although the Fathers always punished them, the bad boys always used them just the same. And the worst thing that they could say was the worst thing that could possibly be said; it was about your mother. Whenever that happened, although the boy who said it may have been the strongest, and the other boy the smallest, the most cowardly in the school, he would throw himself on the boy who said it, and rush at him in such a rage, that he always had the best of it, and all the rest of us were glad. And it went through the whole school. One day, a new boy came to school, and one of the bad boys began to annoy him, and to tease him, and so the new boy struck him, and then the bad boy said—well, just that, the worst thing that could possibly be said. All of us thought he was going to tear him to pieces; and, then, we saw him hang his head, and turn away into a corner, and there he began to cry. A chill crept over my whole body. Hasn't that boy any blood in his veins? What makes him such a coward? Then one of the boys who was standing by, said: "Don't you believe that he's a coward; he is the bravest boy in the school, and the strongest. If he wanted, he could put an end to us all." "Then, what is the matter with him?" "Why, what can he do? What that boy said is true." You see, there couldn't possibly be anything worse in the world than to have to hang your head before the vilest word that can be said to a man, and to have to turn away and burst out crying instead, like that poor boy. It's no use to be brave, it's no use to be strong, when what they say is true, and it is a truth like that. All you can do is hang your head,

turn away and cry, and die of shame, as I wish I were dying now.

IRENE. My boy, my boy! No, no. You are mine, all mine, and no one's else. I will ransom you at any price, I will save you at the cost of my name, of my honor. You are my son. I shall welcome their worst slanders, and they shall all appear true; I shall live my life to redeem you, I shall ennoble you with the riches of my spirit. But you are worn out. Your eyes close.... You are falling asleep.

GERARDO. Yes, I am so tired; I am almost asleep. Mamma Irene, Mamma Irene.... Are you angry when I call you that? Will you really keep me always with you?

IRENE. Yes, always. Always.

GERARDO. Like this? I am so happy. Don't you go.... Don't leave me....

CÆSAR *and the* DUKE *enter.*

CÆSAR. Is he here? Where is he?

IRENE. Hush! He has fallen asleep.

DUKE. Where did he go? Did he tell you his story?

IRENE. A story of two days, which might have been the history of a lifetime, and now can never be.

CÆSAR. What a wonderful fire! Have you been cold to-day, too?

IRENE. No, this fire has burned up one truth and many lies. It has consumed my pride of race, it has reduced my heart to ashes, that it might be purified. It is a spiritual fire, in whose brightness a son has been born to my soul. It glows in my soul like a mystery of love and redemption. Upon the ermine of my field, I shall place a lily as a new charge, whiter than the ermine.

Curtain