PLAYS BY JACINTO BENAVENTE

THIRD SERIES

TRANSLATED BY
JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

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

PLAYS BY
JACINTO BENAVENTE

PLAYS, FIRST SERIES:

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

PLAYS, SECOND SERIES:

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

PLAYS, THIRD SERIES:

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

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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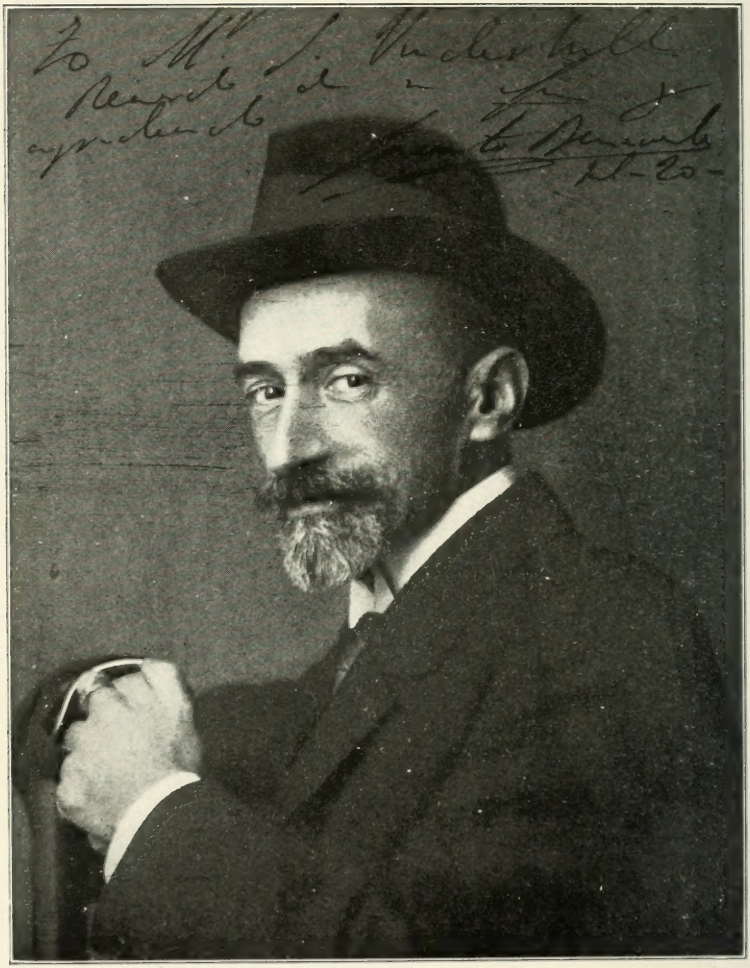

JACINTO BENAVENTE

From a photograph taken in 1920 and inscribed to the translator

PLAYS

BY

JACINTO BENAVENTE

THIRD SERIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

AUTHORIZED EDITION

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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THEORY AND CRITICISM: NOTES ON THE PLAYS

If Lope de Vega, the Monster and Phœnix of Genius, is the most prolific of writers for the theatre, Jacinto Benavente may be accounted the most various and most baffling. A brilliant sophistication conceals and disguises the depth of his human feeling, mellowed by an experience which is at once highly idealized and of almost pedestrian common sense, presenting to the casual reader an enigma quite impossible of solution. The drama of the unconscious mind is, however, essentially a drama of contradictions. To have developed this subtle and most subjective of psychologic dramas among a people as crassly unmetaphysical as the Spaniards, who, through their picaresque tradition, have been parents of modern realism, is a stroke of subconscious humor as apposite as unexpected.

It has been said that the new theatre is constant only in its inconstancy. It has been pictured as unstable, Protean, presenting through its diversity the aspects of the work of several distinct individuals. Undoubtedly the consensus of critical opinion must be accepted as just, certainly in the superficial sphere, yet variety can never be inexhaustible. If criticism is to stop here, already its function has been abdicated. Art derives its richness from principles, from whose vigor its life is renewed. The richer, the more vital it is, the deeper its roots must be caught. Benavente's theatre is not a theatre of change, it is a theatre of equivocation, of underlying realities as opposed to a world of appearances. His plays are so suggestive, so validly disparate because they are more profoundly conceived than other plays, more intimately born of the spirit. His drama is double in focus, moving upon double planes, poised between the objective

and the subjective, between the conscious and the unconscious and unexplored. This is both its history and its explanation. It is all embracing and comprehensive for the reason that it is based upon a recognition of the irreducible dualism of life, and unfolds through a triple series of dualities —a double characterization, a double ideation, and a double plot or action, which are its distinguishing characteristics. The utter absence of sensational or disproportionately salient features renders it imperative that such dramas should be approached with a clear appreciation of their fundamentally subjective quality in order that the absolute unity of their conception and purpose may not escape the reader's mind in his attention to the trivial and the accidental.

The first article in Benavente's dramatic creed is the maintenance of the integrity of the objective world, an apparent respect for fact in itself. An external story is not only present in his plays, but, except in fantasy, it appears as self-sustaining and self-sufficient, provided with adequate motivation, constituting by every rule of the familiar theatre, a complete play. When the nature of the theme will permit, the story is decked out with all the apparatus and parade of mere external drama, upon which a dialogue has been imposed so sparkling and vivacious, so fertile in poetic and philosophic suggestion, that it challenges comparison because of its superficial virtues alone with the masterpieces of the objective stage. Although the logic of fact may be purely illusory, nevertheless it is the truth by which men live, coloring and conventionalizing the daily routine. Truth which is apparent to the senses, cannot habitually be questioned directly by the playwright. Benavente differs, therefore, from other dramatists of the unconscious primarily in the absolute inviolability of his external plot. The foreground, boldly and carefully elaborated, serves as a screen behind which the subjective drama is developed, but to accept the outward story at its face value, failing sedulously to perceive that it is but one of the pivots upon which the action turns, is an error so inviting that, in season and out, it has proved the undoing of a majority of the students of the Benaventian theatre.

It has previously been remarked that Benavente takes his departure from conventional drama through employment of the *double entente*. A favorite device for the insinuation of allusions of doubtful taste becomes in his hands a statement and a reservation, what seems and what is, the obverse and reverse of character in a phrase or a word. The apparent character is thus discredited, and in its place a personality suggested compounded of reserves, which lie behind. As a consequence, the dialogue takes on the quality of conversation as it is actually heard, becoming a fabric of half-statements and approximations, to be co-ordinated by the spectator, yet possessing no inherent credibility of itself. The intention provides the motive power, but by no means necessarily the substance of speech. Character, obviously, can no longer properly be given by definition, but is metamorphosed into a process of induction, and in this way remains subjective. Instead of lending itself to statement, personality invites inference as being rather a matter of direction and tendency, to be caught on the wing as it hovers between the apparent and the real. Like the arbitrary moral standards of the past century, its sharpness of outline has been obliterated, and it has become dissipated and diffused among the uncertainties of the emotions and the will.

The dualism which is inescapable in human nature, and so conspicuously evident in the realm of feeling, has its counterpart, however, intellectually, in a dualism which underlies the world of ideas. Truth itself is merely relative. The psychologic theatre cannot avoid taking this most fundamental of antimonies into account, if it is to penetrate to the heart and reproduce the modalities of life. To conceive is to distinguish, to set apart from something else. An art which is dynamic can have no place for fixed ideas. Ideas are themselves positive and negative, varying in content and connotation with different peoples and times. They are instruments of knowledge, not matters of conviction. Here is potential contrast lying ready to the dramatist's hand. The proper presentation of the basic duality of thought offers, however, extraordinary difficulties to the artist. It is effected by Benavente through an antitechnique of opposi-

tion, a complete system of positive and negative values, of antisymbols and antititles, of antiheroes and antiheroines, and of anti-ideals. Love appears to Princess Bebé as a deluded, hollow infatuation, masked behind a horrible and repulsive scar. Our Lady of Sorrows, in the play of that name, awakes to find herself beatified at last through the not wholly disinterested worship of a false, contemptible ideal. Crispin, too, of "The Bonds of Interest," notoriously an antihero, upon analysis is disclosed to be far less unheroic than he seems. Even the title of the comedy is an inversion, as was recognized at the time of its translation into Dutch as "Die fijne draad"—"The Fine (or Invisible) Thread"—in reference to the invisible thread of love which runs through the story, providing the positive element of the play. The antititle, indeed, is a favorite device of Benavente's—frequently the board from which the action springs. Equivocations of the sort are never even remotely accidental, but have their genesis in the rooted antipathy of his theatre to complete statement, with its inevitable suggestion of finality. It is not a question of theme, but of conception and approach, and Benavente's attitude has been well indicated by a Spanish critic in the assertion that he is always to be found at the point of the scales. But an art which refuses to identify itself with half truths, living instead in the emotions and the intelligence, is a sealed book to the unimaginative, literal mind. Other authors have suffered from opposition and prejudice, but the enemy to the comprehension of Benavente has always been sheer stupidity. Thought and emotion must meet with response in emotion and thought. Only one all-embracing contradiction has failed to attract his interest, and that has been cerebral drama without cerebration. The antitechnique is a discipline which obliges people to think—a species of legerdemain entirely congenial to his temperament and the very touchstone of his genius.

The extension of the antitechnique from the plane of character and idea to that of the dramatic action itself, completes the scheme of the Benaventian dramaturgy. It involves of necessity the creation of a secondary or antithetic inner action, which, while not obtruding upon the course of

the outward story, or destroying its credibility, at the same time confers upon it dual quality and transcendence. The outer or written plot, which is the progress of the story and the history of the characters, must by its nature be direct and objective, and in precise proportion to the definiteness with which it is formulated, of limited significance. It acquires depth and universality from other, remotely hidden sources. Individual experience may properly be interpreted by the experience of the race, in whose generalizations it finds a corrective. Any act, moreover, in so far as it is at all intelligible, must look for explanation to the ultimate impulses and broad reactions of man's nature, to the faculties and processes of the mind which are most general, and so have come almost to have the force of personifications. This is the genesis of the type and universality of the idealist, which through the ages have by common consent constituted the hall-mark of great art. To draw upon these vast stores of experience, handed down immemorially through the ages as the gathered wisdom of the centuries, is the specific problem of the artist. Usually the task has been approached blindly, and the solution has been left more or less to chance, as a matter of accident or of temperament—the consequence of a happy stroke of what is vaguely called genius. The progress of science, however, has clarified our vision of the unconscious. Our insight into its mysteries is keener, more penetrating now than before. Casual knowledge has made way for system. In Benavente, the exploitation of this underworld replaces the banalities of the older playwrights, and is the result not only of genius but of method. From the common treasury of humanity, he conjures an inner, unwritten, suggested universal plot, which is not related to the outward story by any artificial means, and never itself definitely given form, yet which parallels and synchronizes with the outward course of events, underlying and interpreting them, always and under whatever conditions, containing within itself not only the motive and driving power, but also the criticism of the play. Without ever rising to the surface, never under any circumstances seeking expression in words, whether in dialogue or in stage directions, the under, buried

plot conceals the mainspring of the action, which in the ultimate analysis is entirely dependent in this drama of double planes upon subjective elements for its significance.

As drama is feeling, not fact, emotion, not thought, it must perforce sink into the unconscious mind. In plays whose nature is wholly superficial, the action merely repeats the sense of the dialogue, and the curve of emotion is a simple one, complicated by no intellectual embarrassments. If the functions of dialogue and action are identical, however, clearly one must be superfluous, and the ultimate dramatic form be either pantomime or the literary closet drama. Gordon Craig attacks the dilemma, assuming drama to be primarily sculptural, a thing quite apart from words, and to express it his followers have sought to create a symbol, which shall be the drama as a presence, made manifest ocularly upon the stage. As conceived also by Benavente, drama is three dimensional, by its very nature incapable of being written; it is the setting over of something against something else progressively before the eye. Yet it is an unwritten action which is in constant flux, not a symbol or a series of tableaux sinking into pictorial art. The error of the exponents of the new stagecraft lies in the fact that they seek to extract from externals, from the mere trappings of a play, what is the very breath of its being, to be imparted at birth only by the playwright himself. A good play cannot really be read. Although a performance may be visualized from the printed page, the effect of the performance cannot be felt; too many imaginative and constructive processes intervene. Yet these effects of the unwritten action are precisely those in which true drama lies. The dramatic action, the unwritten action which is plastic, which lies behind the plane of language, is taken by Benavente to be the vehicle of his under plot—an unwritten action for an unwritten plot. The action in its purest form thus becomes the instrument of the subjective plot, which is the heart of the play. To disengage the action, to surprise its situations and effects, endowing them with emotional intelligibility of their own through coherence of mood, is to open up new reaches of the theatre. Mood lends itself clearly to independent development, yet

by no other writer since the Greeks has it been dignified as a separate major factor of the dramatic structure. When emotion is treated in bulk and in the mass, upon compelling scale, it becomes perceptible as a dramatic entity, and achieves a power that is distinctive. Instead of following and waiting upon the dialogue, it imparts to it significance and strength, together with that peculiar appositeness which removes conversation from the realm of platitude and the abstract, to the province of art. Read for the plot, plays of this description are mere spectacular melodrama; read for the dialogue, mere literature, incomprehensible and strange, but apprehended in their own sphere, in the shifting planes through which they move, they are an experience at once refreshing and invigorating, as novel as it is deceptive.

In order to centre the attention upon the subjective action, Benavente dispenses with description of persons and scenes, suppressing details of appearance, time, and place, the presence of which might create false emphasis, and so prove both distracting and misleading. To follow the inner action as it is induced in the several types of play, in greater or less degree manifesting its ascendancy, is an adventure of illuminating possibilities. Sometimes the inner plot will be found so tenuous that it is little more than an idea of which the outward story is the exposition. This is true, for the most part, in strictly cerebral drama. Sometimes it remains back of the story, paralleling and reinforcing it with the sanction of an added symbolic quality, appearing independently in the action only upon occasion, at moments of exceptional transcendence. When the parallelism is close, the natural generalizing propensity of the mind will prove sufficient to effect the transition from the outer to the inner scheme. At other times, the inner plot detaches itself from the outward story, to mature in its own plane, where it arrogates to itself the life of the whole. The transition here takes place through a series of false leads, by means of which the outer plot falls away, usually at the end of the first act, while the situations become aborted or evaporate, and pale into the background of the unwritten theme. The attention is withdrawn insensibly from the objective plot and turned

within, resulting to the literal-minded in virtual defrauda tion. More than any other, drama of this type refuses t be read; it is imperative consciously to induce the action i the reader desires to enter into possession of the play. The unwritten action occurs in most highly developed form i drama of the will, where the shocks and conflicts are most powerful, most striking, and most intense, and therefore sharper in outline and emotionally more articulate than is the case in drama of mental states and of ideas. With the pure psychologic drama, this drama of twofold, contrasted action in which the doings of man are projected against the vastness of a universal background, is the most original, as well as the most elusive creation of the Benaventian theatre, treacherous and inhospitable to the unwary, but finely conscriptive of the imagination, opening out into new vistas before those who have eyes to see, receding into unsuspected depths. However modern and metaphysical in form, is it indeed surprising that this most subtle, most subjective of dramas, this theatre of equivocation beneath a world of hard reality, should, after three centuries, have sprung from the stem of Cervantes and the line of Quixote?

"Saturday Night," the most important of the plays contained in the present volume, enjoying with "The Bonds of Interest" and "La Malquerida," wide popular reputation, invites attention as the earliest example of the mature subjective style. It is a composition of peculiar difficulty, the appreciation of which requires both effort and time. Imperia, or ambition, the will, trades upon and then forgets her youth, acquiring wealth and power, at last drawing near the throne of empire of which she has dreamed. Her ambitions already on the road to fulfilment, she turns to recover Donina, her youth, whom she finds amid the blare of a circus, from which she passes to take part in a scene of wild saturnalia, or witches' sabbath, to which all the characters repair. Here, in a striking dramatic crisis, her old life dies at the hand of youth, which is itself exhausted in the blow. Aghast, Imperia summons Leonardo, the imagination to her aid, from whom, long years ago in the dawn of her

girlhood, she had derived her vision of the ideal. Under his tutelage, the material world fades away, until, at the end, she sacrifices her youth, her Donina, who dies immediately, and, by the sacrifice, Imperia achieves for herself character, the mastery of the world and all that is in it, which is the realization of her ideal. This ideal, however, when attained, she finds to be spiritual, entailing supremacy over the things of this earth, but not that crown of earthly empire which in her visions she had seen. Professedly a pageant of life upon the Riviera, "Saturday Night" unfolds in five tableaux, each the bold projection of a dominant mood—the first of sophistication and cold indifference, the second of reawakened feeling, reminiscent of the associations of a romantic past, the third of deep revulsion, so complete that no illusion may longer exist, the fourth of tragic resolution, hectic in collapse, while a placid beauty irradiates the fifth with the soft lights of the garden of the spirit, languorous with vistas of the sea down scented avenues of flowers. According to whatever criteria, the drama must be adjudged an extraordinary achievement. The heroine, Imperia, is a sister of the famous courtesan of that name, whose story has been handed down from the Italian Renaissance. The Countess Rinaldi, a companion figure, has also been drawn from a model of the epoch. Reminiscences of the North, too, occur, of the under and circus world which the author understands so well. Furthermore, there is a reflection of his early Russian experiences. The Spanish public was totally unprepared for drama of this content and complexity at the time "Saturday Night" was first presented in 1903, although it was readily perceived from the outset to be an unusual, glamourous, prophetic performance, to which the vague epithet Shakespearean was applied by the critics, in recognition of dimly suspected but hidden, wholly uncomprehended qualities. Having no affiliation with the traditions of Spanish literature or the Spanish stage, it was necessary that a decade should elapse before this remarkable fabric achieved definitive, popular triumph.

"The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books," composed for the inauguration of the Children's Theatre at

Madrid, on the other hand is a fairy-tale that is clearly akin to simple allegory. The easy grace, the charm and humor of the childlike story of the Blue Prince, intrigue even the casual reader. Yet for all its simplicity, the tale is not as ingenuous as it seems. Equipped with the little knowledge, the material comfort that his parents, who are the Life-Givers, can bestow, a young boy goes forth into the world. He takes with him as he goes the illusions of his youth, which, too, it lay within their power to give. Deceived by appearances, the victim of his own innocence, through danger and difficulty he acquires experience, rescuing the Fool who accompanies him from the fleshly paradise of the Ogre, and the knowledge that is also his from aimless wanderings by the side of the road. The experience which he has gained in the world, whether of good or of evil, has still to be supplemented, however, in the half-lights of the spirit, in the more personal, intimate sphere, where he is saved from an impossible marriage with the daughter of pretense through the choice of unselfishness, whereupon his education is complete. The Powers of Life have then only to lay the treasures of their wealth and wisdom at his feet. Few fantasies reveal such abounding spirits, or are drawn with comparable vigor, or rejoice in equally incisive characterization. It is curious how, in this simple tale, the beguiling innocence of the theme, here, too, cloaks the customary absence of expected *coups de théâtre*. The subjective action has been reduced to little more than an attitude of mind in which the play is approached, which determines the key of the presentation, infusing it throughout with dignity and richness of feeling—spiritual analogues of the vigor and vivacity with which the outward story is unrolled. The mood of the author remains a knowing one. Benavente has enjoyed exceptional success in this genre, in which he meets the most skilful practitioners upon equal ground. Two of his later and most ingratiating works, "Cinderella" and "Once Upon a Time" (*Y va de cuento*), both excursions into fairy-land undertaken upon the grand scale, are not yet included in the collected edition of his theatre.

The two-act comedy "In the Clouds" bears all the

stigmata of orthodox realism. With sober, unobtrusive detail, it mirrors faithfully the emptiness and hardship of middle-class life in modern Madrid. Psychologically true and photographic of fact, there is no compromise with adventitious relief. Don Hilario, the kindly family physician, affords a portrait of the author's own father. It is difficult to understand, from the vantage-point of a distant, more bountiful environment, the pressure of poverty in a country such as Spain, the absolute, hopeless destitution which there prevails, superseding both the social and the moral law with the primitive dictates of the struggle for existence. These ferocities admit of no exaggeration. "In the Clouds" offers a picture of poverty, poverty of means, poverty of surroundings, poverty of mind, poverty of will, which, materially and mentally, are but the husk of the intellectual and spiritual decay of the life that is about to pass. The play is at once realistic and idealistic, conceived below the plane of distinction of the schools, where the spirit and its manifestations are one. The differing address with which the simple folk confront the relentless barrenness of their existence as it looms above the action with menacing, crushing power, the interplay of the divergent forces in which the threat of poverty is exteriorized, to be gathered summarily and finally in the marriage problem, which provokes the crisis, at the same time providing the comic motive when developed in reverse, betrays admirably the hand of the master. Quintessentially Benaventian is the scene depicting the three young men, married, in fact just married, and just about to be married, chancing upon the curiously happy idea of calling to condole with the young man whose marriage has been deferred. Even dulness, when significant, may prove entertaining, while banality presents facets of wit, and is pregnant with comedy of the highest order. The neo-realistic theatre assuredly yields no more salutary model for the student. In conjunction with that singular drama of peasant life, "Señora Ama," whose protagonist is the environment, "In the Clouds" must take rank among the major contributions of Spain to the newer art.

The brief colloquy, "The Truth," an exposition of an idea

through strictly dramatic means, falls readily into the classification of pure cerebral drama. The indeterminate nature of the dialogue, the shyness and hesitancy of the characters through whom it is carried on, contrast strikingly with the truth that is so fondly sought, but which is revealed at the denouement by an anti-antithesis as something equally indeterminate, in whose dubiety lies the only certitude that we know. The piece is in the author's latest manner, where the conversation has attained a simple luminousness of phrase almost directly revelatory of the spirit.

Spanish criticism of Benavente, although laudatory, and frequently keenly sensitive, is regrettably in great part superficial, and seldom for any sustained flight, seriously intelligent. Much that has been written is occasional, composed in haste at the time of the production of the plays with which it deals, exhibiting not unnaturally the defects peculiar to reviews which have been improvised for the newspapers or other periodicals, and by no means enhanced in authority when incorporated afterward without revision in books. Volumes of far from promising antecedents, unfortunately often attain extensive circulation. Manuel Bueno's *Teatro español contemporáneo*, published in 1909 and since widely read, is probably better known abroad than any other general work dealing with the modern Spanish theatre. In addition to its occasional character, the criticisms included date from a period from two to seven years less recent than that of the book. Although frequently most apt, they betray little penetration. The plays, moreover, are assumed to have been composed in the order in which they were originally performed, which is notoriously far from the fact. Gaps of ten years, replete with struggle and growth, are glossed over by all critics with indiscriminate eulogy. This blemish disfigures the anthology in two volumes, edited with an introduction and an epilogue by Alejandro Miquis, and entitled *Las mejores páginas de Jacinto Benavente*. It is a work, however, which is much more soundly documented, of superior range, and perhaps as satisfying as any other not rising above the empiric point of view. José Francos

Rodríguez's *Teatro en españa*, 1908 and 1909, though more fragmentary, deserves commendatory mention, together with the critical study of *La Malquerida* by José Rogerio Sánchez, the conclusions of which are repeated with amplification in the same author's comprehensive *Autores españoles e hispano-americanos*. With these the lengthy and enthusiastic study by Andrés González-Blanco, with which he begins his *Dramaturgos españoles contemporáneos*, may be consulted. It makes no attempt, however, at analysis, and remains wholly indefinite. Few Spanish writers of compendia of criticism, although of gifts and attainments unquestionably beyond cavil, convey the impression of having read the works of which they write. A series of scattered articles by R. Pérez de Ayala, an imitator and at one time youthful admirer, has been collected in that author's *Las máscaras*. They are based upon an æsthetic improvised as they go along, and are without adequate critical equipment.

Greater weight and importance may be attached to the opinions of Julio Cejador y Frauca, contained in the tenth volume of his encyclopædic *Historia de la lengua y literatura castellana*, to which a serviceable bibliography has been appended. "In this theatre that is upside down," writes Cejador, "the action, which was formerly the end, has been converted into the means." Although conscious of the antithesis between the theatre of Benavente and the theatre as it has existed hitherto, Cejador shows himself to be deficient in grasp of dramatic principle, besides displaying an almost unbelievable ignorance of the modern movement in European literature, which alone can account for the mistakes of the general fraternity of Spanish critics in interpreting the programme of the moderns as the personal achievement of Mr. Benavente. Cejador, it may be observed, devotes several pages of his monumental history to an examination of "The Yellow Jacket," the Chinese fantasy by George C. Hazelton and Benrimo, translated into Spanish by Benavente, and performed at the Teatro de la Princesa, Madrid, in 1916. He concludes that the reputed authorship of the comedy by Americans is a huge hoax, and pronounces the play the sole, original, and most highly characteristic work

of Benavente. A previous run of two years in the United States, together with anterior productions in London, Berlin, and Moscow, have no weight with this authority. Well-informed criticism, careful, catholic, and judicious, has always been peculiarly sympathetic, and conducive to the growth of the rarer, more delicate forms of art.

Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín's discussion of Benavente's æsthetics, contributed to the first volume of the *Ateneo* in 1906, is superior in scholarship, continuing the authoritative tradition established by the late Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo. Of necessity, however, because of its date, Bonilla's study is confined almost exclusively to the pre-dramatic period. Gregorio Martínez Sierra, an expert judge of the theatre, has written with equally keen perception of personal and dramatic values. His touch is not always sure in the treatment of individual plays. Similarly sensitive and informing, the confessedly random appreciations by the poet Manuel Machado, collected in his *Año de teatro*, exhibit perhaps a more complete realization of the implications of the new movement, whether psychologic or dramatic, than can be found elsewhere among his countrymen. They afford a welcome antidote to the crass, irremediable realism which forms the staple of every-day Spanish criticism.

Crossing the Pyrenees, the channel and the ocean, but little of importance concerning Benavente has as yet been made accessible in English. In general, English and American writers who are not habitual Spanish scholars, are far too dependent when they travel upon the particular native groups from whom their information is derived, to be in a position to acquire true perspective. Newspapers and literary reviews published in the English language almost without exception reveal themselves as lamentably deficient and ignorant. Articles which assiduous search disinters from the files of magazines may uniformly be set down as perfunctory. John Dos Passos, in a friendly paper devoted to Benavente, included in "Rosinante to the Road Again," slips by the subject entirely, and would have been out of date in large measure at the close of the last century. Forewords to the school and college texts of the plays which have been pre-

pared in this country for the convenience of students of Spanish, while more thoroughly grounded, do not attempt to enter the critical field, nor will Fitzmaurice-Kelly's "History of Spanish Literature," a convenient handbook on many subjects, repay examination. Two experts upon the drama, however, write with ampler information. Isaac Goldberg's essay, appearing at the beginning of his "Drama of Transition," invites comparison with the best work of the Spanish critics. Exceptional insight and sympathy also illumine the pages of Storm Jameson's "Modern Drama in Europe," reflecting, perhaps, more satisfyingly than any other the spiritual side of this great idealist. Ignorance of the language has unfortunately compelled a reliance upon second-hand authorities in matters of detail, leading upon occasion to eloquent comparisons with a beatified Lope de Vega, endowed for the purpose with dramas of model construction, palpitating with vital, distinctive characters. In the cold light of truth, Benavente does not derive from the florid line of Lope. Except for his astonishing richness, his starry spirituality reminiscent, in Shelley's phrase, of the *autos* of Calderón, he has little in common with the Golden Age of the Spanish Renaissance. With a nicer intuition—the prophetic vision of the poet—Rubén Darío has visualized Benavente as of the major, nobler stock of the dialectical troubadour and knight of the spirit, who carried the banner of his country in the new dawn at the close of the Middle Ages throughout the Christian world: "Jacinto Benavente is the man who smiles. . . . Amid the debacle with which the nineteenth century closed in Spain, his face smiles as from an invisible frame. He is Mephistophelian, a meticulous philosopher, whose isolation has become a weapon of defense. As he talks or writes, like a true prince, he always has a poignard at his side, or a fool. He possesses independence, which is more priceless to a man than any kingdom, and so he is the master of truth and the tamer of lies. His culture is cosmopolitan, and his mental processes, which are wholly foreign to his people, bewildering in the land of fixed tradition, but they will not astonish the observer who has the keenness to perceive how this soil, which has been so fertile of genius, has

retained in its bosom in the hope of coming springs, the potentialities of a Ramón Lull."

Dramatically, Benavente's career falls into three divisions, approximately of equal duration. The first, from his début as a dramatist to the production of "Saturday Night," was a period of experiment, interesting chiefly for its brilliancy and the spell which it cast over his contemporaries. When Benavente produced at the Español, Madrid dined an hour earlier. The same tendencies are evident that appear in his non-dramatic prose, guiding the policies of *La vida literaria*, the periodical established by him in order to promote the radical ideas of the rising generation. "A Lover's Tale" and "Love of Loving" bring to the theatre the interests of the editor, testifying to a ready sympathy with new and foreign influences, while the more serious, if lesser, plays of the epoch reveal æsthetic and marked ethical preoccupations. Most popular, beyond question, were the satiric pieces, facile, graceful, with a suspicion of personal animus always lurking between the lines. Benavente's art, from the beginning, has been so nicely, so humanly centred that few of his characters have escaped identification with persons prominent in the social or political life of Madrid. Conspicuous among the earlier comedies, "The Banquet of Wild Beasts," *Lo cursi*, and "The Governor's Wife," reveal unmistakably, although in embryo, all the promise and essential properties of what was later to become the new theatre. It is easy to see in retrospect that too much emphasis has been placed upon the social and too little upon the human bias of these sparkling comedies, which, with the lapse of time, appear unambiguous and clear. An indifference to the mechanics of living—a corollary, indeed, of all thorough idealism—is fundamental even from the beginning. Society and the individual are pictured in apposition. Neither fashion nor custom is a spiritual force, but inasmuch as society has become bankrupt in ministering to the individual, the individual finds himself confronted with the choice of making his escape from society, or of asserting his independence through unremitting struggle, or else of accepting the alternative of surrender and spiritual

defeat. Yet though society is defective, human nature is weak, and the tragedies of character in the last analysis are tragedies of the will.

Although Benavente's theory of art, as well as his philosophy of life, were fully developed in 1892, when he first began to write, and have undergone since no radical change, yet it is not until the maturing of his subjective manner that we encounter the master of the theatre, of the heart and human motive at his full stature. Technique and conception have now become distinctive and original. The monumental achievement of this, his second, period must be adjudged the cycle of five plays, incomparably rich in texture, iridescent in mood, whose subject is the great adventure of life, the faring-forth of the spirit to the conquest of what life holds, and the realization of its ideal. Benavente has here unfolded a "Pilgrim's Progress" of a secular, restless age. The prologue to the series, "Princess Bebé," is a comedy of questioning, of overtones. Youth looks out upon life, dissatisfied with the shams and substitutes which have imposed upon its innocence, and eagerly and earnestly puts the great interrogation, which is to be answered in the succeeding plays. In "Saturday Night" the solution is discovered through ambition, in "Stronger than Love" through duty, accepted at first as a convenience, but entailing inevitably renunciation and surrender. The fourth play, "The Bonds of Interest," depicts in turn the birth of the spirit directly through the transforming power of love, while the cycle concludes with a cameo-like epilogue, the beautiful comedy "The School of Princesses," presenting the discipline of sacrifice, which is conceived as the crown of experience and the unleashing of the spirit, and hence provides not only the subject of the epilogue but the climax and supreme moment of each of the preceding plays. An open and inquiring mind, an ambitious and resolute will, patient of duty, transformed by love, chastened by sacrifice—such is the genesis of the spirit and the measure of man. High feeling, glamourous expression, insight and sympathy, touched by a haunting suggestion of the ever-present awe and majesty of life, together place these dramas at the front of the modern

theatre. "Field of Ermine" and "A Collar of Stars," although of more recent date, may also be listed in the catalogue of psychologic, symbolic drama in which the objective and subjective elements are contrasted with maximum power and effect.

The more important miscellaneous works composed at this period deal predominantly with the influence of character when achieved ("Autumnal Roses"), or with conditions and environments which react upon or inhibit its growth. As in "Señora Ama" and "In the Clouds," neither fact nor environment are of interest in themselves, but are presented as externalizations or postulates of volitional or other human elements. A more strictly psychologic bent further makes its appearance in what may be called comedies of mental states ("Brute Force"), while the lighter one-act comedy of equivocation continues as practised at an earlier day. The best of the one-act pieces belong also to these years.

With "La Malquerida," acted in 1913, Benavente enters upon another phase. As has been well said, the tragedy is not a study in psychoanalysis, but a psychoanalytical play, compact of inhibitions and suppressed desires, so intensively true that it has met with remarkable response both in Spain and in North and South America. Society and the will no longer furnish the theme; indeed, the volitional element has almost entirely disappeared, and we find ourselves enmeshed in a maze of reactions and determinations of the mind, in which the outward world is reduced to the lowest possible terms, the modicum indispensable for bringing the play upon the stage. The dramas of these later years are inexhaustible in variety. "The Evil That Men Do" offers a study of jealousy, "Thy Proper Self" of self-respect. A strange, absorbing projection of mirrored emotions, "A Traitor to All, Yet to All Be Ye Loyal," is concerned with the tragedy of character as reflected entirely from without, imposing itself in the place of the character that is real, as "Our Lady of Sorrows" attains true character within by virtue of a reflected character that is false. Not less moving is the powerfully austere tragedy of indifference and mis-

take, "A Lady." Again, with "The City of Gaiety and Confidence," second part of "The Bonds of Interest"—itself the outgrowth of *La canta de la primavera*, or "Spring Song," published fifteen years previously—we enter the domain of the drama of ideas. What "The Bonds of Interest" does for the individual, "The City of Gaiety and Confidence" undertakes to do for the State, attempting to precipitate from that abstraction the vital principle which supports it, in which the being of the nation inheres. Neither a political satire nor a war play, this pageant of predigested ideas, tendencies, forces, assembled and marshalled under names, surrenders but partially to the spectator upon performance, reserving its message to be delivered up in the amplitude of leisure hours. Such creations, of course, have little relation to the commercial theatre, but are possible only to the master, who imposes his pleasure upon public and actors at will. Benavente, always versatile, comes at last to move with even greater facility, through a wider range of subject and style than before, touching new interests, reviving old, weaving into the most delicate patterns the threads of his phantasmagoric theatre. Insinuation replaces statement, revelation succeeds conflict, while the implication waits upon the approximations of thought. In the final estimate, the subjective drama, the drama of antitechnique, must be held to postulate an antitheatre, opposed in conduct and in content to all the canons which have hitherto accepted by theatrical art. Beside this most elusive of divinations, the experiments of the Expressionists and Monodramatists of the North, of the Futurists and other bizarre Italian cults, appear material and halting indeed.

Considered intelligently, with a mind unbiassed by preconceptions of the objective stage, these plays yield their own explanation, after much reflection and much love. During the next decade their study will repay the attention of all followers of the theatre.

THE PRINCE WHO LEARNED EVERYTHING OUT OF BOOKS

FANTASY IN TWO ACTS AND SEVEN SCENES

First Presented at the Teatro Príncipe Alfonso, Madrid, on the Afternoon of the Twentieth of December, 1909, Inaugurating the Children's Theatre

CHARACTERS

THE KING

THE QUEEN, His Consort

THE BLUE PRINCE, Their Son

TONY, Buffoon to the Blue Prince

THE TUTOR

KING CHUCHURUMBO

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF KING CHUCHURUMBO

THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF KING CHUCHURUMBO

THE THIRD AND YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF KING CHUCHURUMBO

THE OLD WOMAN

THE OGRE

THE BEAUTY, Who is the Ogre's Wife

TWO WOOD-CHOPPERS

Also Three Pages to the Three Daughters of King Chuchurumbo
Attendants and Servants

THE PRINCE WHO LEARNED EVERYTHING OUT OF BOOKS

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE FIRST

A palace. The KING *and* QUEEN *in conversation.*

KING. Weep no more, the welfare of our kingdom demands the sacrifice. The Prince has learned everything which may be had out of books or from teachers. It is necessary now that he should come to know the world.

QUEEN. Do you think that it is worth the trouble of knowing? I have no confidence in the world. Shall I expose my son, who is so lovely and innocent, to its risks and temptations?

KING. We might indeed have confidence could life but detain itself, were it not inevitable that we should be removed from his side in the course of nature while he is still young. The affection of parents is able to raise up walls to protect their children against the evils and the sorrows of life, it can feign for them a world of illusion which is not the real world, but when we die, when our child is called to rule alone over millions of subjects of every condition and class, when he has no longer any friend to love him disinterestedly, to counsel him without malice, to advise him without deception and lies....

QUEEN. But then what has been the use of all these teachers?

KING. That he might become wearied of them, and be led

to prefer the reading of fairy-tales and enchantments to their musty lessons. Does that seem little to you?

QUEEN. Does it satisfy you? Would it not have been better to have taught him the fairy-tales first and afterward the realities of science?

KING. By no means! The proper course is first to assure ourselves of the firm ground, and then to scatter the lighter earth upon it, in which roses may bloom—not to throw upon the flowers hard stones and solid rock. We should shape our lives like a Gothic cathedral, well cemented, and buttressed like a fortress below, but flowering above in sculptured garlands and miracles of many-colored glass. The mass is lightened, though it is all of stone, until it seems rather to be floating in the air than founded on the ground.

QUEEN. Very good, no doubt. Although I fail to see what all this has to do with the journey of our son.

KING. His journey is the bridge which we must build for him between truth and illusion. Life itself is such a bridge, and it stretches from one to the other, and unites and blends them in such a way as to create out of them all the reality that we know.

The PRINCE, *the* TUTOR, *and* TONY *enter.*

QUEEN. My son!

PRINCE. I come to ask your blessing.

QUEEN. This parting is too cruel....

KING. Remember that you are a queen before you are a mother. Embrace your son, and do not make his courage falter.

PRINCE. My mother and my Queen! I go content, accompanied by my faithful servitors, my preceptor and my Tony.

QUEEN. Have you packed the bags without forgetting anything?

KING. What have you there?

TUTOR. Books for our studies.

TONY. I have plenty of good food to eat, which is what we shall need most.

QUEEN. My son, I know it is the King's wish that you travel without pomp or show, as the royal treasury may not become the loot of spendthrifts. But your mother has hoarded these few pieces of money for your use; they were a present from the King to buy me an ermine robe. The one which I am now wearing is somewhat moth-eaten, alas, but until your return I shall have no heart for aught but friezes and coarse flannels.

KING. Aha! So that all the tailors and dressmakers in the kingdom will turn republican? You will buy the robe, my dear, and comport yourself as befits your royal station.

QUEEN. You, my good servants, take good care of your Prince....

TUTOR. He will return a sage.

TONY. I shall bring him back well and fat.

QUEEN. Which is more important. Be careful what you eat. Above all else, do not permit him to stuff himself with tunny fish, roast chestnuts, or gum-drops. The Prince has always had a hankering for such things. Remember that he is heir to the throne.

TUTOR. The kingdom will acclaim in him a ruler wise and just.

QUEEN. Has he plenty of clean underclothes?

TUTOR. Of all kinds, your Majesty.

QUEEN. Where are the three dozen pocket-handkerchiefs I embroidered for you?

PRINCE. Here, mother....but I never heard that princes used more than one fine pocket-handkerchief on their travels, which must have a lace border, nor that they ever had need

of clean clothes. Fairy stories say nothing about these things. Princes ride through forests and scale mountains, they are caught in terrible showers, they swim lakes and ford rivers, but they never soil their clothes.

TONY. Does that immunity extend to their servants?—because I should hate to have anything happen to this coat, which is the best of the two that I have.

KING. Come, you must hurry and be off before nightfall.

PRINCE. My father and my lord! My mother!....

QUEEN. Write every day.

TUTOR. But will the letters arrive?

QUEEN. Yes, the King has given strict orders to assure prompt delivery of the mails.

TUTOR. Not so bad! The public always profits somehow from the travelling of princes.

QUEEN. Good-by! Good-by! You have not forgotten the milk of magnesia?

KING. Oh, woman, woman! Will you never learn how to attach to a moment proper dignity and importance?

TUTOR. Your Majesty, can anything be more important than these homely cares of a mother?

ALL. Good-by! Good-by! Good-by!

SCENE SECOND

The Open Country. Two roads, one of which is filled with thorns and stones. The other is carpeted with flowers.
The PRINCE, *the* TUTOR, *and* TONY *enter.*

PRINCE. Where are we? You said that we should be in a village within an hour. And now you see.... We are lost.

TUTOR. Lost! Lost, indeed! I must consult the topographical map of the kingdom—the latest published by the Royal Geographical Society.

TONY. I told you that we were not taking the right road.

TUTOR. But was I to trust myself to you rather than to the Royal Geographical Society?

TONY. You would have done better if you had trusted yourself to me, for I have been over that road more than a hundred times, night and day.

TUTOR. Without knowing where you were going.

TONY. But I got there. And now who knows where we are?

TUTOR. We have our choice here of two roads.

TONY. Say rather of one, for this is not a road, nor a trail, nor can it lead anywhere. It is a tangle full of briers and rocks. This is the road we ought to take. It is so clean and well kept that it must lead to some large city.

PRINCE. You are a fool. That is so as to tempt us to take it. Don't you know that in all the stories the good roads are the treacherous ones, which lead to the castle of some terrible ogre, who does not hesitate to swallow the poor trav-

ellers the moment they arrive? On the other hand, the thorny paths lead to gardens and palaces of good fairies and good kings where beautiful princesses dwell, who languish for noble princes who appear to fall in love.

TONY. It may be as you say; but, to my mind, things are as their beginning, and I never saw a thing end well that began badly, and it is easy enough for it to end badly when it has begun well. But when in doubt pluck a hair from the wolf, and as the face is, so is the man. Believe me, we ought to choose this road. Don't you hear music and birds singing, and nothing on this side—only the whistling wind, and birds of evil cry?

PRINCE. Ah, how can you be so ignorant! This, this is the right road. This is the way the path of virtue always looks—I have seen it in the pictures—and this is the broad and easy path of vice. Don't you think so, Master?

TUTOR. I do not think anything, now that I have been deceived by the Royal Geographical Society. I must consult my books.

TONY. Here comes a beautiful lady who will be able to tell us the road.

The BEAUTY *enters.*

BEAUTY. Good morning, gentlemen.

TONY. Beautiful lady, can you tell us where we are and whither these two roads lead?

BEAUTY. I can tell you this—that this is not a road, and it does not lead anywhere.

TONY. Didn't I tell you?

PRINCE. Wait!—don't you trust her.

BEAUTY. Are you strangers here? If you wish to rest and take some refreshment, I can offer it to you at my house—which is to say at my husband's house—but a short distance away. All these lands which you see are his, and all the

countryside about. He will consider himself greatly honored to receive and to entertain such distinguished guests.

TONY. We shall be charmed ourselves.

PRINCE. No. This husband whom she speaks of, and these fields and this house—they belong to some terrible ogre!

TONY. It doesn't seem to me that this lady has anything of the ogre about her. She is very courteous and polite.

PRINCE. Like all ogresses.

BEAUTY. Well, are you coming with me?

TONY. Let us set out at once. Our provisions are getting low, and I have a horrible appetite after so much walking.

PRINCE. No, I am not going. I shall take this other road.

BEAUTY. Are you mad? Should night overtake you, you will be attacked by wolves or by robbers; you will find only a miserable hovel in which a mad old woman lives....

PRINCE. What did I tell you? Some good fairy who presents herself in the guise of an old woman, like all good fairies. This, this is my road!

TONY. Don't be foolish, sir! Master, exert your authority.

TUTOR. Let me alone; I wish to read. It is not possible that these maps could be wrong. Until I know precisely where we are, I shall not stir from this spot.

BEAUTY. But are you crazy? This place is infested with poachers and wood-choppers, and until you reach my husband's house you are not safe.

PRINCE. Oh, false woman! How easy it is to see through your designs!

BEAUTY. What does he say?

TONY. Nobody minds what he says. But, Master, don't you see? The Prince is determined to venture alone down these by-ways.

TUTOR. You ought not to let him go.

TONY. Oho! And you?

TUTOR. I distrust everything. One road appears to me quite as bad as the other. I shall await you here, studying. Whichever of you arrives first at some habitation may send me back word how he got there.

TONY. But you are here to keep us out of trouble.

TUTOR. This road appears to me very bad, and this woman inspires me with no confidence whatsoever. Her invitations, her insistence upon taking us to her house, when she does not know us....

TONY. Hm! We are in a nice fix! One with his maps and his books of science, the other with his fairy-tales—and I, dead with hunger!

BEAUTY. Come! It will soon be dark, and I must return home. My husband, you know, is the largest landholder in the vicinity for twenty leagues about—he is the richest, the most powerful, although you see me very simply dressed....

PRINCE. Ah! There is the good old woman, the kind and beneficent fairy! There can be no doubt of it; it must be she. I shall run to meet her. Don't follow me.... I am going alone.

The PRINCE *rushes out.*

TONY. Ah....and he is gone! Gross negligence upon your part!

TUTOR. Upon yours.

TONY. What account of the Prince shall we give now to their Majesties?

TUTOR. What account shall you give? I was merely intrusted with his education.

TONY. Do you consider it education to allow him to do whatever he pleases?

TUTOR. He will desist when the way grows long and hard.

TONY. Yes, but if the wolves eat him up first, or the bandits kill him?....

BEAUTY. It was foolish of you to let him go.—Young man! Young man!

TONY. Yes, you might send one of your husband's greyhounds after him; I don't feel like running at the moment myself. Lead me to your house, for I am dying of hunger and thirst.

BEAUTY. Don't worry.

TONY. I have made up my mind to eat, even though your husband should be an ogre and you an ogress.

BEAUTY. What nonsense are you talking now?

TONY. None, none whatever. Only hunger is turning my head. [*Aside*] If they mean to eat me, they will be sure to feed me first, so that I may get fatter. Do you intend to stay here?

TUTOR. Yes, I shall remain until I hear from you. I shall follow the one who finds the more commodious shelter.

TONY. But aren't you starved?

TUTOR. Spiritual food will suffice me.

TONY. A pleasant dinner!.... Come along.

BEAUTY. Follow me.

TUTOR. The Royal Geographical Society cannot possibly make a mistake.

SCENE THIRD

A Hut.

The OLD WOMAN *enters with the* PRINCE.

OLD WOMAN. Come in, my fine young man. I wish I could offer you better lodging; but I am poor. I have lived here miserably these fifty years.

PRINCE. Can enchantment last so long?

OLD WOMAN. What enchantment are you talking about? Do you think it is enchantment to live like this?

PRINCE. Bah! Do you think that you can laugh at me? Then know that my fate and yours have brought me here to disenchant you. What is it necessary to do? Slay giants and dragons? Or to give you a kiss? There!.... Take one.

OLD WOMAN. Thanks. You are very kind.

PRINCE. Ah! It was not that? Then what is it necessary to do?

OLD WOMAN. Poor young man! He is out of his head.

PRINCE. Do you suffer under the spell of some fairy more powerful than yourself? Of some witch, some mage, or spirit of evil?

OLD WOMAN. No, I suffer under nothing more than my age and my poverty. Do you want something to eat? I can give you figs and nuts.

PRINCE. What nice fat ones!

OLD WOMAN. Help yourself. This is all the food I have.

PRINCE. But, really, can't you tell me how you may be disenchanted? You must not laugh at me; I am the Blue Prince.

OLD WOMAN. Poor young man! It is too bad. You are

cold, no? I am going to light the fire.... Bring me that bundle of fagots.

PRINCE. Ah, you wish to bind me to your service? Must I submit to this proof?

OLD WOMAN. It isn't a proof, any more than I am. If you will be so kind.... I haven't the strength.

PRINCE. Command me at your pleasure. I know that at last I must win your favor, and then you will reveal yourself in your true likeness, resplendent with beauty, and this humble cabin will transform itself into a marvellous palace, and you will lead me by the hand to the Princess of my Dreams!

OLD WOMAN. Yes, yes! I will. Of course! Of course! [*Aside*] I had better humor him.

A knock at the door.

PRINCE. Who is knocking?

OLD WOMAN. Who is there?

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. [*Outside*] Open, good woman.

OLD WOMAN. They are wood-choppers—poor people who range over these mountains to gain a living. Come in!

Two WOOD-CHOPPERS *enter.*

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Good afternoon.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Your good health!

PRINCE. Come in, good people.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Who is he?

OLD WOMAN. A traveller who has lost his way. I think he is out of his head.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. He looks like a fine gentleman. Has he money?

OLD WOMAN. Eh? How do I know?

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Then you ought to know. If he has....

OLD WOMAN. What are you thinking about? Some villainy?

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. You can help us with the trick, as you always do.

OLD WOMAN. Don't you deceive yourself. This poor boy goes out of my house safe and sound.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Leave off your gabble and fetch us something to drink.

PRINCE. What a life for these poor men! It must be hard, to judge by the appearance.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Why not? Running over the mountain all day to gather a miserable bundle of wood.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. There never ought to be winter time for the poor.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. But I prefer the winter. What do you say to summer?

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. All the year is evil for those whose lives are poor.

PRINCE. Poor fellows! My lady fairy, you ought to take pity on them, and divide your riches with them.

OLD WOMAN. You see now that is what I do. This is all my riches—this old, musty wine. Don't you want to try it?

PRINCE. Here! Give it to me.... It is not bad.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Ah! This gives life.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. This cheers the heart.

PRINCE. Here, my good people. It's for you.... For you!

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Gold!

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Gold? Pigs and chestnuts!

PRINCE. [*To the* OLD WOMAN] And for you, too.... Why are you laughing at me?

OLD WOMAN. No, no, I am not laughing. I am much obliged. When did I ever see so much money all at once?

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Did you see? His pockets were full of gold.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. He must have more about him —hid.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. We will come back when he is asleep.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Ho! We will.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. We'd better sharpen the axe.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. No, he's a babe. Our hands will do, or a good rope round his neck.

OLD WOMAN. Those rogues are up to something.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Good! Now we have drunk and are rested. We must get on to town before morning.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Health and a pleasant journey.

PRINCE. Health, my good people.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. We'll be back. Get him to sleep quick, and leave a light burning.

OLD WOMAN. Wretches! No! You shan't come back to-night.

SECOND WOOD-CHOPPER. Look out then, to-morrow! Well, it's all settled.

FIRST WOOD-CHOPPER. Sleep tight.

The two WOOD-CHOPPERS *go out.*

PRINCE. Poor men! Their life is hard. They must have families, too, and children.

OLD WOMAN. He has a kind heart. No, no, I can't allow it. [*Aloud*] My noble boy, leave this house—at once! Do not delay an instant.

PRINCE. What is the matter?

OLD WOMAN. Don't ask me, believe me. Ah! If you only knew....

PRINCE. What? Nothing can frighten me. I know that you must submit me to terrible proofs. I must encounter danger with a light heart. I know that happiness awaits me at last!

OLD WOMAN. Death, unhappy boy! It is death! Run! Run quickly! I will show you a path by which you may leave these woods unseen, undiscovered by anybody.

PRINCE. Bah, let the giants and fierce dragons come! Come monsters and hobgoblins! Raise up your walls of fire!

OLD WOMAN. My son, don't talk nonsense! None of these things can be, nor have we need to fear them. But these men, these soulless wretches—they have sworn to rob you. They have seen that you have gold. They will kill you, as they have killed the others.... Look! They are lighting the bonfire into which they mean to throw your body to burn it up, so that it will not be known. Then they will cast the ashes into the abyss, like those of other boys. I have helped them, oh, so often! I am a sinner.... I was afraid—I was so poor! But I will not do it to-day. No! You are so young, so generous. You make me pity you, I want to save you. But don't delay. Fly! Fly, for your mother's sake! For you are too young yet to have another love on earth than mother!

PRINCE. No, I will not fly. I shall wait here for these men, be they men or monsters, and meet them without fear. Nothing can frighten me.

OLD WOMAN. No, for my sake! Have pity upon me! See! if they return and I protect you, they will kill me, too. And they will kill me if they don't find you here! They will say that I have deceived them. But what difference does it make? I pity you.

PRINCE. No, I will not go. I know you only want to test my courage. No sacrifice can be too great to win the Princess's hand!

OLD WOMAN. Ah, what madness! Poor boy! See! I am not a fairy, I am a poor old woman who has taken pity on you and wants to save you.... Hark! They are com-

ing. We will fly together, if you will. But I can't, I am too old. They would overtake us. They would seize us——

PRINCE. With you, yes—I will go with you! If what you say is true, I cannot leave you with these villains. But I know that you are deceiving me. Come! When you can no longer walk, I will carry you in my arms. I am strong, I never am afraid.

OLD WOMAN. Yes, yes! We will save ourselves together.

PRINCE. But are you speaking the truth? Are you not really what you seem? Are you only a poor woman, and no fairy?

OLD WOMAN. No, no! Come on! Come quickly! Believe what you like—only believe! Yes, I am a fairy, a good fairy, who is saving you.... What more do you ask if I save you?

PRINCE. I know well that you must save me! I know well that I shall meet you at last, Princess mine!

They go out together.

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE FIRST

The OGRE'S *house.*
The OGRE *alone.*

OGRE. Hello! What is this? Is there nobody here? Do we never eat in this house? Gods!.... You gadding women!

BEAUTY. Don't call out; here I am.

The BEAUTY *and* TONY *enter.*

OGRE. Who is this fellow?

TONY. Your humble servant. [*Aside*] I don't like him. That enormous paunch doesn't make me feel comfortable; it's a bad sign. He's an ogre.

BEAUTY. He is a traveller who has lost his way at the entrance to the Dark Wood. There were two others with him, but surely they were mad, as they stayed behind by the roadside. This fellow told me that he was dying with hunger and fatigue, and I invited him to our house.

OGRE. Hum! I don't like these gentry who go about losing themselves on the roads. By your looks, you must be one of those jabbering jugglers who sing and dance at the country crossways so as to wheedle blockheads out of their pennies.

TONY. I am something better than that; I am the attendant of the Blue Prince.

OGRE. His fool, you mean. A miserable position!

BEAUTY. And was that the Prince who was with you—that unfortunate young man who ran off into the wood? Poor boy! What can have become of him?

TONY. By this time he has met the good fairy.

BEAUTY. Yes—among those cutthroats. Poor fellow!

OGRE. Well, well! Enough of this! Bring on the dinner, and send this brazen-faced rascal out into the stable, and you can feed him the leavings there, if there are any.

BEAUTY. Don't be so mean. Let him eat and drink here at his leisure. He will amuse us with his jokes and his songs.

OGRE. Such things never amuse me. But sit down where you like and wait till we have finished dinner. Bring it in.

TONY. [*Aside*] Oh! What torture! To watch them eat and yet not taste one mouthful! I'd rather the Ogre had begun by eating me first. I can't have struck him as very appetizing. [*Aloud*] Sir....sir.... Haven't you thought of me? My flesh is of the very best quality. My breast is tender, and my arms are like pigeon-wings....

OGRE. What do I care? In the name of thunder! Are you mad or drunk?

TONY. [*Aside*] It's no use, he doesn't care for me. He only likes tender little children. To tell the truth, with a table like this every day.... [*The dinner is carried in.*] [*Aloud*] Ah! How good it smells! That roast pig will be the death of me....

OGRE. It smells good, doesn't it? I will leave you a bone. [*They eat.*

BEAUTY. [*Aside*] Poor fellow! I must slip him something on the sly.

TONY. [*Aside*] Thanks, lovely lady. You save my life. Ah! Delicious!

OGRE. Well! Where are your spirits? Is this all you can do? Tell me some joke.

TONY. Ah!.... [*Choking.*

OGRE. What's the matter?

TONY. Nothing, nothing.

OGRE. Are you swallowing?

TONY. No, no. A mistake. [*Aside to the* BEAUTY] A glass of water, for heaven's sake! I am choking.

BEAUTY. Don't be so cruel. Let him at least have a drink.

OGRE. Yes. Let him have a drink.

BEAUTY. Here.

TONY. To the health of such a noble gentleman. Ah!.... The wine is good. Good wine!

OGRE. Of my own vintage.

TONY. Now I understand that you are a happy man.

OGRE. Go up to those windows there. Cast your eye upon that distant mountain; well, as far as that all this country belongs to me. Behind the mountain, there lie other lands, until you come to a river; well, as far as that, all this country belongs to me. Beyond the river there are as many other lands, which stretch down as far as the sea; well, as far as the sea, all this country belongs to me.

TONY. But not the sea? What a pity!

OGRE. The sea wouldn't be of any use to me. The sea is for fishes and sailors, adventurous folk. I am a practical man.

TONY. So I see.

OGRE. I live here happier than a king.

TONY. It may be.... I never saw a king eat with such an appetite.

OGRE. Well, then, this is nothing more than lunch. At noon to-day I dined on a roast calf. And for supper.... Ah! For supper I have reserved the choicest morsel.

TONY. [*Aside*] *Uy!* Now he is looking at me. He has made up his mind to reserve me for supper. [*Aloud*] But you don't know how tired I am—after my journey—walking so far. I am not fit, not presentable....

BEAUTY. We will fix you up.

TONY. [*Aside*] *Uy!* She is going to put me in a stew. I knew she must be the cook. [*Aloud*] Have you finished?

The BEAUTY *rises and goes out.*

OGRE. Yes, man, yes. Do you feel hungry?

TONY. A little. I didn't dine on a roast calf.

OGRE. Sit down then and eat. I am not a niggard. You can fill yourself at your pleasure. Cram, man, cram!.... But don't give yourself a pain.

TONY. [*Aside*] *Uy!* What good care he takes of me!

OGRE. Drink, man, drink. Laugh! Laugh! I am not a surly fellow, I am not one of the sort to eat people up, as before you seemed to think.

TONY. No, no....

OGRE. When I am hungry, I am in bad humor; but when I have had my dinner, I am the jolliest chap in the world. Drink, man, drink.

TONY. [*Aside*] Yes. He wants to get me drunk, so as to throw me in the pot without my knowing it. [*Aloud*] No, no, thank you. [*Aside*] *Uy!* This wine! It goes straight to the head. They are going to cook me without my knowing it! [*Aloud*] Though perhaps I am not the one to ask, what do you intend to do with me? Stuff me with potatoes?

OGRE. Ha? Potatoes? The feed of the poor! We are going to stuff you with truffles.

TONY. [*Aside*] Like a turkey. [*Aloud*] Aren't you afraid you will have indigestion?

OGRE. I have never had indigestion.

TONY. [*Aside*] If I can give it to him, then....

OGRE. [*Singing*]

"With eating and drinking,
Life is but joy...."

TONY. What a sweet voice!

OGRE. Do you think so? Really?

TONY. [*Aside*] I had better flatter him.

OGRE.

"Life is but joy."

TONY. [*Aside*] I think it has gone to his head. If he should get drunk, and I could escape.... [*Aloud*] I should say you were in a jolly humor. At first I didn't think so....

OGRE. Before eating I am always ill-natured.

TONY. Drink! Drink!

OGRE. And you, too.

TONY. [*Aside*] Ah! I think I'll be under the table first....

OGRE.

"With eating and drinking,
Life is but joy!
Hear the glasses clinking;
Bring the pie, boy!
Cut! Cut!
Munch! Munch!
Bring the pie, boy!"

TONY. Jolly song, isn't it?

"Life is but joy...."

OGRE. It seems to me that you are the one who is jolly. That's the way I like you.

TONY. [*Aside*] He likes me with wine.

"Bring the pie, boy!...."

OGRE. Come! Come! Tell me something funny, fool.

TONY. Is this any time to be funny? I had much rather

cry. Ah! What can have happened to my master? No doubt the same as to me. Poor Prince! Poor Prince!

OGRE. Don't cry. No!

TONY. [*Aside*] Poor me! Ah! An idea!.... [*Aloud*] *Ay! Ay!*

OGRE. What's the matter with you?

TONY. I am poisoned! Ah!.... I am poisoned! This wine is poisoned! Something is biting me inside like a dog.... Ah! Mad dog! Mad dog!.... Bark! He bites.... I am poisoned!

OGRE. You are drunk.

TONY. You can't eat me now; I would kill you. Poison.... Oh! Oh!

OGRE. Indigestion.... Poor fellow! I have never had indigestion.

"Life is but joy...."

Ah!.... [*Falls asleep.*

TONY. He has fallen asleep.... I am saved! The Ogress seems to be a good woman, and she will help me escape. How he snores!.... Which way can I get out?.... I had better take some provisions first.... Aha! Aha! This ought to be enough to last me for the journey....

The BEAUTY *re-enters.*

BEAUTY. Where are you going?

TONY. Oh!.... She has surprised me. He has gone to sleep, and so as not to disturb him, I thought perhaps I'd better eat outside....

BEAUTY. Gone to sleep? Yes. There you are! One day this way and another day that.... Pretty soon he will wake in a humor to eat us all up.

TONY. He will, will he? But before he wakes....

BEAUTY. I will see if I can get him to bed. Hello! Come on up-stairs....

OGRE. Eh?

"Life is but joy...."

BEAUTY. Come. Help me hold him up.

TONY. No, no, thank you. He might come to and give me the first bite.

BEAUTY. Mercy! What a husband! What a husband!

PRINCE. [*Outside*] Hello there! In the house! Is nobody there, I say?

TONY. What do I hear? My master! The Prince! Then nothing has happened to him!

PRINCE. Let me in! Open! Hello in the house!

BEAUTY. Coming.... I am coming. Hold him up while I am gone. Do me the favor.... [*The* BEAUTY *goes out.*

TONY. I ought to prevent the Prince from coming in. When the Ogre sees how young he is—and how tender! *Uy!* Who would have thought that he weighed so much? No wonder, with a calf and a pig inside together, not counting the vegetables.... [*Seeing the* PRINCE *enter, he runs to meet him, letting the* OGRE *fall*] Master! Master!.... Cataplum! The tower falls down!

The BEAUTY, *the* PRINCE, *the* OLD WOMAN, *and the* TUTOR *enter.*

BEAUTY. What have you done? You have dropped my husband!

PRINCE. Oh, my good Tony!

The BEAUTY *leads the* OGRE *out.*

TONY. Master! Master! Tell me what has happened to you. How did you come out of your adventure? Did that thorny path lead to some enchanted palace? Is this the good fairy who has taken you under her wing?

PRINCE. I don't know, Tony. I only know that we escaped by a miracle from some highwaymen who wanted to

kill me. I know that I owe my life to this good woman. While we were running through the wood, the robbers saw us afar off and ran after us. This poor old woman could go no faster and I had to take her up in my arms. I ran in among the brambles and the steep rocks, with those ruffians always behind at our heels. When we came to a stubble-field, what should they take it into their heads to do, but to set fire to it, and since the wind was blowing toward us, we soon saw ourselves borne down upon by a rolling sea of flame, which advanced with a roar in a terrible wave . . . .

OLD WOMAN. I shall never get over the fright!

TONY. But how did you escape?

PRINCE. I don't know. But I tell you we had to fly!

OLD WOMAN. Fly? No! But you ran fast in spite of your load. You are strong and brave.

TONY. So there were no palaces, no princesses nor fairies after all? I told you so. That road could lead nowhere that was good. And you, Master Tutor, what happened to you?

TUTOR. I have been busy all this time with my books. It was not possible that the map could have been wrong. In fact, the error was mine. In examining it, I jumped from one line to another, and, as you see, what was an inch on the map, was seven leagues by the road!

TONY. The truth in books, as in life, always lies between the lines.

TUTOR. While the Prince was returning from his perilous excursion, I was asleep. So they waked me as they passed, and this old woman brought us to this house, where, as she says, there is plenty to eat.

TONY. Yes, there is; they eat frequently. But, alas! What is the use of heaping up riches? Don't you know? This is the Castle of the Ogre. I am promised him for supper

to-night; you will have to wait and be dished for breakfast in the morning.

OLD WOMAN. What on earth are you talking about?

PRINCE. Ah! Then this is the decisive trial. This is the Ogre who has the Princess in his power! Must I vanquish him, too, in order to disenchant him and arrive victorious at her side? Then let him come quickly, and I, alone with my sword——

TUTOR. My lord, is it quite honorable to draw your sword against a gentleman who has opened the doors of his house so hospitably? I tell you that all this about ogres is pure nonsense, fable. There are, of course there are anthropophagi—that is to say, men who eat other men—from *anthropos*, man, and *phagein*, to eat; but that is only in savage regions, not in civilized countries like ours.

PRINCE. What do you know about it anyhow? My books tell me the truth. Isn't it true, my good fairy? Are we not in the Castle of the Ogre?

OLD WOMAN. I don't know anything about ogres.

TONY. You can tell by his looks that he must have eaten a great deal. If you could only see his paunch! It is the men and women and children he has swallowed whole.

OLD WOMAN. He hasn't done that, no, but he has swallowed houses and whole villages—yes, he has! You saw when you came in how all the neighborhood around is poor, and how only the lands and house of this man are rich? He has ruined all—buying here, lending there, crushing this one, deceiving that one, grinding down all beneath his treachery and greed. I myself was one of his victims. It is through him that you see me as I am.

PRINCE. What? Is he guilty of your enchantment? Then his destruction shall not be delayed. Sally forth, Mr. Ogre! Sally forth and roar, for the Blue Prince awaits you!

TUTOR. Be careful!

TONY. He will eat us all up.

TUTOR. I tell you that these modern ogres are not like those in the stories.

PRINCE. You need not tell me. I will not hear you. I will not listen! This is where my adventure shall end. Here is my goal! Stand back!.... Protect me, my good fairy! [*The* PRINCE *runs out, his sword drawn.*

OLD WOMAN. Hold him back! The wretch will kill him!

TUTOR. What do you mean by not protecting your master?

TONY. What do you mean?

TUTOR. This impresses me all very much like a dream.

OLD WOMAN. Listen! Run quickly! They are killing him!

The PRINCE *re-enters, running, but without his sword, followed by the* OGRE *with a club and the* BEAUTY *with a broom.*

PRINCE. Ah! They have vanquished me!

OGRE. Rogue! Traitor! You have attacked me in my own house!

BEAUTY. He tried to kill my husband. Out!.... Villains!

OLD WOMAN. Stop!

TUTOR. He is my master.

TONY. Remember he is the Prince....

OGRE. I shall kill him!

OLD WOMAN. Can't you see that the poor boy is mad? Have pity!

PRINCE. My good fairy, my sword broke. It was witchcraft. They have beaten me with clubs.

TONY. And with brooms!

BEAUTY. Well, the snip has been taught a lesson.

OGRE. Go! Leave my house immediately. And thank God that you leave it alive!

TONY. Ah! Not so bad, after all.

PRINCE. My kind fairy, where now is your power? Why don't you save me now, as you did before?

OLD WOMAN. You are saving your life. What more do you ask? Don't delay another moment in making your escape from this accursed house!

OGRE. What is it the old woman says?

OLD WOMAN. Yes! Accursed! Accursed!

OGRE. By my soul!

BEAUTY. Let them go. Go! Go quickly!

PRINCE. Yes, we shall go! But we shall return, if it is necessary, with all the armies of the King, my father! I shall come again to chastise and humiliate you, and to avenge all your victims.

OLD WOMAN. That would not be so bad either.

OGRE. Poor infant! Take him to his parents, or he will come to some bad end, falling out of his cradle.

TONY. Don't infuriate him any further. Let us go!

PRINCE. Alas! I cannot do any more, and my back pains me.

TUTOR. Where are we going next?

OLD WOMAN. Come with me. I will lead you to a place where we shall be more hospitably received, and be more fortunate.

PRINCE. I knew that the road would be long and hard; but never mind.... I was so sure that it was the road to happiness!.... Lead us where you will.

SCENE SECOND

A terrace before the Palace of KING CHUCHURUMBO. *The Three* DAUGHTERS *of* KING CHUCHURUMBO, *with their Three* LITTLE PAGES.

THIRD DAUGHTER. Oh! But aren't you weary, sisters? What are you thinking about?

ELDEST DAUGHTER. I am amusing myself looking at the sky.

SECOND DAUGHTER. I was listening to the rumbling of the sea.

THIRD DAUGHTER. I was looking down the road to see if anybody was coming to amuse us. I am bored to death. What shall we do to pass the evening?

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Sing.

SECOND DAUGHTER. Say verses.

THIRD DAUGHTER. But that is so silly.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. On these summer nights it is too hot to work with a light.

SECOND DAUGHTER. Besides, the King, our father, says a light is too expensive.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Otherwise, I should read.

SECOND DAUGHTER. And I should sew; but we have no more light than the moon.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Let us join hands in a ring, then, and sing. Come, sisters.

THIRD DAUGHTER. How perfectly silly! That is child's play.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. But it is so pretty! There isn't any game that is prettier than singing all together and holding

each other's hands, as if we never had to let go and could go on forever singing in our hearts the same childish songs.

THIRD DAUGHTER. We might sing if you like.

FIRST AND SECOND DAUGHTERS. Yes, yes! Do! What shall we sing?

THIRD DAUGHTER. Whatever has least sense in it.

They join hands and move around in a ring with the PAGES, *singing.*

"Boo hoo! Up the mountain!
Who has upset the fountain?
Laughing water,
Sparkling water,
A kiss for the king and a kiss for his daughter,
Skip! Hooray! Come Christmas!"

KING CHUCHURUMBO *enters.*

CHUCHURUMBO. How now? What is this? Will you never learn sense? This is no way to get married.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. I don't want to get married.

SECOND DAUGHTER. Neither do I.

THIRD DAUGHTER. Oh, I do! I do!

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Why do you want to get married?

THIRD DAUGHTER. So that I may wear beautiful clothes and jewels, and have golden carriages with white horses, and plumes of birds of paradise.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. How foolish! Suppose you should have a bad husband?

SECOND DAUGHTER. Suppose you had lots of children and didn't have time to wear clothes?

THIRD DAUGHTER. I should hire governesses for the children. And I should buy my husband a carriage—one of those that goes by itself—so that he might run off and amuse himself.

CHUCHURUMBO. You are out of your heads, and that is what everybody thinks and it is a public disgrace! Do you know what they say of me—and of you, too, for that matter —everywhere?

"There was an old king,
Count one! Count two!
Who had three daughters
And he didn't know what to do.
So, he dressed them all in red,
And he jugged them all in bed,
And out of the window on the head, head, head . . . ."

THIRD DAUGHTER. Who under the sun ever said that? You ought to have had him hanged!

SECOND DAUGHTER. No, I should not have had anybody hanged for that. I like it! It amuses me.

THIRD DAUGHTER. We never all three dressed alike.

CHUCHURUMBO. No, so as not to agree in anything.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. I had rather dress always in purple, which is the color which is royal, and is worn by bishops and great dignitaries, and by ladies who govern in their own houses well.

SECOND DAUGHTER. I had rather dress in green, which is the color of the fields and of the sea, all hope and all cheer, and happiness for all. For one ought not to be thinking only of oneself and one's house.

THIRD DAUGHTER. I had rather dress in white, which is the color of the snow, and which takes the color of all lights and all shadows and of all the sunbeams—whiter than the moon, more golden than the noonday, red like fire, blue like the deep water of the mountain lake, silver on the brimming borders of the rippling fountains. . . .

CHUCHURUMBO. You are out of your heads, and I shall never be able to get you married, and you will ruin my kingdom.

THIRD DAUGHTER. Oh, look! Look! Here comes a handsome young man.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Yes, here he comes.

SECOND DAUGHTER. It must be the Blue Prince who is travelling through the world, so they say, in search of an education.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. And to get married.

THIRD DAUGHTER. And have a good time.

CHUCHURUMBO. If it indeed be he, he shall be welcome, for the King, his father, is my friend and ally, and I should like nothing better than to marry him to one of my children. Be very careful not to do anything to frighten him away, or by the fourteen points of my crown, I will end by doing to you as the people say:

"I will dress you all in red
I will jug you all in bed...."

The PRINCE *enters.*

PRINCE. Hail, great King! Beautiful Princesses, hail! Is this the palace of King Chuchurumbo?

THIRD DAUGHTER. [*Aside*] The more you look, the less you see. The boy is a numskull!

CHUCHURUMBO. [*Aside*] Be prudent and remember your manners. [*Aloud*] I am King Chuchurumbo, the ninety and ninth of that name, but a duplicate, as I am the second of that number. I have been unwilling in prolonging the line to require my subjects to count above a hundred. This is my palace, and these are my three daughters. And you, my amiable young man, who are you?

PRINCE. Do you know this ring?

CHUCHURUMBO. You are the Blue Prince?—the son of my best friend? Ah, you don't know how glad I am to see you, and how fond I am of your dear father! We have been united in the bonds of friendship for twenty-five years, and in all that time we have engaged in only three wars, all of which have been lost by me, so you can readily imagine what interest I have in avoiding a fourth. What do you think of my three daughters?

PRINCE. Nothing could be more beautiful.

CHUCHURUMBO. Oh, beauty is the least part of it!—education, my son, it is education. They are very handy about the palace. They cook, they sew. They would make any man happy; that is to say, rather, they would make any three men happy, as the laws of our country do not permit that one man should marry all three, although, believe me, I should be delighted if the law could be altered upon your account.

THIRD DAUGHTER. [*Aside*] You are talking stupid nonsense, father.

CHUCHURUMBO. [*Aside*] Be quiet, snip! You will frighten him off. Leave this matter to me. Unfortunately, you have no mother, and I am obliged to attend to these details myself.

PRINCE. I know that I may choose only one, and it will be she whom I have always loved, without knowing her. For I have learned by my books that among the daughters of a king, it is always the youngest who is the most beautiful and the most virtuous.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. Did you ever hear of such a fool?

SECOND DAUGHTER. What a nincompoop!

CHUCHURUMBO. [*Aside*] Control yourselves. [*Aloud*] Yes, so the books and the stories say. And so no doubt.... [*Aside*] I'd better indorse her to him; she will be the hardest to get rid of; she has the worst temper.... [*Aloud*] And so

no doubt it is. Here is her hand. You bear away the most precious jewel in my crown.

SECOND DAUGHTER. [*Aside*] He is not so bad-looking. Some day he will be a great king.

CHUCHURUMBO. I shall assemble my ministers at once to approve your betrothal. To-morrow the rejoicings will begin with a sumptuous reception.

PRINCE. Do you call that rejoicing? Nothing could be a more terrible bore!

CHUCHURUMBO. To us. But it will be great fun for the courtiers.

The OLD WOMAN, *the* TUTOR, *and* TONY *enter.*

CHUCHURUMBO. Who are these people?

PRINCE. Your Majesty, they are my train.

CHUCHURUMBO. Strange escort for a Prince!

TONY. You ran away from the inn. We have been at our wits' end to find you.

PRINCE. I spied the palace of my Princess, and alone I set out upon the way. I knew that my good fairy would not linger far behind. Princess, here is the good fairy who has led me to your side. Salute my wife, my Princess.

OLD WOMAN. What! Are you married?

TONY. I never heard of such a rapid wedding!

PRINCE. Princes, when they marry, are of a rapid disposition.

OLD WOMAN. Oh, my poor young man! But are you acquainted with your bride?

PRINCE. I have known her all my life. She is the youngest daughter of a king, and the youngest daughter of a king is always beautiful and virtuous. You know that, my good fairy. So you see that all my troubles are ended. Speak! What is it that you ask now, in order to reveal yourself in your true likeness?

OLD WOMAN. Alas! Alas! What is it that I ask now? That you come to yourself, that you learn judgment. You don't know what they say of the daughters of this King! You do not belong in this country, you have heard nothing of them. The youngest is a hoyden, a shrew.

PRINCE. Do you wish to submit me to yet other proofs?

OLD WOMAN. Her want of judgment and her coldness of heart have penetrated even to my wilds. Will you still believe in me?

PRINCE. Always!

OLD WOMAN. Then leave this matter in my hands and I will attend to it.—Ah, my lady Princesses! As we entered the palace, we heard your attendants crying out. Three beautiful animals—your pets—had escaped from their cages.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. My monkey!

SECOND DAUGHTER. My parrot!

THIRD DAUGHTER. My white rat!

OLD WOMAN. And the attendants were in tears, because they were afraid that they would be punished severely.

THIRD DAUGHTER. I shall have them killed! Shall I not, father mine?

ELDEST DAUGHTER. It will be sufficient to dismiss them. That is all I ask.

SECOND DAUGHTER. No! Poor creatures! The loss of an animal is too insignificant to justify the giving of pain.

OLD WOMAN. What do you say now?

PRINCE. My Princess has not a kind heart.

OLD WOMAN. Wait! As we came in, I let fall some pieces of money—all that I had in the world. What shall I do to get them back?

THIRD DAUGHTER. Go and look for them.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. I shall send the gardeners to look for them.

SECOND DAUGHTER. Where did you let them fall? Come with me, and I will help you look.

OLD WOMAN. How does it seem to you?

PRINCE. My Princess is not the one who has the kindest heart.

OLD WOMAN. Wait! The Prince has brought three gifts for the Princesses—a jewel, a book, and a flower. He does not know which gift to offer to which. Choose each of you for herself.

THIRD DAUGHTER. I choose the jewel.

ELDEST DAUGHTER. I choose the book.

SECOND DAUGHTER. I choose the flower.

OLD WOMAN. She who chose the jewel was thinking of appearing well before others. She who chose the book was thinking of appearing well to herself. She who chose the flower was thinking of helping her sisters to appear well, for she was thinking of others and not of herself. What do you say now?

PRINCE. That she is my Princess, and you are the good fairy who has taught me how to live.

OLD WOMAN. A poor old woman, and no fairy.

THIRD DAUGHTER. And are you going to stand there like a post and listen while he insults me? You ought to declare war on the King, his father.

CHUCHURUMBO. No! Not a fourth beating, no! I am delighted that your sister should be the chosen one. [*To the* PRINCE] You carry away the most precious jewel in my crown.

THIRD DAUGHTER. I shall tear out his eyes.

CHUCHURUMBO. Silence, rubbish! [*To the* PRINCE] I had not intended to say anything, but tales are tales.

TUTOR. Fairy stories, lies! Place no reliance except upon science.

TONY. Take advantage of your opportunities, whatever they may be, say I; that's my science.

TUTOR. Here come your parents.

PRINCE. Happiness at last!

The KING *and the* QUEEN *enter.*

CHUCHURUMBO. Ah! My excellent friend!

QUEEN. My son!

KING. Chuchurumbo, fly to these arms!

CHUCHURUMBO. You seem remarkably well preserved.

PRINCE. How did you happen to follow me?

KING. We heard that you were wandering about the world doing fearful and foolhardy things, so at the word, accoutred as we were, we set out upon our journey. [*To the* TUTOR] Is this the care that you take of your Prince?

TUTOR. Sire, by nature the Prince is impetuous. It is impossible to govern him.

PRINCE. Pay no attention to what he says. As you see, no harm has come to me.

QUEEN. You took the fairy-tales literally, and you thought that you saw good fairies and ogres and princesses everywhere, like those in the stories. And you were on the point of losing your life! You might even have married an insufferable woman.

THIRD DAUGHTER. What is that, your Majesty? What is that you say about being insufferable? The one who is insufferable, the one who has had no bringing up, the jackanapes, is your son. Little monkey! [*She sticks out her tongue.*

QUEEN. What sort of Princess is this?

KING. Are you undeceived now? Have you learned that life is not a fairy-tale?

PRINCE. No, on the contrary, I have found all my dreams realized, because I have believed in them. I have found good people, like the good fairies; I have found fierce and

cruel robbers, like the ogres; I have found a Princess, like the princesses of the fairy-tales. Upon this good old woman, who has saved me by her pity and undeceived me by her experience, I beg you to bestow rich guerdons and rewards, for she was my good fairy. Upon those ferocious villains, who, like the ogres, oppress the poor and carry misery and suffering everywhere in their train, hardened by their selfishness and enslaved by their greed, I invoke your justice. Upon my dear Princess, who, if she is not the youngest of the daughters of a king, as in the stories, is at least she who has merited my love and won my heart, I implore the blessing of a father's love. You see now that my journey was not so unfortunate; it could not disillusion me of my ideals. I have learned that we all have a good, protecting fairy at our sides, and that if we listen to her always, we can make happy those who surround us and we can be happy also ourselves. I have learned that it is necessary to dream beautiful things in order to do beautiful things. Glory to the fairy-tales! I shall never speak ill of one of them! Happy are they who know how to make out of life one beautiful tale!

TONY. My dear children, the applause of your little hands is the greatest glory for a poet, for you are the future. May the days of your lives, which are the future of our beloved country, be all as a fairy-tale, in which the good may always triumph over everything that is evil. And may you all be happy like the Blue Prince in this story, my dear children.

PANTOMIME:

THE WEDDING OF THE BLUE PRINCE

APOTHEOSIS

Curtain

SATURDAY NIGHT

NOVEL FOR THE STAGE ARRANGED IN FIVE TABLEAUX

First Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza at the Teatro Español, Madrid, on the Evening of the Seventeenth of March, 1903

CHARACTERS

The Lector	Prince Florencio
Imperia	Lord Seymour
Princess Etelvina	The Duke of Suavia
The Countess Rinaldi	Harry Lucenti
Lady Seymour	The Signore
Edith	Mr. Jacob
Donina	Nunu
Zaida	Tommy
Lelia	Tobacco
Mme. Jenny	Ruhu-Sahib
Majestá	Gaetano
Esther	Cecco
Juliette	Pietro
Rosina	Commissary of Police
Pepita	An Unknown
Celeste	1st Sailor
Teresina	2d Sailor
Nelly	3d Sailor
Fanny	4th Sailor
Marcella	A Waiter
Leonardo	Cornac
Prince Michael Alexander	Servant

Ladies, Gentlemen, Performers in the Circus, Police, Sailors, Gypsies and Attendants

The action takes place at a winter resort upon the Riviera, situated near the boundary between Italy and France

SATURDAY NIGHT

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY THE LECTOR

It is Saturday night. Earth, sea, and sky blend in languorous harmony—light, wave, mountain top, and grove smile with the freshness of a world new-born, ignorant of sorrow and of death. Enchanted shore! Gods and heroes, nymphs and fawns should inhabit you, love and wisdom alone are worthy to contemplate your beauty. The idylls of Theocritus and the eclogues of Virgil breathe the spirit of your poesy, or if, perchance, a poet of our restless age has turned to you to glorify his melancholy, it was the divine Shelley, worshipper of the eternal harmony of Beauty, Truth, and Good, who refused to set bounds and limits to the infinite, adoring God in all his works. The ritual of his worship was the passionate litany of the holy poet of Assisi, the universal lover, who greeted all things with his song of ardent flame: Brother Sun, Brother Sea, Brother Birds, Brother Wolf—all brothers!

Into this enchanted scene, by Nature so lavishly endowed, comes man. It is the fashionable winter season—*à la mode*—man has chosen his earthly paradise well; for paradise indeed it is. He flees from the cold and the chill of the North, and he brings the chill of his life with him; he flees from his life, but his life follows and overtakes him. Every pathway opens beneath his feet into an inferno like Dante's, above whose portals is inscribed the legend:

> "Through me the way is to the city dolent,
> Through me the way is to eternal dole,
> Through me the way among the people lost."

THE FIRST TABLEAU

A hall in a sumptuous villa.

The PRINCESS ETELVINA, LADY SEYMOUR, *the* COUNTESS RINALDI, EDITH, LEONARDO, PRINCE MICHAEL, PRINCE FLORENCIO, LORD SEYMOUR, HARRY LUCENTI, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *are seated about the room.* EDITH *plays upon a lute, while* LADY SEYMOUR *and* LEONARDO *listen to the music.* PRINCESS ETELVINA, PRINCE MICHAEL, LORD SEYMOUR, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *take tea.* PRINCE FLORENCIO, *the* COUNTESS RINALDI, *and* HARRY LUCENTI *examine a number of etchings and engravings, engaging meanwhile in animated conversation. Several* SERVANTS *are in attendance, one of whom hands a telegram to* PRINCE MICHAEL.

ETELVINA. News from Suavia?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Extraordinary news. [*To the* PRINCESS] You should be the first to announce it. Read....

DUKE. Is it serious? [*Imposing silence*] The music, ladies——

ETELVINA. I am delighted. Listen, my son. His Imperial Majesty was presented this morning with a prince and heir.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Long live the Prince!

ALL. Long live the Prince!

DUKE. *Viva* Suavia!

ALL. *Viva* Suavia!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*As he takes the telegram*] At last! A prince after seven princesses! The weight of the empire

has oppressed me long enough; it had become an infirmity. Now I shall recover my health.

LADY SEYMOUR. I must say that you bear the blow cheerfully.

RINALDI. One does not lose a throne every day.

ETELVINA. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] We must reply at once. Do not delay our congratulations. Our best wishes for the prosperity of the empire.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Nobody will believe that they are sincere. People always misunderstand me. The Empress suggested an absence from court because she was afraid that I might be in too great haste to wear the crown. Now that the future of my august cousin will be so closely bound up with mine, there is less reason than ever why I should return to Suavia. Responsibility for my own life will suffice me.

ETELVINA. If one may judge by the little care that you take of it.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Since it is my own and belongs entirely to me, perhaps I shall finish by valuing it. I am free! —no longer the heir apparent, the centre of so many hopes, so much ambition, and so much hatred. I am sorry for my cousins, the seven little princesses, who have been dreaming all these years of becoming imperial consorts at my expense, as the Salic law of the empire does not permit them to inherit themselves. It will not matter to them now whether or not I behave.

ETELVINA. You have no right to talk like that. Always this flippant tone!

DUKE. Highness, many of us had placed great faith in you. We watched you from the cradle; we fought beside your father. The heir is a mere babe and the Emperor already old. The state of the empire is perturbed.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Clearly, this is not a solution.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] No, my dear uncle, not while you are still young. You may be Regent yet, as you would have been with me; the weight of the empire would have fallen upon your shoulders, and you would have inherited it in the end. My imperial career would have been short.

ETELVINA. Who knows? Life then would have had an object for you—it would have acquired meaning. However, if you are satisfied——

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Absolutely. And you? Do you recall Daudet's "*Rois en exile*": "Do you love me less now that I am not to be king?"

ETELVINA. Ungrateful, foolish boy! If you are happy, it is all that I desire.

LADY SEYMOUR. A curious coincidence! Edith was playing the national air of your lost empire.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Yes, upon the lute. How depressing! To do it justice, the theme requires drums and trumpets against a background of flashing swords and shining armor I am told that all the fighting spirit of our country has been put into it, although it was composed by a monk who was a foreigner, for the funeral of some poet.

DUKE. A preposterous fabrication.

LADY SEYMOUR. A monk, did you say, and a poet? The combination is amusing.

LEONARDO. Tennyson might have composed an occasional poem.

LADY SEYMOUR. Tennyson was an exceptional poet. He was a gentleman, received in the best society.

HARRY LUCENTI. [*To* LEONARDO] Lady Seymour is jealous of me. She will not pardon the Prince my invitation.

LEONARDO. You are the scandal of England.

HARRY LUCENTI. Run through the *secrétaires* of the great ladies and in every one of them you will find a volume of my poems, laid away with their love-letters. On the table in the drawing-room, the Bible and Kipling.

LEONARDO. And a respectable husband at the head of the table.

HARRY LUCENTI. After dinner, under it.

LEONARDO. I told you that joke yesterday and you found it in extremely bad taste.

HARRY LUCENTI. On the lips of a foreigner, it still continues to be so. It is not easy to forget that one is English, although one has been banished from England like Byron.

LEONARDO. But you have not yet succeeded in banishing England?

RINALDI. Byron, did you say? Byron never seemed immoral to me. I learned English when I was a schoolgirl, reading Byron.

LEONARDO. Did you learn nothing but English reading Byron?

RINALDI. We are not like Lady Seymour in Italy. It is impossible to shock us with banished poets.

LEONARDO. The Countess is shock-proof. She has been cured of timidity.

RINALDI. Rather I am convalescing. That is the reason I come here every winter.

LEONARDO. Always alone.

RINALDI. What is there to attract my husband?

LEONARDO. Nothing; he has been cured already.

ETELVINA. There will be great rejoicing in Suavia.

DUKE. The court and the official element, not to speak of the people, idolized Prince Florencio. They could not forget that he was the son of the soldier, of the invincible liberator, your husband, venerated throughout Suavia.

ETELVINA. Justly so. Yet during these last years, they have hesitated at nothing to discredit my son.

DUKE. What constitution at his age could support this continual liquidation?

PRINCE MICHAEL. If Florencio had been otherwise—pardon, I do not wish to distress you—he is your son, and I know how you love him. But Florencio's conduct——

ETELVINA. What can you tell me that I do not already know? I have shed too many tears. But now his health distresses me. I have brought him here to recuperate.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Here? You arrived two days ago, and already the Prefect has advised me that he is frequenting objectionable resorts.

ETELVINA. Great heaven!

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Prefect is a man of the world; everybody calls him the Signore. He is paid handsomely to keep the peace, and throw an air of respectability over this petty principality, which is a cosmopolis and Mecca of all the idlers of the earth.

ETELVINA. Do you tell me that Florencio . . . . ?

PRINCE MICHAEL. There is no cause for alarm. The Signore has detailed special agents to watch him; they will protect him should occasion arise. Nevertheless, it is deplorable.

ETELVINA. Yes, it is. You sympathize with me. Nothing remained but that he should form an intimacy with this Lucenti, this poet, half-English, half-Italian, a man utterly without moral sense. Lord and Lady Seymour were scandalized to meet him here.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Is it possible? But I thought . . . . pardon a moment. I noticed, my lady, that you appeared to be somewhat shocked by the presence of Harry Lucenti.

LADY SEYMOUR. Really, nobody receives that man.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I beg your pardon. I thought I saw you talking with him at the Casino last evening.

LADY SEYMOUR. Oh, many times! But not before my husband.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But I have often seen your husband talking with him.

LADY SEYMOUR. Frequently. But never before me.

PRINCE MICHAEL. English propriety is more complicated than I had imagined.

LADY SEYMOUR. It is respectability.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] I am in no humor for trifling this evening. Frankly, I am bored. You have no idea how bored I am.

LEONARDO. But you are dying to tell me.

RINALDI. Artists are such dangerous confidants. Afterward, they reveal all one's secrets to the public.

LEONARDO. I am a sculptor. What secrets have you that my art could reveal to the public? By the way, you would make an admirable Juno.

RINALDI. You told me Minerva yesterday.

LEONARDO. It may be Venus to-morrow; everything in its season.

RINALDI. You might have worse models.

LEONARDO. I defer to your authority.

RINALDI. I warn you that I am wearing no stays; this is support *à la grècque.*

LEONARDO. Now you are encroaching upon my domain. Only spiritual confidences, if you please.

RINALDI Why do you suppose that I am here this evening?

LEONARDO. How should I know? Probably because you were invited to dinner by Prince Michael, like the rest of us, to celebrate the arrival of his sister, the Princess Alex-

andra Etelvina, and her august son, Prince Florencio, the late apparent heir.

RINALDI. Invited? On the contrary, I am here precisely because I was not invited.

LEONARDO. Impossible!

RINALDI. Apparently I am considered a *déclassée;* it is my own fault in a way. In Paris I was presented to the Prince officially by the Italian Ambassador, but here, of course, there is no etiquette. One comes for a change, to amuse oneself. One associates with everybody, just as if one were in the country. The Casino, the races, the shooting-club are all neutral ground. Well, one day, at one of them, I chanced upon the Prince with—with his....

LEONARDO. With Imperia.

RINALDI. Should I have refused to bow to him? How absurd! I am not like Lady Seymour, afraid to be seen in public with a fellow countryman, an artist like Harry Lucenti.

LEONARDO. It would have been absurd.

RINALDI. Art and beauty are sacred in Italy. One of the popes said apropos of Benvenuto Cellini, that such artists were above all laws. I did not hesitate to meet the Prince's *innamorata,* nor absent myself from the companies at her villa, nor hurry to leave the Prince at the moment she arrived, when only a few remained—the intimates, the inner circle. They are the most fascinating. However, the Prince has taken my condescension for moral abdication. That is the reason I am here without an invitation. Naturally, he did not seem surprised, but when the Princess saw me, she was like an icicle.

LEONARDO. She is extremely old-fashioned. She receives only dragons of virtue.

RINALDI. And discretion, like the daughter of the Duke of

Suavia. Romantic creature, is she not?—a young lady in waiting, whom the Princess retains in the family so that Prince Florencio may entertain himself at home, and not create such scandals in Suavia.

LEONARDO. Poor Prince! He is very susceptible; a lover of art, indefatigable in the pursuit of beauty.

RINALDI. Entirely too much so. Was he not a lover of Imperia before his uncle?

LEONARDO. I may have heard talk.

RINALDI. And after you?

LEONARDO. She was only my model; I was never her lover. She took her name, Imperia, from one of my statues. It was at my studio in Rome that she met Prince Florencio.

RINALDI. Who left you without a model? You see I am taking your word. Then you fell sick.

LEONARDO. With malaria.

RINALDI. And changed your life completely. Your art suffered a collapse. Is it true that you broke into pieces a great block of marble which you had prepared for a gigantic statue, *The Triumph of Life?* It was to have been a work of genius, and surely not the last. Italy then might have boasted two Leonardos, equally great.

LEONARDO. Leonardo! You have no idea how the name has obsessed me ever since I was a child. It has been to me like some preternatural portent. My father admired the divine *da Vinci*, so he gave me the name—my father was a lover of beautiful things, an idolater of great artists. It was a mighty name which compelled me from my boyhood's days to dream great dreams. But you see how it was: a great ideal can be realized only when it has been reduced to our scale, shattered into parts. From that block of Carrara marble from which I intended to carve my masterpiece, I cut a thousand figurines, such as you have seen in the

windows and at the exhibitions, or afterward in the parlors and boudoirs of the rich—graceful, if you will, they were charming; the public was pleased, and they sold very well. Instead of a dazzling flash of inspiration in a single work, a spark of artful grace in a thousand toys; instead of a monument to immortalize an heroic deed and embody beauty to posterity, a paper-weight, perhaps, or a *bibelot* to support an electric light. And people thought that I had realized my ideal! They judged my soul by my work. They see the grains of sand, but they do not know that in their making a mountain crumbled into dust!

RINALDI. But suppose the ideal is one of love, as mine is?

LEONARDO. You know the secret. Break the block of your illusions and content yourself with figurines. Love all as you would have loved one.

RINALDI. Loving much is not the same as loving many. Consider your experience. You broke the marble, but have you been able to forget your model, your Imperia? Why are you here if it is not for her?

LEONARDO. We are all here for something.

RINALDI. Which we do not tell. We fly from ourselves, from the false lives which we lead, which our position in the world imposes. That is why we huddle together in this promiscuous place where everybody sees and knows everything, but where everybody agrees to see and know nothing. To-night we are cowed into respectability by the presence of the Princess; we are in another world, where we are bored beyond speaking. We would give an eternity to be free as our thoughts are at this moment.

LEONARDO. We are shadows of ourselves as we pass through the world. We see those who walk beside us, yet we know nothing of what they are.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* HARRY LUCENTI] I must go with

mother. It will never do to have her worry. I can give out that I have gone to bed, and join you later. Will those people be there?

HARRY LUCENTI. We might stop for them at the theatre. Do you know Mr. Jacob's new theatre? A gorgeous music-hall, in the worst possible taste, but diverting. Of course it has less character than the old puppet-show by the port, with its sailors and stevedores, open-mouthed at the sight of the fine ladies adventuring slumming. But Cecco's tavern is still there. He gives foreigners their money's worth, too —the whole performance, popular dances, a duel with knives, winding up with a raid by the police, all engineered and directed by Cecco. You would swear it was the truth.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. We might take supper there. It will be more amusing than these eternal midnight cafés.

HARRY LUCENTI. I think so, too. We can have the performance suppressed. He knows we are in the secret.

[*They continue the conversation.*

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] I felt sure that you were sympathetic, but this intimacy with the Prince was disconcerting. My husband may be appointed Ambassador to Suavia. It would never do to have these people suspect anything. Otherwise, I should have consulted the Prefect.

LEONARDO. The Signore? How could you be so foolish? This place would be a paradise but for him. Every winter he imports the picked rogues of Christendom; then they pay him to keep an eye on them; so he contrives to earn his salary. However, leave it to me; there is no occasion to worry. You say he works in a music-hall?—an acrobat, a brute of a fellow?

RINALDI. A brute, but wonderful! You understand; you, too, are an artist.

LEONARDO. Is he threatening you with an open scandal?

RINALDI. I am in for five thousand francs.

LEONARDO. It seems incredible. You have been foolish in more senses than one.

RINALDI. Not a word of it to anybody.

LEONARDO. No, everybody knows it already. Don't imagine that everybody hears from me what I hear from everybody.

RINALDI. But do they know?

LEONARDO. Oh! I should not bother. The same thing happened to Lady Seymour with one of her grooms. Now she envelops herself in the British flag, without condescending to notice you during the entire evening. We become impossible socially, not because of what people know about us, but because of what they imagine we may know about them.

RINALDI. Precisely. We ought always to say what we know about everybody, not out of malice, but in the interest of truth and good feeling. All of us are made of the same clay. Virtue consists merely of those vices which one does not possess. If it had been virtuous not to eat apples, and I had been Eve, man would never have fallen. I cannot abide the sight of apples; although I do not complain of those that eat them. No doubt they have good reasons.

LEONARDO. They seem good to them.

ETELVINA. [*Rising*] It is growing late; it is time to retire. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] Will you lunch with us to-morrow?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Without fail. And we shall write to the Emperor.

DUKE. [*To a* SERVANT] Her Highness's carriage. Gentlemen, her Highness retires.

ETELVINA. Good evening to all. It has been pleasant to meet old friends.—My lady, I may count you among them.

LADY SEYMOUR. Your Highness compliments me to say so.

ETELVINA. Countess.... [*To* LEONARDO] My dear artist,

your works have become indispensable in my house. I trust that you apply yourself now? Your new style is entrancing. Like the old masters, you combine art with utility. Even the necessities you make charming. Good afternoon.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* HARRY] Don't be long.

HARRY LUCENTI. I shall be there before you. Good night.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Good-by, uncle.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Be careful of your health! Have some regard for your mother.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Yes, I remain at home this evening.

ETELVINA. So Florencio has promised me.

PRINCESS ETELVINA, PRINCE FLORENCIO, EDITH, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *retire, accompanied by* PRINCE MICHAEL.

RINALDI. The Princess is remarkably well preserved.

LEONARDO. She almost looks young.

LADY SEYMOUR. She leads the life of an anchorite—a good thing for the poor.

RINALDI. Very popular, too, I am told, in Suavia.

LEONARDO. The virtues of the Princess prove more embarrassing at court than the vices of her son. That is the reason they advise them to travel.

LORD SEYMOUR. I never meddle in foreign affairs.

LEONARDO. An artist, my lord, must communicate his impressions. It is a matter of habit.

LORD SEYMOUR. Damn bad habit! [*To* LADY SEYMOUR] I shall accompany you, my dear. Where do you pass the evening?

LADY SEYMOUR. At the Villa Miranda. There is to be chamber-music. You know what that is....

PRINCE MICHAEL *re-enters.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Princess was delighted to meet you again.

LADY SEYMOUR. Apparently everybody delights the Princess. Good evening, your Highness. Did you receive the invitation to my concert?

PRINCE MICHAEL. A concert such as could be arranged only by an artist of your taste.

LORD *and* LADY SEYMOUR *go out, escorted by the* PRINCE.

RINALDI. You noticed that she did not invite me? However, it makes no matter. I don't need her invitation.

LEONARDO. You will go without it, of course.

RINALDI. Depend upon me.

HARRY LUCENTI. Never permit yourself such a liberty with an Englishwoman; the risk is too great.

RINALDI. I shall present myself upon the arm of one of her grooms.

HARRY LUCENTI. I should advise you not to meddle in foreign affairs.

RINALDI. Ah! Do you defend your hypocritical society after having become the victim of it?

HARRY LUCENTI. I do not complain; I do as I like, and others do the same. I scandalize England, but the world is before me.

RINALDI. You scandalize the world.

HARRY LUCENTI. The world is too dull to be so easily scandalized. Fancy, if one were obliged to please everybody! —Do you please everybody?

LEONARDO. The Countess does, and no complaints.

RINALDI. I am excessively careful about what people think of me.

LEONARDO. As everybody knows.

RINALDI. Without joking.

LEONARDO. Seriously. Of course everybody knows. But I say, if you were not careful!

HARRY LUCENTI. Prince Florencio will be waiting.

RINALDI. Evidently he is a great friend of yours. If he had been Emperor, he would have kept you always at his side like....

HARRY LUCENTI. You intended to say like a fool?

RINALDI. A rather sad fool.

HARRY LUCENTI. English fools are always sad. They might pass for diplomatists in other countries.

LEONARDO. All fools are sad. A smile is the most efficient grave-digger. We cry over what lives, what suffers, what we still carry in our hearts; but when we laugh at a thing—love, faith, memory, hope—it is dead. Shakespeare's fools are the most tragic figures in his tragedies. Hamlet shrivels up in the presence of the grave-diggers, singing and jesting among the graves. Their spades grit in the earth, and out comes the skull of Yorick, the King's jester, to leer and scoff with that horrible grin of his bony jaws. Everything dies, but we still smile. What is life, eternally renewing itself, but the triumphant smile of love as it conquers death?

RINALDI. But death is the end of all things, and then....

HARRY LUCENTI. Hell then. Fortunately, you Italians have a most alluring *Inferno*. I see you, Countess, in the same circle as Francesca, always in the best society.

RINALDI. You must not joke about such things. I am a believer; I hope to be saved.

LEONARDO. Why not? The lives of all the saints have two parts—even the best of them. You are still in the first.

RINALDI. Let us talk of something else. Often, I leap out of bed, shrieking, in the middle of the night, mad with terror, because the idea of death creeps into my mind as I am falling asleep. Sometimes when it is day, one of those days all holiday and sunshine, in the midst of the crowds and the festival, suddenly I stop and think that within a few years all those people will no longer be there, that they will all be dead, and

it seems to me that I must cry out to them and warn them, as if some terrible calamity were impending! Then, all at once a dark veil of silence descends before my eyes—I am not well; I have consulted physicians.

LEONARDO. What do they say?

RINALDI. They advise me to distract myself, to sleep always with a light, with some one near.

LEONARDO. A simple prescription for you to follow.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SIGNORE *enter.*

SIGNORE. Ah, gentlemen! What! The Countess? It is a long time since I have had the pleasure—although I have not forgotten her.

RINALDI. The Signore Prefect is very kind. Whenever I have had the pleasure before, it has always been because of some experience that was disagreeable. The last time I lost my jewels.

SIGNORE. Well, you had no reason to complain. Do you remember that night you heard rumblings in your villa? And the time that *escroc* tried to make you dance to the tune of those letters?

RINALDI. They were forgeries.

SIGNORE. I suppose those anonymous articles were forgeries which revealed such intimate knowledge of the details of your life? But I was on hand to protect you.

RINALDI. You protected me, Signore. [*To* LEONARDO] I wish I could remember the man's name.

LEONARDO. As he never tells the truth, nobody knows his real one. Call him the Signore, and you will make no mistake.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I had no idea that the Countess was one of your clients.

SIGNORE. One of the best of them. That theft of her jewels—a trick to make people think they were genuine.

They were imitation. She valued them at three million francs. The anonymous articles she wrote herself, so that she could truthfully say they were slander.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Very clever of her.

SIGNORE. An extreme measure.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] The Signore bows with a mysterious air, as if he were doing one the favor to keep a secret.

LEONARDO. I hardly think he would go so far. I hear he is about to publish his memoirs.

RINALDI. Gracious! I shall have to buy up the edition. Will you see me home?

LEONARDO. As far as you like.

RINALDI. You do not wish to wait for Imperia?

LEONARDO. Not in the least. I shall retire with you.

RINALDI. Highness, I was delighted to receive your invitation.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Are you leaving so soon? Imperia may be here at any moment. Now we are only the intimates, the inner circle.

RINALDI. I have decided that it is best not to be too intimate. I had supposed that there was only a garden between your villa and that of Imperia—a garden with a gate; but I realize now that you have erected an impenetrable wall.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Don't be vindictive! It isn't my fault. Princess Etelvina admits but few to her acquaintance.

RINALDI. And she is very wise to do so. Hereafter, I shall imitate her example. Good evening, Highness.

HARRY LUCENTI. Highness, good evening.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Sinister poet! Dark courier of infernos like Virgil! Be mindful of Prince Florencio; his health is precarious.

HARRY LUCENTI. I shall endeavor to be as mindful of

him as your Highness. You deprived him of his mistress —entirely for his good. I shall do the same whenever I have the opportunity.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Good evening.

The COUNTESS RINALDI, LEONARDO, *and* HARRY LUCENTI *go out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. To what am I indebted for this honor, Signore?

SIGNORE. I have a difficult duty to perform—believe me, solely in your Highness's interest. Positively, this intrusion is most disagreeable.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Not to me; I am glad to see you.

SIGNORE. No, but it is to me; I am the one who finds it disagreeable. You will appreciate that the meeting here of two Princes is regarded with suspicion in Suavia. You are both immediate heirs, in direct succession to the throne.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I beg your pardon—were, were until to-day. Haven't you seen the telegram?

SIGNORE. Another heir? I am delighted! That is, I am disappointed—upon your account, although I am relieved.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Do not trouble yourself upon my account. You are at liberty to be relieved or disappointed quite as may suit your convenience.

SIGNORE. Then I am relieved, because a conspiracy had been anticipated and I had been retained to keep you under surveillance. Of course, knowing as I do the sort of life that you lead here——

PRINCE MICHAEL. To avoid being Emperor I would have conspired all my life! Do you suppose that I would exchange my liberty for an empire?

SIGNORE. No, no! I beg of you, do not insist. I should not have spoken unless I had been sure. The government of Suavia subsists upon conspiracies. To-day it is an assas-

sination, to-morrow an insurrection. Last year we had a fellow suspected of anarchism, a Belgian who lived in the most extraordinary manner—in a wooden stockade which he built for himself. And there he was visited by the most singular people, the most outlandish in dress! We felt sure we had discovered a hotbed of sedition, and took measures to surprise it, with the result that it turned out to be a gallery for taking views for the cinematograph. Yes, sir! And such views! I had him indicted for an assault upon morality; but we have preserved the films. If some day your Highness would like to arrange a little entertainment for your friends, I should be delighted to lend them to you.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Thank you, but I should not care to be surprised in a conspiracy of that nature.

SIGNORE. In my entire career I have never been guilty of a single indiscretion.

PRINCE MICHAEL. You must have seen a great deal.

SIGNORE. I hold the key to a whole cabinet of mysteries. For the most part, people know as much about life as they do about the theatre—they see the play, that is all; the real show goes on behind the scenes.

PRINCE MICHAEL. By the way, that reminds me; Prince Florencio——

SIGNORE. Oh! I have him always under my eye! At times it is difficult; that Englishman knows some remarkable places. And what people! He would have made a good Prefect.

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, you are quite inimitable.

SIGNORE. Inimitable? Am I not? I should like to see what this Babel would be without me, although upon the surface everything appears so quiet and so calm. The difficulty in my profession is not to inform myself about my business; it is to prevent myself from becoming informed

about what is not my business. However, your Highness need have no concern. Pardon this intrusion....

PRINCE MICHAEL. You are pardoned, you may be sure.

The SIGNORE *goes out.*

During the conclusion of the scene, IMPERIA *has been slowly descending the staircase of the hall.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia! How are you? I have not seen you all day. I have not had one spare moment.

IMPERIA. I also have had guests.

PRINCE MICHAEL. So I see.

IMPERIA. No, you must not judge by this. I do not dress for others; I dress for myself. I like to see myself in beautiful clothes. Your friends did not care to wait for me?

PRINCE MICHAEL. They all had something for the evening. The Countess is terribly put out; I did not find it convenient to invite her.

IMPERIA. And so she invited herself? She was right. In a company which included Lady Seymour and Harry Lucenti, the Countess could scarcely have been out of place. Such hypocrisy is odious.

PRINCE MICHAEL. In the first place, with regard to Lady Seymour, people say, they don't know. As far as the poet is concerned, he is the Prince's friend, and an artist.

IMPERIA. In her line, the Countess is also an artist.

PRINCE MICHAEL. She is a fool. Now I hear that she is in love with an acrobat. Not only does she frequent the circus every evening, but she actually goes behind the scenes and mingles with the performers.

IMPERIA. Yes, I have seen her there myself.

PRINCE MICHAEL. You? You at the circus!

IMPERIA. Yes, the last four nights, without missing one.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But you said nothing about it.

IMPERIA. You didn't ask.

PRINCE MICHAEL. What infatuation is this?

IMPERIA. It isn't infatuation. I go to see my daughter.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Your daughter! What daughter? I didn't know you had a daughter.

IMPERIA. You never asked. What do you know of my life? What other people have told you, who know no more about it than you do, what for some reason I may have seen fit to tell you myself—only I always tell you the truth.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But this daughter?

IMPERIA. She is the child of the only man I ever loved.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Thanks.

IMPERIA. And I still love him; I always shall.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Where is he?

IMPERIA. In prison, reprieved from a death-sentence, serving for life.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Romantic episode!

IMPERIA. He stabbed a foreigner in Rome, attempting to take his money. He killed him. He had been three days without food. We models could earn nothing then; the malaria had driven out the artists.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Were you living with him at the time?

IMPERIA. No, he was living with his mother. I lived at home with my parents and my brothers and sisters, with my child. My father owned a house by the riverside, half tavern, half concert-hall. We children did a little of everything. During the day we went out as models; at night we danced tarantellas in the theatre and sang Neapolitan songs. Then Leonardo gave my father five hundred *lire* to let me come to live with him.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But Imperia! This is horrible!

IMPERIA. It is the truth. What was my father to do? We had to live somehow.

PRINCE MICHAEL. How old is this daughter?

IMPERIA. Fourteen. I was fifteen when she was born.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Where has she been all these years?

IMPERIA. At home with my parents.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Has it never occurred to you to bring her here?

IMPERIA. Why should I? I always sent her money, so she wanted for nothing. Besides, she was better off there. I should have liked to see her, to have returned home—oh, so often! But to bring her here....

PRINCE MICHAEL. What do you intend to do now?

IMPERIA. They have written me that she has fallen in love.

PRINCE MICHAEL. At fourteen? Admirable precocity!

IMPERIA. No, not in Italy. We are not like you are. It is a young fellow who danced in the theatre with her. She ran off with him.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Excellent!

IMPERIA. And now they are appearing together at Mr. Jacob's. Donina—her name is Donina, that was my name at home—is the star of the troupe. She is not beautiful, but she is attractive, oh, so attractive!—very much as I was, as I might have been. And the boy is a fine strapping fellow, *bello, bello!* He looks like one of the Madonna's angels, but they say he is a rogue. All the girls are mad over him, and Donina is jealous, oh, so jealous! As jealous as I was, as I should have been!

PRINCE MICHAEL. But, Imperia! It makes my blood run cold to hear you. Do you consent to this? Do you abet it?

IMPERIA. Abet what? That my daughter should love a man, that she should be happy loving and suffering for him? That is life. I asked her: Would you like to come and live

with me in a beautiful villa, *bella, bella!*—and to have clothes like these? But she wouldn't; she didn't want to. It was only natural. She has no affection for me.

PRINCE MICHAEL. No affection for her mother? This *is* horrible.

IMPERIA. It is the truth. Why should she love me? I left her when she was two years old. She knew that I was alive somewhere, a great way off, that I sent her presents and kisses, sometimes—in my letters. My brothers told her terrible things about me; so did my parents. No wonder! Whatever I sent seemed little enough to them.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Is it possible to live like this?

IMPERIA. Why not? They are in love. If anything happens to one of us, we stand together for vengeance, without one thought of forgiveness, even after years. But with you, it is different. Have you any affection? It is impossible to insult you. If one could, you would never take to blows. Nobody gives you five hundred *lire* when he falls in love with or wants to marry your child. Nothing appears to you as it really is—nothing that you think, nothing that you do. But with us it is all truth, and that is the reason it seems so evil.

PRINCE MICHAEL. It may be so. We face the truth too seldom in our lives.

IMPERIA. Now I am going to leave you. I am going to see my daughter.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I should like to see her, too. I will meet you there.

IMPERIA. But you must not let yourself be known.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Why not?

IMPERIA. She has been told that I am living with a Prince, and she imagines that he is like a prince in a fairy-tale—*bello, bello!*

PRINCE MICHAEL. And she would be disappointed? Isn't it so? How amiable!

IMPERIA. It is the truth. She is—as I was. All she understands is love—like his. Youth and happiness and joy!

Curtain

THE SECOND TABLEAU

A café in a music-hall, representing a grotto, fantastically decorated. Tables and chairs on both sides. Men and women are seated at the tables, smoking and taking refreshments. Waiters pass in and out continually. At the back, an orchestra of gypsies.

MR. JACOB *stands talking with an* ARTIST. RUHU-SAHIB, *at a table, drinks enormously.*

JACOB. [*To the* ARTIST] But this? What do you think of this? Allow me. Here is the best point of view.

ARTIST. Marvellous! Magical!

JACOB. You are surprised to see this, eh? Now what do you say? Pardon, allow me. Here is another point of view.

ARTIST. Marvellous! Magical!

JACOB. My own idea! It didn't occur to me in a moment. Ideas like this don't occur every day. The entire café converted into a grotto—rest for the body, recreation for the soul after the brilliancy of the spectacle. In all Europe, in all America, there is nothing to equal it. It is the most magnificent music-hall in the world—four million francs invested in it. You may say so in your paper.

ARTIST. In my paper? Oh, Mr. Jacob, I am not a reporter!

JACOB. What? You are not the correspondent of the *Dramatic Courier* of Milan, of the Genoa *Manager's Monitor?*

ARTIST. I did not say——

JACOB. But the card you sent in to the office?

ARTIST. Was not mine—a mistake. I am an artist, a performer. I come to make you a great, an extraordinary proposition.

JACOB. An extraordinary proposition?

ARTIST. Yes. To engage me. I have references.

JACOB. And is this what you have kept me talking two hours for, showing you my theatre? Wasting my time! *Andate al diavolo! Morte de un cane! Mais fichez moi la paix toute de suite!* Wasting my time! Valuable time!

ARTIST. Mr. Jacob! Mr. Jacob!

MR. JACOB *rushes out, followed by the* ARTIST.

RUHU-SAHIB. [*Calling a* WAITER] Is the first part over yet?

WAITER. Just over. Don't you see the people coming out?

RUHU-SAHIB. Take this bottle away; bring another bottle. This time I pay myself. No go on the bill of *Madame.*

WAITER. *Madame* says she will pay for no more bottles, after that row you had yesterday.

RUHU-SAHIB. I pay myself. Bring another bottle. Don't talk so much. I break your head.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

ESTHER. Will you look at the elephant-driver?

JULIETTE. He's a case.

ESTHER. To add to your collection?

JULIETTE. Not for mine; he's too much for me.

TOBACCO *and* JENNY *enter.*

ESTHER. Ah! Tobacco, the nigger clown. I have to laugh. He looks like a monkey.

JULIETTE. Is that his wife?

ESTHER. Yes, she's English. The funny thing is, though, they are married. They love each other, oh, so much! They have seven children.

JULIETTE. Blondes?

ESTHER. Not so far; all like their father. My! But it's dull to-night.

JULIETTE. There's nobody here but women.

JENNY. [*To* TOBACCO] Did you stop at the bank?

TOBACCO. I certainly did. [*Making notes in a pocketbook*] Let me see how we come out. With five thousand francs in Turks, if we can sell like last week, it's an investment; we clear a hundred francs.

JENNY. That's handsome.

TOBACCO. I might get a new dress for the act.

JENNY. What for? To throw your money away, eh, playing the clown? Don't you think you look funny unless you wear silk?

TOBACCO. The Russian has a new suit every night.

JENNY. Yes, and people aren't laughing at him any more on account of his clothes. An artist like you is not in the same class with that Russian. Mr. Jacob is an idiot if he pays that man six thousand francs.

TOBACCO. Mr. Jacob won't pay me ten thousand. Now he wants to throw me out, but the public will only laugh at Tobacco. There is only one Tobacco. So he puts the Russian in the second half as the feature, and I am down in the first for the third number. And the audience comes early to see me and they go home early so as not to see the Russian. The public are the ones who pay the artists, the managers don't pay them. An artist is not able to name his own figure.

JENNY. Mr. Jacob is a rogue. He behaves as if this were a barroom.

CORNAC *enters.*

CORNAC. Mr. Ruhu! Mr. Ruhu! Hurry up! Come quick! Nero very excited. Break the bar of his cage. No let us put on the howdah.

RUHU-SAHIB. What's the matter? Hurry up? Too damn hot! Waiter! Give him some beer. And I want some beer.

CORNAC. *Madame* says elephants must not drink beer.

RUHU-SAHIB. *Madame* says too much so as not to pay for the beer. I pay for the beer. A bottle for me, a barrel for the elephants!

MR. JACOB *enters.*

JACOB. Ruhu! Ruhu! One of the elephants has broken loose. He has smashed the bars of his cage. Two hundred francs! And the worst of it is, he won't perform.

RUHU-SAHIB. He will, he will perform. Poor beast! He do no harm. He is a gentle animal.

JACOB. If you don't hurry and do something to the brute——

RUHU-SAHIB. Nero harm no one. You don't know him. I know him. Wait! He is the gentlest of the seven.

JACOB. And don't drink so much. The people see how you are, and so do the elephants.

RUHU-SAHIB. What do they see? I know what they see; and I know what the elephants see. I drink, oh, I drink! But I know what I drink.

JACOB. *Ma andate al diavolo!* Damn rascal!

ROSINA *and* PEPITA *detain* MR. JACOB.

ROSINA. You are not angry, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. That Hindu savage costs me twelve thousand francs besides the feed of his animals! And don't his animals feed! And the public will have none of them; seen once, seen for always. A fine piece of business! Bah! Business? People see the audience, then they see me; they say: "Ah! Mr. Jacob! Fortunate man! Theatre full, receipts enormous, *le maximum tous les soirs.*" But they don't see behind the scenes; they don't know what artists are; they don't understand management, business——

ROSINA. Oh, now, please don't be angry, Mr. Jacob! Not when I want to ask you a favor.

JACOB. Favor? Always favors!

ROSINA. It's for my friend.

PEPITA. *Monsieur*....

ROSINA. I thought maybe you might let her have a pass for the season.

JACOB. *Mon Dieu!* A girl like her? Is it possible she can't get anybody to pay her way in?

ROSINA. If it wasn't for us, there wouldn't be anybody here, Mr. Jacob.

JACOB. On the contrary, you drive decent people away, people who——

ROSINA. When have we had so many princes as this year? I know you will, eh, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. Well, since she's a friend of yours. Go on into the office; but tell her to take more pains with her *toilette*.

ROSINA. She's just got in; her trunk hasn't come yet. I'll look out for her.

JACOB. Where does your friend come from?

ROSINA. From Marseilles.

JACOB. Ah! From Marseilles? Tell her not to say she's from Marseilles. It's not a recommendation.

ROSINA. She don't look very Parisian either. She might be a Spaniard....

JACOB. That Spanish business has been done to death; however, anything is better than Marseilles. The thing is to have personality, to be some one; not to be just like every one else. There are so many! However, there is something in her face. She may get on, though it is difficult. But there is no reason to be discouraged. Good luck, girls! Good luck! I can't wait; I'm so busy....

ROSINA. Thanks, Mr. Jacob.

PEPITA. Thanks.

PRINCE FLORENCIO *and* HARRY LUCENTI *have entered during the conversation, seating themselves at one of the tables.*

ROSINA. I told you it would be easy. Look! A Prince! The Prince of Suavia.

PEPITA. Do you get many princes here?

ROSINA. Very few—real ones. [*They go out, talking.*

JACOB. [*To the* PRINCE] Ah! Your Highness! This is a great honor to me and to my theatre. At your Highness's orders. *Signore!* Ah! I forgot. Next week new and extraordinary attractions. One number alone twenty thousand francs! Business is becoming more difficult, prices continually going up. Your Highness....

[*Backs off, bowing.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Delightful old scamp, Mr. Jacob.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. He must lead a gay life with his artists.

MR. JACOB *goes up to* MME. JENNY, *who is sitting at a table, knitting busily.*

JACOB. But Mme. Jenny, must we quarrel always?

JENNY. Why, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. Is this a place for you to do your knitting?

JENNY. I have to work for the children. What harm is there in it?

JACOB. You might cook your meals here if you like.

JENNY. Yes, it's better to do—what the others do.

JACOB. It's all my fault for allowing the artists to mix with the public.

TOBACCO. Artists? Does he mean me?

JENNY. It's easy to see that you're not accustomed to dealing with artists.

JACOB. I am not accustomed to dealing with artists?

TOBACCO. No. This isn't a theatre, this isn't a circus, it's a....

JENNY. [*Pointing to the cocottes*] Those are the artists you want here.

JACOB. My business is to please the public.

TOBACCO. Well, don't I please the public? Here! Here!

[*Squaring off to strike him. Several interfere.*

SOME. Mr. Jacob!

OTHERS. Tobacco! *Messieurs!*

CORNAC *enters running.*

CORNAC. Mr. Ruhu! Mr. Ruhu! Nero run away! He break everything!

RUHU-SAHIB. Can't they let him alone? Give him a chance. Go on! What more do they want?

[*Saunters out, after drinking, very deliberately.*

The bell rings.

JACOB. And I waste my time, valuable time! The second part—*Sottes!* Stupid people!

MR. JACOB *runs out.*

TOBACCO. I'm through; that settles it. I shan't stay in this place another day. I'm through, I tell you.

MME. LELIA *enters. She carries a large hand-bag.*

LELIA. Why, what is the matter, Mr. Tobacco? Have you been fighting with Mr. Jacob? He is an idiot to fight with you. How are you, Mme. Jenny? How are the little ones?

JENNY. Entirely too healthy for their mother. What they don't eat they break. We cannot keep a thing in the house.

LELIA. I should think you would be glad they are well and strong; some day they will grow up and earn money.

TOBACCO. Yes, they're pretty fine tumblers as it is—better than the Sheffers already.

JENNY. How is your little one, Mme. Lelia?

LELIA. She is not well; only so-so. I had to put her on

the bottle. You see, with my work on the wire, it was impossible——

JENNY. I brought up all seven of mine on the bottle. An artist can do nothing else nowadays, with all the demands on her time. The first thing you know, they take everything.

LELIA. What did Mr. Jacob say?

JENNY. He didn't like my knitting here—a little jacket for my Alex.

LELIA. Last night he told me this hat wasn't presentable—a hat that cost me fifteen francs in Paris the year of the Exposition. This is no place for artists, for decent people.

TOBACCO. This isn't a circus. After a man has worked at Rentz's in Vienna, at Wulf's in Berlin, or the Corradine in Rome—those are dignified establishments. There an artist is an artist.

LELIA. It used to be so, Mr. Tobacco, but now they are all the same. All you need is a machine; then you turn on the current, and you have an artist. The result is the real artists are obliged to work for nothing. I think my husband is a genius as a contortionist.

TOBACCO. You could not go further than that.

LELIA. And on the wire, without vanity, I go myself as far as anybody—I go farther. I stand on my head with a pirouette and a double flimflam; I am the only woman in Europe who dares to do it.

TOBACCO. Nothing finer could be asked.

JENNY. The second part!....

LELIA. Are you coming in to see the show?

JENNY. Yes, my husband wants to look the Russian over. He's got to pick up a few new tricks.

LELIA. No! Is it possible, Mr. Tobacco? You are joking.

TOBACCO. Mr. Jacob thinks that Russian is funny. Ha, ha!

LELIA. I am waiting for my husband. Kisses to the little ones, Mme. Jenny.

JENNY. And to yours from me, Mme. Lelia.

[TOBACCO *and* JENNY *go out.*

NUNU *and* TOMMY *enter.*

TOMMY. They are here! See?

NUNU. I told you they'd be here. The Prince never goes behind.

TOMMY. Are you going to speak to them?

NUNU. Wait till they call us. You know the Prince? Sit down. Have something? [*They sit down.*

TOMMY. Do we eat there to-night?

NUNU. Yes.

TOMMY. Donina, too?

NUNU. Donina's a fool; she's crazy. She don't want to come. She's jealous of my running around.

TOMMY. Why don't she take on some one herself?

NUNU. She? If she only would! The Prince, say.... Our fortune would be made!

TOMMY. Why don't you make her?

NUNU. Make her? You don't know her. You talk like a fool. She wouldn't do it; but she will out of jealousy. Tell her I am out with another woman, and she'd go if it was to hell, and kick the hat off the devil.

TOMMY. What does the Prince want with Donina?

NUNU. How do I know? He's got the notion; I'm tired of her and I need the money. I need a lot of money, so I can leave this life and settle down like a decent fellow. The Prince is like the rest of them; he doesn't know what he wants.

TOMMY. He doesn't? Did you hear what happened to Fred with the Countess? She gave him money at first and jewels; now she is tired of him and says it was blackmail. She swears she'll call in the police.

NUNU. Police? He's a fool if he stands for that. If I once get my hands on the Prince, I can tell you he won't call in the police.

TOMMY. The Prince? Why not?

NUNU. You idiot! Donina's a minor; she's under age. I know the law. The Prince can't stand for a row. Don't you see?

TOMMY. What's the difference? If I was a Prince, I wouldn't give a damn what I stood for.

NUNU. Neither would I. But that's the way these people are. They want to do as they please, and then they don't want anybody to know about it. That's what costs the money.

TOMMY. You bet; but these fellows always have some one around. They mayn't look it....

NUNU. Not this time. Listen! They want to get him in a fix. Some of those chaps were talking to me—they saw me with him. There's a party in his country that wants to make him Emperor. That's the reason they sent him away.

TOMMY. Oho! So you are a conspirator?

NUNU. I? What do I care? I want the money, that's all we can get out of it. He can be Emperor if he wants to. It's nothing to me; I want to give up this life and go home and marry a decent girl—a girl that's straight. Her father won't have me, though. He says I'm no good; but when he sees I have money, that I amount to something——

TOMMY. But I thought Donina——

NUNU. Donina? I tell you she's the one who's in love with me; I let her like the rest. You know all these actresses are good for: *roba di principi.*

TOMMY. But I thought that you loved her, that you were happy?

NUNU. A man has to live somehow, doesn't he?—with his

eye on something else, more or less far away? Isn't that the way that you live?

TOMMY. Yes, but I am tied up with a wife and the boy. What have I to look forward to?

NUNU. Nothing, for yourself; but you can hope that your children won't be like you—that they will amount to something.

TOMMY. Yes....

NUNU. Well, there you are.

ESTHER. Which is the Prince?

JULIETTE. The youngest—the one who doesn't talk. He never talks. Will you look at that?

ROSINA *and* PEPITA *have seated themselves meanwhile at the* PRINCE'S *table.*

They're taking a chance. Won't they be set up?

ESTHER. What does the Prince come here for, anyway?

JULIETTE. It's the actresses. That Englishman is his secretary; he always brings him along. They're to have supper to-night—the real thing—in a sort of dive, but tough! Awful!

ROSINA *and* PEPITA, *who have been sitting with the* PRINCE, *get up and move away.*

ESTHER. Look! They are blushing. And they are laughing at them!

JULIETTE. I'll give them a pinch as they go out.

ESTHER. No, don't make a scene. Mr. Jacob will take up your pass.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Ah, Harry, I am bored to death! I am sick. What will you find for me to do next?

HARRY LUCENTI. March upon Suavia, proclaim yourself Emperor, and declare war against the world.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Silence, imperialist poet!

HARRY LUCENTI. Why not? I am an Emperor myself.

You remember what Hamlet says? "I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself king of infinite space."

PRINCE FLORENCIO. But he had bad dreams.

HARRY LUCENTI. I do not; I reign within my nutshell. I have founded an empire of myself, at war with all the world. My spirit is an island more impregnable than the cliffs of my country.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. How do you manage it?

HARRY LUCENTI. By making myself hated by everybody. Do you know to what the weaknesses, the compromises, the petty cowardices of human nature are due? They are the result of kindness, of sympathy. We attribute to others virtues which they do not possess, and then, so as to meet them upon an equal footing, we are obliged to pretend to virtues which we do not possess.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. A paradox, I suppose? Well, you haven't made yourself hated by me.

HARRY LUCENTI. Not as yet—because I have never told you the truth.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Why not bring yourself to it? You may if you like.

HARRY LUCENTI. The truth? You poor devil of a Prince, impotent, ridiculous, and rotten to the core!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Bah! Hand me the whiskey.

HARRY LUCENTI. The truth, Florencio, it is the truth. Your escapades! Your vices! You imagine that you are scandalizing the world when you are only shocking the old ladies of Suavia. Your bacchantes are all provided by the restaurant at five hundred francs, everything included. You will find them on the bill—little runaway schoolgirls, whose heads have been turned by reading a couple of silly novels. The depths of hell and infamy into which you descend with trembling are these! I can see you now.... Hail, Emperor! Elagabalus! Child of the sun!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Is that all? You don't suppose you can make me hate you with a few simple truths like that? The times are not propitious to Neros or Elagabaluses; neither do they produce Shakespeares, though you may both have written the same sonnets. There is one, too, copied from the Italian of the seventeenth century——

HARRY LUCENTI. [*Greatly incensed*] That's a lie! I steal from no man. Those stories were invented by my detractors. I proved that Italian sonnet was a forgery, made up to annoy me. I proved it, and nobody believed me. Only a fool would repeat such a story, and you are a fool, too, if you say so!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*Laughing*] My dear Harry, you see it is easier to provoke a poet with the truth than an Emperor.

HARRY LUCENTI. Blockhead!

The PRINCE *rises and moves over toward* NUNU *and* TOMMY.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Come, my dear Harry. Why not arrange something diabolic for this evening, something grandiose? Surely you have credit for more than five hundred francs. Hello, Nunu! Hello, Tommy!

NUNU. Highness!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Sit down. Put on your hats. Have you been on yet?

NUNU. No, ours is next to the last number. We were waiting for you.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Will everybody be there? And your Donina?

NUNU. Donina....

PRINCE FLORENCIO. I told you that you didn't want her to come. Now I see I was right. You want to pass yourself off for a cynic. "*Piccola Donina!*" you say. "Bah! *me n'infischio.* I am tired of her!" And all the while you love her and mean to keep her for yourself.

NUNU. No, your Highness, she is the one who is in love with me. You know that. [*His eye is attracted by a ring on the* PRINCE'S *finger*] What a magnificent ring! May I see it?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Are you fond of jewels?

NUNU. Am I?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*His eye lighting upon one of* NUNU'S] So I see.

NUNU. Oh, that's only glass! At night, with the lights, it's all right—when a man can't afford anything else. What is this stone?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. A ruby. This is an opal.

TOMMY. Opals are bad luck.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Not to me; to others, perhaps. Would you be afraid to wear it? [*Tossing him the ring.*

TOMMY. I should say not! [*Putting on the ring*] Thanks, your Highness! Although I shan't have it long. Hard times come with us; that will be the bad luck.

NUNU. [*Offended*] Tommy is your friend now.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. And you are not; I have nothing for you. We are enemies.

NUNU. But suppose I have a surprise for you to-night?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Then I shall give you a ring which will make all your friends die of envy.

NUNU. *Oh, bella!*

PRINCE FLORENCIO. And other things which I know you want besides.

The PRINCE *takes a gold cigarette-case from his pocket and offers cigarettes.*

NUNU. Another! Gold, too....everything is gold. But this one has jewels.... Is this your name?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. No, some English verses; that is all. Keep it, Nunu.

NUNU. Your Highness!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Keep it, I tell you.

NUNU. *Oh, bella!* Look, Tommy! Diamonds; and these are like yours.

TOMMY. Rubies!

NUNU. Did you say they were verses? [*Reading.*]

"O, you, the master-mistress"——

I can't read any more.

HARRY LUCENTI. You won't be any worse off.

NUNU. Here come Donina and Zaida.

HARRY LUCENTI. That Arab girl?—at least that is what she calls herself.

NUNU. It's a fact, though. She's from Constantina in Algiers; she's a Jewess. She did Oriental dances; then her manager turned her over to ours, so since then she has been dancing with us. She'd pass for a Neapolitan.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. I thought she was one.

NUNU. She's always crying—that is her sort. She cries over everything.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Who pays the bills?

NUNU. No one; she isn't that way. She likes me, though, pretty well; she's such a friend of Donina's that if I say anything, she's up in a minute. She's in love with Donina, daft over her. And fierce as a lion!

HARRY LUCENTI. Pretty soon it will be love all around through the triangle.

NUNU. No, she's a lamb.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. No wonder, living with you. We shall meet you then later. Do you go straight from here?

NUNU. Just as we are; it's all arranged.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Nobody will be missing?

NUNU. No, I'll show you who's your friend.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Good-by. Come along, Harry. [*Discovering* IMPERIA, *who has entered a few moments previously, with* DONINA *and* ZAIDA] Ah! Imperia! Harry, do you see?

NUNU *and* TOMMY *go over to the group of women.* DONINA *gets up and begins to dispute with* NUNU, *somewhat apart from the others.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Yes, and I know the attraction: an old friendship with Donina's mother, a purely sisterly affair—these affairs are always sisterly. They belonged to the same troupe. She heard the girl was playing here, so she dropped in to see her; now she has dropped in again. At least this is official.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. My uncle cannot know that she comes to this place; he would not consider it respectable in his mistress. We must see that he does know.

HARRY LUCENTI. Of course! To tell unpleasant truths is always a duty.

The PRINCE *and* HARRY LUCENTI *go out.*

NUNU. [*To* DONINA] Did you see who I was talking to?

DONINA. Yes, and I saw you with her on the stage. Haven't I eyes? Can't I see? There's nobody else left; it was that Japanese woman as long as her husband was here with his act. I know there's a supper to-night, too; but you haven't counted on me.

NUNU. But we have, though; you're invited.

DONINA. I am, am I? So that before my very eyes—Oh, I don't mind so much your fooling with other girls, hugging them and kissing them! It isn't that....but when anybody tries it on me, you stand there and laugh. You consent to it.

NUNU. You're a fool.

He takes the case out of his pocket and lights a cigarette.

DONINA. [*Discovering the case*] Whose is that? Who gave that to you? What does it say?

NUNU. Ha, ha, ha!

DONINA. [*Furious, stamping on the box*] There! Now it doesn't say anything. No, and it won't say anything either. And I'd do the same to you, too, or to anybody!

NUNU. Donina! What are you doing? You've ruined it. I tell you—— [*Threatening her.*

IMPERIA *and* ZAIDA. [*Interfering*] No, no, don't touch her, Nunu!

NUNU. If we weren't in this place——

DONINA. Yes, strike me! Kill me! Anything better than this!

ZAIDA. [*Throwing her arms about her*] Donina! Poor Donina!

NUNU. Come along, Tommy, and get dressed. Come along! She'll be there, all right.

NUNU *and* TOMMY *go out.*

ZAIDA. You mustn't cry before all these people. Don't let them see.

DONINA. What do I care?

IMPERIA. Will you come with me?

DONINA. No, I must stay with him, even if he kills me! He didn't use to be like this; he used to love me. Of course he went with other girls, I know that, but I was always his Donina, I was always first, the only one among the rest. I was so proud to have them love him, and to think that after he had played with them and laughed in their faces, he would come back again to me, always to me, without ever having been able to forget. But it is not the same now. He has something back in his mind, something evil. It isn't that he deceives me; it's that he wants me to know it. And since these men came——

ZAIDA. Nunu is bad; he is all bad now. I loved him before and Donina wasn't jealous. She knew it was on her account—it was just from the heart, I was like their sister; Donina knows that. But Nunu is changed now. He doesn't want to play and sing and laugh any more, and he always used to be happy. And when he was happy, everybody about him was smiling.

DONINA. Yes, they were. We were so happy!

ZAIDA. We used to spend hours by ourselves, laughing and singing and dancing, just for the joy of it, for our own sakes, without ever getting tired or stopping to think that we would have to sing and dance all night long in the theatre.

DONINA. We were so happy!

ZAIDA. And we would have been happy always, just the three of us!

DONINA. It's those men, those terrible men—that Prince who is so pale that he freezes your blood with his eye.

IMPERIA. Yes, the Prince! I know him. His only pleasure is to torture and defile.

DONINA. But I'll go to-night. He wants me to.

IMPERIA. No, anything rather than that. Go with the man you love, who is one with you, to whom you have given your heart, live as he lives, share his sorrows, his joys, let nothing hold you back; but the Prince—never go near that man! Nothing can come from him but evil, degradation, and shame. The women he loves he dresses in rags—he maltreats them without mercy. His friends are miserable wretches whom his money can buy, and there is no depravity he does not know. He gives young girls to old men, unutterably vile; strong, healthy boys to women who are loathsome and diseased. He buys daughters from their parents, sisters from their brothers for his holidays. I have seen him run through the streets in Suavia at midnight, when it was bitter cold and the ground was covered with ice, and gather up the

poor, homeless wretches, starving vagrants, sleeping out-of-doors, and lead them to the morgue, which was filled with suicides and the bodies of those who had been murdered, or who had died in the streets from hunger and cold. There are myriads of them in the winter-time—men and women and children, too. It was horrible! He threw money on the corpses, and the terrible struggle of that maddened throng, frenzied at the sight of the gold, was an awful thing to see. One coin fell into an open wound; a hundred hands grappled upon it. They pushed the bodies aside, they trampled them under foot, while he—he did not even smile; he looked and looked as the devil must look from hell upon the crimes poor wretches commit who are hungry and cold, crushed beneath the selfishness of the heartless and the rich. This is that Prince who is so pale that he freezes the blood with his eye.

DONINA. I did not hate him for nothing. Nunu shall not go with him to-night—or he will never see me any more!

IMPERIA. Will you come with me?

DONINA. No, not without him. I said that he would never see me, because I would kill myself; I could never leave him in any other way.

IMPERIA. Love in life or in death! Be it so.

ZAIDA. The music, Donina! The act before our number. We must not be late....

DONINA. No, to sing and dance! But he shall not go to-night! He shall not go! Are you coming in to see me?

IMPERIA. Yes.

DONINA. Good-by, then. Give me a kiss. [*Indicating* ZAIDA] And one for her, too.

ZAIDA. I love you, too, Signora—all, all who love Donina.

ZAIDA *and* DONINA *go out.* *The* COUNTESS RINALDI *and* LEONARDO *enter.*

LEONARDO. Having rescued you from one danger, how is

it that I surprise you now in the company of Ruhu-Sahib, the elephant-driver?

RINALDI. But surely you do not suppose?.... A Hindu, a savage?.... I was merely gathering points about his elephants. He is a remarkable man. The life of these circus people is vastly more entertaining than ours. I wonder what you would think if I should decide to join the circus? What would people say?

LEONARDO. Probably that you were settling down. In the light of your experience, it might not appear surprising.

RINALDI. This conventional life is a horrible bore. It is unrelieved monotony.

LEONARDO. If you were to suppress the most monotonous feature of your life, it would be a horrible bore.

RINALDI. Come, invite me to take something. I'll have an ice, a *tutti-frutti*. They are delicious.

LEONARDO. With pleasure.... Ah! Imperia. Do you see?

RINALDI. Yes, and I have seen her here before.

LEONARDO. How extraordinary! And alone. In that gown!

RINALDI. She is always gowned imperially. She is an artist, although not in my line.

LEONARDO. I do not understand——

RINALDI. Why be so innocent? You know your model better than I do. By the way, what was she like when she was with you? I have heard so many stories.

LEONARDO. I met her in Rome. She was one of the models who hang about the *Piazza di Spagna*. Donina was her name at the time. She was a spare, pinched figure, clad in rags, with a suggestion about her that was indescribably sordid and poor. This terrible poverty of the great cities is not only want of bread, it is hunger for everything which

goes to make life dear. Among the other models she attracted no attention. The painters saw nothing in her; neither did I. But one day she stopped me as I was passing to beg some coppers. There was no weakness in her voice, no note of complaint; the tone was firm and strong. It compelled attention. So I spoke to her, and her face lit up as we talked, she became a different person—there was another look in her eyes, a new expressiveness in every feature. She was no longer the poor, pinched model; she was a work of art—she was my statue, Imperia, which soon afterward made my reputation. Do you remember? There it stood, with feet bare, and tattered skirt, the body half naked as if she had just clambered up a precipice, and by a last, despairing effort was sinking exhausted on the top into a throne, while upon her face there shone an ineffable light, the smile of life triumphant over death—or of death itself and its calm. It is a long time since I have seen the statue. My ideas of art are not what they were then, but I am sure there was something in it. The combination of the materials was audacious: the rocks of the pedestal were of granite, the figure was marble, and the throne gilded bronze, which shone like gold.

RINALDI. What was the significance of the statue?

LEONARDO. How can I tell? An artist believes that he speaks through his works, but the works take on form and speak for themselves. The statue was—you can see it—it was woman, Imperia, a wretched creature who has climbed up over the rocks, her body lacerated and torn, until she is about to seat herself upon a throne. Perhaps it was something more—the mastery of life and all that is in it, achieved at last by the poor and the outcast! How can I tell? It was the might of the soul to realize its dream! And who of us has not his dream, at least of a throne—a throne where

our selfishness, perhaps, is absolute, or our disinterested love?

RINALDI. How long did you remain with Imperia?

LEONARDO. A passing moment, that was all. The same breath which inspired my statue infused new life into Donina. She became my statue made woman, she was Imperia. Prince Florencio met her at my studio as I was finishing my work; she was still the poor, tattered Donina with her hunger-pinched face. You know the Prince. Well, one morning she said good-by. "Where are you going, my child?" I asked her. "To Suavia to be Empress," she replied. And I had not the heart to laugh at her; there was such conviction in her words, such burning faith in her eyes, it was impossible not to believe it. That woman might be Empress.

RINALDI. Does she still cherish her dream?

LEONARDO. I lost sight of her. Afterward, I heard that Prince Florencio had abused her, and she attempted to kill him; so she was banished from Suavia. Later, she fell in with Prince Michael in Paris, and during these last years she has been living with him. She has grown rich.

RINALDI. Prince Michael is the richest of the Suavian princes.

LEONARDO. He is prodigal as a monarch of other days.

RINALDI. What empire like riches to dominate the world? Well, so this is the very practical reality into which the imperial dreams of your Imperia have been resolved? Was not the throne of your statue gilded until it shone like gold?

LEONARDO. Yes, like gold—because the sun is gold, and the light is. It was the embodiment of light, of hope, of the ideal!

IMPERIA *rises and moves over to speak with them.*

IMPERIA. Countess! Leonardo! You did not see me?

RINALDI. I beg your pardon, I am sorry....

IMPERIA. But you were talking about me.

RINALDI. You couldn't hear us from there?

IMPERIA. No, but it was easy to see. You looked over continually. Were you surprised to find me here?

RINALDI. Certainly not; we are here ourselves.

LEONARDO. Perhaps the Countess will explain the reason?

RINALDI. It is not necessary. We are all here for the same thing, more or less. We may be perfectly frank if we like; no one will remember to-morrow.

IMPERIA. We are like witches, meeting on Saturday night. I was a little girl when I first heard the legend, and you remind me of it now. There was a poor woman who lived near our house; she was very old, and, apparently, very respectable. She lived alone, and you would have said that she was a good woman. Her house was clean; she worked in the garden by day, busy with her flowers, or fed the pigeons; at night she sewed a little on her quaint old clothes. She was never idle—it was a calm and peaceful life, lived openly in the sun. But people said that she was a witch, and every Saturday at midnight, as the clock struck twelve, she mounted a broomstick and flew away to the witches' lair, and there with the other witches she did homage to Satan; and if you could surprise them then, you would see them as they really were. One day, some time later, at dawn on a Sunday morning, the old woman was found dead, out of her bed, at some distance from her house, in an open field, and there was a dagger in her heart. But nobody could ever find the assassin, nor discover any motive for the murder, nor could any one ever explain the reason why that woman should have been found in that place on that morning, when she had been seen closing the door of her house as usual the night before, and in the morning, when they carried the body there, the door was still closed.

RINALDI. But you don't really mean?.... Nonsense! Then you would have to believe in witches.

IMPERIA. No, not in such witches. But there comes a Saturday Night in all our lives, even the most peaceful of them, when our souls, like the witches, fly to their lairs. We exist for years to reach one hour which is vital and real. Then our witches' souls take flight, some toward their hopes and ambitions, some toward their vices, their follies, others toward their loves—toward something which is far from and alien to our lives, but which has always smouldered in us, and at heart is what we are.

RINALDI. It is true. And to-night we are in our lair. We may salute each other. Hail, sister!

IMPERIA. Sister and brother, hail! Whither away, toward good or toward ill?

LEONARDO. I? Where life dissolves in the desert and is gone like the flower.

RINALDI. I? To the Kingdom of Love where joy is—joy that outlasts death.

LEONARDO. And you, Imperia?

IMPERIA. I? To find myself, to find Donina, poor, ignorant Donina—Donina in love. Your art has revealed to me the light that was in me, and I follow my dream!

LEONARDO. Which is?....

IMPERIA. To grow, to become rich! For money is power. With it, all things are possible, for good or for evil, for justice or revenge!

RINALDI. The performance is over. The people are coming out.

LEONARDO. It is time to go.

A number of SPECTATORS *and* PERFORMERS *enter, among the latter* RUHU-SAHIB.

RINALDI. There! Do you see? The Hindu.... I wonder if it would be possible to interest you in the taming of elephants?

LEONARDO. No, but it might in the taming of elephant-drivers. We can sit with him if you like.

RINALDI. Don't be absurd. You are not accustomed to heroic adventure.

LEONARDO. I aspire merely to look on.

ZAIDA re-enters in tears; she runs up to IMPERIA *and throws her arms about her.*

ZAIDA. Signora! Signora! Didn't you hear? Donina——

IMPERIA. What is the matter?

ZAIDA. She's mad! She wouldn't listen! After what you told her. . . . She's gone with Nunu and those people —with the Prince!

IMPERIA. That wretched Nunu has sold her. Quick! Do you know where they are?

ZAIDA. Yes, they went without changing, just as they were! I know the place—that is, I don't know the name, but I can find it.

IMPERIA. Come with me.

ZAIDA. Yes. . . . But not like this. You don't know these people.

IMPERIA. What difference does it make? They are my people, and they will know me. I return to prevent another betrayal of one of us, or to revenge with one blow a thousand. Come! Countess, good night. Good night, Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Good night, Imperia.

RINALDI. Where are you going, Imperia?

IMPERIA. To meet other witches' souls in their lairs. It is Saturday Night.

The café has filled with people. The gypsy orchestra begins to play.

Curtain

THE THIRD TABLEAU

Cecco's tavern.

Night.

SAILORS *and evil-looking persons sit about in groups, drinking and playing cards.* CECCO *and* GAETANO *move among them serving wine.* MAJESTÁ, *an old hag, at a table alone, apparently asleep.* PIETRO *and others in the background.*

THIRD SAILOR. Hand over the money; it comes to me. Bring more wine. I'll pay.

GAETANO. You will?

SECOND SAILOR. Don't play any more.

THIRD SAILOR. Let go!

SECOND SAILOR. I've had enough; I take out my money.

THIRD SAILOR. Take it out, man; take it out. It's quits. Don't talk.

SECOND SAILOR. No, if you're going to play——

FIRST SAILOR. Going to play? Who's going to play?

THIRD SAILOR. Come on! Hand over! Here's my pile.

GAETANO. [*Aside to* CECCO] Who are these people? I don't know them.

CECCO. Off a yacht which got in this morning. Can't you see the name? How does it go?

GAETANO. All right; they have money. They keep a sharp watch.

CECCO. So I see. Play them easy. No trouble to-night, do you hear? Then they won't squeal. They'll be back to-morrow.

GAETANO. I'll let them go now, if you say so....

CECCO. No. It wouldn't do. We can't empty the place. So long as they are quiet——

The COMMISSARY OF POLICE *enters.*

COMMISSARY. Hello, Cecco!

CECCO. Hello! Anything new?

COMMISSARY. No, nothing. We saw the Prince come in.

CECCO. Yes, he's inside.

COMMISSARY. Who is with him?

CECCO. I don't know them all. The Englishman, those circus people.

COMMISSARY. [*Consulting a list*] Let's see if I have them. Here, check them off. Lucenti, the Englishman; Nunu and Tommy of the Neapolitan troupe; Donina, Celeste, Teresina, women from the same troupe; Dick and Fred, jockeys of the Duke of Zealand; two English girls; Marcella, a cocotte—Are there any more?

CECCO. No, that's all.

COMMISSARY. Good. If anything happens, we are outside.

CECCO. I'll send out something. It's cold to-night.

COMMISSARY. Yes; and have it hot. There's a fog over the sea. Good night, Cecco. Who are these?

CECCO. The same as usual.

COMMISSARY. Those sailors?

CECCO. A yacht which got in this morning. Don't you know?

COMMISSARY. Yes, I know. Good night.

[*The* COMMISSARY *goes out.*

FIRST SAILOR. Big fish here to-night. Is it all right?

CECCO. Yes, it's all right. What you see, you see; understand? And shut up!

AN UNKNOWN. [*Going up to* MAJESTÁ *and shaking her*] Hi,

there, old woman! How is it you're not at the party? Wake up!

CECCO. Let her alone. She don't trouble you.

UNKNOWN. The Prince forgot to invite her. Maybe he didn't know she was here. You ought to have told him who you were. "I am as good as you are, your Highness. I was a queen once. They still call me Majestá!"

OTHERS. [*Laughing*] Ha, ha, ha! Majestá!

MAJESTÁ. Dogs!

CECCO. Let her alone, can't you? Don't mind them, Majestá.

MAJESTÁ. I? I don't see them or hear them. They are all far away.

THIRD SAILOR. Is she out of her head?

PIETRO. No, but by this time.... Don't you see? It's the wine.

CECCO. It's true, though, what she says. Take it from me. We've had people here who know. She was handsome once, and she was loved by a king. She had horses and diamonds and palaces.

THIRD SAILOR. Palaces? Lies!

UNKNOWN. She must have changed a lot; she must have grown old. It isn't possible! I don't believe it.

THIRD SAILOR. But when you look at her close....

UNKNOWN. Come, tell us the story. What king was it, eh? Where were those palaces?

PIETRO. Come on, old woman! Give us the story. He was a king, was he? Palaces? They were lies!

CECCO. Let her alone, damn you!

MAJESTÁ. Fools! Dogs! What have I to say to you? Can you see, except with your eyes? You cannot understand. Look at me. Well, I was beautiful once, and pictures of my face and models of my form adorn palaces and

museums. But if I took you to them and said "Look! This is I!" you would not believe it. Many have loved me, many that were great, many that were rich, many that were wise—yes, even a king. For one word of mine he would have forsaken his throne. Do you see me now? Then I was dressed in brocades and covered all with pearls—pearls that outpriced a kingdom! In a day I spent upon flowers enough to last me the rest of my life. You do not believe it? No? Look! Come here.... [*Pulling off a pair of old woollen mittens*] Here are these hands that never worked. Do you see? They are the hands of a queen. Many have kissed them in their time—on their knees—and they thanked me for it. I am proud of them. And sometimes it is cold and I have nothing to wear, and sometimes I am hungry and have nothing to eat, but I never want for gloves. Look at them! Are they not the hands of a queen?

PIETRO. It's true. She's right.

UNKNOWN. Something had to be left her. You can still let them kiss your hands.

MAJESTÁ. You might have all the riches of kings, you might conquer the earth, you might raise yourselves upon thrones, yet your children would not have such hands.

PIETRO. Slippery hands, to let so much slide through them.

UNKNOWN. They might have kept something more than their whiteness. She wouldn't be where she is now if what she said was true.

MAJESTÁ. These hands never learned to save. Jewels ran through them like water through a fountain, and were scattered as they ran.

UNKNOWN. You must have given away lots of money.

PIETRO. And done much good.

MAJESTÁ. Good or evil, as it came. People came to me who were poor, people came to me who were bad—it was all

the same. If one were to stop to think! We must pass the good things of life along. Would you refuse a penny for fear that it was to buy drink? That is enough to make the devil laugh. To some, drink is more than meat. Can beggars eat flowers? But the earth gives us flowers. The heart is dried up that will not give of its flowers.

PIETRO. She's right.

UNKNOWN. She speaks the truth. Poor old woman!

CECCO. I told you she wasn't crazy. Come, boys, buy her a drink.

PIETRO. Let her have what she wants.

MAJESTÁ. I don't care. What you've got.

THIRD SAILOR. Champagne, eh? Champagne—for a queen!

UNKNOWN. Champagne! At least champagne! Bring champagne. Here's the money.

PIETRO. Have you champagne?

CECCO. To-night, yes. I'll bring it—if it's not a joke....

UNKNOWN. If the Prince won't invite you, we will.

MAJESTÁ. The Prince of Suavia? I knew the Emperor; I can see him now on his white horse. Then he was heir apparent. He must be very old. And I knew the Princess Etelvina, the mother of this Prince. She was a little child, and I kissed her.

CECCO. The champagne. Bring glasses.

PIETRO. To her Majesty! Up! Would you like to live long, Majestá?

MAJESTÁ. Why not? As God wills.

PIETRO. Then—to your health!

MAJESTÁ. And yours, and happiness! It is not too late for you. Yes, it is champagne.

CECCO. What did you think?

MAJESTÁ. That it was a dream. It is so long since I

tasted champagne.... God reward you for it. Another glass! It is a rare wine, and this is not bad champagne. I know, Cecco.

PIETRO. You are not the only majesty who's here to-night.

IMPERIA *and* ZAIDA *appear in the doorway.*

IMPERIA. Is this the place?

ZAIDA. Yes, Signora. Are you afraid?

IMPERIA. Why should I be afraid? My home was like this. Come in.

PIETRO. [*Discovering* IMPERIA] Another Queen! Ha! This is a night of queens.

CECCO. Silence!

PIETRO. Is that the way you looked, Majestá?

UNKNOWN. Do you know this Queen?

MAJESTÁ. Queen? Bah! No more than I was! No, I don't know her. The queens that I knew are all dead or have grown old.

IMPERIA. Where is the Prince? Don't attempt to deny it; I know he is here. I know who is with him.

CECCO. Was he expecting you? They said nothing....

IMPERIA. No, he was not expecting me. Wait.... [*She scribbles something with a pencil upon a piece of paper*] Give him this and bring me back the answer. At once!

CECCO. It may....but.... Won't you sit down?

IMPERIA. I'll wait here. Is there no other place?

CECCO. No. Only a hole there—up-stairs.

IMPERIA. Don't be long.

CECCO. It's all right; they won't hurt you. They're good fellows. Don't be afraid.

IMPERIA. I am not afraid.

ZAIDA. Signora! I ought not to have told you!

IMPERIA. Why not? Why should I be afraid? The

place and the people do not seem strange; it is I who seem strange.

PIETRO. [*To* MAJESTÁ] Yes, give her a glass. Invite her. You ought to do it—among friends!

UNKNOWN. Yes, between queens! Do the honors. You ought.

MAJESTÁ. [*Staggering to her feet; then, with a drunken leer*] Here.... Let me have it.... [*Offering a glass to* IMPERIA] Lady....

ZAIDA. [*Alarmed*] *Ay!*

IMPERIA. Don't be afraid. What is it, my poor woman?

MAJESTÁ. Your Majesty, I....I also am a Queen....a Queen....Majestá.... Don't you know me?

PIETRO. Don't mind her. She won't hurt you. She's only a bit out of her head.

MAJESTÁ. To-night I'm holding a feast in my palace. I offer you a glass of champagne. Drink! It will not hurt you. It is not poison. I have no reason to wish you harm. You cannot hurt me. I am happy, oh, so happy! Who can take this happiness away? But they are not all like this. No! There are bad people—bad! Take care! And they have done me harm, much harm. But I....I have harmed nobody! Nobody! That's the reason I am so happy! That's the happiness that none can take away!

ZAIDA. Signora! Come, let us go——

IMPERIA. No, I must hear her. These are the discords, the broken harmonies of the mad. They fascinate me. There is something wild and eerie in them, which may prove prophetic in the end. Come here, my poor woman.

[*Offering money.*

MAJESTÁ. Gold! Do you see? It is gold! More champagne! [*Throwing down the money*] Champagne!

PIETRO. Here! Pick it up! You'll need it.

MAJESTÁ. Need it? No, no! Never! It's for you! I never need anything any more. Champagne! Bring champagne! [*She falls senseless.*

HARRY LUCENTI *enters.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Imperia!

IMPERIA. The Prince?

HARRY LUCENTI. The Prince requests me to offer you my arm—now that you have come so far. Will you join us?

IMPERIA. Does the Prince know why I have come?

HARRY LUCENTI. Pleasure, perhaps; jealousy....

IMPERIA. Of whom?

HARRY LUCENTI. We saw you at the circus this evening.

IMPERIA. And you imagined something monstrous of me, something worthy of the Prince and yourself?

HARRY LUCENTI. A little something of the sort. The Prince will be delighted to see you. Will you accept my arm?

IMPERIA. Take me in. [*A piercing cry*] What is that?

CECCO. [*Enters, running*] What's the matter?

HARRY LUCENTI. Who cried out?

CECCO. [*Closing the door*] Silence. Sit down! Quiet! Nobody moves! [*Runs out.*

UNKNOWN. What's the matter?

CECCO *re-enters with* TOMMY, *supporting the* PRINCE; *also* CELESTE, TERESINA, NELLY, FANNY, *and the two jockeys, followed immediately by* NUNU, DONINA, *and* MARCELLA, *all in the greatest confusion.*

SOME. What's the matter? What has happened?

CECCO. The Prince!

IMPERIA. Blood!

HARRY LUCENTI. Are you hurt?

SAILORS *and* OTHERS. Up! Up! What's wrong? Out! Out!

CECCO. [*To* GAETANO] Lock the door! Stand by! God! Nobody moves!

GAETANO *draws a knife and stands by the door.*

PIETRO. Room there! Back! Or....

They draw knives and daggers.

CECCO. No! No you don't! You'd only run into the police. They'd pull us all. Order! Quiet! Sit down!

NUNU. [*Furiously to* DONINA] It was you! You did it! We are ruined!

DONINA. Yes! It was I! I! It was not you! You coward!

IMPERIA. You?

DONINA. He sold me! Do you hear? He sold me! Coward! Coward!

CELESTE. But they're not going to let him die like this?

CECCO. No one leaves this room.

HARRY LUCENTI. No blood? He bleeds internally; a bad sign. He'll never get up.

CECCO. The police! They've heard us. Run! Quick! Sit down! If they knock we'll have to open. Keep cool! This blood— [*He overturns a bottle*] There! Sit down! And you.... Get around him! Back! Hold him up! So.... And you there, sing—sing and dance! Music! The police! Sh!.... Quiet!....

All do as he tells them.

DONINA. My God! My God!

NUNU. [*Striking her*] Dance! Dance, I tell you!

The music strikes up.

NUNU, DONINA, ZAIDA, *and* TOMMY *begin the tarantella.*

The COMMISSARY OF POLICE *enters.*

COMMISSARY. What's this noise? What's the matter?

CECCO. Nothing! You see....

COMMISSARY. We heard cries....

CECCO. The supper. Too much wine, eh? Is it so? Nobody knows what he's at. They're in fine spirits. The Prince can hardly sit up. Ah! There he is.... We shut the door so that nobody could come in. It's late. Have a drop?

COMMISSARY. No, thanks. Good night.

CECCO. Good night!

At the door, keeping his eyes riveted on those in the tavern until the COMMISSARY *is out of sight; then to those within:*

Go on! Go on! Keep it up!

The women who have been sitting at the PRINCE'S *side spring up terrified. The* PRINCE *rolls under the table.*

CELESTE. Dead!

TERESINA. *Ay!*

Wild confusion. All rush for the door.

CECCO. Ruined! Lost! Now what are we to do? No one leaves this room!

NUNU. [*Threatening violence*] Open the door! Let us out!

CECCO. No! It's no use. The police have got your names. They'd pick you all up, one by one. We stand or fall together.

IMPERIA. Harry! Take him to my house—in my carriage. It's the only way. They must not find him here. Then we can think. Are you ready?

HARRY LUCENTI. Yes. Come on! Quick!

CECCO. Are you going to take him away? Yes, it's the best. But wait.... There may be people in the street. A moment.... Wait.... I'll draw off the police. Sit down! And you there—come on! Come on! One at a time. Pass out as if nothing had happened. Order! Quiet!

PIETRO. The first man who opens his mouth....

UNKNOWN. Not a word! Silence! It's for all.

CECCO. And you—sing and dance! Damn you! Dance!

DONINA. [*Falling exhausted*] I can't dance any more! Not if they kill me!

CECCO. [*Going up to* MAJESTÁ] This woman has seen nothing.... The others will say nothing.

HARRY LUCENTI. [*At the* PRINCE'S *side*] He is dead. Cold already!

IMPERIA. Yes. Dead! Dead! How horrible!

Curtain

THE FOURTH TABLEAU

A room in IMPERIA'S *villa.*

IMPERIA *is discovered writing a note, which she hands to a* SERVANT *when finished. The voice of the* COUNTESS RINALDI *is heard outside.*

RINALDI. [*Outside*] She is always at home to me. Do not trouble....

IMPERIA *rises and goes hurriedly to meet the* COUNTESS, *who enters.*

IMPERIA. Countess!

RINALDI. Ah! You were not expecting me? The *portiere* and the servants did not wish to let me come in; they told me you were resting. But it was so very important that I had to see you; so I dispensed with formality. I am pardoned, I know. But you are not alone? On my way here I passed Prince Michael at the gate of the Princess's villa, no doubt intending to visit her.

IMPERIA. No doubt. Did you speak to him?

RINALDI. No, he was driving; I was walking. I walk a great deal for my health, nowadays. We merely bowed, that was all. Well, what was the outcome of your rendezvous of last evening, the denouement of Saturday night?

IMPERIA. Saturday night?

RINALDI. I fear you are not frank with me; you are keeping something back, much as I love you. It would be interesting to confide impressions, compare adventures, as it were. I have decided to make a change in my life; I am done with frivolity. Fortunately Heaven has put a man in my path

who has proved my salvation. Ah, if I had only met him before, instead of all those worthless scamps who have compromised my reputation!

IMPERIA. Who is he?

RINALDI. He is not a man of the sort one meets every day. His is a primitive spirit, a simple soul. You know him.

IMPERIA. I?

RINALDI. Haven't you seen the seven elephants at the circus?

IMPERIA. But my dear Countess!

RINALDI. Well, he is the elephant-driver. Are you laughing at me?

IMPERIA. I thought that you said you were done with frivolity.

RINALDI. Surely you do not imply that this is frivolity? But you are not acquainted with my plans.

IMPERIA. Then explain them to me! Talk, make me understand. Would to God they were never so fantastic, so extravagant and strange, dreams, fantasies, anything to take me out of myself, to make me forget this reality which is shutting in around me. If you only knew! There are dreams, horrible nightmares with all the appearance of truth, which escape from our sleep and enter our lives. I have dreamed, I am sure that I have dreamed, something which now I seem to have seen, to have heard, but which cannot be, no, which cannot have been. That is the reason I want to hear you talk, to listen to your extravagances, follies, dreams, madness, until all becomes confused and lost in illusion, and we cannot tell whether we are dreaming among visions or waking among facts which are real.

RINALDI. But there is nothing visionary about my plans, they are practical. I am setting my house in order, I am devoting myself to my affairs. Luckily, a unique opportunity

has presented itself, a brilliant speculation, which cannot fail to triple my capital in less than a year.

IMPERIA. You don't know how glad I am to see you. Really, you put every rational thought quite out of my head.

RINALDI. But you must not laugh; it is a serious matter. Ruhu—his name is Ruhu—an Oriental name....well, Ruhu is not the real Ruhu.

IMPERIA. I don't understand.

RINALDI. The real Ruhu-Sahib was the former proprietor of the elephants; this man was merely his assistant, that was all. When the real Ruhu died, his widow, who was English, inherited the seven elephants, and she proposed to the assistant that he continue in charge, and manage all seven upon a salary which she was to pay him. But it was exploitation. While the poor Ruhu exposed his life every day for the most pitiful wages, the widow, the proprietress of the elephants, was collecting wholly fabulous sums from the management. What do you think of that? The poor are justified in rising up against such exploitation. Ruhu was broken-hearted. "Ah, if the elephants were only mine," he said to me with tears in his eyes, "if I had a hundred thousand francs! If I could find some one to associate herself with me!"

IMPERIA. You need say no more; you were touched. You determined to buy the elephants and present yourself with them in the circus.

RINALDI. Not I. How ridiculous! I am to buy them; he is to present them. I shall receive half the profits. You have no conception of what that will amount to. Twelve thousand francs a month, and they are engaged for the entire season. Seven tame elephants for a hundred thousand francs—it's a bargain. Really, you have no idea what it costs nowadays to buy an elephant. And these are the best Indian elephants. You can tell them by the trunk and the ears.

IMPERIA. I see that you have studied the subject. This is not an illusion, after all.

RINALDI. On the contrary, in what other way could one get so much for a hundred thousand francs? That is the reason I hurried to see you. At the moment, I do not happen to have such a sum at my disposal—my balance at the *Crédit* is not above sixty or seventy thousand francs. But it is only a matter of a fortnight. Of course, any of my friends whom I had cared to approach....but I was anxious to afford you a striking proof of my affection.

IMPERIA. I should like to respond in the same spirit, but at present I am unable to give you an answer. I don't know whether or not I have so much money.

RINALDI. You don't call that much money?

IMPERIA. I shall let you know this afternoon—later.

RINALDI. Later? I am afraid this is coyness upon your part. Surely the Prince will not deny you; he never denies you anything. You see that I am speaking as a friend, and our friendship has cost me something. Not that it matters, of course....

IMPERIA. I shall send you my answer.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. His Highness.

PRINCE MICHAEL *enters.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Countess! [*To* IMPERIA] How are you this morning?

IMPERIA. Quite well. The Countess tells me that she passed you at the Princess's villa. Were you calling on her?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Yes, I was to have taken luncheon. Haven't you heard?

IMPERIA. What?

PRINCE MICHAEL. I will tell you later. I was unable to join you at the circus last evening. Another telegram from Suavia detained me with the Duke.

IMPERIA. What has happened?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing....

RINALDI. Your Highness has some private matter to discuss with Imperia.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing that cannot wait.

RINALDI. Although I dispense with invitations which are not dispensed to me, I hardly need one to withdraw when my presence might prove embarrassing. Good morning, your Highness.—My dear, I shall remain at home all afternoon, expecting your reply.

The COUNTESS RINALDI *goes out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. How much did the Countess's visit cost you?

IMPERIA. I see that you have had experience.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I most certainly have. However, her adventures are always amusing. This one ought to be worth something. Leonardo sent her to me. She must have told you—an affair at the circus. Well, what about Donina? Did you find her last evening? You see what confidence I have in you: I believe everything you say.

IMPERIA. You are right to do so. You have been noble and generous with me, and your loyalty deserves mine in return. You have not bound me to you by appealing to my self-interest. You have given me more than enough to buy my liberty; you said that you did not want slaves. And in giving me my liberty, you have won my gratitude forever.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Forever? Your mind is restless, ambitious, filled with great dreams, while I—I am content to have all my days pass alike, to have them seem as one day, undisturbed by trouble or care, flowing smoothly in a calm and even stream. But the shadow of the empire has fallen upon me again. The baby Prince is dead.

IMPERIA. Dead?....

PRINCE MICHAEL. He was born with a mere spark of life.

They telegraphed again directly after the announcement of his birth. The Emperor has summoned Prince Florencio and his mother to return to court; he wishes to become reconciled, perhaps to abdicate. He is not well; the country is on the brink of revolution. A despotic government is no longer possible in these days. Then, Florencio's health is conspiring against me. Once more near the throne!

IMPERIA. Very near! Prince Florencio, that is all. Have you seen him to-day?

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, I was to have taken luncheon at their villa, but his mother was horribly disturbed. Florencio had not returned all night.

IMPERIA. Don't they know....?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing could have happened to him. A debauch! Morning surprised him in some tavern; it was impossible to return home in broad daylight. I have notified the Prefect.

IMPERIA. But you say his mother....

PRINCE MICHAEL. This anxiety will kill her. She cannot endure it; it is one continual agitation. To-day she was more affected than usual. She woke suddenly at midnight; she thought she heard a cry——

IMPERIA. At midnight?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Yes. Now to her mind it has taken the form of a presentiment, and I confess that I was myself affected by it, although of course nothing could have happened. The police are with him continually; it is out of the question. Besides, nobody has seen Harry Lucenti. However, the Signore will know.

IMPERIA. Have you any idea where he was?

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, but they will have, and they will know who was with him. Otherwise.... You don't think that anything could have happened to him?

IMPERIA. You say that his mother heard a cry? Do you believe that spirits can communicate at a distance, that they can speak with each other through the air? He must have been thinking of his mother—yes, he called out "Mother!" And his mother heard him call.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, what are you talking about? Are you dreaming?

IMPERIA. Something must have happened to him. Yes, we must fear, we must expect the worst.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. The Signor Prefect to see your Highness.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Immediately! Now we shall know.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SERVANT *go out.*

IMPERIA *follows them to the door and listens. Presently* HARRY LUCENTI, *pale and haggard, still in evening dress, and showing the effects of intoxication the night before, appears at one of the doors.*

IMPERIA. Who is there? Ah! What do you want? Don't leave him.

HARRY LUCENTI. It won't hurt him to stay alone. He won't move. I heard voices. Do they suspect?

IMPERIA. No, they are looking. They will find out soon enough. Perhaps they know already. Go back! Don't let them see you. Don't leave him alone.

HARRY LUCENTI. He's covered up with a piece of brocade—fit winding-sheet for an Emperor. What a death! Insignificant as his life. Ludwig of Bavaria was the last King.

IMPERIA. Oh! Be still! Be still! I can't bear to hear you, to see you! You are as bad as he was. What difference does it make how he died? He deserved such a death. It does not matter who killed him.

HARRY LUCENTI. Don't tell me that Heaven has punished him. Nonsense, Imperia! Accident—chance. Many a rogue

has died an old man in his bed, amid the benedictions of his children.

LEONARDO *enters.*

IMPERIA. Leonardo! How could you be so long?

LEONARDO. I but this moment received your note. Ah! Harry! What are you doing here?

HARRY LUCENTI. I? Imperia will tell you. A sad office, which leaves nothing for me to do—but to think. Silence!

He disappears.

IMPERIA. Leonardo, I don't know what you have thought since we drifted apart, what your impressions of me may have been. I only know that in the decisive moments of my life, when my heart turns instinctively toward that which is true, I have thought of you as a loyal and faithful friend. Am I wrong?

LEONARDO. No, Imperia. We parted without ill feeling. You were in love with life, you wanted to realize my vision—the ideal of my statue; I, to retire from the world, to find solace in meditation and dreams. The wall of facts came between us. Why do you send for me now?

IMPERIA. To destroy the facts which threaten to close in upon our lives. Your ideal, your vision, the throne of your Imperia—ah, how near it is! It is not inherited, no, the poor inherit no thrones, but we have the power to overthrow them and to reign by right of intelligence without being kings. Do you remember? I told you I was going to Suavia to be Empress? Well, I am not Empress, but I reign in an Emperor's heart—he is mine, I know it; I hold him in the hollow of my hand. He cannot live without me. What do you say now? I am your Imperia, your statue; your spirit breathes in me. I am the realization of your dream.

LEONARDO. Yes, my Imperia—my love! My first, my

only love! Live for me, triumph for me! Alas, I could do no more than dream!

IMPERIA. Yes, I shall triumph; but first it is necessary to destroy the facts, to trample reality under foot. The baby Prince of Suavia is dead. The old Emperor abdicates the crown——

LEONARDO. Then Prince Florencio....

IMPERIA. Prince Florencio is dead.

LEONARDO. Dead?

IMPERIA. Yes, he is dead, murdered last night—before my eyes. No, I killed him myself.

LEONARDO. You! What are you talking about, Imperia? Are you mad?

IMPERIA. Yes, I—I did it! Or what is the same thing, it was my Donina, my child! She was defending her youth, her innocence, her love. It was the vengeance of all of us who had fallen by him before. Don't you believe it? Look! this is his dagger, a precious stiletto, a work of art, exquisitely damascened. The handle is gold, set with jewels. He was playing with it, half caressing, half threatening her. "Would you dare to kill me?" he asked her. "A kiss first and it is yours." And he offered her the handle like a jewel. My Donina, when she felt that kiss, plunged the blade into his heart. No, I am not dreaming, these are not phantoms of the witches' lair. Do you remember? When we parted, I told you it was Saturday Night. Well, its horrible phantoms have followed me back into life, they hover about the room. Do you want to see him? He is here. Harry Lucenti is watching the corpse.

LEONARDO. But it cannot be possible! These things cannot have happened. Nightmares, hallucinations!

IMPERIA. At first I thought so myself. When I came home, I forgot everything. A moment ago and I was laugh-

ing and talking with the Countess; it all seemed so unreal and far away—spectres from the other world, phantoms of our witches' souls. But it is the truth, Leonardo; it is the truth!

LEONARDO. But what are you going to do? They will find out....

IMPERIA. I am not afraid. I shall fight; I shall win. Phantoms cannot frighten me. They will be here in a moment; perhaps they already know. You see, I am calm. They will say nothing. You will see....

LEONARDO. No, Imperia, you are trembling. What is that you are staring at?

IMPERIA. No, no! I am calm. Hush! They are here....

LEONARDO. They must know.

IMPERIA. I shall tell them if they do not.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SIGNORE *enter.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, the Signor Prefect wishes to speak with you. Pardon, Leonardo, I did not know you were here.

LEONARDO. Highness....

PRINCE MICHAEL. [*To the* SIGNORE] Leonardo will retire with me, if you prefer to see her alone.

IMPERIA. No, I prefer that he remain during the examination. I assume the Signor Prefect wishes to examine me?

LEONARDO. As you see.

IMPERIA. Then I prefer to answer in the presence of my friends. Otherwise, the authority of the Signor Prefect might prove intimidating.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Unfortunately, indications that something serious has happened to Prince Florencio multiply every moment. No one has seen him this morning. It has been impossible to ascertain where he is.

SIGNORE. It is known that last night he was at Cecco's

tavern. Here is the list of the persons who were there—the complete list. Will you look it over? Is there any one missing?

IMPERIA. No one.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Your name is on the list.

IMPERIA. That proves that the Signore is well served by his police.

SIGNORE. Then it may be true also that the Prince left the tavern shortly before daybreak, somewhat intoxicated, as it seems, supported by Harry Lucenti and the proprietor of the tavern. He was lifted into your carriage, and driven to your house. Shortly afterward, you returned in the company of a girl named Donina, a circus performer, with whom you must have some connection, as this is not the first time you have been seen with her.

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Signore knows who Donina is; he is informed of your relationship.

SIGNORE. I am informed of everything. Except for the persons who, without doubt, are now in this house, all those who were with the Prince last night are under surveillance as a matter of precaution. The affair is a delicate one. Any indiscretion might compromise persons of quality, who are not to be treated like ordinary offenders. I am questioning you as a friend, Signora. Those who were present assure me that the Prince left the tavern at the same time that you did, as I have already said. Well? Is this an amorous adventure? Or a political intrigue? Is it true that Prince Florencio is now in your house?

IMPERIA. Prince Florencio is in my house. I brought him home with me. But I brought him home dead.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Dead!

SIGNORE. Dead!

IMPERIA. Yes, Prince Florencio has committed suicide.

SIGNORE. What is that, Signora?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Impossible!

LEONARDO. What are you doing?

IMPERIA. [*Firmly*] He has committed suicide. In spite of everything you may know, in spite of everything you may discover, this is and will remain the truth.

SIGNORE. But it is utterly out of the question. There is nothing whatever to indicate it.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Come! We shall see....

IMPERIA. No! Hear me first. He was murdered; that is the truth—I was there; I saw it with my own eyes. But nobody can be held responsible for his death. If you attempt to investigate, to punish it, to lay bare the facts, the facts will become involved in falsehood, and calumny and infamy and lies will entangle us all in the crime, from those miscreants whose very faces betray the degeneracy of this contemptible Prince, to the Emperor of Suavia himself, who might very well have suborned an assassin to relieve himself of the incubus of such an heir to the crown,

PRINCE MICHAEL. Infamous!

SIGNORE. Signora!

IMPERIA. Yes, I was there—your mistress, the mistress of the heir to the throne! But nobody knows why I was there. I can accuse myself, I can accuse you. The Prince had his adherents in Suavia. The halo of martyrdom would set very well upon his brow. If you wish to undeceive the world, to proclaim the truth—very well. Proclaim it. And I will proclaim it, too. Let us tell the life that he led, expose his vices, his crimes, and fix a stain upon his memory, until the contempt and scorn of the world overwhelms you all, and the rest of his kind, partners in his infamies.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. Your Highness....

PRINCE MICHAEL. But what is this?

The DUKE OF SUAVIA *enters.*

DUKE. Highness, the Princess has learned that her son is in this house; she insists upon seeing him. It is impossible to hold her back....

PRINCE MICHAEL. No! Take her away! At once!

DUKE. Yes, don't permit her.... Don't allow her to know....

PRINCE MICHAEL, *the* SIGNORE, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *go out.*

LEONARDO. Do you think they will not tell?

IMPERIA. No, they are afraid. The truth frightens them. I know what his life was, don't you see?—his vices, his crimes, his intrigues. They will not tell—my silence for theirs. The Prince was not murdered; nobody is to blame for his death. It was an accident, a debauch. Don't you see? It is possible to destroy the facts, to triumph over them. Before love, they vanish like a dream.

DONINA. [*From an inner room*] Let me go! Let me go! [*Entering*] Mother! Mother!....

LEONARDO. Is this your child?

IMPERIA. Yes, my child. Why do you run out? You are trembling.

DONINA. Help me! Hide me! I am afraid. I don't want to live, I don't want them to see me, to speak to me. I shan't answer. I shan't say a word!

IMPERIA. Leonardo, take her away—far away.

LEONARDO. We should be seen; it is impossible to escape.

DONINA. Let them kill me! I don't care. I saw him again! Oh, I saw him! And I shall see him always....

IMPERIA. You?

DONINA. Yes, I woke up trembling all over. I wanted to

get away, so I ran out without thinking. And I saw him! Oh, I saw him!—and I shall see him always! I shall go mad!

IMPERIA. What is that? Silence! Do you hear, Leonardo?

LEONARDO. Yes, it is the Princess. She is crying.

IMPERIA. No, no, don't you listen to her! It is nothing.

DONINA. Yes, she is crying! His mother is crying! I can hear her cry. Ah! She is coming nearer, nearer—all the time nearer....

LEONARDO. She is coming this way. Surely they will not permit....

IMPERIA. Wait! No.... They are passing by. Come! Let us go! Let us leave this place!

DONINA. Do you hear her call? "My boy! My boy!"

IMPERIA. Come away!

DONINA. No! I shall hear her always....always! "My boy! My boy!"....

IMPERIA. I can bear it no longer. They were not phantoms, Leonardo; we cannot destroy the facts, they are too strong for us. They creep back into our lives and overwhelm us in the end. This mother weeping for her boy, this child dying of grief and remorse—they chill my blood, they freeze me to the bone! I can do no more. Let what will come, come.

LEONARDO. No, Imperia, your will is strong. Don't throw your life away. Fight on, and triumph!

IMPERIA. No, no, it is too late! Don't think of me! Save Donina, Leonardo! Save Donina!

Curtain

THE FIFTH TABLEAU

Garden of IMPERIA'S *villa.*

DONINA, LEONARDO, *and* NUNU *are together in the garden.* LEONARDO *is modelling a bust of* DONINA, *who poses for him.*

LEONARDO. That will do for to-day, Donina.

DONINA. I am not tired. You mustn't stop on my account.

LEONARDO. I know that you are strong now. We need not be careful of your health any more. It isn't the model this time who is tired, it's the artist. Who could work to-day? What an afternoon! We pray for days like this for our little holidays, but to-day all nature is on holiday. How much better right has she to ask us not to intrude our petty affairs upon her divine calm! Work to-day? Not even in thought! It is enough to be alive, to have eyes to see, to drink in the air and sunlight, to breathe the perfumes of the sea and the flowers. You seem sad, Donina. Why are you always sad?

NUNU. She's afraid she's going to die.

LEONARDO. The doctors say that you are well now. As soon as you are happy, you begin to think of dying. You are happy, Donina?

DONINA. Very happy. That is the reason I am afraid.

NUNU. Can you see Prince Michael's yacht from there?

LEONARDO. Yes, I think so. There it is. It came in this morning.

DONINA. Why does Prince Michael come back? I thought he went away to be Emperor.

LEONARDO. Don't ask me, Donina. It is nothing to us. The Empire of Suavia is very far away.

DONINA. It is a great deal too near.

NUNU. Can't we go out in the boat as we did yesterday? Why do we have to stay here all afternoon?

DONINA. Are you tired, Nunu?

NUNU. No, but the sea air would be better for you. We never leave this place.

DONINA. It is so beautiful!

NUNU. Yes, but it's a bore. It's like a prison.

DONINA. Like a prison?

LEONARDO. [*Aside to* NUNU] You're a bad actor, Nunu.

NUNU. I can't stand this forever.

IMPERIA *enters.*

IMPERIA. You have stopped early to-day. Doesn't Donina feel well?

DONINA. No, it was Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Yes, it was I—the idler always! We are almost done.

DONINA. It looks just like me.

IMPERIA. No, I don't want to see it until it is finished. Does she look as I did when you first knew me, when I was your model?

LEONARDO. No, Imperia. There may be something in the features, but the expression is not the same. You had more life, more will. Donina could never have climbed up over the rocks until she had reached the steps of a throne.

IMPERIA. Why not? You say that because you are merely copying the sadness of her face, you are making a portrait, not expressing an idea in your work. My statue was designed to challenge attention, to triumph eternally, while hers is only for me. You are snatching from death by your art all that we are permitted to save.

LEONARDO. I told her I was tired, but her color frightened me—her labored breath. There is no hope.

IMPERIA. They say that those who die of this disease are never conscious of the approach of death. But Donina thinks of nothing else. She looks forward to it, she expects it.

LEONARDO. It is the cunning of despair, the fearsome dread of death. She knows that it is a bad sign to be cheerful, so she pretends to be afraid. But she does not deceive herself.

DONINA *laughs.*

IMPERIA. She is laughing! She is happy! Oh, so happy! What are you doing, Donina?

DONINA. Picking flowers for you—roses. Aren't roses your favorite flowers? I was laughing because Nunu was telling me a story about them. It wasn't very nice, but it was funny; all his stories are. It was about a nunnery with a garden that had roses in it, and the devil came and hung a little imp on every bush, just the same in color as the roses, so that they looked like little babies. And when the nuns saw them, they thought they were in mortal sin, and so as not to make a scandal they ran and hid them in their cells. But the little devils jumped out and began to run and skip and cut up all sorts of capers—they sang in the choir, and danced while the organ played, and rang the bells in the belfry and then finally—no, I don't think I'll tell you what they did finally—it might not seem nice; but it was funny. You tell them, Nunu; they'll laugh as much as I did.

NUNU. Don't be silly. Come on and pick some more flowers.

IMPERIA. Yes, laugh, Donina, laugh! Ah, Leonardo, why do we waste our lives in dreams and ambition? Our true life is the love which springs in our hearts. The happiness of a child is the only lasting joy, the one hint which life gives us of the value and meaning of life.

LEONARDO. Then you are not going to Suavia? Prince Michael has returned solely for you. Must he go back alone to rule his empire?

IMPERIA. He says that without me he cannot accept the crown. His ship will be lost forever on the deep, cast up on some unknown coast, where his days will be spent in obscurity, and he will slip from the world unnoticed at the close. By nature he is indolent; all his energy, his hope are in me.

LEONARDO. But you?

IMPERIA. While my child lives, my place is with her.

LEONARDO. It will not be long.

IMPERIA. I never wished till now to stop the hand of time. On a day like this, it seems as if we should never die; as if it were impossible that we should be passing through life like shadows, looking out for a little while upon the earth, the sea, and the sky which whisper to us of their eternity and our sudden death. Life cannot be all a cheat—it would be too cruel! No, there is, there must be something higher, something more eternal in us than this sea and this sky.

LEONARDO. But what is there in our lives which deserves to endure? Is it what we are, or what we appear to be?—the love that was in us once? what we long for and dream? Where are our true selves to be found?

DONINA *and* NUNU *come forward with armfuls of roses.*

DONINA. Look what lovely roses! They are all colors. Bring them here, Nunu; we picked them all. What difference does it make? The bushes will be covered with them again to-morrow.

IMPERIA. There never were such beautiful flowers.

LEONARDO. Nor none more suggestive of life. All the colors of the flesh—red, like blood, like lovers' lips; pink, like the skins of children; amber pale, with a languorous carmine

touch, like the warm nudes of Titian; voluptuously opulent, like the great goddesses of Rubens; white and bloodless as a virgin's hands.

DONINA. These are sallow like wax—like the dead.

LEONARDO. No, Donina, they are all alive, they are not like the dead; they live. When I hold them upside down, they are like little ladies, with the petals and the corolla here for skirts. This might be a stately marchioness, a Madame Pompadour, with her wide rose panniers—the stem her slender waist, and these two green leaves by the side, her great, puffed-out sleeves. Although something is lacking.... wait! Let us make a foolish little head for our marchioness out of this petal, with a long, tapering neck so thin, as the poet says, that it is shaped for the guillotine. This might be an Infanta of Spain with her spreading hoop-skirts, and this a magnificent Dogaressa of Venice, imperial in her purple! When you hold them like this, isn't it true that roses resemble ladies in flowers?

DONINA. Yes, they do. How lovely! They are just like ladies. Look, Nunu! But you won't look. You're foolish enough to be afraid that they might be really, and fall in love with you. But I'll spoil them all first. There! There!

[*Throwing roses at him.*

NUNU. Look out! [*Throwing roses back at her*] It's a battle of flowers.

DONINA. Look out yourself!

They run off, pelting each other with roses.

IMPERIA. It cannot be death, Leonardo. Donina is so happy!

LEONARDO. Deceptive happiness! You know the cost.

IMPERIA. Yes, but Donina could not live without him. In spite of all that he has done to her, I had to bring him here, to keep him, by flattery, by fear. The wretched boy wants

to go, but I tell him that I will have him taken to Suavia and accused of the murder of Prince Florencio. What does it matter if it is a lie? Donina has forgiven him, and she believes that he loves her as she was never loved before, and she is happy—dying happy in the belief. Without it, she would have died long ago, in an agony of grief and remorse. His treachery would have killed her.

LEONARDO. Do you believe that Nunu will be able to deceive her much longer?

IMPERIA. It is not his virtue that I count upon, it is his interest. And I am here to attend to it.

LEONARDO. The Countess Rinaldi has driven up to the gate.

IMPERIA. She has seen the Prince's yacht, and she is anxious to know whether I am going to Suavia. Tell her I am not at home; get rid of her in any way you can. That woman is odious.

LEONARDO. Why odious? She is another shadow passing through life, indefatigable in the pursuit of her ideal.

IMPERIA *goes out.*

The COUNTESS RINALDI *enters.*

RINALDI. Leonardo!

LEONARDO. My dear Countess! Did they tell you Imperia was not at home?

RINALDI. I didn't ask whether she was or not. There was nobody at the gate. However, I was certain to find some one, now that Imperia is living *en famille*. Of course I count you as one of the family.

LEONARDO. Of the artistic family.

RINALDI. It is the same thing. We all return to our starting-point sooner or later, unless we run on forever. But I advise you to be careful; Prince Michael has returned, too, in spite of everything.

LEONARDO. In spite of it? He always insisted that he would.

RINALDI. It seems that after the suicide of Prince Florencio —I hope you notice the suicide—I confine myself to the truth which is official.

LEONARDO. An unexceptionable sort of confinement. After all it makes life possible.

RINALDI. I know. The difficulty is, though, that people have such a weakness for the likely lie. Nobody has been able to account for the suicide.

LEONARDO. Why not ask the Signore?

RINALDI. You could never get it out of him. A crime here would horrify the aristocratic element; they are the persons who spend the money. One cannot die here, one cannot kill oneself, except in some way that is agreeable. We die of happiness, we kill ourselves so as not to occasion inconvenience to others. Nevertheless, I have decided to swallow the whole story—a reminiscence, eh, of Saturday Night? Like that affair of Lady Seymour's. Of course you have heard?

LEONARDO. Not another suicide?

RINALDI. Not this time. I met her with her arm in a sling—it seems she fell in her automobile. Last year she had a cut over her eye—a fall, so I hear, with her horse. These accidents always happen when her husband is away from home. Two or three months suffice for the wounds to heal....

LEONARDO. Physically and morally, I suppose?

RINALDI. I confine myself to the truth which is official.

LEONARDO. You are a very prudent woman. By the way, your color is particularly fine this morning. You are looking excessively well. I notice a certain austerity in your *toilette*....

RINALDI. The change in my life. For a time, I was threatened with nervous prostration, but my physician prescribed a severe regimen. "Control yourself," he said. "Remember, neurasthenia is no longer in fashion. The reign of nerves is at an end; this season we shall have a renascence of muscle."

LEONARDO. You are planning to be the Michael Angelo of this renascence?

RINALDI. Fortunately, I had no difficulty in accommodating myself to the change. Heaven directed my feet to the path of salvation.

LEONARDO. Without elephants?

RINALDI. Don't recall those absurdities! I have put such trifles behind me. During one of my walks in the country, I stopped at the door of a Franciscan monastery. It occurred to me to go in. A pale-faced friar with a long, bushy beard was preaching. What a sermon that was! How he did preach about love, human and divine!

LEONARDO. You could have preached upon the former with greater show of authority.

RINALDI. You are laughing at me. I was converted upon the spot. Now, I hear him preach every afternoon. He is a second St. Francis. I am organizing a series of festivals for the restoration of the convent.

LEONARDO. Poor saint! The temptations of St. Anthony will be nothing to his.

RINALDI. You must not say that; you don't know him.

LEONARDO. I know you.

RINALDI. I accept the aspersions of the world as just penance for my sins; I could even wish to have people think worse of me. In pursuance of my plan, I am soliciting from door to door. Of course I may count upon you and Imperia? Will you send me one of your works for my kermess?

LEONARDO. With the greatest of pleasure. Something appropriate—a Magdalen, perhaps. Would you prefer her before or after conversion?

RINALDI. Only be sure that she has plenty of clothes.

LEONARDO. Better have it before, then. Afterward, you recall in what state she ran through the wilderness—as you will be doing shortly, no doubt, though not through the wilderness.

DONINA *and* NUNU *re-enter.*

DONINA. [*Running after* NUNU] Don't you run away. Give me that letter! Give it to me, or....

NUNU. [*Discovering the* COUNTESS] Hush! Be still! Don't you see?.... You're always picking at me.

DONINA. You always——

NUNU. Let me alone, I tell you.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] Oh, don't bother to explain! Two protégés of Imperia's.... Daphnis and Chloe? Or Paul and Virginia? This is the Garden of Love.

LEONARDO. Of profane love; it is not for you.

RINALDI. Will you tell Imperia of the object of my visit?

LEONARDO. I shall announce your conversion.

RINALDI. But merely as a preliminary; I am counting upon her.

LEONARDO. She will certainly hear of it.

RINALDI. These lovers are fascinating! Both children, of course.... How old is the boy?

LEONARDO. Countess, a ripe age.

The COUNTESS *and* LEONARDO *go out.*

DONINA. Give me that letter! Give it to me!

NUNU. That's right. Scream, kick, cry, so that everybody can hear—you always do. Then when you get worse, they'll say it's my fault. Didn't I tell you it was for Tommy? Can't you read? What do you want me to say?

DONINA. For Tommy, is it? Yes, the envelope's addressed to him, but maybe there's another letter inside. Maybe you've arranged—if you hadn't, you wouldn't have hidden while you were writing it. You would have told me. What do you care if I know what you write to Tommy?

NUNU. I wish you did.

DONINA. I will, then. Give it to me!

NUNU. Let go! Let go!

DONINA. Oh! I can't.... I am choking. Oh!....

NUNU. Now you see.

DONINA. My God!

LEONARDO *re-enters.*

LEONARDO. What is the matter with Donina?

DONINA. Nothing.... Nothing....

NUNU. She's crazy. She wants to read a letter I've written to a friend. I can't stand it any longer. Because you pay me you think it's easy—I have an easy life. But I don't. If it wasn't——

DONINA. They pay you? If it wasn't? What do you mean?

LEONARDO. Nunu! Why do you tease Donina?

DONINA. That's the only way he can enjoy himself—and I have given my life for him, yes, my soul! Because I am dying for him.... It was for him that I killed him, it was for him that I lost my soul!

LEONARDO. Donina! What have you done, you fool? [*Aside to* NUNU] Couldn't you wait?

NUNU. Wait? I've waited long enough. I can't stand it any more. So you'd like to read that letter? You want to know what I've written to my friend? Well, then, read it! Read it!

DONINA. [*Snatching the letter*] Ah!

NUNU. Read it! It isn't my fault.

LEONARDO. What does it say?

DONINA. [*Falling flat upon the ground*] Mother of God!

LEONARDO. What have you done? Donina! Donina!

NUNU. It wasn't my fault.

IMPERIA *enters.*

LEONARDO. Imperia, Donina is dying.

IMPERIA. Donina! My Donina!

DONINA. Leave me! Let me die. You have deceived me. Everybody has deceived me.

IMPERIA. What is the matter? This letter?.... What is in this letter?

DONINA. Leave me! Leave me!

IMPERIA. Ah! You have killed her.

NUNU. It wasn't my fault; she wanted to read it. I've stood it long enough. Let me go!

IMPERIA. Go? You forget that I have you in my parole, you coward! I thought that if I paid your price, I could make of you what I pleased, whether it was good or evil, but it was not the life you led that made you evil, it was your wicked heart, you low-born brother of Prince Florencio, incapable of pity or of love!

DONINA. No, let him go. Why did you make him deceive me? Why did you deceive me, Nunu? You can go now; I forgive you. Don't wait here for me to die. They'll give you what they promised you. Give him his pay—he has pretended long enough. I know the truth now. I am dying.... It is the only truth that he ever told me.

IMPERIA. You wrote that letter on purpose for her to see it. You knew that it would kill her.

NUNU. No. She did it herself.

IMPERIA. Leave this house at once! Don't you wait until Donina is no longer here to beg me to let you go! Go, go!

NUNU. Like this?

LEONARDO. Don't you worry. You'll get your pay.

LEONARDO *and* NUNU *go out.*

DONINA. Why did you deceive me? When all my life is a lie, how can I live?

IMPERIA. Donina!

DONINA. I am a hindrance to you; I know it. They want you there in that empire, that cursed empire with its Prince, its ice, and its snow. The white ship is there with its white sails, its men that are so pale.... It has come to take you away to that empire, of which you have been dreaming so long.

IMPERIA. No, Donina, no! I shall be here always with you. The white ship will sail away like a white bird, but I shall still be here with you, always with you! Love is the only reality of our lives—I shall be here with you, always, always with you!

DONINA. Yes, waiting for me to die—as he was.

IMPERIA. No, Donina, your life is my life!

DONINA. Before the white ship sails away like a white bird, I, too, shall sail away forever. I shall not know it, but I shall be gone, like a shadow, like a cloud from the sea. I shall have passed out of your life.

IMPERIA. No, my Donina! Child of my heart, of my one, my only love! Like shadows all, all shall pass but love—that ripens and lives on.

LEONARDO *and* PRINCE MICHAEL *enter.*

LEONARDO. Imperia....the Prince....

IMPERIA. Ah! Why do you come?

PRINCE MICHAEL. You have sent no answer. I have waited all day.

DONINA. He has come for you.

IMPERIA. I shall not go.

DONINA. I know the truth. I tell you, you will kill me, with your lies—waiting here, always pretending, for me to die.

IMPERIA. What do you mean?

DONINA. Promise me that you will not wait; you will go to-day. Or I shall kill myself. I will not ruin your life! Promise....

IMPERIA. Yes, I will go to-day. Leave me a little while. Leonardo, help Donina.

LEONARDO. Donina!

DONINA. No, it was nothing. I am better now.... But I know that it is death.

LEONARDO *and* DONINA *go out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Will you come?

IMPERIA. Yes.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I should not have returned without you.

IMPERIA. Would you have renounced the throne?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Why not? When it is difficult to live one's own life in peace, what must it be to rule an empire? Millions of human beings struggling to be happy, and depending for their happiness upon our precious laws!

IMPERIA. You have no right to talk like that. Would you renounce your divine heritage? The millions of your empire will never attain happiness through you. We are unable to assure the happiness even of those who are nearest to our hearts. Suffering and death are eternal; it is the will to overcome them that makes us immortal, yes, equal to God! You know nothing of life. Good and evil have no significance for you. They have for me. I have struggled, as many have struggled before, against poverty, against envy and shame, injustice and outrage, I have suffered and borne all, and I say to you now upon the steps of your throne:

Do justly, love mercy, and your empire will be glorious among men.

LEONARDO *enters.*

LEONARDO. Donina is asleep. Thanks to an anodyne, she has fallen asleep. If you must go, it is better now. The parting would be too sad. I shall remain with her.

IMPERIA. Go? Leave her? No, no! I cannot.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Bring her with you.

IMPERIA. It would kill her. No! No....

LEONARDO. Death cannot delay in any case.

IMPERIA. But she is still alive! My place is with her. Can't you wait? Oh, this is horrible! Wait!

LEONARDO. Leave her, your Highness. She will come, I promise you.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, if you do not come before night, my yacht will sail, but without me. Instead, it will bear my abdication. In the morning I shall be here with you to resume our old life, and the Empire of Suavia will be lost to you—like a dream.

The PRINCE *goes out.*

IMPERIA. Leonardo, what shall I do? I am your idea, your Imperia. Breathe your spirit into me! What ought I to do?

LEONARDO. You have fashioned your life by your will, and you know where it lies.

IMPERIA. My life is your ideal—my vision! I will go. But Donina— Do you say that she is asleep? I must see her.

LEONARDO. Your courage will fail.

IMPERIA. I must see her! I must see her!

LEONARDO. You will not go if you do. Imperia! You will not go! You will not go!

IMPERIA *enters the house.* LEONARDO *remains at the door and listens. Presently,* IMPERIA *reappears.*

LEONARDO. Imperia!....

IMPERIA. She is asleep. I kissed her upon the forehead, and she did not wake.

LEONARDO. You kissed her upon the forehead?

IMPERIA. Leonardo, it is my duty to go, is it not?

LEONARDO. Yes.... Triumph, Imperia! It is the triumph of my ideal! But first, tell me—I must know it—when you kissed her forehead....

IMPERIA. Well?

LEONARDO. Was it cold?

IMPERIA. Yes—if you must know. She was dead. And now death cannot hold me back. Do you wonder?

LEONARDO. Your soul is great. I wonder and admire.

IMPERIA. To achieve anything in life we must subdue reality, and thrust aside its phantoms which confuse and hem us round, to follow the only reality, the flight of our witches' spirits as on Saturday Night they turn to their ideal—some toward evil, to be lost in its shadows forever like spectres of the night, others toward good, to dwell eternally in it, the children of love and of light. Good-by, Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Good-by, Imperia.

IMPERIA. This is the kiss of the spirit which you gave me, grand as your ideal!

Curtain

IN THE CLOUDS

COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

First Presented at the Teatro Lara, Madrid, on the Evening of the Twentieth of January, 1909

CHARACTERS

Doña Carmen
Doña Teresa
Emilia
Luisa
Adelaida
Paquita
Ramona
Julio
Don Hilario
Paco Galán
Cristóbal
Manolo
Pepe

The action passes in Madrid at the present time

IN THE CLOUDS

THE FIRST ACT

Plainly furnished dining-room of DOÑA CARMEN'S *apartment. As the curtain rises,* RAMONA *enters with a cup, and* JULIO *appears directly afterward.*

JULIO. What are you doing? Is it my sister?

RAMONA. Yes, Señorita Luisa has an attack. She was taken after dinner. Maybe something hot'll do her good.

JULIO. Is mother with her?

RAMONA. Yes, Señorito Julio.

JULIO. If she asks, say I am out. I have an engagement and can't wait. It's nothing, I suppose, as usual?

RAMONA. Of course not. But there are times when you just have to yell, though it might be hard to say why you do it.

JULIO. Nerves, too, eh?

RAMONA. Have I?—only I work mine off singing. Whenever you hear me sing, you can be sure there's something wrong with Ramona.

JULIO. There must be something wrong with you all the time.

CARMEN. [*Inside*] Ramona! Ramona!

RAMONA. Ah, the mistress! Coming, señora....

JULIO. Don't tell her I was home. [*Goes out.*

RAMONA. Trust me.

DOÑA CARMEN *enters.*

CARMEN. What are you doing? Does it take all this time to get a little hot water?

RAMONA. Why, I....

CARMEN. Who was that you were talking to?

RAMONA. Me?

CARMEN. Señorito Julio, wasn't it? He has gone out without seeing his sister. The house might fall for all he cares, and the rest of us be buried under it. How can a young man be so selfish? He never was like this before, that is certain. It is that girl, this precious love-affair, and it will be the death of me. He had his overcoat on, I dare say, and his top hat? Nothing I could do could ever induce him to dress. Give me the hot water, and clear the table; finish as soon as you can. Did you leave word for Don Hilario?

RAMONA. Yes, but he wasn't home. They'll give him the message as soon as he comes in, and he'll be down right away.

The bell rings.

Probably he's here now.

DOÑA CARMEN *and* RAMONA *go out, the latter at the rear. After a moment* RAMONA *re-enters with* PEPE.

RAMONA. Señorito Pepe .... behave yourself!

PEPE. Not so loud....

RAMONA. Where did you learn manners? In a boarding-house from the servants?

PEPE. Why? Are servants in boarding-houses different from other servants? How do you know?

RAMONA. I worked in one.

PEPE. Oh! That's different.

RAMONA. And one was enough.

PEPE. Good girl! What do you say to dinner with me some Sunday at Las Ventas? Rice is their specialty.

RAMONA. Why? You haven't put in your order, have

you? Because nobody is going to shower us with rice. Señorito Julio isn't home, I tell you.

PEPE. I know; that's the reason I called. I'm calling on his mother, Doña Carmen.

RAMONA. Step into the parlor, please.

PEPE. I'm satisfied where I am; I feel more like one of the family. Announce me.

RAMONA. I don't know whether the señora can see you. Señorita Luisa has an attack.

PEPE. Tell her I am here, and my duty will be done. I am not so keen about this interview, anyhow. She is going to question me.

RAMONA. Yes, about Señorito Julio. She doesn't like the idea of his being engaged, not to speak of his getting married. That is all she ever talks about nowadays, just as if it wasn't the most natural thing in the world for a young man to get married. If he didn't have a sweetheart, you know yourself it would be something else. Some people when they get old forget they were ever young themselves. There's a time for everything, and we know it.

PEPE. Yes, we know it. [*Embracing her*] It would be an awful shame, too, to let it slip.

RAMONA. Be careful what you're doing!

PEPE. My dear, you feel to me like a hundred and eighteen in the shade.

RAMONA. I call that a pretty warm young gentleman.

[*Goes out, right.*

She re-enters immediately with DOÑA CARMEN, *and then disappears again at the rear, toward the left.*

PEPE. Doña Carmen!

CARMEN. Good afternoon, Pepe.

PEPE. As Julio was out, and you sent word that you wanted to see me, I thought perhaps we might have a quiet talk.

CARMEN. Yes, I appreciate your coming very much. Won't you sit down?

PEPE. The maid tells me Luisa is not well.

CARMEN. Her nerves, as usual. I am in despair over that child. The best physicians have examined her, and you know what that means to people in our circumstances in the way of sacrifices, with only my son's salary and what I had from my husband to depend upon. The cost of living in Madrid was never so high.

PEPE. No, never, Doña Carmen. Everything nowadays is going up, prices are in the sky.

CARMEN. Although apparently you get along very comfortably. Your salary is the same as my Julio's, but you are alone. Besides, you have had experience; you have no idea of getting married.

PEPE. None whatever, Doña Carmen, none whatever. Why! Why should I?

CARMEN. A man is always in his best years, as I tell my Julio. He has plenty of opportunities. But what is the use of talking? That is the reason I wanted to see you. You are his most intimate friend; you were inseparable.

PEPE. We were, yes, indeed, Doña Carmen, until this complication.

CARMEN. What do you think? Is he in love? I never ask any questions; we never mention the subject without ending in a quarrel. But you must know something. What is he doing? Has he any idea of getting married?

PEPE. Well, frankly, he has gone pretty far. I tell him he is becoming more deeply mired every day. The girl is good-looking; that is some consolation.

CARMEN. But if he marries, what has he to look forward to? He is just in his prime. Now, with his modest salary—I ask

you how far it will go in Madrid? Of course you don't know what it means to support a family.

PEPE. Oh, yes, I do; perfectly. There were five of us at home. I never was able to understand how anybody could support us.

CARMEN. Julio has no conception of what his poor sister and I have been through so that he might not want. We sew, we cook, we wash, we iron, and on top of that my poor Luisa takes in sewing to help out with her pocket-money, at the cost of her health. Naturally, as he always finds things in their places, his clothes cared for, his shirts done up more neatly than if they had been sent out to a laundry, and all his favorite dishes on the table, such as he could not possibly expect from any hired cook, he takes it as a matter of course. How could we do all this if we didn't tend to everything ourselves? He will find a great difference when he marries a young lady who is no better off than he is, because the girl simply will not bring him one penny. Her mother's income is as modest as mine, although she has relatives who have means, and they help out occasionally, but what does that amount to? On the other hand, she is not accustomed to this life, as I am, or my daughter. Anybody can see it. Isn't it pure madness to marry under such circumstances?

PEPE. Yes, Doña Carmen, pure madness; to marry without money is always pure madness. When a man is in Julio's position and can live at home with you and be comfortable, it is unthinkable. Take me, after years of landladies, buffeted about from boarding-house to boarding-house, and yet even I have never considered it. You can make up your mind when I do, that it will be with my eyes open, and in full possession of my faculties.

CARMEN. You have common sense, you understand life;

but my son! Do you suppose he intends to marry very shortly?

PEPE. He has some such idea.

CARMEN. God bless us!

PEPE. I have done what I could to discourage him, but he takes no interest. Some girls who are friends of mine entertain, don't you know, and everybody enjoys themselves there—girls from the country, who are not serious, because they haven't any idea of getting married; they have figured it out, don't you see, and can do better.... Well, he won't look at them. He doesn't care for the theatre, either. The chorus at the Eslava is nothing to him.

LUISA *enters.*

LUISA. Oh, mamma!——

CARMEN. What is it, my dear? Are you more comfortable?

LUISA. Yes....much....thank you.—Hello, Pepe!

PEPE. How is this, Luisita?

LUISA. I heard you talking.... I wanted to be sure not to miss anything.

PEPE. I appreciate it.

LUISA. We don't see as much of you as we did.

PEPE. Julio is never home; besides, you are busy....

LUISA. Yes, and you are busy yourself. We know where.

PEPE. Oh, here and there!

LUISA. That is not what I mean; you are in love.

CARMEN. Not a bit of it! Pepe has more sense than your brother Julio.

LUISA. No, Pepe aims higher. I don't need to mention names; her father made a fortune in Cuba.

PEPE. In the Philippines; but it makes no difference. The point is that he made it.

CARMEN. Well, you amaze me. I certainly wish you luck.

PEPE. Don't take it too seriously. What have I to look forward to—a clerk upon starvation wages? To appear decently in the circles in which she moves would be beyond the reach of my salary. There are men who can borrow on the strength of a fiancée's property, but I never could. Besides, if I could.... Well, the girl is fond of me. Why should I tell you anything else? And her father is not unfavorable; neither are her sisters—so much so that there is one who is more taken with me than the one I am taken with, but the mother—the mother is terrific! Whenever she sees me coming, she turns her head the other way, and then I know she is watching us, for the darn thing is cross-eyed.

LUISA. The daughter is pretty, though.

PEPE. That depends upon which you call the daughter; there are three of them, and a wide variety. Mine—I call her mine to distinguish her—is fair, only fair. They dress well, they follow the styles, and are tighter about the waist than a pass by the bull-fighter Machaco. I never know whether I have hold of a woman or a rolled-up umbrella.

LUISA. You must think you are smart.

PEPE. I do my best to keep my end up. There are so many young fellows about town with plenty of money and plenty of automobiles, and so little else besides, that I see no reason why I shouldn't compete. I shall never marry except for money; I have made myself that promise.

LUISA. But how mercenary!

PEPE. Am I? No, other people are. Money is nothing to me. Others appear to want it—the landlady, the tailor, the tobacconist. When they stop asking it, I shall stop making it, and lose no time about it, either. Marriage, it seems to me, was designed to make a man more complete; it is a means of acquiring what a person has not. I don't need a wife, thank God, not every day; what I need is money. Now,

on the other hand, if there is a woman anywhere who has a daily income, and requires a husband, although it may be only on part time, here I am. We can complete each other.

LUISA. How could you sacrifice yourself, living forever with a person that you did not love?

PEPE. Marriage with money is like a formal call. If I had money, do you suppose I would trouble my wife with my society, any more than I do now my chief at the office? However disagreeable a wife may be, there is no comparison between her and an employer. When you have money, you are enjoying yourselves while you are together, at the theatre, at dinner, riding out in the motor, or travelling. Believe me, it is safe to laugh at all this talk about incompatibility of temper among married people. What you actually find is incompatibility of expense.

LUISA. It is dreadful for a young man to talk like that. You are not the only one, either; there are many. What is a poor girl to do?

PEPE. If she is good-looking, marry a rich husband, as I just said. Complete yourself.

LUISA. But if she is ugly and insignificant?

PEPE. I should advise you not to be too modest.

LUISA. If she is merely honest and humble and industrious?—to prove to you that I am not too modest.

PEPE. Not all men feel as I do, or as I say that I do, to keep my courage up. I am more romantic at bottom than a lake in full moonlight. The truth is that I am afraid of life, of love, of the want of means. At home, I have witnessed many a harrowing scene, although my parents loved each other, and they loved their children dearly. But demands were many and resources few. It is cruel that love should depend upon anything but love. I recall an incident which I shall never forget as long as I live. There were five of us

when we were small, and the youngest fell sick; his illness became serious, and my parents, in their anxiety, wished to leave nothing undone. One day, when we were all at table, we missed the dessert. "Isn't there any dessert?" one of us asked. "No," my mother answered. "We can't afford it. We have to buy medicine for your baby brother." Soon afterward the baby boy died. Time passed, conditions became normal again, and the dessert reappeared on the table. We children clapped our hands. "We have dessert again! We have dessert!" My father and mother looked at each other sadly—it was a look that imposed silence upon us all, agonizing silence. We felt as if we had been eating our baby brother instead of the dessert. Now you understand why the thought of a family of my own in which these childish ferocities might be repeated, appalls me. Their cruelty is so elemental that it does not outrage, but brings tears.

CARMEN. Yes, life is cruel. If these things produced so deep an impression upon you that you have never been able to forget them, think what they must have meant to your father and mother. A child can never know the anguish that parents feel when they see their children suffer, when they hear them complain of life, of the lack of so many things, to which they believe themselves entitled simply through having been born, because they see others about them who have them, simply because they were born. At such a time, even the love through which we brought them into the world, weighs upon our hearts like remorse. We have not the courage to call them ungrateful, we prefer rather to blame ourselves. If our children could only know that we are so eager to see them happy that even their ingratitude, horrible though it may be in a child, does not wound us so deeply as it does to see them suffer, and to realize that we are pow-

erless, with all the love in our hearts, to assure their happiness.

LUISA. Why, mamma!

CARMEN. Forgive me. Now you understand why the prospect of my son's marriage appalls me. I have lived as I am not willing that he should live, as I am not willing that my daughter should live. Luisa might have married her cousin Manolo when she was still very young. It is easy to see what the result would have been, because he has married, and has five children. Everything spells trouble and anxiety in that house. The wife is ill, the children are delicate. No love is strong enough to hold out. The gentlest nature must become crabbed and distorted, and patience is exhausted at last. Bitter disputes take place at all hours; words are exchanged, as a mere matter of habit, which give offense. If love had been all of life, there would not have been a happier woman in the world than I; none was ever loved more dearly by her husband, or was more fortunate in her children. And yet, if you were to ask me: "Would you be willing to live your life over again?" I should reply: "No, no! A thousand times no! I have had enough!" And now to think that my life may be lived over again, that it may be lived again by my children.... Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy!

PEPE. Who knows? Julio may be very happy—it depends upon his disposition, and upon circumstances. Suppose that he should be fortunate enough not to have children? Or he may be lucky in the lottery, or they both may die on their honeymoon, and be satisfied!

CARMEN. That is a terrible thing to say.

PEPE. In all probability nature will take her course, and it will be merely one marriage more. The world has no intention of coming to an end, Doña Carmen, and to face the

question squarely, if only the rich were to marry and only the rich to have children, it would not be long before they could no longer tell that they were rich, because they would be walking the streets barefoot for want of anybody to make them a pair of shoes. I must hurry now; it is time to go, Doña Carmen. I should not like Julio to surprise me here, and to imagine that this was a conspiracy.

CARMEN. Do not worry upon that account; he never returns before eleven at the earliest. But we must not detain you; you have engagements, and our *tertulia* would not prove amusing.

PEPE. Probably you expect company?

CARMEN. Only some neighbors, who spend the winter evenings together. We meet in a different house every night. To-night it is our turn.

PEPE. I suppose you play games?

CARMEN. Not even that. We talk, we read the paper. Some of us go to sleep.

LUISA. You may feel like a dull evening some time yourself.

PEPE. Yes, I shall drop in if I do. I hope you improve, Luisita. Now don't blacken my reputation. I may pursue the rich girls, but you don't know how shocked I should be, if one of them were honestly to sit up and take notice.

LUISA. I wish I could believe what you say.

CARMEN. Good-by, Pepe. Adios! Remember to speak to Julio.

PEPE. Never, Doña Carmen. When a man has made up his mind, it is useless. It would only create feeling. I think too much of Julio, as he knows—and you know what I think of you.

CARMEN. Thanks, Pepe; many, many thanks.

PEPE *goes out.*

CARMEN. Pepe is a nice boy, after all.

LUISA. After all?

CARMEN. At first sight you might think he was light-headed, talking as he does, and pretending that all the girls are in love with him.

LUISA. He is not bad-looking, so no wonder. Besides, he is clever. I must get my sewing.

CARMEN. Don't sew any more, my dear. You are not well. How are you now? Why don't you go to bed?

LUISA. No, I couldn't sleep.

CARMEN. Well, don't sew. I don't want you to overdo; you have enough with the housework. I wish the weather would improve, and then we could go out for a walk in the afternoons. We stay indoors too much—not that I care, I don't feel it myself; I grow stronger every day, by God's grace, apparently. But you, my dear, are nothing but bones; you don't eat.

LUISA. I haven't any appetite.

CARMEN. That reminds me, your tonic has given out. We must send for another bottle to-morrow.

LUISA. No, mamma, it doesn't do any good; it is only an expense. I'll be better soon; I must get strong, so that I can help you, and work.

CARMEN. My poor child, you mustn't think of such a thing.

LUISA. Yes, mamma; when Julio marries, he won't be able to help you any more, although he may not admit it. Even if he could, his wife wouldn't let him. A daughter-in-law isn't the same thing as a daughter.

CARMEN. No, and, anyway, I couldn't accept it. Does he think that is what I have on my mind? What difference does it make? I might be willing to swallow my pride for your sake, but I am accustomed to it. You were babies

in arms when your father died. Now, he is the one I am worried about. A son, a brother, doesn't know what it means to keep house, to support a family. He imagines his wife will be just like we are; but Emilia will have her ideas....

DON HILARIO'S *voice is heard outside.*

LUISA. I think I hear Don Hilario.

DON HILARIO *enters.*

CARMEN. Don Hilario!

HILARIO. What is this? How is the invalid? They told me she had had a violent attack.

LUISA. I only frightened mamma.

CARMEN. Yes, doctor, it was rather violent. Fortunately, it passed quickly.

HILARIO. Come, come! Do you feel distress? Any oppression? Palpitation?

LUISA. No, not now.

HILARIO. How is the appetite?

CARMEN. She hasn't any; she doesn't eat. I am dreadfully worried. Isn't there anything that we can do for this child? Can't we cure her somehow, Don Hilario?

HILARIO. Ah, Doña Carmen, we could open this balcony to the sea or to the green fields, instead of on this narrow, dirty street; we could throw those inner windows wide to the sunshine and fresh air, instead of opening them upon a dusky, murky court, heavy with kitchen smells; we could bring a little love and a little happiness to Luisita's heart along with the sunshine and fresh air!

CARMEN. Yes, you are right. That is the only cure.

HILARIO. But sunshine and fresh air, sea breezes and the scent of the fields, love with its illusions and desires, which are so necessary to the young, are gifts which God has scattered through the world, but which man has made so dear. Believe me, the diseases which science has not yet been able

to master, those familiar maladies whose causes and whose cure are unknown, although there are many, are not so much the despair of physicians as those other ills, in which life, not death, is the enemy, those maladies which we know so well and whose cure we also know, which have but a single name—poverty. I should not speak to others as frankly as I do to you, it might give offense; there is so much false pride. But here I am a friend. Since we have been neighbors, and I have had the pleasure of attending you, I have come to be deeply interested in you all.

CARMEN. We appreciate it, Don Hilario; you have been kind and generous to us. You must forgive us if we abuse your generosity, but your visits are a consolation.

HILARIO. Say no more, Doña Carmen. As I have told you, there is but one word for Luisita's illness, poverty, poverty of blood, poverty of life, poverty of everything. Even though you were to make a great effort, and to change your manner of living for a time completely, what would be gained by it? The inevitable reaction would ensue, accompanied by greater suffering, greater privations. I know there are physicians, and I envy them, who look upon the patient as an abstract being, and have the temerity to prescribe expensive travels and costly diets, fillets and champagnes of rare vintages, whether they ride up in an elevator and trip over soft carpets, or clamber up a hundred steps to an attic, clattering over broken tiles. It is my misfortune to be considerate, and there are those who do not thank me for it. There are persons who say: "Don Hilario does not diagnose my complaint; he prescribes nothing." Whereas I say: "What am I to prescribe here? Bank-notes of a thousand pesetas?" All I can do is appear forgetful, and neglect to send in my bill. If I cannot bring health, at least I have no right to take it away.

CARMEN. Not all physicians are like you.

HILARIO. No, Doña Carmen, there are doctors who receive more for a successful operation—successful except for the patient, who usually dies—than a matador does whose name is at the head of the bill. There are money-changers in all temples. To us, who respect our profession as a holy priesthood, it is sorrowful indeed.

CARMEN. You see so much suffering that you are powerless to relieve.

HILARIO. Yes, we do. I have seen much during my professional career. I began as a country district doctor, if you know what that implies. For ten years I wandered through those Spanish villages, as abandoned of God as of man, the country places of Castile, whose soil is the color of Franciscan sackcloth, and verily one might believe that they were consecrated to the asceticism of the Seraphic Saint. We say in Madrid: "How healthy it is to live and to be brought up in the country!" Marvellously healthy, indeed! As for the children, no more need be said. Every one of those towns is Herod's own kingdom. As ceaselessly as the reapers cut the grain in the summer, death harvests its infants throughout the course of the year. It could not be otherwise. The children are dirty, undernourished; the exhausted mothers are obliged to wean them prematurely, for one is scarcely born before another succeeds to its place, to sap her vitality. Yes, death may move quickly, but life, too, does not rest. In consequence, a child who grows up, a stroke of lightning could not harm. As these are the ones visitors see as they pass through the villages, they exclaim: "How healthy, how strong these children are!" But those of us who have lived in these towns, who have seen what they are, who have been victims, as I have been, of their desolation, entertain a different opinion. I lost

three children, my three children on my wanderings through those abodes of ignorance and neglect. In each case, an epidemic carried one off. Then I determined to move to Madrid, at whatever cost. I felt that in Madrid my profession would prove more agreeable, that the poverty would not be so devastating nor so dour; but it is worse, a thousand times worse, because the sensibility of those who suffer is more refined, because the contrasts are greater, and the almost animal resignation of the man who has seen nothing else, of the man who is not able to compare, of the man who, without rebellion, accepts, is no longer possible. While I remained there, I myself was more humble, more resigned in the presence of another's grief, or before my own. I was able to say: "It is God's will. God has decreed it." But here I am not; here, I feel differently. Many a time, indignantly, I have burst out: "No, no, it is not God; it cannot be! Man, man is responsible." It is his cruelty, his injustice, because we call ourselves Christians, and we live, as you must admit, like wild beasts. The pretense has endured a long time. But are we Christians? Then we should live as brothers, and, as Christians, love one another. Are we wild beasts? An end then to this hypocrisy! Let us fall to and devour each other, and may that one prevail who has most force. Anything rather than this injustice as a social state, propped up by devious arts and worse laws, the rule of the few based upon the weakness of the many, who are not able even to rebel like wild beasts, because they have been cowed and debilitated by starvation, and have learned at last to call their cowardice resignation. These things cannot, they must not be. God has not ordered them, they are the bungling work of man, and man can fight with man. Forgive this peroration. "What has happened to Don Hilario?" you ask, "that he has turned orator, and addresses us like a town

meeting?" To-day has been one of those days with me when a man must cry out to himself, if he can find no one into whose ears to pour his wrath. This morning I lost a patient, a working man, honorable, the father of a family, which he left, as the saying is, only day and night to remember him by. On the other hand, I cured another, a monstrous rogue, rotten with money, who is so solicitous to avoid even the appearance of virtue that he has not so much as one vice that might induce him to part with a penny. Yet to-day, when I dismissed myself, he said to me, highly satisfied: "By the way, I forgot to tell you. In spite of not being able to attend to business, I have had a rare stroke of luck. I have cleared a hundred thousand pesetas. Have a cigar?" It is the one I am smoking now, or rather biting in bitterness. We all know that death shoots in the dark, but, man alive, now and then he ought to display at least blind instinct! Then I come to this house, I see you, who are so deserving of happiness, from every point of view, and I find you sad, preoccupied; and I know the reason. Your son is about to marry. You, his mother, foresee fresh privations, direr hardships than before. You see your daughter suffer, and it wrings your heart. It is only natural. But your son suffers, too—yes, he does; I know, because he has talked with me, not more than a few days ago. But is this right? Is it human? Should an honorable love become a reproach, almost a source of remorse to a young man, who acts simply in obedience to the law of nature? Can it be a mother's duty to oppose the love of her child? Why, it is like a betrayal of motherhood itself! Is there not something iniquitous, something monstrous in all this?

CARMEN. But, Don Hilario, am I not right—not to oppose it, I should not attempt that, and it would be useless—but to prevent if I can the shipwreck of my son's happiness,

the ruin of my poor family which I have preserved until now?—and at what sacrifice!

HILARIO. The iniquitousness, Doña Carmen, lies precisely in this: that you should be right. The realities of life are all on your side. With the marketing book in your hand, you are more potent than two hearts who are embarking upon life's adventure, the pursuit of happiness, prepared to give their all, owning allegiance only to youth and to love. How can you expect them to listen to you? "Be careful," you say, "bread is so much, potatoes so much; beans are at this figure. They are all going up, everything is in the clouds." But love, too, is in the clouds, as they think because it is divine. How can we make them understand that it is also because it is dear, and that there is a more intimate relationship between love and vegetables, between the heart and the marketing book, than there is between the illusions of youth and the realities of life?

ADELAIDA. [*Outside*] Yes, he is coming directly. Are the ladies in here?

RAMONA. [*Outside*] This way, Señorita Adelaida.

CARMEN. Adelaida.

ADELAIDA *enters.*

ADELAIDA. How do you do? How are you, Don Hilario?

HILARIO. How do you do?

LUISA. You are all dressed up.

ADELAIDA. I have spent the afternoon making calls. Cristóbal had nothing to do, so he was able to come along. We were under obligations to so many friends, whom we have known all our lives—the Benítez, the González Flores, and dear General Borrego's widow. Such friendships simply cannot be sacrificed. How are you feeling to-day? Ramona tells me you are not well. Goodness gracious! What is the matter with her, Don Hilario?

HILARIO. She seems much brighter.

ADELAIDA. Don't you think a change would do her good?

HILARIO. A change would do every one of us good. I must be going; I still have two or three visits to make.

ADELAIDA. Do you find much sickness?

HILARIO. Much as usual. I have no reason for complaint.

ADELAIDA. You are not losing many patients?

HILARIO. The death-rate is not as active as might be wished.

ADELAIDA. Heavens! What a dreadful thing to say!

HILARIO. Not that I wish any man harm. Few should die, but let them be well selected. That is what I had in mind when I said that it was not as active as might be wished. Good night, Doña Carmen. Good night, Luisita. [*To* ADELAIDA] My regards to your brother and to your intended.

ADELAIDA. Thanks. I shall remember you to them both.

HILARIO. He is still your intended?

ADELAIDA. Oh, yes indeed! Our engagement, as you may suppose, is quite serious. We are not children.

HILARIO. Don't come to the door, Doña Carmen. I insist....

CARMEN. [*At the rear*] Ramona, open the door for Don Hilario. Good evening, Don Hilario.

DON HILARIO *goes out.*

ADELAIDA. Don Hilario is a nice man.

CARMEN. He is so honest.

ADELAIDA. As a physician, I should say he was entirely out of date.

CARMEN. We are not in a position to judge. At least Don Hilario does not deceive us; he recommends no unnecessary expense.

ADELAIDA. Yes, that is more than can be said of all doctors. We always suffered from a perfect plague of diseases

at our house. Poor papa went through three operations in eight years, which he never recovered from; the misfortunes of our family date from that time. As for Aunt Virginia, everybody knows she was insane for five years after her husband returned from the Philippines, when she thought he was dead. Naturally, it was a good deal of a shock. My brother and I, fortunately, do not know what it means to have a doctor in the house, nor to take medicine either, except a little Carabaña water now and then before retiring at night. So no wonder I am apprehensive. Generally, the person you think is the strongest and healthiest is taken, and he is lucky if he ever gets up. González Flores's wife was telling me yesterday about one of their friends. They subscribed to a box at the Opera together. When their turn came, there she sat with them in the box, but by the time their turn came round again they had a corpse on their hands, so now they are trying to change the box. The number is thirteen and they are becoming superstitious.

CARMEN. We must avoid these sad subjects on Luisita's account.

ADELAIDA. Oh, yes! I beg your pardon. All the same, they are fascinating.

CARMEN. How is it that you are alone to-night?

ADELAIDA. My brother and Galán are right on my heels; I left them at home working. My brother was dictating some papers to Galán, so I decided not to wait. Ah, I have good news for you! Galán receives his promotion next month; he has the Minister's promise.

CARMEN. Congratulations.

LUISA. I suppose, then, you will marry at once?

ADELAIDA. No, we plan to do nothing rash. Until his salary has been increased to sixteen thousand pesetas, it is out of the question. I have waited seven years already, so we shall not mind an additional three or four.

LUISA. If you are not congenial, it will not be through lack of opportunity to become acquainted.

ADELAIDA. All that you can know, my dear, is little enough when it comes to a man. One does hear such stories. Only to-day, General Borrego's widow was telling me about a young girl, the daughter of some intimate friends, who came back to her parents after she had been married two months, because her husband, a young man of excellent family—they mentioned no names, but I can find out from Galán, he has inside information—well, her husband just spoiled her. And you must have heard, too, about the Molineros, who have been carrying on in the newspapers, and had their pictures published in a triangle, with the co-respondent included, all taken together in the same group?

CARMEN. We scarcely have time to keep up with the society news nowadays.

PAQUITA *and* MANOLO *enter at the rear.*

LUISA. Here come Paquita and Manolo.

CARMEN. Good evening.

MANOLO. Good evening, aunt. How do you do, Luisita? Adelaida.... Where are Cristóbal and Galán?

ADELAIDA. They will be here directly. Hello, Paquita. How are you?

PAQUITA. Quite wretched, thank you; I am fading away. Apparently my husband is resigned to my death.

MANOLO. Don't say that, my dear. They might believe you.

PAQUITA. It is true, just the same. You know the doctors agree that I will die if I live in Madrid long enough; they advised you to take me to the suburbs, or to hurry and find a suitable place in the country before it was too late.

MANOLO. But I have to find the suburb or the country that agrees with you first. Where did we go last summer? You know yourself that we only held out four days.

PAQUITA. Because you picked the craziest house in the most impossible town that was ever conceived by a man.

MANOLO. I leave it to you if a villa on the *Côte d'azur* can be hired for twenty-five duros a season? I told you to get anything that would suit, and then go there and stay with the children. I can't ask for another vacation; I wouldn't if I could, to spend it with you and the boys. I need a vacation myself.

PAQUITA. You do? And where would you send me with those five little devils? Talk about murder! We couldn't come down before because of the row they raised when we started to put them to bed. They haven't the slightest respect for their father.

MANOLO. Little pitchers have big ears.

PAQUITA. We have a new maid.

ADELAIDA. Yes, the one who came yesterday.

PAQUITA. No, she came to-day; the one yesterday left last night. She seemed to feel strange with the children. She took a prejudice against them because they yelled she was homely.

ADELAIDA. Are the poor dears all well and strong now?

PAQUITA. When did you ever hear of their all being well together? Five of them? The two oldest have indigestion. They never miss a day.

LUISA. Why do you let them eat so much?

PAQUITA. How can I help it? Their father has no authority; it isn't my place to wring their necks. Let them die a natural death. The baby is cutting his teeth. Now we have music all night.

ADELAIDA. Evidently. Manolo is falling asleep.

PAQUITA. He isn't the only one who is losing sleep.—Don't make yourself conspicuous.

MANOLO. Eh? I beg your pardon.... I....

CARMEN. Yes, you! We noticed it.

PAQUITA. Why didn't you stay home if you wanted to sleep?

CARMEN. Home is the one place where the poor man cannot sleep. Don't disturb him.—Make yourself comfortable. Lie down in the other room if you want to.

PAQUITA. Don't bother about him, he is used to it. He is perfectly well; he can get along without sleep. I am different. As it is, I am so thin you would hardly know me. My face isn't bad, but I wish you could see my legs.

MANOLO. They can judge by mine.

PAQUITA. There is no comparison. He only wants to attract attention.

MANOLO. Don't you believe it. If you encourage her, she will be at death's door. I not only lose my sleep, but I get up early in the morning and go to the office and work there all day, and then, when I come home, all this is extra. I get no relief.

PAQUITA. At least you have the variety. Here I am, shut up all day inside of four walls, with five wild animals and a servant girl, when we happen to have one. None of them sticks it out more than four days.

MANOLO. Now you have a description of a terrestrial paradise.

CRISTÓBAL *and* PACO GALÁN *enter.*

CRISTÓBAL. Good evening. Good evening, everybody.

GALÁN. Sit down; oblige me. Don't disturb yourselves.

MANOLO. But I must. I cannot usurp your position.

ADELAIDA. Gracious, Manolo! We are not sentimental. Did you finish your work?

CRISTÓBAL. Yes, Galán kindly offered to take my dictation, so we were able to conclude earlier.

GALÁN. Your brother tells me that you made a number of calls during the afternoon. With what success?

ADELAIDA. Ah, I was expecting that question! We stopped first at the González Flores's——

GALÁN. Saúco 32, second floor. Correct? I know the house. A friend, who is a magistrate, a most worthy person, lives in the apartment on the left on the first floor. There are plants in the entrance, the doorman wears livery, and the stairs are carpeted. An excellent establishment! The apartments rent at three thousand pesetas, running up to three thousand five hundred, except for the Fombonas's, those American ladies, who occupy the two lower apartments, which have been thrown into one, and pay four thousand—I am wrong, four thousand five hundred.

ADELAIDA. I never saw a man with such a head for business.

GALÁN. How did you enjoy yourselves at the González Flores's?

ADELAIDA. I was waiting for that question.

PAQUITA. [*To* LUISA] Lovers' confidences are always amusing, but none ever equalled Adelaida's and Galán's. She admits herself they are unique. Do you hear what they say?

LUISA. But, my dear, after having been engaged seven years, the wonder is that there is anything left to be said.

PAQUITA. By the time they are married I think myself the edge will be off. Suppose I had thought it over so carefully?.... There sits my husband fast asleep.

LUISA. I am sorry for the poor man; the boys give him no rest.

CARMEN. [*To* CRISTÓBAL] These are busy days for you, too; we are drawing near the end of the month.

CRISTÓBAL. Extremely busy indeed. Remember, I am

agent for seven estates in Madrid, having charge not only of real estate but of the personal property, tangible as well as intangible; and all seven belong to widows, or to single ladies in the eye of the law—for all practical purposes, that is, they may be regarded as single—which increases a man's responsibility; not that I wish to complain, but you know women are exacting. I have more than I can attend to, and it has affected my health. But there is no help for it until my sister has been provided for, which I trust will be within three or four years. Adelaida has had the discretion to wait; she had the good sense to deliberate. Fortunately, she has encountered an honorable man. I am greatly pleased with the progress of the engagement. We have had time, as it were, to become acquainted; not, of course, as thoroughly as we shall be, because one never becomes thoroughly acquainted; nevertheless, it is a guaranty. Adelaida is older than I am, although she pretends the contrary, so there is little danger of their loading themselves up with children enthusiastically, which is the bane of most marriages.

CARMEN. No, I should scarcely apprehend a mistake in that direction.

CRISTÓBAL. What is this talk about your son? This idea of Julio's—pardon my introducing the subject if it is disagreeable—is sheer folly. It is a man's duty to be reasonable. Otherwise, how does he differ from the dumb animals? Marriage means nothing to the rich, and it means very little to the poor; in fact, they are frequently better off married. The woman adds the man's wages to her own, and the children take care of themselves. They require no clothes nor education; the poor get along without them. Marriage is a serious problem to persons in our walk in life. This is not a romantic age.

ADELAIDA. [*To* GALÁN] I have told you absolutely every-

thing I did this afternoon. How have you spent the day? Thinking of me?

GALÁN. Adelaida, don't ask such a question, even in jest. First, let me give you a detailed description of my day.

ADELAIDA. No, reserve that until later. Make a little general conversation, or they will accuse us of forgetting our manners. Say something.

GALÁN. Did you notice what remarkable weather we are having to-day? Nobody pays any attention.... Did you notice the weather?

PAQUITA. Yes, it was hot, and then it seemed to cool off.

CRISTÓBAL. This Madrid climate!

GALÁN. It accounts for all the sickness.

ADELAIDA. And all the deaths. Galán, before I forget it —did you bring the paper?

GALÁN. I always do.

ADELAIDA. Run over the deaths, if you don't mind. I can scarcely wait....

GALÁN. No, nothing fresh to-day. Only anniversary notices.

RAMONA *enters.*

RAMONA. Señorita Paca! Señorita Paca!

PAQUITA. What is the matter? I thought so. I am needed....

RAMONA. Your girl is here, and she says the baby's awake, and he's crying. Nothing she can do will keep the poor boy quiet.

PAQUITA. He wants his mother.—Manolo! Manolo!

MANOLO. [*Asleep*] Do something, can't you? Walk up and down with him, dear.

PAQUITA. He thinks he is home.—Manolo!

MANOLO. Eh.... Ah!.... You frightened me to death.

PAQUITA. It serves you right for sleeping when you're

out. The maid is here and she says the baby's awake. What shall we do? Will you go or I?

MANOLO. I will, I will; don't you bother.

PAQUITA. Can you find the soothing syrup? It's on top of the dresser. Don't make a mistake and give him anything else. It wouldn't be the first time.

MANOLO. My dear, to hear you talk people would think——

PAQUITA. Not that you nearly paralyzed the little angel last time with gum arabic. Hurry, if you insist upon going!

MANOLO. I fly. Ladies, excuse me. [*Goes out.*

PAQUITA. [*At the door*] Be sure the maid has put out the fire in the brazier, and look in the canaries' room and see whether she has closed the blinds. If she hasn't, they will begin singing as soon as it is daylight, and drive us all crazy.

CRISTÓBAL. Paquita, goodness gracious! After sitting up all night with five children, how have you any stomach left for canaries?

PAQUITA. It does seem foolish, I suppose. Just a fancy —the only relic of my girlhood I have left.

CRISTÓBAL. Galán, do me a favor; look at the condition of the market. How is the new loan?

GALÁN. Ah! 103.

CRISTÓBAL. Going strong!

GALÁN. No, pardon, I skipped a line. 84.

CRISTÓBAL. Not so bad, if she can hold that figure.

PAQUITA. What an enticing conversation!

CRISTÓBAL. I am not interested, unfortunately, in the recent issue.

ADELAIDA. Neither am I, unfortunately.

PAQUITA. Nonsense, both of you have more than you know what to do with. Why not? You have no one to consider —a brother and sister living alone.

ADELAIDA. Goodness gracious! Remember what it costs to live in Madrid. The first word you speak here is dear.

PAQUITA. You might look in for a moment at our house, if you think so.

CRISTÓBAL. Thanks for the invitation, Paquita.

PAQUITA. Although, of course, married people have compensations which you bachelors do not enjoy.

CRISTÓBAL. Evidently.

ADELAIDA. Now you must tell me every single thing that you did to-day.

GALÁN. I got up, to begin with, very early; it might have been seven. I saw it was cloudy; then I was afraid it was going to rain....

Voices outside, at the rear.

CARMEN. Who is talking in the hall? I hear Julio.

RAMONA *enters.*

RAMONA. Señora! Señora!

CARMEN. What is it?

LUISA. Don't be so excitable.

PAQUITA. Word from my husband!

CARMEN. No.... [*To* RAMONA] Ask them into the parlor. Light the lights. Hurry!

RAMONA. They said they would rather come where you were; they are friends. They are taking off their things.

[RAMONA *goes out.*

LUISA. Who is it?

CARMEN. Prepare for a surprise, a tremendous surprise: Doña Teresa and Emilia calling with my son.

PAQUITA. God-a-mercy! I am a perfect sight! I'll slip out this way, and slide down the hall. Don't let them know. Enjoy yourselves; I am needed at home, anyhow. Here they come.... Ah! I am going to peep through the door as I go, and see what they have on.

[*Goes out, at the rear, left.*

LUISA. This is an unusual hour for a call.

ADELAIDA. My dear, it is in the family.

JULIO. [*Outside*] Mother! Mother!

CARMEN. Julio!

DOÑA TERESA, EMILIA, *and* JULIO *enter.*

JULIO. See whom I am bringing with me.

TERESA. Good evening, Carmen. Good evening, Luisita.

CARMEN. Gracious, this is a surprise!

EMILIA. How are you, Luisita?

LUISA. Emilia....

CARMEN. Why didn't you go into the parlor?

TERESA. No, we only dropped in informally; we prefer it where you are. But we interrupt....

CARMEN. Not at all.

TERESA. How are you, Adelaida? It is a long time since I have seen you.

ADELAIDA. You have moved so far away. I was explaining to Emilia....

TERESA. Your brother and Galán are both looking well.

CRISTÓBAL. Señora!

CARMEN. Do sit down.

TERESA. Julio called at our house, as he does every evening —I trust that I am not betraying any secret?

CARMEN. No, indeed.

TERESA. Not that I wish to be understood as encouraging visits from a young man, even in the light of suitor, but a mother, as you realize, is not always in a position to oppose a daughter's wishes, especially when her mind has been made up, although it may not be for her own good. Anything is preferable to these exhibitions upon the streets, or in public places, or to hanging over balconies.

CARMEN. I quite agree with you.

TERESA. Julio tells me that Luisita has had another attack.

CARMEN. Oh, he did tell you? I had supposed that he hadn't noticed it.

They continue the conversation.

EMILIA. [*To* LUISA] I have quarrelled with your brother.

LUISA. Not in earnest?

JULIO. Yes, she is angry with me. She is taking your part.

LUISA. Mine?

EMILIA. He told me that you were ill, and that he hadn't even gone in to ask how you were, because he was so anxious to see me. He seemed proud of it—imagine! He expected me to be pleased. I told him that he was a bad brother, and that I was coming to see you this very evening. Now I am going to make Julio ask you to forgive him right here before me.

JULIO. She says I don't love you.

LUISA. Of course I forgive you. Thanks very much.

EMILIA. You don't know how fond I am of you. Ask Julio. I am always talking about you.

JULIO. She is, really.

LUISA. I know, Emilia. I am very fond of you, too.

They go on talking.

ADELAIDA. [*To* GALÁN] She is beautiful; anybody ought to be able to see it. Although if you don't think so, I take it I am to be congratulated.

GALÁN. Regularity of features means nothing to me; the expression is everything. An expressive face never seems to be ugly. Absolutely not....!

They continue talking.

TERESA. We are invited to the theatre this evening, but my daughter insisted upon stopping here first to inquire about Luisita. As you see, we do not stand upon etiquette. We drop in informally, although you do not take the same liberty with us.

CARMEN. We almost never go out, as my daughter's health is so delicate. Julio will explain——

TERESA. It is quite unnecessary. Of course, I appreciate that you are not pleased, but it is not any too pleasant for me, either. You do not have to convince me that our children have been foolish; in fact, it is downright madness. But what can their mothers do? However you may have discouraged your son, you may be sure it is nothing to what I have done to my daughter; I never miss an opportunity. It is no reflection upon us, nor any disparagement to our children, and I should not care to be understood as insinuating that either of them might have done better elsewhere. It is simply that, in my opinion, this affair is impossible.

They continue the conversation.

JULIO. [*To* EMILIA] I am listening to our mothers blossoming out into mothers-in-law. We are tempting fate.

EMILIA. Mamma is offended because your mother hasn't called since we moved. You saw how hard it was to make her come. I had to exaggerate dreadfully about poor Luisita.

JULIO. Perhaps we had better intervene. It begins to look serious.

EMILIA. Yes, start a general conversation.

JULIO. Mother....

CARMEN. What is it, dear?

JULIO. Where are Manolo and Paquita this evening?

CARMEN. They were here, but they left. Word came the boys were crying.

JULIO. Great news!

TERESA. Yes, five children at their age! Isn't it a calamity? How can they expect any peace?

CARMEN. You can't put that too strongly.

TERESA. Some people might profit by their example.

JULIO. Pebbles on our roof. Well, what progress, friend Galán? When is the happy day?

GALÁN. Soon, very soon. The Minister has pledged his word.

JULIO. No, I mean when do you pledge your word? I was referring to the matrimonial prospect.

GALÁN. Oh! You had me. Whenever an opening comes.

ADELAIDA. There is no great hurry, as we have waited seven years.

JULIO. I admire your constancy.

TERESA. They have had time to think.

CRISTÓBAL. And it deserves thought. I have thought myself.

JULIO. You are fortunate to be able to think. All we do is feel. Don't we, Emilia?

EMILIA. [*Aside*] Be careful! We are in the enemy's country. The best thing will be to remove mamma. Otherwise this will inspire her, and we shall have a continuous session to-morrow, beginning when she gets up.

JULIO. Quite right. Don't you really want me to come to the theatre?

EMILIA. No, not to-night. Stay home with your sister, as a punishment. Besides, if you come now, your mother will get the idea that I only brought you so as to let them see how you follow me everywhere, and I don't want them to think that. Stay home this evening. Anyway, don't come up to the box.

JULIO. No, I am not popular with your aunt and your cousins; they have their own candidate.

EMILIA. No, they have heard only nice things about you; it would be awfully foolish to come. I am only going to please mamma. If I didn't, she would make a scene. "Your

cousins will be offended. You will get yourself disliked by everybody."

JULIO. Yes, I know. I think you had better go.

EMILIA. You won't mind, will you?

JULIO. No, I have confidence in you.

EMILIA. You are perfectly wonderful.

TERESA. What time is it?

EMILIA. Time to go, mamma—if you are ready.

TERESA. Good night, Carmen. Good night, Luisita.

CARMEN. One of these days we hope to return your call. You must not hold it against us if we are a little remiss.

TERESA. Adelaida, I shall accept no excuses from you, either.

ADELAIDA. Don't mention it, please! Whenever I look at you, it makes me blush.

TERESA. Good evening, everybody.

ADELAIDA. It is time for us to retire. Are you ready, Cristóbal? Are you, Galán? You know you have to be up early, and you are not a man who can get along without sleep.

GALÁN. I accommodate myself to your convenience.

CARMEN. Ramona! [*At the rear*] Light the lights in the hall.—Good night, good night, everybody.

EMILIA. Until to-morrow, then, at the usual hour?

JULIO. Not before?

EMILIA. I was just going to ask.

JULIO. I shall sit down and write the very instant you leave the house. Our four pages!

EMILIA. I shall write as soon as we get back from the theatre.

JULIO. I might wait, then, so we can be writing at the same time. We shall be thinking of each other at the same time!

EMILIA. The same time? I think of you all the time.

JULIO. I have time for nothing else.

TERESA. Does it take those children forever to say good-by? Emilia!

EMILIA. Coming, mamma.

All go out at the rear. Presently DOÑA CARMEN, LUISA, *and* JULIO *re-enter.*

CARMEN. Aren't you going to the theatre? What is the matter? A lovers' quarrel?

JULIO. No, mamma. I suppose you think I have nothing to do but run after Emilia? She has gone to the theatre with her cousins this evening. I have met them, but only casually.

CARMEN. Yes, you must seem insignificant enough to them, just as you do to her mother.

JULIO. That may be, mamma; I ask no questions, it is nothing to me, anyhow. You are simply impossible.

CARMEN. I can't even open my mouth. You always take offense.

LUISA. Julio! [*A pause*] Emilia's dress was lovely.

JULIO. She makes all her own clothes.

CARMEN. Who ever heard of an unmarried woman who didn't make her own clothes? When she marries, something seems to happen; she immediately forgets how.

JULIO. Oh, mother! As a mother-in-law, you will be terrible!

CARMEN. I suppose I am nothing more than a mother-in-law to you already. I am no longer your mother?

JULIO. No, mother, don't you say such things. The mother-in-law will stick out, though. When a mother once becomes a mother-in-law, she is a mother-in-law even to her own children.

LUISA. Emilia is such a sweet girl.

JULIO. You are not prejudiced.

CARMEN. So she has been too much for you, too?

LUISA. She is so affectionate.

CARMEN. Probably to everybody but me. Of course I am not fair to her.

JULIO. There you are again! You are the one who treats her unfairly. She has spoken to me about it, and that is the reason she is afraid to be demonstrative. You would accuse her of trying to flatter you if she was. What is the poor girl to do?

CARMEN. I realize how fond she is of me.

JULIO. Nothing of the sort. The sooner we drop this subject the better. It is becoming offensive. Are you feeling better, Luisita?

LUISA. Much; I am more cheerful.

CARMEN. Thanks to your efforts.

JULIO. I know that I ought not to have gone out without asking what I could do. I have heard that already.

CARMEN. Can't I make an innocent remark? Do you have to be insulted by every word your mother says? Can't I express myself if I don't approve? You were not always like this. No wonder I think somebody has been twisting you around her little finger!

JULIO. You are the one who is different. You can't speak without hurting me, without wounding me in what is dearest and best.

CARMEN. That is the last insult! What ingratitude! In my child! Oh, what ingratitude!

JULIO. There you are.

LUISA. Oh, come, mamma! Julio!

JULIO. Tell me, did I invite this? Have I committed any sin? Are you afraid that you won't be able to get along without me? It will be just the same. I will work harder than

I ever did, and you will have everything you need. I have been offered another position already, at hours which do not conflict with the one I have now.

CARMEN. Yes, kill yourself working! Do you expect me to sit here calmly and look on? I don't care myself, I ask nothing. I would be satisfied if I thought you would be happy, but it cannot be, it cannot be! A mother never knows what is best for her own children. I was so proud that my son was good, that he had never occasioned me one moment's concern, but now I don't know—I could wish that you hadn't been so well behaved, that you had had more experience of life.

JULIO. Yes, instead of an honorable love, you would prefer a liaison, some discreditable adventure. Is that what you mean? I will not listen to you; don't demean yourself in my eyes. Let me preserve my illusions at least. Why shouldn't I be happy? Were you and my father millionaires when you married? Did you consider anything but your love, which is what I am doing now?

CARMEN. There is no comparison. Times have changed; we could live upon less. I was not brought up to luxury like Emilia. She is going to the theatre to-night to sit in a box with her cousins, as well dressed as they are. Who would imagine to look at them that their position was not the same?

JULIO. You are mistaken. Emilia is a sensible girl; she understands that we cannot afford display. We shall be happy, and you will be very fond of her. Now don't torment me any more; let us not distress ourselves. Never doubt my love, nor compel me to doubt that I love you, when I know that there is not a dearer mother in all the world.

CARMEN. No, my boy; we must not distress ourselves. Luisa, why don't you go to bed? I am going to bed myself.

LUISA. Very well, mamma.

CARMEN. I'll bring you a cup of broth; you must swallow something. You haven't eaten all day.

LUISA. Good night, Julio.

JULIO. Good night. I know that you love me.

LUISA. Because I say nothing, because I don't shout. I have said nothing all my life! [*Goes out.*

CARMEN. You might take something yourself.

JULIO. No, I'm not hungry. I may drink a little orange-juice. Don't you bother; I'll find it.

CARMEN. [*Calling*] Ramona! Ramona!

RAMONA. [*Entering*] Señora?

CARMEN. Let me have the account.

RAMONA. Here it is, señora. The twenty centimos are from yesterday; I forgot to put them down. There was the postman, and a roll sent in last night.

CARMEN. Good. Then I owe you eighty centimos. I'll give them to you now. It would be a miracle if you weren't short.

RAMONA. What shall I get for to-morrow, señora?

CARMEN. We can plan it while you are helping me undress. What would you like to-morrow, Julio?

JULIO. Don't ask me. Whatever there is.

RAMONA. One is as bad as the other. They never eat.

CARMEN. I am going to bed. When the señorito goes, be sure the brazier is out. Bring me the broth for the señorita. Did you lock the door?

RAMONA. Yes, señora.

CARMEN. Have you put the cat in the kitchen? I don't want him jumping on me like he did the other night.

RAMONA. No, señora.

CARMEN. Good night, Julio. Don't forget the light. I hope you sleep.

JULIO. Good night; I hope you sleep. Remember now, no bad dreams.

CARMEN. It's bad enough while I am awake. [*Goes out.*

RAMONA. Good night, señorito. [*Goes out.*

JULIO. Good night, Ramona. [*Absent-mindedly, he picks up the account and glances over it*] Bread....potatoes....a half-kilo of meat....fruit.... Total, six pesetas, eighty centimos. To feed an entire family! Yet mamma says that living is dear!

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

Another room in the same house. A door at the rear and another on the left. A balcony on the right.

LUISA *is giving orders to* RAMONA.

LUISA. Put the hat in my room and bring a jar of water for the flowers. Has mamma gone out?

RAMONA. Yes, señorita, to mass, and on her way back she was to stop at Señorito Manolo's. One of the boys isn't well, so I hear. [*Goes out at the rear.*

LUISA. It's no miracle, either.

JULIO *enters.*

LUISA. Are you home?

JULIO. You can see.

LUISA. Didn't you go to the office?

JULIO. Not thi morning. What have you been doing out so early, alone?

LUISA. I wasn't alone. Mamma was with me.

JULIO. Don't lie to me.

LUISA. What are you talking about?

RAMONA *re-enters, carrying a glass jar filled with water.*

RAMONA. Here's the water, señorita.

LUISA. These flowers are for the dining-room, and set these in my room. I love to see flowers everywhere.

RAMONA. They smell as sweet as can be. [*Goes out.*

LUISA. What a beautiful day! I couldn't resist the temptation of buying these flowers; they are cheap now. Choose the ones you like best, and take them to Emilia as a present. Aren't these wonderful roses?

JULIO. Don't try to change the conversation. I know

where you have been, and it isn't the first time, either. This has been going on for some days.

LUISA. Do you mean to scold me?

JULIO. Scold you? No, but I tell you you are doing wrong. Besides, I can't permit it.

LUISA. Why not? I am happy. I feel much stronger than I did. You must have noticed. . . .

JULIO. Does mamma know?

LUISA. Oh, don't be so suspicious! Of course she does; I told her. It isn't any secret; it's not a crime, anyway.

JULIO. Is she willing to allow you to go out alone into the streets, to expose yourself to insult, to a thousand coarse remarks?

LUISA. Nothing of the kind. Nobody ever speaks to me.

JULIO. Why should you give lessons, and subject yourself to the whims and exactions of strangers?

LUISA. Nonsense! They are nice people, who don't like to send their little daughters to school, and prefer a governess in the house. The essons I give are not very profound; only reading writing, sewing, and, then, I tell stories. I never saw children who were so fond of stories. I have exhausted all I ever knew, so that I've had to learn others, and sometimes even to make them up. All the same, my pupils are very fond of me. It is so easy to please children.

JULIO. Do you suppose that I will sit here and consent——

LUISA. To what? To my leading a life that is no longer altogether useless? Can't I contribute something, though it may be very little, toward relieving the anxiety of my mother as to what will become of me, as to what will become of us both?

JULIO. Yes, and to add to mine. You know I am right. Do you want me to feel that I am an egotist, who hasn't hesitated to sacrifice you, when you have sacrificed yourselves

all these years on my account, so that I, the young gentleman, might have my career, so that the señorito should want for nothing? I admit it; you don't have to insist. It isn't necessary to throw it like this in my face.

LUISA. Why do you talk like that?

JULIO. Because I see your object plainly. Will you tell me what good these lessons can do, with the four or five duros they bring you? It is mamma's strategy; her campaign has been evident for some time. She says nothing, she scarcely speaks to me any more, but she takes care to insinuate at every opportunity what she thinks it best not to say.

LUISA. That isn't true. Mamma didn't know; she scolded me when she found out. But if it makes you feel badly, I will give it up, although—you don't know what it means. I was so happy! You say you have been the young gentleman of the family, but I have been the young lady all my life. You have studied, you have worked, and whatever you have earned has been for us, while I—I have been the most useless of beings, the vapid young lady with nerves, a care and a burden to you, and to every one else. If only I had had a religious vocation, I might have been a nun, and our difficulties would have been solved. I don't believe I even have a vocation to marry—and it isn't enough for one to have that, there must be two. Yet now, now, I really thought I had found my vocation, teaching little children. The girls don't call me Doña, they call me just Luisa, or Luisita, and they tell me I am their big sister, Sister Luisa. It sounds holy, don't you think so? I almost feel as if I had taken my vows.

JULIO. You don't impose on me with this show of false gaiety. There is an undercurrent of sadness in what you say.

LUISA. Don't you deceive yourself; I have never been so happy. When did you ever see me laugh as much as I do now?

JULIO. There are two ways of smiling, of pretending to be happy when a person is sad. One is bitterly, that is irony; the other is gently, that is resignation; and it is your way. Either is as cheerful as flowers on a tomb where one's illusions lie buried. Your cheerfulness does not deceive me. Confess it, dear Sister Luisa, I am right—gentle and resigned as you are!

LUISA. Are you going to cry?

JULIO. I wish you could teach me your gentle resignation, which smiles so that others may have no occasion to cry.

LUISA. It is very simple. You suffer because you have done wrong. It is remorse, because you make others cry.

JULIO. But what can I do? Give up Emilia? Is that what you ask? Is that what you want me to do?

LUISA. No, Julio, surely not. But don't you dream of what you have been planning again. Don't you suppose that we know? To go away, to leave us, to try your fortune in some strange country, far away! To be sure, mamma knows, although she won't admit it. That is why she has been so depressed these past days. We could resign ourselves to anything but that—to have you leave us forever, because it would be forever.

JULIO. But life here has become impossible for us all. However I might wish to believe the contrary, no illusions upon that point can be had. I love Emilia from the bottom of my heart, I cannot give up her love; but I recognize also that I cannot desert you. Without me, this house would be reduced to the direst poverty. I realize that to marry under these circumstances is a hazardous step; our love itself may be the first victim to fall by the way. I have made every

effort to find other employment, to discover some solution, but here all my struggles are useless. Time flies. Emilia's mother, her entire family, are plotting against us, and you are doing the same here; because you love me, I do not question it, but it is unfortunate that it should have the appearance of selfishness at the same time. Meanwhile, life has become a constant torment to Emilia and to me. A situation such as this cannot continue; it is intolerable to us all. In the end it must be resolved by violent means, and it is better to end it now, once and forever. Absolute separation, a new life—there is no other way. A different life!

LUISA. A new life, a different life! Yes, that is easy for you, because you are young, you are in love. But what will become of your poor mothers? No, you have no right to think of it, if you ever did really think of it; Emilia has no right to consent, you cannot force her to choose between your love and her mother's. Yes, and you may be sorry if you do—I am a daughter myself, and I know how I feel.

JULIO. You have never been in love.

LUISA. I never have. I don't know how a woman loves a man, I don't know how far she might be carried by her love; but I understand a mother's love. For that, it is enough to be a woman. I don't know whether you will be happy, alone, far away, with your great love, but I do know that your poor mothers will be broken-hearted. Julio, you cannot do it, it cannot be. Promise me that you will never think of it again. Give me your word, Julio, my dear brother!

JULIO. You, too, have turned against me. Don't you torment me like all the others! [*Goes out, left.*

A pause. MANOLO *enters at the rear.*

MANOLO. Good morning, Luisita.

LUISA. Good morning, Manolo. How is the baby this morning?

MANOLO. Better. I am worried now about Paca; the shock was too much in her condition—I suppose she has told you? How are you? You seem depressed, you have been crying. Is it this news about Julio? Has your mother heard the talk about his going to America?

LUISA. Yes, it is no longer news to us. I was trying to persuade him to give it up, before he speaks to her. Don't you think it is madness?

MANOLO. I hardly know what to say. It seems foolish, but then it is only the natural consequence of other foolishness. Foolishness is endemic, like misfortunes in my family. When he told me, to be honest with you, I was at a loss what to say. I make up my mind to emigrate pretty nearly every day. Our house is not home; this is not living. Ah, my dear cousin, you proved you had sense when you declined to marry me!

LUISA. Don't be silly again.

MANOLO. Silly? Never again. We showed judgment, or rather you did. Apparently I was beyond all salvation.

LUISA. You mustn't say that. Paquita is kind; she is much more sympathetic than I am, more capable. Her disposition is better suited to putting up with annoyances. I admire the placid spirit in which she accepts everything.

MANOLO. Yes, Paquita is very kind, I cannot deny it; and so am I, very. Together we make a model couple. And the boys, too, are something wonderful! However, with two saints and so many angels in the house, it may not be exactly hell, but it is a respectable little purgatory, to say the least. I assure you that if Julio could spend a week with us, he would be cured permanently. As it is, a cousin of Paca's came last year and stayed a week, and this year we hear that he has entered the church, and is saying mass. Has Julio come back from the office?

LUISA. Yes, he is home. Would you like to see him?

MANOLO. If I could have a few words—on a matter of business.

LUISA. I'll call him. Wait.... Here comes Adelaida.

ADELAIDA *enters.*

ADELAIDA. Oh, my dear, my darling Luisa! Where is your mother?

LUISA. Why, what is the matter? Something has happened to you!

ADELAIDA. Oh, what a misfortune! Such a terrible calamity!

MANOLO. You don't mean it? Really, Adelaida?

ADELAIDA. I beg your pardon; I didn't see you were there.

MANOLO. I beg yours; I just ran in undressed. I didn't get to bed at all last night; I hadn't time even to wash.

ADELAIDA. I don't believe I should have noticed it. This morning I am scarcely myself....

LUISA. But what is it?

ADELAIDA. Oh, you could never guess! It is too horrible! Galán is at death's door. He may even be dead while we sit here and talk.

LUISA. You don't say so?

MANOLO. What was that again?

LUISA. But I can't believe it. This is so sudden!

ADELAIDA. For the past four or five days, as you know, he has not left the house; he suffered from a severe cold, that was all. Cristóbal stopped in to see him every day, and even yesterday we were not alarmed; but last night he sent word that he was worse, he had fever. Cristóbal hurried at once to his side, and at eleven I received a message that he was going to sit up and watch him all night; his condition was serious. This morning I became anxious when Cristóbal did not appear, so I sent the maid to inquire, and

now Cristóbal says that they have had a consultation, and the doctors all agree it may be pneumonia.

MANOLO. That is something at least.

ADELAIDA. But if they tell that to me, the pneumonia must already be advanced. He was delirious all night. All night long he dreamed that I was lying at his side.

MANOLO. Pshaw! To be expected.

ADELAIDA. But he is so proper, so reserved. Something surely has affected his mind. He will die, I am certain.

LUISA. Don't you exaggerate his condition?

MANOLO. Men have recovered from pneumonia before now.

ADELAIDA. He never will; he is too respectable. He is a perfect gentleman!

MANOLO. I cannot see why that should aggravate the complaint.

ADELAIDA. No, it is never safe to predict. He will die, that is certain. Then what will become of me? Will you do me a favor? That is why I am here. You must forgive me, but in an emergency such as this, one falls back on one's friends.

LUISA. Do tell us in what way we can be of service.

ADELAIDA. I sent at once to ascertain whether he would have any objection, under the circumstances, to my coming to the house; I had never, you may imagine, set foot inside the door. He lives alone with two servants, a man and a woman, who are both married—to each other—besides that, they are mature. But that makes no difference. I should not have ventured even under the protection of my brother, though he had resided with a regiment.

MANOLO. A regiment would have augmented the risk.

ADELAIDA. I am not in a trifling mood. Pardon my failure to smile.

MANOLO. I was serious.

ADELAIDA. Since we announced our engagement, I have not even passed through the street where he lives. More than once I have caught myself on the corner, but then I turned the other way. It may appear like undue modesty, but, praise God, I was brought up with principles. In this crisis, however, my brother feels it is my duty to fly to his side. Yet I should not be willing to trust myself with a maid. A respectable person ought to be present, so I thought of your mother, if she would be so kind as to come. It will be one of those favors that a woman never forgets.

LUISA. Adelaida, hardly that.

ADELAIDA. Ah, yes it will! These are occasions when one discovers one's friends. Now, take our neighbors on the second floor, for example. They have heard all about my bereavement, yet they have been pounding the piano all morning top-speed, without the slightest regard for the sound of the thing. What has become of your mamma?

LUISA. I thought she stopped at your house?

ADELAIDA. Now I remember I left her there.

LUISA. We might both go, then, and explain. Perhaps I had better come along.

ADELAIDA. I should appreciate it so much if you would. Ah, if we are only in time!

LUISA. Don't anticipate.

ADELAIDA. We might take a cab. I never could exhibit myself on the street after the flood of tears I have shed. While you talk to your mother, I can run up-stairs and change my dress. I am at my wit's end to know what to put on—a hat or a veil? Which do you think would be more appropriate?

LUISA. A hat, my dear, as yet. But hurry, or we may miss him.—I beg your pardon. With all this confusion, I

forgot to call Julio.—Julio! Julio!.... I leave you to tell him the news. He may feel that he ought to come.

MANOLO. And me, too. I will be there; count upon me.

ADELAIDA. Thank you so much! You are friends of mine. Ah, me! I shall accept it as a widow, and wear mourning for the rest of my life. We have been acquainted ten years, and engaged now for seven. They have seemed all too short!

MANOLO. Brief. Hurry, or he will be out of danger; it may prove a false alarm.

ADELAIDA. Oh, never! You will see. It is my duty to be reconciled, but he will die—he will die, I am certain! Hurry, Luisa! Come along.

ADELAIDA *and* LUISA *go out.*

JULIO *enters.*

JULIO. Hello, Manolo!

MANOLO. Hello, Julio.

JULIO. Was my sister with you?

MANOLO. Yes, she went out with Adelaida. They are looking for your mother, and then they are going to call on Galán. Have you heard?

JULIO. Not a word.

MANOLO. Galán is ill, Galán is dying.

JULIO. Are you serious?

MANOLO. According to Adelaida. She has mourned him so often during the cycle of their amours, that I assume we are enjoying another feature of the programme. Although it must happen some time. These long engagements may lead up to marriage, but while they are about it, a widow or widower is on a honeymoon by comparison. What do you think? How are your plans coming on?

JULIO. My plans? I don't know. Don Hilario has written to a friend in Buenos Aires, who settled there as a

young man, and has made a fortune. He is expecting a reply. Until we hear——

MANOLO. Have you said anything to your mother?

JULIO. No. Naturally, I am anxious to delay that as long as possible.

MANOLO. But Emilia? Is she willing? What does her mother say?

JULIO. Her mother is not pleased, as you may imagine. Since I suggested it, she has done all she could to influence Emilia against me. You ask about Emilia. How can I answer for her? She is a woman, and I myself, although I am a man, am not certain but that I will weaken when the time comes, and find that courage fails me to go through with it all.

MANOLO. It is a serious, a perilous step. Going out into the world to make one's fortune smacks too much of adventure. People do it in novels.

JULIO. Unfortunately, the conditions which confront me are distressingly real. You read the papers. Thousands emigrate every day.

MANOLO. Yes, but they belong to a different class. They are people who leave little behind, who have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

JULIO. Nothing to lose? If you and I and others in our position could lose what we have, we should be vastly better off.

MANOLO. You don't convince me.

JULIO. It is true. When our position in life becomes untenable, there are two ways of improving it. One is to advance, which is preferable, and more agreeable of course, but more difficult as well. That is my ambition; I aspire to it, naturally. Yet, if it should not be possible, I shall content myself with the other, and descend in the social scale, which

often is a man's only means of improving his state. If I cannot be a millionaire, I will be a working man, a day-laborer, but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that the daily wage that I earn will be my own, whether much or little, and not be swallowed up by the false appearances to which my social position has committed me, more pauperizing by far than poverty itself. If I have a duro, I shall have it to eat, to buy a blouse and a pair of corduroy trousers, to rent a whitewashed room, with perhaps a half-dozen chairs. I shall not be as I am now, when, though I have double, it must all go for starched shirts and top-hats and patent-leather shoes, and a home as cheerless and unhygienic as any day-laborer's, but plastered over with vain display, which, while it does not make it healthier or happier, greatly increases the cost. I shall have more, having less, because it will be all mine, and not be devoted to keeping up a pretense of being what I am not, what I can never be. I shall drop out of this debilitated middle class, impoverished in body and soul by all the meals on which it has economized, by all the pleasures which it has sacrificed, by all its petty meannesses in whatever makes for largeness of life, this contemptible middle class, which might have developed into a great power, if instead of becoming a caricature of those which are above, it had set an example to those which are below.

MANOLO. Yes, I suppose you are right. I agree with you. To parody the poet, we have either too little money to be comfortable, or too many necessities. And they are fictitious necessities, which a false social standard imposes. Revolution is out of the question with persons in our station. We are not poor enough to be pitied nor strong enough to be feared. Our poverty is our own fault, however we struggle to conceal it, and struggle we do in every sense of the

word; it may be serious to us, but from the outside it is ridiculous. We have been laughing-stocks for years in the newspapers and upon the stage. If we were to rebel, to assert our rights, our banner would not be the black flag of starvation, nor the red flag of revolution, but, more appropriately, a young gentleman's underwear, his trousers, a symbol of our degradation at once shameful and to be greeted with smiles.

JULIO. We must escape from this position, or accept it with all its consequences. As it is possible here to do neither, since in struggling against the environment I should exhaust the greater part of my energies, I shall go somewhere where nobody has any claim upon me, where I shall be as completely my own master as if I had been born without parents, without a name, without social position, without obligations or traditions. I shall become an apprentice of life, and learn of life how to live by my own efforts, to progress, and not to be what I am here, where the determining factor is always what others have done for me, and I am condemned because of errors of education, of misplaced affection, to be forever the professional young gentleman, doomed to everlasting mediocrity, without any possible hope save the lottery of influence, or, perhaps, an advantageous match. I can sell my intelligence or my heart, or sell them both. But I am not a man to do either. My intelligence may not be great, but it is my own, and my heart, because it is my own, I have given entirely. If I did not think as I do, if I did not love as I do, this life that I live would not be my life. Judge for yourself then whether or not I intend to defend it. What more can I say? You know what a man will do for his life.

MANOLO. Yes, you are right; I am compelled to agree. This chronic discomfort is preposterous. Yet so many ties bind us to it. A man is beaten before he begins. For

instance, I intended to ask you a favor; now, I haven't the courage.

JULIO. Nonsense, man! You have courage. You must——

MANOLO. No, I am afraid. I know how you feel; no. But I have no one to whom I can go.

JULIO. Oh, is that it? How much do you want?

MANOLO. A trifle, just to help me over the next two or three days, until the end of the month. You have no idea.... What with the money I borrowed last year, which I shall never repay, although it seems to me I have paid it seven times over, and the everlasting expense of running the house —why, we spend a fortune on the doctor alone, although we have gone in now for homœopathy, the medicines cost less, and we pay the doctor, too, on the same plan, in small doses....

JULIO. I see. How much do you need?

MANOLO. Man, I don't dare; I am afraid. I don't suppose you could spare twenty-five pesetas? Until the end of the month? As soon as I have my salary.... you needn't bother to mention it. There will be no occasion to ask.

JULIO. No, no, of course not. Except for what I pay, as my share, toward the family, I spend nothing—in fact, less now than before.

MANOLO. Honestly, isn't it any sacrifice?

JULIO. I should tell you if it was. Here you are.

[*He hands him five duros in silver.*

MANOLO. No, I'll only take three. I'll get along somehow.

JULIO. Don't be an ass.

MANOLO. Till the first of the month, eh? If you need the money before.... But you do need it.

JULIO. No, man, no. Why shouldn't I say so?

MANOLO. You make me feel very uncomfortable. Thanks, my boy, thanks. You don't know the tight fix I am in.

JULIO. I imagine it.

MANOLO. I dare say there is no use in offering advice, not when your mind is made up; but if my experience counts for anything, I should say: "Don't you marry, my boy, don't you marry, under any circumstances." You will ask: "Why did you do it, then?" I reply: "For the same reason you are doing it now." Not all of us can hold out as long as Galán, and regulate love according to the civil service, though for that matter, if you promise not to mention it—what would Adelaida say if she knew?—I have met Galán more than once on my way to the office, taking the air in the Plaza del Carmen with a tight little maid servant.

JULIO. Heigh-ho, Galán!

MANOLO. Exactly. He picks out the girls who have fat places, fashionable cooks who squeeze enough out of the change to hire a boy to carry home their market-baskets, bulging over, if you please, with rich, juicy things. Think what life must be in one of those families! And what, too, must come the way of the cook! I have seen them with diamond earrings.

JULIO. You don't say? You are observant yourself.

MANOLO. No, I get no further than the market-basket. Take my word for it.

PEPE *enters.*

PEPE. Julio! Manolo! Well, boys.... Caramba!

MANOLO. Hello, Pepe.

JULIO. What have you been up to? We haven't seen you at the office. I was going to drop in at your house and inquire how you were.

PEPE. No, I haven't been to the office. I am not going back.

JULIO. What is that?

PEPE. I have had the pleasure of handing in my resignation.

JULIO. You?

MANOLO. Happy man to be able to indulge—assuming, of course, that it was voluntary.

PEPE. Ah, who can say? I dropped in to bid you good-by.

JULIO. Good-by?

PEPE. Yes, I am leaving Madrid—I might say the world. I am getting married.

JULIO. Heaven!

MANOLO. I understand the reason for your resignation. A rich wife, the match you have been looking for! You are not a man to miss anything.

PEPE. No, no.... this time I appear not to have missed.

JULIO. Congratulations, man; tell us all about it. Our presents may not amount to much, but our congratulations will be sincere.

PEPE. You remember I was paying attention to the Somolinos?—those girls who attract so much attention.

MANOLO. Yes, "Two Thousand for One" is what they call them—a tribute to the attractiveness of their father.

PEPE. Yes, he has the income. Well, I made love to them.

MANOLO. The plural appeals to the imagination.

PEPE. I employ the plural, as a matter of fact, because one looked as good to me as the other.

MANOLO. Presumably. In these cases, interest centres in the father.

PEPE. Meanwhile I waited, so as to allow the girls opportunity to make the choice.

MANOLO. Coquette!

PEPE. And they did. One of them, I believe the eldest——

MANOLO. The eldest invariably develops most speed.

JULIO. The poor man has no chance——

PEPE. She appeared to favor me. Naturally, I said to myself, "This is mine," and from that moment I ceased to ingratiate myself with the other two.

MANOLO. Your delicacy does you credit.

PEPE. We arranged interviews, we commenced a correspondence. Boys, I wish you could have seen those letters! As a talker I am only ordinary, but I am a whirlwind when I write. I hit upon some choice paragraphs. To make a long story short, the girl fell in love with me madly.

MANOLO. And as soon as she was mad enough, she consented to marry you.

PEPE. Who told you she consented?

MANOLO. Ah! Then she was not the one who consented?

PEPE. Never.

MANOLO. Oh! That makes a difference. It was her sister?

PEPE. Neither.

MANOLO. But I mean the other one. You said there were three?

PEPE. Not her either. What do you take me for? Give me credit. You don't know me.

MANOLO. But you just said you were going to marry, you told us you were making love to the family; now, it appears you are marrying some one else. Whom are you going to marry?

PEPE. Does a man have to marry a woman because he happens to mention her name? Now don't you laugh! I am a thorough romantic, I am a man with a heart. Accursed heart, I say!

MANOLO. If it affects you like this, your case must be serious.

PEPE. Wait, wait till you hear! What with all this cor-

respondence, this running to and fro, "Yes, the señorita will be out to-day." "No, to-day she cannot receive." "To-day, perhaps, you might call"....well, the long and the short of it was, I found myself hand in glove with the maid.

MANOLO. Stop! She is the one.

PEPE. What?

MANOLO. You are going to marry the maid.

PEPE. Manolo, you guessed it. The maid!

MANOLO. Man alive!

JULIO. My son!

PEPE. None other. And a maid! I told you I was romantic.

MANOLO. Pepe! Pepe!

JULIO. Pepe!

PEPE. That is all there is to it. I was taken off my guard. The poor girl outdid herself to oblige me, and, to be perfectly fair, I was not in a position to offer tips. It was sympathy, something about me—well, it appealed to us both. I was always telling her nonsense, and she was pleased, naturally, so one day I invited her to go to Las Ventas to sample the rice. A man has to say something. Well, it began to look serious, it began to be serious. I am not a man to stand by and see a poor girl in tears when she has lost her position on my account, and finds herself without a position, as she does now.

MANOLO. You may suppress the details.

PEPE. Well, facts are eloquent; well, I am going to marry her. I see no occasion, however, to laugh. I should not like my friends to think ill of my wife, and as we cannot possibly live here on my miserable pay, especially as I have an idea that we are headed for a large family——

MANOLO. Although you never can tell.

PEPE. Anyhow, I have resigned my position, and made

other arrangements; we are going away. An uncle of mine is a priest—I may have forgotten to mention it—he lives in a small town, where he has a garden and an orchard, in fact, all a man could reasonably ask. They offered to make him canon, but he has always refused. Before taking any steps, I made inquiries as to his habits, whether my sister and I were the only nephew and niece that he had. How the devil could he have had others? All the same, I did not wish to intrude; but he has none, I hear. He is a holy man, so I sat down at once and wrote him full particulars. I offered to come and live with him, and take charge of his property. He is not as young as he used to be, and he replied greatly pleased; he seemed agreeable. He said that he would await me with open arms, so I decided to run down with my wife, and, whatever happens, we shall be quiet there, while I take up farming. I am reviewing the agricultural course I had at the Institute, although, I dare say, I shan't need to know anything there. What do you think? Don't you laugh; have that consideration. I am deadly in earnest.

JULIO. Laugh? Why should we? Your warm heart, or your foolish head, as others might feel, has done you a real service. You are beginning life over again. The country means health, prosperity, and you will take to the country education and breeding. What our fields need are not rough hands to cultivate them, but sympathetic care, which is a caress. It sounds like a paradox, but I believe our harvests are bad because our women and our poets have never loved the country.

PEPE. So, after all, you are not laughing at me? Don't you honestly think I have behaved like an ass?

MANOLO. I will tell you. Apart from the asininity of getting married, as to which I reserve my opinion, and it is

well founded, I should say that you have been extremely fortunate. You will breathe the pure air, you will eat, you will drink natural products, you will dress in comfort and live at your ease, your wife will never have nerves, which are the most expensive luxury a woman can have, but she will have a good appetite, which is cheaper, after all, than not to have any, and to be obliged to stimulate it at all hours.

PEPE. Nevertheless, it might be as well not to say anything to your mother and sister, and you had better not speak to your wife. Do me the favor. I shall write later, with the news of my wedding. I will say I am marrying a country girl, the match was arranged by my uncle. She is the mayor's daughter. It is the best I can do. We are creatures of prejudice.

RAMONA *enters.*

RAMONA. Señorito Manolo....

MANOLO. What is the trouble with you?

RAMONA. Your girl is here. The doctor's come, and your wife wants you home, because she's not feeling well, and she don't intend to have you saying afterward that it was nothing but imagination.

MANOLO. What have I to say, anyway? I'd be better off saying nothing. I'll be there.

RAMONA *goes out.*

MANOLO. Take care, Pepe. You have my sympathy—I mean on the matrimonial side.

PEPE. Yes, if you don't mind, I'll join you; I am going your way.

JULIO. And I am coming along. We might drop in on Galán. At least, we could all leave our cards.

MANOLO. I'll look around later—that is, if Paquita's condition permits.

CARMEN. [*Outside*] Do come in.

DOÑA CARMEN *and* TERESA *enter.*

PEPE. Señora!

MANOLO. Aunt Carmen....

TERESA. Good morning, Julio.

JULIO. Where is Emilia?

TERESA. She is not feeling well to-day. She stayed home with one of her cousins, who ran in to sit with her.

MANOLO. [*To* DOÑA CARMEN] How did you find Galán?

CARMEN. When we arrived he was sitting up taking a thick broth, apparently having the time of his life. Of course, I made allowances for Adelaida's exaggeration.

MANOLO. Then he will be good for another seven years.

JULIO. I was just going to call.

CARMEN. Yes, I think you should. You know how Adelaida appreciates these little attentions.

JULIO. [*Going*] Doña Teresa....

TERESA. Good-by, Julio. Your mother promised to let me have the address of that seamstress she recommended so highly.

JULIO. I asked no questions.

PEPE. [*To* DOÑA CARMEN] My best regards to Luisita. Julio will explain how it is I have been too busy to call.

MANOLO. Good-by, aunt.

JULIO. I'll be back directly, mamma. [*Aside to* MANOLO, *as they go out*] This visit means something.

MANOLO. A conspiracy of mothers-in-law. You have reason to be suspicious.

JULIO, MANOLO, *and* PEPE *go out at the rear, right.*

TERESA. I am sorry that Julio saw me. I came when I did because I supposed he would be out. Now, he will suspect something.

CARMEN. Yes, he imagines already that we are acting in concert.

TERESA. There was no occasion to consult in order to agree. That is the reason I wished to speak to you. Not that Julio is not a fine young man, with an excellent education, and splendid character, who very likely will make a mark for himself, especially if he is careful to cultivate his connections and to build up influence, instead of dissipating his energies. You realize that a man can accomplish nothing to-day without influence. But this unseemly haste to get married—can you tell me the reason for it? They are children. While I married at fifteen myself, my husband was thirty-eight, which was a compensation. We had no means either, but then times have changed. Living has become much more expensive; there are more demands and necessities.

CARMEN. Young people fail to take such things into consideration.

TERESA. In the first place, we should be obliged to live together. It is out of the question to maintain three separate establishments; a man is fortunate to be able to support one. However well-intentioned a person may be, however good-natured and patient, you know yourself what mixed families mean in the way of friction and unpleasantness.

CARMEN. Yes, I do. You do not have to come here to convince me.

TERESA. Nevertheless, I should be willing to make the sacrifice, so as not to disappoint my daughter. I could never reconcile myself to hearing her say that I had opposed her happiness.

CARMEN. Young people imagine that happiness consists simply of loving each other. No matter how deeply in love you may be when you marry, the first love, which is all illusion, does not last long. It may develop into another

love, which is more enduring, more restrained, but in that very little illusion is left; on the contrary, one has resigned oneself to losing one's illusions, day by day. Perhaps the love which is most passionate is the one which resigns itself least easily to losing them, and is least able to rise above its disillusionment. That is what alarms me about my son; he is so violent.

TERESA. Yes, I have noticed it; and you have not seen him with my daughter! All he thinks about is making money, an ample fortune, as he calls it. The worst of it is that my daughter's mind runs in the same groove. What they haven't thought of is incredible—going into business, making inventions; needless to say, they are counting upon the lottery. One day I walked into the room and surprised them shouting at the tops of their voices; I was amazed—I felt sure they had had a quarrel. They were merely reciting their parts in a play; they had decided to go on the stage and get rich in poetic drama.

CARMEN. But how innocent!

TERESA. Yes, it may seem innocent, I myself could see the humor of it; but Julio has more dangerous ideas. I don't know whether he has told you——

CARMEN. Yes, I know. My son plans to go to America.

TERESA. But you haven't heard that he has a letter offering him a position there, and that he imagines his fortune is already made. While I might resign myself to a modest future for my daughter, which nevertheless would be reasonably secure, you will understand that I can never consent to expose her to the chances of any such hair-brained adventure. What? Separate me from my daughter? She is all I have in the world. Women have loved their children before now, Doña Carmen, but no woman ever loved her daughter as I do mine.

CARMEN. Then you can pray God that your daughter may not be as deeply in love as my son Julio. Otherwise, your love will mean as little to her as mine does to my son.

TERESA. There is no danger of that; my daughter loves me. Why shouldn't she love her mother? No matter how deeply in love she may be, she appreciates that she has no right to sacrifice me. If Julio has made up his mind that he cannot afford to marry without marching off on reckless adventures, you can be perfectly sure that my daughter will never consent to abandon me.

CARMEN. If your daughter feels that way, then it is her duty to say so, because, if she doesn't, my son will continue to believe what he does now.

TERESA. That is why I wanted to talk with you.

CARMEN. So that I should be the one to tell him? Ah, Doña Teresa, I made up my mind long ago not to mention this subject again to my son. To be perfectly frank, I trusted rather to the course of events than to the strength of any arguments which I might have been able to bring to bear.

TERESA. I cannot imagine what you mean by such a remark. If anybody has altered her position, it has certainly not been my daughter. Your son never even mentioned his plans.

CARMEN. I was entirely satisfied that your daughter would think better of it for some reason or other before she was through. My son's prospects are not brilliant enough for your daughter. She has higher aspirations, if only on account of her looks.

TERESA. I am surprised at the tone of your conversation. You always insisted that this match was a mistake. You have opposed your son far more than I opposed my daughter. I am at a loss to comprehend how you can pretend to

be displeased now at what you have been praying for all along.

CARMEN. Then you have no appreciation of the feelings of a mother. I realize now that there has been only one victim in this affair, and that is my poor son, who accepted what was mere trifling to your daughter, in sober earnest.

TERESA. You insult us with your insinuations.

CARMEN. No, I do not. It is no insult to say that your daughter has a cooler head than my son.

TERESA. Her mother comes before everything else in the world with my daughter.

CARMEN. If that is the case, I am sorry for the man who marries her.

TERESA. I suppose that you would be delighted to see your son abandon you without one regret?

CARMEN. I should make the sacrifice gladly if I felt that it was for a woman who was worthy of his love.

TERESA. You say that because no woman in your opinion could be good enough for your son. When did a mother ever consider any one good enough to deprive her of her children?

CARMEN. That is no reason why, if she must be deprived of them, she should not prefer some one who would make them happy. We are not justified in taking satisfaction in the suffering and disappointments of our children. I only wish that my son could have said to me: "I am so happy! I have chosen a wife who is worthy of my love." But, now, I realize that I was right, that he is the one who has been deceived, and my sorrow is greater than it was before. Oh, my poor boy!

TERESA. Pardon me if your attitude remains quite inexplicable. If any one consideration has influenced my daughter's decision more than another, it has been the prejudice which you have exhibited against her, and your opposition

to her engagement to your son. Julio will inform you whether he has had occasion for a similar complaint against me.

CARMEN. You were aware of course that you could rely upon the judgment of your daughter. I could not expect so much of my son; I realized that he was in love. You have been more fortunate. It is not strange that our feelings should be different.

TERESA. I shall leave you before I forget that I am in your house.

CARMEN. I should treat you like a lady, wherever you happened to be, and remember that I am one.

TERESA. I did not expect to be received in this spirit.

CARMEN. On the other hand, your visit has been precisely what I had been led to expect. You have proved yourself, as I always felt you were, cool and reasonable.

TERESA. Good afternoon, señora.

CARMEN. Señora....

LUISA *enters.*

LUISA. Mamma! Mamma!.... Doña Teresa! How do you do?

TERESA. Well. Can't you see? I am going.

CARMEN. Yes, she is going....

LUISA. Where is Emilia?

TERESA. Well, thank you. Señora! You need not show me out.

CARMEN. Shut the door after Doña Teresa, my dear.

TERESA. Don't take the trouble!....

Goes out, accompanied by LUISA, *who returns directly.*

LUISA. What is the matter, mamma? What did Doña Teresa want? I never saw you so put out before. Has she said something unpleasant? Or did you say something? Tell me the truth; you must tell me.

CARMEN. Unpleasant? No, it was only what I expected; I knew it all the time. That girl has been laughing at your brother, she has been playing with him. And to think that my poor boy was blind! He was so infatuated that he could not see.

LUISA. But what did Doña Teresa say?

CARMEN. She said enough to let me understand that her daughter has been toying with your brother, and she has encouraged her. She will not give up her child, who for her part is done with him, because she refuses to trust to chance, to reckless adventure—the recklessness of marrying a poor man, that is the recklessness they are afraid of. He may be poor, but he has never courted a rich wife, as other young men have done, without his advantages or his figure or his ability, yes, or his education. Now that girl will plume herself upon having turned him off, so as to foist herself upon some protégé of her uncle's, somebody who was not good enough for her cousins, and so they pass him along to her, like their old hats and their old clothes, which she then proceeds to show off in, like the common creature that she is.

LUISA. Mamma! Mamma! I never heard you talk like this. Don't be so angry. Does Julio know?

CARMEN. No, they are afraid to tell him; they want me to do it. They are so pleased that they imagine that it will be a great joy to me. And it is—it is! It is a tremendous relief. Now your brother will find out whether his mother was right or not, whether it was only a mother's selfishness, as he always said, because that boy would insist that it was nothing but selfishness when I opposed that engagement. A mother's heart cannot be deceived. It is a tremendous satisfaction to me, yes, it is; but all the same I am bitter, I am bitter because they have played with my boy, and his

mortification will be terrible when he discovers it, because it will be a disillusionment to him. He will be ill, or he will do something desperate. See if he doesn't; you will see. He is so violent. God and the Holy Virgin help us! Why cannot children always remain children, and always stay at their mother's side, so that she can take them up in her arms and console them, like children?

LUISA. But mamma! Mamma! You were wretched for fear that Julio might be able to carry out his plans and go away. Only yesterday, didn't you say: "Good Lord, good Lord! My son may have gone crazy, but at least that girl ought to have sense"? Now, when God has heard you, when you ought to be happy, because now Julio will not leave us, nor think of going away, instead of being thankful, you are only growing worse! Weren't you crying because you had lost your son? Well, you have him back again, and he will be more yours now than he ever was before.

CARMEN. Yes, but that is no consolation. A mother's lot is always unhappy. The only time she can say that her children are her own is when life returns them to her, heart-broken and undeceived, to take refuge in the only love that never fails, that always forgives. A mother's heart is like a nest. The birds cry for their mother's warmth, for food and for love, but by the time they are able to fly, and sing happily, they are already far away from the nest, from their mother. When they come back, how can she be happy, since she knows that they come only to pour out their sorrows, and the disappointments they have had to bear?

DON HILARIO *and* JULIO *enter.*

JULIO. Come in, Don Hilario.

HILARIO. Doña Carmen! Luisita....

JULIO. You see, they are crying. It is the daily routine, invariable. And it is my fault! This cannot continue.

HILARIO. Julio is right. This cannot be.

CARMEN. No, on the contrary, I am crying now because I am happy. I have never been so happy before in my life!

JULIO. Yes, evidently. Sit down, mamma—and you, too. I have brought Don Hilario because the time has come to talk sensibly, without tears or recriminations, because my decision is irrevocable. I am going to marry Emilia, and we shall sail for America, to Buenos Aires. No other solution is possible for us all.

LUISA. My poor brother!

CARMEN. Very well, my son, if you really feel that it means your happiness. I suppose you think that your mother is the only obstacle?

JULIO. Don't say that. I won't listen to you.

CARMEN. No, I am calm, as you see. I hope you will be as calm as I am when you know what I know.

JULIO. What do you know?

CARMEN. Have you made your arrangements for the voyage? Are you sure the position is a good one, that there will be opportunity for advancement?

JULIO. Tell them, Don Hilario. They will not believe me.

HILARIO. Yes, Doña Carmen. Julio has consulted me, and I have approved his plan in its entirety. I offered to write to Buenos Aires, to a friend, a responsible, intelligent gentleman, who has replied to my recommendation of your son in a manner which is most gratifying.

JULIO. Here is the letter. Read it, read it. He offers me a position that is well paid, in which I shall have initiative, and at the beginning I shall receive more than I do now. I shall not be embarrassed by the pretense of living like a gentleman, I shall have the satisfaction of being employed at something useful, which is of real service, and not be discouraged, as I am here, eternally issuing orders in our depart-

ment, and rummaging through files of papers, the utility of which, to say the least, is by no means apparent, and which often drive me to wonder whether our government offices are not in fact charitable institutions, maintained in the interest of this debilitated middle class, which, while it retains its self-respect, can take refuge in no other asylum.

HILARIO. Yes, Doña Carmen, the position my friend offers is excellent for a man who is willing to work. That Julio knows. He will have to give up being the young intellectual, who has no other use for his intellectuality than to criticise others who work. He will require intelligence, but only enough to serve a firm and resolute will. Will is necessary above everything else, will that is constructive, will that is able to convert dreams into realities. It will be very different there from what it is here, where we spend the better part of our lives speaking evil of those who construct, because they have not constructed the precise fabric of our dreams, which is so beautiful, so extremely beautiful, that it goes without saying it will never be built. So, because no reality can equal our dreams, we spend our lives outside in the foul weather, while others who do not think so much, nor criticise so much, build themselves spacious houses and even splendid palaces, which doubtless are in very bad taste, but which are solid, nevertheless, and quite comfortable.

JULIO. Yes, I shall build my house like them, whatever it may be; and upon new ground, not on top of ruins.

CARMEN. But you cannot do it alone. Has Emilia seen this letter? Have you discussed it with her and with her mother, as you are doing with me? Have you told them that your decision is final, irrevocable?

JULIO. Emilia will not hesitate if her love is true.

CARMEN. You appear to emphasize the if.

JULIO. No.

CARMEN. You say if her love is true.

JULIO. It is.

CARMEN. Don't you know that Doña Teresa was here? Do you know what she came to tell me?

JULIO. The old story. If you talked, you agreed that we were mad. It is folly, a crime for two young people who are in love, to marry without money. Then, you spoke of the high cost of living, you trotted out your pet phrase: "Everything is in the clouds."

CARMEN. I said nothing; it was Doña Teresa, it is Emilia. Nothing in the world will induce her—and you may as well understand it plainly—nothing will induce her to consent to be separated from her daughter.

JULIO. But Emilia....

CARMEN. Emilia feels the same, and they thought that it would be better that you should hear it from me. If you don't believe me, ask them—ask them both. I am not sure either but that when they find out that this position which has been offered is a good one, they won't change their minds, but I am afraid not—do you hear? I am afraid not. I am so anxious to see you happy that I would do nothing to hold you back, not with my tears, nor by telling you that you are an ingrate to allow your poor mother to sacrifice herself for you all her life, only to see herself abandoned now in her old age without remorse, yes, without one single regret!

JULIO. Mother!

HILARIO. Doña Carmen!

JULIO. Do you hear? I cannot endure any more, I cannot bear it. I will not hear myself called an ungrateful son. You are my mother, I owe everything to you, everything. My life is yours, and I have proved it all my life long, because I have never been anything to you but your son, eternally your son, your son. You would never permit me to be a man.

You have cowed me all you could, you have crushed and kept me under, without a will of my own, always fearful of your displeasure. I was afraid to live, to think for myself. But the same passions which stirred in you when you brought me into the world stir in me, in spite of myself. I have always dreaded this day, I knew it must come, this clash which drives you to be cruel with me, and me, perhaps, to appear an ingrate.

CARMEN. Do you hear? Do you hear my son?

HILARIO. Yes, I hear him, Doña Carmen, and I hear you, too, and I hear life, whose voice is louder than ours, and which tells us that our children are not our children, that they are men, and belong to humanity. Oh, you mothers who have grown old, you nations that decay, do not call it ingratitude when your children leave you! Children never leave their mothers. When you have gone walking with the children, strolling along with friends of your own age, while they played with the other children, haven't you often noticed, as you walked, how the children would soon be at a distance, and then you, the older people, would call out: "Children! Don't run, my dears! Don't lose sight of us. You will get lost." And they, without stopping, would call back, from where they were: "We won't lose sight of you, we are here! We are only running ahead." It is selfishness to expect youth to keep step with age, or to dishearten it with the disillusionments of our experience when it sets out, bright-eyed and filled with hope, upon its career. Such selfishness life does not permit. What would we think of a general who, before going into battle with his recruits, led them first to a hospital filled with the maimed and wounded? Many will die in the battle, many will return incapacitated, but the battle must be joined in the expectation of victory, with the swell of triumphal music in our ears, the flaunting of ban-

ners before our eyes. If we succumb, it must be facing life boldly, with a beckoning glance toward those who come behind, toward those who remain, toward those who will triumph, passing over our dead bodies; and in the ceaseless struggle of life our children are the ones who remain, the ones who will march to victory when we ourselves have succumbed. The future belongs to the young women, the young men.

EMILIA *enters.*

EMILIA. Julio!

JULIO. Ah, Emilia, it is you! I knew it; she is here. She has come to speak for me, for us both. Say you have!

EMILIA. Doña Carmen.... Luisa....

LUISA. Are you alone?

EMILIA. Mother told me she had been talking with you, and that you had had a dispute. She said that you were determined that all should be over between me and your son. You accused me of being a coquette, of trifling, of leading him on.

JULIO. I never believed it; they are our mothers.

EMILIA. My mother does not know I am here, I came with the maid. I should have come alone, if it had been necessary.

JULIO. You have done right.

EMILIA. I had to see you, to speak to you. You will not believe it—any more than I would have believed it—but my mother has taken this talk of going to America in earnest. I knew, of course, you didn't mean it, that you have never considered it.

JULIO. Do you believe that?

CARMEN. You hear what she says.

EMILIA. My mother was afraid that I was going to leave

her, alone, at her age in the world. She never stopped to remember that you have a mother yourself, just as I have.

CARMEN. You are a kind and dutiful daughter.

JULIO. Emilia.... But leave us, yes, leave us. We must talk, we must talk—alone.

EMILIA. Why? There is nothing they may not hear.

JULIO. No, this concerns us alone. It is no time to stand upon formality. We are not two young lovers, nor children; to hesitate is ridiculous. A man and woman at this moment are deciding their future, and it will be forever. I am not willing that any one should interfere. We must speak bravely, freely. Don Hilario, take my mother. Luisita, leave us.... Go, mother, I am calm; Emilia, you have nothing to fear.

All but JULIO *and* EMILIA *go out.*

JULIO. Did you think that my plan was not serious? Do you believe that it is right to continue as we are?

EMILIA. I don't know. We have talked of so many things, we have planned and we have dreamed! But I never believed that any of it could really be.

JULIO. Read this letter.

EMILIA. But you are so earnest! Did you mean it, really?

JULIO. Read it, read it.

EMILIA. It is for Don Hilario.... No, Julio, no!

JULIO. You see that I have considered it seriously. It is our future.

EMILIA. No, Julio, no; you frighten me. It is a dangerous experiment, far away. Not leave our poor mothers? No, tell me you don't really mean it, you are only doing it to test my love.

JULIO. Perhaps I am doing it so as not to test it, not to condemn you to this miserable existence, every hour of which would prove its own test, with but very few either of illusion

or hope, because life would be upon us quickly, a life of continual hardship, of ceaseless struggle with disappointment, with humiliation, until in the end our love itself would be destroyed.

EMILIA. No, never. I could bear any privations gladly, I could face them all, and it would be no sacrifice, but I cannot go away—I cannot do that! It is too much to ask.

JULIO. Do you prefer a daily sacrifice to one supreme, heroic effort? Haven't you the courage to leave your mother, when you have it to embitter her life day by day when she sees you in tears because of discomforts and deprivations which you suffer, or when you see her in them, suffering for you, though you may have courage not to let her see you cry?

EMILIA. No, Julio, you must not ask that of me, it would be too cruel. It would kill my mother. Think it over. I could never be an ungrateful child.

JULIO. That is to say I am an ungrateful son. If I am, remember it is for you. It is more honest, it is the nobler way for us, for all, to prevent unhappiness, to obviate recrimination, although at first it may seem more difficult, more cruel.

EMILIA. But my mother will consent gladly, and we can live here very happily. The first few years we shall manage somehow, as best we may; my family has connections, and they will help us in the end. You will be able to find other employment. Who knows? If we are careful, and prepared to be patient, we shall surely discover some plan.

JULIO. Yes, by petty intrigue, by scheming for humiliating recommendations, by patronage and influence; you are willing to do your part in devious ways. You have only to add that with a wife such as you, any man who is complaisant enough could aspire to the top.

EMILIA. Be careful what you say, Julio!

JULIO. On the other hand, you speak freely, you talk like a woman—like our women. This is what I have heard all my life: "Patience, craft, intrigue! Other men have succeeded; you can learn to do the same, to live." Yes, to live amid the rustle of skirts! Isn't it true? Our Spanish life!—burrowing in offices and antechambers, but fighting out in the open, in the broad daylight, relying on one's own strength, without treachery to oneself, and never so much as a single lie to another—never, never that! That requires superhuman courage. Never!—not even for a man who would die for your sake.

EMILIA. I see that plainly.

JULIO. Yes, and accomplish things of which he never believed himself capable, because I, too, was brought up as you were, to resignation, to expect everything of others, and, until I loved you, I was not conscious that I had strength to live my own life, to live it in spite of others, in spite of the cowardice to which I was brought up. But when my will was the strongest, I relied on you to support me, so that we might fight together for our love, for our happiness, for our children, that they might not be condemned to suffer as we have done. At the cost of appearing ingrates, even to our mothers, we shall have assured them the right to be happy, we shall have freed them from the necessity of sacrificing their hearts, as now you would sacrifice ours.

EMILIA. No, I wouldn't, Julio; I am not the one.

JULIO. Who is it, then?

EMILIA. You, you .... it is you. Give it up for my sake.

JULIO. I will not give it up. You don't know what the will of a weak man is, when for the first time in his life he discovers that he has a will. Decide! Choose this very instant!

EMILIA. What am I to choose? Not to go away; no, I cannot do it, I am afraid. Be sensible, Julio! You know I am right. We will wait as long as you please, I shall wait for you forever, and then—whatever you think best. We are young yet. If you feel you ought to go, why don't you go alone?—and, then, come back. If it is really so wonderful there, it might be different. Don't you see? Have confidence in me. I shall wait for you always.

JULIO. Yes, I will go, alone—alone! You are right. Now, I have made up my mind to go. But don't you wait for me!

EMILIA. Julio!

JULIO. No, don't you wait! I have heard what I never expected to hear.

EMILIA. I knew it; you are the one who forgets, you turn me away.

JULIO. Yes, I do, with my cowardice, my vacillation, determined at last to have a will of my own! Leave me, Emilia, leave me.

EMILIA. God help us! God help us! Oh!....

JULIO. Go back to your mother and be a daughter again —be always a daughter, a good daughter! I am a bad man, bad—and you know it!

EMILIA. You don't know what you are doing; you are not yourself. Oh, I can't bear it! I can't have them see me like this. I am going.... But promise that you will come to see me. You will come, won't you, Julio? I shall wait, I shall wait for you always—all the rest of my life!

[EMILIA *goes out in tears.*

DOÑA CARMEN *and* LUISA *re-enter with* DON HILARIO *at another door.*

CARMEN. My poor boy!

LUISA. My dear brother!

CARMEN. But Emilia?

JULIO. Has gone. She is not here .... not here. She is afraid.... afraid of love, afraid of life. Everything is over between us.

CARMEN. My poor boy! Then....?

LUISA. Now you will never leave us.

JULIO. Yes, now more than ever I must. One illusion that is lost is but a small part of life. Now more than ever I must! The wretched poverty of this existence shall never again crush my heart, brimming over with the fulness of life. I shall win the right to love, to be happy—it is a right which belongs to my children.

CARMEN. Oh! My son——

HILARIO. Let him go. You have no right to discourage him. Others have done the same. Our mother Spain was prodigal of her children, and sent them forth to give life and body to those nations, the daughters of her race, who are to-day her chief, perhaps her only pride. Let him go, and his mother's love and benediction must go with him. A cradle is more sacred than the grave .... greater than the past is the future.

Curtain

THE TRUTH

DIALOGUE

1915

CHARACTERS

LUISA

PEPE

A SERVANT

THE TRUTH

A bachelor's apartment.

The bell rings. Presently LUISA *enters, followed by the* SERVANT.

LUISA. Is your master alone?

SERVANT. He is, señorita.

LUISA. Announce me, or rather—no, you may announce me. Surprises are dangerous, although he will certainly be surprised; I notice that you are surprised yourself. You stand there without knowing what to do or say.

SERVANT. I? Not at all, señorita.

LUISA. Isn't he alone? Tell me the truth.

SERVANT. Yes, señorita, absolutely.

LUISA. Does he expect any one?

SERVANT. Only a few friends; it is early as yet.

LUISA. Of course they always appear. Who is coming?

SERVANT. Señorito Gonzalo; perhaps three or four others.

LUISA. The usual group, I suppose? Señorito Gonzalo never fails.

SERVANT. The señorita knows.

LUISA. Oh, do *you* know?

SERVANT. Yes, señorita, I saw it in the paper. You are to be married—if I may make so bold.

LUISA. Thank you. Probably you have heard a great deal more here, though, than you ever saw in the papers.

SERVANT. I pay no attention to what the young gentlemen say. While they are discussing their affairs, I am busy with the service. Besides, they speak French.

LUISA. But you understand French?

SERVANT. I do, señorita—enough to talk with the French when travelling, but the young gentlemen speak such excellent French that I cannot understand them. I don't exaggerate. I hear the young gentleman behind the door now. The bell rang, and he has heard my voice, so naturally, announcing no one....

LUISA. And he has heard my voice, too, a woman's voice, which must be extraordinary in this apartment. Come in! Come right in! It is I.

PEPE *enters.*

PEPE. You? Luisita! [*To the* SERVANT] Why didn't you announce this young lady at once?

LUISA. He was as thoroughly shocked as yourself.

PEPE. To tell the truth——

SERVANT. Anything else, sir?

PEPE. Not at present. Ask my friends into the other room.... Don't shut that door!

The SERVANT *goes out.*

PEPE. Well, Luisita? Are you alone? Have you permission to come?

LUISA. Why permission? Papa and mamma would be terribly shocked. Imagine what people would think if they knew that I was here with you, alone, a bachelor, in your apartment. Bachelor apartments have such dreadful reputations; all respectable families are convinced they are scandalous. It was bold of me, wasn't it? Now tell me the truth!

PEPE. Bold of you? You know it.

LUISA. That depends.

PEPE. I hope you have a good reason for coming.

LUISA. Let me explore a little first. I think your room is decidedly *chic.* I am awfully anxious to see the pictures. Ah!.... You have taste; you don't exhibit pictures of girls

that you know. These are all friends, relatives.... Very proper indeed! Oh, this is more interesting! Actresses!

PEPE. Possibly three or four.

LUISA. Ah, *La Platanito!* Everybody seems to be mad over that girl. I hear she is charming—and startling, too, when she sings.

PEPE. If singing without a voice and without knowing how may be said to be startling.

LUISA. Unless the rest of the apartment is much worse, I should not call it depraved.

PEPE. What did you expect? When a man lives alone, his friends imagine....

LUISA. Exactly—that he has company.

PEPE. But then what would be the use of living alone? I did not desert a loving family to be free; all I wanted was peace, to draw a quiet breath.

LUISA. I know; your aunts have a different idea.

PEPE. I am living by myself precisely because we have different ideas. Now I hope your curiosity has been satisfied. It is my turn, and I am dreadfully curious. What can I do for you? What do you want? How did you ever manage to slip out alone?

LUISA. Doña Rosalia took me to call on Mercedes Santonja, and she left me there. Mercedes was in the secret, so I ran away from her house, and took a cab—it is waiting around the corner now—and here we are.

PEPE. Delighted! Although.... Is this something really serious?

LUISA. Serious? Very serious?

PEPE. Because if it isn't serious, then it is very foolish. Nothing could be more serious than foolishness in a woman.

LUISA. I am not sure whether it is foolish or serious, but at least the consequences cannot be serious, that is certain.

I have come to consult you because you are like a brother to me, you belong to the family; we have known each other ever since we were children. Besides, you are a sensible young man.

PEPE. Extremely flattering! Nevertheless, I intend to acquire a reputation to-day to last me the rest of my life.

LUISA. Why to-day?

PEPE. You are so adorably beautiful!

LUISA. Gracious, Pepe, now don't you be commonplace! Like most men, you imagine that you are not making yourself agreeable to a woman unless you pretend to be in love with her. Women know perfectly well whether or not men are really in love.

PEPE. In that case further effort will be useless. You are madly attractive; that is as far as I am prepared to go.

LUISA. Suppose I should take you at your word? When Gonzalo comes, you will have to challenge him, although he is your most intimate friend, because he is engaged to me. After you have killed him, then you can hurry and speak to papa, and beg him to grant you my hand.

PEPE. Your father would direct his reply at my head.

LUISA. That might convince me that I am as attractive as you say. But aren't we talking nonsense? However, your compliments are no better: "You are madly attractive," "I am desperately in love with you." If you expect me to believe such foolishness, you will have to do more than talk. I came here to ask you a favor, and now I am sure you are going to raise objections, in spite of all the mad affection you insist that you feel.

PEPE. It depends entirely upon the favor. It may be evidence of affection to refuse.

LUISA. Gonzalo, Luis Montalbán, Enrique Santonja, and your friend Bumbum, that ridiculous old person who I

am perfectly sure demoralizes you all, are expected to-day. I want you to tell me the truth——

PEPE. I am sorry, however, for poor Bumbum!

LUISA. Yes, poor Bumbum! he persuaded the Arellanos's governess that he honestly intended to marry her, and the first thing they knew they had to dismiss her, because when she found out that poor Bumbum was married already, she put in a claim for damages with the British Ambassador.

PEPE. I understood that that governess had already been pretty thoroughly internationalized.

LUISA. Really? Do you know, mother never would consent to a governess in our house?

PEPE. But how silly of her! Your brothers were educated abroad. Why all this sudden interest in poor Bumbum?

LUISA. I am not interested in him, nor in your other friends either. They are merely chorus, marching on. I have come because.... Well, I told you.... I want to find out....

PEPE. To find out? What?

LUISA. What every woman wants to know—what men say about her when they are alone. In a few days, I shall marry Gonzalo, yet what do I know about Gonzalo? I know him as a suitor, but I haven't the slightest idea what sort of husband he will make.

PEPE. What is the nature of the investigation you propose?

LUISA. I intend to experiment.

PEPE. How? By hiding here and listening to our conversation this afternoon? It may be utterly trifling.

LUISA. Not if you turn the conversation to women. Introduce me as a topic; it should not be difficult. It is timely at least.

PEPE. Poor Luisita! How distressingly feminine! You imagine you are clever, and you are more innocent than be-

fore. You have come for the truth. The truth? Do you expect to find it here? Do you suppose that men are sincere when they are among themselves? Why, nobody is sincere with himself! Gonzalo may laugh at your love, and play the sceptic. He may say that he is going to marry for money, or to be comfortable, or else out of mere cynicism. He might even go so far as to boast that he will deceive you, that he is completely indifferent whether you deceive him or not. Of course any statement of that nature you would accept as pure truth?

LUISA. If he ever made such a statement——

PEPE. He may very easily do so. In fact, I have no doubt but that he has done it already.

LUISA. Pepe!

PEPE. All of us do such things. We make light of what is most precious, of patriotism, family, love. If anybody were to hear us, and to judge us by appearances, we should surely be set down as depraved. But we are not; we are merely cowards. The hypocrisy of evil is more common, I think, than the hypocrisy of good, yet it has scarcely been studied at all. And no wonder! It is a frank parade of evil, so it does not seem to be hypocrisy. Yet I believe that more good thoughts are concealed, and more good deeds are left undone, because of this hypocrisy which pretends to be evil, than there are evil thoughts and vicious deeds concealed or left undone by hypocrites of the other sort, the hypocrites who pretend to be good. Evil appears to be evil because evil men are evil, and there can be no mistake about it, and so, to seem sincere, the good pretend to be evil, and those who do not pretend to be evil, by contrast appear fools.

LUISA. As a result, all men are evil.

PEPE. Judged by appearances. Yet, although we are

said to live by appearances, it is not the way that we live. In the serious, the important moments of our lives, the truth shines out clearly above all the screen of our lies, and it is idle then for evil to pretend to be good, or for good to pretend to be evil. I have often cried all night over what I have laughed at all day. Nobody saw me cry, but everybody saw me laugh. Where was the truth to be found?

LUISA. You just said—in your cowardice; you were afraid to be good. That is mere——

PEPE. Cowardice; precisely. I shall not apologize. It is almost always cowardice, though at times it may be modesty. No matter how sure we may be of our physical charms, it is not usual to undress before the first stranger who happens along. Here at least you agree?

LUISA. Of course not!

PEPE. Even the most hardened, and the most hardened invariably are women, offer samples at best, perhaps not altogether insufficient, nor lacking in courage, but anything like an honest, frank revelation....

LUISA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

PEPE. There is also a moral sense of shame. Delicate natures do not expose themselves casually to the chance passer-by.

LUISA. I should hope not. Exposure is one thing, but to wrap oneself up is another, until people imagine that one has something to conceal.

PEPE. True goodness is sportive and joyous; it loves to masquerade, so it passes for folly. False virtue dresses up to go out socially, and walks at a gait which is dignified and slow. I distrust austere gentlemen with their hands in their bosoms, who enlarge upon their virtue at the slightest excuse, and miss no opportunity to eulogize their honor, their integrity, as the phrase runs nowadays—the word is

longer and conceals more, no doubt, like a train. Where did I read that nobody knows what he may be capable of, until he has been an absolute monarch for some hours, and has starved for some days?

LUISA. If you are going to believe that, we can never know the truth about anybody or anything.

PEPE. The truth? Do you wish the truth about your future husband? All you have to do is to ask. Everybody will tell you the truth as he sees it, and all the truths that they tell you will be lies. It would be wonderful to read the story of our lives written by different people—by our friends, our creditors, our servants. It would be like reading a thousand lives of a thousand different people, and if we were to sit down to write our own lives, the result would not be any more genuine, because, although we are all what we are, we all imagine ourselves to be something quite different.

LUISA. Just the same, the truth must be somewhere.

PEPE. The truth of our lives is in the hearts of those who love us, whose love remains ours through all the moments of our lives. It may be so great that at times they may think that they hate us, and we may believe it too, because not even love itself, if it is sincere, can be the same every day, nor through all the hours of our lives, because it is like life itself, and moves with us at its own step down all the good and all the miserable highways, whether we are sad or whether we are joyful, not because we are this or that, but however we may be. It is but a mood, a passing phase, for better or for worse; we are a little weaker or a little stronger, more heroic or more cowardly, as the case may be. At times we are unjust, even cruelly, at others we are indulgent, with equal injustice. We are so proud that we imagine ourselves to be superior to all love, above the need of all

friendship; we are so humble that we crave the sympathy of any man, and hunger and starve for pity and pardon. Do you know why I believe you have come to me for the truth? You do not doubt Gonzalo, the one that you doubt is yourself. You are afraid that he may not be as you would have him, because you would not have him however he may be. The bell is ringing.... My friends are here, and he will be with them. Will you stay? You have time to hide. Or will you go without being seen? Do you prefer to listen? Or will you let your heart speak?

LUISA. No, I should rather not know; I don't wish to hear. Can I slip out without being seen?

PEPE. Yes, come this way. Follow me.

The SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. The gentlemen are in the billiard-room. I asked them to wait.

PEPE. No, show them here. [*To* LUISA] Are you sure? There is still time.

LUISA. No.... Am I making a mistake?

PEPE. A very wise one.

Curtain