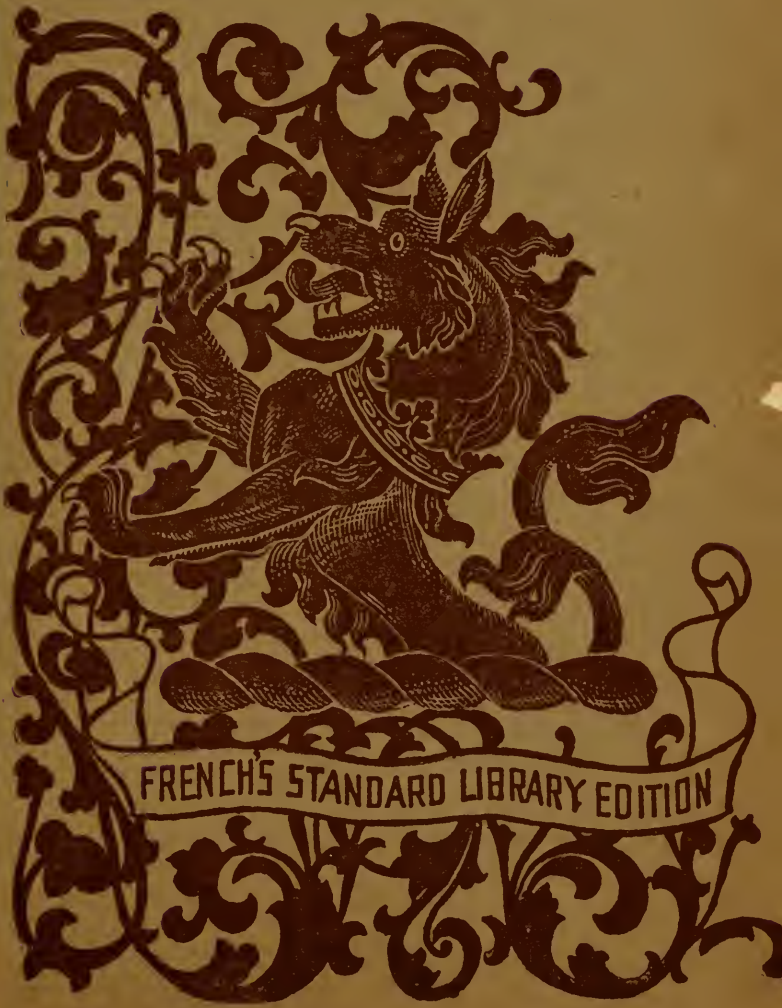
PASSERS-BY

BY

C. HADDON CHAMBERS



SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New York

PASSERS-BY

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

C. HADDON CHAMBERS

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
28-30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND

PERSONS CONCERNED

MR. PETER WAVERTON (27)
WILLIAM PINE, *his man-servant* (40)
NIGHTY, *a cabman* (60)
SAMUEL BURNS, *a tramp* (36)
MARGARET SUMMERS (25)
THE LADY HURLEY, *Waverton's half-sister* (45)
MISS BEATRICE DAINTON, *Lady Hurley's niece* (23)
LITTLE PETER SUMMERS (6)
MRS. PARKER, *Waverton's cook-housekeeper* (60)

PERIOD: *Our own times*

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The first production of *Passers-by* was made at Wyndham's Theatre, London, under the management of Messrs. Frank Curzon and Gerald du Maurier, on the evening of March 29, 1911, with the following cast:—

MR. PETER WAVERTON	MR. GERALD DU MAURIER
PINE	MR. GAYER MACKAY
NIGHTY	MR. GEORGE SHELTON
SAMUEL BURNS	MR. O. P. HEGGIE
MARGARET SUMMERS	MISS IRENE VANBRUGH
THE LADY HURLEY	MISS HELEN FERRERS
BEATRICE DAINTON	MISS NINA SEVENING
LITTLE PETER SUMMERS	MISS RENEE MAYER

PASSERS-BY

ACT I

SCENE: *A handsome sitting-room in a bachelor's apartments on the first floor of a house in Piccadilly, opposite the Green Park. It is obviously the room of a man of comfortable means and good taste. The decoration and furniture are of the Adams period. (For details of scene see accompanying plan.)*

(Note.—This plan is absolutely essential, and can be copied from the Dickworth (London) publication.)

TIME: *It is about half-past ten at night in the winter, and there is a cheerful fire in the room.*

At rise of curtain stage is in darkness, save for the reflection through the windows of the lights in the street below.

PINE, *who is smoking a cigar, is up* L.C., *looking out of window. Suddenly he flings the window open and calls across the road.*

PINE. Nighty! *(Slight pause. As the call receives no response he whistles in a peculiar way. This apparently attracts attention and he waves his arm, inviting the person signalled to cross the road. After another slight pause, during which he watches* NIGHTY *cross the road, he bends out of the window and speaks to him.)* Come along up! *(Slight pause)* Oh, yes, it's all right. *(He withdraws into the window, which he closes.* PINE *then goes down*

R.C., *switches on electric light, then crosses up to sideboard and brings down tray, on which are decanters, syphons, and glasses. As he comes down there is a knocking on outer door; he places tray on table down* R. *and exits* R.1E., *and the slamming of the outer door is heard. A few moments later* PINE *re-enters, accompanied by* NIGHTY. PINE *switches on more light.* NIGHTY *is a typical London cabman of about sixty, weather-beaten, broad-shouldered and slightly stooping. His face is at once cheerful and shrewd, and he has the quality of being deferential without any sacrifice of his natural pride. He is very warmly clad. As he enters the room he takes his hat off.*

PINE. *(Behind table* R.*)* Pretty cold outside!

NIGHTY. *(Down* R.*)* Nippy, I call it, but I've known worse.

PINE. A little something to warm the chest wouldn't hurt anyway.

NIGHTY. Thank you, kindly, Mr. Pine, I could do with it, and that's a fact. *(*PINE *busies himself with decanter and glass)* Me and my old horse are just going to have our supper.

PINE. I saw you drive up to the shelter. Had a good job?

NIGHTY. *(*R. *of table* R.*)* Fair! Stout party with a couple of kids to Ravenscourt Park—'Ammersmith for short—an extra bob for crossing the radius, and nothing for all the way back. Your 'ealth, Mr. Pine. *(He drinks from the glass* PINE *has handed to him, then puts glass on table)*

PINE. Same to you, Nighty! *(He drinks)*

NIGHTY. Prime stuff! Goes straight to the spot.

PINE. Have a cigar? *(Points to box, which is open, on table)*

NIGHTY. No, thank you, Mr. Pine, a drop of whisky is only a drop of whisky, and no one would grudge it to an old cabman on a cold night. But

when it comes to them things. *(Picks up box)* Lord! it's like eating money. Couple o' bob a touch, I shouldn't wonder! *(Puts box back on table)*

PINE. You wouldn't be so squeamish if you'd been brought up in service. *(He gives* NIGHTY *a chair, then crosses down* L.*)*

NIGHTY. *(Sits chair* L. *of table* R.*)* We're all in service, Mr. Pine, from the highest to the lowest. The difference between you and me is that you only take orders from one boss while I take 'em from everybody that hires my cab.

PINE. *(By sofa* L.*)* All the same I often envy you your job.

NIGHTY. Why? You've got a good boss, haven't you? I only knows him by sight, but he looks all right.

PINE. Oh, he's pretty well. Anyway he doesn't count his cigars and measure his whisky as some of 'em do. He's open-handed enough—but you never make no headway with him. I've lived with him three years now, and I don't know him as well as I know you. *(Crosses* R. *a little)* Is he human? That's what I ask.

NIGHTY. We're all human when you pull the mask off.

PINE. *(Crosses* R. *to below table)* It'd take 'ydraulic power to pull *his* mask off.

NIGHTY. Maybe he's had reason to fix his tight on. You never know. *(*PINE *helps him to more whisky)* Thanks, only a drain. I'll have to keep m' eyes bright to-night. It's very thick down at Knightsbridge and if I'm a judge you'll have it black up here presently.

PINE. *(Sitting on edge of table* R.*)* I've never known so much fog as we've had this year.

NIGHTY. *(Rising)* Well, I must pop off. I'm going to take my old 'orse 'ome after supper, before

it gets too thick. *(Through the window the fog can be seen gathering in eddies.)* See, it's creeping up a bit already. *(The noise of a latch-key in a door is heard outside)*

PINE. *(Startled)* Good Lord!

NIGHTY. What's the matter?

PINE. That can't be the guv'nor.

NIGHTY. *(Comes down* C. *a little)* Why can't it?

PINE. I've never known him to come in before one.

NIGHTY. *(With a significant look at the cigar* PINE *is smoking)* I wouldn't go nap on that if I was you.

(PINE *picks up cigar-box, hastily crosses* L. *and places it in drawer in cabinet* L., *then he throws the remainder of his cigar into the fireplace. At the same moment enter* PETER WAVERTON. *He is a good-looking, well-set-up man of 27. The expression on his face is at once grave and indifferent. It is the expression of one who resents rather than enjoys life. He is, however, capable of a rare and very winning smile. He raises his eyebrows in momentry amazement when he sees the two men in his room.)*

WAVERTON. *(*R.*)* Well, I'm damned! *(Leaves door open)*

NIGHTY. All I can say, m'lord, is yer don't look it.

WAVERTON. Don't call me m'lord.

NIGHTY. Very well, guv'nor, but some likes it.

WAVERTON. I don't! My name is Waverton. Who are you?

PINE. *(By fireplace* L.*)* Beg pardon, sir, it was a liberty, I know, but I asked him in. It's Nighty, the cabman.

NIGHTY. So called, guv'nor, because I've been

doing night work for thirty years. No offence, I 'ope, sir!

WAVERTON. *(Ironically)* I trust you have been suitably entertained in my regrettable absence, Mr. Nighty?

NIGHTY. The best, guv'nor—thank you kindly.

WAVERTON. *(Cross behind table,* R.*)* A little more whisky?

NIGHTY. Much obliged, sir, enough's as good as a hogshead, so I'll just 'op along. *(Cross* R. *he salutes* WAVERTON *and goes to the door, then he turns and says gently)* I should be sorry to think, guv'nor, that through 'is kindness to me—Mr. Pine——

WAVERTON. Good night! Pine, show Mr. Nighty the way. *(Exeunt* PINE *and* NIGHTY R. I E.*—leave door open.* WAVERTON *walks to the mantelpiece* L., *and glances at the remainder of the cigar that* PINE *has thrown into the fireplace. The noise of the outer door closing is heard. He gives a gesture of disgust. Enter* PINE, R. I E., *closes door, then crosses up* R., *gets small tray there—crosses down to table* R. *and takes up the glasses that have been used.* WAVERTON, *by fireplace)* In taking my tobacco and whisky, you exceed your duty, Pine.

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. In using my room to entertain your friend you permitted yourself a gross liberty.

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. And in throwing away, half-smoked, one of my best cigars, you committed a crime.

PINE. Yes, sir. I hope that you'll allow me to apologise, sir.

WAVERTON. *(With angry emphasis)* I'll do nothing of the kind. I'd rather receive a blow than an apology from any man at any time. I thought I could trust you. It seems I can't. You must find another place.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(He goes to the door* R. 2 E., *carrying the glasses on a tray—he turns before leaving and says)* I'm sorry, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Shortly)* So am I. *(Removes coat and muffler and throws them on sofa. (Exit* PINE R. 2 E. WAVERTON *walks to the window impatiently, looks out and shivers at the prospect. The telephone bell rings. He goes to the instrument, which is on a writing-table, and takes up the receiver. Crossly)* Hello! Hello! Who is that? *(Then he changes to a more amiable tone)* Oh, is that you, Beatrice? *(Listens for a moment)* Cross with you? Good Heavens, no! I came away simply because I was bored. *(Listens for a moment)* Yes, bored with the others, of course. My dear Bee, how you can stand that set, I don't know. What was the one and only topic of conversation during dinner? "What will the dear Duchess do now?"—What the devil do I care what the dear Duchess will do now? The dear Duchess' love affairs leave me entirely cold. The only love affairs that interest me are my own. *(Listens for a moment, takes off hat and places it on table, then laughs slightly)* Of course, I mean, *affair,* you child. *(Listens for a moment)* Oh, no doubt you were bored too, but you didn't show it. *(Listens for a moment)* No, I shan't go out any more to-night. I am sick to death of bridge, anyway. *(He listens for a moment, then laughs with an approach to heartiness)* All right! *(Listens for a moment)* Yes, yes, to-morrow, then. Good night, dear. *(Puts down the receiver, is thoughtful for a moment, then takes a book—crosses to sofa and sits—another moment's thought, looks over to door* R. 2 E., *rises, flings book on sofa, rings the bell and stands at the fireplace. Enter* PINE R. 2 E., *crosses down to sofa and collects coat, wrap and hat)* Pine, I came home

in a very bad temper, and I have an uneasy feeling that I may have judged you too hardly.

PINE. *(L. C.)* I make no complaints, sir.

WAVERTON. *(By fireplace)* Everything after all is a question of point of view. You were brought up in service?

PINE. Yes, sir, like my father and mother before me. I rose from steward's boy, sir.

WAVERTON. Ah! and the point of view in service is that a man may make free with his employer's goods without being considered dishonest.

PINE. Within reason, sir, particularly in regard to food, drink, tobacco, and such like. Practically every valet and butler in England does it. Most go a great deal further. I could make your hair stand on end, sir, with the robbery that goes on. *(Movement from* WAVERTON*)* I'm not seeking to justify myself, but I've never belonged to that lot. I've always respected myself, sir. *(Cross* R.*)*

WAVERTON. Then from your point of view you've never been dishonest?

PINE. Never, sir.

WAVERTON. And have you any point of view to explain your use of my rooms for purposes of entertainment instead of your own?

PINE. I have my excuse, with respect, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Leans against* R. *end of sofa* L.*)* What is it? *(Motions to* PINE, *who puts coat and wrap on chair,* R., *and hat on table)*

PINE. *(Cross* L. *a little)* Your rooms look out on to Piccadilly—on to Life, sir. My rooms look out on to a dead wall—on to nothing—I love life, sir—forgive the liberty.

WAVERTON. *(With a short laugh)* Well, at least you've been candid, Pine.

PINE. I was glad to be, sir. It's the first chance I've had during the three years I've been with you.

WAVERTON. What do you mean?

PINE. I mean, with respect, sir, that it's the first time I've exchanged remarks with you except in the way of service.

WAVERTON. *(A little surprised)* Why, Pine, the truth is I never looked on you as human. *(Rises, and crosses round* L. *of settee to window)*

PINE. Mr. Nighty was saying when you came in, sir, that we're all human when the mask is pulled off.

WAVERTON. Nighty's a philosopher?

PINE. Yes, sir—not that I'm a judge.

WAVERTON. *(Looking out of window)* What a night!

PINE. *(Above chair,* R.C.*)* It's a bit cheerless, sir.

WAVERTON. Pine, did you ever suffer from an unaccountable depression?

PINE. Feeling of sadness, sir—melancholy, so to speak?

WAVERTON. More than that—a feeling that disaster is in the air—that something unexpected is going to happen?

PINE. The feeling that some one is walkin' over your grave, sir?

WAVERTON. *(Up* L.*)* Well, yes—I suppose that expresses it.

PINE. *(By chair,* R.C.*)* I haven't been a personal sufferer, sir, but I've known cases. Take the late lamented Hearl Edendork, for instance. I was dressing his lordship the night before he was run over by a motor-car, and he said to me—"Pine," he said——

WAVERTON. *(Crosses down* C. *to* R., *dryly)* Yes, I've no doubt his lordship made a very intelligent remark, Pine.

PINE. He did, sir—also his lordship made it a practice to walk under ladders.

WAVERTON. *(Secretly amused)* You are well up in the superstitions, Pine.

PINE. I've made a particular study of 'em, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Down* R.*)* And you're a true believer?

PINE. With respect, sir, I not only believe, but conform.

WAVERTON. *(Laughing, crosses* L. *to fireplace)* Then you are human indeed! Damme Pine, you amuse me! and you may stay on here if you want to.

PINE. I should be grateful, sir.

WAVERTON. You may be, provided you don't express it. You may even exercise your point of view on my whisky, but you'll be good enough to leave my cigars alone until you've learned the proper appreciation of fine tobacco.

PINE. *(Behind table* R.*)* You may trust me, sir.

WAVERTON. As for using my rooms, let me see —it's the window that attracts you, isn't it? *(He walks to the window)*

PINE. It's the passers-by, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Slowly)* The passers-by, eh? *(Looks out curiously)* They're a drab-looking lot to-night.

PINE. *(Up* R. *to window)* I find watching them takes me out of myself, sir. Sometimes, not knowing any one's looking, they'll play up most natural.

WAVERTON. *(Looking intently)* What's that chap doing over there?

PINE. Which one, sir?

WAVERTON. That one with the hair. *(Motions to* PINE, *who joins him at window)* There! He's picked up something and put it in his pocket!

PINE. *(Freezing up severely)* Oh, 'e's no good, sir. He's not human. *(He turns away from window)*

WAVERTON. *(Picking him up quickly)* Not human. How do you know?

PINE. He belongs to the dregs—to the class that lives on what they pick up and charity. Sinful, I call it, sir.

WAVERTON. You don't know him?

PINE. No, sir.

WAVERTON. Yet you presume to judge him?

PINE. *(Firmly)* I know the class, sir. *(Slight pause)*

WAVERTON. *(Suddenly)* Fetch him in here.

PINE. *(Amazed)* Fetch 'im in 'ere, sir?

WAVERTON. Certainly. Why not?

PINE. Excuse me, sir, but it's my duty to warn you. No good can come of mixing with that class.

WAVERTON. Do what I tell you. *(*PINE *goes down* R. *and picks up coat, etc.)* I, too, want taking out of myself and I choose my own methods. And bring your friend Nighty back; I'd like to make a better impression on him.

PINE. *(Goes to door, where he turns—solemnly)* Mr. Waverton—sir—if I might venture to entreat you——

WAVERTON. *(Lightly)* You might venture—but in vain. Go quickly! *(Exit* PINE, R.1E., *shuts door. Now in good spirits)* That's all right! *(Comes down—hesitates—then takes off telephone receiver)* Hello! Give me 17004 Mayfair. *(Pause)* Hello, is that Lady Hurley's house? . . . Oh—it's you, Simpson? Is Miss Beatrice there? Oh . . . playing bridge. See if she can manage to speak to me for a moment. *(Pause, gets cigarette from box and lights it)* Hello! *(He smiles)* Oh, Bee—sorry to interrupt, but I didn't want you to go to bed thinking me an old pig. *(He listens and smiles)* No, I'm not an old pig, am I?—and I didn't at all mean to be beastly—but I had an attack of the blues. Pine diagnosed for me. It appears there was some one taking quite a nice stroll over my grave. *(Listens and laughs)* Yes, all may

yet be well. . . . Kiss you good night? . . . Wish I could. . . . Oh, your photograph.—Wait a moment. *(He reaches for a framed photograph on writing-table, lifts it and kisses it)* There, did you hear it? The deed's done. *(Noise of outer door)* Yes—good night, dearest! To-morrow! *(Puts receiver down, also photo, which is placed at* R. *end of table. The room door* R.1E. *is opened by* PINE, *who shows in* SAMUEL BURNS *and enters himself.* SAMUEL BURNS *is a thin man, looking almost any age from twenty-five to forty, and about five feet five inches in height. He owns an expressionless face, with lustreless eyes, and a short, thin, neglected beard and moustache. His hair is straw-coloured, and bulges out at the sides. He is obviously a wastrel. His clothes are odd and too small for him, and he wears an old travelling cap. His pockets bulge with a variety of impedimenta. He has a habit of carrying his arms in front of him, and tucking his hands into the opposite sleeves. He also has a habit of looking on the ground and picking up unconsidered trifles, such as pins. Altogether he cuts a figure painfully negative, pathetic, and unattractive, and there is a touch of surprise and alarm in his mild face as he looks at* WAVERTON *and around the room.* WAVERTON *comes down to below chair,* L.C. *A little embarrassed—clears his throat)* It was very kind of you to step up—Mr.—er—my good fellow.

BURNS. *(Whose voice is thin and high-pitched,* R.C.*)* No 'arm, Mister.—It was this 'ere gent as fetched me. *(Indicates* PINE *with a nod)*

WAVERTON. *(Fidgeting and still embarrassed, while* PINE *stands motionless as if on duty* R.*)* And —er—by what name am I to address you?

BURNS. My name, do you mean?

WAVERTON. If you'd be so good.

BURNS. Burns, as far as I recollect—Samuel Burns—but nobody calls me nothing.

WAVERTON. Oh — no nickname — or — or pet name?

BURNS. Nothing like that, mister—unless it's "man."

WAVERTON. "Man?"

BURNS. Yes. Sometimes when people give me things they say, "'Ere, man"—— *(*WAVERTON *turns aside up* L. *with a slight groan and rubs his chin—*PINE *nudges* BURNS *gingerly)*

PINE. *(In a whisper)* Take your cap off.

BURNS. *(Starting)* What, me? Yes, sir. *(Takes his cap off hastily.* WAVERTON *and* PINE *catch each other's eyes over* BURNS' *head—their embarrassment is unconsciously humorous)*

WAVERTON. *(With sudden asperity)* Well, Pine, get along!

PINE. Excuse me, sir, but I don't take you.

WAVERTON. You brought this gentleman here.

PINE. *(Firmly)* By your orders, sir.

WAVERTON. You presumed to form a certain judgment. Give Mr. Burns an opportunity of explaining——

PINE. *(Preparing for a moral effort)* I'll do my best, sir. *(Then to* BURNS, *after clearing his throat)* How came you to fall so low, my good man?

BURNS. Me? Fall? I ain't fallen, sir! I'm very good on me pins. *(*WAVERTON *and* PINE *exchange another eloquent look)*

PINE. *(Nervously)* May I speak to you a moment, sir. *(He crosses to* WAVERTON. *They both walk down* L. *and away from* BURNS. BURNS *meanwhile, discovering a pin stuck in the carpet, stoops down and captures it, and sticks it in his waistcoat —*PINE *lowers his voice)* As I feared, sir, 'opeless. Nighty's coming over presently. You'll find 'im more interestin'—a very well-informed, respectable man.

WAVERTON. What's the matter with this one?

PINE. He fair gives me the creeps, sir. He doesn't amount to anything at all. He's simply nothing. It's 'orrible. Hadn't I better give him a trifle and let him go?

WAVERTON. Certainly not! We haven't learned anything about him yet. You said you knew the class. I think you're a bit of a fraud, Pine.

PINE. He frightens me close to—makes me nervous, sir.

WAVERTON. Nonsense! That is what comes of being brought up in the iron security of service. The man's quite harmless.

PINE. So is a cockroach, sir.

WAVERTON. You forget yourself, Pine. The gentleman is my guest, and must be suitably entertained. Is there any food in the place?

PINE. There's cold chicken, sir, and ham.

WAVERTON. *(Turning to* BURNS*)* You'll stay to supper, I hope, Mr. Burns.

BURNS. Supper?—me?—'Ere?

WAVERTON. I hope you'll give me that pleasure.

BURNS. 'Scuse me, mister, but if the gentleman would wrap my bit up in a lump of newspaper——

WAVERTON. That would rob me of the advantage of your agreeable conversation, Burns. You must let me have my way this time. Pine, supper!

PINE. In the kitchen, sir?

WAVERTON. No. Here, of course. *(Goes round sofa up* L., *then down to* PINE*)* Something on a tray. *(To chair,* L.C. PINE *hesitates, then clears table* R., *and puts tray on sideboard up* R. WAVERTON *waves him off imperiously. Exit* PINE R.2E. BURNS, *after a timid look round, has remained standing)* Sit down, Burns.

BURNS. Me, mister? Where?

WAVERTON. Here! *(Pulls chair from writing-table to* C. BURNS, *with a visible moral effort, sits*

on the edge of the arm-chair) No, that's not right. *(Waves him back)* What do you suppose a chair is for? Get your teeth into the damned thing.

BURNS. *(Gives vent to a squeaking little laugh)* My!

WAVERTON. *(Sitting on edge of writing-table)* There, you see you're laughing. You're all right.

BURNS. *(With a touch of vanity)* Oh, yes, I'm all right, mister. There's nothing the matter with me.

WAVERTON. It's pretty bad out to-night.

BURNS. Bad, d'you call it? Why I've known it snow, an' sleet, an' rain, an' fog, an' freeze all at wunst. It's a wonderful place is London!

WAVERTON. You have a cheerful nature, Burns.

BURNS. No good grumbling, mister.

WAVERTON. And yet the world doesn't seem to have used you very well?

BURNS. I make no complaints.

(Enter PINE *to lay the cloth, which he takes from drawer in table,* R.*)*

WAVERTON. You never kick, eh?

BURNS. Me, mister? No. I'm all for peace and quietness.

WAVERTON. *(Crosses* R. *to table)* Hear that, Pine? Mr. Burns has a cheerful nature. He doesn't grumble. He makes no complaints and he never kicks.

PINE. It's uncanny, sir—that's what it is—uncanny.

WAVERTON. *(In a lower voice)* I had him laughing just now—you missed that!

PINE. I consider I was well out of it, sir.

(Exit PINE R.2E.

WAVERTON. *(Sitting on table* R.*)* We get along very well, Burns, you and I. I suppose it is be-

cause we don't agree too much. With regard to the weather, for instance, you contradicted my views with remarkable emphasis. Now as to this kicking business, I think you're wrong. If I were in your condition in life I should kick like the devil. I should expect the State, which produced me, to either mend me or end me.

BURNS. *(Over whose head this speech has passed —with mild cheerfulness)* You never know yer luck.

WAVERTON. An apt quotation, I admit; but I should have thought some employment might have been found—some light form of work——

BURNS. Work, mister? Work's for workmen.

WAVERTON. By Jove, you've said it all, Burns, in one flaming epigram. "Work's for workmen"— You interest me extremely. *(Sits chair* R.C.*)* Would it be indiscreet of me to ask what you were looking for when I first saw you over by the cab-shelter?

BURNS. Me, mister? Any odd bit. You never know what'll come in 'andy. Take a bit of string, for instance. It's wonderful comfortable to tie up the bottom of your trousers when the weather's sharp.

WAVERTON. That's worth knowing. I must try it.

BURNS. *(Earnestly)* Sometimes you'll find something or some one'll give you something as ain't no use. Put it by, I say—put it by—'Ide it till such time as it comes in 'andy—'Ide it—that's business.

WAVERTON. But splendid, Burns. You're a true economist.

(Enter PINE *with butler's tray, on which are chicken and ham, bread and butter, cheese and biscuits, etc.)*

BURNS. *(Taking a corkscrew from his pocket)* 'Ere, mister, see this corkscrew? *(He hands the corkscrew to* WAVERTON *and restores to his pocket many miscellaneous articles that have come out of it.* WAVERTON *gravely examines corkscrew, then, concealing a smile——)*

WAVERTON. It's a well-made corkscrew, Burns, but unfortunately it seems to be broken.

BURNS. *(Eagerly taking the corkscrew back and restoring it to his pocket)* Broken, mister, as you observe, but it'll come in 'andy. I've carried that corkscrew for two years now.

WAVERTON. You see, Pine, Mr. Burns has the true instincts of the collector, and is as thrifty as a Frenchman. He's full of qualities.

PINE. It's 'orrible!

WAVERTON. *(Pointing to* BURNS' *breast-pocket)* That's a particularly prosperous-looking pocket you have there.

BURNS. *(With a sly look)* That's a bit I saved in case I 'ad no luck for supper. Like to see it, mister?

WAVERTON. *(Hastily)* No, I think I'd rather not, Burns. *(The front door bell is heard ringing. Exit* PINE R.1E.*)* Ah! here comes Nighty. Come and take your place at the table. Damme, I like you! This will do nicely. *(He places a chair at the table facing audience.* BURNS *rises, goes to* WAVERTON, *stoops and puts his cap under the chair indicated, which he then occupies. During the following he patiently sits and awaits the turn of affairs. The door opens, and* PINE *enters showing in* NIGHTY*)*

PINE. It's Nighty, sir.

WAVERTON. Good! Glasses, Pine.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(Crosses up to sideboard and gets glasses)*

WAVERTON. *(Shakes hands with* NIGHTY, *then*

takes him L.) It's very good of you to come back, Nighty, just to give me a chance of showing that I am not such a surly fellow as you may have thought.

NIGHTY. Not at all, guv'nor. Me and my old 'orse was just thinkin' of makin' our way 'ome. It's gettin' very thick outside.

WAVERTON. I insist on engaging you and your old horse by the hour. *(In a lower voice)* I want you to help me entertain that poor devil over there.

NIGHTY. With pleasure, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. *(Gaily)* Good! And so to supper. *(He goes to table)* Will you sit there, Nighty? *(Pointing to a chair* L.C.*)*

NIGHTY. Thank you kindly, guv'nor, I 'ad my supper at the shelter; but I'll 'elp Mr. Pine to wait.

WAVERTON. Capital!—and help yourself to whisky. *(Crosses to fire-place and throws cigarette in fire)*

NIGHTY. *(Going up to* PINE, R. *Aside to him)* I thought you said he wasn't human?

PINE. I think he's gone dotty.

WAVERTON. *(Crosses* R. *and sits* R. *of table)* Ask Mr. Burns what he'll drink, Nighty. *(*NIGHTY *bends down and speaks aside to* BURNS. BURNS *replies. Then* NIGHTY *raises his head, his face quivering with suppressed laughter)* Well?

NIGHTY. He says he could do wiv a drop of four 'alf, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. *(Inquiringly)* "Four 'alf"?

NIGHTY. It's a kind of beer, sir.

WAVERTON. Pine, beer for Mr. Burns.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(Exit* R.2E.

WAVERTON. Do have some butter, Burns. *(*NIGHTY, *noticing that* BURNS *is not very expert at the table, butters a large piece of bread for him)*

NIGHTY. *(Putting the bread and butter on* BURNS' *plate)* There, that's hearty! *(Seeing that*

BURNS *is employing his fingers with his chicken,* NIGHTY *puts the knife and fork on his plate as a reminder. Then nudges him)*

WAVERTON. It's all right, Nighty. Mr. Burns prefers the Oriental method, and I'm not sure that it isn't the better one. *(Eats biscuit)* I'm as hungry as a hunter. *(He says this to encourage* BURNS*)*

(Enter PINE *with beer. He fills* BURNS' *glass)*

NIGHTY. It's the nippy air does it, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. Sorry you won't join us. *(Motions* NIGHTY *to chair* R.C.*)*

NIGHTY. *(Sits)* I've just had a reg-lar tuck in of eggs and bacon—prime stuff!

WAVERTON. You find life worth living, Nighty?

NIGHTY. *(Seriously)* It's a wonderful gift is life! *(He sits a little away from table)*

WAVERTON. *(Mixes whisky and soda)* But come now—honestly—if you had had the choice of living or not living, and could have foreseen all you have gone through—you'd have refused?

NIGHTY. Honestly I shouldn't, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. And you, Burns?

BURNS. I never refuse anything, I don't! I make it a rule!

WAVERTON. *(Looks up with a smile at* PINE, *who shudders and turns away)* Pine, give Mr. Nighty some whisky. *(*PINE *does so. Raising his glass)* Gentlemen, your health! I drink to my new friends.

NIGHTY. Here's to you, guv'nor. *(Drinks)*

WAVERTON. Burns, you're a great man; you eat well, and I hope you sleep well.

BURNS. Not always, mister. The other night I dreamt I was choppin' wood.

NIGHTY. *(To* BURNS*)* Work isn't much in your way.

BURNS. I ain't strong.

NIGHTY. Wasn't your father a workman?

BURNS. No, mate. 'E had something the matter with 'is chest. 'Ow 'e used ter corf! My!

WAVERTON. And your mother?

BURNS. She's dead, too. She was always ailin'. 'Ip disease they called it. *(He drinks)*

NIGHTY. *(Aside to* WAVERTON*)* Lord! They breed dogs better.

WAVERTON. *(Nods. To* BURNS, *sympathetically in a low voice)* And then there was only you?

BURNS. *(As if dimly remembering)* Yes, only me. I was abart eleven then, and sickly. I started walking. I was always pretty all right on me pins. *(He is quite unconscious of the pathos of this. There is silence for a few moments.* WAVERTON *and* NIGHTY *exchange looks)* Well, cheero! *(He drinks his beer and goes on eating.* WAVERTON *rises and crosses* L. *for the cigars, which he gets from drawer in cabinet)*

WAVERTON. You're something of a politician, Nighty.

NIGHTY. Oh, I wouldn't say that, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. A thinker then—you have ideas!

NIGHTY. Us old 'orse cabmen has lots o' time for thinking in these days o' taxis and the like.

WAVERTON. *(Gives the box to* PINE*)* Pine, cigars for Mr. Nighty and Mr. Burns. *(*PINE *offers the box to* NIGHTY*)*

NIGHTY. No, thank you, Mr. Pine. *(*PINE, *with an air of grave disapproval, offers the box to* BURNS*)*

BURNS. *(Hesitating)* Wot, me? My! *(He takes cigar and then from his pocket a piece of paper—he rolls up the cigar and puts the parcel back in his pocket.* PINE *puts cigars away on sideboard)*

WAVERTON. *(Sits* L.C. *Encouragingly)* Well, about your ideas, Nighty?

NIGHTY. *(Confused)* Oh, I ain't got many, guv'nor, but if I'd been a rich man and educated I think I'd 'a gone into Parliament! *(Laughs)* Me, a Member of Parliament! I got a cheek, 'aven't I? *(He is slightly "mellow" with the whisky he has drunk.* PINE *gathers supper things together on tray)*

WAVERTON. I'm sure we've many less intelligent, Nighty.

NIGHTY. Sometimes driving 'ome I make a speech out loud, and my old 'orse's ears go flop-flop until I think he understands and is trying to say "'ear! 'ear!" *(Exit* PINE *with tray,* R.2E.

WAVERTON. Capital! And what do you say, Nighty?

NIGHTY. *(Very confused)* Oh, come guv'nor, I couldn't.

WAVERTON. Get along. You're all right, Nighty. We're all tiled in here.

NIGHTY. *(Smiling and wriggling)* But really, guv'nor—— *(*BURNS *makes a parcel of bread, celery, etc.)*

WAVERTON. I want to hear your views. *(Beckons him)*

NIGHTY. *(Draws chair close up to* WAVERTON*)* My views? That's easy, guv'nor. Every child born, boy, is entitled in abundance to the air, light and water that Nature provides. *(He taps* WAVERTON *familiarly on the knee)* It's the duty of the State to see the children ain't done out of their rights. Then again, the State demands children in quantity—very well, it's the duty of the State to see that the quality's all right. Every child is entitled to 'ealthy parents. A 'uman incapable—*(*WAVERTON *raises a warning finger)* Yes, poor bloke! It ain't 'is fault. The thing is, don't breed 'em like that! The future of the race is with the children. Legislate for the chlldren.

WAVERTON. Bravo, Nighty. *(They grasp his hand)* You're a Statesman.

NIGHTY. *(Confused)* Thank you, guv'nor.

BURNS. *(Gets cap from under the chair. Rises, and goes down* L. *of table* R.*)* Well, good night all!

WAVERTON. But you're not leaving us so soon, Burns.

(Enter PINE, R.2E.*)*

BURNS. I want to get along to the Embankment. I never miss the Embankment when I'm in London. There's always a bit of life there, and sometimes they give you things.

WAVERTON. Every class has its social centre, you see, Nighty. One moment, Burns. Pine!

PINE. Yes, sir?

WAVERTON. One of my old overcoats for Mr. Burns—a warm one.

PINE. *(Making a wry face)* Yes, sir.

(Exit R.1E., *leaving door open.*

WAVERTON. *(Walks to the window)* It's terribly black out there, Burns. You'll never find your way. *(The fog outside has grown to be dense black)*

BURNS. I'd find my way blindfold to the Embankment.

NIGHTY. *(Goes to window and looks out anxiously)* Me an' my old 'orse'll 'ave all our work cut out gettin' to Kensington.

WAVERTON. *(Up* C.*)* That reminds me, you and your old horse are mine to-night. *(He presses a coin on him)*

NIGHTY. No, really guv'nor—I——

WAVERTON. Please! *(Enter* PINE *with overcoat.* WAVERTON *joins him down* R., *and takes coat from him, then exit* PINE—*leaves door open)* Now, Burns, let me help you with your coat.

BURNS. Oh, I say!

WAVERTON. *(Helping* BURNS *on with the coat)* Just to keep the cold out.

BURNS. *(Admiring himself in the overcoat)* My! *(*WAVERTON *presses a coin into* BURNS' *hand.* BURNS *looks at it and even his remote heart seems vaguely touched)*

WAVERTON. *(To avoid being thanked, speaks quickly, shakes hands with* BURNS*)* Good night.

BURNS. Good night! Thanks, all!

WAVERTON. Come and see me again whenever things are bad. Remember you have a friend here. Good night.

BURNS. *(Goes to the door. He is then visited by an impulse and he turns to* WAVERTON*)* Good luck, mister! *(Exit* BURNS R.1E.

NIGHTY. *(Crosses down* R. *below table. At door)* Good night, Guv'nor. God bless you!

WAVERTON. Thank you, Nighty, and look in sometimes and see if I have a job for you, remember we're neighbours. Good night. *(Exit* NIGHTY *—shuts door. The smile dies out of* WAVERTON'S *face. He walks to window, looks out and shivers. He comes down to his writing-table, sits, and looks over some papers. Enter* PINE R.2E. *Folds cloth and puts in drawer in table. Without looking up)* The people who are at home to-night are lucky, Pine.

PINE. Yes, sir. It's dangerous to be abroad. Can't see your hand in front of your face. *(Pause)* The young person standing in the doorway seems frightened out of 'er life.

WAVERTON. *(Quickly)* What young person?

PINE. Young woman, sir. Respectable, I fancy. Came out of a 'bus that was on the pavement just now—going the wrong way and frightened to turn. She's coughing something dreadful—fog's got into her chest, I suppose.

WAVERTON. You should have asked her in. It's a frightful night for a woman to be out alone. Go and . . . Wait, I'll go myself! *(Exit* R.1E. PINE *puts chairs tidy. He goes to the open door and listens, then exit* R.2E.*)*

A woman's coughing is heard. It approaches. Enter WAVERTON *and* MARGARET SUMMERS. *She is a slender woman of twenty-five, a little above medium height. The plainness of her dress fails to conceal the attractiveness of her figure; she has a beautiful face and wears a proud and reserved expression. Her face is not seen on her entrance, however, as she is wearing a hat that comes over her eyes and a thick veil. She continues to cough painfully after entering.* WAVERTON *shuts door at entrance. He quickly gets her a glass of water from the sideboard.* MARGARET *lifts her veil sufficiently to drink.*

WAVERTON. *(Pulls chair out* R. *of table. Gently)* Do sit down. *(*MARGARET *sits and breathes heavily, but ceases to cough. Pause.* MARGARET *sighs deeply)* You are a little better?

MARGARET. Yes—thank you. *(*WAVERTON *starts on hearing her voice and looks at her keenly. She lowers her head)* I am all right. I will go now. *(She coughs slightly, then rises)*

WAVERTON. No, no—you must rest for a moment! That abominable fog got into your lungs. It's poisonous!

MARGARET. I would rather go now—please. *(Goes* L. *a little)*

WAVERTON. Wait! wait! You can't go out into *that—(pointing through window)* London blindfold! Appalling thought! The monster sightless! You can hear him growling.

MARGARET. I'm not frightened! I'm going—really—I know my way. Thank you for your kindness. Good night! *(He goes down quickly between her and the door, intercepting her. She falls back, so that they are some paces apart. There is a slight pause. They stand looking at each other. Her breast heaving)* Why?

WAVERTON. *(By door* R.1E.*)* You and I can't part like this!

MARGARET. *(Down* R.*)* We must.

WAVERTON. *(In a low voice)* Let me see your face.

MARGARET. No.

WAVERTON. I ask it with—with the deepest respect.

MARGARET. I don't want you to see my face.

WAVERTON. I know your face—as well as you know mine.

MARGARET. Please let me go now—for—for both our sakes. *(Slight pause)*

WAVERTON. You are right. When a woman wishes to conceal something a man can only—*(He walks to the door)*

MARGARET. Conceal? *(At the suggestion of concealment, she starts with indignation. Then she impulsively raises her veil and pushes her hat slightly back, fully revealing her face.* WAVERTON, *with his hand on the doorknob, turns and sees her)*

WAVERTON. *(In a low voice)* Margaret! Margaret Summers! Did you imagine for a moment that I wouldn't know you?

MARGARET. *(Her breast heaving)* I—I hoped not.

WAVERTON. You knew me?

MARGARET. Directly I heard your voice downstairs. I wouldn't have come up, only I feared the fog would kill me, and—and I don't want to die.

WAVERTON. But why—in God's name, Margaret, why wish to avoid me? *(Slight pause—She is silent)* After six years. Why? *(Impatiently)* Why?

MARGARET. I knew you didn't want to see me.

WAVERTON. *(Down* R.*)* But I did. Good Heavens! how you wrong me. I advertised for you —I employed agents to look for you for months—years—and you tell me now— Please sit down.

MARGARET. I—I want to go now.

WAVERTON. *(Firmly)* I beg you to do as I ask. You are still faint and ill. *(She sits chair* L. *of table* R.*)* Now, tell me, why did you leave my step-sister's house?

MARGARET. She turned me away.

WAVERTON. *(Surprised and shocked)* She turned you away?

MARGARET. Yes.

WAVERTON. *(Sits* R. *of table* R.*)* She told me you were called away—that you had been engaged to a place abroad.

MARGARET. It wasn't true.

WAVERTON. You mean she lied. She would! But for a time I believed her. Then I began to doubt, for I grew to know her better.

MARGARET. I have no right to speak unkindly of Lady Hurley.

WAVERTON. I have. What excuse did she give?

MARGARET. None. She said I would understand.

WAVERTON. *(After a slight pause)* She had been spying on us.

MARGARET. Possibly, and in the circumstances she didn't consider me a proper governess for her children. *(Movement from* WAVERTON*)* Any other mother would have done the same.

WAVERTON. She shouldn't have lied to me.

MARGARET. She thought it her duty.

WAVERTON. She must have known the fault was all mine.

MARGARET. No, Peter—it was ours.

WAVERTON. All mine—for I was two years older and should have been wiser. But I was in love and thoughtless, Margaret.

MARGARET. *(Laying* R. *hand on muff)* We were both in love and thoughtless, Peter.

WAVERTON. *(In a low voice)* And the Spring was in our hearts. *(He takes her* R. *hand)* Margaret!

MARGARET. Don't! I have a work-woman's hands now. *(She withdraws her hand)*

WAVERTON. Why didn't you write to me? Why didn't you give me a chance?

MARGARET. I wrote to you—twice.

WAVERTON. *(Startled)* How do you mean—you wrote to me?

MARGARET. The first time I gave a post-office address—the second time the lodgings I am still in.

WAVERTON. You're sure of this?

MARGARET. Absolutely!

WAVERTON. *(Rises slowly)* Margaret, I never had your letters. *(There is a pause, while they both look at each other)*

MARGARET. *(Rises)* I addressed them to your sister's house.

WAVERTON. Then . . . then . . . it's horrible! Amelia, my step-sister, must have——

MARGARET. *(Quietly)* You mustn't say it. It isn't fair; letters sometimes get lost in the post.

WAVERTON. That woman! I've forgiven her much. This I'll never forgive.

MARGARET. She did what she thought right.

WAVERTON. And you never knew of my inquiries?

MARGARET. No. It's so easy to be lost in London.

WAVERTON. Margaret! My poor Margaret!

MARGARET. Naturally, Lady Hurley gave me no reference. I had no chance of getting another place, and I had no relation living. *(Movement from* WAVERTON*)* I do sewing for the shops now; have done for a long time. I make seven shillings a day.

WAVERTON. You are wonderful!

MARGARET. Oh, no! I couldn't have done it for myself.

WAVERTON. *(Slowly)* There was some one else?

MARGARET. *(Slowly)* Yes — there — there was—— *(Then pathetically)* Oh, let me go—please let me go now! I'm not strong enough to bear any more——

WAVERTON. *(*R. *of table,* R.*)* Tell me—be frank—who else was there?

MARGARET. *(*L. *corner of table* R., *slowly)* There was—the child.

WAVERTON. The child? Your child?

MARGARET. Yes.

WAVERTON. Oh, then you're——

MARGARET. *Our* child, Peter.

WAVERTON. Our child?

MARGARET. Yes—a little boy.

WAVERTON. *(In a low voice)* Margaret!

MARGARET. *(Suffering, goes* L. *to fireplace, then goes round sofa and works up* L. *and round to* C.*)* You shouldn't have made me tell you. It hurts. And you needn't be embarrassed for me, Peter. I'm not ashamed, and I've no remorse. He's my child. I've won him, and he's mine only. He needs no one but me, and he—he's the very breath of my heart. And now forget—please forget that I've told you. It's been strange and wonderful seeing you again—but—— *(*C.*)*

WAVERTON. *(*L. *of table* R.*)* Wait, Margaret! You don't understand—I'm not embarrassed—only

—only full of wonder. I want you to tell me so much more. What is the boy's name?

MARGARET. Peter.

WAVERTON. *(Visibly touched)* Peter? *(Goes up* R. *to* L.*)* Look at it out there; it's awful! *(Slight pause)* Where is the boy now?

MARGARET. *(Down by table* R.C.*)* He's at home with my landlady. She always puts him to bed when I work late.

WAVERTON. *(Comes down* L.C.*)* Margaret, I—I don't know what to say. If I seem awkward and shy, you must try and understand—and forgive me. I can't realise in a moment all that this means—the change it makes in one's sympathies and view of life. *(*MARGARET *coughs. He walks to bell and rings, then says firmly)* One thing is certain, you can't go out into that fog.

MARGARET. Peter, I must. I must go home.

WAVERTON. *(Firmly)* It's a practical impossibility—besides, you're as pale as a ghost.

MARGARET. *(Faintly)* I—I'm all right, Peter.

WAVERTON. I know better. If I can't think for myself, at least I can think for you. *(Gently forces her into chair* R.C.*)*

(Enter PINE R.2E.*)*

WAVERTON. *(To* PINE*)* Make me a shakedown on the sofa and bring a dressing suit.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(Crosses* L. *up stage)*

WAVERTON. And Pine. *(*PINE *stops)* Has Mrs. Parker gone to bed?

PINE. Not yet, sir.

WAVERTON. Send her to me.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(Exit* PINE

MARGARET. I'm really all right now—and——

WAVERTON. *(Thoroughly himself now, and speaking with decision)* You are not going out into

that fog to-night. You are going to have my room. Fortunately there's a woman in the house—my old cook-housekeeper. *(Goes* L.*)* She will look after you in the morning.

MARGARET. *(Rises)* I mustn't stay, Peter—I'm so tired I should sleep late.

(Warn curtain)

WAVERTON. *(Cheerily)* So much the better.

(Enter MRS. PARKER R. *up)*

WAVERTON. Mrs. Parker, I'm going to have a shake-down here to-night. This lady who has been caught in the fog will have my room. You'll see that she's comfortable, please.

MRS. PARKER. Yes, sir.

(Exit MRS. PARKER, L.

MARGARET. But my landlady and the child would be alarmed.

WAVERTON. True, you must write a message. *(Up to window and looks out)* You see it's hopeless. *(*MARGARET *goes to window and looks out. Goes to desk)* It shall be sent first thing in the morning. *(She sits at writing-table. He arranges paper for her to write and discreetly walks away to* C. *Pause. He is thoughtful)* Let me see—the boy must now be——?

MARGARET. Six next April.

WAVERTON. *(Still cheerfully)* Six next April! Six next April! *(Enter* PINE L. *with the things ordered, which he spreads on couch.* MARGARET *has now finished writing.* WAVERTON *goes to her. She hands him the message. To* PINE, *handing him telegram)* This must go the very first thing in the morning.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(*MARGARET *rises, goes to piano, and picks up her hat)*

WAVERTON. If the fog has lifted send it by a

taxi. If not telegraph it through the telephone.

PINE. Yes sir.

WAVERTON. *(To* MARGARET*)* That door on the left where the light is. Get some sleep—you need it. To-morrow we'll talk. *(*MARGARET *looks out of window through curtains in a last hope that the fog has cleared)*

MARGARET. *(Faintly)* Thank you, Peter—Good night!

WAVERTON. *(Taking her hand)* Bless you. Good night! *(Exit* MARGARET, L.

PINE. Anything else, sir?

WAVERTON. Yes—another log. *(*PINE *puts log on fire, then goes round top of writing-table to* C.*)*

PINE. Good night, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Mechanically)* Good night, Pine. *(He is deep in thought. Exit* PINE, R.2E. WAVERTON *goes over* R. *and switches off electric light; then goes* L. *to fireplace and takes a cigarette case from his pocket. Finding it empty, however, he takes a cigarette from a silver box on the writing-table, and is about to light it when he notices the framed photograph of* BEATRICE, *which is also on the table. He takes it up and looks at it thoughtfully while he reclines on the sofa; then he gently replaces it on the writing-table and sinks into a deep meditation. The stage is now lighted only by the red glow from the fire.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as Act I.*

It is nine o'clock on the following morning. On the curtain rising the room is in a dim light. WAVERTON *is asleep on the improvised bed. A slight pause after the curtain is raised; then a ringing and knocking at the hall door is heard.* WAVERTON *is disturbed. He raises himself on his elbow.*

WAVERTON. What the devil——? *(He listens. The distant sounds of a door being opened and shut and of voices are heard. Then there is silence.* WAVERTON *turns over as if to sleep again. The door is cautiously and silently opened and enter* PINE, R.1E., *with letters which he places on writing-table)*

PINE. *(In a low voice)* Are you still asleep, sir?

WAVERTON. Yes. What is it?

PINE. It's as I feared, sir. I 'ad a foreboding—also a dream.

WAVERTON. *(Sitting up and speaking crossly)* Pine, if you are to stay on with me you must discourage fears, forebodings and dreams.

PINE. Very good, sir.

WAVERTON. *(With a huge yawn)* You know very well the morning isn't my best time. Now, out with it! What's the matter? *(With anxiety)* Mrs. Summers hasn't gone?

PINE. No, sir. It's that 'orrible man again.

WAVERTON. What horrible man?

PINE. *(R. end of sofa)* Burns, sir.

WAVERTON. You must also learn to speak respectfully of my friends.

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. What does Mr. Burns want at this hour of the morning? *(Looks at clock on mantel)* Breakfast, I suppose.

PINE. He was brought by a policeman, sir.

WAVERTON. A policeman? This is serious.

PINE. I knew you'd be disappointed in him, sir.

WAVERTON. What's he been doing?

PINE. He's been getting himself hurt, sir.

WAVERTON. Hurt? Poor old Burns! Draw up the blinds. *(*PINE *does so, revealing a bright winter morning.* WAVERTON *gets out of bed, still wearing his dressing-suit, and puts on his slippers)* Is he badly hurt?

PINE. He can walk all right, sir. *(Sarcastically)* He was always good on his pins.

WAVERTON. Yes—I remember. Bring him in.

PINE. And the policeman too, sir?

WAVERTON. No. Give him half a crown and send him away. Damn it! This isn't a public institution.

PINE. *(Going down* R. *and speaking "half aloud")* It seems to appertain to that nature.

WAVERTON. *(Sharply)* What's that?

PINE. *(Unblushing)* I was saying I'm sorry your privacy should be disturbed, sir.

WAVERTON. That's my affair. *(Exit* PINE, R.1E. WAVERTON *goes to the window, throws it open and breathes deeply of the fresh air. Distant noise of traffic, and door being closed.* WAVERTON *closes window. Enter* BURNS *and* PINE, R.1E. PINE *closes door. Comes down quickly)* Ah, Burns, my poor fellow, what can I do for you?

BURNS. *(With some insistence)* You say to me, you say, "Come an' see me again," you say. "W'en things is bad."

WAVERTON. My very words. You will notice another quality in Mr. Burns, Pine; he has an excellent memory.

BURNS. *(R.)* Things is bad, so I come. *(He points to* PINE*)* That gent 'e tries to stop me at the door. *(This a little vindictively)* 'Is words was "It's a bit too thick!"

WAVERTON. *(By chair* L.C. *sternly)* Pine!

PINE. *(Down* R.*)* I 'adn't understood the invitation was to be considered serious, sir.

WAVERTON. Is it true you are hurt, Burns?

BURNS. I was run over in the fog by a milk cart, mister—leastways knocked down.

WAVERTON. My poor fellow—sit down! That chair, Pine. *(*PINE *crosses behind table* R. *and gives* BURNS *a chair.* BURNS *sits* R.C. WAVERTON *lights a cigarette)*

PINE. *(Behind table* R. *in a low voice to* BURNS*)* Your cap!

BURNS. *(Who has apparently grown to reciprocate* PINE'S *dislike)* Oh blow! *(He removes his cap, however)*

WAVERTON. *(Going to* BURNS*)* Any bones broken?

BURNS. I didn't 'ear anything, but me side 'urts me— urts me bad—'ere. *(Indicating his left side)*

WAVERTON. Ah, I see the mark on your overcoat, where the wheel struck you. Poor fellow! *(Cheerily)* Well, we must get you along to the hospital.

BURNS. *(Alarmed)* 'Orspital! Not me! That's what the cop say w'en 'e foun' me restin' on a doorstep. I don't 'old with 'orspitals. I've 'eard tales about 'em. They're not well spoke of. *(Pause.* WAVERTON *is in a grave difficulty, goes up* L.C. *a little.* PINE *rather pleased, watches him. Anxiously and with emphasis)* You say to me, you say "Come an' see me agin" you say——

WAVERTON. *(Turning and interrupting him and only by an effort subduing his impatience)* Yes, yes—I have a vivid recollection. *(*PINE'S *face*

breaks fully into a smile. He can scarcely hold back his laughter. WAVERTON *looks up and catches him.* PINE *covers his grinning mouth with his hand. Icily)* Pine, *(Motions to him and they go down* L.*)* you appear to be in pain.

PINE. *(Composing himself)* It was nothing, sir, just a spasm.

WAVERTON. When you have recovered from your spasm you will take charge of Mr. Burns.

PINE. *(Flabbergasted)* Me—take charge? Excuse me, sir, but——

WAVERTON. *(Down* L. *turning his face from* PINE *to conceal a smile)* I'm disappointed in you, Pine. I thought you a philanthropist; but it appears you are only one of those who would probe the wounds of the afflicted with inquisitive fingers, and do nothing to heal them.

PINE. *(*L.C.*)* Oh, I'm all for the poor, sir, in reason; but this one's an exception. There's something h'ominous about him.

WAVERTON. Well, he's now a protégé of the house, and he's been hurt, so I recommend him to your care. *(Crosses up to* R.*)*

PINE. *(Eagerly)* Shall I get your things, sir?

WAVERTON. *(Going to door,* R.2E.*)* No; I'll manage by myself. You stay here and take care of Mr. Burns. Ring up Dr. Wharton and ask him to come round at once. *(To* BURNS *cheerily)* You're all right, Burns, Pine'll look after you. *(Exit* WAVERTON, R.2E. PINE *looks at* BURNS *and* BURNS *looks at* PINE. *There is no friendship in their eyes)*

PINE. This is what comes of doing a kindness.

BURNS. 'Oo did a kindness?

PINE. Who got your supper last night?

BURNS. 'Oo lost me the Embankment?

PINE. Bah! You make me shiver. *(He goes to telephone)*

BURNS. An' got me 'urt!

PINE. Don't talk to me!

BURNS. 'Is words to you was: "Take care of Mr. Burns."

PINE. *(Ignoring this—takes receiver)* Seven, three, double five, one, Gerrard. *(Pause)*

BURNS. *(As one who has certain established rights)* I could do with a cup o' corfie.

PINE. *(Into telephone)* Could I speak to Dr. Wharton, please? . . . All right. *(Pause)*

BURNS. *(With insistence)* I could do with a cup o' corfie.

PINE. *(Entirely ignoring* BURNS *and using his best voice)* Is that you, Dr. Wharton? Mr. Waverton wishes me to present his compliments, and to ask if you would kindly come round as soon as possible. *(Pause)* Oh, no, thank you, sir, Mr. Waverton is in perfect health, but there is a person who has received some slight hinjury in a street h'accident. A sort of man in a manner o' speakin'. Thank you, sir! *(Replaces receiver and begins to fold bedclothes)*

BURNS. If you 'adn't stopped me I'd a' got to the Embankment and then to the "Salvation Shelter." I'd a' been drinkin' a nice cup o' corfie by now—'ot.

PINE. And been put on a couple of hours' hard work afterwards.

BURNS. *(Quickly)* That's where you're wrong, see? I'd a' been let off 'cos o' bein' delicate. *(Slight pause)* You've been unlucky to me.

PINE. *(Goes* C. *and up to* BURNS *with rug over his arm)* I suppose, my good man, you've never heard the word "gratitude" used, have you?

BURNS. I'm no scollard.

PINE. *(Looking down at him with deliberate pity)* I gathered as much. I understand your case. I think I've 'eard it called arrested mental development.

BURNS. Is that Latting?

PINE. It means a kind of smear. *(He is going* L. *with the rug, when enter* MARGARET L., *fully dressed for going away)*

MARGARET. *(Up* L. *to* PINE*)* Good morning!

PINE. *(Up* C.*)* Good morning, ma'am.

MARGARET. Will you please tell Mr. Waverton——

PINE. He'll be here in a few moments, ma'am.

MARGARET. *(Anxious)* Did my message go?

PINE. Yes, ma'am, at seven o'clock.

MARGARET. You're sure?

PINE. Yes, ma'am.

MARGARET. *(Relieved)* Thank you. *(Then she sees* BURNS*)*

PINE. This person has been in a street h'accident.

BURNS. I been hurt.

MARGARET. *(The mother instinct to the surface)* Oh, you poor fellow. What happened? *(Goes to him)*

BURNS. It was a big 'orse an' cart. *(He puts his hand to his side)*

MARGARET. And you're hurt in the side and there's a wound on your forehead. *(Turns quickly to* PINE*)* Do bring some warm water and a towel. *(Puts muff and gloves on writing-table)*

PINE. *(With mock commiseration)* Certainly, miss. Poor chap! *(Exit* PINE L.

BURNS. I could do with a cup o' corfie.

MARGARET. Of course, you shall have it. I'm sure that Mr. Waverton——

BURNS. That's the other one, ain't it?

MARGARET. He's the gentleman of the house.

BURNS. 'E's all right; it's this one that's agin me.

MARGARET. Oh, nonsense! No one's against you. I'm sure everybody must be sorry for you.

BURNS. *(Resentfully)* The one that's gone for the water (PINE *enters* L. *with a basin and small towel)* tried to stop me comin' in. *'Im! (Pointing to* PINE. MARGARET *takes basin and towel from* PINE *and puts them on table* R. *She then dips towel in water and attends to bruise on* BURNS' *forehead)*

PINE. *(Standing by with affected sympathy)* Poor chap!

MARGARET. *(To* PINE*)* Do you think you could manage to get him a cup of coffee?

PINE. Yes, miss. *(With ill-concealed sarcasm)* He's to have everything he wants. Is there anything else you fancy, my poor man?

BURNS. A slice o' bread and butter—thick.

PINE. *(Affecting the sick room manner and employing a low and pleasant voice)* It shall have hattention. *(He tiptoes down* R. *behind table)* The doctor'll be here presently, miss. *(The hall door bell is heard. Exit* PINE R.1E. *closing door)*

MARGARET. *(*R. *of* BURNS*)* Is that better?

BURNS. It's abart the same.

MARGARET. It's a pity your hair is so thick.

BURNS. It's always been like that.

MARGARET. But I think it would look nicer if it was cut a little shorter.

BURNS. I don't 'old with making changes.

MARGARET. Well, of course, it's your hair.

BURNS. *(Uncompromisingly)* Yes, it's my 'air.

(Enter PINE *and* NIGHTY R.1E. NIGHTY *has made his top hat very shiny, and has a new pair of yellow gloves. Exit* PINE R.2E. NIGHTY *shuts door* R.1E. *behind him)*

NIGHTY. Good morning, Miss!

MARGARET. Good morning!

NIGHTY. Good morning, Burns!

BURNS. Mornin'!

NIGHTY. *(Down* R.*)* Sorry to 'ear you've been in trouble.

(Enter Pine R.2E. *with coffee and bread and butter)*

BURNS. I'd a been all right if that bloke 'adn't stopped me goin' to the Embankment.

MARGARET. *(Taking coffee, etc., from* PINE*)* Here's your cup of coffee, Mr. Burns. *(Smiling, aside to* NIGHTY*)* I think he's more wounded in spirit than body. *(Gives* PINE *basin, etc.)*

NIGHTY. *(Taking* PINE *aside* R.*)* Hadn't I better wait outside? *(*MARGARET *goes to desk for muff and gloves, then up to window)*

PINE. Lord, no! *(Bitterly)* This is no longer a gentleman's home; it's "come one, come all" as you might say.—You're all right, the guvnor's taken you to his heart. As for that Burns, he's his ewe lamb. I'm the only one to suffer, I'm put to take care of that. *(Pointing scornfully at* BURNS*)*

NIGHTY. *(Secretly amused)* Bear up, Mr. Pine, bear up!

PINE. *(Earnestly)* Mark my words, Nighty——

(Enter WAVERTON R.2E. *He sees* MARGARET *first who is up* L.C.*)*

WAVERTON. Ah, Margaret, good morning.

MARGARET. *(Shaking hands)* Good morning.

WAVERTON. *(Down* L.C.*)* Glad to see you've breakfasted, Burns. I haven't. Hello, Nighty, you *are* a swell.

NIGHTY. *(Down* R., *grinning)* Thought I'd brush meself up a bit, in case you 'ad a job for me, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. *(Laughing)* Oh, of course, you're on the staff now. I'll find you a job presently, but first we must get Burns on the big couch in the library.

NIGHTY. *(Going to* BURNS*)* 'Ere, give me your arm. *(He takes* BURNS *by the arm and leads him up to door* R.2*)* Easy does it.

PINE. *(As they pass him)* Poor chap!

(Exit BURNS *and* NIGHTY R.2E.

WAVERTON. You telephoned to Dr. Wharton, Pine?

PINE. Yes, sir, 'e's coming.

(Exit with basin R.2E.

WAVERTON. *(Goes up to door* R.2E. *and speaks off through door)* Pine, Nighty had better bring his cab over and wait for Mrs. Summers.

PINE. *(Off)* Very good, sir. *(*WAVERTON *shuts door* R.2E.*)*

MARGARET. *(Coming down)* Good-bye, Peter.

WAVERTON. Sit down, my dear.

MARGARET. I really must go now, Peter. I have my work to do. I only want to thank you first for——

WAVERTON. *(Interrupting her)* Ssh! Ssh! *(Takes her muff and wrap from her and places them on table* R. *She sits chair* L.C. *He is very thoughtful)* Margaret, now that I've found you I want you to let me be a friend to you.

MARGARET. *(Embarrassed)* But Peter—of course.

WAVERTON. *(*L. *of table* R.*)* I want your permission to try and make up—a little—for all you have gone through.

MARGARET. You are very kind. But I have gone through nothing that hasn't been of good to me. You needn't trouble about us, Peter. *(She smiles)* We're in harbour, now.

WAVERTON. You mean you and—and little Peter?

MARGARET. *(Still smiling)* He and I are all right—and I am proud—perhaps too proud. Pride is my besetting sin, you know.

WAVERTON. I know it is, and I'm a little frightened of it. But—but—you won't refuse to let me help you. *(He says this pleadingly)*

MARGARET. I—I think you must let me go on in my own way.

WAVERTON. *(Turning away from her and with a touch of disappointment in his voice)* It's natural that you should take this attitude, but it makes me think you hate me and I—I don't quite deserve that. *(Goes* R. *a little* L. *of table)*

MARGARET. *(Lifting her face suddenly brimming over with affection)* Hate you! Oh, Peter! *(*WAVERTON *turns back to her quickly)*

WAVERTON. Then if you don't hate me you'll let me help you with the boy. He'll need properly bringing up.

MARGARET. *(Rather coldly)* I'm doing my best, Peter.

WAVERTON. *(*C.*)* I know—and you're an angel —but I can do so much too—in my way. I have the means and the leisure. A boy needs a man friend. And his best friend should be his father.

MARGARET. *(Firmly)* He's my boy, Peter.

WAVERTON. *(With equal firmness)* He's our boy. *(Their eyes meet—slight pause—*MARGARET *rises)* I want to see him.

MARGARET. *(Distrustfully, unconsciously her hand on the photograph of* BEATRICE, *which is on the desk against which she stands)* Oh, you shall see him! But—but whom shall I tell him you are? *(Looking at him)*

WAVERTON. *(Flushing slightly)* Tell him—for the present—damn it, he's only a baby, tell him that I am his mother's and his own best friend.

MARGARET. *(Picks up photograph)* Very well, I'll tell him.

WAVERTON. *(Thoughtfully)* And, Margaret—there's much to be considered. For one thing I really can't allow you to continue working—as you do. *(Goes down* R. *a little)*

MARGARET. *(Quickly)* Why not?

WAVERTON. It's only fair and reasonable and just that I should——

MARGARET. *(In her embarrassment holding the photograph in both hands)* Peter, I have two priceless things in the world—my child and my independence. I shall cling desperately to them both.

WAVERTON. *(Gently, as he goes to her* C.*)* My dear, can't you be generous and help me to win one priceless thing—my self-respect? Now do put that picture down and talk sense. *(He stretches his hand for the photograph)*

MARGARET. *(Looking at the photograph before releasing it)* What a pretty face! *(*WAVERTON *takes photograph and glances at it)*

WAVERTON. Yes. *(He is rather embarrassed)* Perhaps—perhaps it would be best to tell you who it is. Her name is Beatrice Dainton. She is an orphan, and a niece of Lord Hurley. My sister chaperones her and—Beatrice and I are engaged. *(He is not looking at* MARGARET *when he makes this announcement. He goes round top of writing-table, replaces photograph, and then goes down to fireplace.* MARGARET *starts and turns pale. The news given wounds her deeply, but she is determined not to show it.* WAVERTON *now speaks quickly, to cloak his embarrassment)* Now let's get back to what we were saying, and do let me beg of you, my dear, to be sensible.

MARGARET. *(Bravely holding her emotion in check and speaking rapidly, her back turned to him)* I'm quite sensible, Peter, and nothing you can say will change my point of view. You may call it pride or a spirit of foolish independence—but—but there it is. We'll go our way and come out all right; but our way—the way of my little boy and me—isn't your way, Peter—and though you mean to be kind and sweet—I know you do—*(She sud-*

denly turns away to fight her emotion and walks to the piano)

WAVERTON. *(Looking after her wonderingly and going* L.C.*)* Margaret! *(There is a pause while* MARGARET *recovers her self-control. Then she comes down, her face quite composed)*

MARGARET. *(*C. *In almost conventional tones)* We must part now, Peter—thank you for all your kindness——

WAVERTON. *(*L.C.*)* I'm afraid I've said something to hurt you.

MARGARET. *(Perfectly self-possessed)* Indeed no—I assure you. I was very interested about your engagement, because—because I, too, am engaged.

WAVERTON. *(Amazed and displeased)* You—engaged!

MARGARET. *(Simply)* Yes, Peter. *(If* WAVERTON *were not angry he would suspect she is not speaking the truth)*

WAVERTON. To whom?

MARGARET. To a man—a man who is doing well in business.

WAVERTON. What's his name?

MARGARET. Henry.

WAVERTON. Henry what?

MARGARET. Henry—*(the slightest hesitation while she invents the name)* Henry Robinson.

WAVERTON. *(With a bad attempt at indifference)* Oh, really!

MARGARET. Yes. *(She secretly gives him a sidelong glance)*

WAVERTON. *(Lamely)* Seems a funny thing to do—to get engaged.

MARGARET. Why?

WAVERTON. Oh, well—one would have thought you would have waited.

MARGARET. For what, Peter?

WAVERTON. I mean I thought you had devoted your life to the boy.

MARGARET. Perhaps I did it for his sake. *(There is a pause.* WAVERTON *fidgets about, frowning)*

WAVERTON. Well, I—I wish you joy—with all my heart.

MARGARET. As I do you, Peter. *(Slight pause. Suddenly she offers him her hand frankly)* Good-bye.

WAVERTON. *(Taking her hand)* You'll bring the boy to see me—now—this morning. Nighty can wait for you.

MARGARET. *(Withdrawing her hand)* It's so useless. It can lead to nothing good, and might make the child dissatisfied. *(Picks up her muff and wrap from table* R.*)*

WAVERTON. *(Disappointed)* All right, Margaret —only—I don't like to talk of it—it makes me so self-conscious—this youngster of yours—I should have liked to see him—liked it very much. *(Goes up* C. *facing up. A movement towards him by* MARGARET*; then she restrains herself. Pause—*WAVERTON *leans against piano, a sly smile suddenly lights his face, but he doesn't let her see it.* MARGARET *goes to door* R.*)* You needn't fear my being disappointed if the boy happens to be plain, Margaret.

MARGARET. *(Comes* L. *a little, indignant)* Plain! Peter plain!

WAVERTON. *(Comes down* C.*)* Children sometimes improve, and after all "handsome is as handsome does——"

MARGARET. *(With much indignation)* Peter plain! He's a perfectly beautiful child.

WAVERTON. *(Calmly)* Ah, a mother would naturally——

MARGARET. *(Going quickly to door)* You shall see for yourself. I'll be about twenty minutes.

(Exit MARGARET *quickly* R.1E.

WAVERTON. *(Calling after her through door)* Very well. I'll wait for you. *(The outer door closing is heard. He closes door* R.1E. *and goes quickly to window and looks out and down into the street, watching* NIGHTY'S *cab start. Then he comes down to writing-table and begins to open his letters. Enter* PINE R.2E. *with breakfast tray, which he puts on a table* R. *Sits at writing-table)* Give me some coffee. That's all I want. *(He continues to open and read letters)* How is our interesting patient?

PINE. He's resting, sir, after the fatigue of seeing the doctor. *(Pouring out coffee)*

WAVERTON. *(Looking up, interested, from a letter he is reading)* Oh, Dr. Wharton has been here?

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. Well?

PINE. *(Crossing to* WAVERTON *with coffee)* Dr. Wharton was cheerful about Mr. Burns' injuries. His diagnosis was a small shock to nervous system calling for an hour or two's rest. For slight wound on head he prescribed cold water and reduction of hair. For slight bruise on side, he prescribed tincture of h'arnica.

WAVERTON. Well, that's easy.

PINE. He also prescribed a bath and change of underwear.

WAVERTON. *(Smiling and drinking coffee)* He said nothing about carriage exercise?

PINE. Not yet, sir; but I'm sure if you give Dr. Wharton a chance——

WAVERTON. *(Interrupting him, rises and crosses to table* R., *takes toast from rack and butters it)* Pine, you don't like Mr. Burns.

PINE. *(Hypocritically)* Me, sir? I'm sure that all God's creatures——

WAVERTON. No nonsense with me, Pine. I know you don't like him. Now, for my part, I

entertain for him that tolerant affection that I should have for any lost mongrel that I chanced to befriend. . . . I want to do something to uplift him——

PINE. Uplift! That class! Excuse me, sir! *(He sniggers. He takes coffee-cup and replaces it on tray, table* R.*)*

WAVERTON. Don't snigger, Pine. It annoys me. Now, I'm sure if Burns were cleaned up and given some light employment——

PINE. The employment might be possible, sir; but in regards to the cleaning up—— *(He makes an expressive gesture of disgust)*

WAVERTON. *(*L. *of table* R., *firmly)* When Mr. Burns is rested, you will conduct him to the bath-room—the servants' bath-room—and lock him in until he has availed himself of its resources. You will burn his clothes and furnish him with a sufficiency of your own, which I will replace for you.

PINE. *(*R. *of table* R., *resignedly)* Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. You will arrange a shakedown for him in the box-room. When he is well enough you can make him a sort of odd-job man. He shall have a trial any way. *(Crosses to writing-table and sits* L.C. PINE *is looking lugubrious)*

PINE. And with respect to his beard, sir? It's a shocking happendage.

WAVERTON. *(Abstractedly as he reads a letter)* Oh, that must come off.

PINE. *(Brightening considerably and taking breakfast-tray)* Good! I'll call in a barber, sir. *(Exit* PINE R.2E. WAVERTON *gathers his letters together on writing-desk. He rises and looks at his watch)*

WAVERTON. Good heavens! I forgot! *(He hesitates for a moment, then takes up the telephone receiver)* Hello, hello . . . give me 17004 Mayfair. . . . Hello—is that 17004? . . . Is that you,

Simpson? . . . Yes—I'm Mr. Peter. I want you to tell her ladyship that I'm extremely sorry, but business of the gravest importance—what? . . . Her ladyship has left the house in the motor . . . and Miss Dainton? Oh . . . they're calling for me here. Thank you, that will do. *(He puts down receiver)* The Devil! *(A thoughtful pause. He touches the bell. Enter* PINE R.2E.*)* Pine, I'm in an awful hole. I had quite forgotten an engagement I made to motor down into Hertfordshire this morning with her ladyship and Miss Dainton. Now I've asked Mrs. Summers to come back, and——

PINE. *(Discreetly)* Perhaps I could invent some little—— *(The door bell is heard)*

WAVERTON. *(Dryly)* Some little lie. I've no doubt you could, but if that's her ladyship it's too late.

PINE. Shall you be at home, sir?

WAVERTON. I'm afraid I've got to be at home. *(Exit* PINE R.1E. WAVERTON *walks about nervously. Re-enter* PINE R.1E.*)*

PINE. *(Announcing them)* Lady Hurley and Miss Dainton, sir. *(*PINE *exits* R.1E. *(Enter* LADY HURLEY *and* BEATRICE DAINTON. LADY HURLEY *is a well-preserved woman of about forty-seven, of rather severe aspect and a forceful personality.* BEATRICE *is a pretty girl of about twenty-three, with an habitually quizzical expression and humorous eyes. Both ladies are dressed suitably for motoring into the country for luncheon)*

WAVERTON. *(Adopting an extremely agreeable tone)* Good morning, Amelia *(He kisses her ladyship)* Good morning, Bee. *(He kisses* BEATRICE*)*

BEATRICE. Good morning, Peter. *(Crosses down* L. *to fireplace)*

WAVERTON. *(*L.C.*)* You didn't get my message then?

LADY HURLEY. *(R.C.)* What message?

WAVERTON. I've just rung up the house.

LADY HURLEY. We have just left the house.

WAVERTON. But I unfortunately rang up after you had left.

LADY HURLEY. Then how could we have had your message?

WAVERTON. *(Thoughtfully)* True.

BEATRICE. *(Aside to him, and secretly laughing)* You *are* a goat!

LADY HURLEY. You don't appear to be ready for us.

WAVERTON. *(Leaning against* R. *end of sofa.* BEATRICE *is* L. *of him, with her arm through his)* No.

LADY HURLEY. *(C.)* Then get ready. I advise a thick overcvoat. It's cold. *(Slight pause)* Be good enough to hurry, Peter. Lady Tollington always lunches early in the country.

WAVERTON. The fact is, Amelia, I rang you up to tell you that matters of extreme importance had arisen, which make it quite impossible for me to motor down to Hertfordshire with you to-day. I'm sorry.

BEATRICE. *(With a cheerfulness which is intended for* LADY HURLEY*)* Well, that's very simple. We must go without you.

LADY HURLEY. It doesn't occur to me as being so very simple.

BEATRICE. Why, Aunt Amelia?

LADY HURLEY. *(With emphasis)* The appointment was made yesterday morning and Peter was reminded of it by both of us after dinner last night.

BEATRICE. But he says that important matters have arisen since.

LADY HURLEY. Really, Beatrice, you must forgive me, but this is a family affair, and as you're not yet a full member——

BEATRICE. Of the family! No, not yet, Aunt Amelia!

WAVERTON. *(With gentle irony)* When you are, my dear, you will understand that no incident may be permitted to pass unadorned by its little scene. *(*BEATRICE *smiles up at him)*

LADY HURLEY. My dear Peter, no rudeness or sarcasm will alter the fact that you have played fast and loose with an engagement with two ladies. Perhaps, however, you have become ultra-modern, and the fact that one of them is the girl you are going to marry——

BEATRICE. *(Breaking in)* I'm quite satisfied with Peter's explanation. *(A smile between* WAVERTON *and* BEATRICE*)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Ignoring the interruption)* . . . and the other your half-sister and your senior by many years is sufficient excuse in your eyes for conduct which I am compelled to regard as not quite nice.

WAVERTON. *(Crosses* C. *quietly)* Have you quite finished, Amelia?

LADY HURLEY. *(Crosses* C.*)* I may be old-fashioned, but I hate anything raffish.

WAVERTON. Have you quite finished, Amelia?

LADY HURLEY. If even you had some plausible excuse. *(Sits chair* L.C.*)*

WAVERTON. My dear Amelia, I'm well aware you would rather miss lunching with Lady Tollington than finding out what keeps me in town.

LADY HURLEY. *(Indignant)* Really, Peter!

WAVERTON. *(Sits on edge of table,* R.*)* Oh, *I* know— *(He smiles)* So here goes. I had visitors last night.

LADY HURLEY. Visitors at that hour?

WAVERTON. Yes.

BEATRICE. After you telephoned me?

WAVERTON. Yes.

LADY HURLEY. Who were they?

WAVERTON. *(Slowly)* Just some passers-by.

BEATRICE. *(Sitting* R. *arm of sofa,* L.*)* But how exciting, old boy.

LADY HURLEY. *(Gravely)* Peter, I must warn you against eccentricity. It is in your blood. Your poor mother was eccentric. She used to pick up the most extraordinary people, much to the horror of papa and myself.

WAVERTON. Well, Amelia, she's picking up extraordinary people in Heaven now and so peace to her dear memory.

BEATRICE. What was your bag last night, Peter?

WAVERTON. A statesman and an economist.

BEATRICE. You old dear! I believe you are pulling our legs.

LADY HURLEY. Beatrice, you horrify me! Anything more wanting in delicacy——

WAVERTON. *(Interrupting)* The economist returned here this morning.

BEATRICE. Is he presentable?

WAVERTON. Not at the moment. I believe he is in his bath. *(A doubtful look passes between* BEATRICE *and* LADY HURLEY*)*

BEATRICE. Are you quite well, old dear?

WAVERTON. Perfectly, thanks.

LADY HURLEY. If you're serious, Peter, you must be off your head.

WAVERTON. I'm quite serious and quite sane, Amelia.

LADY HURLEY. Are the persons you refer to—gentlemen?

WAVERTON. *(Rises and goes up* C. *a little)* Oh, Amelia! who shall judge a gentleman? They have, however, some of the necessary attributes.

LADY HURLEY. I suppose we are to assume that the business which detains you in town is connected with these persons?

BEATRICE. I have it! Peter's going into politics. Clever old thing! *(She rises and crosses up to* WAVERTON, *and then both go up to window,* R.*)*

LADY HURLEY. If Peter is going mad he'd better see a doctor. If, on the other hand, he's going into politics, he has my approval. Politics is no longer essentially the career for a gentleman, but in these iconoclastic times when class is arrayed against class—*(She suddenly sees one of* MARGARET'S *gloves on writing-table)* when class—is arrayed—*(She picks up the glove and gazes at it for a moment unseen by the others)* against class—*(Slight pause)* Beatrice, would you be good enough to wait for me in the motor?

BEATRICE. *(Crosses down* C., *surprised)* Certainly, Aunt Amelia, if you have something confidential to say to Peter.

LADY HURLEY. I have. *(*WAVERTON, *who also looks surprised, walks down* R. *to door,* R.1E.*)*

BEATRICE. *(Goes* R. *aside to* WAVERTON*)* You're up to some mischief, old dear. What is it?

WAVERTON. *(The same)* For Heaven's sake, get her away.

BEATRICE. *(Aloud)* Can't you postpone your talk with Peter, Aunt Amelia? We shall be so late for luncheon.

LADY HURLEY. *(Firmly)* Be good enough to wait for me in the motor. *(*WAVERTON *and* BEATRICE *shrug shoulders, glance at each other, and exeunt,* R.1E. *The noise of outer door closing is heard. Slight pause, while* LADY HURLEY *looks at the glove with some disgust, then drops it on writing-table. Enter* WAVERTON, R.1E.; *a slight pause while they look at each other)*

WAVERTON. Well, Amelia!

LADY HURLEY. *(In the manner of one who bears a burden with resignation)* Peter, I was unfor-

tunately abroad when our father fell in love with and married your mother.

WAVERTON. *(Up* R.C.*)* So you have frequently given me to understand, Amelia.

LADY HURLEY. Although she had many amiable qualities, the match was one which——

WAVERTON. *(Firmly)* You will kindly leave my mother out of the question, Amelia. Her loss was the tragedy of my childhood.

LADY HURLEY. I hope you remember that I did my best to replace her, Peter.

WAVERTON. I remember everything, Amelia. But I'm afraid that this morning I have no time to indulge in reminiscences, however agreeable.

LADY HURLEY. If at times I have suffered disappointment in you I have done my best to conceal it.

WAVERTON. No doubt! No doubt!

LADY HURLEY. I've always had your best interests at heart, and when I got you engaged to Beatrice Dainton I did so in the belief—— *(*WAVERTON *looks up while she continues significantly)* that whatever errors you had committed in the past—— *(Their eyes meet, there is a slight pause)*

WAVERTON. *(To her)* What the devil are you driving at? *(He goes to her)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Rises, picking up the glove with the tips of her finger and thumb, rising and holding it in front of him)* What is this?

WAVERTON. *(Calmly, after a slight pause)* It would appear to be a glove.

LADY HURLEY. A woman's glove.

WAVERTON. Perhaps a gentlewoman's glove.

LADY HURLEY. Obviously it's the glove of a very common woman.

WAVERTON. Possibly only of a very poor woman.

LADY HURLEY. *(Her eyes fixed on his as she*

lets the glove drop from her fingers on to the desk) You mean an economist.

WAVERTON. *(Frankly bursts out laughing)* Oh, Amelia! Oh, dear Amelia! Life is full of compensations. In the old days—you'll hardly believe it—I used to be rather frightened of you, but in these latter days when I understand you ever so much better you afford me endless amusement.

LADY HURLEY. I suppose I must be very dull, but—— *(Stiffly)*

WAVERTON. Admit that, although your comely and well-clothed body is here present, your imagination for some minutes has been in the bath-room. *(He walks towards door* R.2E.*)* Come with me, my dear Amelia, come with me.

LADY HURLEY. Really, Peter, I must ask you to behave with ordinary decency. If you give me your word that the owner of this glove is not in your apartments——

WAVERTON. I give it gladly, Amelia—only because I am rather pressed for time this morning.

LADY HURLEY. *(Quickly)* Then you know the owner? *(The door bell is heard.* WAVERTON *starts a little anxiously. He is up* R.C.*)*

WAVERTON. Oh, yes.

LADY HURLEY. But—but you decline to tell me who it is?

WAVERTON. Absolutely, Amelia. *(Enter* PINE. WAVERTON *gestures him, warning discretion)*

PINE. May I speak to you, sir? *(*LADY HURLEY *goes down* L. WAVERTON *goes to* PINE *behind table,* R. *They whisper and* WAVERTON *points to* R.2E., *indicating the room beyond. Exit* PINE R.1E.*)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Buttoning her coat)* Very well —my duty is clear.

WAVERTON. *(Crosses* L. *to writing-table)* If you mean your duty to me, Amelia, I beg that you will neglect it.

LADY HURLEY. I refer to my duty to Beatrice—who is under my protection. *(Crosses* R.*)*

WAVERTON. *(Taking up the glove)* Ah, yes—you are right. You will tell Bee and she will tell me, and I may or may not tell her about the owner of this rather pathetic little glove.

LADY HURLEY. *(Who has gone towards door* R.1E.*—turning)* You would be wiser to tell me who she is.

WAVERTON. She is a lady for whom I entertain the highest esteem. *(Calls)* Pine! *(Crosses behind table,* R. *and down to* R.1E.*)*

PINE. *(In the distance outside)* Yes, sir?

WAVERTON. *(In a conventional, "society" tone)* Good-bye, my dear. Awfully sorry I couldn't come. Hope you'll have a nice day. *(Through door)* Pine, go down with her ladyship. Good-bye! *(Exit* LADY HURLEY, R.1E. WAVERTON *closes door, hesitates a moment, then opens door again and looks out, then crosses up* R. *to door. He hesitates again, then comes into the middle of the room. He appears rather embarrassed. He smoothes his hair and pulls his waistcoat straight. Then he walks to the door,* R.2E. *and opens it. In a subdued tone)* Margaret! *(Slight pause. Enter* MARGARET. *She stands calmly at her full length in the doorway for a moment, looking rather proudly at* WAVERTON. WAVERTON *looks first at her and then beyond her. Then he falls back two paces.* MARGARET *reaches one arm behind her and gently and slowly pushes forward* LITTLE PETER. *Enter* LITTLE PETER. *He is a beautiful child of between five and six. His refined oval face is surrounded by a mass of curly blond hair. His eyes are large and solemn. He is dressed simply in inexpensive materials, but in perfect taste. He is just the child and the treasure of his mother.* WAVERTON *looks at* LITTLE PETER *in profound admiration, almost in awe. His voice*

trembles a little as he says): But—but—Margaret —he—he's wonderful. *(He stoops and gives the boy his forefinger)*

MARGARET. *(A slight break in her voice)* I thought perhaps—you would think so.

WAVERTON. *(Stands up with a nervous, pathetic smile)* Damn it, Margaret, I—I'm shy.

MARGARET. *(Suddenly putting her hand to her face as if to stop herself from crying)* I'll come back. *(*MARGARET *steps back quickly and exits* R.2E., *closing the door behind her.* LITTLE PETER *looks after his mother—then at* WAVERTON*)*

WAVERTON. Come along, little man! *(He gives the child his hand and leads him to the writing-table. Then he lifts him into a sitting position on the table)* There! *(Slight pause)* I'll tell you something, old chap—I don't remember what interests little boys of five—what's your name?

LITTLE PETER. *(In a soft voice)* Peter.

WAVERTON. Of course it is. I knew it already. That shows what a great big silly I am. My name's Peter, too. Isn't that funny?

LITTLE PETER. Yes. *(Slight pause)*

WAVERTON. And yet it's not so very funny, Little Peter, because—because—however! Do you play with other little boys?

LITTLE PETER. No.

WAVERTON. Neither did I. I can remember that much. That's what makes us both so shy. *(He looks around the room, and his eyes light on the old grandfather's clock which stands in a corner)* Know anything about clocks? *(He picks* LITTLE PETER *up in his arms)* Here's a wonderful old chap, although he doesn't often take it into his head to go. *(He turns the hands to the hour. The clock strikes.* LITTLE PETER *looks in wonder, but doesn't smile)* Pretty good, eh?

LITTLE PETER. Yes.

WAVERTON. *(Looking into the solemn face of the child, who is still in his arms)* But only pretty good. I think you're right. Now I'm going to really tell you something. People think I can't sing, but I know I can. *(Puts* LITTLE PETER *on the ground, takes his hand and sings the chorus of Harry Lauder's song, "It's just like being at Hame.")* Do you like that? *(*LITTLE PETER *nods his head. He lifts* LITTLE PETER *on to the sofa and lays a hand on his curls. The child still wears his solemn look. Suddenly* WAVERTON *walks away, his back to the audience, to wipe the tears from his eyes. Pause. Then he speaks in a changed and cheerful voice)* I have the idea, Little Peter. Pictures! I can remember that too—I always loved pictures! *(He gets and brings to the sofa a book of engravings. He kneels by the side of the sofa and opens the book)* Do you like pictures?

LITTLE PETER. Yes.

WAVERTON. Well, now we're on common ground. *(He looks cautiously round to be sure the doors are shut, and then for the first time kisses his child—then he rises.* LITTLE PETER *with evident interest, slowly turns over the pages.* WAVERTON *goes to door* R.2E. *and opens it. With an affectation of impatience)* Margaret! Margaret!

MARGARET. *(Outside)* Yes!

(Enter MARGARET, R.2E.*)*

WAVERTON. What the deuce did you go away for?

MARGARET. *(Blankly)* I don't know. *(Then she divines his mood and smiles. She looks over to the child.* WAVERTON'S *eyes follow hers and there is a pause for a moment while the child continues to be interested in the pictures)*

WAVERTON. *(Up* C.*)* He loves pictures—so do I. *(*MARGARET *smiles at him)* Look here, Margaret,

you and I have got to have a serious talk some time.

MARGARET. *(R.C.)* What about?

WAVERTON. Well, for one thing I'm not going to have that fellow—what's his beastly name?—Henry——

MARGARET. Robinson.

WAVERTON. Well, whatever it is, I'm not going to have him interfering in the bringing up of my boy——

MARGARET. Oh, Peter! *(They look at each other for a moment)* Can't you trust me? *(His expression softens. He takes her hand and pats it gently)*

WAVERTON. Why does he never play with other little boys?

MARGARET. The boys in our neighbourhood are so rough—perfect little devils.

WAVERTON. Boys ought to be perfect little devils—I'm convinced of it. What did Nighty think of him?

MARGARET. He didn't say. There was no opportunity. *(*WAVERTON *crosses to fireplace and touches the bell.* MARGARET *comes to back of sofa,* L.*)*

WAVERTON. We'll have him in. He may make the child smile. *(Enter* PINE, R.2E.*)* Is Nighty there?

PINE. Yes, sir, he's in the hall.

WAVERTON. Bring him here.

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. And, Pine!

PINE. Yes, sir.

WAVERTON. At any time Mrs. Summers' little boy is here, you'll take your orders from him.

PINE. *(Smiling broadly)* Yes, sir. *(Aside to* MARGARET*)* He's a perfect beauty, ma'am. *(Exit* PINE*)*

WAVERTON. *(Still at fireplace)* I want to see

Little Peter smile. *(*PINE *goes to door* R.1E., *opens it and motions to* NIGHTY, *who is outside)*

MARGARET. *(With spirit)* He doesn't smile unnecessarily. He's a superior child. *(She bends over to* LITTLE PETER *lovingly)*

WAVERTON. All right, my dear, you needn't be cross.

MARGARET. Don't be absurd.

(Enter NIGHTY, R.1E.*)*

WAVERTON. Well, Nighty, what do you think of Mrs. Summers' little boy? *(*PINE *lingers, deeply interested in the child)*

NIGHTY. *(By table* R.*)* The word is "Angel," guv'nor—or, more correctly, "Cherub." *(He beams. They are all more or less beaming)*

WAVERTON. Tell me, Nighty, your own little boys at that age—were they very quiet?

NIGHTY. Quiet! They were a pack of little devils, guv'nor.

WAVERTON. You hear that, Margaret?

MARGARET. *(In a musical voice as she strokes* LITTLE PETER'S *hair)* There are boys—*and* boys.

NIGHTY. Quite right, ma'am, and the best of'em are quiet before grown-ups. Perhaps it's because they don't trust 'em. *(Enter* BURNS, R.2E. *His hair has been cut, and he has been shaved and, in* PINE'S *clothes—a jacket suit—he looks quite respectable. He is, however, extremely indignant.* WAVERTON *is the first to see him)*

WAVERTON. Why, this can't be my friend Burns! *(They all look at* BURNS*)*

BURNS. *(In a tone of grave complaint)* Yes, mister. That gent, there *(pointing to* PINE*),* 'e puts the barber on me. A liberty, I calls it. *(*LITTLE PETER *rises and leans up against end of writing-table)*

NIGHTY. Why, you look a regular toff, Burns.

MARGARET. It's a wonderful change.

BURNS. *(Agitated)* I don't 'old with changes. I'm fair upset—without a "by-your-leave" or nothin'. It's a liberty. *(Raises his voice angrily)* Why, it ain't me—it ain't like me! It's a houtrage —it's a—— *(He is face to face with* LITTLE PETER. *His expression slowly softens as he gazes at the child, who is looking up at him. The others watch in deep interest. Simultaneously the faces of* BURNS *and* LITTLE PETER *break into smiles)*

BURNS. *(Bending towards* LITTLE PETER*)* Hello, boy!

LITTLE PETER. Hello, man!

NIGHTY. *(Softly)* Well, what do you make of that?

MARGARET. *(Proudly, to* WAVERTON*)* My boy knows when to smile. *(*LITTLE PETER *and* BURNS *shake hands. Picture)*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *The same as Acts I and II. It is about five o'clock one afternoon three weeks after the events of Act II. The day has been very fine and the evening approaches in a golden haze. The window* R. *is open, and the sound of traffic is heard in distance. On the curtain rising* BURNS *is discovered. He is wearing the clothes into which he has changed in Act II, partially covered by a long apron. He is on the sofa looking through a picture book, just as* LITTLE PETER *was in Act II. A patent carpet-sweeper is leaning up against chair,* L.C. *Suddenly* BURNS *thinks he hears some one coming. He starts guiltily and seizing the handle of the sweeper affects to work. Then realising that it was a false alarm, he drops the broom handle and goes to the window up* R. *On the way he picks up a pin)*

BURNS. *(Soliloquising with satisfaction)* A black-head! *(He puts it in his waistcoat. He is absorbed in gazing out of the window. After a few moments' interval the door* L. *of the room opens silently and* PINE *appears. He comes* C. *and takes hold of sweeper-handle which is leaning against piano. Enter* LITTLE PETER *unseen by the others. He lies on sofa and conceals himself with cushions)*

PINE. I thought so! *(*BURNS *starts and turns, shuts window and comes down to* R. *of piano. Noise of traffic ceases)* This morning I put you on to this carpet—did you do it?—No. This afternoon I put you back on it—are you doing it?—No. You're loafing. That's what you're doing—loafing.

BURNS. *(Sulkily)* Bother!

PINE. What were you doing at that window?

BURNS. Smelling the dust—I like it. *(Takes broom-handle from* PINE*)*

PINE. Your sort would. *(*BURNS *moves the sweeper languidly over the carpet)* Why don't you put your back into it?

BURNS. Me back's weak.

PINE. That's only a fiction.

BURNS. What's a fiction?

PINE. Polite for falsehood.

BURNS. My! Wish I was eddicated.

PINE. *(Sitting on chair* L.C.*)* I've been looking at those knives you've supposed to have cleaned. I'm afraid you'll have to go over them again.

BURNS. *(*R.C.*)* Sha'n't.

PINE. You mustn't speak to me like that. I don't want to have to complain to Mr. Waverton about you.

BURNS. Oh, don't yer!

PINE. I'd rather he remained under the illusion that there's some manhood in you.

BURNS. *(Turns on* PINE*)* 'E's on my side, 'e is.

PINE. Oh, he's made a case of you—being a bit balmy. Personally I should have left you where you was best fitted.

BURNS. It was you as fetched me in.

PINE. By his orders. I only drew his attention to you because you were like a picture in a comic paper.

BURNS. *(With an absurd outburst of rage)* Oo put the barber on me—that's what I arst?

PINE. I did—by his orders.

BURNS. *(Much impressed)* 'Tain't true.

PINE. It's the golden gospel. Between us we made you look something like a human being. But *are* you a human being, Burns? The reply is, in the language of poetry, "Yes, I don't think, don't think, don't think!" You don't know poetry, Burns? *(Rises)*

BURNS. *(In mild anger)* I'm straightforward—that's wot I am.

PINE. Poor chap! 'Opeless! Well, we can only go on doing our little best.

BURNS. You'll miss me when I'm gorne.

PINE. *(Going to door* L.*)* Oh, yes, I'll miss you. But you won't go, Burns—your sort never goes. *(Exit* PINE L. BURNS *throws a malevolent look after him, then continues to feebly push the sweeper. After a moment's pause* LITTLE PETER *comes from his concealment, and taking hold of the lower part of the sweeper-handle, assists* BURNS *to shove it.* BURNS *laughs and discontinues work himself, leaving the sweeper in possession of* LITTLE PETER*)*

BURNS. That's right—give it a good 'ard shove. *(*LITTLE PETER *does so.* BURNS *sits* L. *of table* R., *and pointing in the direction in which* PINE *has gone, says with some heat:)* 'E thinks 'e's my boss, but he ain't. I never 'ad no boss—never in my life. *(*LITTLE PETER *continues to work. Slight pause.* BURNS *beckons to him)* 'Ere—little 'un—'ere! *(*LITTLE PETER *puts down the sweeper-handle and goes to* BURNS*)* I don't like 'im, and 'e don't like me—there! 'E's bad.

LITTLE PETER. Is he?

BURNS. Yes. It's snap—snap—snap with him all the time. There's no peace. An' the liberties! 'E 'ad me beard took off. You never see me with a beard.

LITTLE PETER. Was it a long one?

BURNS. Middlin'. Yes, it's snap—snap—all work and sharpness.

LITTLE PETER. *(*C.*)* Poor Mr. Burns.

BURNS. "Burns!" That what 'e calls me. Imperdence! Nobody never calls me nothing before. Me other name's Samuel.

LITTLE PETER. Is it?

BURNS. Yes. Call me Samuel. *(Pauses)* Won't yer? I wouldn't let no one else.

LITTLE PETER. Samuel!

BURNS. That's right.—'Ere, I'll show you somethin'. Yer won't tell?

LITTLE PETER. No.

BURNS. *(In great confidence)* I got me cap back. *(He half pulls it from his breast-pocket and puts it back again)* I've 'ad it years and years. 'E took it away the day 'e put the barber on me, but I creep an' creep in the night, an' I foun' it. *(The door suddenly opens. Enter* PINE. BURNS *rises hastily.* LITTLE PETER *goes down* L.*)*

PINE. *(Crosses down* C. *to* LITTLE PETER. *With grave indignation)* Master Peter, it's not beseeming that you should talk to the under servants. *(He comes down and takes* LITTLE PETER'S *hand and goes* R.*)* I have to take you for a nice drive in a cab, after which your Ma is coming to take you home. That poor chap isn't a fit companion for a young gentleman like you.

BURNS. *(*C. *Bitterly to* LITTLE PETER*)* That's right—I'm the dirt under yer feet.

LITTLE PETER. *(With a look from* BURNS *to* PINE*)* I like him.

PINE. Young gents' tastes is very himature. *(*LITTLE PETER *nods at* BURNS. *Exeunt* PINE *and* LITTLE PETER, R.1E. PINE *shuts door after them)*

BURNS. *(Soliloquising. Drops sweeper)* My sort never goes! *(With great determination)* Don't it! *(*BURNS *evidently makes up his mind to a course of action. He begins by taking off his apron which he flings under piano—then after a longing look through the window he goes softly towards the door. The door* R. *at that moment opens and* LITTLE PETER *appears, dressed to go out)*

LITTLE PETER. *(Shuts door and comes to* R. *of table* R. *In a guarded voice)* Good-bye, Samuel.

BURNS. *(Down* L.C. *In the same tone and beckoning with his hand)* 'Ere! *(*LITTLE PETER, *after a glance over his shoulder, goes to* BURNS*)* Do you like rabbits?

LITTLE PETER. *(*R.C.*)* Yes.

BURNS. I know where there's 'undreds. You make a loop with a bit of string an' sometimes you can catch 'em; then you pick 'em up by the ears, never by the feet, always by the ears. String's wot yer want. I got heaps. *(He takes a collection of string out of his pocket and shows* LITTLE PETER*)* See! *(Pause)* It ain't far. Will you come?

LITTLE PETER. Yes.

BURNS. There'll be a moon to-night.

PINE. *(Outside)* Master Peter! Master Peter!

LITTLE PETER. Ssh! *(*LITTLE PETER *gets quickly under piano and beckons to* BURNS, *who follows him)*

(Enter PINE R.IE.*)*

PINE. Come along, Master Peter. *(Pause. He looks round)* Now, where the—— *(He raises his voice)* Master Peter! Master Peter! *(Exit* PINE L. BURNS *and* LITTLE PETER *scurry lightly across to principal door* R.IE., *which is open.* LITTLE PETER *exits. There* BURNS *stops and turns round for a moment)*

BURNS. *(Looking towards door* L.*)* "My sort never goes!" Yah! *(Exit* BURNS*)*

PINE. *(Outside)* Master Peter! *(Enter* PINE L.*)* I 'ate those silly games. *(He looks round the room at the possible hiding-places, then goes back to the door* L. *Raises his voice)* I suppose you're hiding behind that sofa! If you think I'm going to duck about and make bags of my trousers you're mistaken. *(Slight pause)* I don't want to be hard on you, Burns, but I'll have to report you for this! *(Suddenly he notices the time by the clock)* Good Lord! ten to five! *(He hastily puts the patent*

sweeper outside the door R.2E. *and does one or two little things to straighten the room. Then he goes back to door* L.) Burns, have done with this——

NIGHTY. *(Outside* R.*)* Mr. Pine! Mr. Pine!

PINE. *(Starting nervously)* Hello! *(Raises his voice)* Is that you, Nighty?

NIGHTY. *(Outside)* Yes. *(Enter* NIGHTY R.1E.*)* What about this drive?

PINE. *(On whom a fear is evidently growing up,* L.C.*)* Who let you in? Cook?

NIGHTY. No, I walked in. The door was open.

PINE. Open?

NIGHTY. Yes.

PINE. Who opened it?

NIGHTY. *(Down* R.*)* Well now, Mr. Pine, 'ow should I know? I suppose you left it open last time you came in.

PINE. *(After a slight pause)* Look here, Nighty, that Burns—damn him!—I wish he'd never come here—him and the boy think they're having a game with me—hiding—silly rot I call it.

NIGHTY. Go on, they're only children, both of 'em.

PINE. You have a look round these rooms while I look at the back. Try behind the sofa in there. *(Pointing to door* L.*)*

NIGHTY. Right you are! *(Exit* PINE *quickly* R.2E. *A broad smile steals over* NIGHTY'S *face, he makes a search of the room)* Come along, Master Peter. It's only old Nighty! *(Pause. Then he exits* L. *softly through door, tiptoeing, as if playing with children. Then there is a slight pause. Re-enter* NIGHTY, *looking puzzled and grave. He looks under piano and finds* BURNS' *apron. Enter* PINE *by door,* R.2E. *He is much excited and alarmed)*

NIGHTY. They're not here.

PINE. And they're not out there. Not a sign of them.

NIGHTY. *(Handing him the apron)* This was under the piano.

PINE. *(Deeply agitated* R.C.*)* My God, Nighty, I'm in trouble.

NIGHTY. *(*L.C.*)* Pull yourself together, Mr. Pine.

PINE. I tell you it's ruin for me. That cursed loafer's gone off with the child. They were here one moment, and the next they was gone as if the earth had swallowed them! I always had an instinct about that cockroach—and my instincts——

NIGHTY. *(Firmly)* Never mind your instincts, Mr. Pine—the business is to find 'em. They can't have gone far.

PINE. You're right, and, by God, I'll break every bone—— *(The door bell is heard to ring)* That's the mother—a thousand to one.

NIGHTY. Or the guv'nor.

PINE. No. He'd use his latch-key. If she was to know she'd go stark staring mad. Not a word, you understand. Leave it to me. *(Exit* PINE *quickly,* R.IE. NIGHTY, *grave and troubled, stands waiting,* C. *After a slight interval, enter* MARGARET, *followed by* PINE, R.IE.*)*

PINE. *(By door. Hurriedly and with affected cheerfulness)* It's Nighty, ma'am.

MARGARET. *(Who appears in good spirits)* Good afternoon, Nighty. *(Crosses up* C.*)*

NIGHTY. *(Affecting cheerfulness, works round to door* R. *behind table)* Good afternoon, ma'am.

PINE. *(Also affecting cheerfulness)* We're just starting to take the young gentleman for a little drive, ma'am.

MARGARET. Where is Master Peter?

PINE. *(Quickly)* He's stepped across to the cab-rank with Burns, ma'am. *(*NIGHTY *is now making for the door, bowing and smiling painfully)* Mr. Waverton's motoring, ma'am. He'll be in on the stroke of five.

MARGARET. *(Taking off her jacket)* Don't go too far.

NIGHTY. No ma'am. Just round Constitution Hill and the Palace. *(Exeunt* PINE *and* NIGHTY, *closing door,* R.1E. MARGARET *folds her jacket and takes her hat off and lays them on piano. She then takes off her gloves. She is humming an air. She then takes a piece of work from her bag and makes herself comfortable in chair* L. *of table* R. WAVERTON'S *latch-key is heard in the outer door.* MARGARET *looks up for a moment and then back at her work. Slight pause.* WAVERTON *enters* R.1E. *in motoring clothes)*

WAVERTON. Hello, Margaret!

MARGARET. Hello, Peter! *(*WAVERTON *takes off his coat, cap and gloves, and lays them on chair* R., *just against* R.1E.*)*

WAVERTON. So glad you've come. I'm not late, am I?

MARGARET. No. I was a little early.

WAVERTON. I've been trying my motor with the new light body on it—she goes splendidly. I wish you'd let me take you for a run one day.

MARGARET. I should be afraid. I've never been in a motor-car.

WAVERTON. How old-fashioned of you. It's time you began.

MARGARET. I'm too old to begin.

WAVERTON. *(Walking about and laughing)* You! Old! *(He laughs)* You're still a child. *(As he passes her chair, he lightly touches her shoulder.* NOTE: *His attraction to her and her knowledge of it and instinctive defence underlie the entire scene)* I'll ring for Pine, and we'll have some tea.

MARGARET. I've had tea, thank you. Pine and Nighty have taken Little Peter for a drive. They've just gone.

WAVERTON. Ah! I forgot! I left instructions. *(He goes up* L. *to the spirit stand)* Well, if I'm to have tea alone I'll take it with soda-water. *(He mixes himself a whisky and soda, and drinks)* Do you know, my dear, I think you are very good to me.

MARGARET. I? How?

WAVERTON. First of all, in letting me see the boy twice a week.

MARGARET. I thought it only fair to you both.

WAVERTON. Secondly, in coming to fetch him away yourself. That is unearned increment. I hope it won't be taxed. *(He lights a cigarette, crosses* C. MARGARET *keeps her face down over her work.* WAVERTON *looks at her, but gets no sign of her thoughts. He sits at his writing-table. There is rather a long pause)*

WAVERTON. Margaret!

MARGARET. Yes?

WAVERTON. I want you to make it three times a week.

MARGARET. Don't ask me, Peter. I'm sure it would be unwise. As it is I have misgivings.

WAVERTON. Misgivings?

MARGARET. I'm not sure we are acting fairly.

WAVERTON. To whom?

MARGARET. Well—to—to Miss Dainton. *(Slight pause)* You have told her nothing.

WAVERTON. *(Embarrassed)* No, not yet. I called for her in the motor to-day—meaning to take her for a drive and to tell her. I think I was glad she was out. I suppose she ought to know. But it's difficult—she's only a girl.

MARGARET. *(Slowly)* She must be told the truth, Peter—otherwise I can't——

WAVERTON. *(Hastily)* You are perfectly right, my dear. I shall tell her to-morrow. *(He rises and walks a little down* L.*)* Fortunately Beatrice

has the keenest sympathies. She's just all goodness. *(Coming to her)* What work's that you're doing?

MARGARET. Knitting.

WAVERTON. What?

MARGARET. Socks. *(*WAVERTON *sits on top of table* R., *leaning towards her)*

WAVERTON. Little ones, I see.

MARGARET. For little feet.

WAVERTON. Must you always work?

MARGARET. *(Laughing lightly)* Having a piece of work in one's hand enables one to concentrate.

WAVERTON. Oh, really?

MARGARET. Some people say that if you keep your feet together and your hands together, you complete the circuit. I don't know what it means——

WAVERTON. Nor do they.

MARGARET. Nor do they—but I fancy this has the same kind of effect. *(Holding up her work)* You understand?

WAVERTON. *(Vaguely)* Yes, I suppose so. *(He laughs slightly. She laughs slightly. Then they laugh together rather more than the occasion would warrant)* I told you you were only a child.

MARGARET. *(Returning to her work)* And you?

WAVERTON. I—— *(He takes up wool, which* MARGARET, *after a moment, gently takes away from him)* I think that in some ways of late I've grown younger. I used to feel too old for my age—now perhaps I'm too young for my age—all on account of that kid of ours. Damme, I find myself thinking all the time of cricket and football and the games I missed as a boy through the old man being ass enough to decided against a public school. But I can give Little Peter swimming and shooting and handling a horse or boat with the best of 'em. I don't mind telling you, my dear, that even now, I

wouldn't change my hands on a horse with—— However, I don't want to boast. *(Rises and goes* C.*)*

MARGARET. You forget I saw you win the point-to-point race at Blairfield——

WAVERTON. So you did. So you did. *(Slight pause)* Do you know that little chap grows on one like the devil.

MARGARET. Does he, Peter?

WAVERTON. Yes. Of course with you it's different. The maternal instinct is a very potent factor.

MARGARET. It just means loving—loving dreadfully.

WAVERTON. *(Sits arm of chair,* L.C.*)* Exactly. Now with us mere men—common, ordinary masculine clay—the affection has to grow. The first feeling is one of embarrassment. One is a father! The devil! Awkward responsibility. What's to be done about it? Then one finds one is the father of a kind of glory like Little Peter—with some likeness to what we were ourselves in our obscure youth!—Aha—reproduction of Us. *(Tapping his chest)* What better model? Chip of the old block! Our vanity is tickled. And so that's what it comes to, my dear—the paternal feeling—all vanity. *(He pulls chair towards her, and sits. She laughs)* I may be wrong—but I think Little Peter an unusual child.

MARGARET. He sometimes says wonderful things.

WAVERTON. He always looks wonderful things.

MARGARET. *(In a hushed tone)* Perhaps—perhaps he has a touch of genius.

WAVERTON. Perhaps. It would be a nice change in a Waverton—— *(They are silent for a moment, and then their eyes meet and they smile)* Have you his picture in that locket? (MARGARET'S *hand goes quickly to her neck—where the locket is just under*

her dress. The light begins very gradually to get dimmer as the sun is setting)

MARGARET. Yes.

WAVERTON. Mightn't I see it?

MARGARET. *(Rising, shaking her dress straight and putting down her work)* It's only an old one—taken two years ago. *(Crosses* L.C.*)*

WAVERTON. Two years ago! Little Peter at three! Let me see it. *(Rises and comes to* R. *of her)*

MARGARET. *(Getting away from him,* L.*)* I—I think I have another copy—I'll bring it to you.

WAVERTON. But, my dear, don't you understand? I want to see it now. Do be kind. *(He holds out his hand for locket)*

MARGARET. No! No! You can't see it now. I don't want you to.

WAVERTON. But I must. *(He holds her while she struggles)* Margaret, don't be so cruel. I'm dying to see it. Don't be a perfect brute to me.

MARGARET. *(Panting)* Peter—be reasonable!

WAVERTON. No, really—it isn't nice of you. *(Suddenly, by a desperate effort,* MARGARET *wrenches herself free and rushes to the fireplace. He follows her)* Margaret!

MARGARET. *(Her voice raised)* Do you want me to throw it in the fire? *(Her hand is on the locket at her neck and she is breathing heavily)*

WAVERTON. *(Flinging himself on the sofa)* No. *(He is much agitated. There is a pause while they both make an effort to regain self-control)*

MARGARET. *(Endeavouring to speak evenly—*L. *end of sofa* L.*)* Now you are very angry. I'm sorry.

WAVERTON. I'm not angry. You were quite within your rights. *(Raising his voice)* But you can't expect me to be particularly exhilarated by the thought—— *(He breaks off abruptly)*

MARGARET. Well. By what thought?

WAVERTON. *(Angry and vaguely jealous)* What did you suppose I should think? *(Slight pause. He sits up)* Must I say it? *(Slight pause)* That's the picture of another man——

MARGARET. *(Waving her trembling hands)* Ssh! Don't say that, Peter!

WAVERTON. But isn't it natural, as you were so damned careful not to let me see——

MARGARET. *(Quickly)* No—yes—I suppose so —but you don't understand. You'll take my word though—I'm sure of that, and I give it. Your thought was—was wrong. *(Goes up* L., *round top of writing-table)*

WAVERTON. *(A little ashamed)* I'm glad and —and I'm sorry. Forgive me. *(He looks down at his hands nervously)* I'm a fool! *(She is* R. *of writing-desk)*

MARGARET. If one could only convince oneself that everything is all right—and just the way it's got to be——

WAVERTON. *(Rising—goes up to* L. *writing-table)* You haven't asked me why—why I bothered so much about the locket? *(He is longing to tell her it was because he loves her)*

MARGARET. *(Quickly)* No—I don't want to know. *(She does know)*

WAVERTON. Perhaps you guess.

MARGARET. *(Almost passionately)* No. Can't you see? I prefer not to. *(She is now at the other side of the desk and she takes up the picture of* BEATRICE*)*

WAVERTON. *(Behind writing-table. Almost angrily)* You may put that down—I forget nothing. *(He takes photo from her, and replaces it on table)*

MARGARET. It was unintentional, I assure you, Peter, I took it up unconsciously. I—I am very

nervous. Without meaning it, I'm afraid we hurt each other. *(Goes* C.*)* We must be more—more conventional or else I sha'n't be able to come here again.

WAVERTON. *(Quickly and gently)* Don't say that, Margaret. *(She goes to table* R., *and sits and picks up her work. Crosses* R. *to behind table,* R.*)* It was all my fault. I'm a perfect brute. *(He takes the work from her)* And don't work any more. *(Puts work on piano)* The light's getting too bad. *(Puts chair* C. *up to writing-table, and sits on arm. Pause)* Play something for me. *(They both now try to be conventional)*

MARGARET. I play! Oh, my dear Peter, my playing days are over. My fingers have lost what little cunning they had.

WAVERTON. Don't you get any practice now?

MARGARET. Very little—and that only on my landlady's piano. Imagine it—*(rises)*—a tall, severe repellent affair with a green silk front and three broken notes.

WAVERTON. *(Smiling)* I can see it. There are probably woolwork flowers on the top under a glass case.

MARGARET. Yes, and a stuffed squirrel.

WAVERTON. *(Going to piano)* Do try mine. It's up to date, though possibly out of tune.

MARGARET. *(Going to piano)* But, really, Peter, it's quite out of the question. *(She sits)*

WAVERTON. Anything. *(He stands against the piano looking at her.* MARGARET *begins playing Schubert's "An die Musik" very softly. Pause)* That's it. Nothing clings so desperately to the memory as music, Margaret.

MARGARET. *(Still playing)* No. *(Another pause)*

WAVERTON. That's as I first saw you at Amelia's. It was after dinner, and the new gover-

ness had been sent for to play to us. *(Softly)* You were the new governess.

MARGARET. *(Softly)* Yes, I was the new governess.

WAVERTON. And that is what you first played.

MARGARET. Yes.

WAVERTON. *(He listens for a few moments before he speaks in subdued tones)* I sat, at it were, over there—*(pointing* L.*)* watching you from behind the evening paper. Dear God! how shy I was! I was afraid you would catch me looking at you and still more afraid that Amelia would catch me. She sat there, in what had been my mother's favourite chair, and in complete command as always of the situation. Hurley sprawled in an arm-chair asleep as usual, and my father stood over at the mantelpiece secretly disapproving the sentiment of the music. It was a typical domestic English evening, but in that quiet room love was at work. *(Leaning on the piano)* Their hostility began it. The very air was charged with it, and with the distrust of youth. Instinctively we formed an alliance against the common enemy. And so came our secret meetings and the discovery of our mutual loneliness. And then Margaret—then——

MARGARET. *(Ceasing to play, rising in much agitation)* You mustn't go on. I can't listen. It isn't right. I must go—you must send the child——

WAVERTON. *(Determined)* Wait—I've got to say this. What a man has lost through no fault of his own still belongs to him in his heart of hearts. And it was through no fault of mine that I lost you, Margaret. All the luck was against me, but I want you to know that I wouldn't have given you up—no, Margaret—by God I couldn't! *(He is close to her, and appears about to take her in his arms. Unheeded by* MARGARET *and* WAVERTON *the*

outer door bell has sounded and at this moment the noise of the door being opened is heard)

MARGARET. *(Listening)* The child! Thank God! *(*LADY HURLEY'S *voice is heard outside)*

WAVERTON. *(Listening)* No! It's my sister!

MARGARET. *(Alarmed)* Lady Hurley! *(She is about to move)*

WAVERTON. *(Laying his hand on her arm)* Don't you move.

LADY HURLEY. *(Outside)* It's all right, my good woman, we know our way.

WAVERTON. *(Quickly and impressively)* Will you trust me, Margaret?

MARGARET. *(Up* R.C. *Looking full at him)* Yes. *(*WAVERTON *comes down* L.C. *Enter* MRS. PARKER, R.1E., *opening the door for* LADY HURLEY *and* BEATRICE, *who enter.* MRS. PARKER *closes the door and exits)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Crosses* L.*)* You must forgive this invasion, Peter, but you've brought it on yourself by your neglect.

WAVERTON. *(Going to her)* Delighted to see you, my dear—and you, Bee. *(Crosses* C.— *he touches* BEATRICE *lightly on the shoulder as he passes her to the electric light switches down* R. *The evening light has become very dim)*

BEATRICE. *(*C.*)* Heartbroken, old dear, to have missed you when you called.

WAVERTON. What we all need is more light. *(He switches on the light)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Suddenly seeing* MARGARET*)* I'm afraid our visit is ill-timed.

WAVERTON. *(Going quickly up to window)* And drawn curtains give a sense of intimacy. *(Drawing the curtains)* You and Miss Summers know each other, Amelia. *(*LADY HURLEY *at writing-table falls back a step utterly dumbfounded. Introducing)*

Miss Dainton—Miss Summers! *(Both the girls bow)*

BEATRICE (C.) AND MARGARET (R.C. *Together, rather faintly)* How d'you do?

LADY HURLEY. *(Aside to* WAVERTON, *who has come down* L. *to fireplace, gasping with indignation)* How dare you!

WAVERTON. *(Quietly)* What's the matter, Amelia?

LADY HURLEY. How dare you introduce such a woman to Beatrice.

BEATRICE. *(To* MARGARET*)* I'm glad to meet a friend of Peter's, Miss Summers. *(They shake hands. Slight pause)*

MARGARET. Thank you.

LADY HURLEY. Beatrice, you'll be good enough to wait for me in the motor below.

BEATRICE. *(Up* C.*)* Oh, no, Aunt Amelia; I don't think I can be quite good enough for that. Not to-day.

LADY HURLEY. *(By sofa* L. *firmly)* Please do as I wish.

BEATRICE. I'm sorry I can't, Aunt Amelia. I have a strange feeling that my days of waiting in the motor below have gone for ever.

LADY HURLEY. There are some things that young girls mustn't know about.

BEATRICE. Perhaps they're the very things that young girls ought to know about.

LADY HURLEY. *(With quiet indignation)* Very well. You bring the unpleasantness upon yourself. I'm sorry to have to tell you that this person left my employment in circumstances——

WAVERTON. *(At fireplace, interposing firmly)* Wait, Amelia, I'm sure that you'd never forgive yourself if you said something offensive about a lady who is my guest.

LADY HURLEY. I don't wish to be unnecessarily

offensive, Peter—but if Miss Summers is to remain, I must go.

WAVERTON. I should regret your going, my dear, but if you feel——

LADY HURLEY. *(Quickly interrupting)* Come, Beatrice—— *(Moves as if to go)*

BEATRICE. (C.) I can't, Aunt Amelia. Peter evidently wants to tell me something that I ought to know. He'll tell me the truth. I trust Peter.

WAVERTON. *(Crosses* R. *a little)* Shall I take you down, Amelia? *(A pause.* LADY HURLEY *hesitates)*

MARGARET. I will go. *(Comes down* R. *a little)*

WAVERTON. *(Goes* R. *below table)* I particularly wish you to remain.

BEATRICE. So do I, Miss Summers.

LADY HURLEY. *(Coming to a decision)* As Beatrice is in my care I can't leave her here alone. There would appear to be no respect, no obedience, no decency left in the world. However, I have made my protest against what I consider a scandalous proceeding.

WAVERTON. *(By door* R.1E.) I have made a mental note of your protest, my dear, and I'm glad you've decided to stay. I must beg of you, however, to exercise self-control. I think that's better done sitting than standing. *(*LADY HURLEY *removes her furs which she left on sofa. Then sits on sofa. Goes up* C.) Beatrice! *(He goes to her and gives her chair,* L.C.)

BEATRICE. *(Laying a hand for a moment on his arm)* You dear old thing!

WAVERTON. *(Pulls chair out* L. *of table* R.) Margaret, please don't stand. *(*MARGARET *sits in the chair,* R.C. WAVERTON *position standing behind* MARGARET) I had no intention of permanently concealing from you my friendship with Miss Summers, Bee. I'm sure you believe that.

BEATRICE. I always believe everything you say, Peter.

WAVERTON. We became friends six years ago when Miss Summers was governess in my sister's house. It is idle to attempt to explain what forces drew us together—but there is the fact—we became everything to each other.

BEATRICE. *(Slowly)* I understand.

WAVERTON. On Amelia becoming acquainted in some way with the facts——

LADY HURLEY. Since you insist on knowing the truth, Beatrice—a line of conduct which I consider most improper, unsuitable and deplorable—I dismissed my governess on discovering she was carrying on a disgraceful intrigue in my house.

WAVERTON. My sister not only dismissed Miss Summers, but in her zeal deprived me of all opportunity of repairing the wrong I had done by telling me she had gone abroad to another engagement.

LADY HURLEY. I did so in your own interests.

WAVERTON. I am sure of it, Amelia. Then the postal authorities must have blundered, for two letters which Miss Summers wrote me never reached me. *(*LADY HURLEY *draws herself up stiffly)*

MARGARET. I don't think it is necessary to go on. I have never thought that Lady Hurley could have acted in any other——

WAVERTON. *(Interrupting)* I beg of you to let me finish, Margaret. *(Crosses* L. *to behind sofa)* I leave it to your wider experience, Amelia—do letters—properly and carefully addressed letters—very often go astray in the post? *(Pause)*

BEATRICE. Where were the letters sent, Peter?

WAVERTON. To the only address Miss Summers knew of—to my sister's house. *(Another pause.* LADY HURLEY *is obstinately silent)*

BEATRICE. If you had received the letters you

would have—have seen Miss Summers again, Peter?

WAVERTON. *(Slowly, behind writing-table)* Yes. I think she knows that now—it is only fair to me that she should know it—and it is fair to you that you should know it.

BEATRICE. *(Gently)* You loved her, Peter, dear.

WAVERTON. Yes.

MARGARET. *(To* WAVERTON. *Sitting* R.C.*)* I hope you will explain to Miss Dainton that our meeting again was an accident and that my presence here implies no disloyalty to her.

BEATRICE. I'm sure of that, Miss Summers.

MARGARET. Mr. Waverton told me immediately of his engagement to you.

WAVERTON. And Miss Summers informed me of her engagement—whose name I have unhappily forgotten.

MARGARET. *(Rises)* Mr. Henry Robinson. *(Goes up to piano and gets muff, etc.)*

LADY HURLEY. *(To* WAVERTON*)* And do you consider these secret meetings in your rooms quite fair to this Mr. Robinson?

WAVERTON. *(Crosses to above table,* R.*)* How like you, Amelia—always thinking of others!

BEATRICE. Surely, Aunt Amelia, this is Miss Summers' affair—not ours.

LADY HURLEY. I see Miss Summers is going. In so doing she wins my approval for the first time. *(Rises and faces* MARGARET*)* I should like her to know first that I threw her two letters into the fire.

BEATRICE. Aunt Amelia!

LADY HURLEY. *(Firmly)* I have no regrets. I saw the boy to whom I had devoted so much care falling into an abyss. I did what I thought best to save him. If I failed, the fault isn't mine.

MARGARET. *(Goes to* BEATRICE, *who rises)* Good-bye, Miss Dainton. If I have unconsciously

caused you a moment's unhappiness, I am sorry.

BEATRICE. *(In pained tones)* Please don't speak of it! *(Goes up* L.C. *near window. Enter* PINE, R.IE. NIGHTY *can just be seen in the doorway behind him)*

PINE. *(Agitated)* Can I speak to you a moment, sir?

WAVERTON. Yes—what is it?

MARGARET. *(Quickly)* Where's the boy? *(*PINE *hesitates)*

WAVERTON. Well?

PINE. Disappeared, sir—with Burns. *(*LADY HURLEY *rises)*

MARGARET. My God!

WAVERTON. *(Firmly)* Can't you trust me, Margaret?

MARGARET. Yes. *(Covers her face with her hands for a moment)*

PINE. Nighty and I have been searching for them for over an hour. *(*NIGHTY *steps into the doorway. The scene to be taken very quickly all through)*

WAVERTON. Have you been to Scotland Yard?

NIGHTY. No, guv'nor—but we passed the word to all the policemen we met.

WAVERTON. Round to the garage, Nighty, and order my car. You will come with me. *(Exit* NIGHTY R.IE. *Exit* PINE*)* It only means, Margaret, that the Wanderer has returned to the road and has taken the other child for company. Don't worry—I'll bring them back. *(He quickly gathers his coat, hat, and gloves from chair by* R.IE.*)*

LADY HURLEY. There was mention of a boy. Whose boy?

MARGARET. My boy, Lady Hurley.

WAVERTON. *(At door,* R.IE., *firmly)* And mine, Amelia.

LADY HURLEY. Peter! *(She staggers slightly.*

MARGARET *sits chair* R.C., *her face in her hands)*

BEATRICE. Peter! *(She is gravely distressed)*

WAVERTON. Beatrice! You have a heart. *(Points to* MARGARET, *and exits* R.1E.*)*

LADY HURLEY. *(Picks up furs)* Come, Beatrice. *(*BEATRICE *first looks towards door that* WAVERTON *has gone through, then at* MARGARET, *then at* LADY HURLEY. BEATRICE *with great determination drops her muff on chair* L.C., *then removes her hat and drops it with muff. She crosses to above table* R, *and lays her hand on* MARGARET'S *shoulder.* MARGARET *looks up at* BEATRICE *and breaks down, burying her face in her arms across the table.* BEATRICE *sits on chair above the table, and holds* MARGARET'S *hand in deep sympathy.* LADY HURLEY, *strongly disapproving, stands by writing-table)*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: *The same as the previous Acts. It is* 4.30 *in the morning. The room is softly lighted by electricity, not all the lamps being turned on. On the curtain rising* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep in an arm-chair* L.C. MARGARET *is looking out of window. There is a pause.* MARGARET *walks the room. Evidently she is thinking distractedly of her lost child. She stops once to look down at the sleeping girl, and seeing that the rug over her knees has slipped down she gently readjusts it. She then crosses to fireplace and puts a fresh log on fire. Hearing the sound of a passing taxi, she hurries to the window and looks out through the curtains. As it doesn't stop she comes back into the room with a disappointed air and resumes her restless walk. "Big Ben" is heard striking* 4.30.

BEATRICE. *(Stirring)* Hello—was I asleep?

MARGARET. I hope so.

BEATRICE. What a healthy person I am. *(She rubs her eyes)* I hadn't the remotest intention of going to sleep.

MARGARET. *(R.C.)* You sleep easily because you are young.

BEATRICE. Young? I? Oh no, Miss Summers —I'm grown up suddenly. I don't think any one can look realities in the face and remain young.

MARGARET. Well, because you are good.

BEATRICE. *(Laughs)* Good! Why, my entire mental life has been punctuated with crime.

MARGARET. *(At table* R., *with a slight smile)* Now you're making fun of yourself.

BEATRICE. It's true. How many times do you think I have murdered Aunt Amelia? Even Hurley

and the children haven't escaped me. There have been occasions when I've dabbled in the blood of the entire family. What time is it?

MARGARET. Half-past four.

BEATRICE. Half-past four! *(Rises and crosses to* MARGARET*)* And you have been walking about and wearing yourself out while I've been resting. I feel ashamed. Do let me tuck you up in this nice chair and I'll keep watch for the motor.

MARGARET. Thank you—you are very sweet—but I feel I couldn't rest—I don't seem to be able even to sit still. *(Crosses to fireplace)* I—I want my child.

BEATRICE. You have no faith. *(*C.*)*

MARGARET. Yes, yes, I have—but I am a mother.

BEATRICE. It must be wonderful to be a mother.

MARGARET. *(By fireplace)* Yes, it's wonderful —and beautiful; but I suppose it's like everything else in life—one pays for the joy with the pain.

BEATRICE. *(*R. *end of sofa* L.*)* Miss Summers!

MARGARET. *(Softly)* Yes.

BEATRICE. I insist on your sitting down.

MARGARET. *(Hesitating)* I—I——

BEATRICE. *(In a tone of forced command)* Come here! *(*MARGARET *goes to her)* Sit there! *(Indicating* R. *end of sofa.* MARGARET *smiles and obeys.* BEATRICE *arranges a cushion behind her)* There! *(Pulls footstool out from beneath sofa and places it for* MARGARET*)* Put your feet on that. *(*MARGARET *does so)* Now fold your hands and close your eyes. *(*MARGARET *does so. Slight pause. Suddenly two tears roll down* MARGARET'S *cheeks, which* BEATRICE *wipes away with her hand)* No—you mustn't.

MARGARET. I won't—I promise. It's only——

BEATRICE. Ssh! *(Lays a hand on* MARGARET'S *arm. Slight pause)*

MARGARET. I know I oughtn't to let you stay—but——

BEATRICE. *(Sits* L. *arm of sofa)* But you can't get rid of me. I've made up my mind to stand by you, whether you like it or not, until Peter brings your boy back.

MARGARET. Lady Hurley rang up again half an hour ago.

BEATRICE. What did the darling old thing say?

MARGARET. I began to tell her you were asleep, but she rang off directly she heard my voice.

BEATRICE. Cat!

MARGARET. At least she's a consistent cat.

BEATRICE Oh, yes—consistent to the death. With all her faults she's a tremendous mother—you know—one of the aggressive ones. She'd mother the entire human race if she could, and every one would have a beautiful time—I don't think! I'll bet anything she's dying to know if the child is found. But do you think she'd ask you? Not for an empire!

MARGARET. Isn't that amazing?

BEATRICE. To me it's only Aunt Amelia.

(Enter PINE R.2E. *Cross to above table* L.*)*

PINE. Is there anything I can get you, miss?

BEATRICE. No, thank you. *(As an excuse for lingering* PINE *folds the rug that is lying on the arm-chair, then lays rug over back of chair* L.C.*)*

PINE. I thought perhaps, miss, you would like some coffee.

BEATRICE. *(Her hand on* MARGARET'S *shoulder)* Would you? *(*MARGARET *shakes her head.* NOTE: *During all this part of the Act* MARGARET *is obviously exercising great self-repression)* No, thank you, Pine. We shall not require anything till Mr. Waverton returns.

PINE. Excuse me, miss, but there's no knowing when that will be. London's a big place—the sub-

urbs are still more hextensive—and as for the country——

BEATRICE. *(Rises and crosses to* R. *end of sofa. Interrupting, as she notices the ill-effect* PINE'S *words have on* MARGARET*)* Don't talk nonsense! A well-dressed child with a tramp isn't likely to escape notice.

PINE. *(*C.*)* Pardon me, miss, but if I may make so bold, this Burns was dressed very respectable. He was apparelled in a suit of my own—reduced to size.

BEATRICE. *(Anxious for* MARGARET*)* Very well, Pine, that will do.

PINE. Thank you, miss. *(Starts to go, then hesitates and returns a few paces)* It's a consolation to those in service, miss, when duty done is recognised.

BEATRICE. I'm sure it must be, Pine.

PINE. Thank you, miss. *(Half goes; slight pause)* Charity is a noble thing, miss, and to see it misdirected into unworthy channels gives pain to the deserving. *(With a quick movement* MARGARET *lays her hand on* BEATRICE'S *arm and gives her an entreating look)*

BEATRICE. I told you, Pine, that you might go. *(Speaking very firmly)*

PINE. *(Cowed)* Yes, miss. *(Exit* PINE R.2E., *closing the door after him)*

BEATRICE. Idiot! *(The telephone bell rings)*

MARGARET. *(Springing up)* That must be Peter!

BEATRICE. *(Crosses to telephone, takes receiver)* Hello! *(She listens)* No, it's only Aunt Amelia. *(*MARGARET, *disappointed, walks to the window up* L. BEATRICE *speaks into telephone)* Yes, Aunt Amelia, it's me—I mean it's I. No, the child hasn't been brought back yet. *(To* MARGARET*)* What did I tell you?—but we're not worrying. We have every faith in Peter. *(Listening)* Yes, and, as you

say, in the police. Everything will be all right. *(Listens)* Can't you? I'm sorry. Try counting a flock of sheep going through a gate. *(Listens)* No, Auntie dear, there's not the faintest use in sending for me. Here I stay until Peter comes back. Meanwhile and always I remain, your ever loving niece Beatrice. *(Puts down receiver.* MARGARET *smiles)* Ah, I've made you smile at last! *(She motions to* MARGARET *to chair* L.C. MARGARET *comes to chair and sits.* BEATRICE *crosses to fireplace and pushes logs on fire with her foot. Then she sits on piano stool, which has been left below writing-table* L.C.*)* And now that you're being very good I'll let you talk about your boy. Of course he's beautiful.

MARGARET. People say he is——

BEATRICE. Is there a picture of him here?

MARGARET. I have one. *(She puts her hand to her locket)*

BEATRICE. May I see it? *(*MARGARET *takes off locket and chain. She is about to hand them to* BEATRICE*—but suddenly stops)*

MARGARET. There is another picture here.

BEATRICE. *(After a momentary pause)* Well, of course it is one of Peter. *(The two girls look bravely at each other)*

MARGARET. Yes.

BEATRICE. *(In a soft voice and holding out her hand for the locket)* That's just as it should be.

MARGARET. *(Impulsively she grasps* BEATRICE'S *hand)* I—I can't tell you how sweet and generous I think you are to me.

BEATRICE. *(Rises and crosses up* C. *a little)* Why shouldn't I be?

MARGARET. Because I, unconsciously, have brought a shadow into your life.

BEATRICE. *(Crosses up* C. *and round top of writing-table and then down to lamp on table)* No, no

—believe me. For a moment I had a shock—I admit that, though I tried hard not to show it. It was the fault of a foolish, ignorant bringing-up such as most girls have. But indeed it was only for a moment. What has Peter's past or your past to do with me? Who am I to judge? *(At this moment she has opened the locket; her tone entirely changes. Switches on lamp, after examining locket, switches off light again)* Oh, but what a beautiful child!

MARGARET. *(Delighted)* Do you think so? Really?

BEATRICE. *Rather!* He's simply ripping. I want to ask you something—so much.

MARGARET. You make me feel that I would tell you anything.

BEATRICE. *(Slowly, as she kneels on sofa facing* MARGARET*)* When you got your boy—did you feel that you were compensated for all—for everything you had suffered? *(Pause)*

MARGARET. *(Looking straight in front of her)* I'll tell you, because it was a wonderful thing—a sort of miracle. I had had a terrible time—and I exaggerated my wrongs and felt that I was forsaken by God and man. Then I lay for a time in a hospital and hoped I should die. In my soul there was nothing but bitterness and revolt. I was a revolutionary—a shrieking sister, and on the white ceiling of the little room I saw devils. Then came a climax of suffering—and in the last conscious moment I thought I was dying.

BEATRICE. And then?

MARGARET. *(With a deep sigh)* Then Little Peter woke me up. Oh, the ecstasy of it! I wouldn't have changed places with any woman in the world. Do you know I actually laughed aloud while the child slept against my breast.

BEATRICE. *(Perplexed)* Why did you laugh?

MARGARET. To think that I had ever dreamed of any ambition but simply to be a mother.

BEATRICE. *(Looking at the picture in locket)* Perhaps any woman who was the mother of such a beautiful boy would feel like that. I wonder? *(Face front. Pause as she looks into the locket)* There's a good deal of likeness, don't you think?

MARGARET. Oh, yes.

BEATRICE. *(Glancing at* MARGARET *unseen by her)* Only the child is much handsomer than the man.

MARGARET. *(Gently)* Perhaps that's only because he's at the pretty age.

BEATRICE. His features are much more regular.

MARGARET. Do you think so?

BEATRICE. And there's more sensibility—and—and a sort of added refinement in his face.

MARGARET. But surely you would call Peter—— *(She stops)*

BEATRICE. What? Handsome? *(Gets off sofa and lays locket on writing-table)*

MARGARET. Well, I don't know. I suppose I am no judge.

BEATRICE. Perhaps you mean attractive. *(Crosses round top of table. Slight pause)* Do you think Peter very attractive?

MARGARET. *(Confused)* I—really——

BEATRICE. *(Impulsively)* Don't answer. I'm a mean pig. Of course Peter is as attractive as a man has any right to be. *(Sits on edge of table facing* MARGARET*)* If you weren't such a splendid primitive creature you'd have known I was setting a trap for you.

MARGARET. *(Surprised)* Setting a trap for me?

BEATRICE. Yes—to find out if—if you love Peter still.

MARGARET. *(Rising and drawing away* R.*)* Miss Dainton, I——

BEATRICE. *(Sitting on table)* Do you? *(Slight pause)* Of course you needn't tell me unless you wish to.

MARGARET. *(R.C.)* I'd like to tell you—but—I —I can't.

BEATRICE. *(Rises and goes to* MARGARET*)* What has Peter done that you should have ceased to love him?

MARGARET. He has ceased to love me.

BEATRICE. How do you know?

MARGARET. *(Rapidly)* He's engaged to you—you are suited to each other. I am perfectly content. *(Goes down to below table, then up* R. *to piano)* It takes more than I have gone through to knock the foolish pride out of a stupid woman. Please don't say any more about it.

BEATRICE. *(Crosses down* L. *a little. Reflectively)* Why does any one love any one, I wonder? Why do you love your boy outside your feelings as a mother?

MARGARET. *(Smiling. Comes down* R.C.*)* Because he's so young—and so old—and so foolish and so wise—and because he's such a lamb—such an absolute duck! And because—— *(Three toots of a motor horn are heard.* BEATRICE *rushes to the window.* MARGARET *clutches the back of chair* R.C. *with one hand, and with the other covers her mouth to prevent herself crying out)*

BEATRICE. *(In great excitement, looking out through the window)* Yes, there they are! There they are! And there's your child, asleep in Peter's arms.

MARGARET. *(Murmuring and half-fainting)* Thank God! Oh, thank God!

BEATRICE. *(Crosses down* L. *of* MARGARET*)* There, there, my dear—don't faint after being so splendid. Think of it! Your beloved child asleep in Peter's arms! And Peter is engaged to me!

And you are perfectly content! Well, I'll be blowed if I am! *(They face each other)* Oh, you glorious liar! *(The noise of outer door and many footsteps is heard. Crosses* R. *to door* R.1E.*)* Don't let Peter see how pale your cheeks are! *(Opens door.* MARGARET, C., *draws herself up by an effort of will and recovers her strength.* BEATRICE *has left the window curtains half-drawn, and till the end of the play the grey morning light slowly grows outside. Enter* WAVERTON *carrying* LITTLE PETER *in his arms.* LITTLE PETER *is wrapped in the overcoat* WAVERTON *gave to* BURNS *and is asleep. The speech and movements of them all just here should be very gentle.* WAVERTON *goes to* MARGARET, *meeting her* C. *She takes the child gently from his arms)*

MARGARET. *(Very simply)* Thank you, Peter. *(She carries* LITTLE PETER *to the couch* L. *and lays him down.* WAVERTON *stands watching her as she arranges a cushion under the child's head.* BEATRICE *goes to* WAVERTON*)*

BEATRICE. *(Her hand on* PETER'S *shoulder)* Peter, dear old thing—I'm so glad.

WAVERTON. *(*L.C., *grasps both her hands)* You stuck to your post—I knew you would. *(*BEATRICE *goes to the back of the couch and bends over to look at the child. At a gesture from* WAVERTON, PINE *enters* R.1E. *and comes to him and takes his overcoat)* Bring Nighty and Burns here.

PINE. Yes, sir. *(Slight hesitation)* Did you wish me to communicate with the police, sir?

WAVERTON. No. Word has been sent that the child is found.

PINE. I mean in respect to the man Burns, sir.

WAVERTON. *(Firmly—giving* PINE *a look)* Do what I've told you. *(*WAVERTON *goes up* R. *to sideboard and mixes a whisky and soda, which he drinks)*

PINE. Certainly, sir. *(Exit* PINE R.U.E.*)*

BEATRICE. *(Softly to* MARGARET*)* Yes, he's wonderful. I understand better now, and perhaps if he were my own—my very own—— There's something in that, isn't there?

MARGARET. *(Smiling)* Oh yes, indeed, there's a great deal in that. Would you give me the rug? *(*BEATRICE *motions to* WAVERTON, *who comes down* L.C. *and hands her the rug, which is back of chair* L.C. MARGARET *lifts* LITTLE PETER *out of the coat, which* BEATRICE *takes away, replacing it on the sofa with the rug.* BEATRICE *throws* BURNS' *coat on chair up* L. MARGARET *lays* LITTLE PETER *on the rug and throws the ends over him.* BEATRICE *is behind sofa.* WAVERTON *by table* L.C.*)*

(Enter PINE, *opening the door for* BURNS *and* NIGHTY. PINE *remains a little behind the others. Leave door open.* NIGHTY *goes to* WAVERTON, L.C.*)*

WAVERTON. You needn't go, Pine.

PINE. *(Who had no intention of going)* Thank you, sir.

(BURNS *is standing below table* R.C., *twisting his cap in his hands.)*

WAVERTON. *(*NIGHTY *is* R. *of* WAVERTON*)* Well, Nighty, give me the benefit of your wisdom. What's to be done with Burns? Pine is for calling in the police— (BURNS *gives* PINE *a look)* but I don't think Pine has ever suffered, and I distrust the judgment of those who have never suffered.

(They all speak in slightly lowered tones, as the child is asleep.)

NIGHTY. I never call in the police myself, guv'-nor, till I've called in everybody else. *(Crosses to* BURNS*)* What have you got to say for yourself,

Burns? What made you up an' run off with the young gent? *(Pause*—BURNS *is obstinately silent.* NIGHTY *crosses* L.; *a little aside to* WAVERTON*)* Never so much as opened 'is mouth in the motor-car.

WAVERTON. Is there anything at all to be done with him, do you think, Nighty?

NIGHTY. 'Fraid not, guv'nor—not enough air, light, and water in hinfancy. Excuse me, but that's a 'obby o' mine. An' then the breeding was all wrong. *(Crosses round top of table* L. *and down to behind* WAVERTON*)* Best let 'im go back to 'is own class. *(Goes up* L. *a little)*

WAVERTON. What do you say, Bee?

BEATRICE. *(Behind writing-table)* I can't help you, Peter, for I'm one of those who have never suffered.

WAVERTON. *(Looking at her keenly)* You are sure?

BEATRICE. *(Meeting his eyes firmly)* Quite sure, Peter. *(Goes down to fireplace)*

WAVERTON. And you, Margaret—you haven't the same excuse——

MARGARET. I'm too happy to sit in judgment on any one, and I have to thank Mr. Burns for lending my little boy his overcoat.

(WAVERTON *and* NIGHTY *look at each other, smiling)*

PINE. *(Crosses* C. *above table* R. *to* WAVERTON*)* Begging pardon for the liberty, sir, but there are institootions for people like this poor chap, provided for out of the rates.

WAVERTON. That will do, Pine.

PINE. Excuse me, sir, but——

WAVERTON. That will do. I don't think you can help us much. I'll ring when I want you. Make some coffee.

PINE. *(Looking rather outraged)* Yes, sir. *(He walks to the door* R.2E. *with much dignity. Exit* PINE*)*

BEATRICE. Where did they go to, Peter?

WAVERTON. *(Sitting edge of table* L.C.*)* I gathered from Little Peter before he fell asleep in my arms that they had promised themselves a rabbit hunt.

BEATRICE. *(By fireplace)* A rabbit hunt? How fascinating!

NIGHTY. *(Up* L.*)* Couple of kids! *(He smiles)*

WAVERTON. I got on their track in Hammersmith, where they took the tram.

NIGHTY. I was always against them trams!

MARGARET. And where did you find them?

WAVERTON. In the neighbourhood of Hounslow. They were in a field against a hayrick. Nighty spied them with the assistance of a motor lamp. *(Crosses round top of table to behind same)*

NIGHTY. *(Coming down* L. *a little)* The young gentleman was sleeping wrapped up in the overcoat with hay all round him. He was as snug as a bug in a rug, ma'am.

(MARGARET *and* BEATRICE *laugh at this, and, slightly confused,* NIGHTY *retires up* L., *grinning foolishly)*

MARGARET. *(To* WAVERTON*)* And Mr. Burns?

WAVERTON. He was sitting up against the hayrick, also sleeping.

BURNS. *(Suddenly breaking his long silence)* I wasn't sleepin'. I was thinkin'.

BEATRICE AND MARGARET. *(Mildly surprised)* Thinking!

NIGHTY. *(Smiling indulgently)* Thinking—— *(He looks at* WAVERTON, *amused at the idea of* BURNS *thinking)*

WAVERTON. Thinking, Burns? What were you thinking of?

BURNS. *(With suppressed passion, and with the laboured and painful eloquence of a man who has never spoken at such length before)* I was thinkin' why carn't people let other people alone? You say you carn't do nothin' with me. I say this *(Crosses* L.*)* "'Ooo arst ye to?" That gent there *(pointing a trembling hand at the door* R.*)* 'e started it. 'E fetched me 'ere on my way to the Embankment, w'ere [where] I 'ave a right an' w'en [when] I think I've fun' kine friends, 'e puts the barber on me and takes the little gent away as if I was a dorg. W'y couldn't yer leave me be? I wasn't beggin'—I know the law an' I 'old by it—I was just walkin' along same as usual—well, wot o' that? If the passer-by give yer somethin' becorse 'e's sorry fer yer, wot 'arm—that's wot I arst—wot 'arm? *(Raising his voice slightly)*

MARGARET. *(Gently)* No harm, Mr. Burns.

WAVERTON. Perhaps the passer-by is only sorry for himself, Burns.

NIGHTY. *(A step towards* BURNS, *well up* C., *admonishingly to* BURNS*)* But what about taking that young child away?

BURNS. *(*C.*)* Comin' to that wot I was thinkin', w'ich was that rabbits was on'y an excuse in anger, and I take the young gent back in the mornin' and arst to be let alone. An' now you got 'im back anyway, wot I say is don't 'old no meetin's over me, but let me be. *(Raising his voice passionately)* That's wot I say—let me be!

MARGARET. *(Fearful that the noise will wake* LITTLE PETER*)* Ssh! Mr. Burns! *(She points to the child)*

(BURNS' *manner undergoes an entire change. All the passion seems to die out of him. His face softens. He goes a few steps towards the sofa —his eyes on the child)*

BURNS. *(To* MARGARET, *in a hoarse whisper)* 'E call me Samuel, 'e did!—That's what 'e called me. *(He goes* C.*)* Samuel! *(He puts on his cap, tucks his hands into the opposite sleeves and walks softly out. Exit* BURNS R.1E. *The people on the stage are motionless until the click of the outer door is heard.* NIGHTY *and* WAVERTON *exchange a look)*

WAVERTON. *(Crosses up* L. *and picks up* BURNS' *overcoat)* Take him his overcoat, Nighty. (NIGHTY *takes overcoat)* And tell him—— *(He hesitates)*

NIGHTY. Tell him what, guv'nor?

WAVERTON. Well, tell him to give us another trial—sometime—when things are bad. (NIGHTY *goes* R.1E.*)*

NIGHTY. *(At door)* Your servant, ladies! *(Bows. Exit* NIGHTY, R.1E., *shutting door)*

WAVERTON. *(Going to back of chair* L.C. *and looking at the child)* He's all right, isn't he?

MARGARET. Quite all right, Peter—not a bit feverish. *(She is holding one of* LITTLE PETER'S *hands)*

WAVERTON. It's too early to take him home. You'd better tuck him up in bed for a while.

(She lifts the child, leaving the rug on the sofa. BEATRICE *crosses to* L. *door and opens it; she kisses* LITTLE PETER *as he is carried out)*

WAVERTON. Come back. *(When* MARGARET *is at the door)* PINE'S *making coffee. (Exit* MARGARET *carrying* LITTLE PETER. WAVERTON *sits in chair by writing-table and lights a cigarette)* Bee, you're a brick. However, that's an old story.

BEATRICE. *(Behind writing-table)* Rot!

WAVERTON. I suppose I ought to take you home now.

BEATRICE. I'm not going yet.

WAVERTON. It's nearly five.

BEATRICE. *(Takes cigarette from box on table)* I often dance till six. Besides, I find your domestic affairs exceedingly interesting.

WAVERTON. My dear, if I don't begin excusing, apologising and explaining you must blame your own superior understanding.

BEATRICE. *(Smiling, crosses round top of table to* C.*)* That'll suit me, old boy—and all shall be forgiven if, without the kind permission of Aunt Amelia, you will let me smoke one cigarette. (WAVERTON *lights a match, from which she lights a cigarette. Gives match back to* WAVERTON. *She smokes appreciatively for a few moments, backs up a few steps and leans against piano)* Peter, old dear, it has been put about by various authorities that every cloud has a silver lining.

WAVERTON. *(Gravely)* That is so.

BEATRICE. Now *your* silver lining is that I am peacefully smoking a cigarette instead of being in hysterics on the floor.

WAVERTON. That's simply because you're Beatrice and no other.

BEATRICE. Oh, well, perhaps I'd better take all the praise you'll give me, dear old thing. It's a great help. *(Comes down* C.*)* It's admitted then that I'm a fine creature. You're a judge of fine creatures, Peter. That's a fine creature who just carried your child out of the room.

WAVERTON. Yes.

BEATRICE. Fine in a finer way than I am.

WAVERTON. *(Rising, going to her, and laying a hand on her shoulder)* Bee, dear, I doubt if there could be a finer way.

BEATRICE. *(*R.C.*)* Yes—and she has it. You don't suppose I've been alone with her for eight or ten hours without turning her inside out?

WAVERTON. *(Smiling)* No, I don't suppose that. *(Goes down* L.*)*

BEATRICE. *(Leaning against table* R.C.*)* Peter, old dear, you'd best prepare yourself for the worst. I'm going to give you the chuck.

WAVERTON. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. *(Knocking the ash off her cigarette as she goes to stool* L.C.*)* Not in anger—not in pique—not even because it's much more blessed to give the chuck than to receive it.

WAVERTON. *(Standing* R. *of sofa, his* R. *foot on stool)* My dear—my dear!

BEATRICE. Oh, *I* know. It's inevitable anyway! *(Her left hand is resting on* WAVERTON'S *knee)* You love me all right—quite as well as is necessary—as well perhaps as most men love the woman they are going to marry—but you forget something that I haven't forgotten—you told me when we became engaged that you had loved before. This was the woman, wasn't it? *(She looks at him. He nods his head)* What is between you two is a bigger thing altogether. It's just a matter of Fate. She adores you—you're her God on earth. *(He shakes his head and turns away)* And you—you love her, Peter, you know you do. *(Pause. She takes his chin in her left hand and turns his face so that they face each other)* And I know you dare tell me the truth.

WAVERTON. *(After a little pause, during which they look into each other's eyes)* Yes—I love her.

BEATRICE. You dear, brave old thing! I knew I could trust you. Throw this away for me. *(He takes the stump of her cigarette and throws it in the fireplace. She goes up to* C. *to hide her emotion, then to the writing-table and sits on edge—her left foot on stool)* And don't you run away with the idea that I don't love you, too. I do. I love you because you are so young and so old, and so foolish, and so wise. But there's nothing in-

evitable about it, and in any case we're quite unsuited to each other.

WAVERTON. *(Down* L., *protesting)* Oh, come, my dear!

BEATRICE. Absolutely! Our tastes are quite unlike. You don't take any interest in Society, and gossip, and scandal, but it all amuses me vastly. I always have an awful good time, and the Duchess's love affairs and what she will do now are matters of thrilling interest to me.

WAVERTON. *(Sits* R. *arm of sofa)* Bee, Bee, you're slandering yourself.

BEATRICE. Not a bit! And when *I* marry it will be a man who shares my tastes; a clean, well-built young fellow who dances well, wears nice ties, and is a perfect devil on the golf links. I know dozens of 'em! I shall marry a man I can make something out of—good raw material. I could never have made anything out of you, Peter, you're beyond me, old dear. *(She gathers the rug, crosses up* C.*)* There's your real mate! Your Margaret! *(She points* L. *then goes up* R.*)*

WAVERTON. *(Sits on stool,* L.C.*)* Bee, old dear, you are trying to marry me to a woman who is engaged to another man. *(*BEATRICE *indulges in a rippling little laugh)* What's the matter?

BEATRICE. Robinson you mean—Henry Robinson! *(She laughs again, the rug trailing over her arm)*

WAVERTON. I believe that is the name.

BEATRICE. *(Coming a little down* C.*)* I wouldn't worry about Harry if I were you.

WAVERTON. Why not?

BEATRICE. *(Coming back to him)* Have you ever seen him?

WAVERTON. No, praise God!

BEATRICE. Have you ever heard his voice—even on the telephone? Have you ever seen his photo-

graph, even in a snapshot? *(She bends closer to him and lowers her voice)* Do you believe in him? *(They look at each other)* I don't! *(Back to chair* R.C.*)*

WAVERTON. *(Rises and goes to her, taking a deep breath and laying his hands on her shoulders)* Do you mean to say——?

BEATRICE. You may kiss my forehead.

WAVERTON. You dear! *(He kisses her.* BEATRICE *goes to door* R.2E.*)*

WAVERTON. Where are you going?

BEATRICE. *(Throws rug over shoulder)* I'm being tactful. *(Opens door* R.2E.*)* Also I'm going to have a little snooze in the library. Henry Robinson! Old Harry! *(A rippling laugh, on which exit* BEATRICE. *Her laugh is still heard for a few moments after she has shut the door)*

(Enter PINE R.1E. *with small tray containing coffee.* PINE *looks very cheerful. He places tray on table* R.*)*

PINE. Coffee, sir—and toast! *(Exit* PINE R.1E. WAVERTON *goes towards the fireplace. On the way he finds, where* BEATRICE *has left it,* MARGARET'S *locket. He takes it up and goes to fireplace, putting locket in his pocket)*

(Enter MARGARET, L.*)*

WAVERTON. Would you give me a cup of coffee, Margaret?

MARGARET. *(Crosses to table* R. *and pours out coffee)* Where is Miss Dainton?

WAVERTON. *(*R. *end of sofa* L.*)* She's lying down in the library.

MARGARET. She's been an angel to me.

WAVERTON. She is an angel.

MARGARET. She must be very tired.

WAVERTON. Not too tired to chuck me.

MARGARET. *(Looking up, shocked and troubled)* Chuck you?

WAVERTON. It's her word. It means to release, to repudiate, to go back on, to throw over—in fine, to break an engagement with. *(He comes down and sits on stool* L.C., *his back to her)*

MARGARET. *(Much disturbed, crosses* C.*)* Peter—she—she can't mean it! *(Then stands behind him)*

WAVERTON. Oh, yes—it's final.

MARGARET. Was it—was it—through any fault of mine?

WAVERTON. Oh, dear no! She discovered we are unsuited. She's perfectly right. The truth is I'm not good enough for her. I'm rather by way of being generally out of it, Margaret—and I don't think I'm very happy.

MARGARET. *(Suffering for him, in a low voice)* Not happy! Peter! *(She stretches out her hands, longing to place them on his head)*

WAVERTON. I'm afraid I'm a human sort of person.

MARGARET. *(To herself—her hands at her breast)* Oh, God!

WAVERTON. However, everybody else is happy. Beatrice is on the track of a fine golfer and you have your Henry Thingamebob. *(He rises. He raises his voice and puts a fictitious courage into it)* Here's your locket, my dear. *(Hands* MARGARET *locket, which she opens, his back is almost turned to her. She puts locket in his hand. He slowly looks at it and an expression of great relief and tenderness comes into his face)* Why—why didn't you let me see before?

MARGARET. My wretched pride. I didn't think you wanted me, Peter!

WAVERTON. *(Falteringly)* And—and—your Mr. Robinson?

MARGARET. Oh, Peter, I'm an awful liar and a wicked woman! There was never any Henry Robinson. He was simply an invention. You wronged me in believing me—in thinking it possible that any other man could ever enter my life! When I gave myself to you, it was for ever and ever—whether you cared or not—whether you loved me or not—whether you lived or died. *(*WAVERTON, *overcome, sinks on chair* R. *of desk)* Oh Peter! How could you doubt me? *(She kneels at his feet)* Why, I don't think I know another man in the world even by sight!

WAVERTON. Margaret—my love! Margaret! *(He takes her closely in his arms)*

SLOW CURTAIN.