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BY
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REVOLT
A Play in Four Acts

TO
MISS SYBIL THORNDIKE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- * DR HODDER, *aged 70*
- * JEFF, *an engineer*
- HARRY, *an artist*
- GREGORY, *a poet*
- * VERNON, *an inventor*
- BAGSHAW } *aged 70, his friends*
- BARNABY }
- * SIR JOHN POOLE, *an iron master*
- BLANDFORD, *one of his fellow-directors*
- CANON WOOLMER, *a country parson*
- * HUBERT NORTON, *about 30, a socialist friend of Jeff*
- * POWNALL } *workmen at Poole's works*
- MAYO }
- HUNTER, *a young doctor*
- * RENIE DALRYMPLE, *about 25*
- MISS PARTRIDGE, *her aunt*
- CONSTANCE WOOLMER, *a friend*

Two landladies of lodgings and other minor characters

* The chief characters are marked with a star.

REVOLT

ACT I

In the garden of DR HODDER'S villa, two or three miles from a manufacturing town. In the background L. an orchard; R. a house. French windows. Yews, box-trees and garden seats. A sunny afternoon in May; fruit trees and flowers in bloom. Men in green aprons come and go between L. and house.

POOLE, LADY POOLE, WOOLMER, a DREARY LADY by the window; RENIE, in white, and CONSTANCE walking together.

Enter BLANDFORD L.

BLANDFORD. Ah, Miss Dalrymple! So you're here to help.

RENIE. (*Shaking hands*) Yes, I'm doing the honours.

BLANDFORD. Ah, Connie! (*To RENIE*) And how is the poor Doctor bearing it?

RENIE. Oh, he's all right.

BLANDFORD. Still, I'm very sorry for him, very sorry indeed!

(*The group by the window breaks up. WOOLMER and the DREARY LADY wander round looking at the plants*)

WOOLMER. A perpetually recurring miracle, the arrival of spring.

POOLE. Hullo, Blandford, only just arrived?

BLANDFORD. (*Greeting*) Ah, Lady Poole! You're better? (*She is stout and rosy*) I'm not too late?

LADY POOLE. No, the auctioneer's having his tea, and everybody's getting very impatient.

POOLE. Confound him, we want ours too.

DREARY LADY. (*Bringing WOOLMER to flower bed up C.*) Doronicums seem to do very well down here.

(WOOLMER *yawns*. *He and the DREARY LADY go up C.*)

BLANDFORD. Lots of people here, I suppose?

LADY POOLE. Oh dear, yes; all the county's inside. Let me introduce you to Lady Eaglesham. (*Introducing the DREARY LADY*)

BLANDFORD. Delighted! Have you been round the garden? (*They go round together*)

WOOLMER. Have you been buying anything, Lady Poole?

LADY POOLE. No, I never do at sales.

WOOLMER. Sorry to see so many beautiful things going so cheap.

LADY POOLE. (*To RENIE, who passes with CONSTANCE*) Why, Renie my dear, how smart you look!

RENIE. (*Passing on*) Do I?

POOLE. H'm.

LADY POOLE. Highty-tighty! She wasn't slapped enough in the nursery, I think.

DREARY LADY. (*To BLANDFORD at flower bed C.*) Doronicums seem to do very well down here. (*BLANDFORD yawns. They go up. A bell rings in the house*)

LADY POOLE. There's the bell.

POOLE. Thank Heaven!

BLANDFORD. What is it now?

WOOLMER. The dining-room furniture comes next. (*They all go into house by window. The DREARY LADY is heard to murmur something to RENIE about "doronicums." BLANDFORD and CONSTANCE go last*)

BLANDFORD. And are those the catalogues of the sale?

CONSTANCE. No, these are my parish magazines.

BLANDFORD. Ah, then, I won't take one.

[*Exeunt laughing*]

Enter HODDER up R. with BAGSHAW and BARNABY up R. BAGSHAW and BARNABY sit on a garden seat C. resting their hands on the tops of their sticks, degenerate and fat. HODDER, well preserved, athletic and sunburnt, stands before them. The murmur of the auction comes from the house, with the voice of the auctioneer upraised from time to time.

HODDER. That's what I think of you and your prudence! Oh, I'm sick of the very name of prudence. Here's Vernon, my boy Vernon, one of the finest mathematicians of his generation. But you're not listening to me.

BAGSHAW. No, I'm not listenin' to you. You're mad, Hodder, as mad as a hatter. What's the use of listenin' to you? An old man like you, turnin' out of house and home, sellin' his furniture in order to support a son who ought to be supportin' himself!

BARNABY. And his father too.

HODDER. Don't I tell you he's going to revolutionise science and philosophy? And do you want him to be checked and hindered in his work? To have to go out and earn his miserable bread and butter?

BAGSHAW. How you've grown to be so old and learnt so little is a mystery to me. You come out from your books into the world and flap about like an owl in the sunshine. If you must have this sale, at any rate, you needn't have sprung it on us like this at three days' notice.

HODDER. What? Here I was picturing Vernon rich and happy, fellow of a college, and suddenly I discover he's starving in a Glasgow slum. Do you think I could wait? I had no funds in hand; I was overdrawn at the bank.

BAGSHAW. There !

AUCTIONEER. (*In the house*) Any advance ? Noo then, sir, don't be afeard o' the wife. (*Laughter*)

BAGSHAW. Hark at 'em ! Ain't you ashamed of yourself ? You, that might hold your head high in the world, being sold up like a fraudulent bankrupt ! Where are you going to live ? What are you going to live on ? What'll your wretched little sticks fetch, do you think ?

HODDER. I'll not touch a penny of it. It's all for my poor boy.

BAGSHAW. And you'll go to the Union, I suppose ?

HODDER. And why not ? Better men than me go there.

AUCTIONEER. Noomber forty ; old-fashioned mahogany cellarette ; very haandy to keep yer haat in. (*Laughter*)

Enter ALF and MAGGIE, a newly married couple. Greetings.

MAGGIE. We've come to spend Aunt Rachael's five-pound note.

ALF. As soon as we got the notice, Maggie said, "What a chance for us !" I only wish we weren't so late.

HODDER. Oh, you'll find something to pick up.

[Exeunt ALF and MAGGIE to the house]

BAGSHAW. Why don't your other boys help this Vernon ? They're earnin' their own livin', I suppose ; or do you support them too ?

HODDER. Of course not. They're very well able to support themselves.

BARNABY. So's Vernon.

Enter LORD WONERSH from the orchard.

WONERSH. How are you? Hope I haven't been trespassing? I came by the short cut over the fields.

HODDER. Come to buy something?

WONERSH. Well, I rather thought I might meet some friends here.

AUCTIONEER. (*In the house*) Noomber forty-woon!

HODDER. You'd better hurry up; it's nearly over.

[*Exit WONERSH to the house*]

BARNABY. Was that Lord Wonersh?

HODDER. Yes, the maker of the famous Wonersh Stingo.

BARNABY. I used to attend his father at one time.

BAGSHAW. He's after Miss Dalrymple.

HODDER. What makes you think so?

BAGSHAW. She's been settin' her cap at him a long time.

HODDER. What a detestable way you have of talking! Renie Dalrymple doesn't set her cap at anyone.

BAGSHAW. Why, what a peppery feller you are, Hodder. Why shouldn't Miss Dalrymple set her cap at a Lord? Girls do set their caps at Lords.

Enter RENIE from the house.

BAGSHAW. Talk of the devil.

BARNABY. (*Shaking hands*) Ah, Miss Dalrymple. Why, how cold your hands are!

BAGSHAW. Warm heart, eh?

HODDER. Had enough of the auction?

RENIE. It's so hot in there. I shall go and throw stones in the pond.

BAGSHAW. May I come too?

RENIE. Thank you very much; I'd rather go alone.
[*Exit RENIE up R.*]

BAGSHAW. (*To BARNABY*) She didn't leap at my offer, did she, James ?

BARNABY. I suppose she had her reasons.

BAGSHAW. Here they come.

HODDER. Who come ?

BAGSHAW. The reasons.

Enter LORD WONERSH from the house R. He looks about him for RENIE.

BAGSHAW. Excuse me, Lord Wonersh ; may I introduce my friend, Dr Barnaby ? (*WONERSH looks annoyed at being delayed*)

BARNABY. I used to have the honour of attendin' your father at one time when he was sufferin' from rheumatoid arthritis. He used to say . . .

WONERSH. (*To HODDER*) Did Miss Dalrymple come this way ?

BAGSHAW. She's down the garden, throwin' stones at the ducks.

WONERSH. Ah, thank you.

[*Exit R.*

BARNABY. (*Slyly*) He seems in a great hurry.

BAGSHAW. Not much interested in us.

HODDER. Naturally.

BAGSHAW. She's hooked him right enough this time.

HODDER. There you are again ! Miss Dalrymple doesn't want to "hook " anyone !

BAGSHAW. I only wish I had the drawing up of the settlements. Well, James and I will have to be toddlin'.

Enter CONSTANCE from the house R.

CONSTANCE. Are you busy, Dr Hodder ?

BAGSHAW. Busy ? No, he never is. Well, good-bye. We're sorry for you, Hodder.

BARNABY. Very sorry indeed.

BAGSHAW. Let's hope things aren't as bad as they seem.

BARNABY. The darkest hour comes before the dawn.

BAGSHAW. But you've brought it on yourself.

BARNABY. As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.

HODDER. Good-bye. Thanks for coming round to cheer me up.

[Exeunt BAGSHAW and BARNABY L.U.]

CONSTANCE. Lady Poole is looking for you. She's going to buy some of the china, and wants you to tell her which are the original pieces and which are the copies.

HODDER. If she can't tell the difference, what the devil does she want to buy them for?

[Exit HODDER R. CONSTANCE moves down L.C.]

Enter RENIE up R. and comes R.C. before seat.

CONSTANCE. Well?

RENIE. Well?

CONSTANCE. *(Eagerly)* Any news?

RENIE. None.

CONSTANCE. *(Disappointed)* I thought you and Lord Wonersh were together down the garden.

RENIE. So we were.

Enter LORD WONERSH R.U.

WONERSH. I hope you don't mean what you said?

RENIE. I'm afraid so. But please let us still be friends.

WONERSH. I don't want to be friends.

[Exit WONERSH by the orchard. He chops off the head of a flower as he goes, and knocks apple blossom down in a shower]

CONSTANCE. You refused him? Oh, Renie, how could you!

RENIE. He might have known it was no good asking me.

CONSTANCE. There's Mrs Tatham watching us out of the window.

RENIE. Oh, how I hate all these respectable neighbours of ours! To see them all prowling about here, bobbing and grinning and cackling, as if it were a garden-party, while dear old Dodder is selling up his little home, all the little treasures he has scraped together . . . Oh, if only there were no ladies!

CONSTANCE. I wonder what's the matter with you, Renie; you're getting so bitter. You seem to have everything that a girl can want. Are you tired of life already?

RENIE. Tired of life? No, I should think not! If only one lived! But I'm tired of the life *these* people talk about—births, deaths, marriages, frocks and food.

CONSTANCE. That's what life consists of.

RENIE. Does it? It used to consist of so much more once. Why wasn't I born in the Middle Ages?

CONSTANCE. Wouldn't it have been lovely?

RENIE. They weren't so sensible then; they did silly, unpractical things. They sacrificed themselves for ideas. Think how silly the Crusades were! Do you think anybody would do that sort of thing nowadays? That's when some people first began to be called "noble men"; but now . . . Why was Lord Wonersh's father made a peer? For selling bottled stout! If only it had been beef or mutton; but bottled stout!

CONSTANCE. Yes, the romance has gone out of life.

That's why we enjoy reading about the old days so much.

(*A pause*)

RENIE. How sweet it smells!

CONSTANCE. There's a kind of mystery, a sort of twilight, in spring sunshine that you never get in summer. And the blackbirds . . . How nicely Dr Hodder keeps his garden. Does he do it all himself?

RENIE. He has a man in to mow the grass, that's all.

CONSTANCE. Why *don't* you marry Lord Wonersh?

RENIE. What, and become an ornament of Society again, in a big Georgian house with twelve round pillars in a park? Wasn't it to get away from all that sort of thing that I left home and came to Saltings? To escape from young-ladydom and squire's-daughterdom and having to patronise the villagers? And then you want me to marry Lord Wonersh?

CONSTANCE. Oh, you look down on being a brewer's wife, I suppose.

RENIE. Not I! I look up to it. It's too high for me. Too . . . frothy, too "up," so to speak.

CONSTANCE. Oh, Renie, how can you! But Lord Wonersh is so nice, so kind-hearted. You could hardly wish for a better husband as men go.

RENIE. That's it: as men go! He's so like other people's husbands that, if I married him, I should be afraid of going home from parties with the wrong one by mistake. Look at our friends' marriages; look at Mary Thurston's husband; Harriet's; Ethel's; all so nice; so kind-hearted and so ordinary! Who makes them ordinary? We do; women do.

CONSTANCE. We do?

RENIE. Yes, by our choice, by our flabby standard. We get so tired of our ideal man never coming that at last we give in to whoever wants us and say, "He'll do." He'll do! How awful! Women ought all to strike for a time and say they will only marry extraordinary men; then we should change the type. The demand would create a supply.

CONSTANCE. But supposing one never got married at all?

RENIE. Fearful, isn't it? But one has to pay for being heroic. The brave man risks death, the brave woman must risk solitude. Oh, sometimes I think I'll marry an old man, one of the fine old generation that's passing away, just for a protest, a flag, something to wave, to spite the young ones for being what they are.

CONSTANCE. Oh, don't, Renie! I couldn't bear it.

RENIE. We have such power in our hands, if only we used it properly. Men are all slaves; they've got to be this or that. We're free; we can rove and choose.

CONSTANCE. I know what I should choose.

RENIE. Someone handsome, rich and clever. . . .

CONSTANCE. No, I don't care about that. But someone who would sacrifice all the world for me, live only for me, and then for the children, counting all else as dross.

RENIE. I wouldn't give twopence for your ideal husband, then. No, give me a man whose eyes are fixed on something beyond; a man with a cause at heart, for which he would sacrifice wife, child, everything he has.

CONSTANCE. Sacrifice *you*?

RENIE. Yes, me first.

CONSTANCE. Oh, Renie, how awful!

RENIE. Anything but an ordinary husband who will "do." I would rather have one who got drunk and beat me. So long as he will do *something* out of the common, he's the man for me.

CONSTANCE. I believe you're going mad, Renie.

RENIE. No, I'm going sane, my dear. That's what's the matter. I've been mad all my life, like you; but now . . . Who's this?

Enter JEFF, HARRY and GREGORY L.

CONSTANCE. Why, it's the Hodders, the Doctor's sons. You know them, don't you?

RENIE. They won't remember me. I'll go and tell him they've come.

[Exit RENIE *to the house R. Familiar greetings.*

GREGORY *makes a mock reverence*

GREGORY. Wasn't that Miss Dalrymple?

CONSTANCE. Yes. Why, of course, she's an old flame of Jeff's.

JEFF. Nonsense.

GREGORY. Jeff doesn't share these human weaknesses.

CONSTANCE. Oh, how silly you are!

JEFF. Where is he?

CONSTANCE. She's gone to fetch him. Why didn't you all come sooner?

GREGORY. We none of us knew anything about it until we got the printed notices this morning.

HARRY. We met by accident at St Pancras.

GREGORY. We were anxious about the Dad.

Enter HODDER *from the house R.*

CONSTANCE. Here he is.

[Exit CONSTANCE

HODDER. So you've come! Well? Aren't you ashamed to look me in the face? You knew about Vernon and you never told me! You leave me to learn it by chance from Beadle. You knew about it, Harry?

HARRY. Yes.

HODDER. Gregory?

GREGORY. Yes, Dad.

HODDER. And Jeff?

GREGORY. No, Jeff didn't know.

HODDER. Ha!

GREGORY. Vernon told us not to tell him.

HARRY. Not him or you.

HODDER. Oh, Vernon told you not to tell, did he? And you were fools enough to listen to him. How ever did he get like this? What's become of his fellowship at Trinity?

HARRY. It was only for three years.

HODDER. I never thought of that! But, if you didn't tell me and Jeff, why didn't you help him yourselves?

GREGORY. We have been sending him money.

HARRY. A little now and then.

HODDER. A little now and then! How much?

HARRY. Five shillings some weeks, half-a-crown others.

HODDER. Five shillings some weeks, half-a-crown others! What do you do with all your money, you young profligates? What do you spend it on? Not on your clothes, apparently. (*To HARRY*) What's become of all you got for your pictures from those German museums?

HARRY. I didn't get much for 'em, Dad. *The Blessed Damosel* they bought at Munich was a dead loss of ten pounds, and *The Wild Duck* cost me near fifteen.

HODDER. And *Melisande* they wanted for the Tate ?

HARRY. I've still got it rolled up under my bed.

HODDER. What do you live on ?

HARRY. I've got some work drawing maps. Of course, if I painted what the public wants I might have managed ; but somehow I couldn't bring myself to do it. I'd rather do the maps. I have Sundays for my painting.

HODDER. And how much do you make with your maps ?

HARRY. About twenty-five to thirty shillings a week.

HODDER. Twenty-five to thirty ! (*Sits on seat L.*) Well, I'm glad you haven't painted what the public wants. . . . But come now, Gregory, what about you ?

GREGORY. I'm like Harry, I'm afraid, Dad. I do shorthand for *The Daily Circular*.

HODDER. What's *that* ?

GREGORY. I report Company meetings.

HODDER. What ! You, the poet ! And Harry draws maps ! Am I mad, Jeff ? Do I look mad ?

JEFF. You're about the same as usual, Dad.

HODDER. You'll be telling me you're not an engineer next.

JEFF. Well, since it's a day of confessions . . .

HODDER. Good heavens ! What's coming now ?

JEFF. When I came back from Stuttgart and went into Poole's works, I soon found out what working in a big firm meant. My head was stuffed full of new mechanical notions ; I simply *had* to work them out. I couldn't stick it ; so I left . . .

HODDER. I know ; for another firm.

JEFF. But not an engineering firm. I wanted an

easy trade that wouldn't interfere. I got a place in a . . . well, in a bicycle shop.

HODDER. A bicycle shop!

JEFF. As a journeyman. But I luckily invented a new tow-clip, and bought my employer out. And now I'm doing well on my own. You haven't seen my card: "Geoffrey Hodder, Cycle Stores, 262 High Street, Ball's Pond."

HODDER. (*Reading*) "Repairs neatly executed." No, no! It's too much. All three of you! Oh, we're a ridiculous, unpractical family; we'll never succeed in life; but we'll be happy, boys, and we'll stick to our guns against the world, eh? And now Vernon.

JEFF. He shall never have to earn a penny of his living any more. There's my hand on it.

GREGORY. And mine.

HARRY. And mine.

HODDER. Good boys! That's right! I'm pleased with you.

JEFF. And now, what about you, Dad?

HODDER. Oh, *I* don't matter. There's no more good to be got out of me.

JEFF. If you're not too proud to live over a shop . . .

HODDER. Oh, gammon!

JEFF. I'm evidently the millionaire of the family. Will you come and live with me?

HODDER. Well, I suppose I may as well save the rate-payers my keep. I'm going for a day or two to Miss Partridge's, but after that . . .

Enter LADY POOLE and the DREARY LADY from the house, followed by POOLE, BLANDFORD, WOOLMER, CONNIE and MISS PARTRIDGE. They are talking. MISS PARTRIDGE is heard to say something about "tea-time."

JEFF. Hullo, here they come!

HODDER. (*Rises*) The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.

JEFF. I'm off.

[*Exit R.U. behind seat*]

LADY POOLE. Now for some tea!

DREARY LADY. How nice!

(*Motor horns, carriage wheels and exclamations of departure are heard behind. The impression of a large crowd going away in the other direction*)

GREGORY. Aha, sounds of departure!

HARRY. Let's go and look at 'em over the hedge.

GREGORY. I love to see the rich in the country.

HARRY. They look so sleepy and good-natured.

GREGORY. Like tigers between two meals.

HARRY. You could almost go up and stroke them.

GREGORY. Come on!

[*Exeunt R.U.*]

LADY POOLE. What charming things you have, Dr Hodder!

HODDER. (*Correcting her*) Had! (*They laugh*)

BLANDFORD. Good-bye. I must be getting back to tea.

[*Exit L.*]

WOOLMER. Tea? Tea? Where's Connie?

POOLE. They say Renie Dalrymple has refused Lord Wonersh.

LADY POOLE. Refused a Lord? Not she! She's a snob, my dear, to the tips of her toes.

(*RENIE appears at the window*)

POOLE. Look out!

RENIE. Come on, Con!

WOOLMER. We must be getting home, my dear.

CONSTANCE. Wait a bit, Papa. We're going to get you some "suitable refreshment."

WOOLMER. Ha, a little tea!

[*Exeunt RENIE and CONSTANCE by the window R.*]

POOLE. A few minutes more. I ordered the car for five.

LADY POOLE. But what about tea ?

WOOLMER. So everything is sold ?

HODDER. Everything.

WOOLMER. Books too ?

HODDER. Books too.

WOOLMER. You will feel quite lost without them.

HODDER. Not I ; it's good riddance. Here have I been wasting my time over them all these years ; and what was the use ? What's the good of it when I'm dead ?

WOOLMER. You mustn't say that. No good thing is wasted that we acquire on earth.

HODDER. Do you think we shall talk science in Heaven ?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Fancy the angels walking up and down among the clouds discussing Haeckel and Huxley.

HODDER. I doubt if they care about "The Riddle of the Universe" up there.

Enter RENIE and CONSTANCE with a big white jug, crockery and mugs on a tray.

RENIE. Mrs Brown has made us some tea.

HODDER. Oh, good Mrs Brown !

CONSTANCE. It's one of the school treat jugs.

RENIE. Will you have a mug, Lady Poole ?

(They hand round the tea with the necessary words)

MISS PARTRIDGE. *(To POOLE)* Heaven knows why women *do* marry nowadays. I think it's only because they have no pockets.

Enter the AUCTIONEER from the house, a dingy man, with tall hat and black bag.

AUCTIONEER. Well, I'm off, sir.

HODDER. Ah . . . thank you very much for selling my things.

AUCTIONEER. It went pretty well, I think.

HODDER. First rate.

AUCTIONEER. I was in goodish form to-day ; I got a laff several times. (*To RENIE and CONSTANCE gallantly*) No tea for me, thank you ; I've had mine. (*To HODDER*) There's a cheque on account. The foreman wants to know what he's to do with the bewks.

HODDER. Books ? What books ?

AUCTIONEER. They were all bought in, you know.

HODDER. Oh no ; they were all sold to a dirty little fellow with a hook-nose.

AUCTIONEER. That's our Mr Moss. He had orders to bah them in.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Oh, that's all right, Mr Auctioneer. They're to be sent to my house. I'll speak to the foreman about it.

AUCTIONEER. (*Shaking hands*) Well then, good-day, sir. [*Exit up R.*]

HODDER. Phew ! It's like shaking hands with the dentist. But what's this about the books ?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Oh, you must ask Renie about that. It's her doing.

RENIE. Don't be angry, Dodder ; they're for your birthday.

HODDER. But I tell you I don't want them. How dare you try and force me ? . . . Well, well, I should have been sorry not to see the old friends again. Thank you, my dear, it was very kind of you.

(JEFF, GREGORY *and* HARRY *meet by the house and come down together*)

HARRY. We've both got to get back to-night.

GREGORY. I've got a meeting in the morning.

JEFF. Something literary ?

GREGORY. Yes, india-rubber.

JEFF. (*To POOLE*) How do you do, Sir John ?

POOLE. What, Hodder ?

JEFF. You've not forgotten me, sir ?

POOLE. Of course not. I hope you're getting on in town.

JEFF. Oh, first rate.

POOLE. May we go round the kitchen garden, Doctor ? I want to show Lady Eaglesham the view.

HODDER. Of course.

LADY POOLE. (*To LADY EAGLESHAM*) You can see the works from there.

POOLE. Jane thinks everybody wants to see the works. I'm sure I don't.

[*Exeunt POOLE, LADY POOLE and LADY EAGLESHAM L.U.*]

HODDER. Let's see; you know everybody here, then, boys ?

(*Greetings and handshakings; the boys are C.*)

JEFF. I and the Canon met indoors.

(*RENIE and the sons look uncertainly at each other*)

HODDER. What, Renie, don't you know my sons ?

RENIE. (*Shaking hands*) When I stayed here as a little girl we used to see each other sometimes.

GREGORY. At a distance.

RENIE. How I used to wish I could take part in your games !

GREGORY. You did.

RENIE. Did I ?

GREGORY. Jeff was very medieval in his tastes. We used to be wicked knights, and he was the good one. As the eldest he insisted on that, and on winning.

RENIE. And what was I ?

GREGORY. You were the distressed Princess whom he rescued.

RENIE. (*To JEFF*) Thank you very much ; it was very kind of you to rescue me.

JEFF. (*Embarrassed*) Are you staying down here now ?

HODDER. Oh, she's always here now.

WOOLMER. Miss Partridge has adopted her.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Nothing of the sort, I can assure you. She's simply dumped herself on me ; I have to put up with it as best I can.

RENIE. Oh, you wicked woman !

HODDER. Well, well, we shall have to give up knowing princesses like you in future. Our social position won't admit of it. (*To MISS PARTRIDGE*) An hour ago I thought I was the father of an engineer, an artist and a poet ; but it seems I'm only the father of a map-maker, a company-meeting reporter and a bicycle-shop keeper.

MISS PARTRIDGE. What nonsense is this ?

HODDER. It's a long story ; I'll tell you this evening. There's evidently no place in this world for clever men ; and I'm told that's just how it ought to be. That's what the obscurantists say.

WOOLMER. You needn't look at me like that. I'm no more obscurantist than yourself. I look forward to the day when every man in England will have leisure for the higher life ; when, freed from the cares of daily bread, they will turn their thoughts to patriotism, to charity, kindness, and love of work for its own sake.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Bravo !

GREGORY. Hear, hear !

HODDER. Thought must be free.

WOOLMER. Yes, thought must be free.

HODDER. It isn't worth calling thought unless it's free.

WOOLMER. Exactly !

GREGORY. How strange that the word free-thinker should ever have been used as a term of reproach.

WOOLMER. Ah, that's a different matter.

HODDER. Is it ?

Enter ALF and MAGGIE from the house with a parcel.

ALF. (*Grinning*) Well, Doctor, we've been packing up our purchases.

MAGGIE. (*Grinning*) We're so delighted about the sideboard.

HODDER. Ah, *you've* got the sideboard, have you ?

ALF. It'll be the making of our dining-room.

HODDER. Yes, it's a nice old sideboard.

MAGGIE. And twelve pillow-slips and the blankets with the purple line.

RENIE. (*Interrupting*) What was the subject of the book you were going to write once, Dodder ?

HODDER. Ah, that's an old story. *Infandum regina . . .* I pondered over it for years while I was practising as a doctor, and had not time. (*MAGGIE yawns*) But I always promised myself that when I had saved up three thousand pounds I would retire from practice, and devote my life to it. (*ALF yawns*)

HODDER. At last the happy day arrived. I bought all the books I could lay hands on.

RENIE. But what was the subject ?

HODDER. About atoms and the constitution of matter.

ALF. (*Stealing across*) Don't move ; we must be off.
[*Exeunt MAGGIE and ALF L.U.*]

RENIE. Well ?

HODDER. Well, I found I was an old fool, that's all. The world had been moving on behind my back.

My epoch-making discovery was founded on an atomic theory that had been exploded years before.

(WOOLMER *yawns*)

RENIE. Poor Dodder! How disappointed you must have been.

HODDER. It's the common lot. For one idea that lives and grows, a multitude are doomed to perish. It's like the pollen grains that float in clouds from the trees; the whole air is full of them; sailors sweep them from the decks in passing ships. One in how many million ever comes to maturity? We must be content to imitate the bounty of nature.

WOOLMER. (*Rising*) We must be off. I've got my sermon to write.

[WOOLMER *and* CONSTANCE *shake hands and exit* L.U.]

RENIE. Didn't you try to catch up?

(*Motor horn* R.)

HODDER. It was too late. I passed on the torch to the younger generation. Vernon is at work on the same subject.

Enter POOLE, LADY POOLE *and* LADY EAGLESHAM
L.U.]

POOLE. There's the car. We must be saying good-bye.

HODDER. I was just telling them my boy Vernon's theory. It's something in your line.

POOLE. That's interesting. What is it?

[LADY POOLE *and* LADY EAGLESHAM *say good-bye and are escorted out* L.U. *by* GREGORY *and* HARRY

HODDER. It's a mechanical theory of matter.

POOLE. Oh, a theory of matter!

HODDER. What he needs to verify it is some benevolent engineer who will help him to experiment. Now, here's a chance for you. If we lived in an ideal state . . .

POOLE. But we don't. The whole question is, is it useful? Will it clothe us? Will it feed us? Will it give us a mechanical advantage?

HODDER. You can never tell till you've tried.

POOLE. This is not serious, I suppose.

HODDER. Serious? I should think so!

(*Motor horn L.*)

POOLE. Well, I'm afraid we have to think of our shareholders.

LADY POOLE. (*Without*) Come along, John!

POOLE. We can't spend their money on researches in the airy realm of theory.

HODDER. It's always money.

POOLE. Always.

[*Exit POOLE L.U. HARRY and GREGORY have already returned*]

JEFF. (*R. on buttress*) What's the good of talking to Poole about it, Dad?

HODDER. Why, if he took it up . . .

JEFF. We don't want his help. We can manage for ourselves.

HARRY. We shall have to be off; our train's in half-an-hour.

GREGORY. Are you coming too, Jeff?

JEFF. No, I'm stopping the night at the Chough. (*Rises and shakes hands with GREGORY*)

HODDER. He's going to Glasgow with the money to-morrow.

HARRY. Well, good-bye, Dad. (*Shakes hands with HODDER*)

[*HARRY and GREGORY say good-bye and exeunt L.*]

MISS PARTRIDGE. (*To HODDER*) Will you be ready

soon? The boy has taken your bag down. I thought we might walk.

HODDER. Good.

Enter BUILDER'S WORKMAN L. above tree.

WORKMAN. Can we be gettin' in now, sor?

HODDER. I'll come and see.

WORKMAN. T'peeaperers are comin' fost thing t' mooan. We'd lahk to ha't all riddy for 'em.

HODDER. (*To MISS PARTRIDGE*) I shan't be long.

MISS PARTRIDGE. I'm coming too to see about the books. (*To JEFF*) You must come and dine with us.

RENIE. Yes, do. (*Sits on seat C.*)

(*JEFF thanks them*)

MISS PARTRIDGE. Take care of him, Renie. See that he doesn't run away.

[*Exeunt HODDER, MISS PARTRIDGE and WORKMAN to the house*]

RENIE. Poor Dr Hodder! I'm half in love with him, you know. Your brother must be a wonderful person to deserve so much from him.

JEFF. Vernon? Ah, if you only knew him! He's a hero in the true sense of the word. There's a man born with a passion for everything beautiful; food, wine, pictures, women, china, music, everything! And he's thrown it all to the winds for the sake of his work; he lives in poverty, dirt too, probably. Can't you imagine his Glasgow lodging? In the old days a knight swore allegiance to a prince or a lady.

RENIE. That was in the days of Romance.

JEFF. Aren't these days of Romance?

RENIE. Romance perished with the Middle Ages.

JEFF. Not it. It only changed its form. The easy

chances of romance in the old-fashioned sense may have perished; battles, duels, rescues of distressed damsels. There are not bulls in every field, and even runaway horses are getting scarce. But the hero is still with us; the man who thinks life not worth living unless he risks it for greater things. Only the alternative now is not the easy one of death; but life without the things that give life its charm. In the old days the Hero jumped on a horse and rode out into the plains and forests; his Quest was in the material world. The modern Hero's Quest is in the world of Thought. He sallies forth in pursuit of an idea. Chivalry was once the privilege of the class from which you spring. Oh, I know all about your noble ancestry. (RENIE *smiles it aside*) Its heroism is all in the past. Romance has gone over to my class now. While *your* ancestors were caracoling about on gaily caparisoned barbs mine were probably plodding in the towns at unromantic crafts; but behold in the whirligig of time, while your brothers and cousins, carrying on the degenerate traditions of an effete aristocracy . . . You'll forgive me?

RENIE. Don't mention it.

JEFF. Are quite unromantically hooking inoffensive fish or shooting unretaliating rabbits, mine are having the wildest adventures in the world of thought tilting at things that can hit them back. Think of all the enemies that surround a man like Vernon; all the tempting hopes of Wealth, Comfort, Indolence, Love, Friendship and Worldly Greatness; all the oppositions and indifferences that beset his path. One after another he must roll them in the mud, until at last he reaches the magic castle, to hack his way through

the thickets and awake some long-hidden secret of nature from its enchanted sleep.

RENIE. You mean that your brother has renounced the lower side, the sensuous side of life?

JEFF. Lower? Why the lower? Upon my word I can't say which is higher and which is lower; or why one should try to belittle the mundane life.

RENIE. The mundane life?

JEFF. Yes, it's so much more than the merely sensuous that such a man gives up; everything instinctive and warm and natural, even love for his father and family.

RENIE. Has he any right to give that up?

JEFF. There's no question of right. If he has the heroic devotion to a purpose, all these things fall away from him without his thinking about it. Only don't let us use contemptuous language about what he gives up. It's about the mundane that Nature spreads all her glamour and loveliness. That is the life of which the poets sing.

RENIE. Poets sing of the sublime.

JEFF. Not the good poets. Good poets sing of the mundane; of love and life and death, of birds and children, flowers, and sweet smells, just as the skylark sings of grubs and flies and the little warm nest on the ground. If Vernon gives *us* up, it's because he has nothing else left to give up.

RENIE. And would you do the same as he has done?

JEFF. I hope so; I think so. Yes, if ever I find an object for my devotion, if ever I am called upon a Quest, I will give up everything; father, brothers and the hope of wife and child; though I dare say I could relish those things as well as other men.

RENIE. Yes, I am sure you could.

JEFF. I will do as Vernon has done

Enter a very small TELEGRAPH BOY L., whistling very loudly.

BOY. Hodder ?

JEFF. It's for my father, I expect. He's indoors.
[Exit BOY to house R.]

RENIE. *(Rises)* I do hope it's not bad news.

JEFF. Why should it be ?

RENIE. I'm countrified enough to feel anxious when I see a telegram. Dr Hodder is going to live with you in London, isn't he ?

JEFF. Yes, when he leaves you.

RENIE. I hope I may come and see him there.

JEFF. Of course. Are you going to be in town ?

RENIE. Yes. Aunt Hetty and I are coming up for the sales.

JEFF. I'm delighted to hear it. Yes, please, come, don't forget, I shall look forward to it.

[The TELEGRAPH BOY crosses from the house and exits L. whistling]

Enter MISS PARTRIDGE

RENIE. What was the telegram ?

MISS PARTRIDGE. I don't know. We must be getting home. The builders want to get to work.

Enter HODDER with telegram R.

HODDER. I was none too soon with my sale.

JEFF. What is it ?

HODDER. It's a telegram from Beadle. He's been to see Vernon and wires that he's ill.

JEFF. Ill ! I'll go to-night.

HODDER. *(Nodding)* Here's the cheque. You can cash it in Glasgow.

JEFF. (*Looking to see that it is endorsed*) I'll catch the six-thirty and pick up the night mail at York.

HODDER. You can just manage it.

(JEFF says good-bye to MISS PARTRIDGE)

HODDER. Come on, Jeff, no time to lose.

RENIE. Then we shall meet again in London.
Good-bye.

[JEFF says good-bye to HODDER and exits L.]

HODDER. Send me a wire.

JEFF. (*Without*) All right.

MISS PARTRIDGE. (*To RENIE*) What do you mean, you'll meet again in London?

RENIE. You and I are going up for the sales.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Oh, I'm going up, am I? Do you mean to marry him?

RENIE. No.

MISS PARTRIDGE. (*To HODDER who returns from up L.*) Come along, Hodder, we must be off too. (*HODDER takes his walking-stick and a satchel full of odds and ends*) Good-bye, old house!

HODDER. Good-bye! Good-bye! . . . Why should one mind going so much? What is a home after all? It's only matter, inorganic matter, an arrangement of Mole . . . Molecules. Come on, let's be off, or I shall make an old fool of myself.

[*Exeunt L.*]

(*A PAINTER has closed the French windows and paints round patches on the panes*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

In a garret. VERNON lies on a low bed up L.C. with his eyes closed. HUNTER, a young doctor, writing at a table covered with American cloth. MRS MACKINTOSH stands by him, watching an etna boil. Books are scattered on the floor. In a corner stands the model of a scientific apparatus, covered with a torn tablecloth. In another corner, a tall linen cupboard. A girl is playing Rakhmaninoff's Prelude in C sharp minor on the piano in a neighbouring lodging.

HUNTER. (*Crumpling up the paper on which he has been writing and throwing it on the floor*) No, I shan't give him any more drugs at present. What he wants is feeding up. It's simply a case of starvation and overwork.

MRS MACKINTOSH. Will I go on with the Benger?

HUNTER. Yes. Benger every two hours; and the Sanatogen three times a day in hot milk. Try him with a little meat juice about one, and let me know how he takes it.

MRS MACKINTOSH. Yes, sir. (*They are watching VERNON furtively while they talk, and turn towards him as he moves his head*)

VERNON. Wasn't that the bell?

HUNTER. Bell? No. You go to sleep!

MRS MACKINTOSH. He keeps listening for the bell ever since he knows that his brother's coming.

HUNTER. When's he due?

MRS MACKINTOSH. He might be here any meenit now.

HUNTER. (*Looking at his watch*) I must see about

getting the district nurse. There's that brat of Murdoch's practising her piece again.

MRS MACKINTOSH. He says it doesna disturb him. (*To VERNON*) Would you wish to have the music stopped now?

VERNON. No, I like it. It's so like life. It's all effort, effort; never getting there. It's like what's his name rolling his stone up that hill in Hell.

HUNTER. You're getting too sharp. I must give you another sleeping draught.

VERNON. No, no! I mustn't be sleepy when my brother comes. I've got something to tell him.

HUNTER. Wait till you're well.

VERNON. Can't wait. I say, Doc, be a good chap; give me some of that pick-me-up of yours again. I must have my mind clear. When I've seen Jeff you can souse me with sleeping draughts as much as you like. Bring a barrel round at twelve. There! Surely that was the bell.

MRS MACKINTOSH. I'm thinking it's a bell in your head you've got.

HUNTER. Give me your wrist again. (*Feeling his pulse*) Is it anything very important?

VERNON. It's more than life or death to me.

HUNTER. Bible oath?

VERNON. Bible oath.

HUNTER. The pulse is better than I expected.

VERNON. You will?

HUNTER. (*Taking a small bottle from table*) You can have a couple of table-spoons after you've got the Bengel down.

VERNON. You're a brick.

HUNTER. I'll leave it here. (*Puts it on table by bed*)

VERNON. Hurry up with that Bengel, Mac.

HUNTER. I must be off. (*Goes to door R.*)

VERNON. Tata. Don't forget the boxing match.

HUNTER. Boxing match? What boxing match?

VERNON. You and me on Friday.

HUNTER. Rubbish!

[*Exit HUNTER R.*]

VERNON. Hurry up, Mac, I'm starving. I'm not half as bad as you two try to make out, you know.

MRS MACKINTOSH. (*Bringing him the Benger*) There!

VERNON. (*Eating*) Ah! Slap up! (*He hands back the bowl*)

MRS MACKINTOSH. Why, you've hardly touched it.

VERNON. Nonsense; you don't expect me to eat the bowl as well, do you? It's lovely of you to take so much trouble, Mac. I'll marry you when I'm well. (*A bell rings*) That's him. I know his ring. Be quick! (*MRS MACKINTOSH goes to door R.*) Stop! Just smarten me up a bit. Dip the brush in the jug. There's a good chap. (*She does his hair*) There, now I feel more like a Christian.

[*Exit MRS MACKINTOSH. VERNON takes a dose of the tonic and lies back*]

Enter JEFF R.

Thank God you've come.

JEFF. How are you getting on?

VERNON. How's the Dad and everybody?

JEFF. They're all right.

VERNON. Don't look at my room like that. We haven't had time to tidy up.

JEFF. So you've had a doctor in?

VERNON. Have you had breakfast yet?

JEFF. Yes.

VERNON. Good. There's no time to waste on meals. Mrs Mac gone?

JEFF. There's no one here but you and me.

VERNON. She's a brick. Look here, old chap, this is a bad affair.

JEFF. What do you mean?

VERNON. It's all up with me, Jeff. I'm what the French call *flambé*.

JEFF. What do you mean? You don't mean . . . Oh, nonsense! Don't be an ass.

VERNON. The machine's worn out.

JEFF. We'll pull you round. We'll get a better doctor, we'll . . .

VERNON. It's too late. Isn't it sickening? Hooked by the leg just as I was climbing in at the window. For I'd got it, Jeff. I'd just found the link I wanted.

JEFF. What does the doctor say?

VERNON. Never mind that; I've got it, I tell you. Matter is energy, and I've discovered the way to prove it. The worst thing these days has been the fear I might . . . I mightn't have time to hand on the secret. But thank God you've come. Gosh! If my head would only clear for a minute.

JEFF. You've written it down?

VERNON. That's where I've been such a fool. I'm so unmethodical. Things dashed down here and there and everywhere, on the backs of letters, on the floor, the wall; no one could make head or tail of it without an explanation. The key's in here (*tapping his forehead*) and I must give it you before . . . before . . .

JEFF. Rest a bit.

VERNON. As for formulae, that cupboard's full of 'em. Hunter locked 'em up, and Mrs Mac has got the key. It all depends on understanding them. Then there's to be a machine, an experimental apparatus. That's the model of it. The machine'll prove it; if it works all right, that is.

JEFF. We thought I might be useful.

VERNON. You're the very man I wanted. (*Struggles up*) Now if only I could pull myself together. Just lug that thing over here; it isn't heavy. (*JEFF drags up the model*) You know what an atom is; a hollow space with a handful of electrons buzzing round in it for all they're worth. Gosh! I think I've got an atom up top instead of a head. I'll try another pull at that tippie. (*Drinks and listens to music*) Rum, tum, tum, tum. Listen to her, struggling on, struggling on, and never getting there. Where was I? I know. The machine. It all depends on giving the right series of movements to the machine. If I could only show you the way about the formulae you'd soon fossick out the rest for yourself. Now for one great glorious moment of clearness. Rum, tum, tum. (*He sits up and puts out his hand for the medicine bottle*)

JEFF. You mustn't go drinking your medicine up like that. It says every four hours.

VERNON. Don't be a fool, Jeff. What does it matter, so long as it helps me to tell you what I have to? We're nothing, you know it. Now I've got it clear. There are two sorts of electrons with different oscillations. The formula for the oscillation of the first. Have you got a bit of paper? The formula for the oscillation of the first . . . Damnation. I'm dying! (*He falls back and dies. JEFF closes his eyes and rings the bell*)

Enter MRS MACKINTOSH

JEFF. Have you got the key of that cupboard?
MRS MACKINTOSH. It's here in my pocket. (*JEFF*

holds out his hand) Will you promise not to let him look at them ?

JEFF. Yes, yes. (*He unlocks the cupboard, from which masses of paper tumble out*)

MRS MACKINTOSH. (*At the bedside*) Oh, sir ! D'ye know he's deid ?

JEFF. (*Examining papers*) I know, I know.

(*THE GIRL goes on practising Rakhmaninoff*)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

In JEFF'S bicycle shop. Door L. to HODDER'S room ; door C. to yard with a spring bell. The store full of bicycles runs back into darkness R. ; at the far end of it a gas jet and a man hammering iron on iron. Writing-table and chairs down R. A glass house aloft in gallery.

HUBERT NORTON, *in shirt-sleeves, with hands and face smudged with black oil, at work on a bicycle in the foreground. 1ST GIRL BICYCLIST at door C. with bicycle ; 2ND waiting while workman gets her bicycle from the store*

1ST GIRL. Hurry up, Nell. (*Laughs and rings her bell*)

2ND GIRL. How impatient you are. (*To WORKMAN who is R.C.*) I don't want anything very grand ; it's only for a spin.

1ST GIRL. She'll tumble off. (*Laughs and rings*)

2ND GIRL. Mind you don't wear your bell out.

(*JEFF comes out from gallery house and looks down*)

JEFF. Is that you, Hubert ?

HUBERT. Hullo ! Come up to blow ?

JEFF. Have they got that piston fitted yet?

HUBERT. I'll go and see. Will you see Hazeman if he comes?

JEFF. No, I'm too busy. Miss Partridge hasn't been to see my father, has she?

HUBERT. The lady with the niece? Not yet.

JEFF. Let me know if she does.

HUBERT. Oho! Not too busy for that! All right, I'll let you know.

[*Exit* JEFF. HUBERT goes up R.]

HUBERT. (*To* 2ND GIRL) Excuse me, madam.

2ND GIRL. Oh, lor'!

(1ST GIRL *laughs and rings*. WORKMAN *gives* 2ND GIRL *a bicycle*)

Five shillin's, isn't it?

WORKMAN. We don't take no deposit from girls.

1ST GIRL. She'll steal it.

WORKMAN. Ring the bell if the shop's shut.

2ND GIRL. Right-o!

(*Exeunt* GIRLS L.C. WORKMAN *works*. *Clang of iron*. 1ST GIRL *laughs and rings in distance*)

Enter RENIE and MISS PARTRIDGE C. *with parcels*.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Is Dr Hodder at home?

WORKMAN. Yes, mum; I'll go and tell him.

[*Exit* L.]

RENIE. He's at work up there, no doubt.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Who is? Dr Hodder?

RENIE. No, Jeff.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Pff! isn't it hot!

(*Clang of metal*)

RENIE. How I love this bicycle shop with its atmosphere of work and practicalness. There's nothing unmeaning, nothing superfluous here.

MISS PARTRIDGE. It's curious the passion you've

developed for bicycle shops of late. We've been here every day for nearly a month now.

WORKMAN. (*Entering L.*) Just comin', mum.

RENIE. (*Up C.*) Oh, do look at these dear little oil-cans.

CYCLIST. (*To WORKMAN*) I want Bert to look at this chain. [*Exeunt up R.*]

Enter HODDER L. in an apron. Greetings.

HODDER. (*Taking off his apron*) I'm afraid I'm rather untidy. I was busy making a pudding.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Making a pudding?

HODDER. Yes, a bread-pudding.

MISS PARTRIDGE. But can't your cook make a bread-pudding?

HODDER. We haven't a cook now. We've given her the sack.

MISS PARTRIDGE. And do *you* mean to do the cooking, pray?

HODDER. One must do something. I had hoped to be some use in working out the notes poor Vernie left behind him; but there! my mathematics don't even touch the fringe of it. I'll have to leave it all to Jeff. He's up there day and night ever since he brought the model home. (*To RENIE*) I only hope he won't injure his health, my dear.

RENIE. I'm sure I hope not.

MISS PARTRIDGE. And so do I.

HODDER. I didn't want to be a useless burden. So I've turned cook.

RENIE. But *can* you cook, Dodder?

HODDER. Well, I've bought a book about it, my dear; and if things are very bad, we can always go out to the chop-house round the corner.

Anyhow we're better off than poor Vernie was. (*A pause*) People are beginning to find out what they've lost. Jeff's article on him in *The Clarion* has roused the democracy to a sense of the stupid injustice of it all. There are letters every week.

2ND WORKMAN. (*Entering*) I'll just run the spanner over it.

BICYCLIST. (*Entering R.C. with HUBERT and 1ST WORKMAN*) I'll look in again on Tuesday.

[*Exit C.*

HUBERT. Seven o'clock. You can shut up and go home.

(*TWO WORKMEN shut up the shop and EXEUNT saying "Good-night" during the ensuing scene*)

HODDER. You don't know Hubert, do you? Mr Norton, Jeff's partner, Miss Partridge, Miss Dalrymple. He only got back from his holiday last night.

HUBERT. I'm afraid I'm too dirty to shake hands. I'm only a working man, you know.

HODDER. That's his boastfulness. He's a University man. He was up with Vernie at John's.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Ah, you're a Socialist, I suppose.

HUBERT. I am.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Oh, you needn't hope you're going to shock us. Renie's a Socialist too, though she doesn't look it. She comes from one of the stately homes of England. Her father's an economic parasite.

HUBERT. Oh, mine is only a solicitor.

MISS PARTRIDGE. It comes to the same thing. Why didn't he make you a solicitor too?

HUBERT. He wanted to.

MISS PARTRIDGE. And wouldn't you let him?

HUBERT. My Public School career had unfitted me for an intellectual profession. Besides, I prefer

working with my hands. I should have made a poor sort of solicitor; whereas I'm not half bad as a working man. You should see me hammering rivets. I'm a nailer at rivets. Then not to have to go to a club; you can't think what a pleasure it is not to have to go to a club; not to carry an umbrella; not to pretend you don't know people when you've seen them daily for the last ten years; but just to be slapped on the back and called "mate" at once. "Mate," it's a grand word, isn't it? I'll call Jeff. It's all affectation his not showing up. I bet he knows you're here. (*Calling*) Jeff! Jeff!

HODDER. Have you been shopping?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Yes, at Marshall's sale; scrimmaging in a crowd of excited females for remnants of the last extinct fashion.

Enter JEFF. Greetings. The scene grows darker.

How nice and cool you look! Still hard at work?

JEFF. Yes.

HODDER. How have you been getting on to-day?

JEFF. Same as usual; like an omnibus in a fog.

MISS PARTRIDGE. What's the machine to do?

JEFF. You don't really want me to explain?

HUBERT. It was all in *The Clarion*.

MISS PARTRIDGE. But I don't take in *The Clarion*.

HODDER. It's to convert matter into force.

JEFF. Energy, father. It's to liberate energy from its disguise as matter. Matter is energy employed in keeping still. That's Vernon's discovery. Energy opposes itself like that. (*Pressing one finger against another*) We're going to let it loose; (*releasing them*) like that.

MISS PARTRIDGE. How are you going to do it?

JEFF. Ah! That's the difficulty. Perhaps we can't. But if we can, think what it means! We shall have proved that matter, for all its variety, is only one; we shall have shown that its indestructibility is a myth; perhaps we shall even learn how to create it.

HODDER. And this is what Vernie was on the eve of doing when they starved him to death.

HUBERT. It's an awfully damning thing, you know, against the present economic system, that a man that's doing work like that gets practically frozen out.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Are *you* a philosopher too?

HUBERT. Oh, me? Well . . .

JEFF. Hubert's a Philistine.

HUBERT. Yes, I'm a Philistine. Social progress is my lay; nothing else seems to matter much compared to that.

HODDER. Yes, yes. How the rich hate thought! They want wealth to be the only means to glory; they naturally hate a rival which can confer a distinction from which they're excluded themselves.

MISS PARTRIDGE. But surely they aren't as bad as all that? When I used to go out to dinner-parties in London I often met artists and writers and clever people.

HODDER. But did you ever meet any unsuccessful ones?

MISS PARTRIDGE. I don't know, I'm sure; they all wore evening-dress.

HUBERT. Well, well, there's a good time coming. Once Socialism triumphs, and it's bound to come, the hand-workers and the brain-workers will have their innings.

MISS PARTRIDGE. (*To JEFF*) You're a Socialist too, I suppose?

JEFF. Oh, I've no politics. All I ask is to be left alone to my work. If that's Socialism, I'm a Socialist; if it's not, I'm not.

HUBERT. It is.

MISS PARTRIDGE. But you wrote in *The Clarion*?

JEFF. Oh, that's Hubert's doing.

HODDER. (*Looking at his watch*) Hullo, I must go and put that pudding in.

RENIE. I'll come and help you.

MISS PARTRIDGE. And so will I.

HODDER. The penalty for interfering will be that you'll have to stop and eat it.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Well, I hardly—

RENIE. We'll risk it.

HODDER. Come along.

[*Exeunt HODDER, RENIE and MISS PARTRIDGE L.*
(*The bell rings*)

HUBERT. Perhaps that's Hazeman.

JEFF. Turn on the light, will you? (*JEFF looks out of the window. HUBERT turns on garish top-lights*)
It's two chaps in top-hats.

HUBERT. I wish I'd had a wash.

JEFF. Aristocrat! (*He opens the door C.*)

Enter POOLE and BLANDFORD

What, Sir John? This is a great surprise.

POOLE. Let me introduce my fellow-director, Mr Blandford.

JEFF. Let me introduce my fellow-director, Mr Norton: Sir John Poole, Mr—

BLANDFORD. Blandford.

(*HUBERT washes at a tap and basin up R.*)

POOLE. (*To BLANDFORD*) Mr Hodder was in the works for a short time; but I dare say you never came across each other.

JEFF. You've come to see my father, of course ; I'll go and tell him.

POOLE. No, it's you we've come to see.

JEFF. Me ?

POOLE. We've come on business.

JEFF. Oh !

POOLE. Aren't you going to give us something to sit down on ? (JEFF gets stool for POOLE from up R.C. and chair for BLANDFORD from L. They sit.

JEFF goes to R. and sits on arm of chair) I was sorry to hear of your brother's death, very sorry. It must have been a great blow for your father.

BLANDFORD. So young and so brilliant. I have read your article in *The Clarion*.

JEFF. Oh ?

POOLE. One of our foremen showed it us.

JEFF. Aha !

BLANDFORD. If only we had known sooner ! But, to tell you the truth, I knew nothing about him till I read his obituary notice.

JEFF. No, that's often the case with geniuses, isn't it ?

BLANDFORD. When one thinks what it might have meant if we had been able to help him.

JEFF. There are plenty of geniuses left for you to help.

BLANDFORD. We can't help everybody. Your brother was different. It's a sad loss, a very sad loss.

JEFF. You surely didn't come all the way to Ball's Pond to tell me my brother's death was a sad loss ? Surely there must have been something else. I see what it is, Sir John, you want to buy a bicycle. We keep all the best brands. (*Naming them*) Now which shall it be ?

POOLE. We came to make you an offer.

JEFF. Oh? (*Sits again*)

POOLE. Yes. It appears from your article in *The Clarion* that a lot of experimenting remains to be done.

JEFF. Yes.

POOLE. Well, we can help you.

JEFF. How?

POOLE. The managership of *our* experimental department happens to be vacant, and we came to offer it to you.

JEFF. To me?

POOLE. Yes, in order to go on with the experiments. We are authorised to offer you the place at five hundred pounds a year. We'll give you all the plant you want.

JEFF. That's a very liberal offer, sir. What's the motive?

POOLE. Of course it's a business proposition. We don't give things *away*. If you succeed we want to share in any patents arising out of the invention, ten per cent. for the inventor, the rest to the works.

JEFF. You think there's money in it?

POOLE. I think so. It looks like it.

BLANDFORD. I think so too.

JEFF. H'm!

POOLE. If it works.

BLANDFORD. Yes, if it works. It's time we began looking about for some new source of energy for succeeding generations. Coals running short; petroleum may give out; and where shall we be then? If your brother's discovery turns out to be sound, think what it means! An inexhaustible supply of motive power for our engines, cheap electric light, cheap heating for the poor in winter.

POOLE. It may supply us with an explosive of a more destructive kind than anything hitherto discovered.

JEFF. How delighted my brother would be to feel that he had bequeathed such a blessing to posterity!

POOLE. Oh, there's nothing to laugh at. It would be a great thing for the nation. Well, that's our proposal.

BLANDFORD. Think it over; we don't want an answer immediately.

POOLE. Sit on it; there's no hurry.

JEFF. (*Rises*) No, I can answer you at once. I am much obliged to you for the offer, but I am afraid I must decline it.

POOLE. Why?

BLANDFORD. No, don't decline it.

JEFF. (*Walks up and down*) We couldn't work together. We're after different things. I'm trying to make a contribution to knowledge; you want to make a profit.

POOLE. Naturally; our shareholders elected us to get them dividends, not to improve their minds.

BLANDFORD. I quite see your point. As directors we certainly hope to make money for our shareholders, and for ourselves too. But, if we make a profit, isn't it because we supply something that the public needs? In fact, the more profit we make, the more it shows that we are doing good to the public. Come, collaborate with us to benefit mankind.

JEFF. No, I've refused your offer and there's an end of it. You would know that what you say is all rubbish if you were a scientist.

BLANDFORD. But I am!

POOLE. Why is it rubbish?

JEFF. Nobody ever discovered anything by setting out to benefit mankind.

BLANDFORD. Think of the steam-engine, think of the telegraph.

JEFF. They were discovered out of pure curiosity. That's the true scientist's only motive. The good's a by-product. Do you suppose it was in order to benefit mankind that James Watt watched the kettle, or Franklin flew his kites, or what's his name discovered the coherer? They'd never have found out anything if it had been.

BLANDFORD. Then look at it from your brother's point of view.

JEFF. We'd better leave my brother out of this discussion, sir. Who helped my brother when he was struggling to work out his ideas? Why, you refused yourself, Sir John; do you remember? Who helped him when he was starving? When he died, who cared? No one. It's only when you've scented the hope of gain that you come at last to try to get a share in his discovery. No; I want none of your help. *He* wants none of your help. We will shift for ourselves, and you must find some other means to benefit mankind. *(Puts his chair behind table)*

POOLE. *(Rising)* Well, it's as you please. We can't *make* you accept.

BLANDFORD. It's a great pity. *(Rises)*

POOLE. You may change your mind.

JEFF. I shall not change my mind.

POOLE. Nobody ever knows if they won't change their mind. *(JEFF takes them to the door C.*

HUBERT *opens the door L. RENIE joins him and they stand in the doorway conversing)* If you do, we're staying at the Ritz. Send us a wire.

“Yes” will be plenty. We shall understand.
(*Salutations*)

[*Exeunt* POOLE and BLANDFORD C.

RENIE. (*To* HUBERT) It's just what I should have expected of him. Oh, by the by, we couldn't find the carving-knife.

HUBERT. It's probably in the boot-hole.

RENIE. Will you go and give it to Aunt Hettie?

[*Exit* HUBERT L.

(*To* JEFF) I congratulate you.

JEFF. (*Morose*) What on?

RENIE. On your refusal.

JEFF. Ah, you heard.

RENIE. Mr Norton just told me. It was splendid of you.

JEFF. What else could I do but refuse? It makes me angry to see them, these sleek employers, these parasites of science, with their frock-coats and tall hats; and then to think of Vernon starving in his garret. It's like the contrast between their big, perfect, well-oiled machinery and Vernon's model up there. You shall see it to-morrow; an unsightly object, put together of string and sealing wax, wire, cigar-boxes, slips of firewood; a thing of shreds and patches, but all inspired by the divine idea. Think of him there, wearing out his brains in the search for Truth; and then of them with their shares and directorships. What brought them here? The smell of money; their carrion noses smelt profit in his death. I wish you could have heard them! “It will be so useful; it will provide heat and motive power and explosives!” Explosives! No, Vernon's secret shall never be handled by their money-getting sacrilegious hands. When we tell them that Vernon has divined the most wonderful

secret in the world, the secret of Energy, the rich say, "Show it us; show us this marvel sent down from heaven. We will make it useful." Useful! "We'll use it for boiling kettles and making toast, for killing foreigners and motoring down to our country houses." Killing foreigners; that's the summit of their ambition, the thing for which the chief honours are reserved in this dirty world of theirs. Fighting foreigners for the food supplies; that's the meaning of all this pomp, patriotism, gold lace, plumes and solemn services in St Paul's. Ideas are nothing to them. The Athenians, a nation not half so numerous or a hundredth part as rich as the people of Upper Tooting, left behind them imperishable works of art, of poetry, of statuary and of architecture. But we? What will England leave behind her when she perishes? Oyster-shells and mutton-bones, empty bottles and battered mugs; fragments of things we could not eat, the rusty remnants of the ships we built to carry our food to us, and the guns we made to prevent the foreigners from eating it before it reached its destination. (RENIE rises and draws close to him, pale and eager, fascinated by the vigour of his feelings) You must forgive me, I'm getting angry. I must get back to my work; that's my only refuge.

RENIE. (*Agitated*) No, don't go. I want to talk to you. I've—I've always . . . You can't imagine how you interest me.

JEFF. (C.) I'm afraid we don't hold the same views.

RENIE. Yes, yes; we do.

JEFF. You've no grievance against the world.

RENIE. Yes: none of my own: but I agree. You say it so well, what I feel myself, without being able . . .

JEFF. You feel like I do ?

RENIE. Yes, you rouse me ; it's like a general waving his men on to the attack. We're brothers in arms.

JEFF. Brothers in arms ? You and me ?

RENIE. Rebels together, rebels against the order, disorder . . . Well, go back and work if you must.

JEFF. No, your voice is music to me. Go on talking.

RENIE. What were we saying ?

JEFF. Anything : say anything.

RENIE. I talk so easily to you. Your energy seems to go into me ; the thoughts come so easily, and the words.

JEFF. Thoughts which wouldn't come to either of us, perhaps, if we were alone.

RENIE. I feel you're a free man ; there are so few ; I don't think I ever met a free man before.

JEFF. I feel as if there were no barrier between us ; suddenly as if I could say anything that came into my head. May I ?

RENIE. Yes.

JEFF. After all these years, looking on you as something unapproachable, something mysterious and remote . . .

RENIE. On me ?

JEFF. And now suddenly I can say what I like.

RENIE. Yes.

JEFF. (*Kneeling*) Oh, Renie, I love you ; I've said it now ; I love you, you beautiful woman, you exquisite, dear woman.

RENIE. Do you really mean it ?

JEFF. Every inch ; your heavenly face, your slender hands, your clothes, your hair.

RENIE. Oh, Jeff, Jeff, Jeff.

JEFF. Then the barrier is down ?

RENIE. It wasn't there.

JEFF. You beautiful, wonderful live woman! To find you so close, suddenly so close, off your pedestal. I long to be humble, to grovel; to thank you for being slender and fine and alive; and suddenly my dearest, closest friend; you are?

RENIE. If you want me to.

JEFF. (*Rising*) What do I care what the world does now? What do I care what they think? But it'll be a hard fight.

RENIE. I know.

JEFF. I've got to fight myself too.

RENIE. I know.

JEFF. You remember our talk in the garden?

RENIE. Yes.

JEFF. About the two lives.

RENIE. I've thought of it often since.

JEFF. The beautiful mundane life, the life of love and poetry. Well, I've been called on my Quest.

RENIE. I know.

JEFF. There can't be any mundane life for us.

RENIE. No.

JEFF. There'll be no warm little nest on the ground.

RENIE. No, we must stay side by side up there in the sky, singing.

JEFF. Even the distant hope . . .

RENIE. No, no; don't let's spoil it; it would be worse still; to be waiting and watching; to see us both growing older and older . . .

JEFF. If I succeed in restoring Vernon's secret, that is only the beginning. There's a whole world of consequences to be worked out.

RENIE. I know. It's just this spirit of sacrifice which first made me care for you.

(JEFF *kisses her hands*)

JEFF. Oh, Renie, Renie, tell me in plain words . . .

RENIE. (*Draws back and stands apart*) Stay where you are.

JEFF. I won't move. Do you love me as I love you?

RENIE. Yes, I love you.

JEFF. More than any other living thing?

RENIE. Yes, more than any other living thing. You make me a real living woman at last. Till *now* my life has been only a sort of ground-plan, a design for a life. Do you know what I've really been doing all these years? I've been searching for self-expression, trying to find a symbol in the outward and visible world . . . it's like looking for a word in a dictionary. Well, I've found it; it's you. So now you see what you're in for. You've got to live up to that. I've got to keep you up to the mark. Together we shall be irresistible.

JEFF. Then what are we? Friends?

RENIE. More.

JEFF. Lovers?

RENIE. (*Giving him her hand*) Husband and wife.

JEFF. A Scotch marriage, begad! But what about the witnesses?

RENIE. (*Pointing to the advertisements on the walls*) There they are!

JEFF. (*Calling them by name*) I call you to witness, this is my wife. Is a ring the thing?

RENIE. No, no ring. What fun! Jeff, I'm a different woman.

JEFF. Come on, you rich people! I'll stand no nonsense now.

RENIE. Here comes Sir Geoffrey, and his gallant squire. . . . No, that's wrong. I'm not your squire, I'm your horse, your fairy horse that

knows where you've got to go to ; and if you pull the wrong rein . . .

JEFF. You'll throw me over your head.

RENIE. Yes, I'll *roll* on you ! No, I won't ; I'll take the bit between my teeth and carry you the right way whether you like it or no ! (*Holds out her hands to him*)

JEFF. (*Taking her hands*) Are we to tell them ?

RENIE. There's nothing to tell.

JEFF. A secret between us ?

(*She nods*)

RENIE. Yes. And now if I'm your wife you must do as I tell you.

JEFF. Come on ! What have I got to begin with ?

RENIE. Accept Poole's offer.

JEFF. What !

RENIE. I love your having refused ; it was stalwart, quixotic, splendid ; but you must withdraw it.

JEFF. You're trying to turn me into a respectable man.

RENIE. No. That's beyond me.

JEFF. You mean to marry me after all.

RENIE. Never ! But why *did* you *refuse* ? Was it pure devotion to the Quest ? Was there no pride in it ?

JEFF. A little, perhaps, but . . .

RENIE. Have you any right to risk the idea for pride ? Isn't that part of the mundane ? Think of a crusader risking the Holy Sepulchre for some private pique. Think if you should betray your trust. You have to experiment, don't you, with this model ?

JEFF. Yes.

RENIE. Surely it would be better to have good machinery and clever workmen.

JEFF. Yes; but I don't want to be any man's servant.

RENIE. You wouldn't; you'd be their master. Their greed enslaves them.

JEFF. Why should I have any truck with greedy people?

RENIE. Because it's only greedy people who are rich. Well, exploit their greed. Trade on it. Accept! Accept!

JEFF. I will. You're right. It *was* pride.

RENIE. Where are the telegraph forms?

JEFF. A post card's good enough for them.

RENIE. Oh, oh!

JEFF. Am I to have no vices? (*Takes telegraph form, writing*) "Yes."

RENIE. Now go and send it at once in case you change your mind.

JEFF. Shall I?

RENIE. Don't say "Shall I?" but do as you're told.

JEFF. How ripping!

[*Exit JEFF C., leaving door open*

Enter HUBERT L. at the sound of the spring bell.

JEFF. (*Without*) I beg your pardon.

2ND GIRL. Oh, lor'!

(1ST GIRL *laughs and rings her bell.* HUBERT *goes to the door C. and the two GIRL BICYCLISTS appear in it*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

In JEFF's lodgings near POOLE's engineering works. Open French window in the back with view of the works and shop No. 7 on a hill. It is noon on a sunny day in August. A sooty tree looks in at the window from a black unfertile garden. Steam and smoke blow from the chimneys of the works across the background. Door L. Door to HODDER's room R. A white tablecloth is laid for a large party. MRS BEVERLEY, the keeper of the lodgings, a good-natured, dirty, stupid, inefficient old Yorkshire woman, and NELLY, her niece, aged fourteen, come and go throughout the earlier part of the act, getting lunch ready and exchanging such remarks in Yorkshire dialect as are appropriate to that occupation. BAGSHAW and BARNABY have just been ushered in L. by NELLY. MRS BEVERLEY, with her hands full of knives and forks, looks out of the window and calls DR HODDER.

MRS BEVERLEY. Et's tweeah gen'leman, sor.

HODDER. (*Without*) All right, Mrs Beverley, I'm coming.

BAGSHAW. You'd better sit down, Barnaby, after your walk.

BARNABY. (*Counting the places laid on the lunch-table*) Six, seven, eight places! Why, it's quite a party. I wonder at Hodder after such a recent bereavement; it's hardly decent.

MRS BEVERLEY. 'E's joost a-coomin', sors.

Enter HODDER C. in his shirt-sleeves, restored to health and spirits again.

HODDER. Where are they? Ah, how are you?
(*They greet*)

BAGSHAW. We're rather early ?

HODDER. Not a bit.

BAGSHAW. Many happy returns of the day, old man.

BARNABY. (*Sadly*) Ah, many happy returns.

HODDER. Thank you, thank you.

BARNABY. I'm surprised to see so many places laid.

We thought it would be just us three.

HODDER. Oh, it's only some old friends: Miss Partridge and Renie Dalrymple . . .

BARNABY. Well, I'm glad you have the spirits.

BAGSHAW. And what are you doing in your shirt-sleeves ?

HODDER. I was busy gardening.

BAGSHAW. You shouldn't do it, Hodder. It's dangerous at your age.

HODDER. My age, confound you! I'm only seventy. But the worst of it is, nothing will grow in this confounded place; the smoke stops up all their pores.

BAGSHAW. And where's Jeff ?

HODDER. Hard at work, bless him. That's his shop, No. 7, over there, with the red roof. And there he is day after day experimenting and experimenting.

BAGSHAW. And never succeedin', eh ?

HODDER. Oh, he'll succeed soon enough.

BAGSHAW. Humph !

HODDER. And then think of the glory of it.

(*A hooter sounds; five or six bells ring, and a caged canary sings in the garden*)

HODDER. There's the dinner-hour. Jeff'll be here in a moment.

MRS BEVERLEY *enters* L.

BARNABY. Listen; what bird's that ?

HODDER. That's Mrs Beverley's canary.

BARNABY. Oh, a canary . . .

HODDER. Did you think it was a nightingale? The hooter always sets it off.

(A sound of men cheering in the distance)

Why, bless my soul, what's that noise?

BAGSHAW. I don't hear any noise.

BARNABY. There isn't any noise.

HODDER. It sounds like cheering. What can that be about, Mrs Beverley?

MRS BEVERLEY. Beg pardon, sor?

HODDER. What can that cheering be about?

MRS BEVERLEY. Ah'm seer ah deean't knaw, sor. Ah niver trooble my heead aboot onnything outsahd t'hoose.

Enter GREGORY, ushered in by NELLY L.

NELLY. Please, maaster, it's a gen'leman.

HODDER. What, Gregory? Well, I never!

(Greetings)

GREGORY. I've run down to wish you many happy returns.

HODDER. Thank you, thank you, old chap; I'm glad! Did you hear any sound of cheering as you came in?

GREGORY. Yes, there were some men cheering . . .

HODDER. What about? What about?

GREGORY. Something about some shop.

HODDER. That's it! Jeff's shop! I told you so! Where the devil is Jeff? He's succeeded; bet you a thousand pounds he's done it at last.

BAGSHAW. Don't make too sure.

BARNABY. It may be something quite different.

BAGSHAW. It may have been an accident.

BARNABY. It may have burst and killed him.

HODDER. Here, take these old things away, Greg.

I must go and put my spade away. Why on earth is Jeff so late?

[*Exeunt* GREGORY

(BAGSHAW and BARNABY R. HODDER goes towards window C.)

MRS BEVERLEY. (*Holding up two wine bottles*)

What am ah to deeah wi' t'wahn, sor?

HODDER. Open it, Mrs Beverley, open it.

MRS BEVERLEY. Big pardon, sor?

HODDER. Open it and hand it round.

MRS BEVERLEY. Varry good, sor.

HODDER. We'll have the Graves and the Beaune at lunch, and the port afterwards.

MRS BEVERLEY. Varry good, sor.

Enter BLANDFORD L. HODDER goes to him; both talk.

BLANDFORD. { Well?

HODDER. { Well?

HODDER. What is it? What is it?

BLANDFORD. { Is what I hear true?

HODDER. { What has happened?

BLANDFORD. { Don't you know?

HODDER. { I thought you would know . . .

BLANDFORD. { The men were all cheering . . .

HODDER. { We wondered what the cheering was about . . .

BLANDFORD. { I was told your son had had a . . .

HODDER. { Is there any news from No. 7?

Enter JEFF at the window C.

HODDER. { Ah, there he is! Jeff, you rascal, is it true?

BLANDFORD. { Are we to believe our ears?

JEFF. (*Grinning*) Well, I don't know what you've heard.

HODDER. Go on! Have you done it?

JEFF. Yes. We've had a successful experiment; we've done it at last.

(They all speak at once. MRS BEVERLEY continues to lay lunch unmoved)

HODDER. There! What did I say? I knew it was only a matter of time. Jeff, my boy . . .

BLANDFORD. I needn't say how delighted I am; not only as a director . . .

JEFF. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Dad. . . .

But remember that this is only the beginning.

We have no proper record of what was done.

BLANDFORD. Oh, that's a detail!

JEFF. Yes. We know that we *can* succeed now.

That's all that we've got to so far.

HODDER. That's all that matters.

JEFF. We must work harder than ever.

BLANDFORD. We'll help you.

HODDER. Pile on the steam.

JEFF. We must have more men, more money.

BLANDFORD. Whatever you ask for. I promise you that. The Board will do anything for you. Oh, it's delightful. But I mustn't stop; I'm due at the Chief's. There's some deputation of workmen; I just had a 'phone. I congratulate you again and again. *(Shaking hands)*

JEFF. Thank you, thank you. *(Reading a note he has picked up)* Go by the window. It's shorter.

HODDER. *(Turning down his shirt-sleeves)* I'll show you the way.

JEFF. *(To HODDER)* The Rector's coming.

HODDER. Good.

[Exeunt HODDER and BLANDFORD C.]

JEFF. Will you please lay ten places, Mrs Beverley?

MRS BEVERLEY. Beg pardon, sor?

JEFF. Lay places for ten.

MRS BEVERLEY. Varry good, sor.

JEFF. Have you opened the sardines?

MRS BEVERLEY. Yes, sor; when s'all ah han' 'em roon'?

JEFF. We'll begin with them.

MRS BEVERLEY. Varry good, sor.

Enter RENIE L., carrying dog-whip. She turns at the door and stops her dog from following her.

RENIE. Stay there, Judy!

JEFF. Ah, Renie!

RENIE. Jeff!

JEFF. Have you heard?

RENIE. Not a word! But I know. Will you tie Judith up, Mrs Beverley?

MRS BEVERLEY. Beg pardon?

JEFF. Take the dog and tie it up. (*Hustling her out*)

RENIE. Oh, Jeff, you've done it!

JEFF. I've done it! But how did you know?

RENIE. Wireless telepathy: like yesterday. I was painting Judy, forgetting all about the time, when suddenly I knew! Judy pricked up her ears and we heard men cheering in the distance. I had no time to change. I threw on the nearest hat and simply flew. Oh, what did it feel like? Tell me, Jeff.

JEFF. Glorious, Renie, glorious!

RENIE. Did you laugh and dance among the engines in your exultation?

JEFF. No. It was too much of a thing for that. A cold thrill went up my back. I felt as if I had seen a ghost, peeping round a corner at me. It was Nature's first response. We've been twisting her arm for months, until at last this morning she yelled, "Pax, I'll tell."

RENIE. Tell me what happened.

JEFF. We had been at it for hours: the usual routine; applying different currents and all that. Well, we were just preparing for a new series, oiling the machine, and what not, when suddenly the wheel flew round, and for one brief intoxicating moment I saw the electric balance fly up, showing that the . . .

RENIE. Yes, yes, go on!

JEFF. Showing that the . . . Why, you're crying!

RENIE. No, I'm not: I'm laughing.

JEFF. You're not.

RENIE. Yes, I am. Did you get a good record?

JEFF. That's the devil of it. The electrician was too busy watching the action of the brushes on the commutator to take the reading on any of the instruments. Do you feel like that about it? Oh, my darling girl! Oh, Renie, don't let's fight against real things, on a day like this, when I'm blazing like a flame in oxygen. Don't let's miss the grandest moment we shall ever have . . .

RENIE. No, no!

JEFF. One kiss! One great, gorgeous kiss before we die!

RENIE. No, no! Remember our vows!

JEFF. We may have been wrong to make them.

RENIE. This isn't the moment . . . We can't unmake them now.

JEFF. You ineffable thing! You thing that I was born to long for!

RENIE. No, no!

JEFF. It's beyond me. We can't invent a new way of loving.

RENIE. Let me go! Let me go!

Enter HODDER, putting on his coat.

RENIE. Thank God !

HODDER. Hullo, hullo, what's this ?

RENIE. Don't look so shocked, Dodder.

HODDER. What is it ?

RENIE. I love him.

HODDER. You what ?

JEFF. It doesn't seem possible, does it, Dad ? She says she loves me.

HODDER. And I came stumbling in, of course, like a damned old fool, just when I'm not wanted. I'm sorry.

RENIE. No, you came in just at the right moment.

JEFF. Yes, by gad ! You must forgive me, Renie. I'm a villain.

HODDER. Why on earth ?

JEFF. A coward and a villain.

HODDER. What's wrong about it ? Why shouldn't you if she's agreeable ?

RENIE. We said we wouldn't.

JEFF. We're not going to marry.

HODDER. You're not ? Why not ? Won't she have you ?

RENIE. He won't have me.

HODDER. What do you mean ?

JEFF. It's agreed between us.

HODDER. Why ?

JEFF. Vernon didn't. Vernon wouldn't have. He gave himself up to his idea. That's my inheritance.

HODDER. I see . . . But . . .

JEFF. We've thought it over. We've thrashed it out between us.

RENIE. It's all settled.

HODDER. Yes, but a sacrifice like that . . .

RENIE. We like it ! Come, Dodder, you can't make us marry.

JEFF. We won't!

RENIE. We won't! We won't!

HODDER. What am I to say? How can I thank you?

If only . . . Oh, I was going to say a stupid thing.

RENIE. Say it, Dodder.

HODDER. If only Vernon could look down through a chink anywhere and see . . .

RENIE. Perhaps he can.

(HODDER *kisses* RENIE)

HODDER. There's no harm in *my* doing it any way.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY L., ushering in CONSTANCE, WOOLMER and MISS PARTRIDGE. CONSTANCE wears a white summer frock and a straw hat with a wreath of flowers on it; she carries a cardboard box; MISS PARTRIDGE carries a nosegay. They all greet gaily.

HODDER. (*Going about excitedly*) How do you do? How do you do?

WOOLMER. (*Looking at the lunch-table a little shocked*) What? A party? I thought it would be just ourselves.

HODDER. Lunch, Mrs Beverley. (MRS BEVERLEY *goes off* L.) You're ready, Jeff. You've heard the news?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Not a word.

CONSTANCE. What news?

WOOLMER. I've heard no news.

HODDER. Jeff'll tell you. I'll call the others.

[*Exit* HODDER R. *Hubbub of voices* R.]

WOOLMER. What has happened?

CONSTANCE. What is it, Jeff?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Your father seems quite crazy to-day.

RENIE. Jeff has had a successful experiment.

Enter HODDER R. with BAGSHAW, BARNABY and GREGORY. More greetings. Enter MRS BEVERLEY and NELLY L. with lunch.

ALL. You haven't? Really? You've succeeded? How splendid! . . . etc.

GREGORY. Why, Connie, what a swell you are!

RENIE. Isn't she! I can't be seen beside her in this horrid old hat!

[Exit RENIE R. to take off hat
(During all this scene before lunch and at lunch the actors are to say and do whatever is natural to be said and done by them under the circumstances, but so as not to interfere with the things set down for them to say. The sentences are to be said in the order most convenient for the scene.)

MRS BEVERLEY and NELLY during lunch move eagerly and inefficiently about, MRS BEVERLEY whispering loud to NELLY what she is to do.

NELLY, rather scared, puts dirty plates on the floor, on the chairs, on the tables)

HODDER. (To BAGSHAW) Come along, you old croakers.

JEFF. (To GREGORY) What, you here? Whatever brought you down?

GREGORY. My dear chap, it's simply ripping. I've some news of my own, but it'll keep, it'll keep.

BAGSHAW. You can't be too careful, Miss Partridge. It's a very dangerous time of the year.

BARNABY. Just the moment for an attack of lumbago.

MISS PARTRIDGE. (Presenting her nosegay to HODDER) There's a birthday present for you, Doctor.

(HODDER thanks her. She arranges flowers about the room)

CONSTANCE. (Opening her cardboard box) And here's

another little present, Dr Hodder. (*Crosses to HODDER*)

WOOLMER. Why, what's this? What's this?

CONSTANCE. It's some crackers.

WOOLMER. Crackers?

CONSTANCE. I saw them cheap at Batterby's.

WOOLMER. My dear girl, I'm surprised at you!

HODDER. Not at all: I'm delighted.

CONSTANCE. They do make a lovely noise.

HODDER. Thank you, my dear. We'll pull them after lunch. I'm very much obliged.

WOOLMER. She's still a child, I'm afraid.

HODDER. Let's hope she may remain so. (*The crackers are strown on the table. HODDER claps his hands*) Now, now; sit down, all of you. We've not much time. Jeff's got to be back at two. (*All sit down in some confusion. HODDER arranges them*) You sit there; you sit there. (*When they have all taken their places and begun to talk, he interrupts them*) No; that won't do: Connie mustn't sit next her father. (*He rearranges them*)

GREGORY. Connie's place is here.

(*She sits by him. They flirt. A babel of talk ensues*)

CONSTANCE. Oh, how silly you are!

Enter RENIE R.

HODDER. Come and sit by me here.

JEFF. Why, where's old Hubert?

HODDER. Hubert Norton? Oh, I forgot to tell you; he looked in this morning and said he was sorry he wouldn't be able to come.

JEFF. Why not?

HODDER. Oh, some nonsense. He said that now he was a workman and you were an employer, it

wasn't decent. He said it was like the masters asking the boys out to meals at Winchester; it robbed them of their freedom in the struggle with their natural enemies.

JEFF. Oh!

(All laugh)

MISS PARTRIDGE. But there's no struggle in these works, is there?

HODDER. That's what I said.

JEFF. I should think not.

HODDER. There's nowhere where the workmen get on better with their employers than at Poole's. The works are famous for it.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Is that the Mr Norton we met at the bicycle shop?

HODDER. That's the man.

MISS PARTRIDGE. The socialist?

HODDER. Yes. He's a full-blown workman now. Jeff got him the job.

(General conversation ensues. HODDER explains inaudibly to BAGSHAW what the invention will do for the British industries)

BAGSHAW. *(To HODDER)* Well, and what's the good of it all?

WOOLMER. *(To MISS PARTRIDGE)* This is wonderful news indeed of our friend's experiments. *(To JEFF)* Let us hope that this is only the beginning.

JEFF. I hope so, sir.

WOOLMER. You have your feet on the ladder of success; but there are many rungs of it to be climbed yet.

JEFF. Hundreds.

BARNABY. I didn't get to bed till nearly eleven last night.

HODDER. *(Elated; finishing his explanation)* Now do you see?

BAGSHAW. I see.

HODDER. It's an industrial revolution.

BAGSHAW. Well, I can't pretend to be so pleased about it as *you* seem to be.

HODDER. What's wrong about it ?

BAGSHAW. Why, if it's going to supersede coal and electricity, what's to become of everyone that's put their money in coalmines and electric light ?

HODDER. Oh, bless his heart ! If we found a pill that abolished illness, Bagshaw'd go round complaining that we'd ruined the undertakers ; if we abolished crime, he'd say, " Pity the poor policeman."

GREGORY. You're out of date, Mr Bagshaw ; you're a thing of the past, old dear. Jeff has the great democratic future on his side.

BAGSHAW. Oh, you're a socialist.

GREGORY. Sir, you have divined me.

BAGSHAW. Ugh !

GREGORY. What is the past ? Heaven's rough draft for the future. (HODDER *calls* MRS BEVERLEY *and tells her to get wine*) Let us hail the finished poem and fling the dirty copy in the fire.

BARNABY. (To RENIE) Would you pass the salt ?

BAGSHAW. (To MISS PARTRIDGE) If all the wealth in England were divided equally, it wouldn't come to more than half-a-crown apiece.

BARNABY. Would you pass the salt, please ?

RENIE. Oh, I'm so sorry. I was thinking of something else. (*She becomes attentive and gay*)

HODDER. This sort of opposition has always been raised to all great ideas.

GREGORY. Usually by the Church.

WOOLMER. That time is past. The Church of to-day is on the side of all Progress.

HODDER. Hear, hear!

WOOLMER. All legitimate Progress. We don't want random truth, we want truth that helps us or helps you. If this idea of yours brings grist to the Hodder mill, that is enough for me.

GREGORY. A noble sentiment i' faith.

WOOLMER. (*Raising his glass*) I drink to the health of the Invention!

CONSTANCE. Your glass is empty!

MISS PARTRIDGE. You've got no wine.

(*Laughter*)

WOOLMER. (*Genially*) Let us by no means drink such a toast with empty glasses. Where is the wine?

HODDER. Here, Mrs Beverley! Give him some wine!

MRS BEVERLEY. Bone or Graves, sir? (*L. of table gives him wine then crosses round table to up R.*)

WOOLMER. A very funereal choice!

(*All laugh*)

CONSTANCE. Oh, isn't papa dreadful!

(*Laughter*)

ALL. (*Rising—drinking*) To the Invention!

WOOLMER. And long life and health to our dear friend Hodder!

ALL. Dr Hodder!

BARNABY. Hodder, old man!

RENIE. Your health, Dodder!

JEFF. Prosit!

RENIE. Chin-chin!

MISS PARTRIDGE. And Jeff!

(*They drink to JEFF*)

WOOLMER. Who knows but we shall see you President of the Royal Society yet, Jeff? It isn't only riches that matter.

BAGSHAW. If it leads to that sort of thing, well and good.

CONSTANCE. Here's to the Royal Society!

WOOLMER. She's in great spirits to-day.

[MRS BEVERLEY and NELLY go off.]

JEFF. Miss Constance Woolmer!

(Everybody drinks her health. GREGORY and CONSTANCE pull crackers)

BARNABY. (Warmed by the wine) Here's to all pretty young ladies, God bless 'em! Where should we be without 'em? Miss Connie! Miss Dalrymple! Here's plenty o' lovers and a good, sensible, steady-goin' husband in the end.

RENIE. Thank you.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Just the thing for Renie. Somebody with regular habits and a well-ordered mind.

GREGORY. One can't keep it in for ever. I've good news too. Friends, Romans, Countrymen, here's to *Belisarius*!

ALL. (Inquiringly) *Belisarius*?

BAGSHAW. (Sulkily) Who the devil is *Belisarius*?

GREGORY. A Tragedy in Five Acts and in verse by Gregory Galvani Hodder.

HODDER. What! Has *Belisarius* been accepted?

GREGORY. Tree has accepted it.

ALL except BAGSHAW. You don't say so! Really? Hooray! You're a made man. Bravo, *Belisarius*! (Toasting) *Belisarius*!

GREGORY. (Toasting) Tree!

(Two or three crackers are pulled with loud reports)

ALL. Hooray!

HODDER. What a day! What a day!

(CONSTANCE puts a paper crown from one of the crackers on GREGORY'S head)

CONSTANCE. Keep still, I can't reach.

WOOLMER. Constance, my dear.

(GREGORY strikes a burlesque attitude, with his hand on CONSTANCE'S shoulder. Talk and laughter)

CONSTANCE. Oh, how silly you are!

JEFF. That's right. Crown the poet. Gird his brow with laurel.

BARNABY. Kiss her, poet!

GREGORY. And why not, Mr Barnaby? She and I were boys together.

HODDER. Here's to all them that we love.

GREGORY. And here's to all them that love us.

ALL. And here's to all them that love those that love them that love them that love those that love us. (*More crackers are pulled and caps put on, with a hubbub and cries of "Hooray!"*)

GREGORY. What famous statue do I remind you of? (*He and CONSTANCE imitate statues and pictures*)

WOOLMER. Connie, my dear, you mustn't be so noisy.

CONSTANCE. I can't help it. I think it's the wine.

HODDER. Something must have gone wrong, I think. There are two of the Hodders having something like a success the same day.

BARNABY. Hear, hear! (*And Chorus of approbation*)

RENIE. (*Standing on her chair with one foot on the table with a phrygian cap (paper) on her head and a glass in her hand*) What statue does this remind you of?

(*HODDER fills her glass*)

GREGORY and ALL. Victory, victory!

MISS PARTRIDGE. The chariot of Victory drawn by Dr Hodder and his three sons.

RENIE. Gee up, gee up!

BARNABY. And are you going to drive 'em, my dear?

RENIE. Yes, and I'll give them each a lump of sugar when they get there.

JEFF. (*To GREGORY, who is looking in a drawer*) What are you looking for?

GREGORY. Nut-crackers.

JEFF. There aren't any.

GREGORY. (*To CONSTANCE, holding up a pistol*)
Will this do?

HODDER. That's Jeff's cat-gun.

GREGORY. (*Posing*) "His last cartridge!"

(*All laugh. GREGORY breaks nuts on the table with the butt of the pistol*)

HODDER. (*Pouring wine for BAGSHAW, who has fallen into a despondent mood*). Drink away, you old fossil; keep up your spirits. Here's to progress! (*Goes round table, gives wine to the men; ladies refuse*)

BAGSHAW. Hang progress. What good has progress ever done us, I should like to know? Who was it gave us railways and brick-fields and factory chimneys? Who was it gave us newspapers and universal education? Who was it invented barbed wire and corrugated iron roofs?

GREGORY. (*In a sepulchral voice*) My mother!

BAGSHAW. (*With bitter enmity*) Ah, you!

BARNABY. What's old Bagshaw grumblin' about?

A glass or two of wine always makes him like that.

HODDER. While you . . .

BARNABY. My dear fellow, I expand like a flower.

(*All laugh*) I beam on my fellow-man; I subscribe to charities; I begin to think of marriage.

ALL. Oh!

HODDER. (*Going behind BARNABY with a decanter*)

Have some more wine?

BARNABY. Why, my dear chap, I'm half seas over already.

HODDER. Never mind, you're getting into port now.

(*Goes to his chair, sits*)

(*Laughter and the bang of crackers*)

Enter MRS BEVERLEY

GREGORY. Good for you, Dad.

CONSTANCE. Oh, *isn't* that silly !
(They are all wearing paper caps by now and all talking and laughing)

JEFF. *(Pushes his chair back. To MRS BEVERLEY, who has been murmuring in his ear)* Someone to see me ? Who is it ?

MRS BEVERLEY. Et's some warkin' men, sor.

JEFF. Working men ? Someone from the works ?

MRS BEVERLEY. Aye, men fro' t'warks.

HODDER. A deputation come to congratulate you.

WOOLMER. A very graceful notion.

JEFF. *(To MRS BEVERLEY)* Ask them to wait ; I'll come out.

HODDER. No, no ; we've all finished, haven't we ?

ALL. Yes, yes ; we've finished.

HODDER. I'll make coffee in my room. I've got all the things in there.

JEFF. *(Rises, goes L.C.)* All right ; I'll see them in here, Mrs Beverley.

[MRS BEVERLEY goes out L.]

HODDER. Cheese ? Cheese ? Anybody say cheese ? No ? Come along then.

(All rise)

ALL. *(Going R. GREGORY opens door)* This way. After you. Isn't this your handkerchief, et cetera.

BAGSHAW. *(To BARNABY)* Those infernal crackers have made me quite deaf.

GREGORY. *(To CONSTANCE)* Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever !

CONSTANCE. How can you be so silly !

[Goes off R. WOOLMER follows her.]

BARNABY. *(To MISS PARTRIDGE)* You're not lookin' a day older than when you were Polly's bridesmaid. *(Going with MISS PARTRIDGE. They stop at door)*

HODDER. Bring that port, Gregory. Every one take his own glass. [Exit R.]

(WOOLMER comes back for another glass)

BARNABY. Hullo, the Rector's got two.

(Laughter as they go)

(JEFF lights a cigarette and walks up and down, happy and excited, in a paper cap. The furniture is in disorder; the room is strown with plates, napkins and torn crackers. MRS BEVERLEY introduces HUBERT, POWNALL and MAYO L.)

During the ensuing scene there are bursts of laughter from the adjoining room at convenient moments)

JEFF. Hullo! Come in. Sorry you couldn't come to lunch.

HUBERT. (Shaking hands) You got my message? I'm awfully glad about the experiments, old chap. Best congratters. You know my mates?

JEFF. Of course I do. We've been working together for a month. How are you, Pownall, how are you, Mayo?

POWNALL. (Yorkshire accent) I congratulate you, sir. It's a great achievement.

MAYO. (Yorkshire accent) I congratulate you, sir.

JEFF. Take a chair, won't you?

(All sit except JEFF)

POWNALL. Thank you, sir.

(A pause. HUBERT looks at POWNALL)

MAYO. It's a wonnerful thing, this new machine o' yours, sor.

JEFF. Have a glass of something? Port? Where the devil's the port?

POWNALL. Not for me, thank you, sir.

MAYO. No, thank you, sir; I never touch port till night-time.

JEFF. Have a smoke?

POWNALL. Not for me, thank you, sir.

MAYO. Thank you, sir ; ah deean't smewk.

(*A pause*)

HUBERT. We've come on business.

JEFF. Oh, business ? (*Sits R. of table, No. 4 chair*)

HUBERT. You'd better weigh in first, mate.

POWNALL. You begin, Mr Norton ; he's your friend.

MAYO. Aye, he's yoor freend.

HUBERT. Well, it's like this, old chap. We're here as representatives of the men, all the men in the works ; they sent us. We wanted to make sure of you at once, because we're in for a bit of a rumpus with the firm.

JEFF. Rumpus ? What about ?

HUBERT. Well, wages, naturally.

POWNALL. Share of the profits.

MAYO. That's reet.

JEFF. Well ?

HUBERT. Of course you've heard about the men's association here.

JEFF. Oh, vaguely ; something socialistic.

HUBERT. No, we are not socialists.

JEFF. Well, syndicalists then.

HUBERT. Not that either.

POWNALL. It doesn't matter what you call it, sir ; we are not theorists, we are working men. If we have any principles, they're just to stand up for our own interests and those of our fellow working men as best we know how.

JEFF. Well, what's your method ?

POWNALL. Profit-sharing.

JEFF. I see. Well ?

POWNALL. We've been waiting for an opportunity ; and it's come.

JEFF. But what's all this got to do with me ? Is there going to be a strike or something ?

POWNALL. Not if we can avoid it, sir. But it has a good deal to do with you, because it's you that has provided us with the opportunity that we wanted.

JEFF. I have?

POWNALL. Well, you see, sir, what we've been waiting for all this time was a clear issue where we could put down our foot and stand firm. While the works were running along in the ordinary way, paying a moderate percentage on a heavily watered capital, we didn't see much chance. We were waiting for some turn of the market that looked like a big advance in profits; and we think we've got it in your machine.

JEFF. My machine?

POWNALL. Yes, sir, we've been following your experiments with the greatest interest, waiting for the first sign of success.

JEFF. And then went straight off to demand a share of the profits?

POWNALL. Aye.

MAYO. Aye.

POWNALL. We called on Sir John an hour ago.

JEFF. Well, and what did he say?

POWNALL. He said "No."

MAYO. He said a deal more than that, mate.

JEFF. He refused?

HUBERT. He showed us a clause in our contracts that we'd clean forgotten.

POWNALL. I hadn't forgotten it.

HUBERT. By which we stand to lose a fortnight's wages if we go out on strike without notice.

JEFF. (*Rises*) Good God! (*Crumpling his cap and throwing it on the ground*)

MAYO. Aye, sir, it's a mean clause.

JEFF. Damn the clause! I wasn't thinking of that. And what the hell do you come to me for?

HUBERT. We want you to help us.

JEFF. Me ?

HUBERT. There's only one way to avoid the forfeit clause, and that's for you to refuse to go on with the work yourself unless they agree to our demands. Then it won't be a strike but a lock-out.

JEFF. Me refuse to go on with my work ?

HUBERT. That's it, old chap.

JEFF. Do you know what you are saying ? Do you come to *me*, that's been struggling all this time to be allowed to work, and ask me to refuse to go on ? Do you think I'm going to stop the job over which we've been sweating blood, yes, blood, my brother and I, all these months, in order to settle some damned little question between you and your employers, which of you is to get most beef and bread, most chairs and carpets, out of it ? What do I care ? I wouldn't stop work five minutes for such a piffling affair.

MAYO. It's no such piffling affair.

HUBERT. It's the whole question of social justice.

JEFF. Why, here am I, encouraged at last by a gleam of success, eager to work ten times harder than before . . .

HUBERT. But, don't you see, it's a case of knocking off anyhow ?

JEFF. How's that ?

HUBERT. We shall lump the forfeit. Your work will be stopped just the same if you refuse.

JEFF. Well, if it's got to be stopped, *I'm* not going to stop it ; you can take that from me. I'm not going to turn against the only men that have ever helped me.

HUBERT. Only out of greed.

JEFF. I prefer the greed that helps me to the greed that stops me. (*Goes to fireplace R.*)

HUBERT. Do you refuse ?

JEFF. Of course I refuse. And if you stop me I'll fight you tooth and hoof for all I'm worth.

POWNALL. You can't do much without us in the shop, sir.

JEFF. Can't I ? What share do you think you've had in the making of the machine ? As much as the boy at the bellows has in organ music. If you all died to-night I could fill your places ten times over in the morning.

POWNALL. Do you mean blacklegs, sir ?

JEFF. I don't care what colour their legs are so long as they'll do my work.

POWNALL. Then we've no more to say to each other, I think, sir. (*All rise*)

HUBERT. Look here, old chap, perhaps I haven't made things plain.

POWNALL. That's enough, Mr Norton. (*HUBERT goes behind POWNALL to left of him*) You quite understand, sir ? The men are only waiting for the signal ; I have only to raise my hand when I get into the street.

JEFF. Raise it, then.

POWNALL. Very good, sir ; come along, mates ; good-morning, sir. (*Crosses to door*)

MAYO and HUBERT. Good-morning, sir.

JEFF. Good-morning.

MAYO (*As they go*) Well, that's a straight answer anyway.

[*Exeunt POWNALL, MAYO and HUBERT L.*
(*JEFF walks up and down*)

Enter MRS BEVERLEY

MRS BEVERLEY. Did ye ring, sor ?

JEFF. No.

MRS BEVERLEY. Beg pardon, sor ?

JEFF. No. Go away.

MRS BEVERLEY. Varry good, sor. (*She goes to the table and clatters loudly with the plates*)

JEFF. Go away, I say, Mrs Beverley.

MRS BEVERLEY. Ah thowt ye said clear aweeah,
sor. [*Exit* MRS BEVERLEY L.]

(HODDER *looks in R.* *A burst of laughter comes from the adjoining room as he opens the door*)

HODDER. Have they gone ?

RENIE *enters R.*

Come and have some coffee.

JEFF. There's no hurry, Dad ; we've got the whole afternoon before us.

HODDER. (*Comes in alarmed. RENIE follows him and shuts the door*) What do you mean ?

JEFF. We are stopped from work again.

HODDER. Eh ?

JEFF. First it's the Capitalists ; now it's the workmen. God seems to have given Englishmen brains only for devising ways of hindering thought.

HODDER. What's happened ?

JEFF. The men have gone out on strike.

HODDER. On strike ?

JEFF. Whatever made me bring the thing to this damned place ? It's just a cockpit where these animals fight each other for food.

RENIE. (*Comes toward R.*) It was my fault.

JEFF. No, no. It seemed best at the time. But, oh, if only we had kept it in the clean air of poverty and unsuccess where all the world's great work is done.

HODDER. I don't believe it. There is no strike ! (*Looking at his watch*) The hooter goes in a minute, and then the foremen ring the bells.

JEFF. There will be no bells rung to-day.

(The hooter sounds)

HODDER. Now for the bells. Eh!

(A pause. The canary sings. Sound of cheering)

JEFF. Well?

RENIE. Jeff?

JEFF. *(Looking round for his hat and taking no notice of her)* I must go and see the Chief.

[Exit JEFF C.]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

The same scene. October ; twilight ; a grey, stormy sky ; wind and rain ; a bright fire ; a kettle boiling on a tripod. RENIE and BLANDFORD are taking tea. JEFF sprawls dishevelled, with a book. Many books lie by him on a table.

BLANDFORD. You *must* come and help.

RENIE. I can't. It's against my conscience.

BLANDFORD. Against your conscience to help people who are starving ?

RENIE. It's their own fault.

BLANDFORD. What difference does that make ?

RENIE. It's cruelty to help them. It only prolongs the struggle.

BLANDFORD. I never expected to find you so hard and logical.

RENIE. Cake.

BLANDFORD. Thank you. What a senseless thing it all is ! Supposing some stranger from another planet visited this earth, I suppose there is nothing in the whole of our social arrangements which would so much convince him that we were all crazy as a strike. First he sees us exercising the wonderful magic of modern industry, converting dull lumps of iron into wonderful and useful things, into ships, engines, locomotives, quartz-crushers and what not, all of us busy and contented, spreading wealth and happiness all over the world. Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, it is as if some powerful magician had come and cast an evil spell on the place ; the engines stop working, the chimneys stop smoking, weeds spring up in the deserted yards, and the men all go about with hatred

and malice on their faces, hungry and unhappy.

JEFF. (*Starting*) What's that ?

RENIE. Nothing ; a door shutting.

BLANDFORD. Your nerves seem all to pieces.

JEFF. They are. (*Goes on reading*)

RENIE. Two lumps ?

BLANDFORD. Yes, please.

Enter MISS PARTRIDGE R. with two cups and plates on tray.

RENIE. Some more tea ?

MISS PARTRIDGE. No, thank you. (*Places cups, etc., on table*) I've just come in to get a book I left here. I'm going to read it to your father.

JEFF. How is he getting on ?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Oh, he's all right. (*Picking up a recent dull novel and naming it*) It may help him to go to sleep.

[*Exit MISS PARTRIDGE R.*

BLANDFORD. If it's like this after six weeks, what will it be like when the cold weather comes on ? We must all join together and *compel* Sir John to give way to the workmen's demands.

JEFF. Oh, by the by . . .

BLANDFORD. Yes, what is it ?

JEFF. Nothing. (*He goes on reading*)

RENIE. Why shouldn't the *workmen* give way ?

BLANDFORD. Oh, I know you blame them.

RENIE. Yes, I think they're in the wrong.

BLANDFORD. It makes no difference after all. It isn't the men I think about so much, it's the women and children. *They* had nothing to do with the quarrel at any rate. Why should *they* suffer ?

RENIE. Then get the workmen to give in.

BLANDFORD. It can never be right to hurt the children, poor little mites.

JEFF. (*Listening*) There's that beastly cat again!

BLANDFORD. The men may be in the wrong or they may be in the right; that's all a matter of speculation; whereas the suffering of the children is a solid fact.

RENIE. According to you, the masters ought always to give in, *whatever* the men demand.

BLANDFORD. Suppose one of the children died of starvation, how would you feel about it then?

RENIE. I should feel very sorry, but it wouldn't put them in the right.

JEFF. Ah! (*Clapping his book to*) It's splendid to hear you talk, Mr Blandford. I only wish your brother-directors shared your lamb-like disposition; then this strike would soon be over, and I should be a happy man again. But I'm afraid the facts of life hardly tally with your amiable philosophy. Life as I see it is a struggle.

BLANDFORD. It shouldn't be.

JEFF. But it is. It always will be. Employers and workmen have different interests; they struggle. I'm opposed to both of them; I struggle. You disapprove of blacklegs; you struggle. I struggle, you struggle, we struggle, they struggle; that's life. Ah, if only you had had the making of the world! You'd have stuffed it full of feathers, so that we shouldn't hurt ourselves if we tumbled down. . . . However, I'm afraid that I've got an appointment here at six; some people are coming to see me.

BLANDFORD. Well, I suppose that's a pretty broad hint to me to be off.

JEFF. Oh, not at all.

BLANDFORD. (*Putting on his overcoat which is on chair L. of window*) I must go my rounds and see that everything's in order up at the works. Good-bye.

RENIE. (*Rises*) It's still raining, I'm afraid.

[*Exit* BLANDFORD C.]

Is it right to read when you have visitors ?

(RENIE *closes window, comes to behind table, places plates, etc., on tray*)

JEFF. Would it be more polite to scream ?

RENIE. Is that the only alternative ?

JEFF. Yes.

RENIE. Mr Blandford's a good man.

JEFF. He's an angel. But I can't stand angels, not just now. I'm sick of all this sentimentality about the bread-and-butter war.

RENIE. You've been doing too much work to-day.

JEFF. Sh! My first day! When I stole down to the shop at five this morning with two portman-teaux full of papers in my hands, I felt like a boy going home for the holidays. All these weeks I've been simply rotting away for want of work; I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat. (*Lighting a pipe*) Thank God I could always smoke.

RENIE. What's your appointment ?

JEFF. I was nearly telling Blandford, but I thought better of it. I had a bright idea at lunch. I've invited Poole and Pownall to a conference.

RENIE. To make peace? What terms are you proposing ?

JEFF. Oh, terms! That's their affair. They can make what terms they like.

RENIE. And Mr Norton, is he coming too ?

JEFF. Not this time. Poor old Hubert, I fancy he's a bit fed up with his new walk of life. He's fallen in love with Jessie Poole. . . .

RENIE. Sir John's girl ?

JEFF. Yes; he met her at Mayo's doing good works. And now he's wondering if he can work his way up again out of the working class to marry her or whether that's immoral.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY I.

MRS BEVERLEY. Theear's a warkin' man coom to see ye, sor.

JEFF. (*Rises*) Mr Pownall ?

MRS BEVERLEY. Aye, that's t' neeam.

JEFF. Show him in.

[*MRS BEVERLEY goes out.*]

RENIE. Well, I'd better go.

JEFF. Go and sit with Dad. I'll call you when they've gone.

RENIE. Oh, I shall know.

[*Exit RENIE R.*]

Enter POWNALL L., shown in by MRS BEVERLEY.

JEFF. Good-evening, Pownall. Come in, come in.

POWNALL. Good-evening, sir.

MRS BEVERLEY. S'all ah cleear aweeah, sor ?

JEFF. Yes, you can take the things. (*Takes up tray*) Oh, have a bit of something to eat before it goes, Pownall ? You must be pretty hungry.

POWNALL. No, thank you, sir ; I've had my dinner.

JEFF. Gammon, come on ! You're as thin as a lath.

POWNALL. Thank you, sir, I won't take anything.

JEFF. Well, well, take it away.

[*Exit MRS BEVERLEY*]

It's a damnable thing, a strike, Pownall. I hope I'll never see one again.

POWNALL. Yes, sir, it's not a pleasant thing ; it could easily be ended with a little good-will.

JEFF. That's all that's wanted. (*A knock at the window*) Come, trot out your good-will, for here's Sir John come to talk it over with you. (*He opens the window*)

Enter POOLE, shutting a wet umbrella.

POOLE. Beastly weather. Excuse my coming this way. I thought as our conference was to be a private and unofficial affair . . .

JEFF. Here's Pownall.

POOLE. (*C. above table*) Ah, Pownall! Sit down, sit down. (*POWNALL sits L. of table. JEFF on sofa R. POOLE above table*) Well, so Mr Hodder has determined to make peace between us?

JEFF. You've got to make peace yourselves.

POOLE. Good. If only Pownall will be reasonable, I'm just in the mood to come to terms.

POWNALL. Well, sir, I don't think there's much doubt about our terms.

POOLE. Come, come.

POWNALL. What we put forward from the beginning was a minimum demand.

POOLE. Now, let's start quite fresh. If you can show me any legitimate grievances I'll undertake to remove them.

POWNALL. It's not a case of grievances, sir. We want a percentage on the profits.

POOLE. Yes, that's what you asked for; but as I told you before . . .

POWNALL. It's a question of principle with us.

POOLE. Oh, come, if we are both so firm about it we shan't get much forrader. It's only by mutual concessions that we can achieve peace. You come half-way and I'll come half-way. Do you see?

- POWNALL. I see, sir.
- POOLE. You don't say that we haven't been paying you a fair rate of wages, do you ?
- POWNALL. No, sir.
- POOLE. The rate agreed on in our contracts ?
- POWNALL. Yes, sir.
- POOLE. Very well, then ; you brought us your labour ; we paid you a full price for it. What more can anyone demand ?
- POWNALL. We want a share in the thing produced.
- POOLE. Now, come, if a man brings me goods and I pay him his price for them, I'm under no further obligation to him. The thing I turn out with those goods is my property unless I choose to give it away. Well, I don't choose. We took the risks, we supplied the materials, we supplied the design, it was made in our shops.
- POWNALL. Yes, sir, but it was made there by our hands. There's not a bolt or screw in the whole of that machine but was made by our men.
- POOLE. Well, and what sort of a job do you think your men would have made of it if we hadn't shown them what to do with those blessed hands of theirs ?
- POWNALL. Well, sir, I don't want to be personal, but you can't claim that you had much to do with it yourself, for as far as I know you've never once put foot inside No. 7 since the work began.
- POOLE. My work for it is done outside ; I have to be organising, or the work you do in there wouldn't be worth a halfpenny.
- POWNALL. Yes, sir, you're an organiser ; that's your work (*JEFF rises, walks up to window, then goes to chair below fire. Sits*) ; same as I'm an electrician and my brother's a greaser. But, right or wrong, the men say the organisers are

paid out of all proportion to the others who share in the work. If the organisers are to be paid according to the profits, they say, why not the rest?

POOLE. Well, and supposing there aren't any profits? Supposing the thing don't work? (*Leans back in his chair*) Do you *really* want a share in the profits of No. 7?

POWNALL. That's what we've struck for, sir.

POOLE. Very well, your share in the profits so far will be just about . . . Let's see, two and three's five and three's . . . It's cost us something like eight thousand pounds up to date; divide that among four hundred workmen, it makes minus twenty pounds apiece; so instead of getting wages this month each of you will kindly hand us over twenty pounds.

POWNALL. People with no economic margin can't be called on to share losses, sir.

POOLE. That's what I thought. So that after all what it amounts to is simply this: you're like everyone else, you want more money than you've got, and as we are the nearest capitalists you propose to get it out of *us*. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'm just as eager to get this beastly strike over as you are; if you'll come back to work to-morrow we'll raise your wages five per cent. all round. That's better than a share in hypothetical profits.

POWNALL. Is that the best you've got to offer us, sir?

POOLE. Yes.

POWNALL. Then I can't accept it. The money is nothing to us unless we get the principle.

POOLE. And that's just the one thing that we're not going to give you.

POWNALL. (*Rising*) Then I'm afraid we can't come to terms, sir.

POOLE. (*Rises*) What a pity we bothered to come out in the rain! (*Takes his overcoat*)

POWNALL. I'm sorry, sir; it wasn't my suggestion. (*To JEFF*) Good-night, sir. (*Going L.*)

JEFF. (*Rises*) Whoa! Stop there! I'm not going to let you go like that. (*Goes to table*)

POWNALL. I can see no hope of agreement, sir.

JEFF. One of you two has got to give in.

POWNALL. It won't be me, sir.

POOLE. Nor me.

JEFF. Now, listen to me; you two have done all the talking so far, but I'm going to have my word now. It didn't seem to strike either of you, so far as I noticed, that there were some other little matters concerned besides the interests of the two bodies that you two represent.

POWNALL. We are not fighting only for ourselves; we are fighting the battle of all the poor and needy in the country.

JEFF. Oh, nonsense! You're fighting the battle of the well-to-do working man. Only a few cranks in London bother their heads about the poor and needy.

(*POOLE puts on his overcoat*)

POWNALL. (*To POOLE*) And there's another matter, sir. There was somebody working in No. 7 to-day . . .

JEFF. What the devil's that got to do with you?

POWNALL. Our picket heard some hammering. I can't answer for the men if that goes on.

POOLE. The usual vague threat of labour leaders. (*Moves up C.*)

POWNALL. Then let's be clear about it, sir. That's got to be stopped, or I shall take measures to stop it.

POOLE. (*Turning*) Am I master here or are you?

POWNALL. I'm master of the men, sir.

POOLE. And I'm master of the works, do you understand?

POWNALL. Well, sir, you've had your warning. Good-night.

(POWNALL goes L., POOLE C.)

JEFF. Stop. You've both forgotten the most important factor in the question.

POWNALL. It's no use, sir.

POOLE. Waste of breath, Hodder. (*About to take umbrella*)

JEFF. (*Goes up to R.C.*) Put down that umbrella and hear what I have to say. I'm a patient man; I was ready to put up with your damned arrogance . . .

POWNALL. Arrogance?

JEFF. Yes, of both of you. If only you managed to come to terms; that's all I wanted. I've given you your heads. I've sat here, letting you discuss *my* machine, *my* invention, my brother's and mine, as if the only important thing about it was how much each of *you* was to get out of it, as if capital and labour were the only two elements in the production . . .

POOLE. What, do you want a rise too?

JEFF. Nonsense; I've thrown you the profits as a sop, a sop to buy my liberty, my liberty to work. . . . Good God! wherever I look I find the same thing. The Thinker, the Man of Ideas, is regarded as a creature with no civil rights; a thing to be tolerated only; to live on crumbs, on charity, to be spoken of indulgently when you're in a good mood; to be patted on the back and allowed sometimes to come down to dessert.

POOLE. Come, come!

JEFF. Look at my brothers. Harry the artist

reduced to drawing maps; Gregory the poet writing shorthand reports, dependent for his daily bread on the leavings of commerce. Nothing matters in this world, one would think, but the division of money between the employers and working men. I've got principles at stake too. We claim the right to go on inventing and creating, the right to live without crawling under your table for crumbs. If you won't grant us our right, we'll take it by force. (*Slight movement from POWNALL*) Yes, by force! Why didn't you leave me in peace in my bicycle shop? You lured me here to serve your ends, and now I can't go on because you two choose to get at loggerheads. Make peace, I say!

POWNALL. We can't, sir.

(*POOLE shakes his head*)

JEFF. Then, by Lord! I'll leave you nothing to quarrel about. I'll take my work away from both of you; I'll go back to London and take the invention with me. (*Goes down to fireplace R.*)

POWNALL. Are you going to let him do that, sir?

POOLE. He can't. The machine belongs to the Company.

JEFF. You're welcome to it! What use will the machine be without me? Without my brother's formulae? Work it if you can! To-morrow I go, and take my papers with me. Now will you be reconciled?

POWNALL. Is it to be peace, sir?

POOLE. On my terms, nothing else.

POWNALL. I refuse them.

JEFF. Then there's no use talking. I'll work no more for either of you. (*Sits in chair below fire*)

POWNALL. Ye'd best think twahce of what ye're sayin', sor.

JEFF. I've said my last word. (*Rings bell below fire*)
[POWNALL *pauses as if ruminating; begins to speak and stops, then goes out L.*

POOLE. (*Comes to R. of table*) Don't do anything rash, Hodder. This strike will soon be over. I'll take a cigarette if you don't mind. It's only a question of days now. They're not supported by their trade unions; they depend entirely on the subscriptions of a few enthusiasts in Manchester.

JEFF. It's no good, sir. I've made up my mind. (*Rings bell again. Rises*) I find it a humiliating position to have to sit by twiddling my thumbs while you and your workmen wrangle over the interests of your respective classes.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY L.

MRS BEVERLEY. Did ye ring, sor?

JEFF. Yes. Bring my lamp, will you?

MRS BEVERLEY. Beg pardon, sor?

JEFF. I want my lamp.

[*Exit MRS BEVERLEY L.*

POOLE. In deciding material questions one is obliged to take a material point of view, but of course—

JEFF. I see that we shall never agree, sir. I'm much obliged to you for all you've done for me; I'm sorry it has come to nothing; but I've quite made up my mind. I'm off to-morrow.

POOLE. Well, I'm sorry, very sorry. But I can't prevent you; and I can't give way. (*Moves up to window C.*) Perhaps you'll change your mind.

JEFF. No, I shan't change my mind.

POOLE. You did before, you know. I'm very sorry.

Look in and say good-bye before you go. (*Looking at the sky*) It's stopped, apparently.

[*Exit POOLE window C.*

(*JEFF goes moodily and sits down on the sofa in the red glow of the fire. It is dark by now, the weather is clearing; lights begin to show here and there in the houses on the opposite hill*)

Enter RENIE

RENIE. Have they gone?

JEFF. Renie, I'm going to leave you. The conference has been a failure. Do you understand?

RENIE. (*Comes to sofa L. of JEFF. Sits*) Yes.

JEFF. I am going back to be an unsuccessful man in a bicycle shop again.

RENIE. When?

JEFF. To-morrow.

RENIE. To-morrow?

JEFF. I can't take my machine away because the metal belongs to Poole; but I'm going to take away the idea. I'm going back to London again.

RENIE. To Ball's Pond?

JEFF. Yes, it isn't let. I shan't have the workmen; I shan't have the tools or the space I have here. I shall have to spend months, years very likely, in getting back to the point I had reached six weeks ago; but I shan't be at the mercy of masters' and men's caprices any longer; I shall be a free man. On the whole it's a good thing; I'm glad they refused. But I'm frightened. I'm always frightened of big things, whether they're good or bad. This is a good thing, but I'm frightened. . . . It means we're going to be separated.

RENIE. Yes.

JEFF. No more long silences in the glow of the fire,

no more dreaming and hoping side by side, no hand to put out a hand to.

RENIE. Those are only little things compared with—

JEFF. The certainty. . . . Good God! how had I the courage to live before I knew! *That one day, that one moment, changed everything; and now . . . Why, even if we never met again, we should still be close—close.*

RENIE. You couldn't stay here in Saltings?

JEFF. I couldn't earn a living. Oh, it'll be good to be back there among the bare boards again, with all my papers about me; living with them, eating with them, sleeping with them. That reminds me I've got to go down to the shop to fetch the papers back. (*Goes up R.C.*)

RENIE. Won't to-morrow do?

JEFF. I'm never easy away from them. If anything happened to them . . . it's unthinkable.

RENIE. But you could work it out again?

JEFF. Not possibly. Without the formulae those papers contain, one might work at it for years in vain. And I haven't yet quite discovered the secret of how they were arrived at.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY, who coughs. An ELDERLY WOMAN follows her close, and walks forward into the room.

JEFF. Hullo, what is it?

MRS BEVERLEY. Et's a woman to see ye, sor.

JEFF. Who is it? What's her name?

WOMAN. Et's me, sor.

[*MRS BEVERLEY goes out.*

JEFF. Let's have a look. (*Lighting a match. Goes to her L.C.*) I don't think I know you.

WOMAN. No, sor. (*Blowing out the match*) Ah'm afeard o' t' leet. Ah'm Jem t' neet watchman's wahf. Ye remember, sor?

JEFF. No.

WOMAN. Jemmy 'at was to 'a' had t' sack.

JEFF. I remember, for being drunk.

WOMAN. Yes, sor, ye gat him off.

JEFF. Well, and what do you want with me?

WOMAN. Ye weean't say 'at ah teeald ye, sor? Ah deean't know what they'd deeah to me ef they knawed.

JEFF. Well, what is it?

WOMAN. T' men's oop to some mischief, sor. Ah heeard 'em talkin'. They're geean to do some mischief to yer shop.

(*RENIE rises*)

JEFF. No. 7?

WOMAN. Yes, sor.

JEFF. Good God! Where are my boots? (*RENIE gets boots from up R.*) Why don't they bring my lamp? (*Ringing and calling*) Mrs Beverley!

RENIE. (*Searching*) Here they are.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY. JEFF sits below fire putting on boots.

MRS BEVERLEY. Did ye call, sor?

JEFF. Where's my lamp, confound you!

MRS BEVERLEY. Ah was joost i' t' act o' laghtin' it, sor.

[*Exit MRS BEVERLEY*]

RENIE. But what are the men going to do to the shop?

WOMAN. Ah couldn't say, miss; but everyone's coomin' out o' their houses, expectin' something. They're all over t' hill.

JEFF. (*Breaking a bootlace*) Damn!

RENIE. Where are you going to, Jeff?

JEFF. To get the papers from No. 7. (*A rocket goes up*) Good God! (*Dashes to the window*)

WOMAN. That's t' signal.

HUBERT. (*Without*) Whoa there!

JEFF. Let me pass! Let me pass!

HUBERT. You can't pass here.

(*JEFF and HUBERT struggle in the window*)

WOMAN. They're all about us!

(*She goes out L., meeting MRS BEVERLEY, who enters with a lamp and sets it on table C. While this is said and done JEFF and HUBERT speak through it*)

JEFF. I must go to No. 7!

HUBERT. And I'm here to prevent you.

JEFF. My papers are down there.

HUBERT. Hold back, you fool! It's for your own good I'm telling you.

(*No. 7 blows up with a bang and burns. Cheers and murmurs without C.*)

Enter HUBERT C. still gripping JEFF.

HUBERT. There! Now do you understand? I've been waiting there in case you got wind of it. I knew what you'd do.

*Enter HODDER, in dressing-gown, and MISS PART-
RIDGE R.*

HODDER. What's happening?

Enter MRS BEVERLEY with lamp.

What was that bang?

(*Sound of singing outside*)

A VOICE. (*Without*) What prahee yer machine now?

RENIE. The hill's all black with people.

HODDER. What's happened? Why does nobody answer me?

HUBERT. No. 7's been blown up.

HODDER. Blown up? The machine? And where were the papers?

JEFF. (*With a gesture of the head*) Down there.

HODDER. Lost too! Ah! (*Sitting*)

HUBERT. Whatever was in the shop, you'll never see it again, Dr Hodder. The men have taken good care of that.

HODDER. (*Rising*) You damned scoundrel!

HUBERT. No, sir, I had no hand in it. I did my best to prevent them.

HODDER. Why didn't you warn us?

HUBERT. I couldn't go back on my mates. I did what I could for Jeff.

HODDER. So there's an end of it all! Half-a-dozen rascals and a chunk of dynamite. . . . But what the devil possessed you to leave the papers down there?

MISS PARTRIDGE. Leave him alone, Doctor.

(*Alarm bell*)

HUBERT. There's the alarm bell. Come on, Jeff.

JEFF. Leave me alone, everybody.

[*Exit HUBERT C.*

What do I care? I want to be alone, I tell you.

(*To RENIE, indicating HODDER*) Take him away.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Come back to your fire, Doctor. Take my arm. Come along, we can't do anything to help.

HODDER. I'll not sit doing nothing! Give me my hat, give me my coat. I'll go and see for myself; I'll go and look at the ruins of my boy's work

Ah, Vernon, Vernon, if you knew what they had done to us! (*Staggering*) Ah!

MISS PARTRIDGE. He's fainting!

RENIE. Catch him, Jeff!

(*JEFF catches him and supports him out R. Alarm bell stops*)

MISS PARTRIDGE. He will die of this! It was only the hope of seeing the thing through that kept him alive.

JEFF *re-enters*

JEFF. Go and look after him. He's as white as a sheet.

MISS PARTRIDGE. Come and help me, Renie.

[*Exeunt R.*

(*JEFF puts on coat and hat. Goes to drawer and takes pistol and box of cartridges; loads pistol and holds it in his left hand behind his back, going C. as RENIE enters R.*)

RENIE. I couldn't stay away; I was afraid; you looked so wild. (*Comes down to R.C.*) What were you doing when I came in? Where were you going?

JEFF. Down there.

RENIE. What for? (*Sees cartridges*) What have you got in your hand? What were you going to do with that? You didn't mean to kill yourself? (*Takes pistol from him*)

JEFF. My work's over.

RENIE. But you couldn't be so treacherous, so unfaithful! Oh, put it away! Is it loaded? Quick! How does it unload? Unload it, unload it! Oh, Jeff, did you think of what it meant to all of us? How could you treat me so? To cut yourself adrift without a word, to launch out into the open, right away where I might never find you again.

JEFF. One doesn't reason. They'd blown up everything I had; let me go too.

RENIE. If there's any vestige of the invention left it's in your brain and nowhere else.

JEFF. That's ended!

RENIE. But the invention isn't everything. Life goes on, the world goes on. If this is a bad world where they care only for food, we must build up a new one where they care more for thought and ideals. If they destroyed what you brought them, we must teach them to preserve what others bring. That's our business now. You've not got to die, Jeff! You've got to live and struggle harder than ever. If the world's bad it wants you all the more.

JEFF. Why should I trouble about the world?

RENIE. Because it's the only thing that gives our personal life a meaning; because without it life is mean and dull, and with it large and glorious, as ours has been this summer; because it's our deepest and most imperious instinct to try and make the world better.

JEFF. My instinct is to creep into a hole and hide myself.

RENIE. Ah! If only I could take all the pain out of you and have it all to myself; I'd rejoice in it; I'd know I was doing my job properly at last, leaving you free to be strong and to hope. I've been useless as yet, because we've been trying to be wiser than nature.

JEFF. Renie!

RENIE. We must never be separated again, Jeff. (JEFF rises) We're not strong enough to stand alone. (Their lips meet at last in a long kiss)

CURTAIN

CAST OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, 11th November 1912

BLANDFORD	ERNEST BODKIN
RENIE DALRYMPLE	SYBIL THORNDIKE
CANON WOOLMER	BREMBER WILLS
SIR JOHN POOLE	EDWARD LANDOR
LADY POOLE	MRS ALBERT BARKER
LADY EAGLESHAM	DORIS BATEMAN
CONSTANCE WOOLMER	CHRISTIE LAWS
DR HODDER	JULES SHAW
BAGSHAW, <i>a lawyer</i>	LIONEL BRIGGS
BARNABY, <i>a doctor</i>	H. A. YOUNG
AUCTIONEER	EDWARD BROADLEY
MAGGIE	MURIEL STEWART
ALF	ERNEST HAINES
LORD WONERSH	HERBERT LOMAS
GREGORY HODDER	FRANK DARCH
JEFF HODDER	MILTON ROSMER
HARRY HODDER	REGINALD FRY
MISS PARTRIDGE	HILDA SIMS
A BUILDER'S WORKMAN	ARTHUR MILTON
TELEGRAPH MESSENGER	THOMAS BURNS
DR HUNTER	ERNEST HAINES
MRS MACKINTOSH	MURIEL STEWART
VERNON HODDER	LEWIS CASSON
1ST CYCLIST	DORIS BATEMAN
2ND CYCLIST	MARIE ROYTER
HUBERT NORTON	LEONARD MUDIE
WORKMEN	{ REGINALD FRY
	{ TOM KILFOY
3RD CYCLIST	LEONARD CHAPMAN
MRS BEVERLEY	ANNIE MOLLER
NELLY, <i>her niece</i>	MARIE ROYTER
POWNALL	HERBERT LOMAS
MAYO	ARTHUR MILTON
ELDERLY WOMAN	DORIS BATEMAN

Produced by LEWIS CASSON

THE FOUNTAIN

A Comedy in Three Acts

TO
MISS MARY JERROLD

NOTE: First produced for the Stage Society at the Aldwych Theatre, London, in March 1909.

A revised version, as performed by the Scottish Repertory Company at the Royalty Theatre, Glasgow, in October 1909, and other Repertory Companies, published in 1911 by Messrs Gowans & Gray, Glasgow. I must thank Messrs Gowans & Gray for kindly allowing me to include *The Fountain* in this volume.—KATHARINE CALDERON.

PREFACE

THE only object of this Preface is to clear away some misconceptions raised by the Dramatic Critics. They said that my hero was an exponent of orthodox socialism, and that I myself was a disciple of Bernard Shaw. They were wrong about both of us.

Wren is a member of the Fabians, it is true ; he goes off to one of their meetings at the end of Act I. ; but, like many other members of that Society, he is not a socialist at all ; he only thinks he is a socialist.

As for myself, I am very grateful for some of the things implied when the word "Shavian" is applied to my comedy ; but *distinguamus*. Mr Shaw has no exclusive copyright in talkative heroes. "Beaucoup parler, voilà l'important," was already Fantasio's motto. If what Mr. Walkley was pleased to call Wren's "patter" deals with politics, so does the "patter" of all the family doctors in Lavedan and Dumas, and most of Aristophanes is pure political discussion. My inspiration was certainly not derived from *Widowers' Houses*. The plot of *The Fountain* was developed by a severely logical process from a philosophical thesis. House-rents were the form of wealth most convenient for the illustration of my meaning. But I am not chiefly concerned with slums or houses or wealth of any sort. When you dive down to the very bottom of *The Fountain* (where Truth dwells) you will find yourself face to face with something as Anti-Shavian

as can be, with a tremendous discovery of mine which may revolutionise both Literature and Life. For the basic intention of my play is to show that all the Evil that matters is produced, not by evil intention, as is generally supposed, but by good intention working through the complicated channels of our social system.

“ Personne n'est méchant, et que de mal on fait ! ”

Bundle all the really wicked people in the world into a lethal chamber, and it will have no visible effect on human happiness. In *The Fountain*, accordingly, all the people who together cause the miseries of Boodle Court are good ; there is a tender-hearted lady, a philanthropic trustee, a conscientious lawyer, a benevolent house-agent, a noble rent-collector, and in the background a jolly old horse-breeder who wouldn't have hurt a fly.

How naïve and old-fashioned after this seems *Widowers' Houses*, with its slum-landlord grinding the faces of the poor ! Bernard Shaw, like Lloyd George and all those nurtured in the socialism of the early eighties, still believes in the fantastic old Wicked Rich myth. Wren's jaunty epigram, “ Villains are a literary invention which the Elizabethan drama inherited from the demonology of the Middle Ages ”—an epigram which one of the critics was misguided enough to say “ might have come from the Shavian mint ”—expresses a truth which has certainly never entered the Shavian head. Mr Shaw's villainous landlord does not correspond to anything in real life, but is derived

straight from the Iagos and Don Johns of the Tudor stage, who, in their turn, were copied, not from men (there never were such men), but from the goblins of the medieval mysteries.

G. C., 1911.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Stage Society, 1909

KATE KERRISON	MISS EMILY MALYON
MRS CARTWRIGHT	MISS ALICE MANSFIELD
DINAH KIPPIN	MISS NANCY PRICE
TOM OLIVER	HUBERT HARBEN
CHENDA WREN	MISS MARY JERROLD
JIM CROW	FRANK COLLINS
JAMES WREN	FREDERICK LLOYD
MRS JELlicOE	MISS MABEL ADAIR
JELlicOE	P. PERCIVAL CLARK
JENNY JELlicOE	MISS IRENE ROSS
A FAT WOMAN	MISS ETHEL INGRAM
A WIDOW	MISS BEATRICE FILMER
AN IDLE MAN	FRED PENLEY
A GLOOMY MAN	WILTON ROSS
A LITTLE MAN	A. E. FILMER
PONTIFEX	FRED GROVE
DAVENIL	ALLAN WADE
NIX	ROBERT BOLDER
POSTMAN	VAL CUTHBERT
A FOREMAN CARTER	ARTHUR BACHNER
PALMER	ROSS SHORE

CROWD OF EAST-ENDERS

Time: The Present. *Place:* East London

THE FOUNTAIN

ACT I

The scene of all three Acts is the kitchen of a first-floor flat in Boodle Court, a block of workmen's dwellings in the East End of London. Through the window in the back one sees a row of houses opposite; one of them is tall and ugly, and built of red brick. There are two doors, one on each side. The door to the left hand of the spectator leads to the outer staircase; the door to the right leads to the bedroom. The room is furnished partly with the necessaries of a kitchen, and partly with the remains of a cultured household. On an old-fashioned dresser of dark wood common crockery and pretty porcelain are mixed; keys hang on one hook; bills are filed on another. About the room are disposed kitchen chairs, Chippendale chairs, an arm-chair, a grandfather clock, a bookcase, a warming pan, a bureau, a little French clock, Arundel prints, reproductions of Burne-Jones, Watts's "Hope," etc. Bulbs are sprouting in pots on the window-sill. A kitchen table, small ornamental tables, etc.

KATE KERRISON, aged about 35, in a cloth skirt and a cotton blouse with the sleeves tucked up, stands at the kitchen table, with her back to the audience, ironing a muslin curtain. KATE is well-meaning, orthodox, a prig; she has no sense of humour; her manner to the poor has the mechanical amiability of the professional philanthropist. In the staircase door stand a few poor children watching her. Having ironed the curtain and laid it aside, KATE goes to the door; the children start back.

KATE. It's all right, darling, I'm only going to get my other curtain.

(The children follow her movements and resume their poses. As KATE returns from the staircase MRS CARTWRIGHT and two other poor women appear in the doorway, looking over the heads of the children. MRS CARTWRIGHT is an ingratiating person of about 60, dressed in a flowered bonnet, and a black velveteen mantle, from which her bare red arms protrude; she carries a white beer jug)

MRS CARTWRIGHT. I 'ope you don't mind my lookin' in.

KATE. Not at all. Won't you step inside?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. *(Entering and looking curiously about the room)* I was just passin'. One can't help feelin' inquisitive, you know. I suppose it's one of our primeval hinstincks. *(She has read of such things in her halfpenny paper)* May I ask, if not a liberty, what possessed you to come 'ere?

KATE. Oh, it's no liberty, Mrs—— I'm afraid I haven't quite caught your name yet.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Mrs Cartwright; you're welcome.

KATE. Thank you, Mrs Cartwright. Neighbours ought to know something of one another. I came up to London to be near a very dear friend of mine.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh, indeed. The Reverend Oliver?

KATE. *(Laughing)* Oh no, not Mr Oliver; a woman friend.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. A woman friend? Isn't she a lydy?

KATE. Yes; but we're all women, you know.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Is it the lydy who was here last Choosday?

KATE. Yes.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Mrs Wren ?

KATE. Yes.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Such a kind lydy ! She give me a beautiful book.

KATE. Did she ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. And might a person ask why you don't live in the West End like other lydies ?

KATE. I'm too poor ; I couldn't afford it. I have to live like other poor people.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh no, madam, not like pore people, I assure you.

WOMEN. (*At the door*) Oh no, not like pore people.

KATE. Why, what is the difference ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. You don't 'ave to work for your livin' like pore people.

(*Women at the door murmur assent*)

KATE. Well, but I'm working now.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh, you are indeed, but you're not earnin' your livin'. You're only doin' for yourself.

(*Women at the door assent again*)

Enter DINAH KIPPIN quickly, a dingy and defiant young woman, carrying a tablecloth. She is a nervous creature, driven half mad by the burden of her cares. Conceiving life, necessarily, as a path to be traversed at high speed, whenever she sees an obstacle in her way, whether in the physical or in the moral sphere, she rushes at it furiously to remove it or destroy it.

DINAH. (*To the children*) Get out of the way, you !

(*To KATE*) May this tablecloth be yours, madam ?

KATE. Yes, that's my tablecloth.

DINAH. Then I'll trouble you not to 'ang it on my ryling.

KATE. I didn't know the railings belonged to anyone.

DINAH. New-comers can't be expected to know heverything.

KATE. I'm very sorry, I'm sure.

DINAH. Don't name it. But I thought it best to tell you, then you'd know another time.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. (*To DINAH*) Good-morning, my dear.

DINAH. (*After looking at her and snorting*) I congratulate you on yer company! [*Exit DINAH*]

MRS CARTWRIGHT. (*Puzzled*) 'Oo? Me?

KATE. And who is that?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. That's my daughter, Dinah, that keeps the sausage shop down below. She's bin soured, pore thing. She didn't make an 'appy marriage; not for 'er 'usband, that is. There's a reward out for 'im; but those who know, bless you, they 'aven't the 'eart.

KATE. And has she any children?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Five, and one at the breast, besides a lodger. . . . Well, I must ask you to excuse me. I 'ope you didn't mind my just lookin' in. (*OLIVER appears in the door*) Will you please give my kind regards to Mrs Wren?

KATE. When I see her.

Enter OLIVER, a clergyman, aged 32, clean-shaved, dressed in wideawake hat and black Norfolk jacket, carrying a walking-stick and a book with papers in it. He nods to KATE, and shakes hands with MRS CARTWRIGHT.

OLIVER. Well, Mrs Cartwright, I was glad to see you at our evening service yesterday.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh, sir, you noticed?

OLIVER. So you know Mrs Wren too?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh yes, sir, that I do, God bless 'er 'eart. She paid me a call at my flat last Choosday and gave me a beautiful book all about the Inner Life. But I must be gettin' on with my work now if you can kindly spare me.

OLIVER. (*Pointing to the jug*) What are you going to do with that?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. I was goin' to get a little milk for my 'usband, sir.

OLIVER. What, is he lying up again?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Yes, sir.

OLIVER. He's always got something wrong with him.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Yes, sir.

OLIVER. What is it this time?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. He's got a sore foot and can't do no work, pore feller. If you could look in and speak a few words to 'im, sir; he always says there's nothing do 'im so much good like.

OLIVER. Very well; I'll look in.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Oh, thank you kindly, sir. Good-morning, sir, good-morning, miss.

[*Exit* MRS CARTWRIGHT

OLIVER. Well, Kate? (*Shaking hands*) Chenda seems to have made friends with everyone. (*Going to the door and addressing a little boy*) Ah, Johnny, how's your mother? (*A big girl who is there is understood to say that his mother is still very poorly*) Well, tell her to get well at once or I shall make Dr Tucker send her round a bottle of physic that she won't like. (*The boy stares at him, then bursts out crying*) There, there, silly boy; I was only joking. (*He shuts the door. To KATE*) There are the parish magazines you asked for. (*Referring to his papers*) Will you please tell the people in your district that the Infants' Tea is

at four on Monday; games afterwards; Miss Hubbard has undertaken to do some tricks.

(KATE listens seriously and humbly. Having no sense of humour, she does not miss it in OLIVER. She looks on him as the beau ideal of a manly man)

KATE. I was to ask if you could inspect the Band of Hope at five on Sunday.

OLIVER. They must wait. I've got a P.S.A. at the G.F.S.

KATE. Oh.

OLIVER. (*Referring to his notes again*) Then let me see. "Chenda." Oh yes, Chenda comes to-day, doesn't she?

KATE. No, it's not her day; she comes on Tuesdays and Fridays.

OLIVER. Are you sure?

KATE. Quite sure.

OLIVER. I have her down for Mondays and Thursdays.

KATE. No; Tuesdays and Fridays.

OLIVER. You must have told me wrong. (*It is always somebody else's fault when OLIVER makes a mistake*) I wanted her to run round and speak to me on business when she came.

KATE. About the Settlement?

OLIVER. Well, indirectly.

KATE. It's so good of her husband to let her spend so much of her money on the parish.

OLIVER. Oh, splendid. But it's probably mere slackness on his part.

KATE. Oh, Tom! You never allow any good in him.

OLIVER. I knew him too well at school. He's a gas-bag. I'm sorry for Chenda.

KATE. You don't think she's unhappy?

OLIVER. How can she be anything else? (*A knock at the door*) Who's that?

KATE. (*Opening the door*) Why, it's Chenda !

Enter CHENDA, a lively, elegant woman of 22.

CHENDA. Isn't this a surprise !

KATE. Darling Chenda ! (*They embrace*) I thought you were lunching with the Nugents.

CHENDA. So I was. Darling old Kerry ! (*Kissing her again*) I've chucked them. (*Shaking hands with OLIVER*) Dear old Tom, I should like to kiss you too.

OLIVER. Pray do. I *thought* Kate was wrong ; I knew you were due to-day.

CHENDA. Oh, but I'm not. This is quite outside the programme. (*She goes and looks out at the door*)

KATE. Shut the door and tell us what brought you.

CHENDA. Half a jiffy. (*Speaking off*) This way.

Enter JIM CROW, a native of the Society Islands, with a portmanteau and some hand baggage. He is a man of graceful and dignified manners, tall and thin, with a cropped moustache and white hair.

That's right. Put it down there. Thank you so much. (*Giving him a shilling*)

JIM. (*Looking at the shilling, and bowing with his hands extended*) Mauruùru ! E mea máitai. (*This is Raparoan for "Thank you. It is a good thing." It must be pronounced like Italian*)

[*Exit JIM*]

CHENDA. What a dear old man !

KATE. What's all this ?

CHENDA. It looks like somebody's luggage.

KATE. This isn't a cloak-room.

CHENDA. Don't you see ? I've come to stay. (*She takes off her things and hangs them up*)

KATE. Stay ? Stay where ?

CHENDA. Here.

KATE. Oh, nonsense. I can't put you up.

CHENDA. You must.

KATE. There's only one bed.

CHENDA. Then you'll have to sleep on the floor.

OLIVER. Has Wren gone away somewhere ?

CHENDA. No, he's at home all right.

OLIVER. Then why have you come here ?

CHENDA. We've had a row. I've run away.

(KATE goes on ironing)

OLIVER. Are you serious ? (CHENDA nods) What has he done ?

CHENDA. Nothing.

OLIVER. Come, Chenda, that won't do. He must have done something very bad.

CHENDA. (*Laughing*) You always hope for the worst from Jimbo, don't you ?

OLIVER. I don't judge any man. Wren and I are too different. He doesn't understand me and I don't understand him.

CHENDA. You don't try much, do you, Tom ?

OLIVER. Well, if you won't tell me . . . (*Taking his stick*) I dare say you two have lots to say to each other.

(*They have. KATE looks round, then goes on ironing*)

CHENDA. Oh, not a bit. Nothing that can't wait.

(*She and KATE exchange glances*)

OLIVER. Well, if that's so, (*Putting down his stick again*) I wanted to speak to you.

CHENDA. As a parson, or as a cousin ?

OLIVER. Neither ; as a trustee.

CHENDA. Fire away then.

OLIVER. We were talking the other day about your money affairs.

CHENDA. Yes, and if I couldn't get more.

OLIVER. You wanted me to commit a breach of trust.

CHENDA. Oh, Tom, what a story! After all, it's for charity. I know that there are some splendid investments where you get about fifteen pounds or twenty pounds a year for every hundred you put in. All I wanted to know was, why can't my money be put in one of them?

OLIVER. Well, it can't. I thought very carefully over what was to be done, and at last I came to the conclusion that, as usual, the straightforward method was the best. I called on the lawyers when I was in town yesterday and simply demanded that they should let you have fifty pounds a year more out of the estate.

CHENDA. When shall I have the money?

OLIVER. We had a great argument about it.

CHENDA. When shall I have the money?

OLIVER. They wanted to explain the nature of the things the money was invested in, but I refused to listen to them.

CHENDA. When shall I have the money?

OLIVER. Don't be so impatient. I didn't succeed in getting any.

CHENDA. Oh, Tom, you wretch!

OLIVER. But when I got home in the evening I suddenly remembered Jimmie Nix, who was at school with me and Wren.

CHENDA. Some cleverer lawyer who can make more out of it. . . . Oh, Tom, you duck! When shall I have the money?

OLIVER. I wrote an ultimatum to Burgess & Burgess . . .

CHENDA. Well?

OLIVER. I'm expecting their answer any time this morning. I asked them to send it by express messenger.

CHENDA. You're a perfect angel! Isn't he, Kate? And what *do* you think! I've been doing business too. I've found a place for the Settlement.

KATE. (*Coming down*) Where?

CHENDA. You'll never guess. (*Leading them to the window and pointing to the red-brick house*) There! isn't it splendid?

OLIVER. The girls' school?

CHENDA. Yes, Glengarry House. The Settlement will be on the ground floor, and the Old Age Pension House and Sanatorium up above.

OLIVER. Something like we had at Leeds.

CHENDA. It's practically settled.

OLIVER. It'll cost a lot of money.

CHENDA. Oh, that doesn't matter now. (*Sitting on the table*) Oh, and I've had another idea. I often have bright ideas in the tram; I suppose it's the electricity.

OLIVER. Not an expensive one, I hope?

CHENDA. It'll cost us nothing at all, and yet be worth a perfect fortune to the poor people it's for.

OLIVER. Oh!

CHENDA. You see, when I was going round the district with Kerry the other day I found that for five days of every week everybody down here had to do without half the necessaries of life because they were at the pawnshop; and then had to pay money as well for the privilege of being without them. Now there is nothing I hate so much as usury.

OLIVER. Quite right.

CHENDA. It's forbidden in the Bible, isn't it, Tom?

KATE. "The good man is merciful and lendeth..."

OLIVER. Never quote without the context. (*TOM always snubs KATE. Her admiration for his*

virility invites the constant display of it) Come, come, what's your idea? I'm beginning to be afraid of it.

CHENDA. Oh, there's nothing to be afraid of. You will let me do it, won't you?

OLIVER. That depends.

CHENDA. I want to make the poor people little advances myself. You see? I'm going to be a pawnbroker. "Chenda Wren, Pawnbroker"; isn't it a lovely idea? I'll lend the money myself, only I won't take the poor creatures' things away from them. I'll simply inquire into each case very carefully and say, "Very well, there's five shillings, and mind you give it me back on Saturday."

OLIVER. No, Chenda. I absolutely forbid it. It would be the end of all thrift.

CHENDA. Why, where's the harm in it?

OLIVER. They would simply regard it as a gift.

CHENDA. Oh, but I should be very strict!

OLIVER. Unless they had given security, they would never think of repaying you.

KATE. But why shouldn't you take pledges?

CHENDA. As if I would!

KATE. The main thing is to do away with the usury on the loans, not with the security for them. Don't you agree, Tom. There would be no risk then.

OLIVER. (*Hesitating*) Well . . .

CHENDA. You're both so damping.

OLIVER. If she took pledges, that's different. I don't say it's a good plan; we never had anything like it at Leeds.

KATE. One might try it as an experiment.

CHENDA. Why don't you try to help me instead of discouraging me?

OLIVER. Well, if Kate doesn't see any harm in it.

As you say, it's only an experiment. I'm going to see one or two people, (*Referring to his notes*)

Mrs Hanson, Mrs Jellicoe, Mrs Pike.

KATE. Don't forget Mrs Cartwright.

OLIVER. She's not on my list.

KATE. But you just promised.

OLIVER. (*Impatiently*) Yes, yes. (*Entering her name*) If I happen to come on some really deserving case, some really thrifty person in want of a little temporary loan through no fault of their own . . .

CHENDA. You'll send them round ?

OLIVER. Yes, I'll send them round.

CHENDA. You duck ! Send me crowds and crowds of them.

OLIVER. No, we'll confine ourselves to one, thank you.

CHENDA. Only one ?

OLIVER. Only one. And mind, you must take a good solid pledge from him.

CHENDA. It isn't a bit what I meant, but if you . . .

OLIVER. I can't help you on any other condition.

CHENDA. Very well then.

OLIVER. You promise ?

CHENDA. Of course I do. (*CHENDA is too good-natured to refuse to give promises, even when she knows that it would be injudicious to keep them*)

OLIVER. All right. Well, good-bye then for the present.

[*Exit OLIVER, to the relief of everybody*]

CHENDA. At last he's gone ! Dearest Kerry, I have been longing to get at you and cry my heart out on your dear old chest.

KATE. My poor darling ! What is it has happened ?

CHENDA. Oh, it's awful !

KATE. Has James not been good to you ?

CHENDA. Oh, don't speak of him! It's all over between us. (*Crying on KATE's bosom*) Lend me a hanky.

KATE. (*Giving her a handkerchief, putting her in the arm-chair and kneeling by her*) There, there, don't try and talk for a little while. . . . I hope you didn't get your feet wet coming down?

CHENDA. (*Wiping her eyes*) No, I've got on good thick shoes. But please don't be tactful, Kerry, it makes it seem so much worse than it is.

KATE. What is it James has done?

CHENDA. Nothing!

KATE. He must have done something.

CHENDA. You're as bad as Tom. He hasn't done anything.

KATE. Nothing at all?

CHENDA. Nothing at all.

KATE. But you've quarrelled?

CHENDA. Yes, we've quarrelled. It came to a head last night.

KATE. But if he's done nothing?

CHENDA. That's just it.

KATE. How do you mean?

CHENDA. I've been waiting and waiting for him to do something, but he never did, and I simply couldn't stand it any longer.

KATE. What was it he was to do?

CHENDA. Oh, anything.

KATE. Anything?

CHENDA. Yes, anything.

KATE. Let me see, how long have you been married?

CHENDA. Three months next Tuesday. I meant to give him three months.

KATE. And I thought you were so happy all the time.

CHENDA. So I was; it's been like Paradise.

KATE. I don't understand a bit.

CHENDA. Well, I'll explain. It's a long story.
Don't move.

KATE. I'll get my work.

CHENDA. You shan't.

(KATE is always at work throughout the play, coming and going from time to time. She listens awhile to CHENDA now, then quietly reaches for her work-box or knitting)

CHENDA. *(After a pause)* I dare say you often wondered why I fell in love with Jimbo?

KATE. Oh, but he's quite handsome.

CHENDA. Jimbo handsome! Do you really think so? Well, anyway, that wasn't why. It was his mind, his intelligence that fascinated me.

KATE. Is James clever?

CHENDA. Don't be an ass, Kerry! Is Jimbo clever!

KATE. I know him so little.

CHENDA. You see, living at home at Potter Catton there was really no conversation. Now was there?

KATE. Oh, Chenda!

(There was quite enough for a dull creature like KATE when she was governess there. It is not the necessity of stifling any remembrance of boredom that prompts her exclamation, but horror at the impropriety of criticising Potter Catton at all)

CHENDA. No, don't be tactful. There wasn't, and you know it. There never was a dearer family than mine, I really believe, but it's no good trying to make out that they were intellectual. Well, anyway, when I met Jimbo—that was at a dance at the Nugents'—I was absolutely bowled over. He simply poured reason over me. Not an occasional splash or a drop like most clever people, but a steady stream like a garden hose. It simply took my breath away. That hour I spent with

him in the conservatory was unlike anything I'd ever experienced all my life.

KATE. What did he talk about?

CHENDA. Oh, everything! You know the way people do. Riches and poverty and religion and life and all that sort of thing. Of course it sounds very dull like that, but you know what I mean. I was simply fascinated. The astonishing thing was that I seemed to understand it all. I sat at his feet and wallowed. I'd never seen a socialist before.

KATE. Is he a socialist? (CHENDA *nods*) Fancy!

CHENDA. We were all Tories at home, of course. I had always heard of socialists as some awful sort of wild beast, don't you know. The Dad couldn't stand 'em. And here was one sitting almost in my lap in a greenhouse, like an angel dropped from heaven. I believe that's the first moment in my life that I ever began to think; a sort of Soul's Awakening like that beautiful picture of Sant's. (*Rising and pacing the room*)

KATE. Why is it that men are always something odd like that nowadays? Socialists, or something?

CHENDA. Poor Kerry! Captain Burney was an Agnostic, wasn't he?

KATE. That was why I had to break it off.

CHENDA. Did he preach his doctrines?

KATE. No.

CHENDA. Jimbo would have.

KATE. He didn't care whether people agreed with him or not.

CHENDA. Oh, nor does Jimbo. How you must have suffered!

KATE. It was a great wrench. But go on, darling. About the dance.

CHENDA. Well, after that it was all one delicious

whirl for weeks. I don't know what happened and what didn't. I believe I was most immodest. I met him everywhere : I went out fishing with him ; I sat in the woods with him.

KATE. You had made up your mind to marry him ?

CHENDA. No. Honestly, I don't believe I ever thought of it ; but I simply couldn't keep away. Mary says my behaviour was perfectly atrocious. Oh, how jealous I was of anybody else ! When I was up in town with her she had to go to the dentist's. It was quite close to Jimbo's flat. I called on him while it was being stopped. I could hear his voice at the front door ; I said "Sh !" and walked in. He was sitting over the fire roasting chestnuts with that little girl Nelly.

KATE. Who was Nelly ?

CHENDA. Oh, the porter's little girl. He was very pally with the porter's kids. There he sat telling her the most lovely stories. Just imagine ! Jimbo pouring out his pearls before that little swine.

KATE. Chenda !

CHENDA. I could have shaken her.

KATE. But surely it was very nice of him to take so much trouble with the child ?

CHENDA. Don't be ridiculous. Jimbo who might have been anything if he had tried ! Everybody said he was splendid while he stayed at the Bar. He and one of the judges used to be quite brilliant together ; people used to come in from other courts. When he was up at Oxford Professor Jowett of Balliol said to Dean Something-or-other : "Mark my words, that man will outshine us all." Not quite like that, but you know what I mean. He said there were only three men in the University who would be really great ; I forget who the other two were, but Jimbo was

the third. And there was Jimbo roasting chestnuts and pouring out fireworks for a rotten little kid with bad teeth who would have been just as happy with the butcher boy. I made a dreadful scene when she had gone; she didn't stay long; and that's when it was all settled. We were married a month later.

KATE. And when did the great change in him begin?

CHENDA. How stupid you are, Kerry! Don't I keep telling you he never did change? He's always been exactly the same.

KATE. Then I don't see . . .

CHENDA. We went over to Paris. Oh, I shall never forget that fortnight. We went to all the sights.

KATE. But do tell me about the quarrel.

CHENDA. I'm telling you. We came home and settled down to ordinary life. We had people to dinner; we went out. You can't imagine! Oh, such heavenly dinner-parties; not a bit like real dinner-parties you know; with artists and unsuccessful literary people in St John's Wood; and we dined at Roche's and he talked, and, oh! it was heavenly.

KATE. But the quarrel! The quarrel!

CHENDA. Well, don't you see? With all this talking I was expecting him to begin to *do* something. I thought he was going to revolutionise the world. But he argued round and round. . . . Well, two or three weeks ago I began to lose patience. He was wandering off after breakfast one day to the window-seat with one of his old books and I asked him, "Jimbo, when are you going to begin?" "Begin what?" says Jimbo. "Doing something." "What sort of thing?" I tried to explain. I couldn't even make him understand what I was driving at. He looked

quite blank, as if there were something the matter with me. So at last I thought, Well, if he does nothing *I* will. So I began coming down here. (*Parenthetically*) The Dad was always interested in this parish, you know ; I don't know why. It was he got Tom the living. Jimbo never asked any questions about what I did. I kept hinting, but he wouldn't. When I said I was helping Tom, he only said " Dear old Squog," and changed the subject. Yesterday afternoon at tea I began again. I wanted advice and criticism. Instead of which he began arguing again, oh, so beautifully ! But I was *afraid*, Kerry, I was *afraid* of his beautiful arguments. They seem to sap my energies. I feel as if there were no reason left for doing anything. I said, " Stop, stop, Jimbo ! You're taking all the vim out of me."

KATE. What did he say ?

CHENDA. He said, " Vis, darling, vis ; there's no such word as vim." So I said, " No, Jimbo ! vis or vim, it's all a matter of words ; I'm sick of words ; I don't want you to *talk* any longer." Well, he was angry ; I was angry. We quarrelled. I knew it was the end. He left the flat ; I heard him slam the door. I waited and waited. I expected him to come back all haggard and worn with pacing the streets. At last he came . . .

KATE. Well ?

CHENDA. Very cheerful. He had met a man he knew. They dined together at some Italian restaurant. I was silent ; I concealed my surprise. He picked up a book and began to read to me, oh, something quite idiotic ; I forget what it was, but it made us laugh a great deal.

KATE. You laughed ?

CHENDA. Oh, one couldn't help it. But I had made

up my mind. After breakfast this morning, when he was out, I packed up a few things, wrote him a letter explaining, and here I am.

KATE. And is that all?

CHENDA. Why, what more do you want?

KATE. You've quarrelled, all about a little thing like that?

CHENDA. A little thing? It's as big as agnosticism.

KATE. But what will he do now?

CHENDA. Jimbo?

KATE. Won't he come after you?

CHENDA. Not he. When he reads my letter he will be furious for a moment; then he will go down to the Club and it will all pass away in words. (*A fearful knocking is heard at the door; CHENDA starts up and crosses the room; the knocking is renewed; KATE opens the door*) Goodness, it's him!

Enter WREN; aged thirty-two, half artist and half undergraduate.

WREN. Is Chenda here? In Heaven's name, what is the meaning of this?

CHENDA. We've quarrelled.

WREN. What, last night?

CHENDA. Yes, last night.

WREN. Pooh, a little tiff like that!

CHENDA. Have you read my letter?

WREN. Good Lord, yes; the style is something awful. It's the sort of billet women write in shilling shockers when they run away at last to the hated rival.

CHENDA. I've run away to Kerry!

WREN. And have I got to call Kerry out and pink her with a rapier at Chalk Farm in the morning?

KATE. Oh, James, what an idea !

CHENDA. I wonder you can take it so lightly.

WREN. Why, what has happened after all ? I was feeling elated after two cups of tea as usual. I began to march up and down the room and talk. You said I was talking bunkum.

CHENDA. I didn't !

WREN. You said you wouldn't listen any longer.

CHENDA. That's different.

WREN. I was naturally riled. What do you think I married you for ?

CHENDA. I didn't want to hear you.

KATE. Chenda doesn't take you seriously.

WREN. *Bah, la belle affaire !* Who does ?

(KATE down L.)

CHENDA. Oh, Jimbo, you're as blind as a bat.

WREN. Me ?

CHENDA. I take you frightfully seriously.

WREN. That's your look-out.

CHENDA. It's you who don't.

WREN. Why should I ?

CHENDA. I set you on a pedestal, and I find that you are not divine.

WREN. But why should I suffer for your blunders ? Women are so selfish. If I'm going down the road and I mistake a shoeblack for a bandsman in the Guards, do you think I have a right to punch his head because I find he can't play the cornet-à-piston ? Here was I living a happy tranquil life, a respectable retired barrister. . . .

CHENDA. At the age of thirty !

WREN. Thirty-two. With my music and my books, harming no one, frequenting the company of upright men, spreading wise and virtuous ideals, going away now and again for a little fishing when I felt the need of rest. When all of a sudden a

wild hunting woman comes careering across my path, knocks me off my feet and drags me howling to the altar.

(KATE takes luggage and goes out quietly L.)

CHENDA. You asked me to marry you.

WREN. My character was compromised. Miss Nugent was beginning to draw in her skirts when I went by.

CHENDA. You positively grovelled.

WREN. There was no doubt a moment. I was frightened. Between the time when the mouse is first struck by the venomed fang and the time when he is ultimately swallowed, there is always a moment when he creeps a little nearer. That is what women call a proposal of marriage; a pretty fiction which we allow for modesty's sake.

CHENDA. What harm have I done you? Go back to your old life.

WREN. Go back, little half-digested mouse, and sport among the corn! You know it's impossible.

CHENDA. Well, why don't you work then?

WREN. Work? I'm sick of work; I've done nothing else all my life. What about my metrical version of Smith's Leading Cases?

“There were six jolly Carpenters
That went into an Inn”;

why, it's still used by the crammers. What about my golfing poems in the *Field*? “Linklater's Lament,” very appropriate under the circumstances. (*Burlesquing a pathetic reciter*)

“And I must play a one-some
Round the links of life, I ween,
Till I am putted in the hole
That's on the churchyard green.”

What about my prize translations in the Saturday *Westminster*? Why, only last week I and Professor Robinson divided their prize of half-a-crown for turning Eno's Fruit Salt advertisement into Greek iambs: ὁ τοῦ βίου κίνδυνος.

CHENDA. One and threepence in three months.

WREN. Oh, if you judge work by the takings!

CHENDA. You judge it by its usefulness, I suppose?

WREN. Of course. Why, think of all the bilious Greeks who go murdering Macedonians under the cloak of religion out of sheer ill temper for want of a little Eno; it's the first serious attempt to deal with the Eastern question.

(Little by little CHENDA is drawn back to WREN by that same force which drew her when first they met at the Nugents' dance)

CHENDA. What were you doing at the Nugents' ball at all if you didn't dance?

WREN. I was doing good to my country. While you were in the ballroom wasting your time in selfish pleasure, I was at work in the conservatory enlarging the mental horizon of the future mothers of England.

CHENDA. And when I found you fishing next morning you couldn't catch anything.

WREN. I couldn't catch anything?

CHENDA. Your basket was empty.

WREN. I am a sportsman, not a fishmonger. I was trying a fly which Izaak Walton recommends. But what a morning we had! I saw the rarest gift in you, the intelligence of the heart. Other girls, when I let off a good thing, would regard me with an astonished and uneasy stare. You drew me out. I had never been so eloquent before. I was quite surprised. It wasn't my usual time

either. Before lunch. Who ever heard of such a thing? I really was splendid, wasn't I?

CHENDA. You were amazing. I'd never heard anything like it. I could have kissed you.

WREN. You did.

CHENDA. You liar!

WREN. You picked me up and kissed me.

(CHENDA *laughs*. *She is close beside him now. He puts out his hand to take hold of her; she starts away alarmed and released from the spell*)

CHENDA. Jimbo, you snake, you're trying to bewitch me!

WREN. Are you still determined to leave me?

CHENDA. Yes . . . No. I'll give you one more chance. Remember that it's your last.

WREN. Well?

CHENDA. You must join me in my work down here.

WREN. Never!

CHENDA. Then we must part.

WREN. Never!

CHENDA. Yes!

WREN. Never!

CHENDA. Yes! You and I can't work in double harness. I'm all for action, you're all for inaction. While I am striving to go forwards you stand still and prevent me. You are an immoral influence ruining my life.

WREN. No, this is too bad! I have been chivalrous too long; but even the Wren will turn. I've allowed you to misrepresent me in order to glorify yourself so far, but now you force me to be candid I will tell you what I think of your conduct. Yes, madam, when you first started coming down here I felt uneasy; as time went on my suspicions grew deeper and deeper. I went to Slater's!

KATE. (*Who has returned*) To the detectives?

WREN. No, to the bunshop, to think it over. Now I'm convinced; you're guilty.

KATE. Oh, James!

WREN. You've been . . . committing . . . charity!

CHENDA. How idiotic!

KATE. (*Shocked*) Really, James!

CHENDA. As if charity were a crime!

WREN. Ha! I thought as much; you don't understand the enormity of the offence you're guilty of. Listen and I will tell you. At bottom you're not a bad woman. You are shocked by the same evils in the world as I myself. It's in the remedy that you go wrong. We find society on a false basis; the rich are battenning on the poor. We both hope to get the wrong righted. But Nature is hard at work. Her panacea of discontent is in full operation; the poor are discontented; the rich are discontented. It's like the gout coming out; there are shooting pains in the joints; the disease is evaporating. I rejoice, I say, "Stand back, everybody, the crisis is approaching." You haven't the courage to bear the patient's groans; you rush forward and souse the poor devil with anaesthetics. You drive the disease in again. If there were no charity and no beer in London the social question would be solved in a week; neither the rich nor the poor could endure things any longer. Instead of throwing your ill-gotten wealth bodily from you as your religion commands you fasten on to the capital with all your claws and give away the interest in homœopathic doses to prevent the full iniquity of your position from being seen.

CHENDA. What a cram!

KATE. It isn't true, James.

CHENDA. We never give money.

KATE. At least . . .

WREN. You give food and clothing, which comes to the same thing. The cart is rolling down the hill, to use your rustic metaphor, rolling down of its own momentum towards the millennium. I stand with the traces loose and give the cart a chance; you push back with all your might and call me a lazy devil. Progress is Nature's affair, not ours; action is *her* prerogative, not man's. For man there are only two things possible, inaction and reaction. *You* react and effect nothing; by doing nothing *I* achieve wonders.

CHENDA. Then what's a man of action?

WREN. A contradiction in terms, a myth, a silly fiction invented to tickle the man in the street.

CHENDA. (*Scornfully*) Who's the man in the street?

WREN. Women.

CHENDA. Isn't he awful, Kerry?

WREN. The world is a body of liquid that wants to solidify. You reformers pretend to help it by stirring it up with a teaspoon. The sage, that's me, is like a modest little crystal forming unobtrusively in a corner, setting the pattern of good citizenship which is to transmute the muddy mixture into a gem-like mass. Down with the teaspoons! *À bas les cuillers!* Because I do nothing I make no mistakes. *Chi non fa non falla.* I am perfect. You wade through blood from blunder to blunder. Ruin marks your track. (*He subsides on the sofa*)

CHENDA. Blunder? Of course I blunder. It's better to blunder than to sit in a corner twiddling your thumbs. What is the use of wise ideas if nobody acts on 'em? I'm like that jolly sailor-cousin of the Nugents who turns up sometimes with the Cattons. He can't clear the jumps, and

he don't know where the gates are; he goes blunderin' through the hedges and flounderin' in the ponds and rivers, and comes up smilin' in the end, covered with mud, with his face scratched and his hat banged in, as full of beans as when he started.

WREN. Jack Smiley, I remember.

CHENDA. It's better than meandering down the lanes in the wrong direction with the grooms and second horses.

WREN. Ah, that's me, I suppose.

CHENDA. Besides, it isn't true that you sit and think. I wouldn't say a word. You're always talking.

WREN. (*Bounding up again*) Talking? Why there are only two things that great men ever do in this world; one's killing and the other's talking. What did Napoleon do? What did Caesar do? They killed, and in the intervals they talked. They did no one any good by the killing; by their talking they founded empires. What does Parliament do? It talks, and out comes a law. And what is a law? It's only talk, talk on paper. What does a clergyman do when he's not busy giving anaesthetics? He talks. What is the Catechism? What are the Ten Commandments? What is the Sermon on the Mount? Only talk.

CHENDA. (*Stopping her ears*) Stop! Stop! He's doing it again. He's sapping all my vim.

WREN. Vis, woman, vis!

KATE. If I may be allowed to criticise, James, I should say that you have too many theories. If you have a *theory* about everything, you are not likely to do much good. Tom doesn't talk; he *does* things; he has no theories.

CHENDA. Hear, hear!

WREN. And may I ask what you and "Tom" propose to do with Chenda down here?

KATE. She's going to work!

WREN. Well, as her husband, I wish you could have chosen a more sanitary and respectable neighbourhood for her to work in. I never saw such a seedy-looking crew as you've got for neighbours in this rabbit-warren of a model dwelling-house.

CHENDA. This is one of the plague-spots of East London.

WREN. Is it?

CHENDA. That's why we chose it.

KATE. It is a field worth tilling.

CHENDA. It is marked jet-black in Booth's map of London.

KATE. It has a higher percentage of poverty . . .

CHENDA. And crime . . .

KATE. Than any other equal area in the United Kingdom.

WREN. So that's the kind of place you lure my wife into!

KATE. Yes.

WREN. Well, you're a nice sort of governess, I don't think. (*A knock at the door. KATE opens it*)

KATE. Oh, it's you, Tom.

Enter OLIVER, carrying a teapot, and followed by JELICOE, MRS JELICOE and JENNY. JELICOE is dressed in a ragged frock coat; MRS JELICOE, a pretty tired young woman, in a green silk bodice; JENNY, aged thirteen, has her hair tied with a pale blue ribbon over one ear; she has bad teeth, a dirty face, dirty hands, a dirty frock with a frilled collar, and an elegant but battered hat.

OLIVER. (*Coldly*) Hullo, Wren, you here?

WREN. (*With mock enthusiasm*) Yes, I've come down

to lend a hand. (*They shake hands coldly*) What's this about?

OLIVER. (*Taking no notice of him*) Here's a case for you, Chenda. This woman's run short of money; the man's out of work and they want medicine for the baby. You might advance something on this teapot; I should say it's worth eighteen-pence.

WREN. Give it here; I'll value it for you.

OLIVER. Do you know anything about teapots?

WREN. Teapots? It's been the study of my life.

MRS JELlicOE. It's hall marked, sir; it was a wedding present.

WREN. (*Having examined the teapot*) Two-and-six.

OLIVER. There, there, don't cry. There's nothing humiliating in accepting charity.

MRS JELlicOE. It isn't charity, sir, it's a loan.

OLIVER. If I was in want I shouldn't be ashamed to ask.

JELlicOE. We didn't ask, sir; it was you suggested it.

MRS JELlicOE. But I don't know however we're going to pay it back. Augustus hasn't had a job for weeks.

CHENDA. (*Searching*) Where's my purse?

OLIVER. Look here, I tell you what. I'm in want of a parlourmaid. My housekeeper's very old, and we want somebody to run errands. Would you like to be my little parlourmaid, Jenny, and wear a cap?

JENNY. Not 'ahf!

OLIVER. Not what?

JELlicOE. She means very much, sir. It's an expression she's picked up at school.

CHENDA. There's the money.

OLIVER. (*Angrily*) Don't cry, Mrs Jellicoe! You'll

get your teapot back on Saturday when Jenny gets her wages.

MRS JELlicOE. Yes, sir, but whatever will people think of me ?

OLIVER. You needn't tell them.

MRS JELlicOE. It's very 'ard to 'ave no sympathy.

JELlicOE. She wasn't brought up to this, sir.

*Enter DINAH swiftly, holding JIM CROW by the arm.
MRS CARTWRIGHT follows.*

WREN. Hullo !

CHENDA. Why, it's that nice black man who brought up my luggage.

[Exeunt the JELlicOES

OLIVER. Well, Mrs Kippin, what do you want ?

DINAH. I want a plain answer to a plain question.

(To CHENDA) Did you give this man a shillin' this mornin', or didn't you ?

CHENDA. I did.

DINAH. I thought as much ; Polly see'd 'im spittin' on it. *(Struggling with him)* Now you give that up.

JIM. Aíta vau e hinaáro! *(the Raparoan for "I don't want to")* My tilling ; given me all for Dim Trow.

OLIVER. What right have you to his money ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. 'E's 'er payin' guest.

DINAH. *(Getting the shilling)* A lot o' payin' !

JIM. Aue! *(ah-oo-éh, the Raparoan for "Alas!")*

Everyt'ing very different in England from my tunty. In Raparoa my wife see man go by, she say : "Haere mai tamaá," come here eat. I sit at door of my house ; de sun he settin ; I say : "Haere mai taoto," come here sleep. Ole Dim Trow wish he was back in Raparoa wid de ole wife and little chillun.

(The Raparoans go on adopting children all their lives, and when they are old their houses are still running over with little boys and girls)

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Don't be 'ard on 'im, my dear.

DINAH. I've got my children to think of. Let 'im pay me 'is two weeks' board and lodgin'.

CHENDA. How much is it? I will pay.

DINAH. Thank you for nothing. I don't want no charity.

OLIVER. What are this man's means of subsistence? What's his work?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. He 'asn't got any work since his dog died.

OLIVER. Dog? What dog?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. It was a Battersea.

OLIVER. But what did he do with a dog?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Pore little thing. It used to 'ave to sit up on its 'ind-legs all day with a cap on its 'ead and 'oldin' up a gun at the corner of Bellingham Park. And if ever it dropped its gun 'e used to beat it with a stick. *(To CHENDA)* Crool, I call it.

OLIVER. Why don't you work like other people?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. *(Shifting her sympathies quickly from the dog to the man, as soon as he is attacked)*

'E's too old. They've got no stamina these haliens. Pore old man. 'Ow can 'e work when 'e can 'ardly stand up?

WREN. It's the way of the world. Mrs Kippin squeezed Jim Crow, and Jim Crow took it out of the dog.

DINAH. What do you come down 'ere for, all you toffs, hinterferin' and bullyin' us? Can't you find amusement enough in Belgrave Square but you must come badgerin' us? Smooth people ought to live in smooth places, not come smearin'

about down 'ere with their sympathy and their charity and their ain't they crool? 'Oo made us crool? I squeezed Jim Crow, did I? An' 'oo squeezed me? You're all of a pack, you are, you smooth people; you rob the pore and then come down 'ere to make out we're robbin' one another.

CHENDA. You're angry or you wouldn't talk like that, Mrs Kippin. I know quite well there are rich people who delight in making the poor suffer in order that they may grow still richer, but I myself would sooner die than be guilty of such a crime. Thank heaven, I am not a money-grubber or a usurer. I am here on purpose to save you from usury. If you want to borrow any money, you have only to . . .

OLIVER. I'll allow no such thing! You have hardships to bear no doubt, Mrs Kippin; but we all have our sorrows, and it is our duty to bear them without murmuring. Our Lord said that we should have the poor always with us, and I thank him daily for it. (MRS CARTWRIGHT *succumbs to the luxurious mood which sermons always induce in her*) Were there no poverty or suffering in the world, there would be no compassion or benevolence. It would be an unhappy world indeed. And when a lady, who might be enjoying the wealth which God has given her in a life of selfish ease, devotes her days to doing good works among you, it is the height of presumption and ingratitude to denounce her as your oppressor.

WREN. Oh, this is too sickening to hear you all patting yourselves on the back in this infernal way! Mrs Kippin is perfectly right. Chenda flatters herself that she's not a usurer. Why, she lives by usury and nothing else.

CHENDA. I do?

WREN. You live on the interest of your capital ; and what is interest but usury ?

OLIVER. Nonsense, Wren ; Chenda is simply living on her property.

WREN. Her property ! What does it mean, living on her property ? If a caterpillar lives on a leaf he eats it gradually away till there is nothing left. But property ! Oh, property is a magical thing ; you put it on a shelf and never touch it, but something emanates from it called interest and nourishes us. It was typified in the widow's cruse, which was evidently some joint stock limited concern. Capital is simply a means of slavery ; of itself it produces nothing ; we lend it to someone else, to miners or the like, and say, Work and sweat in the darkness that I may live in the light. Chenda, with her thousand or so a year, lives on what can be screwed out of fifty labourers working eight hours a day, and then complains that they have votes and she has none.

OLIVER. You talk as if she were spending it all in selfish pleasure.

WREN. If she spends it in charity, what difference does that make ? What right has she to make fifty poor devils work for her *protégés* ? What guarantee is there that the people she squeezes the money out of are any better off than the people she's trying to help ?

OLIVER. Oh, Wren was always like this. He could always argue the hind leg off a donkey at school debates.

WREN. While you sat eating biscuits in a corner. How can you have the face to pray God every morning to give you your daily bread, if you've secured it from men beforehand on a share-

certificate? Do you think it means, Give us this half year our half-yearly dividends?

OLIVER. Nonsense, nonsense.

WREN. Nobody borrows unless they are poor. When you invest your money in shares it's the poor workman that you lend it to, not the manager or the manufacturer. He's only your slave driver. You throw open the doors of the ergastulum and say, Go in and work for me. You hand the money over to him simply because you have not the skill to apportion the slaves their tasks or the energy to ply the lash on their backs yourself.

CHENDA. (*Crying*) It's a monstrous accusation. How can you be such a brute, Jimbo? Here's my heart bursting with pity for these poor people, and you accuse me of driving slaves with a whip!

DINAH. (*To WREN*) Ah, you're a nice brute of an 'usband, like the rest of 'em. Ho, I know what I'd like to do with you!

MRS CARTWRIGHT. Ah, she knows, poor thing! She's 'ad a bad 'usband 'erself.

DINAH. They expect everything comfortable at 'ome and their wives the pink, as if there was no work to do about the 'ouse. And not a hand's turn will they do themselves or even mind a baby; when they've laid their four hundred bricks a day and talked to fill the gasworks, they think they've done enough.

VOICE AT THE DOOR. Shop, Mrs Kippin!

DINAH. Ho, never a moment's peace from morning to night. I'm a comin', I'm a comin' . . .

[*Exeunt DINAH and MRS CARTWRIGHT*]

WREN. My darling Chenda, I wasn't accusing you of anything. But unless people know where their money comes from . . .

CHENDA. As if anybody knew! It is simply paid into the bank.

WREN. I bet you that Oliver knows no more than you do.

OLIVER. I have nothing to do with business. My life is dedicated to other things.

(A knock is heard at the door)

WREN. This general ignorance is the oddest feature of modern life. I knew a case of a temperance mission entirely supported by brewery shares.

Enter a DISTRICT MESSENGER BOY

MESSENGER. Is Mr Oliver here?

OLIVER. *(Taking letter from him)* Ah, it's from the lawyers, sent on from my rooms. *(He reads the letter to himself)* Burgess & Burgess resign the management of your Trust.

CHENDA. Hooray! Then we can go to your clever friend.

OLIVER. Yes.

CHENDA. We shall get more money.

OLIVER. I hope so.

WREN. *(Looking at his watch)* Hullo! one o'clock. Goodness, how time flies.

CHENDA. Are you going anywhere?

WREN. Nothing that matters. I can't bear to leave you . . .

CHENDA. Oh, I'm all right.

WREN. Well . . .

CHENDA. Honest Injun!

WREN. Then good-bye, my love. *(Kissing her)* I'll come and see how you're getting on to-morrow.

CHENDA. Where are you going?

WREN. I've got a meeting at the Fabians.

[Exit

CHENDA. Now, let's get to work. I want Jimbo to see what *I* can do!

(CHENDA, OLIVER and KATE settle down with pen and paper to devise schemes for the salvation of the parish)

CURTAIN

ACT II

The following Saturday. The same scene. CHENDA'S and KATE'S hats hang on pegs on the wall. KATE is washing up the breakfast things. The staircase door is open; by it stand JELlicOE, holding a silver sugar basin, and MRS JELlicOE, rocking a baby in her arms.

MRS JELlicOE. We'd never have come again, but the baby was ill. We were between the door and the wall as you might say.

(A pause, during which CHENDA is heard sweeping in the bedroom)

JELlicOE. It's only till the afternoon, when Jenny'll have her wages.

(Another pause, sweeping)

MRS JELlicOE. Five shillings isn't much, but it's very kind of Mr Oliver.

KATE. Well, I'll ask Mrs Wren. Chenda!

(A bumping noise is heard on the stairs)

PONTIFEX. *(Without)* Ha! ha! Mrs Potter, good mornin' to you.

MRS JELlicOE. *(Shrieking faintly)* Ah!

KATE. What is it?

JELlicOE. It's Mr Pontifex, the rent collector from Palmer's, with the wooden leg. It's always a shock to Mrs Jellicoe to hear him.

MRS JELlicOE. They might get a rent collector with the usual number of legs.

KATE. Chenda!

Enter CHENDA from the bedroom, simply dressed, with her sleeves tucked up, holding a broom.

CHENDA. Good morning. *(To JELlicOE)* Is this your baby?

JELlicOE. Whose did you think, mum ?

CHENDA. Oh, isn't Me a twubs !

MRS JELlicOE. We all think he's so like Shakespeare.

KATE. Has he any teeth ?

JELlicOE. None, I am thankful to say, miss. Mrs Jellicoe is a delicate woman, and I think I may truly say it would have been the last straw for her to have had a child that age with teeth.

KATE. Mrs Jellicoe wants to pawn this sugar basin to get some medicine for baby.

CHENDA. Oh, bother the pawnshop !

JELlicOE. It's hall marked, mum.

CHENDA. Here, quick ! Take the money and go to Boots. No, no, put the sugar basin in your pocket.

KATE. Oh, Chenda, it's such bad political economy. Tom says that . . .

CHENDA. Oh, bother Tom. At least, you know what I mean. I can't have the child suffering because his elders have theories about political economy.

JELlicOE and MRS JELlicOE. Thank you, mum. It's only a loan, mum. (*They peer out and go, leaving the door ajar*)

KATE. My dear Chenda, you'll soon be ruined at this rate.

CHENDA. What do I care ? Besides, I shall have more money now.

KATE. Did Tom manage to get it after all ?

CHENDA. Yes, he transferred the Trust to Mr Nix's hands, and he has promised to let me have fifty pounds more every year than Burgess & Burgess did.

KATE. But still . . .

(*The JELlicOES run in again : the sound of the rent collector's wooden leg pursuing them is heard*)

JELlicOE. It's Mr Pontifex again.

MRS JELlicOE. It's Palmer's man. Here, quick, let me take it. (JELlicOE gives her the money)

Enter PONTIFEX

PONTIFEX. (*Saluting*) Excuse me, miss. I'm after one of my customers. Well, Mrs Jellicoe, what about last week's rent?

MRS JELlicOE. Oh, Mr Pontifex, I 'aven't nothing to give you.

PONTIFEX. What's that in your 'and? You give it up or I'll distraint the baby.

MRS JELlicOE. 'Ow can you be so 'eartless, Mr Pontifex?

PONTIFEX. (*Signing receipt and sticking it into JELlicOE's breast pocket*) There! (*Crossing to KATE*) Excuse me, miss, can I have a word with you? (*He talks with her*)

MRS JELlicOE. (*Rocking her baby*) 'Ush! 'ush! I can't give you no paregoric, little love; they've took my money from me.

(JELlicOE *wistfully pulls out the sugar basin from his pocket*)

CHENDA. (*Motioning to him to put it back, and putting money impatiently into MRS JELlicOE's hand*) There, there! (*She pushes them towards the door*)

JELlicOE and MRS JELlicOE. If it wasn't for you, mum. It isn't myself I care about. Palmer's are very 'ard on us.

CHENDA. (*Hustling them out*) Yes, yes.

[*Exeunt JELlicOE and MRS JELlicOE still murmuring complaint and gratitude.*]

CHENDA *shuts the door behind them*

PONTIFEX. (*Ending his conversation with KATE*) I

know it's only a trifle to you, miss, but I thought you'd like to know first as a matter of courtesy.

CHENDA. What is it?

KATE. All the rents in the block are being put up.

CHENDA. Put up? These poor, poor people's rents?

KATE. Sixpence a week.

PONTIFEX. (*To CHENDA*) A small advance, miss.

(*To KATE*) I will ask you not to mention the matter before collectin' time, as otherwise some of the lodgers might be tempted to do a mike while my back was turned. [*Exit PONTIFEX*]

KATE. Fancy the rents being . . .

CHENDA. Don't tell Jimbo.

KATE. Why?

CHENDA. What *can* be the reason?

KATE. I wonder!

CHENDA. Palmer's are at the bottom of this. (*Taking broom*) Oh, how purposeless seem all the sufferings of the poor!

KATE. There's a purpose in everything if we only knew.

CHENDA. Wherever I turn I hear the name of Palmer's, Palmer's, Palmer's (*A modest knock is heard at the door*), like some terrible man-eating tiger. (*CHENDA opens the door*)

Enter DAVENIL, aged twenty-two, in tall hat and frock coat, very correct; carrying a draft lease in his hand. His manner varies between schoolboy chivalrousness and business-like severity.

DAVENIL. Does Mrs Wren live here?

CHENDA. Yes.

DAVENIL. Would you kindly tell her that Mr Davenil wishes to see her? There's my card.

KATE. Who is it ?

CHENDA. Mr Davenil.

DAVENIL. (*To KATE*) I wished to see Mrs Wren.
Have I the pleasure ?

KATE. No, this is Mrs Wren.

DAVENIL. Oh, I say, I am so awfully sorry.

CHENDA. You took me for the maid ?

DAVENIL. No, really. I assure you it wasn't anything in your . . . I should have known you anywhere for . . .

KATE. Won't you sit down ?

CHENDA. You came on business ?

DAVENIL. I came about the transfer of the lease you were asking for, for Glengarry House opposite.

CHENDA. It's all settled, isn't it ?

DAVENIL. Oh, quite, as far as we are concerned. There are only some formalities. (*He begins to open the lease*) I was down on business with my uncle at the agent's.

CHENDA. What agent's ?

DAVENIL. The house-agent's. There wasn't much for me to do ; not for the moment, I mean, of course ; so they sent me round about the lease.

CHENDA. Have you come from Palmer's ?

DAVENIL. Yes, they're the agents that do our business down here.

CHENDA. Ah ! (*She and KATE exchange glances*)

DAVENIL. There are some covenants in the original lease . . .

CHENDA. We were talking of Palmer's just before your arrival.

KATE. We haven't a very high opinion of Palmer's here.

DAVENIL. I say, I'm awfully sorry. They've not done anything bad, I hope ?

CHENDA. They are extremely oppressive to the poor

people who live in these houses. Their rent collector was here only a minute ago, wringing the last farthing out of a poor woman. Do you know the man? He's an old soldier called Pontifex.

DAVENIL. Is that the man with a game leg, a lame leg, I mean? (CHENDA *nods*) I saw him this morning.

CHENDA. I wish you'd speak to him about it.

DAVENIL. Oh, certainly, I'll make a point of it. My uncle would be awfully vexed. But of course I'm not in Palmer's firm.

CHENDA. Aren't you?

DAVENIL. I hope you didn't take me for a house-agent!

CHENDA. Well, you took me for a housemaid, you know.

DAVENIL. (*Very friendly and confiding*) I say, I am so awfully sorry; it was all the broom. I'm a lawyer; I'm in my uncle's office. We do a lot of business with Palmer's.

CHENDA. They're very sharp in business.

DAVENIL. Oh, you have to be sharp in business, you know; you'd be astonished. (*Suddenly remembering what he is there for*) About this transfer now. There are some formal covenants in the original lease that you must agree to. (*Reading*) The house is to be used only as a residential dwelling.

CHENDA. Yes, yes.

DAVENIL. Not for the purposes of any trade.

CHENDA. Did you think I was going to set up a shop?

DAVENIL. It *is* rather amusing, isn't it?

CHENDA. Are covenants always things like that?

DAVENIL. It's only a form you know, but we're obliged to get your consent. (*Reading*) Nor as a

factory, laboratory, workshop, smithy, brewery (*Looking up and smiling*), bakehouse, or other place of manufacture.

CHENDA. Of course ; as if I would !

KATE. What an idea !

DAVENIL. Nor as a hospital, sickhouse, nursing home, clinique or sanatorium.

CHENDA. (*Indignantly*) What ?

KATE. Oh dear, oh dear !

DAVENIL. Nor as a hospital, sickhouse . . .

CHENDA. Why, what right have you to dictate how I'm going to use my house ?

DAVENIL. But these are the covenants.

CHENDA. You can call them what you like.

DAVENIL. I'm obliged . . .

CHENDA. It's a gross impertinence.

DAVENIL. I say, I'm awfully sorry.

CHENDA. It's most infernal cheek.

DAVENIL. But unless you consent, don't you see, our clients won't agree to the transfer.

CHENDA. I never heard anything so inquisitorial.

DAVENIL. It's always done.

CHENDA. (*Resolving on a breach of covenant*) Oh, if that's the case.

KATE. (*Alarmed at CHENDA's known want of honesty and coming round to her side*) Chenda !

CHENDA. Don't interrupt.

KATE. But . . .

CHENDA. Don't be silly, Kate.

DAVENIL. Then you consent ?

CHENDA. Yes, yes, I consent.

DAVENIL. I'm so glad ; I was sure there wouldn't be any difficulty. There's nothing else. Then I'll just get this thing finished off at Palmer's and send it round. Good-day, madam, good-day. (*Bowing*)

CHENDA. (*Holding out her hand*) Good-bye, Mr Davenil.

DAVENIL. (*Shaking hands*) You're very good. (*Glancing at the broom*) I do hope you'll forgive me. I'm so glad to have made your acquaintance. I've heard of you from my cousin, Miss Fortescue, who works down here too.

CHENDA. Oh yes, at the St Joseph's College Mission, of course.

DAVENIL. Yes, I was up at Joe's myself. I do think it's so awfully decent of you to do this sort of thing, don't you know. I only wish I could do something to help. Not that it's half as bad as people make out. I was surprised to see what jolly big streets there are, with shops and trees and things. It isn't really so very different from the West End.

CHENDA. Oh, it's not all misery.

DAVENIL. I like to see the little kiddies playing hopscotch or dancing to the organ.

CHENDA. But it's a sad life when they grow up, Mr Davenil.

DAVENIL. Why, if I might suggest, when you've really settled into Glengarry House, you might get up some acting for the parents. That's what they do at the Joe's Mission. There's a room over there (*indicating Glengarry House*) with folding doors that'd just do. I'm very fond of acting myself; only small parts, of course.

CHENDA. I think it's a splendid idea, Mr Davenil.

DAVENIL. (*Embarrassed*) I don't know if you collect subscriptions and that sort of thing.

CHENDA. Oh dear, yes. Our Children's Clothing Club is glad of any contribution.

DAVENIL. Well, if you don't mind I should like to leave something. (*Takes out a sovereign and*

looks about uneasily. CHENDA *holds out her hand discreetly as if for a tip.* DAVENIL *laughs and puts it on a corner of the table*) Well, good-morning. I must be getting back to my work. (*Renewed hand-shaking*)

CHENDA. I hope you'll look in again some time, if ever your business brings you down this way.

DAVENIL. May I really? Thank you so much. I tell you what, I'll look in later for the lease when you've signed it . . . if I have time, that is.

[*Exit DAVENIL*

CHENDA. What a nice boy! (*Taking the sovereign from the table and putting it in a cash-box in one of the upper drawers of the bureau*)

KATE. Very nice. But, Chenda! how could you agree to those wicked covenants?

(*CHENDA washes at the sink and makes herself tidy*)

CHENDA. There was nothing else to be done.

KATE. But the whole point of the Settlement's gone now.

CHENDA. He forced me.

KATE. It says, not as a hospital, sickhouse, or sanatorium.

CHENDA. Well, I'm not going to turn it into a hospital. But I suppose, if it's my house, I can choose my visitors without consulting the house-agents; and if they don't happen to be quite well, who's going to turn them out I'd like to know?

KATE. But surely . . .

CHENDA. It's too late to give the house up now. Everything's ordered from the Semparatus Company for twelve o'clock. They've promised to have the place ready by three.

KATE. Fancy! Really ready to move in in three hours?

CHENDA. Yes, that's their special line at the Semparatus. They're Emergency Hospital Furnishers. Semparatus is a Latin word meaning "always ready." The suction desiccator goes in first, and the carpets and furniture follow right on its heels all complete. The beds are simply ducks. The head lifts up, so that you don't have to shove a lot of stuffy and probably septic pillows behind their backs when they're going to eat anything. And you'll love the washstands. The basins turn right upside down when they're not in use. That's the latest thing. It's most dangerous to leave basins like we do; they're simply hotbeds for hatching out young germs. (CHENDA settles herself in an armchair with a magazine. A knock at the door) We're far too careless about these things. . . .

(KATE opens the door)

KATE. Oh, here's Tom. (KATE goes to her breakfast things)

Enter OLIVER in a cassock and mortar-board; he nods and closes the door cautiously behind him.

OLIVER. Good-morning, good-morning. I say, I've found out an awful thing. I've just been to see Mrs Cartwright.

CHENDA. Well?

OLIVER. You know, that nice, respectable old woman who comes to the evening services. Well, I'm afraid she drinks. (*This sensational announcement creates none of the expected stir*)

KATE. Is that all?

CHENDA. Of course she does.

KATE. Why, didn't you know that, Tom?

CHENDA. Who wouldn't under the circumstances?

OLIVER. Chenda!

CHENDA. I should.

OLIVER. You're getting to talk like Wren, Chenda.

I hadn't the faintest suspicion. She was out last night on the spree. Her husband rose too, as if by magic, from his bed and joined her.

CHENDA. Christian Science!

OLIVER. It seems she won a bet about a horse-race.

CHENDA. What, the Grand National?

OLIVER. Yes, that was the name of it.

CHENDA. Then she *did* back Caper Sauce!

OLIVER. You knew about it?

CHENDA. Why, I gave her the tip.

OLIVER. You did?

CHENDA. Everybody was ramming Little Arthur down one's throat, but I knew he couldn't stay it out. You've only got to look at his legs.

OLIVER. You dare to encourage them?—to encourage *my* parishioners . . .

CHENDA. Oh, Tom, I'm sick of this anti-betting and drinking business. It's all very well for us with our comfortable homes, but just think what life is for the mass of these people! Why, unless they had their glass of beer of an evening, and backed a horse now and then, they'd simply go mad.

OLIVER. Flinging away money . . .

CHENDA. Oh, if they back the wrong horses.

OLIVER. Day after day.

CHENDA. Oh, that is rot too. But the Grand National! No, hang it, Tom.

OLIVER. Once an evil, always an evil.

CHENDA. Well, I can't argue, but you should hear Jimbo! He's A1 on beer and betting as recreations for the poor. I'll turn him on to you.

OLIVER. I shall not listen to him. And, by the by, I'm glad you reminded me. It's nearly a week since you came down here, and he's been here every day, keeping you from your work.

CHENDA. Why, he's the greatest help!

OLIVER. Kate doesn't find him so.

KATE. I never complained.

OLIVER. Yes, you did.

KATE. Oh, Tom!

OLIVER. Well, I find him a nuisance. I shall have to forbid him the parish.

CHENDA. Oh, Tom!

OLIVER. If he comes down again he'll have to work.

(*A knock at the door. KATE opens it. Enter JENNY dressed as a parlourmaid; she bobs and goes to OLIVER*)

JENNY. Please, sir, yere's a telegram.

CHENDA. Why, it's little Jenny Jellicoe!

JENNY. Ain't I a treat!

OLIVER. Behave yourself, Jenny. (*Opening telegram*) Aha! here's good news this time.

CHENDA. What is it?

OLIVER. (*Reading*) "Have taken steps provide further money required. Nix."

CHENDA. Then I shall have my money!

OLIVER. I wrote last night. This is what I call doing things in a business-like way. Very different from Burgess & Burgess.

CHENDA. Oh, hooray, Kate.

OLIVER. Well, Jenny, what do you want?

JENNY. Oh, please, sir, may I run up and show myself to Byby?

OLIVER. (*Giving her money*) You'd better take your mother your wages.

JENNY. Thank you, sir.

CHENDA. Would you like sixpence to buy sweeties with?

JENNY. (*Taking the sixpence*) Not 'ahf!

KATE. But are you having *more* money from your Trust?

CHENDA. Yes, a second go; another fifty.

KATE. Fancy!

CHENDA. We didn't ask for nearly enough at first. What with the children's clothing club, the reredos, the choir, the surplices . . . (*OLIVER smiles*) This second fifty will all go towards endowing the Settlement. Oh, you have no notion how business-like Tom and I are getting. I signed dozens of papers yesterday, and neither Tom nor I have a notion what they were all about. . . . Oh, by the by, Tom, have you heard? It's a good thing we're here to help.

OLIVER. What's gone wrong?

CHENDA. Palmer's are raising the rents of all the lodgings in the block.

OLIVER. Raising the rents? What a monstrous thing!

KATE. We were wondering what the reason could be.

CHENDA. Do you think, perhaps, it has anything to do with the Insurance Act?

OLIVER. Kate, let me see your district accounts before I go. (*KATE gives them to OLIVER, who sits at the table and examines them*)

KATE. You don't want me?

OLIVER. No.

KATE. Then I'll finish the bedroom.

[*Exit*]

OLIVER. Raising the rents ? I shall certainly enter a vigorous protest.

Enter WREN; carrying daffodils.

WREN. Cuckoo !

CHENDA. Jimbo !

WREN. (*Kissing CHENDA, then drawing back and spreading out his arms*) The Graeco-Roman style !
(*CHENDA imitates him, and they come to grips in a hearty embrace*)

OLIVER. Well, Wren ?

CHENDA. What ducks of daffys ! You *are* a pet to bring them.

WREN. (*Drawing them away*) Who said they were for you ?

CHENDA. (*Mischievously*) They're not for Tom, are they ?

WREN. Yes, I'm going to strew them on the ground before him as he walks about the parish.

OLIVER. What brings you down ?

WREN. One would think you weren't pleased to see me.

CHENDA. I invited him, Tom ; I want to talk to him.

OLIVER. Talk away, you won't disturb me.

(*OLIVER studies the district accounts*)

WREN. The daffodils are for Kate.

CHENDA. Why not for me ?

WREN. Because you're coming home.

CHENDA. Oh, I can't, Jimbo, I can't. There's too much to do. Every day I mean to come back, and every day something new turns up that must be done. And now I'm moving into the Settlement.

WREN. But it isn't ready.

CHENDA. It will be in a jiffy.

OLIVER. (*At the window*) There's a van unloading things at Glengarry House.

CHENDA. It's the Semparatus (*Going to the window. Delightedly*) There's the suction desiccator. There are the beds. Oh, joy, hooray! Isn't it splendid, Jimbo?

WREN. What will Jane think of me? Every morning I say, "Jane, to-day we will kill the fatted calf; I'm expecting the Prodigal home at half-past seven." Every evening I return crest-fallen to eat the fatted calf alone. "Where's the missis, sir?" says Jane. "Eating husks among the swine, Jane," I reply.

OLIVER. Don't be profane.

WREN. Oh, I didn't mean you. (*Going to the window*) I'd be ashamed to have a Settlement in such a hideous building.

CHENDA. Glengarry House? It's just the same style as this we're in.

WREN. Red brick picked out with black and yellow. I suppose it's the Glengarry tartan.

(*A knock at the door. OLIVER opens it. An OFFICE BOY appears in the doorway: then a POSTMAN*)

BOY. A note from Palmer's, sir.

OLIVER. Thank you.

POSTMAN. Parcel, sir. (*Holding out a very big brown-paper parcel*)

OLIVER. (*Walking away*) Put it on the chair. (*He opens the envelope, reads the covering letter, and looks cursorily at the document enclosed*)

CHENDA. (*To WREN*) All your gloomy forebodings of what a mess I should make of it down here have come to naught. My policy of *doing* things has borne fruit on every side. The pawnshop has been the greatest success.

WREN. Has it?

CHENDA. Customers came pouring in. Our limited staff could hardly cope with the business.

WREN. And have they redeemed their pledges?

CHENDA. Not yet. They're coming for them this morning. All this week affluence has reigned where poverty stalked before. The children have known what plenty is for the first time in their lives, and their parents have been entertaining one another with high teas and all sorts of jollifications.

WREN. (*Laughing*) Splendid!

OLIVER. Come, come, there's nothing to laugh about. Here's something you've got to sign, Chenda. (*Showing her the document just received*) It's from Jimmy Nix; he's round at Palmer's. I don't entirely understand it, but you may be sure it's all right.

WREN. Let *me* have a look.

OLIVER. (*Ironically*) What will the sage make of it? (*WREN takes it, grimaces, and hands it back*) By the by, we were talking about you.

WREN. Something pleasant, I'll be bound.

OLIVER. If you come here, you must work.

WREN. Come on! What shall it be? Give me the broom. (*Takes broom*)

OLIVER. Don't be funny about it; I'm serious. Come and witness Chenda's signature to these papers.

WREN. What an unpractical chap you are, Squog. Don't you know that a husband can't witness his wife's signature?

OLIVER. You always have some excuse.

CHENDA. He's quite right. We must call Kerry. Kerry!

OLIVER. And I wish you wouldn't call me Squog. We're not schoolboys any longer.

WREN. No, sah!

(*He careers about the room, playing soldiers with the broom and singing!*)

Enter KATE

KATE. (*Dryly*) Oh, James, you here?

WREN. Yes. (*Presenting arms to her*) Oliver asked me down to give an address to the mothers. It's all very well, you know, but you'd be sorry if you missed my prattle.

OLIVER. (*To CHENDA*) Sit down here. (*Giving her a chair at the kitchen table*)

CHENDA. (*Puts broom away and sits down*) Where do I sign?

OLIVER. You must read them through first.

CHENDA. What a bore. (*Reading*) Whereas, very big, by an indenture, very small, made on the 17th April 1866, between Robert Carr of the first part, Wilhelmina Angela Brunch afterwards Boodle of the second—what a name!

OLIVER. Go on.

CHENDA. And Henry Seaton Brocklethwaite of the third.

KATE. (*Looking at the parcel left by the POSTMAN*) It's the children's clothes from Anderwicks'.

CHENDA. Hooray, they've come!

OLIVER. Sit down, Chenda, and go on with the papers.

CHENDA. Blow the papers! I'll sign anything. Here goes!

OLIVER. Stop! You must come and stand here while she signs, Kate.

KATE. They've sent the wrong stuff for the petticoats. We said cottonette.

OLIVER. That will do afterwards. You must witness Chenda's signature.

KATE. (*Still the other side of the room*) All right, I'm witnessing.

OLIVER. No, you must see her sign. It says "in the presence of."

(KATE crosses; WREN examines the clothes)

CHENDA. (*Signing and delivering*) I deliver this as my act and deed.

(KATE signs)

WREN. They look very expensive.

CHENDA. That shows all you know about it. They cost next to nothing.

WREN. Then they were certainly made by sweated labour.

(A knock)

OLIVER. Stop fooling, Wren, and see who that is.

(KATE and CHENDA take the clothes to the little table and sit. WREN opens the door, peeps out, and retreats. Enter a crowd of lodgers with bundles, which they hide behind their backs. The crowd, in their very old clothes, present a pervading tone of yellow)

OLIVER. What do you want?

CROWD. (*Hesitating*) We pledged some things 'ere Monday last.

OLIVER. Of course, it's Saturday. Now then, girls, these people want their pledges back.

CHENDA. Oh, bother!

KATE. We're busy.

CHENDA. Make Jimbo do it.

OLIVER. He'll make a mess of it.

CHENDA. Jimbo's very good at that sort of thing.

WREN. It's agin the law. I've not got a licence.

OLIVER. No more excuses.

WREN. Come along then. (*To CROWD*) You line up there. Where are the things?

OLIVER. Here they are.

WREN. Put 'em on the table.

KATE. (*Offering an exercise-book to WREN*) Here's the list we made of them.

OLIVER. (*Taking it*) All right, I'll explain it to him. You see, here are the names of the people who pledged the things. Here's the price they got for them. Three shillings, four shillings, five shillings, six. . . . There must be some mistake. They seem to go up in order.

WREN All right, old chap. I can read.

(CHENDA *laughs at OLIVER'S discomfiture, and whispers to KATE*)

KATE. (*Tactfully helping TOM out of a difficulty*) Oh, please come and help us, Tom. We're in such a muddle. (*KATE rises and gives OLIVER her chair. CHENDA and KATE consult him. He looks round from time to time at WREN*)

WREN. Now then, walk up! Walk up! Advances from half-a-crown to fifty thousand pounds on simple note of hand. Perfect secrecy guaranteed. Now then, what's your name?

KATE and CHENDA. (*Murmuring from time to time*) Do you think these little pyjamas would be suitable for Sarah's boy? These two little blouses would do for the Heavenly Twins. It would be rather warm for playing in the streets, etc.

WOMAN. Mrs Job, sir.

WREN. Ah, Mrs Job? Let's see. No. 5. Eight and fourpence. Be patient, Mrs Job. Did you get eight and fourpence for this ragged old coat?

WOMAN. Yes, sir.

WREN. Is your husband going to a party?

WOMAN. It ain't his best, sir.

WREN. Not his best? I'm glad to hear it. Well, where's your eight and fourpence?

WOMAN. I've not got it, sir.

WREN. Not got it, eh? Then what on earth have you come here for? (*Holding up a little pair of knickerbockers*) Is this his too?

FAT WOMAN. No, sir, that's mine.

WREN. Yours?

(*Laughter*)

CHENDA. What nonsense is Jimbo talking?

OLIVER. Remember, this may be very amusing for you, Wren, but it's no joke for the poor people whose things they are.

WREN. You hear that? You're not to make me laugh. Now whose is it really?

FAT WOMAN. (*Showing a boy of fifteen*) It's my little boy's, sir.

WREN. His?

FAT WOMAN. Yes, sir; he's growed out of 'em.

WREN. What, since Monday?

FAT WOMAN. No, sir; mostly before.

WREN. Well, where's your three and threepence?

FAT WOMAN. I've not got it, sir.

WREN. What, you've not got it either? Has anybody here got any money? (*Silence*) It's all right, I'm not going to borrow it.

CROWD. I've not got none. Wish I had! We've none of us got no money.

WREN. Then what on earth have you all come here for?

CROWD. (*Suddenly unwrapping and displaying broken utensils of every sort, such as a jug without a handle, a lamp without a top, a bicycle wheel without a tyre, an old rat-trap, an old dustpan, an old broom, a tall hat with the top out, a battered fireguard, a broken umbrella*) I thought, sir, as I might get a little something on this. I didn't know but what . . .

WREN. (*Stands on a chair*) Do you think we're

stocking a Universal Providing Store ? I see how it is. Last Monday you brought everything that you'd worn out or grown out of and didn't happen to have thrown away ; and now, encouraged by success, you've been raking over the borough dust-heaps, thinking that any trash would do for us.

CHENDA. (*Crossing*) But, dear Jimbo, it isn't really a bit like that.

WREN. What I like is the exactness with which the prices have been worked out.

Enter JELlicOE, MRS JELlicOE, and MRS CARTWRIGHT, in a garish new hat.

CHENDA. We really did our very best, and some of them are quite genuine. We were regular Shyllocks. Ah ! there's Mrs Jellicoe come to get her teapot back, I'm sure.

OLIVER. (*To KATE*) I knew how it would be if Wren had any hand in it. (*Crossing angrily to MRS CARTWRIGHT, and pointing at her hat*) What is the meaning of this ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. My 'at, sir ? I won it in a raffle, sir.

OLIVER. Do you know what happened to Sapphira ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. (*Quite unaware that Sapphira is a Biblical personage*) She didn't start, sir.

(*OLIVER turns angrily away*)

WREN. (*Who has been inquiring into MRS JELlicOE's case*) Ho ! This is a genuine case. There's your teapot, Mrs Jellicoe.

MRS JELlicOE. What shall I do with the half-crown, sir ?

WREN. Leave it on the table as a nest-egg. It's a curiosity in its way.

OLIVER. Chenda, this pawning business of yours must stop. Wren and these people between them have made it a perfect farce.

*Enter DINAH, carrying a red cap and toy gun.
JIM CROW follows her.*

OLIVER. What do you want ?

DINAH. I want to pawn my lodger's things.

MRS CARTWRIGHT. It's 'is little dawg's cap and gun.

OLIVER. You can't.

DINAH. Why can't I ?

OLIVER. Mrs Wren isn't going to lend any more money.

DINAH. Ho, not to the likes of me, I suppose ?

OLIVER. Not to anyone.

DINAH. Not even for a proper pledge ? (*Holding out the cap and gun*)

OLIVER. No.

DINAH. Ho, and she lends to other folk without a pledge at all.

OLIVER. She does not.

DINAH. She does.

OLIVER. Who's had money without a pledge ?

DINAH. Mrs Jellicoe did. Didn't she, mother ?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. I don't know, my dear. Did she ?

OLIVER. (*To CHENDA*) Is that true ?

CHENDA. No, it's not true.

DINAH. It is true.

CHENDA. Mrs Jellicoe was lent the money for a silver sugar-basin.

OLIVER. Where's the silver sugar-basin ?

CHENDA. She's taking care of the silver sugar-basin herself.

DINAH. There !

CHENDA. (*To WREN*) I thought that, as it was her own . . .

(*DINAH disappears in the crowd and goes out unobserved*)

OLIVER. It's a monstrous thing. The moment my back is turned everyone deceives me.

(*The JELICOES go out hastily*)

CROWD. (*To the JELICOES*) Look out. 'Urry up. 'E'll catch you.

OLIVER. Where is Mrs Jellicoe ?

CROWD. She just went out beyind yer back, sir.

OLIVER. Then I must go and get the sugar-basin myself.

(*A bumping noise is heard outside. There is panic and murmuring in the crowd*)

OLIVER. What's the matter ?

CROWD. It's Mr Pontifex, sir, after 'is rents.

PONTIFEX *raps on the door with his stick and enters.*

OLIVER. (*To CHENDA*) Mind, you're on your honour while I'm gone.

PONTIFEX. (*Saluting OLIVER*) Good-mornin', sir. Fine day, sir.

OLIVER. Nonsense ! It's raining. [*Exit OLIVER*]

PONTIFEX. So this is where everyone's got to. Mrs Wren, there's the lease from Palmer's ; you've got to sign it.

CHENDA. Oh, thank you.

PONTIFEX. (*To CROWD*) What are you all doin' here in the lady's room ?

CROWD. We've got as much right as you.

KATE. They're my guests. I'm very glad to see them here.

PONTIFEX. But I wanted to collect their rents, miss.

KATE. Pray do !

PONTIFEX. Well, if you have no objection, miss.
(CHENDA joins KATE and WREN at the table. PONTIFEX stumps up and down amid a confused murmuring of voices. He takes money and gives receipts)

PONTIFEX. Morning, Mrs Job. You're never at 'ome on rent day I notice. Well, Mrs Cartwright, I'd like a spoonful of your Caper Sauce. (*To a little man who is going out*) Wo there, my beauty, you've forgotten something.

LITTLE MAN. What do you want with me?

PONTIFEX. What did ye think? That I was goin' to recruit ye for the Grenadiers?

LITTLE MAN. I can't pay.

PONTIFEX. (*Shaking him*) You're jinglin' all over.

LITTLE MAN. You might let me off for a day or two.

PONTIFEX. You got the tip for the Grand Nash.

LITTLE MAN. I know of a job if only I can get a decent soot o' clothes.

PONTIFEX. They'll always give you tick at Poole's.

WREN. (*At the window*) There's another beastly cartload.

CHENDA. (*At the window*) How ripping! (*Coming down*) I must sign the lease.

DINAH. (*Entering*) What have you done with my keys, mother?

MRS CARTWRIGHT. I'm sure I don't know, my dear.

PONTIFEX. Ha, how's dividends, Mrs Kippin? Is the Kaffir Circus goin' strong?

(*An excited group forms round PONTIFEX and DINAH*)

CHENDA. (*Reading*) Whereas . . . Why, it's the same as the other one. (*Signing*) Why do I have to sign the same thing twice?

DINAH. (*Loud, answering PONTIFEX*) It's a shyme, I say!

CHENDA. There's Mrs Kippin quarrelling again. I deliver this as my act and deed.

(KATE signs. *The group about DINAH and PONTIFEX opens suddenly*)

DINAH. Put my rent up? Seven-and-six for a place I wouldn't keep a cat in?

PONTIFEX. No, you'd put him in your sausages, I suppose, same as you did old Gollywog's dog.

(*Indicating JIM CROW with his thumb*)

DINAH. It oughtn't to be more than four by rights.

PONTIFEX. Oughtn't it? Well, it's seven-and-six for the future. And if it's not paid, out you go. Yes; that's the latest news, ladies and gentlemen. All the rents are put up sixpence a week.

DINAH. Strike me pink, that's not the truth?

PONTIFEX. That's the straight griffin.

CROWD. Shyme! I never 'eard of such a thing! Five bob for my little 'ole? I can't do it. I can't afford it, Mr Pontifex, indeed I can't.

LITTLE MAN. I can't do it. I'd blow my brains out first.

PONTIFEX. *They* wouldn't make much mess.

DINAH. I can't pay more, and I won't.

PONTIFEX. Then out you go.

DINAH. 'Ow can I go? I'd lose my customers.

PONTIFEX. An' a good thing for their 'ealth.

DINAH. (*Pouncing on JIM CROW*) You bring me that 'ahf-a-crown before the day's over or hout's the word! Mark what I say!

JIM. Aue! (*Ah-oo-éh*).

DINAH. D'ye think I'm going' to keep you till Doomsday eatin' yer ugly yead off on the nod?

[*Exit DINAH*]

CHENDA. Oh, what a triply-dyed villain the owner of this house must be. What? he knows how these poor creatures live here in misery from hand to mouth . . .

WREN. Don't abuse him, my dear. He's a good man of business, that's all.

CHENDA. Jimbo, don't talk nonsense; you know perfectly well that he's an unmitigated scoundrel.

WREN. Not a bit of it. He's doing what anybody else would do in his place. I do it, you do it, Oliver does it.

CHENDA. How can you, Jimbo? It's a perfect lie.

KATE. Tom would scorn to do such a thing!

(*Half the crowd form a group round CHENDA, the rest round WREN*)

CHENDA. (*Quickly*) Oh, if the rich people who are responsible for this could but see the misery which they inflict!

CROWD. Ah! I wish they could. It'd do 'em good to try it for a bit.

WREN. (*Quickly*) A landlord is a kind of safety-valve devised by providence to prevent misguided philanthropists from raising the working classes out of the poverty which befits them.

(*WREN continues his speech in dumb show*)

CROWD. 'Ear, 'ear! 'Ooray!

CHENDA. (*Interrupting*) The criminal classes do not live in Bethnal Green; they live in Belgrave Square. (*As before*)

WREN. The landlord simply raises his rent and gets ten shillings where he got only five before.

CROWD. 'Ear, 'ear!

(*JIM CROW takes the half-crown from the table and goes out*)

CHENDA. But at least we can keep our hands clean by refusing to be tools of the oppressors.

PONTIFEX. Look 'ere, I've 'ad enough of this. I'm not goin' to stand 'ere and be talked at any longer.

WREN. My good sir, nobody's talking at you.

PONTIFEX. 'Ow would you like to be talked at ?

WREN. I was quite impersonal.

PONTIFEX. Oh yes, I know your sort in the army ; always hargufyin' and never wash. Do you suppose it's for amusement I spend my day goin' round collectin' their sticky shillin's ? Do you think I pouch 'em for myself ? Do I live in Belgrave Square ? Do I drink dry champagne ? What's a soldier to do once he's left the army, I should like to know ?

CROWD. Ah ! 'Oo ! 'Ark at 'im. You don't care whether we've got the money or not. It's all py, py, py with you. You think because you go to the war and blow yourself out all day with chocolate and tinned meat on the 'Eath in Africa and then you come 'ome and they call you a Nero, you think you can treat us as if we was a lot of bloomin' Bores.

LITTLE MAN. Eh ! I wish someone would take me to a war !

Enter DAVENIL. CHENDA expresses in pantomime her pleasure at seeing him. He indicates that he has come to fetch the lease away, and she hands it to him. He pockets it smiling, and converses delightedly with her.

CROWD. (To PONTIFEX) And when you're away everybody calls you a habsent-minded beggar and forks out 'andsome for your wives and children. More wives than children too, I reckon.

PONTIFEX. If you'd wash yer face a bit you'd be able to open yer mouth wider.

CROWD. And if we go and play the Habsent-Minded Beggar, does anyone call us a Nero ?

LITTLE MAN. (Ironically) Ho yuss !

CROWD. They don't 'ave us up on the carpet before the beak do they, and give us what for for desertion ?

LITTLE MAN. Ho no !

PONTIFEX. Ho, you're the man that wanted a noo soot of clothes, are you ?

LITTLE MAN. What's that to you ?

PONTIFEX. You un'althy beggar !

LITTLE MAN. Un'althy yourself.

PONTIFEX. The next soot you get 'ad better be a wooden one.

CROWD. (*After a pause of horror*) Shyme ! Shyme ! I never 'erd such a thing ! Pore little feller !

DAVENIL. (*At last aware that something unusual is going on*) What is all this about ?

CHENDA. It's Mr Pontifex again, bullying the people. I thought I told you to speak to him about it.

DAVENIL. (*To PONTIFEX*) Excuse me, Pontifex, you're forgetting yourself. (*CHENDA eggs him on*)

CROWD. Ah, give it 'im !

DAVENIL. Remember that this is not the barracks or the battle-field. You must be more respectful.

PONTIFEX. I've not said a word to the ladies.

DAVENIL. I'm not speaking of the ladies. You must show respect to those who are not so fortunate as yourself. One must not take advantage of people being poor and helpless.

PONTIFEX. *You talk to me like that ?*

DAVENIL. Yes, I do, Pontifex, and I mean what I say. You needn't threaten me ; I'm not afraid of you. I have already had complaints of your behaviour to our poorer tenants, and I'm determined to put a stop to it.

PONTIFEX. *You put a stop ?*

DAVENIL. It shall never be said that I allowed any

poor people for whose welfare I was responsible to be trodden underfoot by a brutal overseer.

(Delight in the crowd)

PONTIFEX. Brutal overseer! Me?

DAVENIL. I withdraw the word if it's too strong. *(Disappointment in the crowd)* I don't want to hurt your feelings; but you must be gentle and considerate with the tenants.

PONTIFEX. *(Ironically)* Gentle and considerate! Oh yuss! and not say, If you don't fork out you'll get the blimy chuck.

DAVENIL. No bad language, if you please.

PONTIFEX. Oh, ain't you a pretty child standin' there with yer angel face, not afraid of the bad rough man that's workin' 'imself into a passion at you? Oh, you hearly Christian martyr! An' will you please tell the kind ladies and the hinnercent oppressed pore people who it was that came out of the inner office at Palmer's at eleven o'clock this morning, while I was filin' my accounts in Mr Cheadle's room, and says, The firm would be obliged to you, Mr Cheadle, if you would send that bad wicked man Pontifex to screw twelve per cent. more out of the innercent pore in Boodle Court?

DAVENIL. I . . . I . . . I . . .

PONTIFEX. Do you deny it?

DAVENIL. I . . . I . . . I did what I was told.

CHENDA. You, Mr Davenil! Is it you who are responsible for the raising of the rents?

PONTIFEX. Him and his uncle came drivin' down together like a pair of bloomin' staff-officers. . . .

DAVENIL. *(Heroically)* Not a word against my uncle, please; he is not here to defend himself.

CHENDA. Do you admit the accusation, Mr Davenil?

DAVENIL. I accept full responsibility for the action

of the firm, Mrs Wren. It is quite true that I gave Mr Cheadle the order for raising the rents; but this is a matter of business, not of sentiment. I act on the orders which I receive from the firm; and if the rents are raised I have no doubt it is because we have received instructions ordering it to be done.

CHENDA. And knowing all this, you have the face to come here this morning and pretend to take an interest in the welfare of the poor creatures on whose misery you batten? With an air of disinterested benevolence, forsooth, you offer to subscribe to alleviate the wretchedness of which you are the cause.

DAVENIL. I . . . I . . . I . . .

CHENDA. With one hand you offer us a miserable trifle to gratify your sentiment, while with the other you wring a thousand times as much from their helplessness in the way of *business*! Oh, I envy you your capacity for separating business and sentiment. (*She goes to her bureau and opens the drawer, then returns to listen to PONTIFEX*)

PONTIFEX. I'm not goin' to put up with all this talkin' any more. I'd rather be sellin' matches in the gutter, I would, as I was a year ago, and see my wife and children starve. I'm goin' round at once to chuck my job at Palmer's. (*Going*)

CROWD. Well done 'im! Mr Pontifex is what I call an 'igh-minded man.

PONTIFEX. Oh, don't you worry yer fat. They'll get somebody else to do my job.

CROWD. Let's 'ist 'im up and carry 'im round to Palmer's. 'E's an 'igh-minded man. Three cheers for Mr Pontifex!

[*Exit crowd, cheering, with PONTIFEX*]

CHENDA. (*Returning to her bureau, getting the sove-*

- reign out from the cash-box, and handing it to*
DAVENIL) There's your donation back again. We do not take money from impure sources. Your gold is tarnished with the tears of the poor.
- DAVENIL. You're awfully hard on me, Mrs Wren. It isn't as if I was owner of the place. I'm only a servant.
- CHENDA. It would be nobler to suffer poverty like Sergeant Pontifex than to take wages in the service of the devil.
- WREN. (*Suddenly, at the table*) I say, somebody has taken that half-crown I left here!
- DAVENIL. Why, that's a felony, you know!
- CHENDA. Use the hardest names you can.
- KATE. Oh, how awful, Chenda! Have we had a *felon* among us?
- CHENDA. What does it matter, Kerry? Some poor creature has been goaded at last beyond endurance. He is not to blame. Whatever the hand that took it, it is Mr Davenil, and Mr Davenil alone, that I look on as the thief.
- DAVENIL. Me? Oh, Mrs Wren, I really think if you understood business a little . . .
- CHENDA. Thank you, I prefer my ignorance.
- (DAVENIL *brushes his hat, pauses for something to answer, then walks out rapidly without having found it.*)
- OLIVER. (*Without*) Mind where you're going!
- DAVENIL. (*Without*) Not at all, it was my fault.

Enter OLIVER, carrying the silver sugar-basin.

- OLIVER. I had to chase them all across the park. What's happened here? That chap was crying. (*To CHENDA*) Lock that up. (*He stands talking to CHENDA*)

WREN. (*To KATE*) It's a most damnable thing about that half-crown. You can't leave a thing lying for half-a-minute but somebody goes and bags it.

KATE. (*Ironically*) I wonder you don't approve of the man who stole it.

WREN. So I do! So I do! My reason approves, but I've got nerves like anybody else, and my nerves would like to punch his head.

OLIVER. What's the matter with Wren?

KATE. He's naturally upset about the money that's been stolen.

OLIVER. What money? Who's been stealing?

KATE. Somebody took half-a-crown which James had left on the table.

OLIVER. What was Wren doing when it was taken?

KATE. He was talking about providence and safety valves.

OLIVER. So! I knew how it would be. You can't be trusted with a little easy bit of work like that but you get talking and neglect it.

WREN. Me talking? Why, I've hardly got a word in edgeways since I came. By gad, I never heard anything like Chenda when she's fairly roused. (*Imitating*) "So this is your disinterested benevolence, forsooth quotha." The way she gave it to poor Davenil . . .

OLIVER. It was your fault that the half-crown was stolen.

WREN. My fault?

OLIVER. You shouldn't have undertaken the job if you couldn't carry it through.

WREN. Me? I was forced into it against my will. I've said all along that one ought not to *do* anything at all.

OLIVER. *We* have managed all right.

WREN. And a precious lot of good you've done ! It's you and Chenda that are responsible for the theft of the half-crown, not me.

CHENDA. *We are ?*

WREN. All you've done is to excite the greed of the landlord of these dwellings by pauperising his tenants. He's determined to catch the golden shower as it falls. So up go the rents ! And those who haven't been lucky in the scramble are driven to larceny in order to keep up with the rest.

(A growing sound of an angry crowd is heard outside. JELlicoe runs in, dressed in the same clothes as before, with an oily new second-hand top hat. He closes the door, which is kicked and struck from without)

JELlicoe. I'm sorry I ever took the job on.

OLIVER. What job ?

JELlicoe. Mr Pontifex's job.

OLIVER. Who's chasing you ?

JELlicoe. All the lodgers. The rents are raised again.

CHENDA. The rents . . .

JELlicoe. Yes, it's a shilling all round, instead of sixpence.

CURTAIN

ACT III

A quarter of an hour later. WREN is on his hands and knees searching the floor. OLIVER leans against the kitchen table eating a biscuit, and watching him. KATE looks out of the window behind. Milk and biscuits are on the table.

CHENDA. (*Walking up and down*) I shall make it my business to find out who it is that owns this house; the evil spirit that pulls the strings in the background. According to Jimbo, nobody seems to blame.

KATE. You'd better drink your milk while it's hot, Chenda. There go the washstands.

CHENDA. (*Going to the window*) Oh, aren't they ducks? Come and look, Jimbo.

WREN. (*Crawling about, morosely*) Oh, do shut up!

OLIVER. Wren's busy.

CHENDA. (*Still looking out*) Why, there's that horrid boy from Palmer's.

KATE. Where?

CHENDA. With that old man.

KATE. So it is.

CHENDA. What business is it of his?

WREN. I know it's a pure farce looking for that half-crown! It isn't here.

OLIVER. We must leave no stone unturned to find it.

WREN. (*Knocking his hands together*) I don't know about stones . . .

OLIVER. I can't for the life of me understand how anyone in his senses could leave it lying there all the time, like a glass of whisky under the very nose of a lot of drunkards. (*Looking at his watch and snapping it to*) However, you've been searching

for a quarter of an hour now, and I'm afraid we must come to the conclusion that it's not here. (WREN rises) I shall not rest until I have discovered the culprit.

WREN. What a vindictive fellow you are, Squog.
(*Taking biscuits and milk*)

OLIVER. (*Angrily*) Don't call me Squog!

WREN. All this fuss about two-and-six!

OLIVER. As if it was the money that mattered!
It's hopeless for me to try and explain anything to you.

WREN. Oh, absolutely.

CHENDA. If I could find out the landlord's name, I would publish it in all the newspapers and hold him up to infamy and execration.

WREN. That's the way we salve our consciences for the crimes of society in which we are all confederates. When we want to enjoy the luxury of virtuous indignation, we talk of Mr Bung the brewer and Mr Rackrent the landlord as if they were a separate sort of creature from ourselves, only fit to be used as Cockshies and Aunt Sallies. Who is Mr Bung? Who is Mr Rackrent? I am, you are. . . .

CHENDA. Oh, Jimbo, I'm tired of this nonsense. . . .

WREN. That's the melancholy thing about the evils of modern society, that they are all caused by well-meaning people. Villains are a literary invention which the Elizabethan drama borrowed from the demonology of the Middle Ages.

CHENDA. Bosh!

WREN. (*Gloomily*) That's what they always say to the prophets.

CHENDA. Are you sure you didn't put the half-crown in your pocket, Jimbo?

WREN. (*Laughing*) What a fool I was not to think of

that before! (*Taking out half-a-crown*) Why, upon my word, Oliver . . .

Enter DINAH, holding JIM CROW; two or three girls follow and stay in the doorway.

OLIVER. What's this, Mrs Kippin? Don't be so rough with that man.

DINAH. I'm rough, am I? Do you know what this man's done? He's a thief; that's what he's done.

(CHENDA *signs to WREN, who puts his half-crown hastily back in his pocket*)

DINAH. There! (*Throwing a half-crown on the table*) He stole the 'ahf-crown that Mrs Jellicoe laid on that very table not 'ahf-an-hour ago to bail out her Britannia teapot.

OLIVER. So! This is the unhappy victim of temptation.

JIM. Aue!

KATE. You're holding him rather tight; I think, Mrs Kippin.

DINAH. There was I, only just come in from 'ere. Hat it again! Slavin' and slavin' away till I'm fit to drop. Peelin' potatoes and washin' up plates that'll only be dirty again in an hour; and all the children in the way as usual. When in comes Mr Crow as sweet as sixpence, if you please, just as if there'd been no words between us. "Where's that money you owe me?" says I. "'Ere," says he, 'oldin' out his 'ahf-a-crown. "'Ow did you get it?" says I, smellin' a rat; and with that he starts patterin' his black man's flash. "Tell me that in plain English, you immigrant," says I, "or I'll bang yer ugly onion against the wall until you do"; and bang it I did till I was

tired, as if it was my own child, until he owned up the whole story ; and what do you think of that ?

OLIVER. What have you to say to this, Crow ?

(DINAH goes up and talks with KATE)

JIM. Pore ole Dim Trow very happy man in Raparoa. Me good to everybody, everybody good to me. One day old gentleman come along. He say, "Me Christian missionary come from England. English people very good people ; all love Jesu Chrise. Raparoa people very bad people ; not know nutting of Jesu Chrise."

OLIVER. One of those London Missionary Society people, no doubt. Well ?

JIM. I say, "Where he born, Jesu Chrise ?" Ole gentleman say, "He born in Galilee." I go down to de shore and see schoonah. I say, "Where you go ?" De Cappen he say, "We goin' to England." I say, "Me come too, see Galilee where Jesu Chrise was born." De Cappen he say, "Come along ; I show you Galilee." We come along to England ; de Cappen he give me eighteenpence. I come ashore and look for Galilee. Big man he come along and knock me down, take away my eighteenpence. Another big man come along, pick me up and say I drunk. Wish I was back in Raparoa wid de ole wife and little chillun.

OLIVER. All this is quite irrelevant.

WREN. It seems perfectly relevant to me. The man's been swindled.

OLIVER. That's no reason for swindling us.

WREN. They induced him to come over here by pretending people lived in England according to the Sermon on the Mount.

OLIVER. Well ?

WREN. Just think of the irony of it.

OLIVER. I don't know what you mean. Where does the irony come in?

WREN. Think what the man gave up: the innocent life of the island with the cocoa-palms, where he was good to everybody and everybody was good to him. And think what we gave him in exchange!

OLIVER. We gave him the hope of eternal life.

WREN. Oh, nonsense!

OLIVER. Wasn't that worth eighteenpence?

WREN. And now the poor devil, because he has infringed some miserable English rule of etiquette . . .

OLIVER. Etiquette?

WREN. Which probably doesn't obtain at all in his native country, is set upon and threatened with all the terrors of our savage penal code.

KATE. If he has done wrong he deserves to be punished.

OLIVER. Don't argue, Kate.

WREN. The whole system . . .

OLIVER. I know exactly what you're going to say, but it's all nonsense, and very harmful nonsense at that. You can't mend the world by white-washing the devil. Besides, who said I was going to set the penal code on him?

WREN. Well, what are you going to *do* then?

OLIVER. Do you imagine that when a man's soul is sick I send him to gaol to be cured?

WREN. Well, what *are* you going to do then?

OLIVER. He must be removed from the atmosphere of harshness and misunderstanding in which he has lived too long. What he needs is sympathy and indulgence. Chenda, I think you understand me.

CHENDA. Oh, Tom, what a brick you are! He shall be the first inmate of my Pension House.

KATE. Oh, Tom, and you forgive him! (*To WREN*)
People aren't necessarily cruel because they
don't go in for your fantastic and immoral
theories.

CHENDA. (*To JIM*) Oh, you dear, dear old man.

KATE. Dear Mr Crow!

CHENDA. It's all happened just at the right
moment.

KATE. It's as if he were sent from heaven on
purpose.

JIM. (*Drawing back in alarm*) What you want to do
to me?

KATE. Don't be afraid of us.

CHENDA. Dear, dear Jim Crow, I will make you so
happy. You shall forget these miserable years.

DINAH. What are you goin' to do with 'im?

CHENDA. I am going to take care of him.

DINAH. Isn't he to be sent to gaol?

KATE. Why should he be sent to gaol?

DINAH. What d'ye think I brought him here for?

OLIVER. He has been fortunate enough to fall into
hands more merciful than yours.

DINAH. Ho, it's the old story again, I see. Live
honest and you may starve; but crack a till, or
take to drink, or throw yer baby in the water-
works, and all the clergy will come 'oppin' round
to give you a good character. Oh yes, and I must
slave the flesh from off my fingers, and 'ave my
rent put up, while he can loll on a bench in your
back-room, and stuff 'imself with steak and
onions because he burgled 'ahf-a-crown!

OLIVER. That's not why we wish to help him.

DINAH. Oh yes it is, and not the first time neither,
Mr Oliver.

OLIVER. What do you mean?

DINAH. Oh, you know what I mean.

KATE. Remember who you're speaking to.

DINAH. There was that brute Arthur that tried to cut his uncle's throat in the doss'ouse, an' you begged 'im off before the Beak, and now he's body-servant to a Lord that knows no more who shaves him of a mornin' than the babe unborn.

OLIVER. I am thankful to have been the means . . .

DINAH. And there was 'Appy 'Ancock who snaked the pewters, an' you gave 'im a good character at the Old Bailey, and he . . . he copped an extra two years' penal servitood for kiddin' the clergy. No! I won't stand it any longer! I'll 'ave justice.

CHENDA. What can you do?

DINAH. Do? My duty, as some don't. I'm goin' to give 'im in charge.

CHENDA. Can she?

OLIVER. It'll be no use.

DINAH. In charge for stealin'.

OLIVER. We shall refuse to prosecute.

DINAH. Then he'll be 'ad as a vagrant, for 'avin' no visible 'ome.

CHENDA. His home is with me.

DINAH. We'll soon see about that, miss. (*Folding arms*) I don't leave this room until . . .

BOY. (*Without*) Shop, muvver!

DINAH. I don't leave this room until . . .

BOY. (*Running on*) Shop, muvver!

DINAH. Ah, you wait till my work's over!

[*Exit DINAH smacking the boy's head and scolding him.*]

DAVENIL. (*Without*) I beg your pardon.

DINAH. (*Without*) 'Oo spoke to you?

PONTIFEX. (*Without*) You keep a civil tongue in yer 'ead.

OLIVER. Ha, it's Sergeant Pontifex.

Enter PONTIFEX with a flower in his buttonhole to celebrate his release from the service of the devil; behind him, DAVENIL. JIM CROW disappears into the background unnoticed, and finally disposes himself to sleep on a sofa which stands by the window.

PONTIFEX. Come on, Mr Davenil. Don't you be afraid of 'em.

CHENDA. What does this person want here?

DAVENIL. I am really very sorry to intrude again.

CHENDA. What does he want?

DAVENIL. It's a most unpleasant task which brings me; but there was really no one else to do it.

CHENDA. Tell him to be as brief as possible.

DAVENIL. It is a note for you from Palmer's, Mrs Wren.

CHENDA. Take it, Jimbo. Your hands are dirty already.

(DAVENIL gives the note to WREN. WREN reads it)

OLIVER. So you've resigned, Sergeant?

PONTIFEX. Yes, sir, I've resigned, and glad of another job. Something on the flat preferred.

OLIVER. (To WREN) The note seems to contain good news.

WREN. I hope I don't betray any indecent glee. It's addressed to Chenda.

CHENDA. It is not likely to be of any great interest to me.

WREN. I'm rather afraid it is.

CHENDA. Well?

WREN. You can't move into the Settlement.

KATE. Oh dear, oh dear!

CHENDA. Why can't I move in?

WREN. It seems you've overlooked certain covenants in the lease.

CHENDA. Covenants? What covenants?

KATE. There ! I told you so.

CHENDA. What do you mean about covenants ?

WREN. (*Reading*) M'm, m'm, brought to our notice that the nature of the articles of furniture now unloading at the said door indicates the lessee's intention of using the building as a sanatorium or hospital.

CHENDA. What right has anyone to look at my furniture ?

DAVENIL. It was all over the pavement.

CHENDA. Somebody has been spying.

DAVENIL. Mr Palmer tumbled over one of the beds.

CHENDA. They'll be searching my pockets next.

OLIVER. That's not the question now, Chenda. Go on.

WREN. (*Reading*) M'm, m'm, instructed to warn you that the lessors will re-enter according to the terms of the agreement and exercise their lien on all furniture, personality and appurtenances. . . .

CHENDA. Fiddlesticks !

WREN. Oh, but . . .

CHENDA. What does it matter ?

WREN. Matter, why . . .

CHENDA. Do you imagine it makes the least difference to me what Mr Davenil says ?

DAVENIL. That's what I said myself.

WREN. (*To DAVENIL*) Good Lord, man, don't give way like that !

DAVENIL. I knew Mrs Wren wouldn't listen to me.

WREN. Remember your clients' interests.

CHENDA. Mr Davenil can say what he likes.

WREN. I say, isn't there a stronger representative of the firm about ?

DAVENIL. My uncle's round at Palmer's ; but I didn't want to trouble him.

WREN. Oh, never mind the trouble. Here, Mr

Pontifex, you're a man of leisure ; you might just run round and fetch him.

PONTIFEX. All right, sir. (*Levelling his stick at the girls in the doorway and charging*) Get out of my way, you Bores !

GIRLS. 'Ooray for the British Harmy !

[*Exit PONTIFEX followed by the girls*]

WREN. Where's the lease ?

DAVENIL. Oh, I forgot ; I've got Mrs Wren's copy of it in my pocket. There's the covenant. (*Handing it to WREN. WREN looks up the covenant and nods*)

Enter the FOREMAN of the carters, an agreeable person, with "Semparatus" in gold letters on his cap.

SEMPARATUS. (*To DAVENIL*) I beg your pardon, is Mrs Wren here ?

CHENDA. Oh, it's the Semparatus man. Good-afternoon.

SEMPARATUS. Good-day, madam.

CHENDA. Is it all done ?

SEMPARATUS. Yes, madam. We've made a quicker job of it than we promised even. We undertook to do it in three hours, and we've been exactly two hours and fifty-three minutes.

WREN. Have you got all the stuff in ?

SEMPARATUS. Yes, sir, it's all in, down to the very last toothbrush.

WREN. Then you take my tip ; you get it all out again as quick as you can.

SEMPARATUS. Sir !

CHENDA. You'll do no such thing. It's no business of yours, Jimbo.

WREN. As you please, my dear. I thought you'd both be glad to get it out again before Palmer's had time to lay hands on it.

CHENDA. They can't really ?

WREN. Of course they can, and will.

KATE. He's quite right, Chenda. The only safe thing is to get it out.

Enter PONTIFEX

PONTIFEX. Here he is.

DAVENIL. Thank heaven, here's my uncle.

Enter NIX, young, business-like and vulgar, and PALMER, aged, benevolent and rather deaf.

WREN. (*To* SEMPARATUS, putting money in his hand) Get it out as quick as you can.

SEMPARATUS. Very good, sir.

[Exit, shutting door behind him]

OLIVER. (*Shaking hands with* NIX) Ah, Jimmy, I'm glad you've come. Chenda, this is Mr Nix.

PALMER. (*To* OLIVER) Glad to know you, sir. You remind me of Mr Addleshaw, the first clergyman we ever had at our little church down here.

(Everybody is anxious to get the business in hand cleared up, except this pleasant old gentleman, who is full of amiable reminiscences)

OLIVER. We sent for Mr Nix to advise us about the lease of Glengarry House.

PALMER. Glengarry House? It isn't forty years since there were cabbages growing where that stands now. Then Mr Jamieson built Glengarry House and this block; but he failed and it went to his mortgagee, a Mr Boodle.

OLIVER. Yes, yes . . .

PALMER. They've always gone together, these two houses.

OLIVER. Yes, yes, but . . .

PALMER. It was half country then.

OLIVER. There are certain covenants . . .

PALMER. I can remember shooting snipe as a boy along the Romford Road.

NIX. Here, let *me* have a look at the lease. (*WREN hands it to him*) I see, it's a transfer. Well, if Mrs Wren has agreed to the covenants, I don't see how I can help her out of them.

PALMER. Of course he can't.

NIX. There's no getting round a covenant.

PALMER. Turning it into a hospital would do great injury to the value of the building. I'm sure my son won't hear of such a thing.

OLIVER. Let *me* have a look at the lease. (*Taking it from NIX. Reading*) Whereas by an indenture . . .

CHENDA. Shut up, Tom. (*To NIX*) Do you mean to say that I can't have the house if the beds go in? Who is this gentleman that comes here to dictate to me?

NIX. This is Mr Palmer.

CHENDA. Mr Palmer?

NIX. The house-agent.

CHENDA. Mr Palmer, the house-agent! Ah, at last I have you then! Oh, you wicked old man. You are at the bottom of all the villainies that are practised here. Whether you are the oppressor himself or only his servant I cannot tell. I do not greatly care. So I shall do an injury to the house property, forsooth. The house property! Are you so lost to every sense . . .

OLIVER. (*Giving up the inside of the lease as a bad job and looking at the inscription on the outside*) I say, there's something queer about this. This lease for Glengarry House is from the Bellingham mortgage estate.

NIX. (*Horried, bellowing*) What! (*Snatching the deed from OLIVER*) The Bellingham Mortgage Estate?

OLIVER. Mrs Wren was a Miss Bellingham.

NIX. It's her own estate, of which Mr Oliver is trustee. She's letting the house to herself! (*To DAVENIL*) This is some of your work, Master Harry.

DAVENIL. I couldn't tell she was Miss Bellingham.

CHENDA. But what's the point of all these technicalities? What I want to know is, has this person (*Indicating PALMER*) a right to prevent my furniture going into Glengarry House, or has he not?

NIX. Of course he hasn't. Don't you see, my dear madam, it's your own house; it's your own house.

CHENDA. My house?

NIX. Yes, you can do what you like with it.

CHENDA. Then I needn't take my furniture out?

NIX. No.

CHENDA. Really?

NIX. Yes, really.

CHENDA. I can have my sanatorium after all?

NIX. Yes, yes, yes.

CHENDA. Oh, joy, delight! (*Twirling WREN about*) I can! I can! Oh, hooray! I must stop them. (*At the window*) Hi! Semparatus! Hoyoy! (*Coming down*) Then I shall go into the Settlement to-day after all. Oh, do go down and tell them, Mr Pontifex.

[*Exit PONTIFEX*

Oh, hooray! Kate, isn't it splendid? (*To NIX*)

Oh, you *are* a clever lawyer. I wish we'd always gone to you.

KATE. But how clever of Tom!

CHENDA. Oh, and you too, Tom.

OLIVER. You'll have to take me into partnership, Jimmy.

Enter PONTIFEX and SEMPARATUS FOREMAN

SEMPARATUS. Excuse me, madam, I am told that I am to put all the furniture back into the house again.

CHENDA. It's quite right.

OLIVER. Quite right.

SEMPARATUS. But we've reloaded one van already.

OLIVER. You must unload it again.

SEMPARATUS. (*To WREN*) Is that right, sir?

WREN. Oh, go to hell!

SEMPARATUS. Very good, sir. I get so many contradictory orders . . . [*Exit SEMPARATUS*]

OLIVER. (*Triumphant*) There'll be no difficulty about the Settlement now, Wren. Your wife will have a place of refuge from the whirlwind of words at last. Oh, it will be no place for you, I assure you. The word silence will be written up in big letters over the door: "Abandon Theory all ye who enter here." We'll write up, "*Favete linguis; Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*"

WREN. (*To PALMER, very seriously, perceiving the drift of what has happened*) But didn't you say that this block and Glengarry House are all the same estate?

(*He sits down and buries his face in his hands. NIX listens and perceives the drift of affairs*)

PALMER. Yes, yes. They've never been divided. All Mr Boodle's interest passed to Mr Bellingham.

CHENDA. (*To PALMER*) When you and your rack-renting landlord have driven the dwellers in these miserable dens into sickness and disease, I shall still be able to offer them a refuge.

WREN. Oh, Chenda, Chenda! Don't you see who the brutal landlord is that rackrents these miserable dens?

CHENDA. (*Startled*) Who?

WREN. Don't you see who it is that has been raising the rents here?

CHENDA. Who?

WREN. You and Oliver.

OLIVER. I?

CHENDA. Me?

OLIVER. *I* have raised the rents?

CHENDA. You, Tom?

OLIVER. I, who have always protested . . . It's the most monstrous falsehood.

PALMER. They were raised twice, by sixpence and a shilling . . .

NIX. (*Coming down*) That's the two times you applied for an increase of income; the fifty and the hundred . . .

OLIVER. But I had no notion . . .

NIX. You said you didn't want to hear . . .

OLIVER. But do you imagine if I had known . . .

CHENDA. Oh, Jimbo, Jimbo! I see it all. You mean that *I* am the owner of this horrible place, that it is *I* who live at ease because these poor creatures live in misery. Oh, where can I hide myself? Where can I hide myself? (*Hiding her face on WREN's bosom*)

PONTIFEX. (*Grasping it at last*) Well, dammy, if that isn't the finest thing that ever I heard! After all the talking at I've had, and been obliged to resign my post as rent-collector and all, for oppressin' the innocent pore. And all the time it was Mr Oliver that's been raisin' the rents and creatin' all this hullabaloo. (*Laughing*) Ho, I must go and tell the boys. [*Exit*]

CHENDA. Oh, Jimbo, Jimbo! What a nightmare it all is! Oh, why didn't I listen to you when you said it was no good doing anything?

WREN. My poor, poor darling! You've done your best.

CHENDA. I've done nothing but harm.

KATE. It was all done for the sake of charity.

WREN. Charity! Now you see what charity means. All the money you were spending on Oliver's parishioners was being pumped up into your horn of plenty out of Oliver's parishioners' pockets all the time. There they were, the poor tenants, Pontifex, Mr Palmer, Davenil, Nix and Oliver; and at the top of all, yourself, like a nymph on a fountain, pouring the water back into the basin. That's charity! That's why we erect fountains at street corners to philanthropical gentlemen. It's an allegory, a satire. Why, every time I . . .

KATE. I think we've had enough speechmaking, James.

WREN. So we have! So we have! (*To CHENDA*) My darling pet! Chennie, my angel, you mustn't cry so.

CHENDA. I'm better now. How I detest myself! I'll never be charitable again. There was a picture that I always loved all my childhood, of a tall lady in white giving money out of a purse to the poor; you know, Jimbo, the one that hangs over my burry; I always wanted to be like that. But now I know how the purse is filled. Oh, I'll smash that beastly picture when I get back. (*She goes and gets her hat from its peg*)

KATE. Where are you going?

CHENDA. I'm going home with Jimbo.

(*Jimbo wears a pensive, doubtful air*)

OLIVER. You mustn't be selfish, Chenda; you've undertaken certain obligations to my parish.

CHENDA. What obligations?

OLIVER. There's the Settlement to begin with, for which you've signed the lease, you know. (*Holding out the lease*)

CHENDA. (*Taking it melodramatically, tearing it up, and throwing it on the floor*) There's your lease then! You and I are not fit stewards for such a trust.

(*A pause, a thrill*)

NIX. (*Prosaic, disillusioning*) What's the good of that? . . . Tearing up the counterpart of an indenture don't make the indenture void. You're bound to pay rent to the Trust Estate.

CHENDA. My own?

NIX. You're only a life tenant.

CHENDA. The Trust Estate is at an end.

NIX. Nonsense. You can't put an end to the Trust Estate.

PALMER. Come along, Mr Nix, we'd better be going.

[NIX and PALMER salute the company and go, laughing.]

NIX. (*At the door, turning to DAVENIL*) Come along, you young idiot! [*Exeunt*]

OLIVER. I may as well be going too. [*Exit OLIVER*
(WREN gives OLIVER an ironic nod)]

CHENDA. (*To KATE*) Good-bye.

KATE. What about your luggage?

CHENDA. Send it on by Carter Pat.

KATE. Good-bye, darling. I'll go and put your things in. [*Exit to bedroom*]

(JIM CROW remains asleep on the sofa at the back)

CHENDA. Come along, Jimbo.

WREN. Wait a bit.

CHENDA. You're not going to make difficulties now!

WREN. Come and sit here. (*A pause*) I'm a selfish beggar, Chen, and I've been longing to get you back home at any price, but you've opened my eyes.

CHENDA. Whatever do you mean ?

WREN. I think you ought to stay down here.

CHENDA. Me stay here ?

WREN. For a time, I mean.

CHENDA. No, I can't do without you now. I must have you by me.

WREN. I'll stay too.

CHENDA. You ? . . . Oh, Jimbo, I can't face this place after my ghastly failure.

WREN. I tell you what, Chen, you're wrong about the failure.

CHENDA. Wrong about the failure ?

WREN. If it's a failure it's succeeded in a way that nothing else could have succeeded. Things are in an awful mess, that's true ; you're grabbing with one hand and doling out with the other. But it isn't you that made the mess. It's society that made the mess, and you, you've been fumbling round to clear it up. Nobody would have discovered what a mess it was if you hadn't gone fumbling round ; and the discovery is the first step to the remedy.

CHENDA. Oh, Jimbo ! And what's the remedy ?

WREN. I don't know.

CHENDA. You don't know ?

WREN. Nobody does.

CHENDA. Then what can we do ?

WREN. (*Impressively, as if it were a policy and a solution*) Fumble on ! . . . You remember what you said about Jack Smiley's method of hunting ? "Blundering through the hedges and floundering in the ponds." . . . Well, that's the way to tackle social questions.

CHENDA. (*Seeing a humorous side to it*) But I can't imagine you down here, my Jimbo.

WREN. Hm ! It certainly isn't much in my line.

CHENDA. Going about arm in arm with Tom, doing good works.

WREN. No, that isn't quite the idea. No. I've suddenly realised how valuable your slapdash methods are for *theory*, how illuminating. *That's* the object of action. Action does no good. In fact, it always does harm; but theory, lovely theory, rises from the ruins. I've learnt more political economy this last week than I did in ten years before. I want to stay here and watch you all at it and penetrate the full irony of the situation. Then I think we might see if we can't give your tenants better value for their money, don't you think? And if we can spare any time from mending our own ways, we'll spend it in harassing employers, landlords, insanitary people, brewers, publicans, everyone who battens on the poor.

CHENDA. All the other Chendas, in fact.

WREN. Yes, all the other Chendas. What fun it'll be!

CHENDA. You duck! (*A long kiss*)

(*JIM CROW stirs on the sofa, coughs and stretches*)

WREN. (*Rising*) Hullo, are you still there, old friend?

JIM. (*Sitting up*) Wish I was back in Raparoa wid de ole wife and little chillun.

WREN. And so you shall be, by Gad, as fast as ship can carry you, and curses on the infernal rascal that ever dislodged you from your happy island and brought you over here to see the squalid barbarism in which your pretended betters pass their days. We'll book his passage, and then we'll get home and have a good talk at last. You can't think how the solitude and silence have been weighing on me all these days.

CROMWELL: MALL O' MONKS

A Historical Play in Five Acts

TO

LAURENCE BINYON

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

	<i>Approximate Ages</i>
CROMWELL, THOMAS	40
HENRY VIII.	40
WOLSEY, CARDINAL	60
NORFOLK, DUKE OF	60
LINCOLN, DUKE OF.	70
MORE, SIR THOMAS	55
BOLEYN, SIR THOMAS	50
TALBOT, SIR JOHN	45
CRANMER, <i>a priest</i>	45
NORRIS }	{ 30
BRERETON } <i>courtiers</i>	{ 30
BEAULIEU, <i>the French ambassador</i>	30
SMEATON, <i>Court musician</i>	25
LAMBERT }	{ 35
MORISON } <i>friends of Cromwell.</i>	{ 40
FOULKES }	{ 50
CAVENDISH, <i>usher to Wolsey</i>	20
SADLER, <i>uncle to Cavendish</i>	50
RAT, <i>chaplain to Sir T. Boleyn</i>	40
PATCH, <i>Wolsey's fool</i>	50
PETO, <i>a Black Friar</i>	60
ROGER }	{ 50
DICCON } <i>yeomen</i>	{ 30
ANNE BOLEYN	25
JANE SEYMOUR	20
KATHARINE HOWARD	15 or 20
ANNE OF CLEVES	35
LADY ROCHFORD	30

Courtiers, Ushers, Yeomen, Chaplains, Hereticks, Merchants, Peasants, Monks, Friars, Ladies-in-waiting, etc.

The scenery to be simple and quickly shifted. The stage might be arranged as in Mr Martin Harvey's *Hamlet*, the changes being effected by change of back-cloth and by presenting different sides of the wheeled pillars which take the place of wings.

CROMWELL: MALL O' MONKS

PROLOGUE

Spoken by a BELLMAN

Oyez! Oyez!

Good dames and gentles all, oyez!
I am the Prologue, not the Play.
Beseech your gracious ears to hear
What fell before three hundred year;
A story told in the ancient fashion
Of Harry the Eight and the Reformation.
Pray you, believe it something more
Than musty antiquary lore:
Though in the ancient tongue indite,
That is but for your more delight;
So strip this trimming right away
And seek a moral for to-day.

One virtue from antiquity
We'll take, and that's simplicity.
Here is no wealth of pictured scene
To please the taste of pampered een.
Let Fancy paint the barren walls
And follow where the story calls,
Unhindered in her wayward flight
With waiting on the eye's delight.

Imagine when the curtains rise
The Cardinal in a farm-house lies,
Wolsey, that three days since was great
And now is fall'n from's high estate. . . .

But an I blab all, there'll be nought left for the
Players. I must vacate; and so to't, and God save
the King!

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[Exit, ringing his bell

ACT I

In a farmyard. Dawn.

Enter ROGER and DICCON, yeomen

ROGER. Who's that ?

DICCON. What, Roger ?

ROGER. Diccon ? Up betimes.

DICCON. Methought I heard a stirring in the loft.

ROGER. I care not who stirs ; I'll be stirring hence.

DICCON. There, there again !

ROGER. Cows moving in the byre.

If this be Wolsey's service I'm for none of it.

What, sleep in straw ? I, Roger Dutt ? Gog's wine !

The murrion rats have gnawn me to the bone.

DICCON. Ay, this it is to serve a fallen man ;

We are too faithful, fellow.

ROGER. Basta fidelity !

I'll take my wage and go. We're cozened. What ?

Lived like the King, and now . . .

DICCON. Most like the Queen.

ROGER. Ay, she's spilt too, the Spanish slut ; that's balm.

DICCON. What noise was that ?

Enter CAVENDISH, a young gentleman, poorly dressed.

CAVENDISH.

What's tóward ?

Enter PATCH and RAT, fighting.*

ROGER. Wolsey's fool.

PATCH. A spy ! A spy ! I'll teach thee, spy, thou cullion ! *(Beating him with his bauble)*

* PATCH, a little, misshapen, degenerate man, with small eyes, splay mouth and big red nose, round backed, dressed in tight yellow jerkin buttoned clumsily down the back ; his head-dress with two long stiff ears all the one colour, like an ass's head.

ROGER. About him, Patch.

Enter some YEOMEN

RAT. Let be! I am a clerk.

ROGER. Cries benefit of clergy.

RAT. Loose me!

PATCH. Lutheran!

RAT. Hoddypeke!

PATCH. Javel!

RAT. Kipskin!

PATCH. Solifidian!

Enter CROMWELL, with sword drawn.

CROMWELL. How now? The Philistines upon us?

CAVENDISH. Master Cromwell.

CROMWELL. (*To PATCH*) Put up thy jawbone, Samson. What crow's this?

PATCH. A carrion from the Court, bawd Boleyn's priest.

I took peepholing in my nuncle's roof.

CROMWELL. Let him be bound to wait his Grace's will.

[Exit SPY in custody. Exit PATCH

(To YEOMEN) Go truss your stuff; address you for the road.

What would you have with me?

ROGER. My wgae.

DICCON. And mine.

ROGER. This fare is not for me.

CAVENDISH. A dog lies better.

CROMWELL. Take it and go. (*CROMWELL gives them money*)

[Exeunt ROGER and DICCON

You too, Cavendish!

CAVENDISH. Faith, no;

An you stand by his Grace . . .

(A knocking at the gate)

CROMWELL. Who's there ?

BRERETON. (*Without*) Open in the King's name.

Enter BRERETON, NORRIS and ESCORT, in mud-spattered silks and velvets.

BRERETON. Here's a Court for a Cardinal !

NORRIS. Straw for rushes.

BRERETON. And pig's mire for pómander. Pah !
What, sir, I say ? Tell his Disgrace the Cardinal
I bring a message from the King.

CROMWELL. From the King ? Go, Cavendish, advise my Lord. I'll bring this sparrow anon. Will you sit, sir ?

BRERETON. In the trough ? We have ridden up and down all night in the mud seeking you. Why not at Esher ?

CROMWELL. We were benighted on the road.

BRERETON. A farm-house was sorry lodging.

CROMWELL. Luxury, sir. His meanest chaplain hath a stall
Here like a Bishop.

Enter WOLSEY

BRERETON. Here's him was Wolsey.

CROMWELL. (*To WOLSEY*) You lose your pride.

WOLSEY. A message from the King ?
Sweet Master Brereton, angel of good news,
What says his Majesty ?

BRERETON. He sends this brief.

WOLSEY. Sealed with his agate seal. We're in the presence. (*Kneels*)

These naughty strings ; off, treasonable cloth !
(*Breaking the strings of his cap*)

Oh, gentle paper, say that the King is kind ;
He seemed to frown, to try mine enemies ;
The jest is done ; we shall make merry.

- BRERETON. Read !
 The comment after.
- WOLSEY. (*Reading*) What, must all be taken ?
 " A perfect docket of your good and stuff."
- BRERETON. Your thanks were oversoon.
- WOLSEY. Why, this is dross ;
 Sith I have lost his favour, good-bye all.
 I'll weep out my remainder in a cave,
 With stones for pillows, trees for serving-men,
 Turn heavenward the heart I turned to him
 And win a place above . . . to meet him there.
- BRERETON. My task is done ; be yours obedience.
- WOLSEY. Stay !
 What quenched my hope had kindled hope to
 quench ;
 For this I thank his Grace. Take him this chain
 In token of my thank.
- BRERETON. 'Tis the King's already.
- WOLSEY. What, have I nothing ?
- BRERETON. All of your good is his.
- WOLSEY. Then take my fool.
- PATCH. Not your poor, faithful fool ?
- WOLSEY. What boots it, Patch ? Can I make
 merry now ?
 My laughing days are done.
- PATCH. I'll wear a hood,
 Turn hermit too, and teach you how to weep.
- WOLSEY. Away, away !
- PATCH. Oh, tickle trust of princes !
 What ! I have loved you, laboured to your
 mood,
 Laughed when you laughed, been sad when you
 were sad ;
 And now—Go pack ! A hind had shown it more
 That sent his calf to market. Oh, I'll be
 A monkey fool, play them such elfish tricks,

Pinch the King's punk and tell the King he's fat,
They'll rue the gift and curse the giver.

ESCORT. Come !

WOLSEY. Good gentleman, I pray you for your pains
Take the poor guerdon of these scanty angels
All that I have. (*Giving purse to BRERETON*)

BRERETON. (*Tossing the purse to CROMWELL*) Here,
fellow !

CROMWELL. (*Tossing it to a YEOMAN*) Fellow, here !
[*Exeunt BRERETON, FOLLOWERS with PATCH*]

WOLSEY. Oh, Thomas !

CROMWELL. You must be riding, good my Lord.

WOLSEY. Oh, Thomas ! I have tossed the livelong
night.

CROMWELL. You must be riding.

WOLSEY. Fever in my bones.

CROMWELL. Esher mends all.

WOLSEY. The little that I ate . . .

CROMWELL. I pity you, my Lord.

WOLSEY. Oh, good my Thomas,
Mine only comfort ! Who is faithful ? None.

CROMWELL. My Lord, the fewer faithful, better fare ;
For you must prune your state to meet your
fortune.

Let all your family be summoned forth,
Ushers and chaplains, yeomen, all. Go, Cavendish,
I must to London. [*Exit CAVENDISH*]

WOLSEY. You forsake me ?

CROMWELL. No.

The King has written ; why, there's hope in that ;
I'll go and pray for mercy at his feet,
Canvass the Bishops, sound the Councillors,
Stay the impeachment in the Parliament,
And though your cause be true in Heaven's eye,
Yet I'll go laden with such earthly things,
Such title-deeds, advowsons, gold and gear,

Teach earthly wits to see with Heaven's eye.
 Fallen is fallen, but we'll lay a bed
 Of down to catch your fall.

WOLSEY. Mine only friend !

Enter CAVENDISH

CROMWELL. How now ?

CAVENDISH. These clerks sleep sound.

CROMWELL. True Churchmen !

In the softest corners, ousting the honest lay.

Enter the HOUSEHOLD

Range you on this side and on that. My Lord
 Bids you Godspeed or Welcome, as you will.

WOLSEY. Ay, welcome, thrice welcome, ye who dare
 To friend your fortunes with a ruined man ;
 Godspeed to those whose prudence or whose need
 Teaches the other road. My day is done ;
 Riches and office I have none to give ;
 Who serves me yet serves only for my love.
 Our holy business, dedicate to God,
 Brooks not the carnal bonds of wife and child ;
 Yet we have hearts, and you have been my sons ;
 These tears we shed together prove our kin.

CHAPLAINS *and* USHERS. Father, I stay. And I.
 And I. And I.

YEOMAN. And so would I, an I could live on air.

If he have nought, then what remains for us ?

CROMWELL. Dismiss the serving-men.

YEOMAN. Yet softly, sir ;

Home far and money out, what boots adieu ?

Our need would make us true against our will.

WOLSEY. Money ? Alack, I have no money.

CROMWELL. Why,

Who should maintain a father but his sons ?

CHAPLAINS. What follows ?

CROMWELL. The first Apostles of the Church
Walked without scrip or wallet ; Peter hungered,
But Peter's afterlings grow fat. Your clerks
Have wallets stuffed with tithe and benefice.

CHAPLAINS. Ever a word ayenst the Holy Church !

WOLSEY. Had Wolsey Chancellor been rife in gifts
As Wolsey Cardinal, men would have cried
For shame !

CROMWELL. Lay goes by worth ; cure souls who
will.

Lend me a cap. An alms, ye holy men !
Here's for a handsel. (*Throwing money in*) Draw
your strings !

A groat ? For shame. Come, let the angels
sing ! (*Shaking the bag*)

CHAPLAINS. There's mine. Beshrew him. Mine,
and mine, and mine.

YEOMEN. Long live the Cardinal and Mayster
Cromwell !

CROMWELL. Farewell a while, my Lord ; I'll bring
you balm.

[*Exit WOLSEY, attended by the HOUSEHOLD*

CROMWELL. (*To CAVENDISH*) Sir Squire, you'll ride
with me. Go, trap the nags,
And thrust a suit of Court gear in my pack.

[*Exit CAVENDISH*

(*A knocking at the gate*)

Anon, anon ! The sky rains visitors.

Enter LAMBERT

CROMWELL. God save you, sir.

LAMBERT. Give thee good-morrow, friend.

CROMWELL. You use me freely. What's your will
with me ?

LAMBERT. Hast thou forgot me ?

CROMWELL. That, or you yourself.

LAMBERT. And Anvers too ?

CROMWELL. Jack Lambert, as I live !

What, Jack, my dainty heretick, my Grecian ?

Jack ?

The accolade, Jack ! (*Embracing him*) Here's a breeze of youth,

Of bounding youth, that hoped, and laughed, and swore

To tear the world to tatters and make it new ;

And still the old world holds.

LAMBERT. We'll tear it yet.

CROMWELL. What do they say in Anvers ? What's the news ?

LAMBERT. 'Tis two years gone since I left Anvers.

CROMWELL. What ?

Two years in England ?

LAMBERT. Ay.

CROMWELL. And never a word ?

LAMBERT. Never a word, Tom, waiting the time were ripe.

I ply a perilous trade ; the port of London,
By secret friends and mates of Flemish hoys,
Yields cargazons of gallows-matter, books.

CROMWELL. Heretick books ?

LAMBERT. Wrought off abroad, and these

I bear by colour of merchandise in corn

To Oxford.

CROMWELL. Oxford ?

LAMBERT. I have seen thee there.

CROMWELL. And thou wast mum, Jack ? Feared my danger ?

LAMBERT. No ;

Our dangers are a debt. I spied my time.

CROMWELL. Thou'st spied it ill.

LAMBERT.

No.

CROMWELL.

I'm a ruined man.

LAMBERT. A free man. Whiles you served the
Cardinal,

What boot'd it to speak of such adventures ?

This worldly gear had trammell'd all your
thoughts.

Oh, I have seen thee, toising the new Hall,
Bidding the masons budge to build the fame
Of Wolsey in imperishable stone.

CROMWELL. Ay, the new college by St Aldate's.
True !

The Cardinal's surveyor, sorry drudge,
Buried in ledgers, title-deeds and ink,
Too slave to nourish the big hopes of youth,
The dizzy Anvers hopes of Liberty,
My light quite quenched.

LAMBERT.

Ay, Thomas, so I feared.

CROMWELL. Out on thee, knave, that harboured
such a fear,

That numbered Thomas Cromwell with the
hinds

Who toil and eat and sleep and toil again,
Content to live in smug obedience,
And hour by hour creep nearer to the grave
With nothing hop'd or dared or lost or gained.
Why, Jack, my purpose is as firm as thine ;
Was heretick or you were cradled, boy,
Lollard or you were breeched.

LAMBERT.

There's my old Tom !

CROMWELL. The gentle youths at school that called
me kern,

Farrier-spawn and upstart, taught me rebellion ;
The stripe-rife pedant, Jacobin Dan Peto,
Rod-seal'd the lesson. I hated Rome
And Heav'n and England, all places where

Obedience reigns and order. Hell for me,
 Where ever the riotous voice climbs up the sky,
 Scorched and defiant, of martyrs kissed the stake
 For daring think. My deeds have shown my mind.
 Did I not fight with Carbajál in Italy ?
 Pizarro ? Almojén ?

LAMBERT. I know thy scars.

CROMWELL. We cannot choose our fate.

I took a wife ; she multiplied, and I
 Must get more bread than on a whinyard's end,
 Cupboard my hopes, like corn that shoots again ;
 Home and a counting-house received me.

LAMBERT. How liked you Merry England ?

CROMWELL. Passing ill.

One day of tears my Jenny, tired of living,
 Turned to the wall and died. The next came news
 The Duke of Bourbon marched against the Pope.
 My blood cried out for sport ; I armed and flew.
 We carved a bloody way thro' the Campagna,
 Trod on the skirt of the scarlet drab, Rome !
 Breathed for a space, and on a moonless night
 Went word for the assault ; a camisado ;
 Shirts on our habergeons, a throng of ghosts,
 We scaled the battlements ; the ancient goose
 Challenged the former Gaul, had yield her room
 To men-at-arms ; the gallant Bourbon fell,
 Through-shotten by a rascal silversmith,
 Cellini Benvenuto, most Malvenuto then.
 With him fell my employment. Back to my task ;
 A hungry brood sate homefast, beaks agape ;
 My whinyard for an inkhorn once again.

LAMBERT. And Rome ?

CROMWELL. We sacked her.

LAMBERT. The booty ?

CROMWELL. Spent in a night.

One said I'd served him, served me then

And placed me by the Cardinal. I throve ;
 Deemed myself powerful, Wolsey's friend,
 This lamentable prelate, who but now
 Kneeled in the mixen to his Grace's lackey.
 Oh, I would conjure ! In my dreams I touched
 The pinnacle, and lo, the temple fell.
 Now to the Court to salve my Master's wounds ;
 And then I'll school my heart to humbleness,
 Plant herbs, and learn my babes their criss-cross
 row.

LAMBERT. And I'll stand hammering at thy gate
 the while
 To call thee forth.

CROMWELL. What would you ?

LAMBERT. Spread the light
 By all the oaths that bind, man ! thou art ours !

CROMWELL. What boots it ?

LAMBERT. The hour is ripe.

CROMWELL. Go, hawk thy books,
 And teach a wench or two blaspheme the mass,
 Yell on the rack and feed unprofitable fires.

LAMBERT. The day of books is done ; we'll bawl the
 truth
 In every market-place.

CROMWELL. Smithfield the next.

LAMBERT. Another would have said, Cromwell's
 afraid.

CROMWELL. Ay, marry,
 Afraid to fail where he has spied success.
 What boots it, lad, to scatter truth in drops,
 Parched even in falling by the jealous sun,
 When we might pour a mighty flood along
 Would wash the whole world clean ? I almost
 held

The sluice-pole in my hand when Wolsey fell.

LAMBERT. But Wolsey fell.

CROMWELL. Oh, thou wouldst make me out
 The innest thoughts myself do blush to look on.
 What if Madonna Fortune smile again?
 They say she dwells in Courts; I'll seek her there;
 Make friends for Wolsey, I make them for myself;
 From small at first, I'll grow to such a head,
 O'ertopping all resistance, break all dams,
 And swim to freedom, maugre the King's own teeth.

LAMBERT. Dreamer!

CROMWELL. There's hereticks there, Sir Thomas
 Boleyn,
 My Lady's father . . .

LAMBERT. He's a Lutheran!

CROMWELL. Anon?

LAMBERT. A worser tyranny than Rome
 Fettering to the tangled script.

CROMWELL. Content;
 Yet where there's war, with these or those be
 ranged,
 Else perish.

LAMBERT. Resist not evil, said the Christ;
 Devil fight devil, truth is in the midst.

CROMWELL. And trampled in the fray.

LAMBERT. We must have faith!

CROMWELL. A fig for faith!

Enter CAVENDISH with a bag.

How now?

CAVENDISH. The horses wait.

CROMWELL. (*To LAMBERT*) Ride thou with us; we'll
 more of this anon.

(*To CAVENDISH*) This budget?

CAVENDISH. Stuffed with gear to gild the palms
 Of Councillors.

CROMWELL. 'Tis well.

LAMBERT. You buy opinions ?
CROMWELL. Not I ! In this fool world we judge by
number ;
Opinion's free ; I buy but those have none,
Or none worth having.

Enter two YEOMEN with RAT.

YEOMAN. Master, and the spy ?
CROMWELL. Loose him ; he rides with me.
YEOMAN. What, go uncutdugged ?
CROMWELL. (*To the SPY*) By your favour. Faith,
Jack, I'm glad of thee.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE 1

At Court; in a hall with a throne set. TALBOT,
COURTIERS and LADIES.

TALBOT. That's by the way. Where was I?

1ST LADY. All astray.

2ND LADY. The prologue's overlong; come to the
play.

Enter JANE SEYMOUR and a LADY

1ST LADY. Here's Talbot fresh from Ampthill and
the Queen.

3RD LADY. Queen Katharine?

JANE. Poor lady, she is sad?

TALBOT. Why, marry, yes,

If laughing, dancing and good appetite
Be signs of grief. Spring comes to her in
Autumn;

Wived to Prince Arthur, widowed, wived again
Ere she had learned what is't to be a child,
She bowed her head to wedlock as a flower
Too early budded bows to the snows of March.

Oh, she was meek and still; but at the last,
When she was like to see her maid a Queen,
Herself beshent, her child abastardised,
The proud Castilian lion stirred in her,
Awoke and sprang to battle for its cub.

Her passing triumph works in her like wine;
She bids the night be day, day holiday;
She drives abroad against her former wont,
With smiles and bows and wafting of the hand,
That pink of princesses, that piece of starch,

That crab-tree sapling, Mary, at her side ;
 And all the people cry, God save the Queen,
 And blow her greasy kisses. While the King
 Sits glooming here, like fairy prince bewitched,
 In magic fetters, elling and forlorn ;
 And hotfoot heralds speed the farthest roads,
 Trumpeting half his realm and all his love,
 To whoso find the spell-relenting word
 Shall loose the web cast round him by the witch.
 The gentle Wolsey, pregnant of the phrase,
 But licked his lips to speak, when black Campeggio
 Revoked the cause to Rome. He fell. Who next ?
 LADY. The rumour runs . . .

Enter BOLEYN

TALBOT. But mark where Boleyn walks.
 Ho, ho ! he's proud, he's happy ;
 His legs are eloquent and blab state secrets ;
 His lips will still be smiling, wring them as he may.
 He's Baron, Viscount, Earl, and God knows else,
 For what desert, but the begetting Anne ?
 What, Boleyn ! (*Admiring his clothes*)
 Here's a dainty piece of tailor-craft ;
 This tabby swims like water in the sun.

BOLEYN. You like it ? 'Tis from Paris.

TALBOT. Come, sirrah, what's the best news with
 you ? Are you to be the grandfather of Kings ? Let
 us walk in the upper gallery, ladies ; here come some
 suitors against his Grace's coming forth.
 At noon when audience ends we bait the bear
 That Suffolk brought from Calais. Will you
 walk ?

[*Exeunt OMNES*]

Enter CRANMER with two pupils, YEOMEN

CRANMER. (*To a YEOMAN*) I pray you, bring me to my Lord Gardiner, the King's secretary. Tell him that Master Cranmer, the poor clerk he wots of, is here at his bidding. I would I were a thousand miles away.

(*Two YEOMEN look at him disdainfully, laugh together and saunter off*)

Enter CROMWELL and CAVENDISH with a YEOMAN

CROMWELL. (*To 3rd YEOMAN*) Fly, sirrah, fly! This plume shall wing thy feet. (*Giving him a coin*)

CAVENDISH. Then all our hope is fixed in Gardiner.

CROMWELL. Why, who should speed our suit so well as Gardiner?

A man lives not more bounden to his like
Than Gardiner to Wolsey: he was naught,
A go-by-ground that Wolsey lifted up,
Cocked and cherished; fatted him with honours,
And set him by the King. Then who more apt
To serve the Cardinal than Gardiner?

CAVENDISH. Why, this is truth, yet spoken mockingly.

CROMWELL. Cromwell a mocker? Fie! (*Seeing CRANMER*) Whom have we here?

CRANMER. I crave your pardon, sir, if we do wrong being in this place.

CROMWELL. No wrong to me, Domine. You have a suit to the King?

CRANMER. Marry, not I, sir; a thousand griefs would never have brought me willingly here; but Master Fox and Master Gardiner, the King's secretary, with whom you are out of doubt acquaint?

CROMWELL. A little, sir.

CRANMER. These two lay a night at Waltham where

I taught these children, and I being questioned by them at supper as touching the King's suit of divorce, showed them my poor mind in the matter, which, they being pleased to applaud, Master Gardiner thereafter rapt me to London, though sorely loath, bidding me wait on him here this morning to confer more largely in the same behalf. I muse he tarry so long in coming.

CROMWELL. Behold his Reverence.

Enter GARDINER; a lean, pale man with deep black eyes, dressed in a close-fitting black bishop's robe and cap.

CRANMER. My name is Cranmer.

GARDINER. Go wait in the antechamber.

[*Exit CRANMER*

(*TALBOT and two LADIES appear in a balcony above, looking down*)

CROMWELL. (*Ceremoniously*) Master Gardiner,
The Cardinal commends him to your love.

GARDINER. As I to his.

CROMWELL. And bids me sue your favour.

GARDINER. Command what my scant power can afford.

CROMWELL. Sithen no suitor dare, on pain of durance,

Present his plaint unpatroned at the Throne,
I, whose poor breath must plead for Wolsey here,
Beseech your Reverence, be sponsor to my suit.

GARDINER. Sir, though the ancient love I bear your master,

Still undiminished by his just disgrace,
Be strong to push me from my duty's rule,
Yet must my charge to minister the law
Forbid me urge exception from the law

For private love or favour. Gardiner weeps,
 Gardiner would do all, but Master Secretary
 Dare not be swayed. Command me in all else.
 CROMWELL. Would that the King had others such
 to serve him !

GARDINER. How fares his Grace's health ?

CROMWELL. Why, bravely, bravely ;
 He sings, he laughs, hugs ruin like a wench.

GARDINER. Sir ?

CROMWELL. Why, Stephen, friend, are we all mad ?
 The house afire, and we stand chapping courtesies
 Like mummers in a Christmas interlude ?

God save thy soul, if thou have soul to save !
 I tell thee, fellow-serving-man, the Master
 Who served us as we him these many years
 Is like to die for want of Henry's grace ;
 Away with ceremony, fellow, come !
 We'll fling us side by side at Henry's feet,
 Deafen his ears with such a storm of speech,
 Drown him with floods of tears, till he be fain
 To grant the thing we ask for very fear.

GARDINER. I answer once again, it is impossible.
 You do not know the King ; his heart is fixed.
 If Holy Thomas' self trudged up from Canterbury
 His instance were in vain. To plead for Wolsey
 Is to enrage him, lose the little power
 I yet may have to benefit my friends.

CROMWELL. This is not Stephen speaks ; some felon
 sprite
 Loosed from a courtier's carcass hanged for
 thieving

Hath stole his image to deface his honour.

GARDINER. I speak my very mind.

CROMWELL. You speak your fears
 But not your mind. Come, I have asked too
 much ;

I bate the better half : I'll plead alone ;
 But say : " Here's one I knew in worsers days,
 A sort of rogue that hath a suit to urge,
 I take no part in him."

GARDINER. You waste your breath ;
 His treason is too rank, too palpable ;
 To plead for him is partner to his crime.
 I cannot nor I dare not lift a finger
 To fish him from the abysm.

CROMWELL. Why, Stephen, man,
 Have you no bowels ? Are you not made of flesh ?
 Are clerks not men ? And did your chaste
 renouncement
 Banish your blood and fill your veins with whey ?
 Have you no pity, stockfish ? Wolsey sues
 That never wont to sue but to be sued ;
 And sues to what ? To Gardiner !
 This fallen, broken, pitiful old man
 Humbles himself to what himself did make,
 A bastard from the kennel, washed and wiped,
 Set in a stall to be a bishop. Lo,
 The thing takes state upon it, pleads his office,
 Must not be turned aside by private favour,
 Draws in his skirt for fear it be defiled,
 And leaves his uplifter sprawling in the mire.
 Why, this is the very snow-bound peak of false-
 ness,
 By which all other villainy's flat virtue,
 Bawdry is honest, thieves and murderers saints.

GARDINER. O Cromwell ; these be bitter words
 indeed ;

And yet I bear no malice. All my thought
 Is bent to serve the cause by gentler means
 That you would mar with clumsy eloquence.
 Tho' open pleading would but hasten harm,
 My nearness to the King will lend occasion,

Whenas we seem to talk of other gear,
 To touch a word in season; by the way,
 To mitigate his doom. Go back to Esher:
 Let my poor wit, more homely to the Court,
 Be the attorney of our common suit.

CROMWELL. Go to, thou subtle shaveling; well I
 know

The serpent-drift hid in thy flowered words.
 Not love of safety moves thee, but ambition
 To make a stepping-stone of Wolsey's fall,
 And clamber to the place he tumbled from.
 Begone! lest these my hands forget their nice-
 ness

And stain their honour in a villain's blood.

GARDINER. So be it; I have offered amity;
 If enmity, I am not all unarmed.
 Farewell.

CROMWELL. Fare ill, thou piece of holy treachery.
 [*Exit GARDINER*]

CAVENDISH. Here's a fine gear. We come hither to
 seek friends and straight you raise us an enemy.

CROMWELL. Tilly vally, man. 'Tis the first furni-
 ture of a courtier. Such an enemy as Gardiner
 is seven friends.

Enter TALBOT

TALBOT. Why, this was well done, worshipful
 gentleman. I say this was gallantly done. To
 hear Master Secretary so beknaved, bevillained,
 beshavelinged. What? "Washed and wiped"?
 Oh, this was a rare gleek. Are you not that
 Master Cromwell that attended the Cardinal here
 at the Court?

CROMWELL. Oh, my Lord, I stood once or twice
 among the servitors.

TALBOT. No servitor, sir! You sate in the Parliament House; I mind it well.

CROMWELL. Are you not that Sir John Talbot that was kind to my master?

TALBOT. Marry; sir, I recall no special service.

CROMWELL. The Cardinal's heart keeps better register. He bade me bring you a trifling recompense or he be quite beggared.

TALBOT. A recompense?

CROMWELL. The Rectory of Camden Regis: here be the muniments; a gift all unworthy the acceptance; yet take it in gree, for tho' small in itself, yet is it big with his blessing.

TALBOT. What; Rector of Camden Regis?

CROMWELL. Your duty to receive the greater tithes, no more.

TALBOT. No other duty?

CROMWELL. None but that of receiving.

TALBOT. 'Tis pity. Lord! I could preach them such a sermon. 'Washed and wiped'! In thank for those two words I'll even present you to the King myself for your suit as Gardiner would not.

CROMWELL. I am most bounden to your gentleness.

TALBOT. Go to. Ka me ka thee. Give-gave is a trusty dog.

The King will be here anon; and we shall know
How standeth the matter of the divorce.

His Majesty looketh lickerishly at Mistress Anne Boleyn; like a hungry tie-dog at a bone; but 'tis a proud bone and saith, Break me thy chain first. I'se warrant you we see a pretty comedy played here, Mas Crumple, and all deeply prepared beforehand: the King threatening to pare his crown and turn monk, and Lincoln beseeching him to overcome his known love of chastity for

the sake of his people. I shall have all the pains in the world to forbear laughing. But see, here comes the Court.

Enter the KING and COURT, ushered in by SIR THOMAS BOLEYN.

Yonder comes haughty Norfolk with the evil eye ; there's Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, that married the King's sister out of France. Yon ancient all-bones is the Duke of Lincoln that's to play old Vice in the comedy. And this (*pointing to himself*) is the Rector of Camden Regis. Stand by me here and seem not to know me.

(HENRY *ascends the throne*)

HENRY. My lords and friends, the shepherds of my folk,

Whose duty is make known our sovran will
And not the secret springs which gave it motion ;
Now, forasmuch as idle rumours run,
Touching the motives of our suit to Rome,
Of our good grace and favour unconstrained
We will declare our inward thought therein.
A child, and yet unversed in Holy Writ,
I entered yoke, a score of summers since,
In humble duty to my father's will,
With Princess Katharine of Aragon,
The youthful widow of my brother Arthur.
The curse of barrenness decreed of Heaven
On such a sinful bed was shown in us—
Each after other our expected issue
Perished in birth ;
One only daughter, Mary, mocked our hopes.
Prickt in my tender conscience I have sought
A remedy, where remedy should be ;
For who should be so forward as the Pope,

The earthly minister of Law Divine,
 To loose a sinner from the mesh of sin ?
 Yet all in vain ; his wayward Holiness
 Brands me my daughter bastard, but denies
 To rid me from the bond that made her so.
 If it be Heaven's will that I should pay
 The penance of my all unwitting crime
 By stern renouncement of the joys of love,
 My June of manhood turned to barren winter,
 My flower of life wilted in monkish gloom,

(The COURTIERs murmur)

Go to, you know my temper ; I am chaste ;
 Not passion moveth me, nor light desire,
 To wanton changefully from sweet to sweet.

(The COURTIERs murmur again)

Let it be so ; I bow to the decree.
 But, by the blood which bought us, nevermore
 Will I return, for all the Popes in Heaven,
 To her that never was, but seemed, my wife.
 Henceforth let no man speak of her as Queen ;
 She is not Queen, nor never has been Queen.
 So ; I have spoken ; let your tongues proclaim
 My royal pleasure in the people's ear.

LINCOLN. Most dread our sovran, yours it is to
 speak,

Ours but to hearken. Yet give me leave awhile
 To thank your Grace for these your gracious
 words,

And Heaven which sent the comfortable balm
 Of loving friends and trusty counsellors
 To heal your wounded spirit in its need.

HENRY. Our friends are thanked, and let our thanks
 be known.

Sir Thomas Boleyn, use henceforth the style
 Of Earl of Wiltshire, with all pertaining rights ;
 Be Mistress Boleyn, Marchioness of Pembroke.

COURTIERS. Good joy, my lady! God give you joy of it!

TALBOT. Did I not say so?

HENRY. You look but poorly, Marchioness; seat you here.

(ANNE *sits on the steps of the throne*)

PATCH. (To ANNE) Long live your Majesty!

HENRY. Take that sad fool away.

[*Exit* PATCH]

LINCOLN. Sith I have spoken, let me speak my fill.

(*Kneeling*)

O Majesty, have pity on your people,
Whose dearest hope a prince of Henry's blood,
Whose chiefest fear to see the Tudor rose,
The flower of peace, blown on the battlefield
Of ever-warring York and Lancaster,
Wither and make the world a wilderness
When jealous Heaven reave you to itself.

HENRY. What would you, Lincoln?

LINCOLN. Banish your chaste resolve.

Let England's universal prayer prevail
Where earthly appetite is impotent.
Queen us a queen in place of the unqueened,
And make us princes of the Tudor blood.

HENRY. My people's good hath ever been my law.

But even were I fain to yield in this,
To steal from Heaven the dedicated gift
And leave austerity for fruitfulness,
Yet were the doing all unpossible
Whiles I am fettered by the ancient bond,
Still, if my people will it, stir your brains
And make impossible be possible.

Farewell, my lords. (*Rising*)

GARDINER. Most gracious King.

TALBOT. Your Majesty.

HENRY. Speak, Talbot.

TALBOT. (*Leading CROMWELL forward by the hand—
CROMWELL kneels*) Here's one that hath a suit to
urge.

HENRY. I hearken, sirrah.

CROMWELL. Your Highness' Grace, I plead for one
has erred

Most grievously against your Majesty.
He doth confess the justice of your wrath,
And prays for what the King alone can give,
For mercy, mercy for his foul offence.

HENRY. Who is the man ?

CROMWELL. The Cardinal.

HENRY. What Cardinal ?

CROMWELL. Wolsey, the fallen.

HENRY. And the justly fallen.

You plead in vain. The law, not I, condemned
him,

Let him entreat the Law.

CROMWELL. In vain, my liege ;
The Law can render him his goods again,
Lands, houses, gold and such despised pelf,
But not the breath of life, your Grace's favour.

HENRY. He hath offenced our kingly privilege
And breached the bulwarks of the written law,
By suing licence at the Court of Rome
To wield the power of legate in our realm.

CROMWELL. Yet only on your Majesty's behalf,
To judge your Grace's cause against the Queen.

HENRY. And judged it ill.

CROMWELL. How could he grant a suit
Pleaded so ill ?

HENRY. Ill pled ?

CROMWELL. By Gardiner.

GARDINER. Your Grace . . .

HENRY. Peace, sirrah. But for Wolsey's fault
My cause had had no further need of judgment.

He was ambitious, would be Pope himself,
And so provoked the Pope to cast my suit.

CROMWELL. Ambition is no sin. He would be Pope
Only to serve your Majesty. The fault
Was his whose indiscreetness published it
To all the world.

HENRY. Whose ?

CROMWELL. Who but Gardiner ?

HENRY. You are a sorry courtier. These good folk,
As much beholden to his Grace as you,
Men that have fattened on his benefits,
Yet not a one of them hath lift his voice ;
And you, his serving-man . . . Why, know you
not

'Tis wooing bale to plead for fallen men ?

CROMWELL. Fallen myself I needs must feel for him.

HENRY. This is a faithful fellow. What's your
name ?

CROMWELL. Cromwell ; yet would that it were
Gardiner.

HENRY. Still on that string ? Interpret.

CROMWELL. Side by side

We served the Cardinal, lived in his light,
Both equal bounden by the knot of love.

How all unmeet that I, the humble usher,
Disgrace your Highness' presence by my suit,
While he, grown great, stands silent and aloof !

HENRY. There's sooth in this. If he be false to
Wolsey,

'Tis like that he prove false to Henry too.

How fares the Cardinal ?

CROMWELL. Grown thin and wan.

HENRY. What, Wolsey wan ?

CROMWELL. For lacking of your favour ;
Sans sleep, sans appetite, and like to die.

HENRY. What, he is ill ? You knew it, Gardiner ;

'Tis Wolsey's crime not Wolsey moves our wrath.
Ho, a physician straight to wait on Wolsey.
What, Wolsey ill?

BOLEYN. 'Tis too much favour, Liege.

HENRY. Ha : none but asses spurn the fallen lion.
Ill, say you, sirrah? Ill, and like to die?
Send five physicians more.

CROMWELL. Physic is vain,
Without your Grace's favour.

HENRY. Why, we love him;
Take him this ring in token of my love.
Send him a token, Anne.

ANNE. Sir?

HENRY. I command it.

ANNE. I love him not, sir.

HENRY. Do as I bid you; here, your girdle's owch;
Quick, or I snatch it. (*Taking it*) These to Wol-
sey's hands.

CROMWELL. Had I the tongue of angels, gracious
Lord,

I should but mar my thanks in telling them.

HENRY. (*Rising, to the LORDS*) What else?

GARDINER. A certain Master Cranmer, Liege.

HENRY. Ha! the learned clerk that had counsel to
propound in the matter of the divorce. I'll hear
him by and by in my closet. (*To CROMWELL, who
is bowing himself out*) Stay, sirrah; you shall hear
him too, and show me your opinion thereon.
Come.

[*Exeunt* HENRY, GARDINER, CROMWELL,
MORE and TALBOT

COURTIERS. (*To each other*) Good morrow.

God give ye good day.

CRANMER. (*Led across by an USHER*) What, withouten
my velvet cloak? Would I were safely back at
Waltham.

SCENE 2

(COURTIERS *conversing*)*Enter* TALBOT

COURTIERS. Whence come you, gentle Sir John ?

TALBOT. From the King's closet, whither mine office called me.

COURTIERS. Hast thou heard aught ?

TALBOT. Marry, have I. I have walked in the inner chambers of the King's confidence as touching the matter of the divorce.

COURTIERS. (A.) What said they ?

(B.) Let us hear all.

TALBOT. Marry, the most part of what they saiden was more than a bowshot beyond the reach of my poor entendiment, that had not clergy enough to unravel the long tangled skeins of their schoolman Latin ; yet can I deliver you the pith of the business in few words.

COURTIERS. (A.) We know thy few.

(B.) Speak on, Laconian.

TALBOT. First spake Master Parson, whose worthy name I put somewhat into oblivion.

COURTIERS. Cranmer.

TALBOT. Ay, Cranmer ; so it was.

COURTIERS. What said Master Parson ?

TALBOT. The voice of the Church, quod he, is the voice of all good churchmen ; nor is her wisdom all boxed in the Pope's sconce. Ergo, let his Grace appeal first in the matter of the divorce to the doctors of the Church in Christendom about. And having gathered their opinions in his favour, of which there is no doubt, he will thereby enforce

the Pope to favour his cause, seeing that his Holiness must needs say yea to what all Christendom voucheth to be Truth and Justice, or else seem untrue and unjust himself.

COURTIERS. What said the King?

TALBOT. His Grace vouchsafed answer that the learned clerk had the right sow by the ear.

COURTIERS. (A.) 'Twas well said.

(B.) Ay, a very handsome answer.

(A.) And then what?

TALBOT. And then Master Cromwell being bidden to speak uttered good honest English breath; saying that the Bishop of Rome was no more than another bishop, saving for his usurped right, and if the doctors of Christendom were all agreed the Pope might go wipe his nose; with much more of the same kind, at which the King was mightily pleased. But here they come; say nothing, but mum.

Enter HENRY, with his arm about MORE's neck, followed by CROMWELL and others.

HENRY. I like the fellow's wit. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." Am I not Caesar?

CROMWELL. (*Bowing himself out*) Majesty, by your gracious leave.

HENRY. Nay, by this light, sirrah, thou shalt not part so. Let me have the knave about the Court. I have need of such as thee. Find him some charge, I prithee, good Sir Thomas; clerk of the jewels, the hanaper, or God knows what.

CROMWELL. What of my message to his Grace the Cardinal?

HENRY. Let honest Butts pack it up with his physic. I cannot lack thee.

CROMWELL. I am humbly beholden to your Majesty.

HENRY. "Render unto Caesar!" 'Tis too little yet; here, a sword, a sword!

CROMWELL. I am of humble birth, your Majesty.

HENRY. Tut, man; we are all made o' dirt. Ha! A sword, I say! Here, bail me thy bilbo, Norfolk. What's the fellow's name?

CROMWELL. Thomas, your Grace.

HENRY. (*Dubbing him*) Rise up; Sir Thomas. (*The COURTIERS gather about CROMWELL to congratulate him*) Come your ways, friends; the bearpit cries for us.

[*Exeunt all but CROMWELL and LAMBERT*]

CROMWELL. What say you, doubter, now? Whether was best,

To crawl and creep by inches to the goal,
Or fly like a silver bolt shot heaven high
Full in the clout? O gentle Lady Fortune,
Is Cromwell knight? I'll wear thy favour; sweet,
And split the gorge of all who call thee jade;
Fickle or froward. Couch thy lance, Sir Enemy;
Have at thee, Jack!

LAMBERT. Peace, peace.

CROMWELL. I'll garr the King
So knit me to his soul, thinken my thought,
Doen my deed, as wear the crown myself.
I am made, made, made!

LAMBERT. Marred, marred, marred!
Alas, poor bird, thy foot is in the net.

CROMWELL. Sir Thomas now, scant Goodman
Cromwell once;
Bred in a stithy, Tom the farrier's son
That wed the walker's wench Jane Wellyfed.
Alack, poor Jenny! Come, we'll not be
proud;

We'll not be dazzled by this metal's gleam,
But forge a sword to let the daylight in.

LAMBERT. Farewell, poor Tom; there's no more
help in thee;

I'll go my way alone.

CROMWELL. And I'll go mine.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1

At Court. ANNE BOLEYN, KATHARINE HOWARD, JANE SEYMOUR, SIR JOHN TALBOT, NORRIS, BRERETON, SMEATON *at the virginals.* LADY ROCHFORD, *dressed in black, sits apart telling her beads and watching the rest. Laughter and music as the curtain rises.* NORRIS and BRERETON kneel before ANNE BOLEYN, who holds a ribbon.

SMEATON. (*Singing*) "I mun be married o' Sunday,
I mun be married o' Sunday,
Whosoever shall come this way,
I mun be married o' Sunday."
(*From "Roister-Doister."*)

ANNE. Whose shall it be ?

BRERETON. 'Twas I that spied it.

NORRIS. I that picked it up.

ANNE. 'Twas I that dropped it, therefore *c'est à moi.*

NORRIS and BRERETON. No, no !

ANNE. Peace, all of you.

NORRIS and BRERETON. 'Tis mine.

ANNE. Have done !

Yours, Mark, for other such a song.

SMEATON. Anon !

(*Making eyes at her, singing sentimentally*)

"*Noli me tangere, for I am Caesar's.*"

ANNE. Not that !

TALBOT. Give it to me.

NORRIS. You are too old.

BRERETON. Too fat !

TALBOT. Deem ye there be no gallants but yourselves ?

Et ego "militavi non sine gloria."

JANE. A forfeit !

TALBOT. Why ?

JANE. For quoting scripture.

TALBOT. *(Kissing her)* Paid !

Enter GARDINER

BRERETON. But mark where Gardiner comes.

*(NORRIS snatches the ribbon and runs with it ;
ANNE pursues him)*

SMEATON. A chase ! A chase !
(He plays hunting-horns on the virginals)

ANNE. *(Stopping at sight of GARDINER and curt-
seying)* Good-morrow, Monseigneur.

GARDINER. *Pax tecum; domina.*

SMEATON. *(Sings)* " Elisha walked by Kishon's side,
And there a maiden fair espied."

ANNE. *Tais-toi*, Mark.

LADY ROCHFORD. *(To GARDINER)* Now see you with
your proper eyes that of which I made report to
you.

GARDINER. Is the King not yet come forth ?

LADY ROCHFORD. He cometh anon. My Lord of
Norfolk is with him even now, entreating him
to set you in Warham's place as Archbishop of
Canterbury.

GARDINER. Ay, does he so ? The Lord knoweth
that I desire this not from any movement of
carnal pride, but only to His greater glory. In
these perilous times better I than Latimer;
Shaxton; Bonner or any others of them that
follow the new learning.

Enter SIR THOMAS BOLEYN; with a long white wand.

BOLEYN. Make a lane there; my lords and masters,
make way for his Highness' Grace the King.

Enter HENRY with NORFOLK and MORE, both in black; after them CRANMER and CROMWELL humbly.

HENRY. Good-morrow, friends. What, pretty pignie, Nance ?

And who be these two fairs that wait on you ?

ANNE. This is Jane Seymour, *dame de mes atours* ;
This saucy chit, my cousin, Katharine Howard.

(HENRY talks with JANE SEYMOUR)

(To MORE) You look unfriendly on me, good Sir Thomas.

MORE. Good madam, I look friendly on my friends.

ANNE. Oh, fie ! Do they use ladies so in Utopia ?

GARDINER. (To CRANMER) Master Cranmer,

No further need for you about the Court ;

Your work is done ; depart in peace to Waltham.

CRANMER. Glory to God ! Would that I had been there these three months that I have been travelling the Universities, gathering the opinions of the Doctors on the Divorce.

GARDINER. Your work has been well done ; the King and I are content with you.

HENRY. Come hither ; Master Gardiner. Right worthily

Hast served thy charge of secretary ; but now

Give me your ring ; I've other gear for you.

NORFOLK. (To LADY ROCHFORD) Said I not so ?

HENRY. Too long the room is void

That much behoves my realm and me to fill.

Subtle and cunning ; deep in craft of state,

And skilled to wring thy face to courtesy,

Who fitter ?

GARDINER. If it be your Grace's will.

HENRY. Prepare to travel.

GARDINER. Travel, Sire ?

HENRY. To France,
In embassy to Francis' Court.

GARDINER. But, Sire,
What of my flock, my See of Winchester ?

HENRY. Wanting thy help, must save their souls
themselves.

GARDINER. Humble and hearty thanks, my Liege.

HENRY. (*Dryly*) Anon.

CRANMER. Your Highness' Grace, permit me to
depart.

At Waltham wait my scholars twain.

HENRY. But twain ?

What's twain to Gardiner's flock ? Tarry, sir
priest ;

There's work for thee. I've marked thee wise
and humble,

Simple and holy, innocent of guile,

Not quarrelsome, nor greedy of men's praise ;

A Christly pattern meet for a Christly room.

Fling horn-books hence, thy schoolroom for a
see,

Thy rod a crook, bishops not babes thy charge.

CRANMER. Good Master !

HENRY. Take the throne of Canterbury.

CRANMER. Spare me, my Lord, for I am far unfit ;
Nolo episcopari.

HENRY. *Sed debetis.*

CRANMER. Hear me at large.

HENRY. I'll hear but not be moved.

Come forth, the sun shall daysman our debate ;

Come, Nance, and ripe thy peaches in his ray ;

Come, Cromwell, by my side.

[*Exeunt* HENRY, CRANMER and CROMWELL

ANNE. You too, Sir Thomas ?

MORE. Black robes gay not the day.

ANNE.

Nor black looks neither.

[*Exeunt ANNE, KATHARINE, JANE, TALBOT, BOLEYN, SMEATON, BRERETON and NORRIS*]

Enter SUITOR and YEOMAN

YEOMAN. (*To MORE*) A suitor, my Lord Chancellor.

SUITOR. (*Reading a paper*) Gravissimo, doctissimo, illustrissimo, jucundissimo, reverendissimo domino Thomaso Moro, ordinis equestris ornamento prae-stantissimo, ego, Johannes Higgs, specierum mercator . . .

MORE. Prithee, good friend, an thou've a suit to urge, Waste not thine eloquence on me. Too late ; My sun is set ; seek those that have supplant me.

[*Exeunt MORE, the SUITOR, and the YEOMAN, leaving GARDINER, NORFOLK, LADY ROCHFORD*]

NORFOLK. This then is the fruit of all our pains.

GARDINER. The old order still tottereth to his ruin ; the true faith is made the mocking-stock of her enemies.

NORFOLK. Little hath Wolsey's downfall profited the good cause.

LADY ROCHFORD. Strange is it that this same Howard blood which hath wrought so much good for England should wreak at the same time so much ill. It is your niece, Anne Boleyn, Norfolk, that is the cause of all our present woes.

NORFOLK. A plague light on her !

LADY ROCHFORD. The fagots blaze in Smithfield for hereticks not half so pestilent.

NORFOLK. The King's affections are too firmly set on her for us to shake them.

GARDINER. Yet, if he should but doubt her ! The greater his love, the greater the bitterness of any untruth in her.

LADY ROCHFORD. Marry, if he but knew in what disports she passeth her time away ! What, did we not see her with our own eyes even now, Gardiner ? Smeaton, Brereton, Norris, do these men not love her ?

NORFOLK. Their fault availeth nothing, if she be innocent herself.

GARDINER. All were it she be spotless as a lamb, yet, if his Grace believe her guilty, then were she undone.

LADY ROCHFORD. He speaketh sooth.

NORFOLK. What can we do, Gardiner ?

GARDINER. I; nothing ; for under colour of embassy I am banished from the realm. Yet can ye do much, an ye will ; laying springs and snares for these same dawcocks with the bait of their own vanity, as making them believe that she favoureth their amorous propensions, whereby they may be lured on to such a pitch of foolishness as shall cast the reflection of guilt upon her also.

NORFOLK. Why, this were a merry pastime !

LADY ROCHFORD. A merry pastime indeed, Norfolk ; and I look to enjoy it without tract of time.

GARDINER. And so, fare ye well ; for I must be about preparing my journey into France.

[Exit GARDINER

SCENE 2

CROMWELL, *with a book alone.*

CROMWELL. “ Chi vuole per il principe regnar.”

“ For who would govern by the Prince's mean
Must let the Prince still seem to have his way.”

Ay, say you so, good Master Machiavelli ?

To sound the Prince's mind, outrun his wish,
 To know that treacherous river's pilotage,
 His flow and ebb and where the shallows lie,
 Shunning the wrecker marks of specious words,
 As duty, justice, and high-sounding names
 That dwell on princes' lips. Ay, I can do it,
 Can do my task, set Thought the prisoner free;
 Thought that should rule the world, and now his
 slave,

Fettered with law and custom, priest and faith.
 This was the task of all the prophets gone,
 And still of all the hereticks to come.
 For heretick and prophet, each the same;
 Christ was a heretick once, and still to-day.
 They slew him, ay, and slew his doctrine too,
 And built a cozening Church and called it his,
 And said he'd come again and know it for his own;
 Yet he, once dead, returns no more, but sits
 In heaven above, and weeps for the deceit.
 Better have lived, better have made it sure,
 Made friends of Herod; swayed his sceptred hand,
 Than herd with slaves, be crucified and fail . . .
 "Chi vuole per il principe regnar,"
 "Must let the Prince still seem to have his way."
 Ay, so he shall! Have women, money, love,
 Whate'er his heart desire; and we'll have Free-
 dom.

Enter CAVENDISH and SADLER

CAVENDISH. Good-morrow, Cromwell, you are
 strangely moved;
 By what mischance, or loss of hoped-for gain?
 Or pictured passion in the book you read
 That makes you start and commune with your-
 self?

CROMWELL. The book, boy? Ay, the book; my breviary.

And spake aloud? Conning my matin-song.
What is it, Cavendish?

CAVENDISH. You too turned saint?

CROMWELL. The poor man hath no friend but Heaven. Who's this?

CAVENDISH. My uncle Sadler, and a boon of thee.

CROMWELL. A boon?

CAVENDISH. The place of gaoler at the Tower.

CROMWELL. Ay, Compton's dead. Why, sir, if your deserts

And my poor word could win the thing you ask . . .

SADLER. Doubt of your will, but not your power to help.

CROMWELL. Come, seek a better patron to your quest.

This boy, unversed in Courts, seeing me knight,
Clerk of the Hanaper, and such small beer,
Deems that I sit among the cherubim,
And wear Jove's thunders tucked beneath my belt.

Enter TALBOT and SUITOR

TALBOT. Stand ye merry, your Mayships. Give ye good-morrow, Mas Crumple. What, Mas Candish too? (*To CROMWELL*) Wouldst thou hear words of rhetoric flow and compliments in *issimo*, mark me this man. Rehearse the catalogue of your superlatives, gentle sir.

SUITOR. Gravissimo, doctissimo, illustrissimo, jucundissimo, reverendissimo domino Thomaso Cromwellio . . .

CROMWELL. Is this Latin ?

SUITOR. Ay, good Latin, my lord.

CROMWELL. Speak it in English. This smacks too much of Rome.

SUITOR. You hate Rome, my lord ?

CROMWELL. Hate her ? I love the wench ; I sacked her once. But what is it ?

SUITOR. Marry, my lord, 'tis a document of mine own composing, tho' I be but a spicer.

CROMWELL. But what's the matter of it ?

SUITOR. The matter of it ? 'Tis a petition, worshipful sir, that you would vouchsafe me a certain request.

CROMWELL. Another suitor ? Why, Sir John, what maggot hath gotten into the wits of those about me this morning, that all with one accord come bringing me suits and suitors ? Did the world breakfast on henbane ? Do you take me for the Duke of Norfolk ?

TALBOT. The Duke of Norfolk—pah ! Ye have the moldwarp's een, Crummle. See ye not that ye be grown powerful ? You could work on the King an you would but try. Yestreen the King asked where Crummle was, called you a merry Greek and a man of hair, plucked you by the sleeve as he spake with you in his traverse ; small things, good mayster, but straws bewray the wind. . . . To our speedy meeting ; I have a merry tale I must go bear to Mistress Anne.

[*Exit* TALBOT

CAVENDISH. Will you grant my request, Cromwell ?

CROMWELL. Go to the office of the Hanaper. I'll be with you anon.

[*Exeunt* CAVENDISH, SADLER and SUITOR

CROMWELL. (*Alone*) What ; am I powerful ? Can I work wonders ?

Enter LAMBERT and other HERETICKS led by OFFICERS.

Jack Lambert, and in ward ? What gear is this ?
 OFFICER. A band of dangerous hereticks; my master.
 Arrested by Sir Thomas More's command
 To hold in the Chancery gaol.

CROMWELL. For what desert ?

LAMBERT. For saying bread was bread and wine
 was wine.

CROMWELL. Still the same headstrong fool !

LAMBERT. Ay, still the same,
 Still bawling in the mart, still bearding Rome,
 Still burning with the fury of the Lord,
 Not fearing aught that man can do to me.

OFFICER. Ay; marry; when we have you in the
 bracks

You'll sing another tune.

LAMBERT. A fico, friend !

The bracks may wring my flesh, but not my
 soul.

CROMWELL. (*To the OFFICER*) The bracks; manner-
 less varlet ? I'll brack you.

You'll hang, javel; an you but touch a hair of him.
 The bracks, ha ? They shall never hurt a hair,
 Believe me, Jack, for I'll stir heaven and
 hell . . .

LAMBERT. Nay, fear me not ; I'll answer them.

OFFICER. Along !

[Exeunt LAMBERT, OFFICERS and HERETICKS

CROMWELL. (*Alone*) Lambert in ward, in danger of
 the torment ?

And Cromwell powerful ? My time is come.

I'll see the King; and put it to the touch ;

I'll try my new-sprung wings to make or mar.

[Exit

SCENE 3

The KING'S Closet. HENRY and NORFOLK.

HENRY. I must have money, Norfolk, for the fleet,
Money for guns and muniments of war.

NORFOLK. Still money, Sire? Still water from the
rock?

HENRY. They say the envious Almain buildeth
ships;

The spite enkindled by our growing merchantry
Finds secret fuel in the Court of Rome,
Where Pontiff Clement, prickt by our defiance,
Feeds him with greedy hopes and promises
Of rebel help, to tempt our easy shore;

While we, with mildewed galleys; rusty guns,
And fortresses in ruin; sit and smile,
And trust to Heaven to save us in our sleep.

God helps who helps himself. I must have
money.

NORFOLK. Pity your people, Highness.

HENRY. Pity, forsooth?
What pity were it to let the invader in?

NORFOLK. Gentle and simple, franklins, chapmen,
churls,

Do choir in one the lamentable dump
Of aids, accises, tallies and gabells;
Their fleece still tattered from thy father's dogs
Is shorn skindeep for Scotch and Frankish wars,
Their markets shut and Nature self turned
stepdam.

The husbandman among his country kine
Looks on a scrannel field of empty husks
And languid awns wagged sadly in the wind.
Where there is naught, there's naught to take away.

HENRY. What, have my nobles bit so near the bone ?

Go to, for famine's self finds store at need.

Busy your brain to seek the magic word.

NORFOLK. I am no alchemist to conjure gold.

HENRY. What, rebel, wilt gainsay me? Deem'st I made thee

Chief of my Council, and my Treasury

For compliment and easy sinecure ?

Honour enough for us small fry; forsooth,

To deign to live and be thy father's son.

NORFOLK. My deeds by land and sea repugn the taunt.

HENRY. Basta, thou prating knave; I bid thee whist.

A minister's charge to minister not to parley;

Administer me gold, I prithee, minister,

Or I'll find those who can.

Enter CROMWELL

CROMWELL. Sovran, a boon !

HENRY. Welcome, Sir Thomas, what's your will with me ?

NORFOLK. I do beseek your Grace's patience yet To hear the upshot of my argument.

HENRY. What, shall I not be master of mine ears To choose with whom I speak? Out of my sight,

Thou insolence, until I bid thee come !

[Exit NORFOLK]

What is it, Cromwell ?

CROMWELL. As I walked but now

I'th' gallery, came catchpoll cursitors,

And in their midst, bound like a dangerous Turk,

Lambert, a learned clerk of Oxenford,

My heart's own friend, a holy, harmless man,
Haled to the Chancellor's Court for heresy.

HENRY. And thou wouldst have me pardon heresy ?

CROMWELL. Not pardon it; but have it duly judged.

If yours the Church; who wrongs the Church
wrongs you ;

Your courts must judge; and not a court of
priests.

Let Lambert answer in the common bench.

HENRY. What was his crime ?

CROMWELL.

Cleaving with Gospel shears

Some knot of gossamer spun in a schoolman's
brain.

HENRY. Beat on the window, call a yeoman here.

I will not look too nicely at his fault ;

Being thy friend, that merit pardons him.

CROMWELL. My life shall show my thank.

Enter YEOMAN

HENRY.

Go, Montague,

And bid Sir Thomas More attend me presently.

[Exit YEOMAN

Rede me a rede. The Emperor threatens war

And I, wanting its sinews, tremble the issue.

My treasury drained, my people faint with taxes,

What fount shall save us in the wilderness ?

CROMWELL. The fount that parched it.

HENRY.

What fount's that ?

CROMWELL. Look on your land, its goodly plenti-
tude,

Lush leas and spreading acres for the plow,

Your ports and havens thronging with the press

Of galleys, argosies, and caravels.

Would not a stranger say, oh, envied folk

Whose riches overflow upon their King ?

Yet they are poor forsooth, the swinking hind
 Garners his golden corn in alien barns,
 The merchant's toil fills coffers not his own.
 Only the priest is fat, and monks and freers
 That scrawl like Egypt frogs in every vale,
 Pilling and polling, horns and hoof and hide,
 With dime and tithe and fine and heriot,
 With trentals, obits, masses, chantries, alms,
 Pardons, and fees for leave be born or die ;
 Not they alone; the Pope still claims his share;
 In annates, entries, Romescot, Peterpence.
 How shall your folk be rich or you be free ?
 Rebél, and turn the red Pactolian flood
 Into your empty Treasure ; let your Church
 Look for its bounty to its bounty's head.

HENRY. Will this hold good in law ?

CROMWELL. And mark what follows ;

The priests dependent on your Grace's grace
 Must needs play true or lose by what they live.
 Bishops for almsmen, Pope for pensioner,
 Who shall gainsay you your supremacy ?
 The overmuch that swells their wanton pride
 Shall feed the general realm's necessities :
 With ships careened and furbished armaments,
 With fallen fortresses re-edified,
 The Emperor suing peace, the Irish quelled,
 The kilted Scots upon their naked knees,
 Commons contented, nobles and merchants rich,
 Your Court enhanced to fitting radiance,
 Outshining the ancient Field of Cloth of Gold,
 Were't not a sin to let the minute slip

That's laden with such blessings for your realm ?

HENRY. Get thee behind me, Satan ! How shall I,

The warden of the Church, pillage the Church ?

CROMWELL. Christ is a spirit, and his Church is
 spirit :

All that exceeds the spirit is worldly gear
Working against the spirit.

HENRY. The law dispones
Of worldly gear.

CROMWELL. The law gives all to you.

HENRY. Ha, is it true ?
Rehearse me what mine ears hunger to hear.

CROMWELL. Bishop and deacon, all your presbyters
Are guilty with the guilt that Wolsey owed.
If his usurped authority was treason.
Then equal treason their obedience ;
Their lives and goods all forfeit to the State ;
What lesser chastisement you grant is mercy.

HENRY. Taking so much, will not my people
murmur ?

CROMWELL. Begin with small ; and let the fear of more
Persuade them yield the lesser willingly.

I'll be your hound ; unleash me on the prey ;

I'll beard the Bishops in their parliament,

Make them forswear the Pope ; and for the nonce

We'll wipe them of a hundred thousand pounds.

HENRY. It shall be done. Tendering my subjects'
weal,

And for the greater glory of the Lord,

We'll take this gear in hand.

Enter MORE

Gentle Sir Thomas,

Pen me thy fairest Latin in a scroll

To Vicar Cromwell, vicar in my stead,

In all concerns my governance of the Church.

And let my servants know he holds the room

That lately Gardiner held of secretary.

(*To CROMWELL*) There is my ring.

CROMWELL. (*Kneeling*) Gramercy, Majesty.

MORE. (*Bowing*)

To hear is to obey.

HENRY. Lo, sweet my Chancellor, thine alway zeal
 To stint the noyous weed of heresy,
 Which else might choke the garden of the faith,
 Merits our tender love. But time brings change ;
 The rigid law that bound our simple sires
 Must not prevail against this subtler age ;
 Faith often questions what it most believes
 To build it surer. While the Church was young
 It walked in leading strings, withouten doubt
 Lipping the simple lore its nurses taught ;
 But grown to man's estate it needs must sift
 What's true, what's old wife fable, proving all
 Upon the touchstone of the Gospel word.
 Relax your vigour, gentle Chancellor ;
 And for the firstling of your clemency
 Free me the honest doctor—(To CROMWELL)
 —What's his name

CROMWELL. Lambert, my liege.

HENRY. Let Lambert go in peace.

MORE. Mercy becomes a king, but not to spare
 One body and endanger many souls.

HENRY. I hear it is a good and learned clerk.

MORE. The greater clerk, the worse ensample.

HENRY. Once
 You taught that tongues were free.

MORE. Once I was young.

HENRY. We've broke the law ourselves, man.

MORE. Majesty,

We that have led the van, the paladins,
 But not the common pikemen of the host.

HENRY. Still, let him go, for I require it, More.

MORE. So be it, Sire ; I yield him to your hand ;
 And with him yield some toys have lost their price
 Since I have lost the thing they signified.

(He opens the door, admitting OFFICERS with his
 seal and keys on cushions)

Too well I guessed the meaning of this call.
 What Henry gave let Henry take again.
 While I could serve I served ; but now I see
 The groaning realm is pregnant of some change ;
 Let others, wiser, worthier than myself,
 Be midwife to her throes ; for I am old
 And cannot school myself to altered ways.

HENRY. Not wiser, More, nor worthier, nor as much
 But since it is your pleasure, set them down,
 For I'll have willing ministers or none.
 Thanks and farewell, my servant ; Heaven send
 A new one half as trusty as the old.

[*Exit HENRY and OFFICERS*

(*MORE and CROMWELL*)

MORE. Take heed, oh, Cromwell, you that are young
 in hope,

You, that stand smiling in the sun and watch
 The ancients groping to the outer dark ;
 You too will know the pains that office brings,
 The baffled good ; the shame of high intent
 Brought low to match with hard expediency.
 You see me stark and stern of countenance,
 Relentless in the purging of the faith ;
 Think you I love to chasten ? Gentleness
 And not the rod taught all my household know,
 And in the larger world I fain had wrought the
 same ;

But rude disorder rears his Titan head,
 The ancient hills are shaken from their base
 To scale Olympus ; mild-eyed clemency
 Must cloke her gentle brow, and turn aside.
 You too will sue the softer way in vain.
 Ever to flatter, ever to seek his grace,
 Ever to grant his wishes ere he ask,
 Binding the Prince in bonds of his desires
 To grind the mill of Cromwell's policy ;

A noble plan, forsooth! (Have I divined you?)
 How far more slave, you that must crouch and bow
 On pain to lose his love and all your toil;
 But once to fail, but once to cross his will,
 Love what he hates, or hate what he desires,
 Farewell to Cromwell! See where your journey lies,
 By stony wilderness and thorny ways,
 By pools of blood and shades of infamy,
 False to yourself and false to all you love,
 If it but stand in yours or Henry's way.
 Ah, I'll not trust you, Cromwell, in the hour
 My head can serve your turn; you'll dip your hands
 In dearer blood than mine, aye, even his
 Whose bonds so much concerned you even now.

CROMWELL. Jack Lambert? He'll be free to preach
 his mind.

MORE. 'Tis done.

CROMWELL. He's free?

MORE. But he'll not preach the same;
 His doctrine's changed.

CROMWELL. How changed?

MORE. He hath forsworn
 The ancient errors of his creed.

CROMWELL. Forsworn?

MORE. Ay, under pressure of some fleshly pain.

CROMWELL. Tormented?

MORE. Ay, the question.

CROMWELL. Bloody slave,
 Butcher and hang-dog, you shall pay for this!

[Exit CROMWELL]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE 1

At CROMWELL'S house, a few years later. TALBOT, MORISON and FOULKES. These two last are soldiers of fortune; FOULKES elderly and weatherbeaten; MORISON younger, keen-eyed and dashing.

TALBOT. So ye be friends of Cromwell ?

MORISON. Marry, yea,
Sin twenty years agone in jolly Anvers.
Cromwell, the roaring boy, the prince of rufflers,
The first to spring a wench, or crush a can ;
And now a Minister !

TALBOT. The King's Vicegerent,
Baron of Oakham, Lord High Chamberlain,
Knight of the Garter.

MORISON. Zounds !

TALBOT. And holds a state
Becomes a prince. Daily his almses fill
Two hundred empty bellies at his gate.

FOULKES. While we poor misers trudge the planet's
face
Scratching for crumbs of gold.

MORISON. I'll not exchange
My sunburnt beggar for his pallid wealth,
My earrings for his garter, my ten years
Of Chile and Peru for all his life.

TALBOT. You're newly from Atlantis ?

FOULKES. Faith, not I :
Five weary years in Africk, fighting the Moor.
Arrived in Greenwich at the point of day,
As I laid limb across the briny board,
Hungry to tread the dew-washed green again,
Came on our heels a noble galleasse,

Forspent with travel, patched and hoar with
age ;

Still bravely bellying from every yard,
As all the seas had buffet her in vain.

And while I stood and mused on her estate,
Out from her side, most like herself, leaped forth
This brisk moustachioed conquistador,
With threadbare jerkin, beaver gaily cocked,
And purse as empty as the day he sailed.

MORISON. So, worthy sir, you know us as ourselves.
And you ?

TALBOT. A castaway poor gentleman,
A trinket of the Court grown somewhat dim
For want of wear ; a kex, a runt ; a quondam,
A cracked antiquity, too stiff i' the hams
To bob his way among these bustling times ;
But more than all a friend of Cromwell
That wandered in to bid him sup to-night.

MORISON. And what's the news at Court ?

TALBOT. Alack, fair sirs,
You've fallen on a woeful time. The Queen
Yield up her gentle soul this day at dawn.

MORISON. Sad hearing for my Spanish cabin-mates.
Poor Katharine !

FOULKES. Tut, Spanish Katharine
Is gone long since. So Lady Anne is dead !

TALBOT. Ay, true, 'tis true ; howbeit, five years of
Moorland

Have brought your Fasti something out of date.
Have you not heard ?

FOULKES. Nothing in all these years.

TALBOT. To-day we mourn Queen Jane : a twelve-
month's passed

Since Anne bequeathed her gentle soul to God.

FOULKES. So Lady Anne is dead ! By what dis-
temper ?

TALBOT. Marry, a tempered distemper, that defies
The leech's skill : a hatchet and a block.

FOULKES. Beheaded ?

TALBOT. Ay.

FOULKES. For what ?

TALBOT. For wantonness.

FOULKES. I'll swear the charge was false !

TALBOT. And so will I !

Lord ! when I think of all her dainty ways,
Her mincing smile, and Frenchified 'Dieu
garde,'

She seems like some white lily of the field
Beat down by an oafish boy, a pretty plaything
Broke in a surly game. And by the bye,
So kind a queen, I cannot praise our friend.

MORISON. Cromwell ?

TALBOT. Oh, mark you, I say naught against him.

There was much wonder at their amity,
And what the matter of their long discourse
Week after week. For I must tell you, sirs,
Their custom was, as every Sabbath came,
To meet in far-spied congress, eye to eye,
In yewbound walks, or by the cloistered hearth
Plotting high policies (that was their secret)
Of how to pluck the priestlihood away
And bring the golden age to earth again.
And I, that shared their counsel,
(Not that I favoured their design) did much
admire

This marriage of the oak-tree and the lily,
The shaggy stradiote and minion queen,
Working to such high ends. The world in
arms

Seemed all too weak a thing to hold them back.

Yet, but a breath, and she was gone ! Alas,
This Queen that's dead (a dainty creature too,

A waiting-maid in Mistress Boleyn's train)

Found favour with the King, and then . . .

MORISON.

But stay ;

What part took Cromwell in the Queen's
disgrace ?

So bound a friend, that bully warrior,

Knowing her innocent . . .

TALBOT.

Ay, that he knew.

MORISON. Did he not take King Henry by the
beard,

Tell him they lied that blemished her repute,

And stake his head with hers upon the cast ?

That was the Cromwell that I knew of old.

TALBOT. Why, by the Masskin, on the Spanish
main,

In Barbary, Peru, and savage wilds,

There may be still such men ; I know not, I ;

But here at Court the breed is out of date.

As careful shipmen hold a finger up

To mark the changes of the fickle wind,

Submit their will to his, sail East or West,

Not as their haven but the tempest rules,

And conquer Aeolus by humouring him,

So we, whose wind is Henry's favouring breath,

To sail, or stand, and drift upon the rocks . . .

MORISON. Enough ; I see your pith ; Cromwell
forsook her.

TALBOT. Well, well, not he alone.

MORISON.

Beshrew the day

That ever brought him to your cankered Court.

What, did he steal aside and hold his peace ?

TALBOT. Nay, something more than that ; he had
no choice ;

Before the counsellors that judged her cause

He was appointed for an advocate

To plead . . .

MORISON. Her innocence ?

TALBOT. Her guilt.

MORISON. Come, Foulkes.

Out from this poisoned air.

FOULKES. Yet, stay, Peruvian,

New havened from the grey and hungry world

Amid the enchanted splendours of this house,

Rich with the promise of satiety,

I will not be so glib a judge. Who knows ?

There may be reasons that we wot not of.

She was the gentest thing ; I weep for her ;

But still, friends grown to ministers are rare.

MORISON. Well, go thy ways ; set snout to trough ;
grow fat.

And I'll seek out some friend whose money's
spent,

His plans miscarried, place and credit gone,

Cased in a hovel. Such a man perchance

May still have kept the promise of his youth.

Farewell.

FOULKES. *Valete*, hothead.

TALBOT. Fare you well.

[*Exit MORISON*]

Tut, tut, tut ! The Equator hath gotten somewhat into the blood of this picaroon friend of yours. Cromwell came to the Court for other occasions than to have his shoulders sheared for Mistress Boleyn's sake. And yet, Lord ! Lord ! when I think of her . . . and mark you, I much misdoubt but Cromwell himself hath some gnawings and grudgings of heart at the remembrance ; since the day they laid her in two pieces he was never the same man again ; somewhat brawn-fallen, somewhat hollower in the chaps.

FOULKES. Poor Lady Anne ! 'Tis a sad story.

TALBOT. Ay, so the King thought ; and made a

tragedy of it in five acts even while she lay in the Tower, and showed it about among his friends ; 'twas very movingly writ. And stopped his chase at Epping to hear the gun that signalled the deathsman's stroke, and fetched a deep sigh, thus, before he bade the huntsman uncouple the dogs to follow the sport. Mistress Jane had a day's work to console him, whom he wed next morning. But here cometh the good man of the house.

*Enter CROMWELL, CROMWELL'S SON and CAVENDISH.
CAVENDISH pompous and splendidly dressed.*

CROMWELL. Whom have we here ? What, Foulkes ! What spirit wafts thee hither ? Come, open thy brisket, man, and fall to ! (*They embrace*).

FOULKES. You have not forgot old friends ?

CROMWELL. " You, you ? " Thou me or by this goll I'll break thy sconce. Ho there, some rascal ! Bring flagons ; bring Hippocrass, Hockamore, Brown Bastard and Backrag ; and look ye, stint not. Meat and bread, you rogues ; bestir yourselves. " 'Tis merry when knaves meet ! " We'll drink to Anvers, to Jack Lambert, Hewitt, Harvel, Morison. What's befallen honest Morison ?

FOULKES. He lives, he lives.

CROMWELL. In England ?

FOULKES. Ay.

CROMWELL. We'll find him, never fear. To think how times are changed ; we that scarce durst open our mouths then, even with the sea between, to utter so much as a word against the divell, for fear of *scandalum magnatum* and the stake. And now . . . But I forget my manners. Be

acquainted all, the thing within this gallant case is William Cavendish, of twenty mansions armiger ; this fathom of gravity, my son. Judge it leniently ; 'tis not a finished poem ; 'tis but an impromptu thrown off one sleepless night in Venice. Baron in his own right and married to the dead Queen's sister.

CAVENDISH. To think how times are changed !

TALBOT. Ay, here's Mas Candish, that was proud to be Wolsey's doorkeeper once for ten pound Easterling by year, so swollen now with monkish acres he'll scarce say Proface to a humble Knight bachelor.

CAVENDISH. (*Drinking*) Proface ! Proface ! Oh, the venom of jealous tongues ! Those that envy us poor impropiators divine not the weight of the burthen that we have taken on our shoulders. Know ye not that we be but stewards of this trust, holding the lands not to our own use and glory, but for the exercise of that open welcome to all poor, sick, aged and pious persons, and to travellers, which the good monks and fathers exercised afore us ?

TALBOT. *Sic vos, non vobis.* Oh, most pitiable impropiators !

CAVENDISH. My heart rejoiceth as I think of my children's children to the end of time receiving the halt and the lame with open arms both in town and country in their hospitable houses.

TALBOT. Oh, most blessed children's children !

Enter LAMBERT and RAT

LAMBERT. The Lord be here.

RAT. Christ keep this company.

CROMWELL. Here's all Anvers come to life again.

Jack, my own Jack. (*Embracing him*) Grown graver, Jack ?

LAMBERT. Ay, and you. What, Foulkes ? How fare you, friend ?

FOULKES. Still above the sod; Doctor.

CROMWELL. And who is this ?

LAMBERT. 'Tis a worthy clerk that I met by the way ; he seemeth by his speech a holy man.

RAT. *Salve magister* ; I am come to thank you for a service rendered me long since.

CROMWELL. A service, sir ?

RAT. You saved my life aforetime, and being newly returned to England I am come to thank you.

CROMWELL. The circumstance, though not a trifling one, has slipped from my mind, sir priest ; but sit you down, you are right welcome. Proface ! Proface !

(*All drink except LAMBERT*)

LAMBERT. Tell me the tale of your adventures in these wars of Africa.

FOULKES. Nay, I have rehearsed them so often these ten hours that my tongue is already weary.

CROMWELL. Then let's hear thine, Jack.

LAMBERT. 'Tis but a sorry exchange ; the tale of my faint-heartedness in place of that of Foulkes' brave adventures. Yet seeing that I am come to bid you farewell . . .

CROMWELL. Farewell ? Art thou bent on a journey, then ? Pass the flagon, pass the flagon, worshipfuls.

LAMBERT. Ay, on a journey, and a long one, but short in the travelling. I that had been so bold, speaking openly in the market-places, and defying the oppression of man, having recanted from my

faith at the first touch of the torment, fell thereafter into an agony of mind far exceeding such poor fleshly pain as the bracks could impart. And so I passed a year, thinking often to destroy myself, but for the hope that by living I might redeem the shame of my cowardice. And after much meditation I resolved to offer up my poor offending flesh a sacrifice, by declaring yet again my faith with such firmness that they must needs burn, hang or destroy me. And that I might the better ripen and furnish myself to that end and give such reasons to my tormentors and persecutors that they could not gainsay my doctrine, I went back to the schools again and have been this long season in Germany at the feet of the theologians. And now all is ready for my going up to Jerusalem; God shall be glorified in me, and shall receive me out of this wretched world into the regions of His everlasting peace.

CROMWELL. Too late, too late, my honest Jack! We'll never let thee be a martyr. Live, and proclaim thy faith! While thou'st been in Germany I have not been idle. Did I not promise thee? And now, behold, England is free for every man to speak the belief that is in him. Wilt thou deny the Church? Deny it. Wilt thou deny the authority of the Book? Deny it. No man will hurt a hair of thee. Ay, deny Christ Himself, and His Father in Heaven an thou wilt; all's one. Did I not promise thee to wash all the dams and hindrances of our liberty away? Ay, and have done it and quenched the fires of Smithfield in the flood.

LAMBERT. Is it even so, Cromwell?

TALBOT. Ay, this is sooth, or near it.

LAMBERT. Oh, Lord, how long? Have I sinned the

unpardonable sin, and must I go forth again to wander like the accursèd Cain, and never still the serpent that gnaweth at my heart by day and night? The peace of the Lord rest with you, friends, that can never rest with me. Farewell. Nay, touch me not, for I am even as a leper and one marked with the mark of the beast. Fare ye well. [Exit LAMBERT

TALBOT. There goes a woeful man.

CROMWELL. No man but hath his secret sorrows. Drink, worshipfuls, drink; here's to our new-won freedom!

RAT. I'll do you justice. Troll the Rhenish!

FOULKES. I marvel to hear thee; Cromwell, that wast but a merchant's lieger in the old days, talk of high deeds of statecraft as lightly as it were bales and cargoes and the cheaping of freights.

CROMWELL. Forsooth; I'm the King's lieger now.

TALBOT. He hath humbled the high shaven heads.

RAT. Troll the Rhenish! Troll the Rhenish!

FOULKES. And what of the nobles?

CROMWELL. A fig for the nobles! They are brought low long since; the new smooth-visaged mansions that rise from the ruins of their battlemented castles are the pledge of their lost independence. The Lords, ka? If the Lords should take me in hand I would give them such a breakfast as never was made in England; and that the proudest of them should know.

FOULKES. What of the King?

CROMWELL. The King? God's benison rest on him. . . .

RAT. (*Drunk*) Ay! God bless old King Hal!

CROMWELL. I am sure of the King.

FOULKES. Will he not turn?

CROMWELL. Though the King should turn, yet will

I not turn. (*To RAT*) Unhand the flagon; tosspot. Here's to the good cause! I am ready to fight for it, ay, though all the nation stand against me!

FOULKES. There's my old warrior!

CROMWELL. (*Kissing his dagger*) On this bodkin! So let it thrust me to the heart if I do not die in this quarrel against them all.

RAT. Troll the Rhenish!

Enter a YEOMAN

YEOMAN. How now, art thou not that Dr Rat that is chaplain to my Lord of Norfolk?

CROMWELL. Leave the clerk in peace, Hal; whoever he may be, he's welcome here.

YEOMAN. As water in a ship.

RAT. Troll the Rhenish! Troll the Rhenish!

SCENE 2

At Paul's Cross. FARMERS, PEASANTS, MERCHANTS
and TOWNSFOLK.

Enter CROMWELL and CAVENDISH disguised with cloaks.

CROMWELL. What is the cause of this assemblage?

FARMER. They say that one of the wandering Black Friars, Dan Peto, will preach here at noon.

CROMWELL. (*To CAVENDISH*) That's my rogue schoolmaster. (*To the FARMER*) 'Twas a good day for the farmers when these bald heads were cast out of their strongholds.

FARMER. A sorry day, mayster. At the harvest and the haying in sooth one may hire labourers good cheap among the homeless monks and freers;

but my Lord of Norfolk spake sooth when he said it was merry in England before the new learning came up; with their saints' days and pardons, their gangweeks and rogations, their churchales and festivals, there was joyance in every season in the old days; and right noble was the cheer that greeted me in their houses as I travelled to the further marts, where now I must lodge in some scald hovel, or else lie in the fields. Nay, give us back our monasteries, say I.

WOMAN. Ay, and zo zay I.

CROMWELL. What, you that were daily robbed by them with their masses for the dead and other such extortions?

WOMAN. Why, zee now, mayster, how can good Kyrsum folk lack their masses? There was my mother, God assoil her zoul, that died in zin and went to purgatory; and before ever chad time to buy her out, clap comes the new law, and there she must lie in torment till the last trumpet calls her to perdition.

PEASANT. Ay, and shall we have no more hereticks neither, my maysters? No more vaggot-carrying? The first time ever I went to the vaggot-carrying there cometh a hooly vreer, saying, "Here be an indoolgence; go and zin for a moonth," and I went away and zinned for a moonth, and then back to Smithfield and carried another vaggot. Let us have more hereticks, say I!

(CROMWELL goes over to a group of MERCHANTS)

1ST MERCHANT. We are all undone unless the quarrel with the Pope and Emperor be soon ended.

CROMWELL. What, shall we not quarrel with the enemies of our faith?

2ND MERCHANT. "Better kiss a false knave than be troubled with him."

1ST MERCHANT. We have lost our trade with Flanders.

CROMWELL. Ay; but think of the Faith.

1ST MERCHANT. Faith is not my matter now; my talk is of wool; we have no mart left for our wool.

CROMWELL. Lay up your treasure in Heaven.

1ST MERCHANT. Ay, when I have aught to lay up; but now I stand in danger to go hungry to Heaven ere I have time to lay up any, either above or below.

2ND MERCHANT. And now, worse than ever, with this rebellion in the north and all hands too busy with bills, partisans and hand-guns to think of the homely shears.

1ST MERCHANT. It was rumoured on the Change that the Duke of Norfolk had gotten a notable victory over the rebels.

FARMER. Here cometh the worthy Friar, Dan Peto.

Enter DAN PETO followed by CHILDREN dressed as Monks.

MERCHANT. And who be these holy men that follow on his heels?

CHILDREN. (*Breaking up and dancing round PETO*)

“I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good,
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.”

(*From “Gammer Gurton.”*)

1ST MERCHANT. I am aweary of this mocking.

2ND MERCHANT. So are all honest men.

PETO. (*To the CHILDREN*)

Woe to the loins that gat you, spawn of Satan,
Woe to the womb conceived, the breasts that fed
you,

Woe to the hands that stinted of the rod ;
 For as the bear rent those that mocked Elisha,
 Vengeance shall light on you and all your
 kind.

(The CHILDREN laugh and run away)

(To the PEOPLE)

Behold the Lord's appointed time is near
 When He shall come in wrath with whips of
 scorpions,

Scatter His enemies before His face,
 And thoroughly purge His threshing floor with
 fire.

Rejoice, ye faithful servants of the Lord ;
 Lift up your heads again, be of good cheer ;
 For ye shall hear the gnashing of the teeth.
 Your eyes behold the proud oppressor's fall,
 His quaking flesh harrowed with gads of iron,
 His spirit cast into unquenching flame.
 Filled with the Spirit of the Lord, mine eyes,
 Piercing the veil of perishable things,
 Behold the secret places of the heart.

(Pointing suddenly at CROMWELL)

Cromwell, thou son of Belzebub, stand forth !
*(The CROWD murmurs and parts, leaving CROMWELL
 and CAVENDISH standing alone)*

Thou that these hands have scourged, too selde,
 in vain,

Thou and thy King, the rebel runagate
 Whose perjured eyes swell out with lust and fat-
 ness ;

Ye that have drunk the blood of all the saints,
 The dogs shall lick your blood, that licked the
 blood

Of Ahab and his servant Obadiah.

Behold, thy course is run, and even now
 I hear the feet of those shall bear thee out.

By treachery lived, by treachery thou shalt die ;
 False to thy friends, false to the wanton Queen,
 Learn from my lips the falseness of thy King,
 Who all unknown to thee is ridden forth
 With welcome to thy dearest enemy,
 The Duke of Norfolk, where he now returns
 In triumph from the rebels of the North.

CROMWELL. (*To CAVENDISH*) What! Is it true?

And never a word to me?

Come, I must see to this.

[*Exeunt CROMWELL and CAVENDISH*]

PETO.

Mark where he goes

With blanching lips, and stricken to the heart.

Repent, for the hand is writing on the wall,

The feast is broken up, the wine cup spilt;

The avenging host is gathering in the plain.

(*CURTAIN while he is speaking*)

SCENE 3

At Court. COURTIERS assembled. The DUKE OF LINCOLN walks with BEAULIEU, the French Ambassador.

LINCOLN. (*To a LADY*) Smile, gentle Marchioness,
 upon my friend,

Seigneur Beaulieu, the Frankish Embasseur.

LADY. Soyez le bien-venu en Angleterre.

BEAULIEU. Je suis charmé de votre courtoisie.

LINCOLN. This noble bevy is assembled here

To grace the welcome of the Duke of Norfolk

Who comes anon ; with laurel-laden arms,

Stained with the rebel blood of Yorkish kerns,

Westmorland, Lincoln, Durham, Lancashire,

Whose rugged wits inflamed by false alarms,

Hatched in the *nido di tradimenti*, Rome,
 Made what his Grace had done to save the Faith,
 Seem but a means to pluck away the Faith.
 For six long months the even balance swayed,
 England in arms to conquer England's self,
 Till we were fain to dig a grave and sing,
 " *Dirige; vivit Anglia; England was.*"

COURTIER A. Who would not be a soldier in such times as these ?

COURTIER B. I' faith, the squeaking of pens and the grave voice of reverend counsellors is drowned in the clang of arms and the braying of trumpets.

COURTIER C. *Cedat armis toga.*

COURTIER A. Ay, the priests and soldiers bid fair to rule the roast.

COURTIER B. The priests too ?

COURTIER A. Forsooth ; the King's woe for the loss of his Lady hath turned his heart suddenly to religion again, and he is for undoing all that he and Cromwell have done these past years, lest he endanger his soul from going to join her in Heaven.

COURTIER B. Marry, they say that he hath sent for Gardiner out of France.

COURTIER A. We have had changes enough. What say you, Sir John ?

TALBOT. (*Greeting those who pass from time to time*)
 Changes enough forsooth. (God speed you, Madam.)

I lose my brain in this turmoiling hive ;
 Strange faces everywhere, (Give you good den)
 Beggars-a-horseback, new smell-carrion lords
 Fatted on Minster lands (God 'ield you; sir)
 That shut the sunlight from the old noblesse.
 Who would have thought, a few short summers
 since,

To hear the echoing palace walls repeat
 Such low uncouth plebeian names as Cecil,
 Montague, Paget, Russell, Candish, Seymour?
 Who knows but that some future age of men
 May take this gilt for gold, and seeing them lords,
 Still sons of lords, may count them equal nobles?

A LORD. Who knows but once when Alfred burnt
 the cakes

Men said the same of Talbot?

TALBOT. Like enough;
 But we that smote the Dane, and spilt our blood
 To chase the miscreant from the Holy Land,
 Built in a nobler plot, I ween, than those
 Who smote the Monk and stole his tenements.

A LADY. (*Clapping her hands*) Have at him,
 Talbot!

A COURTIER. (*Turning his thumb down*) *Pollice
 verso, Vestal!*

Enter CROMWELL

COURTIER A. Mark where Cromwell walks, alone
 and half unheeded.

COURTIER B. How changed from but a month since
 when each one in the Court had some favour to
 ask of him!

COURTIER A. Little good does his Garter do him.

COURTIER B. They say some strange and magical
 effect worketh in it, ayenst which only the noblest
 blood is strong enough to resist.

COURTIER A. Is it that which maketh him so
 webegone?

COURTIER C. Marry, "the black ox hath trod on his
 foot."

COURTIER B. They say that the Lady Anne's spirit
 visiteth him in the night season, reproaching him

for his treachery, and that the fear of her hath engendered these bitter humours.

COURTIER A. God save you, my Lord.

CROMWELL. And you, sir. Is the King not yet come forth ?

COURTIER A. He is closeted with Gardiner.

CROMWELL. With Gardiner ? Is Gardiner in England ?

COURTIER A. Wist ye not that his Grace had revoked him out of France ?

CROMWELL. Faith, true ! I had forgot.

(CROMWELL *walks away*)

COURTIER B. He knew naught of it.

COURTIER A. He hath no more part in the King's secrets.

COURTIER B. He'll go the way of More and Wolsey.

COURTIER C. He's hatchet-ripe.

COURTIER A. 'Tis a tree blazed for the hewing.

COURTIER B. It will go hard with him an Norfolk and Gardiner have such a hand over the King.

COURTIER A. Norfolk beareth him a sore grudge for the attainder of his brother that married the King's niece.

COURTIER B. Marry, attainder without trial, an injustice unknown aforetime !

COURTIER A. He'll not forgive him his Garter neither.

COURTIER C. Forsooth, passing the door of the King's closet I have heard him so beknave; befool, bebeast Cromwell; ay, and beat him too with his jest till he roared for mercy.

COURTIER A. Go to, ye have heard old Tib thwacking her cat.

Enter GARDINER and RAT

CROMWELL. This is a gentle sight, friend Gardiner.

GARDINER. Are ye not astonied at my revocation ?

CROMWELL. 'Twas I that counselled it to the King.

(*To RAT*) God save you, Sir Priest.

RAT. And you, my Lord.

GARDINER. (*To LADY ROCHFORD*) This is a great day that must be marked with a red stone.

LADY ROCHFORD. There will be greater days yet.

GARDINER. The King seems sad.

LADY ROCHFORD. Marry; I have that laid in lavender which will make him merry.

GARDINER. What secret is this ?

LADY ROCHFORD. A secret that will soon out ; Mistress Katharine Howard, Norfolk's niece, grown now to be more beautiful than words can tell.

Enter the KING on one side ; NORFOLK and SUFFOLK led by CHAMBERLAINS by the sleeves on the other ; with trumpets, flags, HALBERDIERS and SOLDIERS.

HENRY. No need, my Lords, to tell at length the cause

Of this august assemblage. All have felt
The throbbing of the universal joy
Which fills the realm, to know the danger past,
Th'insurg'ing head of rude rebellion
Beat down into the dust. Norfolk, my friend,
Whose honoured life, spent all in deeds of war,
Now finds its crown in this last feat of all,
A worthy sequel to thy father's fame
Reaped in the raftered rigs of Flodden Field ;
Adorned long since with all such dignities
Of title, place, and outward ornament
Which it was mine to give, for this last need
Take what I have, my love. And for our joy
To welcome thee, we'll make a three days' feast
Of banquet, joust, and public holiday.

NORFOLK. I humbly thank your gracious Majesty.

HENRY. Not by the evil of their hearts alone
The boorish rebels of the mutinous North
Were pricked to such adventure. Rome had
sought

On this last throw to win the empire back
Which once she wielded in this land and lost.
Let the ensample of their chastisement
For ever quell the rash insensate hope.
Yet mark, I cast aside the burdening yoke
That galled the Faith, not cast the Faith itself,
Not for our pastime, not for liberty,
To wring the hallowed doctrine of the Church
To our perverted wills ; I thrust away
The ostented power of the Pope to save
The authentic Faith from his false foistings in.
Christ's Church was one ; but Rome hath fall'n
away

And we alone remain to keep it whole ;
A precious burthen in a narrow path.
And for a farther proof, if any need,
Of our intent to keep the doctrine pure,
We shall this very day at the behest
Of Norfolk and my Bishop Gardiner,
Ourselves descend to meet in argument
A boastful heretick who hath denied
The carnal presence in the Eucharist.
His name is Lambert.

CROMWELL

Lambert !

HENRY.

He was seen of late

Carousing in your house, my Lord of Oakham.

CROMWELL. I know not, Sire ; many resort to me.

HENRY. And lest our lieges in some after time

Should seek to cloke their peevish heresies
With doubtful texts and argumentive twists,
We have declared in brief and certain phrase

(Devised by my Lord of Winchester)
 Six Articles of Faith, of such as seem
 Most useful for the saving of the soul ;
 As need of shrift, and chastity of clerks,
 The Presence of the Saviour in the host.
 And whoso in the stiffness of his heart
 Shall still withstand the patent means of grace,
 Must pay, without the hope of earthly pardon,
 Sharp penance by the gibbet and the stake.
 Go, good my Lords, and bid my lieges all
 Lay by the engines of their handicrafts
 And fall to joyance;
 For the honour of this happy day.

[*Exeunt* COURTIERS

NORFOLK. (*To* SUFFOLK) See, this fellow hath gotten
 the Garter while we have been away.

SUFFOLK. It fits him as a saddle fits a sow's back.

NORFOLK. (*To* CROMWELL) Good joy, my Lord, of
 your advancement.

HENRY. My gentle Lords of Norfolk, Suffolk, Oak-
 ham and Winchester, a word in your noble ears.
 This six-stringed whip which I have twisted for the
 scourging of the hucksters from the synagogue is
 like to touch one most saintly man on the gall. I
 would as lieve cut off my head as hurt a hair of
 Cranmer's ; yet I misdoubt greatly but he will be
 evil at ease in the matter ; seeing that he must now
 either put away his wife that he hath lately taken,
 or be adjudged to die a felon. Go to him there-
 fore, I beg you, my Lords, and take occasion over
 the supper board to assure him of my continued
 gracious favour to himward.

[*Exit* HENRY

SCENE 4

*At CRANMER'S house. CRANMER, NORFOLK,
SUFFOLK and GARDINER.*

NORFOLK. Thus and much more he said. Take
heart of grace.

CRANMER. Lo, she is gone ; God's blessing rest on
her ;

A holy, innocent woman ; what way worse
Was I, whose soul was no less near to God,
But rather lifted by the flight of hers ?
Still, if His Highness deem . . . What man shall
say,

Thus the Lord wills or thus ? But she is gone
And my heart with her into Germany.

Enter CROMWELL

NORFOLK. Here comes the newly gartered Knight.
All hail !

(Pointing at the Garter which CROMWELL wears)

Strange that the spoil of noble Buckingham,
The dearest toy of honour's armoury
That gentlest great have coveted in vain,
Should ring the humble farrier's ham at last.

CROMWELL. You much debase the worth of your
condition

To flee at lowly birth in honest men.

Heaven allots to everyone his share,

And some have birth, and some have brain, but all
We have our uses in the Commonwealth.

NORFOLK. A noble thought, my Lord, forsooth !
Who knows ?

Belike your father hammered the iron heels

That bare my father's horse to victory
On Flodden Field.

CROMWELL. Time was methinks
The Howards themselves were no such mighty
gear.

As ivy mends the mason's bungling work
Time lends a gloss to humblest words, and once
Howards were Hogwards, keepers of the swine.

NORFOLK. Thou liest, scurvy knave !

CROMWELL. Take back thy lie !

CRANMER. My Lords ! My Lords !

Cease from these stout spiteful words ;
This that should be a loveday !

NORFOLK. Murderer,
That slew my brother in the Tower !

CROMWELL. Would it had been yourself.

SCENE 5

*In the Palace at night. CROMWELL alone, with a
portrait of Anne of Cleves.*

CROMWELL. Ay, marry, do they triumph for the
nonce ?

My hand hath lost her cunning with the King ?
But here's a medicine for my cause. Dear maid,
Another lovelier Anne, sweet Anne of Cleves,
I bless the blessed God that made thee fair,
To win the fickle monarch to my ends,
And mend the troubles of the suffering realm.
Wedded to Cleves, he's wed to Cleves's friends,
Wed to the Protestants of Germany,
To Smalcald and the enemies of Rome ;
And I may snap my fingers in the face
Of Norfolk, Gardiner and all the rest.

Oh, Holbein, blest magician of the brush !
Thy painted cloth saves me and saves us all.

*Enter LAMBERT, surrounded by FRIARS, BISHOPS, etc.,
with torches carried by YEOMEN.*

CROMWELL. What gear is this? (*Taking a torch
and holding it to LAMBERT'S face*) Lambert !

LAMBERT. Praise be to God that hath lifted the
heavy burthen from my shoulders at last ! When
I most thought to confound mine enemies with
my wisdom the Lord set a seal on my lips, and
I could answer them naught. The King himself
hath judged me, and I am condemned to die.

CROMWELL. Must I spend all my days in praying
the King for your pardon ?

LAMBERT. No need. I sought death and I have
achieved it.

[Exeunt all but CROMWELL and a SECRETARY

SECRETARY. Marry, the prisons overflow with of-
fenders against the new law of the six articles.
There be five hundred in hold already in London
alone.

CROMWELL. So many ?

SECRETARY. Take this paper.

CROMWELL. What is it ?

SECRETARY. Lambert's death warrant.

CROMWELL. 'Tis no gear of mine.

SECRETARY. 'Tis your charge to take it to the
King.

CROMWELL. I'll have none of it.

SECRETARY. Marry, nor I. It must be either signed
or torn asunder. I'll leave it here on the table.

[Puts it down and exit

CROMWELL. Accursèd paper ! At such a moment
when I must needs avoid all matter of offence

with the King! What must I do? I'll even take it and go boldly to him.

Enter HENRY, dressed in white satin.

HENRY. Fear not, I am no spirit, but the King.
(*Sitting*) Peuh! I have need of rest; a weary day,
A weary day; my Cromwell, six long hours
Banding logic with a heretick.

What is *νοούμενον*, what *οὐσία*,
Whether if attributes of bread remain
The essential substance can be wholly changed;
You know my vein; the knave was quite o'er-
whelmed.

Some that were there were pleased to praise my
learning.

CROMWELL. Oh, by your gracious favour, "some
that were there"!

The city rings with praises of your wit;
Theologers and deepest clerks do muse
When, in the multiplicity of things,
You take occasion to be read so deep,
As far to pass them all. Would I had heard you!

HENRY. Would that ye had, Cromwell. What kept
you thence?

CROMWELL. Care of your Grace, no less a thing had
done it;

For, even as I made forth, came messengers
In embassy from John, the Duke of Cleves,
Propounding, by your gracious leave to speak,
A marriage with his sister, Princess Anne.

HENRY. My days of love are done; deep in the grave
My heart is earthed with Lady Jane; but still
If she be fair . . . there's balm in beauty.

CROMWELL. See,
Here is her picture, limned by Holbein's hand,

Her faithful image; void of flattery,

By him that erst portrayed your Highness' self.

HENRY. I know him of old, the rogue; no flatterer he!

CROMWELL. Look on her dewy lips, her dawning smile;

See in her eyes the gentleness that glows

In shady pools on golden summer eves.

HENRY. How sweet on such a gentle breast to lay

The head bowed down with woe. Blessed be God

Who, dealing sorrow for our portion, sent

The comfortable breed of womankind

To solace us; submissive, modest, mild,

Light-shod, soft-voiced and not too rich in wit,

Like tender music, silent in betimes.

CROMWELL. Such to a jot is the report of her.

HENRY. Then, by St Julian, she shall be my wife;

I'll have her, Cromwell!

CROMWELL. I rejoice, my Lord;

I'll send empost to tell the happy news,

And bring her here before the month is out.

HENRY. And I'll go forth to meet her by the way,

Disguised from my true self, to nourish love.

CROMWELL. This news will make all England drunk with joy.

(A pause)

And have I truly lost your favour?

HENRY. No;

Never were nearer to my heart, Cromwell.

CROMWELL. Yet there be those, presuming on your grace,

That wrest the new-made law in my despite

(I, your Vicegerent) to a tyranny

And terror of the folk. Five hundred souls

On slender surmise of apostasy

Lie in the gaols of London. Let them go!

HENRY. Marry, on such a day it ill beseems
 To ply the stricter censure of the law.
 My gentle Anne shall plead for those have erred ;
 Poor rogues, for love of her, I pardon them.

CROMWELL. And there is one among the rest ? This
 Lambert . . .

HENRY. Him that my dialectic overthrew ?

CROMWELL. The same ; let him go back to Germany.

HENRY. Now by this light, my Lord, I much mis-
 doubt

Your flattering words be but a coloured guile.

What, I am learned, eh ? The city rings ?

And deepest clerks do muse upon my wit ?

Yet when the main is fought, the cockerel down,

“ Let him go back to Germany ” ! Odd's bones,

Am I a mocking-stock, a beancake King,

To turn my solemn judgment to a sport ?

CROMWELL. Forgive me, Majesty ; he was my
 friend ;

What must I do ?

HENRY. A minister has no friends.

CROMWELL. They brought a warrant for his death
 to me ;

Here is the scroll.

HENRY. (*Refusing it*) I have no part in it.

Vicegerent of the Church, this is your gear.

CROMWELL. Yet, noble King . . .

HENRY. I bid you do your duty ;
 Sign it, or there be others for your room.

[*Exit HENRY*

CROMWELL. (*Alone*) Now curse the folly of this
 headstrong knave,

That I must choose . . . Did I not bid him
 whist ?

What ? Lose all that I have laboured for so
 long ?

Build from the base, and at the coping-stone
Go tumbling down? . . . No wrong to him, I
wis;

He hath determined on his death himself.

If I refuse, faith; I know Henry's way;

My head perchance . . . (*Signing the warrant*)

Then die, Jack Lambert, die!

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE 1

An open place in Rochester. Early morning.

MUSICIANS.

MUSICIAN A. Body o' me, 'tis a bitter frost.

MUSICIAN B. Foul weather for a Serenata, say I.

MUSICIAN A. My dickers be all to-starven with cold; an I hold my notes too long they'll freeze to the vents.

MUSICIAN C. Is it for the King, sayst thou?

MUSICIAN A. Marry is it: he cometh anon to greet the Princess of Cleves, and wishing to show her all that's loveliest in his realm, he hath even sent for thee.

Enter CROMWELL and HENRY disguised as a yeoman.

HENRY. What ween ye? Will she know me for the King?

Oh, Cromwell, I'm an amorous boy again,
Agog with hope and trembling at a name.

Can Kings be loved? The splendour of their
place

Blinds the beholder, and makes affection dumb.
I'll not be King to-day but Yeoman Hal;
I would be loved as simple men are loved.

But come, let's trudge; the peevish dawn strikes
cold.

[Exeunt HENRY and CROMWELL]

MUSICIAN B. Here's more gay company on the road.

MUSICIAN A. The fame of our music is gone abroad
and all the Court flocks to hear us.

Enter NORFOLK, GARDINER, LADY ROCHFORD,
KATHARINE HOWARD *and* RAT

GARDINER. (*To the* MUSICIANS) Give you good
morrow, gentle minstrelsy.

Here in this paper is a song set down
That ye must play among the morning's masque
To please his Majesty. Can this be done ?

MUSICIAN. So like your Reverence.

NORFOLK. What song is this ?

GARDINER. A pretty madrigal that Henry writ
And Lady Katharine must sing to-day.

NORFOLK. Does Cromwell know of this ?

GARDINER. I' faith, not yet,
But when the King hath seen the Princess Anne
He'll need some comfort for his squandered
sighs.

NORFOLK. Is she so foul ?

GARDINER. Not foul, but all ungainly,
Wanting the grace that toucheth Henry's heart.

Enter HENRY *and* CROMWELL

HENRY. I muse at this delay ; 'tis bitter cold ;
Why tarries the Princess ?

CROMWELL. She comes anon.

HENRY. (*Seeing* KATHARINE) What wench is that ?

CROMWELL. I know not, Majesty.

HENRY. Br'r ! Odd's body, will the Princess never
come ?

CROMWELL. Yonder she steps from her caroché ;
the masque begins.

HENRY. A masque ! This was no season for a
masque.

THE MASQUE

(*The MUSICIANS play. Enter SWAINS and SHEPHERDESSES, meeting*)

SHEPHERDESSES. Ye gentle Shepherds which do keep

Upon this mountain-side your sheep,
That which doth move our most envy
Ye haven all things plenteously;
Both store of fruit and every meat
In your housen so fresh and sweet,
And pasture for your woolly flocks
Among the groves and mossy rocks;
And yet you looken piteously,
And tear-drops standen in your ee.
Now tell us what thing ye do lack.

SWAINS. We can not tellen, out alack!

Yet ever in our happiness
Visiteth us this heaviness.
We would fallen and kiss his feet
If any wight should make us meet
What is the cause of this annoy
Which hindereth us from our joy.

SHEPHERDESSES. Have ye no corn to make you bread?

SWAINS. On finest manchets we be fed.

SHEPHERDESSES. Have ye no gold in your pouches?

SWAINS. We have foison of all richesse.

SHEPHERDESSES. Is it your health some thing aileth?

SWAINS. Nay, we ne know sickness ne death.

SHEPHERDESSES. If gold and corn and health ye vaunt

We cannot tellen what ye want;

Unless perchance of love ye lack
To give your am'rous sighings back.

SWAINS. Of love, say ye? What is that thing?

SHEPHERDESSES. Do ye not know?

SWAINS. We know nothing.

SHEPHERDESSES. Why, this is love if we do
kiss. (*Kissing them*)

SWAINS. I ween a joyful thing it is ;
And I could love till evensong
And never think the day was long ;
Such pretty sporting is in this
When you and I together kiss. (*Kissing
again*)

Who gave this blessing unto men?

SHEPHERDESSES. The Queen of Love hath it
given.

SWAINS. If I could find this Queen of Love
I would praise her all gods above.

SHEPHERDESSES. Would ye do so? Ye shall
see her,

Of all this love the kind giver.
She is new comen to this land
On the King to bestow her hand.

SWAINS. To seek her, pray you, hasten hence.

SHEPHERDESSES. We go anon; have patience.
[*Exeunt the SHEPHERDESSES*
(*The SWAINS dance*)

HENRY. Marry, 'tis easy talking. These swains
may well have patience seeing that they can dance
to keep their feet warm; but my patience, lacking
such remedy, is nigh frozen to death.

CROMWELL. We have reached the heart of the matter
now, your Majesty.

HENRY. Ay, and a sweet heart, I hope.

SWAINS. Here from our dancing let us stay,
For see the Maidens come this way.

NORFOLK. Now will the murder out. Come Queen of Love,

Come Cupidon, come Venus and her squabs !

(SHEPHERDESSES *come forward dancing*)

SHEPHERDESSES. Good Shepherds, pray you hither look ;

This is that Queen of which we spoke.

(*They part and discover ANNE OF CLEVES, who has entered with her train of attendants*)

HENRY. Body o' me, Cromwell, can this be she ?

CROMWELL. It is no other, your Grace.

HENRY. Why, Cromwell, I am stricken to the heart, that is no Queen of Love, but a great Flanders mare.

CROMWELL. The cold hath pinched her somewhat.

HENRY. The cold had not pinched that little wench that was here anon. What must I do ?

CROMWELL. Even put such face on it as you can, your Majesty ; go forward with it now, and we will devise some remedy after.

HENRY. (*Giving a gold cup to a HERALD*) Give the Princess this cup in Henry's name.

(*The HERALD carries the cup to ANNE*)

ANNE. (*To an attendant*) Hier, nimm dass, Hans.

HENRY. She does not look at it.

ANNE. Ist dass der Prinz ?

HERALD. She asks, an't be your Grace.

HENRY. She hath divined me, Cromwell.

ANNE. Er ist dick.

HENRY. What does she say ?

HERALD. She saith your Grace doth wear
A port beseems a King.

HENRY. So much in few ?

CROMWELL. The Masque is done.

GARDINER. A little more ; attend.

SWAINS. Hath she no child, this lovely Queen ?

SHEPHERDESSES. She hath one only child, I ween,

A child that loveth sport and game ;
The Princess Pastime is her name.

CROMWELL. What is this ? This was not in the book.

NORFOLK. Tut, man, you'll not blame her : it is but meet that a Queen of Love should have a child.

(*The MUSICIANS begin to play a song*)

HENRY. Ha, a gracious melody forsooth.

GARDINER. It is your own, Majesty.

HENRY. I had forgot I writ so well.

SHEPHERDESSES. Let garlands crown the festal day,

For see, the Princess comes this way.

Enter KATHARINE HOWARD and sings KING HENRY'S song : " Pastime in Good Company."

HENRY. Now Spring is come where barren Winter reigned,

Dew on her lips, and sunshine in her eyes ;
The flowers break forth, birds sing in every bush.
(*To the HERALD*) Tell the Princess I writ the song myself.

ANNE. Das lasset man bei uns gemeinen Leuten.

HERALD. She saith, it is well written.

GARDINER. Glozing rogue !
She saith in Almany they leave such toys
To common men.

HENRY. I' faith, a gracious answer !

Go, Cromwell, and attend the Princess Anne ;
Tell her the King is pleased to welcome her.

[*Exeunt ANNE and her TRAIN, the MASQUERS,
the MUSICIANS and CROMWELL*

(HENRY, GARDINER, NORFOLK, RAT)

HENRY. Who was the maid ?

NORFOLK. My brother's daughter, Kate.

HENRY. Bring her to Greenwich. I must speak with her.

Of noble birth ; a morsel for a King !

GARDINER. The King will marry with the Princess Anne ?

HENRY. Never !

GARDINER. 'Tis Cromwell brought you to this pass, Not tendering your good, but for some sleight Devised against the Pope and Emperor.

No remedy ! This Anne must be your bride, If you disown not him that made her so.

HENRY. He is my friend.

GARDINER. Is he indeed your friend ?

NORFOLK. Your friend that joyed because the Queen was dead ?

GARDINER. And made a banquet for his complices.

NORFOLK. Carousing deep, and boasting in his cups That he would trounce the Lords if they gainsayed him.

GARDINER. Said that the King was cowed and dare not thwart him.

NORFOLK. All witnessed by the worthy Dr Rat.

RAT. Yea, I was there ; he lift a dagger up And swore he'd plunge it in the King's own heart If he withstood him.

HENRY. Damnèd treacherous knave ! If this be proven, he shall die the death.

"Said that the King was cowed" ? Come, let's along :

I'll see this closer.

GARDINER. Mark where he comes.

HENRY. Anon.

Enter CROMWELL

CROMWELL. Her Highness lays her duty at your feet.

HENRY. Thanks, gentle Lord. For all your tra-
vailing

Anent my sponsals with the Dame of Cleves,
Receive the quality of Earl of Essex.

My Chancellor shall bail you the escroll.

GARDINER. Good joy, my Lord.

CROMWELL. Thanks, gentle Gardiner.

[*Exeunt* HENRY, GARDINER, NORFOLK and RAT
CROMWELL. An Earldom too! My star that seemed
so low

Climbs to the pole and shines serene again.

SCENE 2

The Council Chamber. GARDINER, SUFFOLK, the
LORD CHANCELLOR and other COUNCILLORS at the
Board; NORFOLK presiding.

NORFOLK. His guilt is manifest; the warrant's
signed

For his arrest and lodgement in the Tower.

His Majesty denies to see him more.

CHANCELLOR. What must I do with this? (*Holding
out a scroll*)

NORFOLK. What is it, my Lord?

CHANCELLOR. The scroll of his addition.

NORFOLK. Let him receive it.

Enter CROMWELL, wearing the Garter.

Welcome Baron of Oakham!

CHANCELLOR. Earl of Essex (*Handing him the scroll*)
As by this instrument you are preferred.

CROMWELL. Thanks, Chancellor.

NORFOLK. Beware of pride, my Lord!

So many honours heaped upon one head;

The Garter too! They say prosperity,

Unless it wear some blemish on his front,
Is blasted by the eye of envious men,
And at his full is nearest to decay.

Have you no fear of envy ?

CROMWELL. None, my Lord.

NORFOLK. Why, you provoke it, County ; even here
You wear the thong that others leave at home.

CROMWELL. I please myself and not the Duke of
Norfolk.

NORFOLK. Wretch, that too long hast gulled the
gentle King,

I 'rest you of High Treason. To the Tower !

CROMWELL. By what authority ?

NORFOLK. (*Showing him a ring*) By this, hilding !

Dost thou acknow the King's own ring ?

CROMWELL. I do ;

See that he mock not at you.

NORFOLK. Have no fear ;

He knows your charge.

CROMWELL. I'll answer any charge.

NORFOLK. You'll have no room. You that attainst
my brother

Unheard in his defence, by Act of Parliament,

You forged the engine of your own defeat.

SUFFOLK. Twisted a rod for his own tail, i' faith.

CHANCELLOR. Your tyranny is over !

CROMWELL. Worser tyranny

Will follow on the heels of this.

NORFOLK. Enough !

Enter GUARDS

My Lord of Suffolk, bear him to the Tower.

But stay ! Not in the panoply of honour !

(*Tearing off CROMWELL'S Garter*)

Thou base-born churl ! Long have my fingers itched
To tear these trappings from thy farrier flesh.

SCENE 3

At Court. GARDINER and NORFOLK.

GARDINER. Whither, my Lord of Norfolk ?

NORFOLK. To the King.

GARDINER. Be ruled by me, my Lord ; we shall 'but seem

To be envenomed by some private hate,
Rather than tendering the Kingdom's weal,
If we assail his ear with too much cause

Why thus and thus he should not pardon Cromwell.

NORFOLK. Cranmer's been with him, clamouring for mercy.

GARDINER. His Grace of Canterbury is with him now,
And Sadler, with a letter from the Tower
From Cromwell self.

NORFOLK. Zounds, we shall be undone !

GARDINER. There's one that reasons better than ourselves

Against the side of mercy.

NORFOLK. Who is that ?

GARDINER. Your niece's lips, the Lady Katharine,
Which, only to smile, not speak, outreason all.

(Pointing out of the window)

See where she walks among the cypresses.

Is it a wonder that so fair a face

Should break that wafer cake the Prince's heart ?

Yet if he pardon him there is no way

But he must keep the German for his Queen ;

And so farewell to Lady Katharine.

Enter HENRY, CRANMER and SADLER with a letter.

CRANMER. Sire, I have throughly known him as I know

The bottom of my heart ; a snow-white man ;
 There is no guile or treachery in him.
 And how he loved your Grace ! Does not his love
 Cry from this letter ?

HENRY. Read me that piece again.

SADLER. (*Reading*) " Beseech your Grace, perpend
 my woeful lot,
 Ready to take the death when it shall please
 you ;

And yet the frailty of the flesh incites
 To call for mercy. . . . "

HENRY. Ay, " most gracious Prince,
 I cry for mercy, mercy, mercy. . . . "

NORFOLK. What ?

Did he have mercy ? Did he spare my brother ?

HENRY. Your brother was a traitor, but this man
 Has served me faithfully for many years.

NORFOLK. All England cries aloud for vengeance on
 him.

HENRY. This is your malice speaks, not love of
 England.

England should bless not curse him.

CRANMER. Now I hear

The King's authentic voice speak from his heart.

HENRY. Cranmer, I love him still. . . .

(GARDINER *signals from the window, and KATHARINE'S*
voice is heard singing in the garden : " Pastime in
Good Company ")

HENRY. Whose voice is that ?

GARDINER. The Lady Katharine, walking in the
 shade;

Defies the ousel to a joust of song.

CRANMER. Your Majesty . . .

HENRY. Leave me in peace, Cranmer,
 Commons and Lords have judged him ; plead
 with them.

SADLER. And shall I bear no message to him ?

HENRY. None.

[*Exit* HENRY

SCENE 4

In a dungeon of the Tower. Night. The scene is lighted only by a lantern standing on the floor. CROMWELL alone.

CROMWELL. Day after day, night after dreadful night,

I sit and con the story of my past,

My hope, my glory and my swift descent ;

And ever the shadow of my coming death
Creeps slowly forward to my trembling feet.

How often have I watched the sun's first ray
Steal in through yonder grill and kiss the wall,

Rejoicing that another night was gone

With its fantastic shadows and its dreams.

Now when the sun shines in, O misery. . . .

O sun, sink into everlasting night,

Clocks stand, and all things make an end of time ;

For I must die upon the point of day.

I that had seemed so sure ; made Earl of Essex

Only to fat me for the slaughter . . . Hark !

What sound is that ? The headsman's dreadful
tread

Echoes among the vaults of heartless stone,

Keys rattle and the rusty lock cries, Death !

Enter SADLER and a prisoner

Go back ! go back ! the sun's not risen yet ;

I am not fit to die ; I will not die !

SADLER. Do you not know me? It is I, my Lord,
Sadler that keeps this prison, him that once
Yourself preferred to hold this doleful charge;
Sadler, that bare your message to the King.

CROMWELL. O gentle Sadler, grief hath made me
blind.

O foolish fear that hid my joy from me;
For now I know, the King has pardoned me;
You came to wake me with the joyful news.

SADLER. Have no such hope, my Lord.

CROMWELL. He read my letter?
Was he not moved? Did he not say, Poor
Cromwell?

SADLER. Banish all hope; he will not pardon you,
And at the hour of sunrise you must die.
Be brave, my Lord; even as this poor clerk,
For whom the dawn brings death no less than you.

*[Exit SADLER, leaving his
prisoner behind him]*

CROMWELL. Oh; to be brave! But how can I not
quake

To see the daily pageant of this world,
The leaves, the blades of grass, each tiny stone,
And vulgar things, this lantern and this jug,
All that perceiving means to be alive,
Plunge at the axe's blow to nothingness?
You, sir, my fellow-prisoner, gentle friend,
You that lie there so still (thinking of what?),
Have you the secret? How should a man face
Death?

Teach me the lesson.

*(His fellow-prisoner crosses and lifts the lantern so
that its light falls on both their faces, revealing
himself as LAMBERT)*

LAMBERT. See, it is I, Cromwell.

CROMWELL. Lambert!

LAMBERT. I know your story. You that were brave,
Are you a coward at last and fear to die ?

CROMWELL. A little less, Jack, for the sight of thee.

LAMBERT. Our roads that so long parted meet again ;
Each for the selfsame goal we started forth,
To bring the Kingdom of the Lord to earth.
How hast thou fared ? In Courts and Palaces,
Bending thine honour to a thousand shifts,
Slipping by small and small from brave intents,
Foiled in the end, condemned, afraid to die.

CROMWELL. And thou, O prophet, crying in the
Wilderness,
Hast thou succeeded better ?

LAMBERT. Yea.

CROMWELL. And yet
The selfsame morning brings us to the death,
And still no sign on earth of Kingdom gained.

LAMBERT. I too was blind ; but now mine eyes have
seen.

CROMWELL. When will it come, Jack ?

LAMBERT. It will never come ;
Never but in the heart. Age after age
Mankind will be the unchanging slavish same,
Hugging his chains, and hating those who seek
That freedom which the Christ went forth to
preach.

And when we seem to conquer, shaking off
The load of tyranny that weighed us down
In State or Church, they'll build it up again
In some new shape and called by some new name,
And still be slaves.

CROMWELL. Then have we toiled in vain ?

LAMBERT. No, not in vain
If we have freed one soul, our own or other,
And given it wings to soar above the rest,
Despising mockery, judgment, torment, death,

Too proud to barter freedom for its ease.

Art thou not free, Tom ?

CROMWELL. Thou dost infect me with thy courage,
Jack ;

Give me thy hand, boy ; I'll be brave at last.

Too proud ; ay, that's the word ; too proud to
quail

Before the bludgeoning of this knavish world.

What ! Such a pack of clumsy butchers ? Out
on them !

I'll put forth merrily from this dingy shore

To seek new lands and new adventures . . .

LAMBERT. There's my old Cromwell ! See, the sun
shines in ;

Farewell, it is the hour of our death ;

I to the faggot, thou to the axe. Farewell !

*Enter SADLER with EXECUTIONERS, ATTENDANTS
and FRIARS with candles.*

CROMWELL. Farewell, my honest Jack ; we'll meet
anon.

SADLER. Farewell to both ! Officers, do your
charge.

*(The EXECUTIONERS go to take CROMWELL and
LAMBERT)*

CROMWELL. *(Offering a piece of gold to the HEADSMAN)*
Here, gentle Deathsman, here's guerdon for thy
pains ;

See and shame not thy calling by thy stroke.

HEADSMAN. *(Throwing the piece of gold on the ground)*

Out, bloody villain ! I'll no gold of thine !

I'll wreak thee vengeance of a nation's tears ;

I'll hack thee, villain, like a shambles prentice-
boy,

And change thy death to twenty thousand deaths.

CROMWELL. Peace; varlet; I that fear not death himself,

Weenest I fear what thou canst do to me?

[Exeunt in procession with FRIARS chanting

CURTAIN

CINDERELLA

An Ibsen Pantomime in Three Acts

TO THOSE
WHO TOOK PART IN THE
ORIGINAL IMPROMPTU
IBSEN PANTOMIME

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MRS INQUEST

HEDDA, *her daughter, a distinguished, fashionable person*

HILDA, *her stepdaughter*

MADAM HELSETH, *her servant*

AUNT JUDY, *her sister*

MOPSYMAN, *Aunt Judy's dog*

STOCKFISH

TESMAN, *his son*

A DEMON, a FAIRY, a HIRED WAITER and a THEATRICAL MANAGER

NOTE: The parts of MRS INQUEST and AUNT JUDY are to be played by men.

PROLOGUE

THE THEATRICAL MANAGER comes before the curtain and introduces the play with a short speech, in which he says that he has endeavoured to please both generations, providing Ibsen for the young and Pantomime for the old. The result is a Pantomime as Ibsen would have written it, if only it had occurred to him to write one.

NOTE: This pantomime is hardly more than a rough draft, written when the idea was fresh and put aside to be worked on when the right moment should come. Unhappily it never came; but even in its present form the play has seemed too characteristic of its author to be lost, and it is therefore printed as it stands. K. C.

CINDERELLA

ACT I

SCENE 1

Before a drop scene. Red light and a gong.

Enter a DEMON

DEMON. What O! I am the spirit of the Night.
And to do heevil is my chief delight.
When I see people 'appy I am sad ;
Nothing seems good to me unless it's bad.
Good girls like Cinderella drive me wild ;
She's never naughty ; that's why I hate the child.
And now that she's emergin' from her teens,
I'll give her no *pease* ; I'll give her *beans*.
(*White light and a gong*)

Enter a FAIRY

FAIRY. Turremble, saucy knave ! Behold
The enemy you feared of old !
DEMON. Oh, Lor' ! My word ! That girl again !
FAIRY. De toutes les fées je suis la reine.
DEMON. She's a hundesirable himmigrant.
FAIRY. No harm shall come to Cinderella
From you or any other feller ;
I and my fairies will protect her.
DEMON. They're the police, she's the Inspector.
Where are the others ? Where's the ballet ?
FAIRY. They can't come on the stage to-day, so allez !
DEMON. Why not ?
FAIRY. Oh, Madame Brown forgot to send their things,
So we're obliged to keep them in the wings.

FAIRY CHORUS. (*Behind*) 'Ark to the fairies singing their song,

Dear little fairies singing all wrong ;
If you can't hear our song very plain,
When it is finished we'll sing it again.

DEMON. Oh, spare me ! Spare me ! What have I done to deserve this ?

(*Chorus repeated*)

FAIRY. Enough ! Belay there ! It is time
To give the kids their Pantomime.

[*Exeunt* DEMON and FAIRY

SCENE 2

The drop scene is raised, revealing an Ibsen interior.

MRS INQUEST *sits at a table and knits. She rings a bell.*

Enter MADAM HELSETH

MRS INQUEST. Come hither, Madam Helseth, and sit down by me.

MADAM HELSETH. But I've the scuttles to fill.

MRS INQUEST. No matter ; come hither ; I want to talk. Soliloquies are not allowed in modern plays. It is necessary that I should have a confidante.

MADAM HELSETH. I'll take my sewing.

MRS INQUEST. I am a lady of middle age and prepossessing aspect. My name is not Mrs Twankay ; it is Mrs Inquest ; a nice cheerful sort of name with a Scandinavian ring about it. I do nothing all day but knit, knit, knit. It has some sort of symbolical meaning. I never open a book ; we none of us ever do ; there are no books in the house except what we write ourselves. We sit and brood over our sorrows. We are a peculiar family all of us ; we are a thing apart. Our

names all begin with an H. There's Hilda, and Hedda, and Helseth . . .

MADAM HELSETH. And Hinquest.

MRS INQUEST. We are all fond of pickles, and all our uncles drink, and we all have green eyes of a peculiar shade.

MADAM HELSETH. But good gracious, Mrs Inquest, I have heard all this a dozen times before.

MRS INQUEST. Very likely, but those good people over there haven't. The name of this house is Rosmersholm ; it is a gloomy place, situated on a bleak and cheerless heath overlooking the fjord. We have no friends ; no neighbours. There is no human habitation within miles and miles, except the gas works. And here we all live side by side, cheek by jowl, but miles apart in soul, Hilda and Hedda and I, and we all detest each other heartily. Hedda is mad ; Hilda is mad ; we are all more or less mad.

MADAM HELSETH. I must go and be about my work.

MRS INQUEST. Nay, hear me out.

MADAM HELSETH. But indeed I must go.

MRS INQUEST. You *shall* hear me out ! (*Forcing her back into her chair*) Am I mistress here or not ? Listen and I will tell you the story of my life. I have a past behind me.

MADAM HELSETH. Ha ! This becomes interesting. Do you know, an idea of that sort had crossed my mind already once or twice.

MRS INQUEST. When I was very young I was married to a man with whom I had no single point of sympathy. He loved me, oh, so passionately ! but it was only for my beauty, my charm, my wit. I was not a human being to him ; not a creature with a free, wild will. I was only a chattel, a doll. Even then I wanted to live my

own life, but he wouldn't so much as let me eat macaroons.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah! So you are Nora.

MRS INQUEST. Yes, I am that unhappy woman.

MADAM HELSETH. I know all about you. You ran away.

MRS INQUEST. (*As if she had forgotten*) Ran away? . . . Oh, that was nothing. I soon came back again. When at last my child was born . . .

MADAM HELSETH. Miss Hedda?

MRS INQUEST. Yes.

MADAM HELSETH. But you had several already?

MRS INQUEST. Oh, they didn't count. We turned them out; they were dolls too. We wanted to start quite afresh.

MADAM HELSETH. Fancy!

MRS INQUEST. When Hedda was born I determined to get rid of my husband. His constant presence irked me; his perpetual smiles and caresses seemed to insult my humanity.

MADAM HELSETH. What did you do?

MRS INQUEST. I drowned him in the mill-race.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh dearie, dearie me! You drowned him?

MRS INQUEST. Yes, I had my undaunted freeborn will at that time. I pushed him in.

MADAM HELSETH. That was when the White Horse began to haunt Rosmersholm.

MRS INQUEST. Ah yes, the White Horse. I enjoyed the luxury of widowhood for many years; then I determined, for some very complicated reasons, to marry again. Oh, he was an angel; I met him up at the Baths. He had a daughter already.

MADAM HELSETH. Miss Hilda?

MRS INQUEST. Yes, her name was Hilda.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, that was a happy marriage!

MRS INQUEST. Yes, those are the worst, the happy marriages.

MADAM HELSETH. You always agreed on everything.

MRS INQUEST. Yes, I always insisted on that. But I was bored, mortally bored. All this happened as usual, you will understand, together with a lot of other complicated circumstances, fifteen or twenty years before the play opens. Well, I could stand it no longer; I had to get rid of him too. He was a miserable, undersized little beast.

MADAM HELSETH. What! did you kill him too?

MRS INQUEST. No, he was good enough to take that trouble off my hands. He hanged himself in the apple orchard. I drove him to it. I drove him mad, inexorably mad. I hinted. I said: "Here is a rope; there is the apple orchard."

MADAM HELSETH. But that was cruel of you; it was tactless.

MRS INQUEST. Oh, of course, blame me! blame me! A woman is always in the wrong.

MADAM HELSETH. And is that all? Were there no other children?

MRS INQUEST. Oh yes, fifteen others.

MADAM HELSETH. What became of them?

MRS INQUEST. I killed them. Lucky children! They enjoy the peace and luxury of death. Then at last I began to live, deep down, in the bottom of my soul.

MADAM HELSETH. These secrets are more than I can bear.

MRS INQUEST. But all this is nothing; it is only the prelude; you have not heard the worst.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, Lord! Have you more confessions to make? Was there some other crime?

MRS INQUEST. The worst thing was what came after.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, let me know the worst!

MRS INQUEST. No, I will keep it for some wet afternoon. It is all in here. (*Giving her a portfolio*) Here is the key. I want you to take care of it for me. But you must on no account look inside.

MADAM HELSETH. Then why do you give it me?

MRS INQUEST. 'Sh! It may be useful in the last act. And now you know why it is that a kind of gloom weighs over the household.

MADAM HELSETH. The White Horse; yes, yes!

MRS INQUEST. Hedda is clever and writes books. Hilda has a mean, crawling spirit; she loves drudgery; she does the housework while you loaf around, gibbering about White Horses and things. I never laugh; Hilda never laughs; nobody ev-ver laughs at Rosmersholm.

(*HEDDA laughs off*)

MADAM HELSETH. Except Miss Hedda.

MRS INQUEST. Yes, Hedda laughs at times. But it's a funereal sort of laugh; a sardonic, anchovic sort of laugh. It always means death to somebody.

Enter HEDDA

HEDDA. Give me my pistols; there's a visitor coming up the drive.

[*Exit with pistols*]

MADAM HELSETH. Lor', that Miss Hedda! The things she does do!

(*Pistol-shots without*)

TESMAN. (*Without*) Help! Help!

(*More pistol-shots*)

Enter HEDDA laughing.

MRS INQUEST. What is the matter, my child?

HEDDA. It is only Tesman come to pay a call. I nearly got him, but he dodged.

MRS INQUEST. It is Over-Drain-Inspector Tesman, who is engaged to be married to my daughter Hedda.

MADAM HELSETH. (*Impatiently*) I know! I know!

Enter TESMAN, in mittens, carrying a parcel.

HEDDA. You dodged, you mean beast, you dodged!

TESMAN. Do you know, Hedda, I wish you were a little more gentle and winning in your ways.

MRS INQUEST. You mustn't mind Hedda, Tesman; she overflows with the joy of life.

HEDDA. Why have you come here?

TESMAN. I came to show you something very wonderful. You will never guess what. It is Aunt Jemima's wedding present. I had never hoped for anything so good from her.

HEDDA. I don't care; I don't want to see.

TESMAN. (*Following her about*) But you must, Hedda; you are one of the family now.

HEDDA. I don't want to see! I don't want to see!

TESMAN. Uncle Krogstat used to wear them. You never saw such a big pair.

HEDDA. Heavens! What is he going to show us?

TESMAN. (*Producing them from his parcel*) A pair of goloshes. What did you think? A pair of old goloshes.

MRS INQUEST. Fancy!

TESMAN. Old goloshes! Think of that, Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes, yes!

TESMAN. Only think, Hedda.

HEDDA. I am thinking.

TESMAN. But that is not the most important thing that I have to tell you. No, there is something more.

MRS INQUEST. Whatever can it be ?

TESMAN. I cannot come and see you now so often.

HEDDA. You can't ?

TESMAN. This valley has become terrible to me.

MRS INQUEST. Why ?

TESMAN. Because I have found my father.

HEDDA. Your father ?

MRS INQUEST. You have a father ?

TESMAN. A long-lost father. He lives up here at the gas-works under an assumed name. You can hear his footstep. (*A steady footstep heard pacing up and down*) Up and down, up and down.

MRS INQUEST. Up and down, up and down.

TESMAN. For eight long years. On the top of the gas meter.

HEDDA. Are you afraid of your father then ?

TESMAN. Yes, inscrutably afraid ; it is one of the old habits of childhood. But that is not all.

MRS INQUEST. What more is there ?

TESMAN. He has grown tired of his solitude at last. To-day he has determined to come down, to go out into society again. He is coming here.

HEDDA. (*At the window*) See, he is descending the gas meter.

MRS INQUEST. Slowly step by step he clammers down the ironwork pillars.

HEDDA. He has a stick in his hand.

TESMAN. I must be off. Be kind to him. After all, he is my father. You mustn't mind if he's a little strange in his manner.

MRS INQUEST. He cometh hitherwards.

HEDDA. I must have a shot at him.

TESMAN. No, don't ; not on his first visit. He might not understand. It might make him shy of coming again. Here's Hilda ; bully her instead.

Good-bye. I must fly. I love him dearly, but my life is not worth a minute's purchase if he finds me here.

[*Exit* TESMAN

Enter HILDA *in green spectacles, with a cardboard shade over her eyes.*

HEDDA. Come here, come here, you little coward! you little mean-spirited wretch! Why do you wear those goggles and that idiotic shade over your eyes?

HILDA. Oh, please, Hedda, you know that I have to, for my work.

HEDDA. Your work!

HILDA. The glare of the kitchen fire is too much for me without them. Oh, please forgive me, Hedda. I've got such weak eyes.

HEDDA. You wretched little household drudge! You're afraid of me, you're afraid of me!

HILDA. Oh, please don't hurt me!

HEDDA. And I can't stand your hair. (*Rumpling it*) Ugh! It's all fluffy like a Regent Street chicken.

HILDA. Oh, please!

HEDDA. "Oh, please!" I think I must burn it off after all.

HILDA. Oh no, please not! I'll do anything you tell me.

Enter MADAM HELSETH, *ushering in* STOCKFISH, *with straw in his hair.*

MADAM HELSETH. Mr Stockfish.

(*She hands his card to* MRS INQUEST)

HEDDA. (*Winningly*) So glad, I'm sure.

STOCKFISH. H'mph !

MRS INQUEST. (*To MADAM HELSETH*) One of my former husbands. (*Standing beside the table, like Mrs Borkman*) Why have you come here, Stockfish ?

STOCKFISH. Can you not forget ? Can you not forgive ?

MRS INQUEST. I never forgive ! I never forget !

STOCKFISH. After eight years of solitude I could bear it no longer. I waited and waited up there expecting a deputation, but nobody came. This is not life ; I must have company.

MRS INQUEST. Company, Stockfish ? Did *I* have company when as a girl of thirty-five . . .

HEDDA. Leave us, mamma. Your presence irks me. [*Exit* MRS INQUEST

Sit down. Tell us the story of your life.

STOCKFISH. Once I was a builder. I used to build houses.

HILDA. With high towers to them ?

STOCKFISH. How did you know that ? Yes, they had high towers to them. Who is this girl ?

HEDDA. Take no notice of her ; she's the between.

STOCKFISH. I built houses on a new principle. But they always tumbled down, the houses that I built, burying housemaids and clockwork mice in the ruins.

HEDDA. Clockwork mice ?

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, there's some symbolism in that, you may be sure.

HEDDA. It is a pity only that they tumbled down.

STOCKFISH. But that wasn't the worst. It was what happened after they tumbled down that was the worst.

HEDDA. What was that ?

STOCKFISH. I began to mistrust myself.

HEDDA. To mistrust yourself? Ah, that is the worst sort of mistrust.

STOCKFISH. Yes, I began to doubt whether I had any great mission, any special message to the world, in the architectural line. Others began to doubt it too. I began to be known as the plaster-builder. I resolved to begin a new life; I resolved to build no more houses.

HEDDA. You were quite right; houses are so irrelevant.

STOCKFISH. I said to myself: "I will build gas-works instead."

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, to light the town; that is the great need of the local situation.

STOCKFISH. No, that is where I had been wrong all my life. I had been trying to serve mankind. I had been trying to do something useful.

HEDDA. Useful! How I hate that mean, ugly word!

STOCKFISH. I said: "I will no longer do what is useful. I will no longer build little humdrum houses for little humdrum people to live in. I will build gas-works out in some wild, desolate spot, far from all human habitation, among the peaks and the great waste places, where they can nev-ver, nev-ver be of any use to anybody at all."

HEDDA. Oh, that was noble of you, Stockfish!

STOCKFISH. Do you know what I am? I am an Idealist. Whatever I do has a symbolical meaning.

HEDDA. And the gas?

STOCKFISH. That is symbolical too. . . . I cast off my family; I changed my name.

HEDDA. Why?

STOCKFISH. Do you not understand? I wanted to start quite afresh. Besides, I owed money in the town.

HEDDA. You were quite right. All that sort of thing is so irrelevant.

STOCKFISH. The soulless toil of the wage-earner has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. That is why I cast off my son, Tesman.

HEDDA. Tesman!

STOCKFISH. You know him?

HEDDA. Oh, slightly.

MADAM HELSETH. Ahem!

HEDDA. You'd better go and get on with the house-work, I think, Madam Helseth.

[Exit MADAM HELSETH

STOCKFISH. He insisted on working. He worked nearly six hours a day, and lived on what he earned.

HEDDA. Shame!

STOCKFISH. He haunted me with the vision of the humdrum citizen, the good bourgeois. I said, "Épatons-le," and I épatted him. He wanted to be respectable. I kicked him out. I want none of that.

HEDDA. I should think not indeed!

HILDA. Serve him jolly well right!

STOCKFISH. He is a drudge.

HILDA. Down with him!

STOCKFISH. Besides, as Over-Drain-Inspector to the Stockholm County Council he had condemned several of the houses that I built. And so for eight long years I have been up in this valley, making gas that no one will ev-ver burn.

HEDDA. That no one will ev-ver burn! How beautiful!

STOCKFISH. The solitude up there at the gas-works is something awful; you can't think. You could cut it with a knife.

HEDDA. What, are you quite alone?

STOCKFISH. 'Sh! No, I am not quite alone.

HEDDA. Is there some other person . . .

STOCKFISH. No, it is not a person. 'Sh! It's a great secret. I keep it in the box-room. You shall see it when you come up.

HEDDA. Oh, what can it be?

STOCKFISH. This evening you will see. At last I have grown sick of this life. Even gas-making palls in the end. This morning I said to myself: "I will go out into Society again; I will marry."

HEDDA. Marry!

HILDA. One of us?

HEDDA. I am engaged; but I can easily break it off.

STOCKFISH. I have determined to give a party. I am going to break the ice. I invite you to my party.

HEDDA. This evening?

STOCKFISH. Yes, just this evening.

HILDA. Oh, how ripping!

HEDDA. Nonsense, *you're* not asked.

STOCKFISH. Of course not. I only want the eligible ladies of the neighbourhood; just the County.

HEDDA. And what amusements will there be at the party?

STOCKFISH. We will play paper games.

HEDDA. How beautiful! Long dreary paper games! I'll go and ask mamma. We shall have to titivate a bit, change our clothes and all that.

STOCKFISH. Oh, clothes are so irrelevant!

HILDA. How I wish I could go too!

HEDDA. You indeed! Ugh! I think I shall have to burn your hair off after all.

HILDA. Oh, please not, Hedda! Spare me! Spare me! I am weak and feeble.

[*Exit* HEDDA

Oh, sir, I want to ask a favour of you.

STOCKFISH. A favour? You?

HILDA. Mayn't I come to your party too?

STOCKFISH. A little tame beast like you? No indeed! I want no mouse-faces about me, no lap-dog muzzles, no turtle-bills. Give me tiger-snouts and ravening wolf-jowls!

HILDA. Oh dear, oh dear! Why am I such a miserable teeny-weeny little mizzler? I am enormously fetched by you, Stockfish; there is something very taking about you.

STOCKFISH. Pah, scrub!

Enter MRS INQUEST and HEDDA in hooded cloaks.

(*To MRS INQUEST*) What, are you coming too?

MRS INQUEST. Stockfish, during fifteen years I wrestled with another woman once for your soul, and now I mean to have it.

STOCKFISH. Oh, Sophonisba, how will all this end?

[*Exit STOCKFISH*]

MRS INQUEST. (*To HILDA*) Have the milk hot when we come back, and don't forget to feed the cat. And by the by, don't let anybody in while we're away.

HILDA. Who is likely to come? No one ever comes here.

MRS INQUEST. My sister has been seen in the hills, your godmother, Aunt Judy.

HILDA. Aunt Judy? My godmother? Why, I never even heard of her!

MRS INQUEST. She's a bad lot. They call her the Rat-wife. Heaven grant that you may never meet her. (*AUNT JUDY laughs without*) Why, what was that?

MADAM HELSETH. The White Horse!

HEDDA. Ugh! you wait till I get back.

[*Exeunt* MRS INQUEST and HEDDA

MADAM HELSETH. Heaven grant they may not meet the White Horse on the way.

HILDA. All alone! All alone! All alone!

MADAM HELSETH. Why, you've got me, dearie.

(HILDA *sings a song expressing solitude and dejection*)

HILDA. And now I suppose I shall have to spend the evening scrubbing those pots and pans. How I hate pots and pans!

MADAM HELSETH. Are we down-hearted? No!

HILDA. And I'm hungry too; they give me nothing to eat.

MADAM HELSETH. Lord love a duck, young lady, I'll toss you up a bit of a pancake for your supper in no time.

HILDA. I tell you what we'll do; we'll read Hedda's book together. That'll be a lark.

MADAM HELSETH. What! Is Miss Hedda writing a book?

HILDA. Didn't you know? Yes, on Department for Young Ladies.

MADAM HELSETH. Fancy! That ought to be something quite new. (*A bell rings*) Hark! there's the bell. Whoever can it be? I'll go and see.

HILDA. Yes, do!

[*Exit* MADAM HELSETH

(*Reading*) My! The things Hedda does say! If mamma only knew!

Enter MADAM HELSETH

MADAM HELSETH. It's an elderly woman downstairs who wants to see you.

HILDA. Who is she?

MADAM HELSETH. She's not much to look at. She seems what you might call a bit crazed; balmy, so to speak, on the crumpet, and that's a fact.

HILDA. Ah, well, she won't be out of place here. Ask her to come up.

MADAM HELSETH. I did. I told her to follow me; but she said she preferred coming her own way.

(A gong, music and red light)

Enter AUNT JUDY through a trap-door. She has a hooked nose, and wears a Welsh witch costume with tall hat and cap frill.

AUNT JUDY. Well? Here we are again! Pardon, seductive lady, you don't remember me?

HILDA. I don't think I ever had the pleasure.

AUNT JUDY. Why, I'm your Aunt Judy.

HILDA. Aunt Judy? The lady I wasn't to admit under any circumstances? Come in! Come in!

AUNT JUDY. I'm your godmother.

HILDA. I know.

AUNT JUDY. Your fairy godmother.

HILDA. What, are you a fairy?

AUNT JUDY. Yes, I'm a troll. *(Singing and dancing)*

Fol de rol lol,

I'm a troll, I'm a troll!

Fol de rol lay,

Toujours gaie, toujours gaie!

Fol de rol lee,

You'll never catch me!

Fol de rol lol de rol lido!

(Spoken) Ha, ha, ha, my elegant mermaid, what do you think of that?

HILDA. What an engaging old lady you are! Are you always as gay as that?

AUNT JUDY. Rather! I sing and dance all day and all night. *Allegro con brio* is my lay.

HILDA. And is it true that you are a bad lot?

AUNT JUDY. Ah, they told you that! *Fi donc!* That's their spitefulness, my unspeakable jam puff, because I went my own way without listening to them. *Donnerwetter, ma chère*, I was never cut out to be a myrmidon of morality. I'm an *émancipée*, that's what I am. I've always lived my own life; *comprenez?* What are cork-screws made for? Ahem! I say no more.

HILDA. Aha! You've been brought up by hand?

AUNT JUDY. You have hit it, gracious lady! I've signed the pledge a dozen times, but, bless you, Aunt Judy still remains the woman she always was. Since then they call me the Rat-wife. That's the jolliest thing in the world that anyone can be.

HILDA. Are you so fond of rats then?

AUNT JUDY. Fond of them? I've *got* to be fond of them whether I like it or not. I see rats, rats, rats everywhere. Big rats, little rats, pink rats with purple eyes. Look at them! Rats and pumpkins! They're all over the floor. And white mice too!

HILDA. Ugh! (*Jumping on a chair*) I don't see no mice.

AUNT JUDY. Ah, you wait till you've signed the pledge! They come creepy-crawly up in the beds all night long. They plump into the milk-cans. They go pittering pattering all over the floor, backwards and forwards, and up and down, nibbling and gnawing and creeping and crawling, all the rats and the blessed little rat-children; and I go about following and following after them, I and my lovely little dog Mopsyman.

HILDA. What, have you got a dog too?

AUNT JUDY. A dog? Of course I have.

HILDA. A real dog ?

AUNT JUDY. I should think so indeed ! He drinks whisky too.

HILDA. Real whisky ?

AUNT JUDY. Yes, Scotch reel. (*She calls.*)

Enter MOPSYMAN

Ah, you should see him dance ! Why, what's this ? A pair of clogs ? Four of them ; a pair for me and a pair for you, Mopsyman. Let's have a clog dance.

(AUNT JUDY and MOPSYMAN dance)

Basta ! I'm blown. So the rest of the family have gone out to a party and left you all alone at home ?

HILDA. Yes.

AUNT JUDY. I overheard all that they said. I was under the window. I said to myself : What ho ! Capisco, meine Damen. I'll have my revenge. I'll put some stiffening into that tame little ash-cat Hilda, and twist old Inquest's tail. I've come to revolutionise you. You've got to stand up and be a man.

HILDA. Me ? Oh no, I'm a little soft Early Victorian thing ; you can't stiffen me.

AUNT JUDY. What, are you contented with your position here ?

HILDA. Oh no.

AUNT JUDY. To be a drudge, a cinder-minx ?

HILDA. No, I crave for great things, great enormous irrelevant things.

AUNT JUDY. Ha, ha ! You want to live your own life.

HILDA. Yes, that's it. I want to live my own life. If only I knew how to begin !

AUNT JUDY. Odds ratikins, that's easy. Every woman begins with the same thing.

HILDA. What's that?

AUNT JUDY. A man.

HILDA. A man? Oh, my! How ripping!

AUNT JUDY. A little soft whiskery man to scrunch up in your dainty fingerkins.

HILDA. Oh, wouldn't I like it! (*Running about*)
Oh, where's a man, where's a man?

AUNT JUDY. There's Stockfish to begin with.

HILDA. Stockfish?

AUNT JUDY. You can practise on him for a start.
Go up to the party at the gas-works.

HILDA. But Hedda would burn my hair off.

AUNT JUDY. Hedda indeed! Who's afraid of Hedda? Disguise yourself.

HILDA. But how am I to disguise myself?

AUNT JUDY. I have it! . . . Wash!

HILDA. I will!

AUNT JUDY. And fig yourself up in some of Hedda's clothes.

HILDA. Right-o! I will. I will get myself up in the height of fashion.

(AUNT JUDY and MOPSYMAN *get out clothes*; HILDA *washes and dresses*)

There, what do you think of that?

AUNT JUDY. Be free! Be free! Don't let others prescribe your life for you. Don't be a myrmidon of morality any longer. Go it, you cripple! Paint the little homestead red!

HILDA. I will! I'm damned if I don't!

AUNT JUDY. Come, you're beginning to swear. That's better.

HILDA. (*Jumping across the stage like a kangaroo in a hobble skirt*) Women must be free, untrammelled. We have been tied up too long. I'm going to be a

new woman, a bold-faced jig. But don't you think they'll recognise me?

AUNT JUDY. Not they! It isn't much of a disguise outwardly; but you're disguised *mentally*; that's the important thing.

HILDA. And what am I to do next?

AUNT JUDY. Something symbolic — something to show your new-found freedom.

HILDA. I know! Hedda said she would burn off my hair. Well, I tell you what; I'll burn Hedda's book, her manuscript on Department for Young Ladies. What a lark! She burned Lovborg's book, you know. Serve her right, the cat! That'll larn her! (*Burning the MS.*) Now I am burning your child, Hedda; I am burning your child. What ho, she bumps! This is prime fun! Why wasn't I a suffragette before?

AUNT JUDY. Now let's be off.

HILDA. But how are we to get there? I can't walk; it's raining.

Enter MADAM HELSETH

MADAM HELSETH. Lor, Miss Hilda, you do look a swell! Well I never! Miss Hedda's fichu, too!

HILDA. We're going to the party.

MADAM HELSETH. But you can't walk, not in them shoes.

HILDA. Now for some of those rats and mice and pumpkins of yours, Aunt Judy.

AUNT JUDY. Oh, but they're only imaginary rats and mice. They won't take you anywhere. Why, here's the very thing, just at the door. A pair of . . .

HILDA. Horses?

MADAM HELSETH. White horses?

AUNT JUDY. No, no ; a pair of goloshes.

HILDA. That'll do. I'll go in them. . . . It's frightfully thrilling !

[*Exeunt* AUNT JUDY, MOPSYMAN and
HILDA, *trailing her big goloshes*

(*Music*)

Enter the FAIRY

FAIRY. Behold me, Cinderella, in your hour of need,
What time the others to the party speed !

Would you not like to go as well ?

MADAM HELSETH. Too late ! She's gone.

FAIRY. Oh, what a sell !

CHORUS. (*Behind*) 'Ark to the fairies singing their
song, etc.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

At the gas-works. The scene is only a few feet deep. Behind the back cloth there is a great din of hammering, and occasionally a blow on the cloth itself. STOCKFISH alone. At home he is an ordinary peevish nervous householder.

STOCKFISH. Oh dear, oh dear! I wish I had never undertaken to give a party. If I had known all the preparations that it would involve! This fearful noise going on all day; nowhere to sit down or anything; and as soon as I get a little privacy someone is sure to come intruding.

Enter TESMAN disguised as a waiter, with a false nose and a long beard. Another WAITER with him, small and Jewish. Both wear big white cotton gloves.

Now what do you want? Who on earth are you?

TESMAN and WAITER. *(Stepping absurdly together, and keeping exact time in their words and gestures)*
We are the first and second hired waiters.

STOCKFISH. Ah, the men from Gunter's. Now you know that I'm expecting a small party here to-night. . . . Oh dear, oh dear, what is all that noise behind?

TESMAN and WAITER. It is the stage-carpenters preparing the big scene, the big set scene.

STOCKFISH. I do wish they could be a little quieter about it. Well, as I say, I am expecting a small party. . . .

(He is interrupted by a blow on the back cloth near his head)

There! that one nearly got me. Relling and Morvik will be here, Nigel Playfair, little Aslaksen and the old crew, some chamberlains, a thin-haired gentleman, a flabby gentleman, a short-sighted gentleman, courtiers, peasants, soldiers, servants, etcetera. . . . For heaven's sake go and tell those people behind to be a little bit quieter; the audience won't hear a word I have to say.

TESMAN and WAITER. (*Together*) Master, we hearken and obey. Salaam!

[*Exeunt TESMAN and WAITER*

(STOCKFISH endeavours to make a speech to the audience but is drowned by the noise)

Enter MRS INQUEST and HEDDA

STOCKFISH. Hullo, what's this?

MRS INQUEST. You didn't say anything about clothes; so we thought it best to come in fancy dress.

HEDDA. I have come in classical costume; I am Aspasia.

MRS INQUEST. (*Funereally*) My costume is symbolical; I am Joy.

(*They all sit and yawn*)

STOCKFISH. How shall we amuse ourselves?

MRS INQUEST. Let us look at albums of photographs of cathedrals and places of interest that we have never visited.

HEDDA. You promised to play paper games.

STOCKFISH. Paper games?

HEDDA. Long dreary paper games.

MRS INQUEST. Let us play at Words. We will take some long word . . .

HEDDA. Some long dreary word.

MRS INQUEST. Aleximorkigarticonologicalness.

(*All repeat*)

STOCKFISH. And what do we do then?

MRS INQUEST. We make little words out of it.

HEDDA. Words of not less than eight letters.

MRS INQUEST. Beginning in "x."

STOCKFISH. How long shall we have?

MRS INQUEST. Forty minutes.

(They sit with pencils and paper. After a moment

MRS INQUEST produces a big flute and plays the Dead March in "Saul"; they all say "Ugh!" at the chords)

HEDDA. We are having an excessively jolly evening.

MRS INQUEST. It might best be described as an orgy.

STOCKFISH. How many words have you?

HEDDA. None.

MRS INQUEST. None.

STOCKFISH. I also have none.

MRS INQUEST. With my flute in my hand and you two at my side I can be happy.

HEDDA. Let us play at telegrams.

STOCKFISH. Let us play at prehistoric animals in "m."

MRS INQUEST. I do not care what game we play; all are equally dreary. Let us penetrate the blackest depths of gloom.

(HILDA is heard singing without: "I am free, I am free, I am free!")

STOCKFISH. What is that?

MRS INQUEST. It is seldom that anyone sings near Rosmersholm.

STOCKFISH. Or near the gas-works.

MRS INQUEST. Even the birds only make a sort of croaking noise.

Enter HILDA in goloshes.

HILDA. *(Singing)* I am free, I am free, I am free!
No more life in the prison for me!
I am free as a flea, I am free!

HEDDA. (*Looking at her through long-handled eye-glasses*) Who can this be ?

MRS INQUEST. We haven't a notion who this can be.

STOCKFISH. What an enchanting creature !

HEDDA. A little bourgeois.

MRS INQUEST. No style.

HEDDA. Rather rococo.

HILDA. My, what a picnic ! Are you playing at wax-works ? Chambers of Horrors, sixpence extra.

STOCKFISH. What astonishing persiflage !

MRS INQUEST. What a pert little minx !

HEDDA. Bad form, I call it, to be so familiar.

HILDA. Are you alive ?

HEDDA. Yes, we are living . . . deep down.

MRS INQUEST. We are going it . . . inside.

HILDA. Do you call this living ? Pah ! You don't know what life is. Life is to leap and dance in the woods, to catch skylarks with the hands, to chase the roebuck and leap down the rocks.

HEDDA. You can't do that at the gas-works.

MRS INQUEST. We shall have to play that game some other day.

STOCKFISH. Aha ! So that's the sort you are ! One of the alive lot ! We'll go hunting, you and I, right up there in the mountains, in the mists and clouds, near the Bathing Establishment. You're a huntress, aren't you ?

HILDA. Yes, a huntress of men.

STOCKFISH. A pretty wit, i' faith ! I'll show you my dogs ; you shall see them gulp down great bones, huge beef bones covered with flesh and gore.

HILDA. Ah, give me gore ! That's life !

STOCKFISH. Come, let's all be jolly ; let's climb down off our perch a bit. We're too intense. It's all very well for the children, but we must

think of the old folk too. Remember that this is a Pantomime.

MRS INQUEST. All right ; what shall we do ?

STOCKFISH. Let's have a song and dance.

HEDDA. Right you are !

MRS INQUEST. I'm game.

STOCKFISH. (*To TESMAN and WAITER*) Just keep things going till we're ready.

TESMAN. Shall we do a short turn, Guv'nor ?

STOCKFISH. Yes.

[*Exeunt* STOCKFISH and HILDA

MRS INQUEST. Now mind, whatever you do, let your entertainment be refined.

TESMAN and WAITER. (*Together*) Madam, of course.

MRS INQUEST. Something that the children can thoroughly understand, something really Drury-Lanian. I should suggest, for instance, that you both pretend you're brokers' men and one of you is drunk and toasts a herring over a candle. You see ? Something amusing but refined.

[*Exit* MRS INQUEST

TESMAN. (*To HEDDA*) 'Sh ! Not a word ! You know me ?

HEDDA. You are Bernard Shaw.

TESMAN. No. I am your affianced bride. I am Tessman of the D'Urbervilles. (*Introducing the WAITER*) This is Jude the Obscure. One must earn one's living somehow.

[*Exit* HEDDA

Something amusing but refined. I know ! We'll do the ticket business.

Enter AUNT JUDY and MOPSYMAN

TESMAN and WAITER. Now then, what do you want here ?

AUNT JUDY. Oh, please, Mr Gentleman, we want to go to the party.

TESMAN *and* WAITER. Very well then; where's your ticket?

AUNT JUDY. We haven't got no ticket.

TESMAN *and* WAITER. You can't come in without a ticket. The Guv'nor said he'd saw my leg off if I let anybody in without a ticket.

AUNT JUDY. (*To MOPSYMAN*) We must disguise ourselves.

MOPSYMAN. What as?

AUNT JUDY. I know. Ibsen characters.

(*They disguise themselves, MOPSYMAN in bathing drawers, AUNT JUDY as a bathing woman*)

Please, Mr Gentleman, this is little Eyolf, and I am the Lady from the Sea. I'm just going to give him a dip.

TESMAN *and* WAITER. Very well, where's your tickets then?

(*TESMAN and WAITER turn them out. They re-enter newly disguised*)

Who are you?

AUNT JUDY. We're Pillars of Society.

TESMAN *and* WAITER. Where's your ticket then?

(*They turn them out. They re-enter in sheets*)

AUNT JUDY. We are Gh-o-o-osts! (*They pass and turn*) Don't be so frightened; we're not real ghosts.

TESMAN *and* WAITER. Not real ghosts? What are you then?

AUNT JUDY. We're the Pretenders.

(*AUNT JUDY and MOPSYMAN throw their sheets over the others and run away*)

TESMAN *and* WAITER. (*Pursuing*) Where's your ticket? Where's your ticket?

SCENE 2

A deeper scene, with palace staircase and crowd of guests painted at the back. The middle of this painting is a practicable, double door ; but the doors are not painted as doors ; parts of the staircase and crowd swing back when they are opened. STOCKFISH shakes hands and converses with the painted guests, and the WAITERS offer them refreshments. STOCKFISH, MRS INQUEST, HEDDA and HILDA discovered.

STOCKFISH. Well, here we all are then.

HEDDA. And what is this ?

MRS INQUEST. (*Referring to a catalogue*) This is the Pageant of Empire ; Gallery No. 17 ; meeting of Colonial Premiers.

STOCKFISH. Not bad for gas-works, eh ? This is the Board Room, the room where the Directors come when they're bored.

MRS INQUEST. (*Dancing*) Come, let us be sportive and merry. Let us have a song and dance.

STOCKFISH. How are you ? Are you feeling pretty fit ?

MRS INQUEST. Fit ! Yes, fit for anything. (*With emphasis*) I am fit to be made a peer.

(*The BANDMASTER taps his desk. MRS INQUEST clears her throat*)

HEDDA. (*To HILDA*) You hear ? Tap, tap, tap ! She's going to sing. I knew how it would be if we took her out to a party. The coffee goes to her head at once.

SONG¹

(MRS INQUEST *with the other three as chorus*)

1

Ho, poor old Mr Hasquith
Is very 'ard-worked, I fear ;
'E's tryin' to find five 'undred men
That's fit to be made a peer.

Chorus

'E's tryin' to find five 'undred men
That's fit to be made a peer.
What O ! You know !
That's fit to be made a peer.

2

Well, 'e wouldn't look long if 'e 'eard this song
For someone to make a nob ;
There's me and there's 'im and there's Bill and
there's Jim
Is ready to tyke the job. *Chorus.*

3

There's me and there's 'im and there's Bill and
there's Jim
Is ready to tyke the job.
What O ! You know !
Is ready to tyke the job. *Chorus.*

4

The day this girl is made a Hearl,
O my, won't I feel queer !
I'll walk in the Row with my helbows so
When I am made a peer. *Chorus.*

¹ To be replaced by something topical at the moment when the play is produced.

5

You won't catch me at the A.B.C.
 Nor Lockhart's then, no fear!
 I'll do myself well at the Carlton Hotel
 When I am made a peer. *Chorus.*

6

I won't eat no more sausages
 Nor drink no ginger-beer;
 I'll wet my gum with the finest Mumm
 When I am made a peer. *Chorus.*

7

He must mend his ways in the coming days
 Must Mr Lloyd George, that's clear;
 I'll not let him rob the riches of the nob
 When I am made a peer. *Chorus.*

*(After each chorus the singers walk round repeating
 the chorus to the words:)*

Umpery umpery umpery um
 When Hi am made a peer.

*(Having finished the song, MRS INQUEST takes the
 stage)*

MRS INQUEST. Talking of the House of Lords always
 reminds me of that dear old ditty *The Corpse.*

(The BANDMASTER taps his desk)

STOCKFISH. Heavens! She's going to sing again.

MRS INQUEST. *(Singing drearily)*

It was a corpse lay on a bier
 Beneath the silvery moon.

STOCKFISH. There, there, that's enough. You've
 had your song. You must make way for someone
 else now.

MRS INQUEST. What! So I have got to make room
 now? To make room for the new generation?

For little chits of girls? No! I will never make room! I will never retire! I will go on singing for ever and ever.

(They hustle her)

(Singing) It was a corpse lay on a bier
Beneath the silvery moon.

(She is bundled out. The music plays a dance)

HEDDA. What is this?

STOCKFISH. This is our principal ballet. It is a Grand Pageant of All Nations. The dresses alone cost fifty thousand pounds. Hush, they come! *(Ballet of Four Hired Waiters. TESMAN dances à la russe and says: "Gop, Gop! Doóshenka mayá!" The JEW wears three hats. An ITALIAN WAITER says: "Caramba!" A GERMAN WAITER carries three glass mugs in either hand and exclaims: "Potztausend Donnerwetter!")* *(To TESMAN)* Come hither, Dandini; I would quaff a goblet of brown October. *(TESMAN serves him)* Thank you.

TESMAN. Do not thank me. It is my simple duty. I am paid to do it.

STOCKFISH. *(Leaning his elbow on TESMAN'S shoulder and looking at HILDA)* Tell me, Dandini, who is yon virgin of peerless beauty?

TESMAN. I know not, your Majesty; but fain would I right gladly meet with her anon in the twi-twi-light.

(The BANDMASTER taps)

STOCKFISH. Nay, not that, for heaven's sake! Ring off! Oh, spare me, spare me!

TESMAN. Do not kneel to me, old man! Do you not know me? I am Tesman, your long-lost son. *(He takes off his beard and nose)*

STOCKFISH. You! What, have you turned up again?

TESMAN. And this is Hedda, my little Hedda ; we are engaged.

STOCKFISH. You engaged ? You don't mean to say you ever had the courage to propose to her ?

TESMAN. Yes, last Tuesday I took the . . . header. There were many that sought her hand. I was jealous. I said : "Hedda, I wish to be the only cock on your fowl-roost."

STOCKFISH. And what did she say ?

TESMAN. She said : "Buk, buk, buk, buk, bukaha !"

STOCKFISH. Bless you, my children ! (*Aside*) Be-shrew him ! Ever this varlet foils my plans. I must be revenged. (*Aloud*) Come, let us amuse ourselves as we did of yore in the old Stockholm days, with a little knockabout business ; you remember ?

TESMAN. Only too well.

(*They put on small straw hats and do a knockabout business in which STOCKFISH is beaten worst*)

STOCKFISH. And now I will keep the promise that I made you. I will show you the great secret, the mystery of the box-room.

HEDDA. Ah yes, the thing that isn't a person.

STOCKFISH. I must put on my uniform first. I like to do everything in style. [*Exit*]

HEDDA. What is the mystery of the box-room ?

TESMAN. Oh, it's a symbol (*A cymbal is sounded in the orchestra*)—like that.

(*Song: "It's a Symbol"*)

Enter STOCKFISH suddenly in a cocked hat, standing in a Napoleon attitude.

STOCKFISH. I am the rightful heir to the throne of France. I am Napoleon returned to his own.

The Island of Elba was too small for me ; I had no Elba-room.

TESMAN. He was in the volunteers, you know.

STOCKFISH. And now for the secret, the great secret.

'Sh! (*He goes on tiptoe, and opens the folding doors at the back*)

ALL. 'Sh!

TESMAN. Is she awake ?

STOCKFISH. I can't quite tell yet ; she's in her hutch. I told you you should see her, and so you shall. [*Exit into box-room*]

HEDDA. What has he got in there ?

TESMAN. Poor old man, you must humour him. It's an idea of his. It's all the pleasure that he has now. Since he gave up taking real outdoor exercise he goes in for big-game shooting in the box-room.

HEDDA. What does he shoot ?

TESMAN. That's the secret. It's a guinea-pig.

HEDDA. A guinea-pig ?

TESMAN. A real wild guinea-pig.

HEDDA. But why a guinea-pig ?

TESMAN. Oh, he was swindled out of some money once by a company director. He creeps round among the boxes and trunks—he pretends they're trunks of trees—and shoots at it with a pop-gun.

Enter STOCKFISH, alarmed.

STOCKFISH. I say, there's something rather queer about that guinea-pig to-day. (*His pop-gun goes off and frightens him*) She looks so fierce ; she seems much bigger than usual and uncommonly lively.

(*A gong. MOPSYMAN jumps in from the box-room, and AUNT JUDY behind, laughing*)

AUNT JUDY. Here we are again ! Did little Mopsy-man give you a bit of a turn, Herr Militär ? Aha ! The forest avenges itself with a vengeance. We always like coming in in these funny ways if we can.

STOCKFISH. Who is this ?

TESMAN. This is Aunt Judy. She's not respectable. She's been in jail, you know.

STOCKFISH. In jail ? Well, well, that's a bond of union ; so have I.

Enter MRS INQUEST and MADAM HELSETH

TESMAN. Why, here's Madam Helseth too. How very mixed Norwegian society is becoming.

(Song and dance: MRS INQUEST, AUNT JUDY, HEDDA, and MADAM HELSETH)

We're the Ib-sen Gib-son rickety rackety gells,
True blood, blue blood, Scandinavian swells,
Queer girls, dear girls, take us all in a lump ;

We're rather rough,

And we're up to snuff,

And we're all of us off our chump ;

Yes, all of us, all of us, all of us, all of us,

All of us off our chump.

[Exit HILDA

HEDDA. Come, Aunt Judy, let's have a drink together. It's a long time since we met.

AUNT JUDY. No, thank you, nothing for me. I've signed the pledge.

MRS INQUEST. What, again ?

HEDDA. What does it matter ? Pledges are so irrelevant. Come, a little cold punch.

MRS INQUEST. Better not press her, my dear.

HEDDA. Do have a glass !

AUNT JUDY. No, thank you.

HEDDA. Aha, you dare not! You preach freedom to others, but you dare not be free yourself. Didn't you see the way they smiled when you said No? Come, be secure, be confident of yourself!

AUNT JUDY. (*Drinking five or six glasses*) Well, well, here goes then!

MRS INQUEST. Did you see that? She wolfed the lot, my dear, wolfed the bally show!

Enter DEMON and FAIRY, meeting.

FAIRY. Oh, there's someone I know at last!

DEMON. (*With an eyeglass*) Ah, how dy do, how dy do! Don't you know many people here?

FAIRY. Not a soul.

DEMON. 'Pon my word, queer set of folk they've got together; wonder where they rake them up?

FAIRY. I feel rather out of it.

DEMON. May I have the pleasure of taking you in to supper?

[Exeunt arm in arm. All have gone but STOCKFISH]

Enter HILDA in cloak and goloshes.

HILDA. At last I find you alone!

STOCKFISH. You're not going?

HILDA. Alas, poor man, it were better for you that I should. I must be back by twelve.

STOCKFISH. But it's only eight. (*Eight strikes*) You've got four hours.

HILDA. All too little for what I have to say. This is a moment that I have waited for for years.

STOCKFISH. Who are you, mysterious stranger?

HILDA. I am a woman who has found herself at last. I am the apostle of freedom ; freedom for everyone to be themselves ; no social conventions, no duties, nothing but to do and to be ! *You* are still a slave, I see, a slave of little things. You love your furniture, your glasses. I will free you from them ! (*She goes round with a hammer breaking everything*) There ! That's the sort of hairpin I am ! (*Nine strikes*) Nine o'clock ! Goodness, how time flies when you're enjoying yourself. Do you feel it beginning ?

STOCKFISH. Feel what ?

HILDA. Love.

STOCKFISH. No, I feel only dread.

HILDA. That's right. That's how it should be. I want you to loathe me and to dread me ; that is what binds people together. For you are mine, mine, mine ! (*Embracing him*)

STOCKFISH. Unhand me, wench ; you are strangling me.

HILDA. Will you return my passion ?

STOCKFISH. I will do anything, if you will only let me go.

HILDA. Do you loathe and love me ?

STOCKFISH. I will care for you with the quiet tenderness of a middle-aged man.

HILDA. I want no tenderness ; I want no quiet ; I want to be loved as your dogs love those great bloody bones they swallow whole. Oh, how lovely that must be !

STOCKFISH. What, would you like to swallow big bones whole ?

HILDA. No ; but to be swallowed whole ! (*Ten o'clock strikes*) Ten o'clock. I must hasten ; I must get to the point. Listen to me, Stockfish ; when first I saw the gas-works I knew that it was

all over with me. It was so tremendously thrilling. I couldn't believe there was anybody in the world could have built such great enormous gas-works. Ever since I was born I love you, love you, love you!

STOCKFISH. But we have never met before!

HILDA. Yes, don't you remember? Long, long ago. That was up at the Bathing Establishment. Do you not remember? It lives in my memory as if it were but yesterday. I was only three weeks old then. You picked me out of my cradle and kissed me passionately.

STOCKFISH. It isn't true. I always detested babies.

HILDA. It is true. You kissed me, here.

STOCKFISH. Did I?

HILDA. Since that moment our seals are souled for one another.

STOCKFISH. I have no recollection.

HILDA. But that isn't what mattered. That wasn't the important thing. The thing that mattered was what came after.

STOCKFISH. I know that phrase. It is always what came after that matters.

HILDA. You took the coral necklace off my neck and hid it in your pocket.

STOCKFISH. Fancy!

HILDA. And I said to myself—for I couldn't talk out loud then—I said, "That is the man for me, a real man, a man who is master of his own soul and not bound down by little petty conventions and rules of etiquette."

STOCKFISH. I don't remember a word of all this.

HILDA. (*Aside*) Nor do I. (*Eleven strikes*) Eleven o'clock. My time is nearly out.

STOCKFISH. Come, tell me who you are!

HILDA. No; that you must never learn, not now nor nevermore. That must always remain a secret between us, a beautiful secret, symbolical of the relation between the two sexes.

STOCKFISH. Tell me your address.

HILDA. Never!

STOCKFISH. Tell me at least your telephone number.

HILDA. No, no.

STOCKFISH. I am bewildered. I do not know what I ought to do.

HILDA. Do you not know? Listen; we two are the only waking creatures here. Do you not understand me?

STOCKFISH. No, I do not understand you.

HILDA. (*Getting on the table*) The champagne is on the table.

STOCKFISH. I do not see any champagne.

HILDA. "There stood the champagne, but he tasted it not."

STOCKFISH. Ah, now at last I understand.

(*He runs after her. Twelve strikes*)

HILDA. Stop, stop! There's twelve striking.

STOCKFISH. Come here, you little witch!

HILDA. I've got to get back.

STOCKFISH. One kiss! One kiss! (*She boxes his ears and runs away. He follows her out and returns with a golosh*) She's gone! She's gone! But in her flight she dropped this precious relic. (*Kissing it*) Oh nyum nyum nyum nyum!

Enter TESMAN. STOCKFISH hides the golosh.

TESMAN. See, father, three chamberlains are playing blind-man's buff with Madam Helseth.

STOCKFISH. What do I care? Tush, I would be alone!

Enter MADAM HELSETH and THREE CHAMBERLAINS

MADAM HELSETH. (*Very arch*) Ah! It isn't always the oldest wine that is the best.

A CHAMBERLAIN. She's coming out at our expense.

TESMAN. Oh, fie! Oh, fie! What raillery!

Enter MRS INQUEST and HEDDA and AUNT JUDY

AUNT JUDY. I am bored to death with insipid conversation and heartless amusement. I am stifled with the taint of marsh vapours. Oh! if only I could find the address of the Alcohol Refraining Society. I would send in my resignation.

STOCKFISH. You're not going?

AUNT JUDY. I am home-sick for the mighty nothingness. Farewell, old horse; good-night, respected sir.

STOCKFISH. I'll see you out.

AUNT JUDY. No, thank you; I'll go my own road.

(*Red fire and a gong*)

[*Exit AUNT JUDY through the ceiling*]

MRS INQUEST. Please excuse her; she's always been a little eccentric.

STOCKFISH. And now it's time that you all went. I want to be alone.

(*He kisses the goloosh*)

MRS INQUEST. Well, after a broad hint like that!

HEDDA. We'd better say good-night.

ALL. Good-night. Good-night. May you have no dreams. Let us pray that we may none of us have any dreams.

(*TESMAN, MRS INQUEST and the WAITER stand as a comic American unaccompanied trio, TESMAN in little straw hat, WAITER in a Newgate fringe*)

TRIO

O put my mighty by the fire
And make my gruel hot ;
And go and get the warming-pan
To warm my little cot.

(FALSETTO) My little cot.

(BASS) To warm, to warm.

(ALL) My little cot.

STOCKFISH. Come, that's enough. Why don't you go ?

Enter FAIRY : she trips forward and takes the stage.

FAIRY. And now that all the rest have had their say,

Comes Fairy Bright-Eyes, whom mortals all obey.
Behold the triumph of my . . .

STOCKFISH. Oh, you won't go, won't you ? Then I'll turn off the gas.

(Darkness. Screaming, laughter and pistol-shots)

CURTAIN

ACT III

The same scene as in Act I., Scene 2. STOCKFISH, in a garland of leaves, sits with HEDDA and MRS INQUEST at a small round table, on which stands a bottle of champagne. MADAM HELSETH stands by them.

MRS INQUEST. Did you sleep well after it ?

STOCKFISH. I slept a little towards morning.

HEDDA. I felt an oppressive burden here.

STOCKFISH. I saw crocodiles and hippopotamuses all night, dancing and making faces at me.

MADAM HELSETH. I saw white horses.

MRS INQUEST. Have a little more champagne.

Enter HILDA in spectacles and eye-shade, with a tray of pies.

Ah, here are some pies that Hedda has made, on purpose for you, Over-Gas-Purveyor Stockfish.

HILDA. (*Aside*) I love to see him with the vine leaves in his hair.

STOCKFISH. My aunt is dead, Eilert is dead, Ekdal is dead, Aslaksen is dead, the governess of the gardener's children is dead, everyone is dead.

MRS INQUEST. You are in low spirits, Stockfish.

STOCKFISH. The cloth is dirty ; the wine is flat ; the pies are bad ; absolutely uneatable !

(One of them goes off, like a Jack-in-the box)

HEDDA. Whatever I touch I make a mess of ! Have some more wine ? (*She pours the wine all over the table*) I am bored, and tired of life.

MRS INQUEST. My Hedda is thirsty. Bring more champagne ! Bring a magnum ! (*MADAM HELSETH puts a jeroboam on the table*) I want my wee

girlie to be happy. She shan't go racking her brains.

HEDDA. Never a gleam of brightness to lighten our home! It isn't a home; it's a cage.

STOCKFISH. It's a menagerie. . . . I cannot rest until I have found out who that girl was who came last night—that princess.

HEDDA. She wasn't a princess.

STOCKFISH. Well, she had on a princess skirt. There she stood on the table, as it might be that bottle of champagne. I practically had only to draw the cork.

HEDDA. Who can it have been?

MRS INQUEST. We cannot guess.

(HILDA sings without: "I am free, I am free")

STOCKFISH. There! I hear her voice. (*He runs off and returns*) No, there's nobody there; only that little mouse-jowled slut of a slavey. There was I, there was the table, and there she stood.

(HILDA sings above)

There! I'll swear that was her voice. (*He runs up and returns*) No, there's nobody there; only that pulp-headed Abigail upstairs dusting the hay-loft. Well, as I was saying, there we stood; I was where that chair is, and she was . . .

(HILDA sings below)

This time I'm sure! (*He looks down through a trap-door*) No, not a soul! Nobody but the she-serf down in the cellar drawing the beer. Well, for the present I must be off. However, our friendship mustn't end like this. I will come and see you again to-morrow; I will come and see you again this afternoon; I will come and see you two or three times every day. Oh, if I could but find her again! She left a gum-

shoe behind her: it might prove a clue. I'll let you know.

(A loud knocking at the front door)

MRS INQUEST. Who on earth can that be?

HEDDA. Are you expecting anyone?

MRS INQUEST. No, no one. There isn't a soul but ourselves up this mountain except the hired waiters.

STOCKFISH. And they've gone back to town again.

MRS INQUEST. Go and see who it is, Madam Helseth.

STOCKFISH. Well, I must be off.

HEDDA. Don't forget about the golosh.

STOCKFISH. No, no.

[Exit STOCKFISH]

DEMON. *(Without)* I beg your pardon, guv'nor.

STOCKFISH. *(Without)* Not at all, not at all.

Enter DEMON and FAIRY

DEMON. I 'ope you'll excuse the liberty.

FAIRY. We are sorry to interrupt the course of the Pantomime.

MRS INQUEST. What has happened? What's the matter?

FAIRY. We wanted to ask you a question. The fact is, we were both at Mr Stockfish's party last night and couldn't help overhearing a good deal of the conversation around us. We were both profoundly astonished.

MRS INQUEST. What sort of conversation? What about?

DEMON. The moral haspect, lady.

HEDDA. The moral aspect: what does he mean, mother?

FAIRY. The point of view seems to have changed so much since our young days.

DEMON. It used to be so heasy.

FAIRY. In fact, we were fairly confused by all we heard and what we want to know is, what *is* Right and what *is* Wrong?

MRS INQUEST. (*To HEDDA*) What a comical, old-fashioned pair, my dear; quite a couple of drolleries!

HEDDA. (*Looking at them through her long-handled glasses*) Such people don't exist nowadays.

MRS INQUEST. My dear children, these arbitrary distinctions of Right and Wrong have quite gone out; they have been abolished.

DEMON *and* FAIRY. Well, I never! You don't say so!

MRS INQUEST. In place of them, we have nowadays the Expression of our Personality.

DEMON. Crikey!

MRS INQUEST. It is our duty to express our Personality in our lives just as much as ever we can; and if in doing so we break the criminal law, well, so much the worse for the criminal law.

DEMON. But look 'ere, lady; in that case I am just as good, just as moral, as *she* is.

MRS INQUEST. More so, in all probability, because you've more snap in you, more expression of your Personality.

DEMON. My! Do you 'ear that, Titania? And I've always looked on myself as such a bad lot!

MRS INQUEST. My poor fellow, you've been reproaching yourself quite unnecessarily.

DEMON. Yes; but look 'ere, I love heevil!

MRS INQUEST. Quite right; so do we all. It was made to be loved.

DEMON. Yes, but I *do* heevil.

MRS INQUEST. You try to, but you never do

any harm really. Your intentions are always baffled ; haven't you noticed that ?

DEMON. Yes, *she* foils me every time.

MRS INQUEST. Evil intentions never come to anything ; it's only good intentions that ever do any harm. But bless my soul, why should two innocents like you worry your heads over these matters ?

DEMON. The fact is, lady, it isn't only curiosity, prying into things that's too high for us, like ; it's, well . . . We've met so often, in the way of business, all these four or five thousand years . . .

FAIRY. Since the creation of the world, you know.

DEMON. That we're . . .

FAIRY. We've come rather to like one another. In fact he wants to marry me.

DEMON. I've got a little 'ome ready for her in the Garden Suburb.

FAIRY. But I've felt it my duty to refuse him, as he's such a very, very bad man.

MRS INQUEST. Then in that case it is *you* who are the devil, because you're preventing him from expressing his personality.

FAIRY. Then it's really *me* that ought to wear the horns ?

MRS INQUEST. Yes, and *he* ought to have a halo.

(*The DEMON puts on a halo and poses like a saint*)

DEMON. 'Ow do I look, Tity ?

(*The FAIRY puts on his horns. They laugh heartily*)

MRS INQUEST. You must have a little something in the servants' hall before you go.

(*MRS INQUEST leads them out. HEDDA looks at them through her glasses. The FAIRY lowers her horns at HEDDA and bellows wickedly. Exeunt all but HEDDA*)

Enter HILDA

HEDDA. So there you are, miss. Now I'm going to give you what-for.

HILDA. Give me what-for, Hedda? Surely you wouldn't bang your little Hilda?

HEDDA. I suppose you think we didn't know you at the party last night? I suppose you thought you were very fine and smart in my clothes, eh?

HILDA. I didn't think you'd mind, Hedda.

HEDDA. Who gave you leave to wear my ninon ballet-skirt and plum-coloured pelerine? Who gave you leave to splash one of my slippers all over with mud?

HILDA. Oh, what are you going to do to me, Hedda?

HEDDA. (*Producing a pistol*) I am going to shoot you.

HILDA. Oh, not shoot me, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, shoot you.

HILDA. Are you sure you mean to shoot me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Quite sure.

HILDA. Come on then! Two can play at that game! (*Producing a gun*) What ho!

HEDDA. What! You! You have the courage?

HILDA. I have courage for this or for anything now! I have awakened from the dead; I have found myself at last!

HEDDA. Oh, joy! Hooray! (*Embracing her*) At last you are one of us!

HILDA. Yes, I'm a real rickety rackety Ibsen girl at last.

HEDDA. Oh, Hilda, what a wonderful thing it is at last to have a sister that one can love! But what about my lover, Hilda?

HILDA. Tesman?

HEDDA. No, Stockfish. You will not steal him from me, Hilda ?

HILDA. No, Hedda, I will not steal him from you, Hedda. We will share him fairly between us, Hedda.

HEDDA. How can we do that, Hilda ?

HILDA. Wait and see, Hedda.

*Enter MADAM HELSETH, dragging MRS INQUEST.
TESMAN follows.*

HEDDA. What is this ?

MRS INQUEST. Spare me ! Spare me ! Do not shame me before my children. What I did, I did with a good purpose.

HILDA. Oh, what has she done ?

TESMAN. Don't be harsh with her, Madam Helseth !

MADAM HELSETH. Children, your mother is a fraud. She has been leading a double life ; she has been deceiving us !

MRS INQUEST. No, no ; do not expose me !

MADAM HELSETH. I must ; it is my simple duty. All these years your mother has been living on the reputation of a mysterious past full of fearful crimes.

HEDDA. Yes, yes, we respect her for it.

MADAM HELSETH. Know then that your respect is founded on a *lie* ! I have examined this portfolio.

MRS INQUEST. I forbade you to open it !

MADAM HELSETH. I looked for murder, arson, robbery, forgery, the usual things. What do I find ? Nothing but blameless innocence.

HEDDA. Oh, horror !

MADAM HELSETH. A pious and well-spent youth.

HEDDA. Oh, shame ! You, our mother !

MADAM HELSETH. I hardly like to tell you the things that woman has done, the things she has been.

HEDDA. Let us know the worst.

MADAM HELSETH. A Sunday school teacher.

HEDDA *and* HILDA. Oh!

MADAM HELSETH. President of the Gothenburg Dorcas Society.

HEDDA *and* HILDA. Oh!

MADAM HELSETH. Organising Secretary for the Diocesan Mothers' Treat.

HEDDA *and* HILDA. Oh!

MADAM HELSETH. And Treasurer of the Orphan Curates' Sustentation Fund.

HEDDA *and* HILDA. This is too awful.

MRS INQUEST. I can never face my children again.

HEDDA. From henceforth, mother, we declare to you solemnly that your authority in this house is at an end. You must take a back seat. I never did believe much in those dark stories of fifteen or twenty years ago. I and Hilda at least have *real* crimes that we can boast of.

MRS INQUEST. Hilda? No, not my innocent Hilda!

HILDA. If I have committed no crimes as yet, mother, I am about to do so on a stupendous scale.

MRS INQUEST. My reign is over! There is nothing left for me but to sit and gibber in the chimney-corner now. My salts! My salts!

HEDDA. Her salts! Has it come to this, then? Our mother has weak nerves! (*A bell rings*) There's someone ringing; a visitor; please, please compose yourself.

[*Exeunt* MRS INQUEST, HEDDA *and* HILDA

TESMAN. Do you know, at times I almost regret my promise to marry Hedda.

MADAM HELSETH. Whatever made you fall in love with her I cannot understand. You'll never have a moment's peace. It'll be another Doll's House; or more like a Punch and Judy show, in which you'll be the baby.

TESMAN. Do you know, Madam Helseth, in spite of the disparity of our years, I have half-a-mind to kiss you.

MADAM HELSETH. God bless me! Whatever put such an idea into your head?

TESMAN. I sometimes think that you and I are the only two sane people here, although the author evidently meant to guy us. . . .

(TESMAN *kisses* MADAM HELSETH)

MADAM HELSETH. There! There!

TESMAN. It's very annoying; I've searched and searched.

MADAM HELSETH. Have you lost something, Mr Tesman?

TESMAN. I could have sworn I left a pair of goloshes here yesterday, and now there is only one of them.

[*Exeunt* TESMAN and MADAM HELSETH]

Enter STOCKFISH, MRS INQUEST, HEDDA and
HILDA

STOCKFISH. Here is the golosh that she left behind her. Now, if you've got such a thing as a blood-hound about you . . .

MRS INQUEST. Perhaps it's got the name of the maker inside; that might be a clue.

STOCKFISH. "Rabbits." Where does he live, I wonder?

MRS INQUEST. I know; in the Borough.

HEDDA. What if it should belong to someone in this house?

STOCKFISH. That is hardly likely.

MRS INQUEST. We look so different by candle-light.

STOCKFISH. Well, I don't care ; I swear that I will marry the rightful owner of this golosh, whoever it be.

(TESMAN *runs on*)

TESMAN. Father, father ! It is mine ! It is your own Tessie Wessie's. I am yours, yours for ever !

STOCKFISH. Oh, confound this jackanapes ! Wherever I turn I find him in my road. Take that, you oaf, take that ! (*He kicks him out*)

HILDA. Let *me* try it on.

MRS INQUEST. You indeed !

HILDA. Come here, Stockfish !

STOCKFISH. What is it, Backfish ?

HILDA. Let me murmur in your ear.

STOCKFISH. Murmur away.

HILDA. (*Shouting*) There stood the champagne, but he tasted it not !

STOCKFISH. You !

(*HILDA takes off her spectacles and eye-shade*)

Go, all of you ! I must be alone with this girl.

[*Exeunt all but HILDA and STOCKFISH*]

So it was you !

HILDA. Me, me, me ! Oh, if you knew the hungry hanker that I feel for you ! For a man that could do such a delightful asinine thing as build those great clumping gas-works on such a desolate mountain-side.

STOCKFISH. Then if I love you and you love me, there is only one thing to be done. We must marry.

HILDA. Marry, Stockfish ? What do you take me for ? A heroine of second-rate English comedy ? What ! We meet on the lofty plane of affinity, aspiration, high towers and big gas-works, and then you drag us down to this ! To marriage !

How humiliating! How irrelevant! There, there! I didn't mean to be harsh; but surely my own boy knows that such a solution is impossible. I have higher things than that for you!

STOCKFISH. Only tell me what they are, Hilda.

HILDA. Listen! I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand. I am going to ask a big thing of you.

STOCKFISH. Whatever you ask!

HILDA. I want no commonplace contentment. I want something rare; something with a sting and an ache in it; bliss with a groan in it.

STOCKFISH. Oh, what is it, what is it? I will give it you.

HILDA. I have a wild uncontrollable desire to see you suffer, suffer horribly, unendurably. Finish well what you have begun so well. Get on these gas-works that you have built and blow yourself up.

STOCKFISH. Not that! Not that!

HILDA. Only that.

STOCKFISH. I would do anything to please you, Hilda; but this . . . Oh, I am afraid, I am afraid!

HILDA. Do you mean to tell me that you, my hero, are afraid to blow yourself up on gas-works that you yourself have built?

STOCKFISH. Oh, Hilda, you know that I would gladly do anything in reason to amuse and entertain you; but this is too much! How if I refuse?

HILDA. Then I shall shoot you, in the stomach, where Lovborg shot himself.

STOCKFISH. What an awful choice to have to make! This then is what love means?

HILDA. Scandinavian love. But don't look down-cast, Stockfish. This is the only way that I can

have you utterly, utterly to myself. When you are blown to bits, then at last I can know for certain that you will never be anybody's else's. For my sake you must do it gladly. Take this wreath; I had prepared it for this moment.

STOCKFISH. You knew that I should come?

HILDA. Something told me. It was made ready for you to wear at your own funeral. Immortelles; a pretty idea. I want you to do it beautifully, with the vine-leaves in your hair. Beautifully, Stockfish, promise me that.

STOCKFISH. Farewell, Hilda Inquest!

HILDA. Farewell, Half-done Stockfish! This is the end.

(STOCKFISH goes out and returns)

STOCKFISH. But supposing the gas won't catch fire, Hilda? It may turn out to be quite incombustible, you know.

HILDA. Fancy, Stockfish! There'll be a sort of sporting interest in that. Good-bye.

[Exit STOCKFISH]
This is frightfully thrilling! *(She dances a horn-pipe)*

Enter HEDDA

HEDDA. Why is Stockfish going about from room to room with a wreath in his hand, asking everybody to lend him a crowbar and a flaming torch?

HILDA. Stockfish has gone to kill himself.

HEDDA. To kill himself? Fancy! Why is Stockfish going to kill himself?

HILDA. I made him.

HEDDA. You made him?

HILDA. I did. He is to ascend to the highest peak of the gas-works and blow himself up.

HEDDA. Hilda, I adore you! You have the true Viking spirit.

Enter MRS INQUEST and MADAM HELSETH

Mamma, Stockfish is going to kill himself. He is going to turn away from the banquet of life and blow himself up on the gas-works.

MRS INQUEST. Ha! At last a bold deed. There is beauty in this. We shall have a good view from this window. Why doesn't he hurry up?

MADAM HELSETH. Dear Lord, Miss Hilda, how could you do such a crool thing!

HILDA. He bored me.

MADAM HELSETH. You will never have any peace of soul again after this.

HILDA. Who cares?

HEDDA. Peace of soul! What a humiliating idea!

Who wants peace of soul?

MRS INQUEST. It sounds like "Snacks of fish, threepence"; doesn't it?

MADAM HELSETH. This then is what the White Horse meant!

HILDA. What's that White Horse she's always talking about?

MRS INQUEST. Oh, it's a public-house down the road here.

HEDDA. (*At window*) See, see, there he goes to his death!

MRS INQUEST. Now he ascends the little path.

HEDDA. Now he clammers slowly up the ironwork, with the crowbar in his teeth and the wreath about his neck.

MRS INQUEST. Now he has arrived. He looks round. He wipes his brow with a red bandana handkerchief.

HEDDA. Now he is the only cock on the fowl-roost at last.

MRS INQUEST. Now he plunges the crowbar into the gas meter.

HEDDA. Now he sets the torch to the orifice.

(An explosion without. They imitate a rocket, look up high and clap their hands)

MRS INQUEST. My word!

ALL. What a beauty!

MRS INQUEST. Well, there's an end of *him*!

HILDA. He's blown himself up! He's blown himself up.

(ALL sing and dance)

Enter TESMAN, weeping.

TESMAN. Blown up! Gone to glory! I shall nev-ver, nev-ver see them again.

MRS INQUEST. Them? What's them?

TESMAN. It's the little things that hurt one most, the things that some people would look on as almost nothing.

MRS INQUEST. Come, Tesman, what things do you mean?

TESMAN. He went up in my goloshes!

HEDDA. Your goloshes?

TESMAN. My beautiful big goloshes that Aunt Jemima gave me.

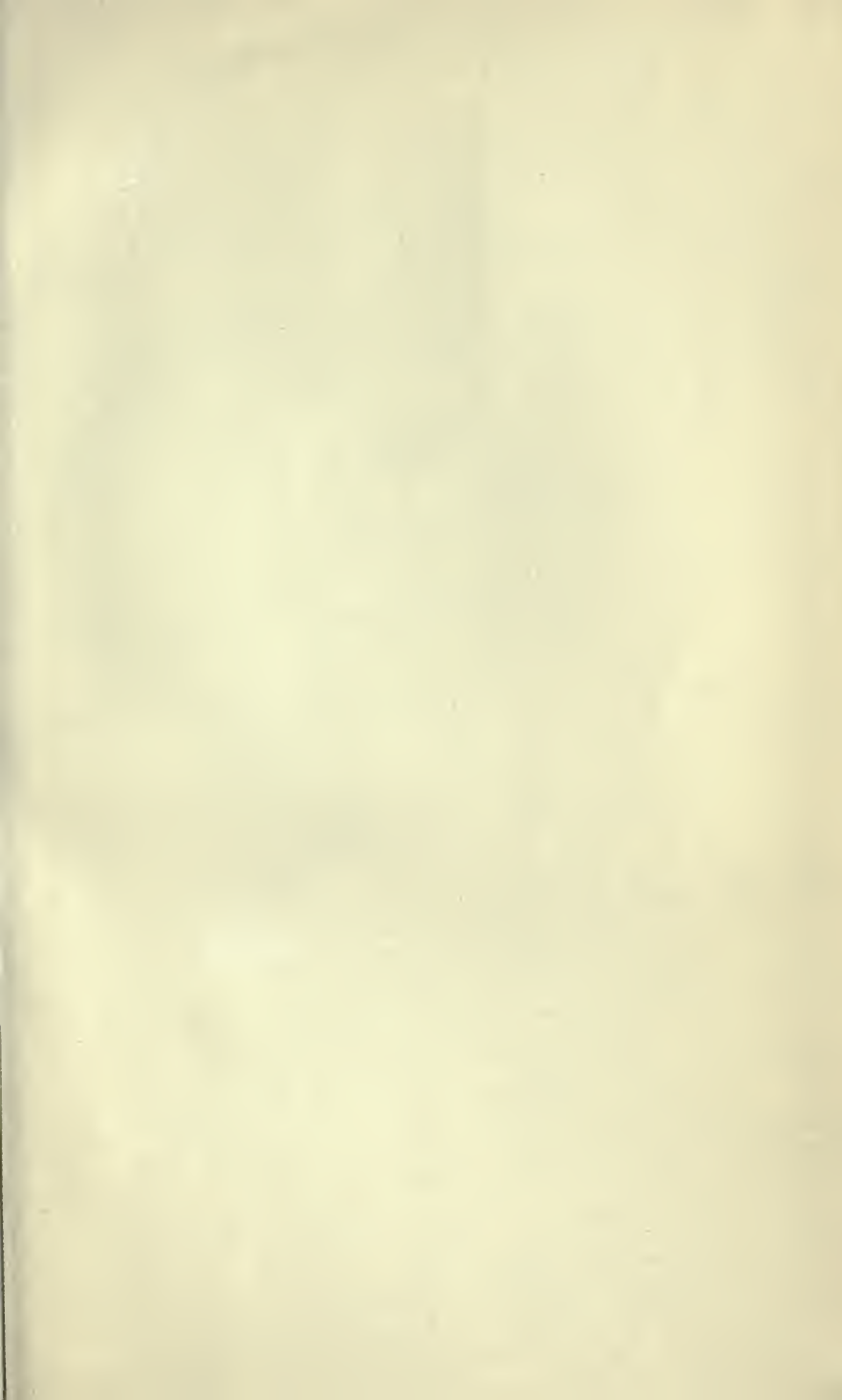
HILDA. *(Waving a handkerchief and dancing)* My plaster-builder!

TESMAN. My goloshes!

HILDA. My plaster-builder!

TESMAN. My goloshes!

CURTAIN





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