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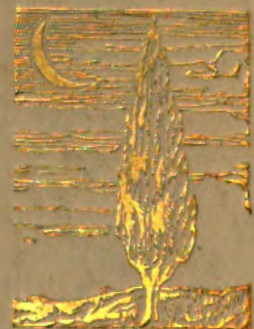
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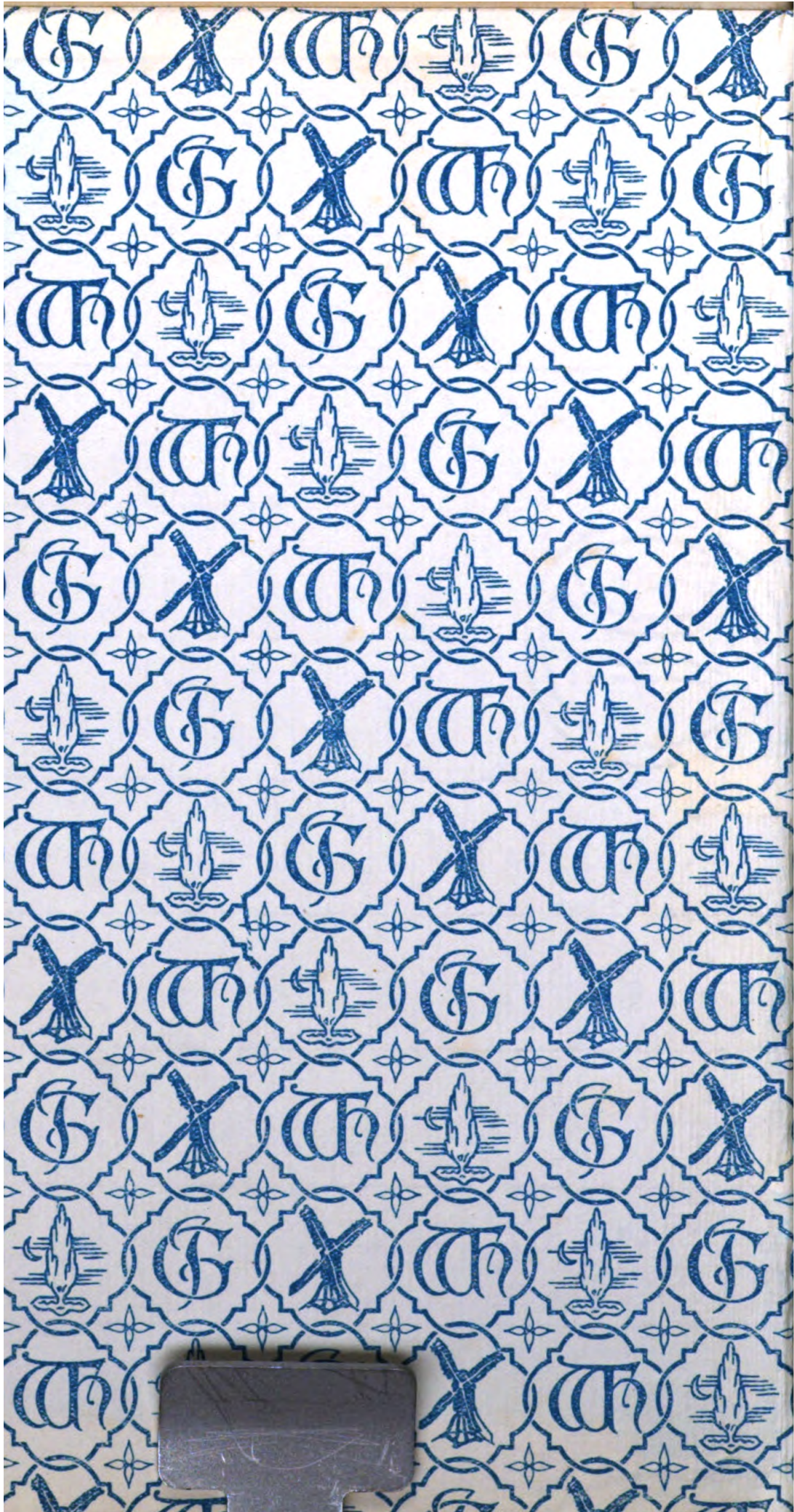
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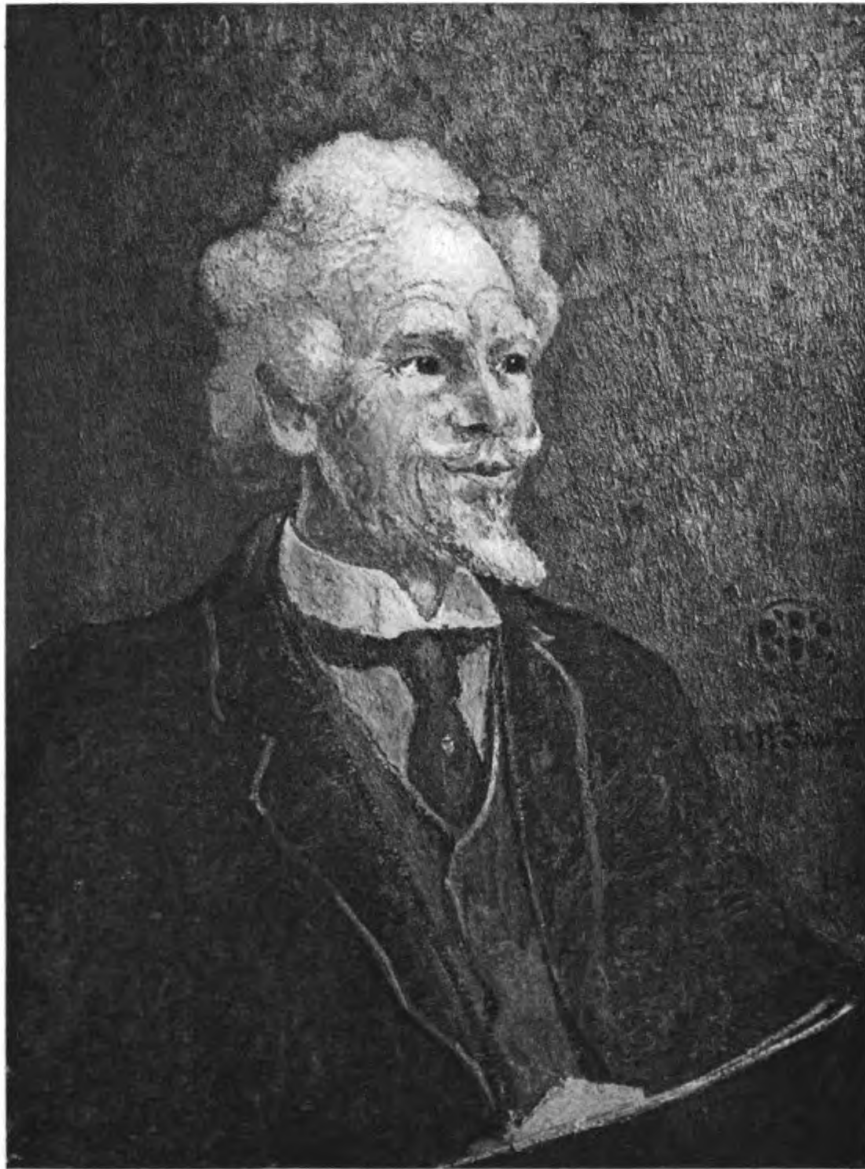
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MANATON EDITION

VOLUME XIX

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JOHN GALSWORTHY IS LIMITED TO
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Leon M. Lion as "Wellwyn" in "The Pigeon"

PLAYS

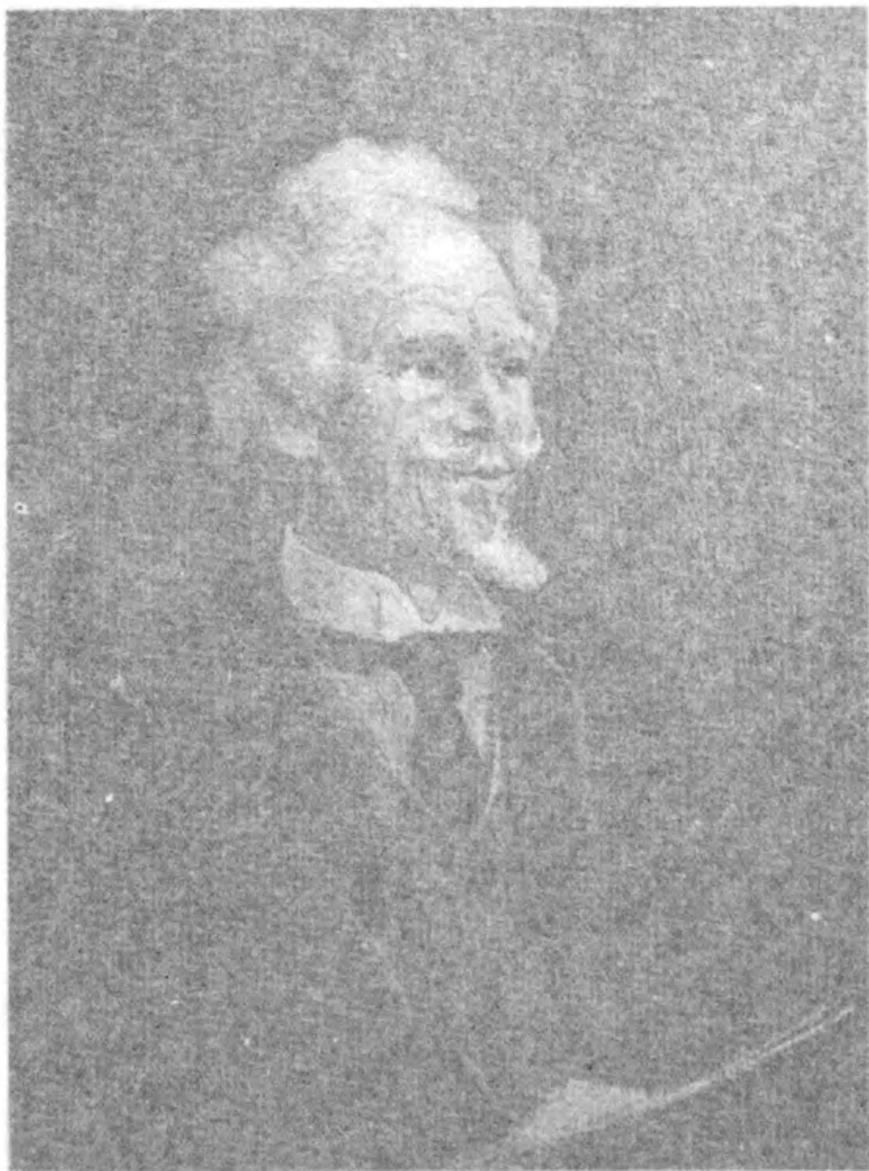
VOLUME II

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.
MCMXXIII



Jean-Baptiste Helleu en 1789

PLAYS

VOLUME II

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.
MCMXXIII



The four plays contained in this volume were originally published by Messrs. Duckworth & Co. as follows :—

JUSTICE. First published 1910
Reprinted 1910 (twice), 1911 (twice), 1913, 1918, 1919, 1920

THE LITTLE DREAM. First published 1911
Revised acting edition 1912
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THE PIGEON. First published 1912
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THE FUGITIVE. First published 1913
Reprinted 1914, 1920

THE FIRST TWO PLAYS IN THIS VOLUME
ARE DEDICATED TO JOHN MASEFIELD;
THE LAST TWO TO DOLORES AND FRANK
LUCAS.

J. G.

CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|------------------|------|
| Justice | I |
| The Little Dream | 129 |
| The Pigeon | 167 |
| The Fugitive | 267 |

The frontispiece of this volume is a photogravure of a painting by R. H. Sauter of Leon M. Lion as Wellwyn in "The Pigeon."



JUSTICE

A TRAGEDY IN FOUR ACTS

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JAMES HOW
WALTER HOW, *bis son* } *solicitors*
ROBERT COKESON, *their managing clerk*
WILLIAM FALDER, *their junior clerk*
SWEEDLE, *their office-boy*
WISTER, *a detective*
COWLEY, *a cashier*
MR. JUSTICE FLOYD, *a judge*
HAROLD CLEAVER, *an old advocate*
HECTOR FROME, *a young advocate*
CAPTAIN DANSON, V.C., *a prison governor*
THE REV. HUGH MILLER, *a prison chaplain*
EDWARD CLEMENTS, *a prison doctor*
WOODER, *a chief warder*
MOANEY }
CLIPTON } *convicts*
O'CLEARY }
RUTH HONEYWILL, *a woman*
A NUMBER OF BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, SPECTATORS,
USHERS, REPORTERS, JURYMEN, WARDERS, AND
PRISONERS

TIME: The present.

*ACT I. The office of James and Walter How. Morning.
July.*

ACT II. Assizes. Afternoon. October.

ACT III. A prison. December.

SCENE I. The Governor's office.

SCENE II. A corridor.

SCENE III. A cell.

*ACT IV. The office of James and Walter How. Morning.
March, two years later.*



CAST OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION

AT THE

DUKE OF YORK'S THEATRE

FEBRUARY 21, 1910

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| James How | MR. SYDNEY VALENTINE |
| Walter How | MR. CHARLES MAUDE |
| Cokeson | MR. EDMUND GWENN |
| Falder | MR. DENNIS EADIE |
| The Office-boy | MR. GEORGE HERSEE |
| The Detective | MR. LESLIE CARTER |
| The Cashier | MR. C. E. VERNON |
| The Judge | MR. DION BOUCICAULT |
| The Old Advocate | MR. OSCAR ADYE |
| The Young Advocate | MR. CHARLES BRYANT |
| The Prison Governor | MR. GRENDON BENTLEY |
| The Prison Chaplain | MR. HUBERT HARBEN |
| The Prison Doctor | MR. LEWIS CASSON |
| Wooder | MR. FREDERICK LLOYD |
| Moaney | MR. ROBERT PATEMAN |
| Clipton | MR. O. P. HEGGIE |
| O'Cleary | MR. WHITFORD KANE |
| Ruth Honeywill | MISS EDYTH OLIVE |

ACT I

The scene is the managing clerk's room, at the offices of JAMES AND WALTER HOW, on a July morning. The room is old-fashioned, furnished with well-worn mahogany and leather, and lined with tin boxes and estate plans. It has three doors. Two of them are close together in the centre of a wall. One of these two doors leads to the outer office, which is only divided from the managing clerk's room by a partition of wood and clear glass; and when the door into this outer office is opened there can be seen the wide outer door leading out on to the stone stairway of the building. The other of these two centre doors leads to the junior clerk's room. The third door is that leading to the partners' room.

The managing clerk, COKESON, is sitting at his table adding up figures in a pass-book, and murmuring their numbers to himself. He is a man of sixty, wearing spectacles; rather short, with a bald head, and an honest, pug-dog face. He is dressed in a well-worn black frock-coat and pepper-and-salt trousers.

PLAYS

ACT I

COKESON. And five's twelve, and three—fifteen, nineteen, twenty-three, thirty-two, forty-one—and carry four. [*He ticks the page, and goes on murmuring*] Five, seven, twelve, seventeen, twenty-four and nine, thirty-three, thirteen and carry one.

He again makes a tick. The outer office door is opened, and SWEEDLE, the office-boy, appears, closing the door behind him. He is a pale youth of sixteen, with spiky hair.

COKESON. [*With grumpy expectation*] And carry one.

SWEEDLE. There's a party wants to see Falder, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. Five, nine, sixteen, twenty-one, twenty-nine—and carry two. Sent him to Morris's. What name?

SWEEDLE. Honeywill.

COKESON. What's his business?

SWEEDLE. It's a woman.

COKESON. A lady?

SWEEDLE. No, a person.

COKESON. Ask her in. Take this pass-book to Mr. James. [*He closes the pass-book.*]

SWEEDLE. [*Reopening the door*] Will you come in, please?

RUTH HONEYWILL *comes in. She is a tall woman, twenty-six years old, unpreten-*

tiously dressed, with black hair and eyes, and an ivory-white, clear-cut face. She stands very still, having a natural dignity of pose and gesture.

SWEEDLE goes out into the partners' room with the pass-book.

COKESON. [*Looking round at RUTH*] The young man's out. [*Suspiciously*] State your business, please.

RUTH. [*Who speaks in a matter-of-fact voice, and with a slight West-Country accent*] It's a personal matter, sir.

COKESON. We don't allow private callers here. Will you leave a message?

RUTH. I'd rather see him, please.

She narrows her dark eyes and gives him a honeyed look.

COKESON. [*Expanding*] It's all against the rules. Suppose I had *my* friends here to see me! It'd never do!

RUTH. No, sir.

COKESON. [*A little taken aback*] Exactly! And here you are wanting to see a *junior* clerk!

RUTH. Yes, sir; I must see him.

COKESON. [*Turning full round to her with a sort of outraged interest*] But this is a lawyer's office. Go to his private address.

RUTH. He's not there.

COKESON. [*Uneasy*] Are you related to the party?

RUTH. No, sir.

COKESON. [*In real embarrassment*] I don't know what to say. It's no affair of the office.

RUTH. But what am I to do?

COKESON. Dear me! I can't tell you that.

SWEEDLE comes back. He crosses to the outer office and passes through into it, with a quizzical look at COKESON, carefully leaving the door an inch or two open.

COKESON. [*Fortified by this look*] This won't do, you know, this won't do at all. Suppose one of the partners came in!

An incoherent knocking and chuckling is heard from the outer door of the outer office.

SWEEDLE. [*Putting his head in*] There's some children outside here.

RUTH. They're mine, please.

SWEEDLE. Shall I hold them in check?

RUTH. They're quite small, sir.

[She takes a step towards COKESON.]

COKESON. You mustn't take up his time in office hours; we're a clerk short as it is.

RUTH. It's a matter of life and death.

COKESON. [*Again outraged*] Life and death!

SWEEDLE. Here is Falder.

FALDER has entered through the outer office.

He is a pale, good-looking young man, with quick, rather scared eyes. He moves towards the door of the clerk's office, and stands there irresolute.

COKESON. Well, I'll give you a minute. It's not regular.

Taking up a bundle of papers, he goes out into the partners' room.

RUTH. [*In a low, hurried voice*] He's on the drink again, Will. He tried to cut my throat last night. I came out with the children before he was awake. I went round to you——

FALDER. I've changed my digs.

RUTH. Is it all ready for to-night?

FALDER. I've got the tickets. Meet me 11.45 at the booking office. For God's sake don't forget we're man and wife! [*Looking at her with tragic intensity*] Ruth!

RUTH. You're not afraid of going, are you?

FALDER. Have you got your things, and the children's?

RUTH. Had to leave them, for fear of waking Honeywill, all but one bag. I can't go near home again.

FALDER. [*Wincing*] All that money gone for nothing. How much *must* you have?

RUTH. Six pounds—I could do with that, I think.

PLAYS

ACT I

FALDER. Don't give away where we're going. [As if to himself] When I get out there I mean to forget it all.

RUTH. If you're sorry, say so. I'd sooner he killed me than take you against your will.

FALDER. [With a queer smile] We've got to go. I don't care; I'll have you.

RUTH. You've just to say; it's not too late.

FALDER. It is too late. Here's seven pounds. Booking office—11.45 to-night. If you weren't what you are to me, Ruth——!

RUTH. Kiss me!

They cling together passionately then fly apart just as COKESON re-enters the room. RUTH turns and goes out through the outer office. COKESON advances deliberately to his chair and seats himself.

COKESON. This isn't right, Falder.

FALDER. It shan't occur again, sir.

COKESON. It's an improper use of these premises.

FALDER. Yes, sir.

COKESON. You quite understand—the party was in some distress; and, having children with her, I allowed my feelings—— [He opens a drawer and produces from it a tract] Just take this! "Purity in the Home." It's a well-written thing.

FALDER. [*Taking it, with a peculiar expression*] Thank you, sir.

COKESON. And look here, Falder, before Mr. Walter comes, have you finished up that cataloguing Davis had in hand before he left?

FALDER. I shall have done with it to-morrow, sir—for good.

COKESON. It's over a week since Davis went. Now it won't do, Falder. You're neglecting your work for private life. I shan't mention about the party having called, but——

FALDER. [*Passing into his room*] Thank you, sir.

COKESON *stares at the door through which FALDER has gone out; then shakes his head, and is just settling down to write, when WALTER HOW comes in through the outer office. He is a rather refined-looking man of thirty-five, with a pleasant, almost apologetic voice.*

WALTER. Good-morning, Cokeson.

COKESON. Morning, Mr. Walter.

WALTER. My father here?

COKESON. [*Always with a certain patronage as to a young man who might be doing better*] Mr. James has been here since eleven o'clock.

WALTER. I've been in to see the pictures, at the Guildhall.

COKESON. [*Looking at him as though this were exactly what was to be expected*] Have you now—ye-es. This lease of Boulter's—am I to send it to counsel?

WALTER. What does my father say?

COKESON. 'Aven't bothered him.

WALTER. Well, we can't be too careful.

COKESON. It's such a little thing—hardly worth the fees. I thought you'd do it yourself.

WALTER. Send it, please. I don't want the responsibility.

COKESON. [*With an indescribable air of compassion*] Just as you like. This "right-of-way" case—we've got 'em on the deeds.

WALTER. I know; but the intention was obviously to exclude that bit of common ground.

COKESON. We needn't worry about that. We're the *right* side of the law.

WALTER. I don't like it.

COKESON. [*With an indulgent smile*] We shan't want to set ourselves up against the law. Your father wouldn't waste his time doing that.

As he speaks JAMES *How comes in from the partners' room. He is a shortish man, with white side-whiskers, plentiful grey hair, sbrewd eyes, and gold pince-nez.*

JAMES. Morning, Walter.

WALTER. How are you, Father?

COKESON. [*Looking down his nose at the papers in his hand as though deprecating their size*] I'll just take Boulter's lease in to young Falder to draft the instructions.

[*He goes out into FALDER'S room.*]

WALTER. About that right-of-way case?

JAMES. Oh, well, we must go forward there. I thought you told me yesterday the firm's balance was over four hundred.

WALTER. So it is.

JAMES. [*Holding out the pass-book to his son*] Three—five—one, no recent cheques. Just get me out the cheque-book.

WALTER goes to a cupboard, unlocks a drawer, and produces a cheque-book.

JAMES. Tick the pounds in the counterfoils. Five, fifty-four, seven, five, twenty-eight, twenty, ninety, eleven, fifty-two, seventy-one. Tally?

WALTER. [*Nodding*] Can't understand. Made sure it was over four hundred.

JAMES. Give me the cheque-book. [*He takes the cheque-book and cons the counterfoils*] What's this ninety?

WALTER. Who drew it?

JAMES. You.

WALTER. [*Taking the cheque-book*] July 7th? That's the day I went down to look over the

Trenton Estate—last Friday week; I came back on the Tuesday, you remember. But look here, Father, it was *nine* I drew a cheque for. Five guineas to Smithers and my expenses. It just covered all but half a crown.

JAMES. [*Gravely*] Let's look at that ninety cheque. [*He sorts the cheque out from the bundle in the pocket of the pass-book*] Seems all right. There's no nine here. This is bad. Who cashed that nine-pound cheque?

WALTER. [*Puzzled and pained*] Let's see! I was finishing Mrs. Reddy's will—only just had time; yes—I gave it to Cokeson.

JAMES. Look at that t y: that yours?

WALTER. [*After consideration*] My y's curl back a little; this doesn't.

JAMES. [*As COKESON re-enters from FALDER'S room*] We must ask him. Just come here and carry your mind back a bit, Cokeson. D'you remember cashing a cheque for Mr. Walter last Friday week—the day he went to Trenton?

COKESON. Ye-es. Nine pounds.

JAMES. Look at this. [*Handing him the cheque.*

COKESON. No! Nine pounds. My lunch was just coming in; and of course I *like* it hot; I gave the cheque to Davis to run round to the bank. He brought it back, all notes—you remember, Mr. Walter, you wanted some silver to pay your

cab. [*With a certain contemptuous compassion*]
Here, let me see. You've got the wrong cheque.

He takes cheque-book and pass-book from

WALTER.

WALTER. Afraid not.

COKESON. [*Having seen for himself*] It's funny.

JAMES. You gave it to Davis, and Davis sailed for Australia on Monday. Looks black, Cokeson.

COKESON. [*Puzzled and upset*] Why this'd be a felony! No, no! there's some mistake.

JAMES. I hope so.

COKESON. There's never been anything of that sort in the office the twenty-nine years I've been here.

JAMES. [*Looking at cheque and counterfoil*] This is a very clever bit of work; a warning to you not to leave space after your figures, Walter.

WALTER. [*Vexed*] Yes, I know—I was in such a tearing hurry that afternoon.

COKESON. [*Suddenly*] This has upset me.

JAMES. The counterfoil altered too—very deliberate piece of swindling. What was Davis's ship?

WALTER. *City of Rangoon.*

JAMES. We ought to wire and have him arrested at Naples; he can't be there yet.

COKESON. His poor young wife. I liked the young man. Dear, oh dear! In this office!

WALTER. Shall I go to the bank and ask the cashier?

JAMES. [*Grimly*] Bring him round here. And ring up Scotland Yard.

WALTER. Really?

He goes out through the outer office. JAMES paces the room. He stops and looks at COKE-SON, who is disconsolately rubbing the knees of his trousers.

JAMES. Well, Cokeson! There's something in character, isn't there?

COKESON. [*Looking at him over his spectacles*] I don't quite take you, sir.

JAMES. Your story would sound d——d thin to any one who didn't know you.

COKESON. Ye-es! [*He laughs. Then with sudden gravity*] I'm sorry for that young man. I feel it as if it was my own son, Mr. James.

JAMES. A nasty business!

COKESON. It unsettles you. All goes on regular, and then a thing like this happens. Shan't relish my lunch to-day.

JAMES. As bad as that, Cokeson?

COKESON. It makes you think. [*Confidentially*] He must have had temptation.

JAMES. Not so fast. We haven't convicted him yet.

COKESON. I'd sooner have lost a month's salary than had this happen. *[He broods.]*

JAMES. I hope that fellow will hurry up.

COKESON. *[Keeping things pleasant for the cashier]* It isn't fifty yards, Mr. James. He won't be a minute.

JAMES. The idea of dishonesty about this office—it hits me hard, Cokeson.

He goes towards the door of the partners' room.

SWEEDLE. *[Entering quietly, to COKESON in a low voice]* She's popped up again, sir—something she forgot to say to Falder.

COKESON. *[Roused from his abstraction]* Eh? Impossible. Send her away!

JAMES. What's that?

COKESON. Nothing, Mr. James. A private matter. Here, I'll come myself. *[He goes into the outer office as JAMES passes into the partners' room]* Now, you really mustn't—we can't have anybody just now.

RUTH. Not for a minute, sir?

COKESON. Reely! Reely! I can't have it. If you want him, wait about; he'll be going out for his lunch directly.

RUTH. Yes, sir.

WALTER, entering with the cashier, passes

RUTH as she leaves the outer office.

COKESON. *[To the cashier, who resembles a seden-*

tary dragoon] Good-morning. [*To WALTER*] Your father's in there.

WALTER *crosses and goes into the partners' room.*

COKESON. It's a nahsty, unpleasant little matter, Mr. Cowley. I'm quite ashamed to have to trouble you.

COWLEY. I remember the cheque quite well. [*As if it were a liver*] Seemed in perfect order.

COKESON. Sit down, won't you? I'm not a sensitive man, but a thing like this about the place—it's not nice. I like people to be open and jolly together.

COWLEY. Quite so.

COKESON. [*Buttonholing him, and glancing towards the partners' room*] Of course he's a young man. I've told him about it before now—leaving space after his figures, but he *will* do it.

COWLEY. I should remember the person's face—quite a youth.

COKESON. I don't think we shall be able to show him to you, as a matter of fact.

JAMES and WALTER *have come back from the partners' room.*

JAMES. Good-morning, Mr. Cowley. You've seen my son and myself, you've seen Mr. Cokeson, and you've seen Sweedle, my office-boy. It was none of us, I take it.

The cashier shakes his head with a smile.

JAMES. Be so good as to sit there. Cokeson, engage Mr. Cowley in conversation, will you?

[He goes towards FALDER'S room.]

COKESON. Just a word, Mr. James.

JAMES. Well?

COKESON. You don't want to upset the young man in there, do you? He's a nervous young feller.

JAMES. This must be thoroughly cleared up, Cokeson, for the sake of Falder's name, to say nothing of yours.

COKESON. *[With some dignity]* That'll look after itself, sir. He's been upset once this morning; I don't want him startled again.

JAMES. It's a matter of form; but I can't stand upon niceness over a thing like this—too serious. Just talk to Mr. Cowley. *[He opens the door of FALDER'S room]* Bring in the papers in Boulter's lease, will you, Falder?

COKESON. *[Bursting into voice]* Do you keep dogs?

The cashier, with his eyes fixed on the door, does not answer.

COKESON. You haven't such a thing as a bulldog pup you could spare me, I suppose?

At the look on the cashier's face his jaw drops, and he turns to see FALDER standing in the

PLAYS

ACT I

doorway, with his eyes fixed on COWLEY, like the eyes of a rabbit fastened on a snake.

FALDER. [*Advancing with the papers*] Here they are, sir!

JAMES. [*Taking them*] Thank you.

FALDER. Do you want me, sir?

JAMES. No, thanks!

FALDER *turns and goes back into his own room. As he shuts the door JAMES gives the cashier an interrogative look, and the cashier nods.*

JAMES. Sure? This isn't as we suspected.

COWLEY. Quite. He knew me. I suppose he can't slip out of that room?

COKESON. [*Gloomily*] There's only the window—a whole floor and a basement.

The door of FALDER'S room is quietly opened, and FALDER, with his hat in his hand, moves towards the door of the outer office.

JAMES. [*Quietly*] Where are you going, Falder?

FALDER. To have my lunch, sir.

JAMES. Wait a few minutes, would you? I want to speak to you about this lease.

FALDER. Yes, sir. [*He goes back into his room.*

COWLEY. If I'm wanted, I can swear that's the young man who cashed the cheque. It was the last cheque I handled that morning before my

lunch. These are the numbers of the notes he had.
[*He puts a slip of paper on the table ; then, brushing his hat round*] Good-morning!

JAMES. Good-morning, Mr. Cowley!

COWLEY. [*To COKESON*] Good-morning.

COKESON. [*With stupefaction*] Good-morning.

The cashier goes out through the outer office.

COKESON *sits down in his chair, as though it were the only place left in the morass of his feelings.*

WALTER. What are you going to do?

JAMES. Have him in. Give me the cheque and the counterfoil.

COKESON. I don't understand. I thought young Davis——

JAMES. We shall see.

WALTER. One moment, Father—have you thought it out?

JAMES. Call him in!

COKESON. [*Rising with difficulty and opening FALDER'S door ; hoarsely*] Step in here a minute.

FALDER *comes in.*

FALDER. [*Impassively*] Yes, sir?

JAMES. [*Turning to him suddenly with the cheque held out*] You know this cheque, Falder?

FALDER. No, sir.

JAMES. Look at it. You cashed it last Friday week.

FALDER. Oh! yes, sir; that one—Davis gave it me.

JAMES. I know. And you gave Davis the cash?

FALDER. Yes, sir.

JAMES. When Davis gave you the cheque was it exactly like this?

FALDER. Yes, I think so, sir.

JAMES. You know that Mr. Walter drew that cheque for *nine* pounds?

FALDER. No, sir—ninety.

JAMES. Nine, Falder.

FALDER. [*Faintly*] I don't understand, sir.

JAMES. The suggestion, of course, is that the cheque was altered; whether by you or Davis is the question.

FALDER. I—I——

COKESON. Take your time, take your time.

FALDER. [*Regaining his impassivity*] Not by me, sir.

JAMES. The cheque was handed to Cokeson by Mr. Walter at one o'clock; we know that because Mr. Cokeson's lunch had just arrived.

COKESON. I couldn't leave it.

JAMES. Exactly; he therefore gave the cheque to Davis. It was cashed by you at 1.15. We know that because the cashier recollects it for the last cheque he handled before *bis* lunch.

FALDER. Yes, sir, Davis gave it to me because

some friends were giving him a farewell luncheon.

JAMES. [*Puzzled*] You accuse Davis, then?

FALDER. I don't know, sir—it's very funny.

WALTER, *who has come close to his father, says something to him in a low voice.*

JAMES. Davis was not here again after that Saturday, was he?

COKESON. [*Anxious to be of assistance to the young man, and seeing faint signs of their all being jolly once more*] No, he sailed on the Monday.

JAMES. Was he, Falder?

FALDER. [*Very faintly*] No, sir.

JAMES. Very well, then, how do you account for the fact that this nought was added to the nine in the counterfoil on or after *Tuesday*?

COKESON. [*Surprised*] How's that?

FALDER *gives a sort of lurch; he tries to pull himself together, but he has gone all to pieces.*

JAMES. [*Very grimly*] Out, I'm afraid, Cokeson. The cheque-book remained in Mr. Walter's pocket till he came back from Trenton on Tuesday morning. In the face of this, Falder, do you still deny that you altered both cheque and counterfoil?

FALDER. No, sir—no, Mr. How. I did it, sir; I did it.

COKESON. [*Succumbing to his feelings*] Dear, dear! what a thing to do!

FALDER. I wanted the money so badly, sir. I didn't know what I was doing.

COKESON. However such a thing could have come into your head!

FALDER. [*Grasping at the words*] I can't think, sir, really! It was just a minute of madness.

JAMES. A long minute, Falder. [*Tapping the counterfoil*] Four days at least.

FALDER. Sir, I swear I didn't know what I'd done till afterwards, and then I hadn't the pluck. Oh! sir, look over it! I'll pay the money back—I will, I promise.

JAMES. Go into your room.

FALDER, *with a swift imploring look, goes back into his room. There is silence.*

JAMES. About as bad a case as there could be.

COKESON. To break the law like that—in here!

WALTER. What's to be done?

JAMES. Nothing for it. Prosecute.

WALTER. It's his first offence.

JAMES. [*Shaking his head*] I've grave doubts of that. Too neat a piece of swindling altogether.

COKESON. I shouldn't be surprised if he was tempted.

JAMES. Life's one long temptation, Cokeson.

COKESON. Ye-es, but I'm speaking of the flesh and the devil, Mr. James. There was a woman come to see him this morning.

WALTER. The woman we passed as we came in just now. Is it his wife?

COKESON. No, no relation. [*Restraining what in jollier circumstances would have been a wink*] A married person, though.

WALTER. How do you know?

COKESON. Brought her children. [*Scandalised*] There they were outside the office.

JAMES. A real bad egg.

WALTER. I should like to give him a chance.

JAMES. I can't forgive him for the sneaky way he went to work—counting on our suspecting young Davis if the matter came to light. It was the merest accident the cheque-book stayed in your pocket.

WALTER. It *must* have been the temptation of a moment. He hadn't time.

JAMES. A man doesn't succumb like that in a moment, if he's a clean mind and habits. He's rotten; got the eyes of a man who can't keep his hands off when there's money about.

WALTER. [*Dryly*] We hadn't noticed that before.

JAMES. [*Brushing the remark aside*] I've seen lots of those fellows in my time. No doing anything with them except to keep 'em out of harm's way. They've got a blind spot.

WALTER. It's penal servitude.

COKESON. They're *nabsty* places—prisons.

JAMES. [*Hesitating*] I don't see how it's possible to spare him. Out of the question to keep him in this office—honesty's the *sine qua non*.

COKESON. [*Hypnotised*] Of course it is.

JAMES. Equally out of the question to send him out amongst people who've no knowledge of his character. One must think of society.

WALTER. But to brand him like this?

JAMES. If it had been a straightforward case I'd give him another chance. It's far from that. He has dissolute habits.

COKESON. I didn't say that—extenuating circumstances.

JAMES. Same thing. He's gone to work in the most cold-blooded way to defraud his employers, and cast the blame on an innocent man. If that's not a case for the law to take its course, I don't know what is.

WALTER. For the sake of his future, though.

JAMES. [*Sarcastically*] According to you, no one would ever prosecute.

WALTER. [*Nettled*] I hate the idea of it.

COKESON. We must have protection.

JAMES. This is degenerating into talk.

[*He moves towards the partners' room.*]

WALTER. Put yourself in his place, Father.

JAMES. You ask too much of me.

WALTER. We can't possibly tell the pressure there was on him.

JAMES. You may depend on it, my boy, if a man is going to do this sort of thing he'll do it, pressure or no pressure; if he isn't nothing'll make him.

WALTER. He'll never do it again.

COKESON. [*Fatuously*] S'pose I were to have a talk with him. We don't want to be hard on the young man.

JAMES. That'll do, Cokeson. I've made up my mind. [*He passes into the partners' room.*]

COKESON. [*After a doubtful moment*] We must excuse your father. I don't want to go against your father; if he thinks it right.

WALTER. Confound it, Cokeson! why don't you back me up? You know you feel——

COKESON. [*On his dignity*] I really can't say what I feel.

WALTER. We shall regret it.

COKESON. He must have known what he was doing.

WALTER. [*Bitterly*] "The quality of mercy is not strained."

COKESON. [*Looking at him askance*] Come, come, Mr. Walter. We must try and see it sensible.

SWEEDLE. [*Entering with a tray*] Your lunch, sir.

COKESON. Put it down!

While SWEEDLE is putting it down on COKESON'S table, the detective, WISTER, enters the outer office, and, finding no one there, comes to the inner doorway. He is a square, medium-sized man, clean-shaved, in a serviceable blue serge suit and strong boots.

WISTER. [To WALTER] From Scotland Yard, sir. Detective-Sergeant Wister.

WALTER. [Askance] Very well! I'll speak to my father.

He goes into the partners' room. JAMES enters.

JAMES. Morning! [In answer to an appealing gesture from COKESON] I'm sorry; I'd stop short of this if I felt I could. Open that door.

SWEEDLE, wondering and scared, opens it.

JAMES. Come here, Mr. Falder.

As FALDER comes sbrinkingly out, the detective, in obedience to a sign from JAMES, slips his hand out and grasps his arm.

FALDER. [Recoiling] Oh! no,—oh! no!

WISTER. Come, come, there's a good lad.

JAMES. I charge him with felony.

FALDER. Oh, sir! There's some one—I did it for her. Let me be till to-morrow.

JAMES motions with his hand. At that sign of hardness, FALDER becomes rigid. Then, turning, he goes out quietly in the detective's

*grip. JAMES follows, stiff and erect. SWEE-
DLE, rushing to the door with open mouth,
pursues them through the outer office into the
corridor. When they have all disappeared
COKESON spins completely round and
makes a rush for the outer office.*

COKESON [*Hoarsely*] Here! Here! What are we
doing?

*There is silence. He takes out his handkerchief
and mops the sweat from his face. Going
back blindly to his table, he sits down, and
stares blankly at his lunch.*

The curtain falls.

ACT II

A Court of Justice, on a foggy October afternoon—crowded with barristers, solicitors, reporters, ushers, and jurymen. Sitting in the large, solid dock is FALDER, with a warder on either side of him, placed there for his safe custody, but seemingly indifferent to and unconscious of his presence. FALDER is sitting exactly opposite to the JUDGE, who, raised above the clamour of the court, also seems unconscious of and indifferent to everything. HAROLD CLEAVER, the counsel for the Crown, is a dried, yellowish man, of more than middle age, in a wig worn almost to the colour of his face. HECTOR FROME, the counsel for the defence, is a young, tall man, clean-shaved, in a very white wig. Among the spectators, having already given their evidence, are JAMES and WALTER HOW, and COWLEY, the cashier. WISTER, the detective, is just leaving the witness-box.

CLEAVER. That is the case for the Crown, me
lud! [*Gathering his robes together, he sits down.*

FROME. [*Rising and bowing to the JUDGE*] If it

please your lordship and members of the jury. I am not going to dispute the fact that the prisoner altered this cheque, but I am going to put before you evidence as to the condition of his mind, and to submit that you would not be justified in finding that he was responsible for his actions at the time. I am going to show you, in fact, that he did this in a moment of aberration, amounting to temporary insanity, caused by the violent distress under which he was labouring. Gentlemen, the prisoner is only twenty-three years old. I shall call before you a woman from whom you will learn the events that led up to this act. You will hear from her own lips the tragic circumstances of her life, the still more tragic infatuation with which she has inspired the prisoner. This woman, gentlemen, has been leading a miserable existence with a husband who habitually ill-uses her, from whom she actually goes in terror of her life. I am not, of course, saying that it's either right or desirable for a young man to fall in love with a married woman, or that it's his business to rescue her from an ogre-like husband. I'm not saying anything of the sort. But we all know the power of the passion of love; and I would ask you to remember, gentlemen, in listening to her evidence, that, married to a drunken and violent husband, she has no power to get rid of him; for, as you

know, another offence besides violence is necessary to enable a woman to obtain a divorce; and of this offence it does not appear that her husband is guilty.

THE JUDGE. Is this relevant, Mr. Frome?

FROME. My lord, I submit, extremely—I shall be able to show your lordship that directly.

THE JUDGE. Very well.

FROME. In these circumstances, what alternatives were left to her? She could either go on living with this drunkard, in terror of her life; or she could apply to the Court for a separation order. Well, gentlemen, my experience of such cases assures me that this would have given her very insufficient protection from the violence of such a man; and even if effectual would very likely have reduced her either to the workhouse or the streets—for it's not easy, as she is now finding, for an unskilled woman without means of livelihood to support herself and her children without resorting either to the Poor Law or—to speak quite plainly—to the sale of her body.

THE JUDGE. You are ranging rather far, Mr. Frome.

FROME. I shall fire point-blank in a minute, my lord.

THE JUDGE. Let us hope so.

FROME. Now, gentlemen, mark—and this is

what I have been leading up to—this woman will tell you, and the prisoner will confirm her, that, confronted with such alternatives, she set her whole hopes on himself, knowing the feeling with which she had inspired him. She saw a way out of her misery by going with him to a new country, where they would both be unknown, and might pass as husband and wife. This was a desperate and, as my friend Mr. Cleaver will no doubt call it, an immoral resolution; but, as a fact, the minds of both of them were constantly turned towards it. One wrong is no excuse for another, and those who are never likely to be faced by such a situation possibly have the right to hold up their hands—as to that I prefer to say nothing. But whatever view you take, gentlemen, of this part of the prisoner's story—whatever opinion you form of the right of these two young people under such circumstances to take the law into their own hands—the fact remains that this young woman in her distress, and this young man, little more than a boy, who was so devotedly attached to her, *did* conceive this—if you like—reprehensible design of going away together. Now, for that, of course, they required money, and—they had none. As to the actual events of the morning of July 7th, on which this cheque was altered, the events on which I rely to prove

the defendant's irresponsibility—I shall allow those events to speak for themselves, through the lips of my witnesses. Robert Cokeson.

He turns, looks round, takes up a sheet of paper, and waits.

COKESON *is summoned into court, and goes into the witness-box, holding his bat before him. The oath is administered to him.*

FROME. What is your name?

COKESON. Robert Cokeson.

FROME. Are you managing clerk to the firm of solicitors who employ the prisoner?

COKESON. Ye-es.

FROME. How long had the prisoner been in their employ?

COKESON. Two years. No, I'm wrong there—all but seventeen days.

FROME. Had you him under your eye all that time?

COKESON. Except Sundays and holidays.

FROME. Quite so. Let us hear, please, what you have to say about his general character during those two years.

COKESON. [*Confidentially to the jury, and as if a little surprised at being asked*] He was a nice, pleasant-spoken young man. I'd no fault to find with him—quite the contrary. It was a *great* surprise to me when he did a thing like that.

FROME. Did he ever give you reason to suspect his honesty?

COKESON. No! To have dishonesty in our office, that'd never do.

FROME. I'm sure the jury fully appreciate that, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. Every man of business knows that honesty's the sign qua nonne.

FROME. Do you give him a good character all round, or do you not?

COKESON. [*Turning to the JUDGE*] Certainly. We were all very jolly and pleasant together, until this happened. Quite upset me.

FROME. Now, coming to the morning of the 7th of July, the morning on which the cheque was altered. What have you to say about his demeanour that morning?

COKESON. [*To the jury*] If you ask me, I don't think he was quite compos when he did it.

THE JUDGE. [*Sharply*] Are you suggesting that he was insane?

COKESON. Not compos.

THE JUDGE. A little more precision, please.

FROME. [*Smoothly*] Just tell us, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. [*Somewhat outraged*] Well, in my opinion—[*looking at the JUDGE*] such as it is—he was jumpy at the time. The jury will understand my meaning.

FROME. Will you tell us how you came to that conclusion?

COKESON. Ye-es, I will. I have my lunch in from the restaurant, a chop and a potato—saves time. That day it happened to come just as Mr. Walter How handed me the cheque. Well, I like it hot; so I went into the clerks' office and I handed the cheque to Davis, the other clerk, and told him to get change. I noticed young Falder walking up and down. I said to him: "This is not the Zoological Gardens, Falder."

FROME. Do you remember what he answered?

COKESON. Ye-es: "I wish to God it were!"
Struck me as funny.

FROME. Did you notice anything else peculiar?

COKESON. I did.

FROME. What was that?

COKESON. His collar was unbuttoned. Now, I like a young man to be neat. I said to him: "Your collar's unbuttoned."

FROME. And what did he answer?

COKESON. Stared at me. It wasn't nice.

THE JUDGE. Stared at you? Isn't that a very common practice?

COKESON. Ye-es, but it was the look in his eyes. I can't explain my meaning—it was funny.

FROME. Had you ever seen such a look in his eyes before?

COKESON. No. If I had I should have spoken to the partners. We can't have anything eccentric in our profession.

THE JUDGE. Did you speak to them on that occasion?

COKESON. [*Confidentially*] Well, I didn't like to trouble them without prime facey evidence.

FROME. But it made a very distinct impression on your mind.

COKESON. Ye-es. The clerk Davis could have told you the same.

FROME. Quite so. It's very unfortunate that we've not got him here. Now can you tell me of the morning on which the discovery of the forgery was made? That would be the 18th. Did anything happen that morning?

COKESON. [*With his hand to his ear*] I'm a little deaf.

FROME. Was there anything in the course of that morning—I mean before the discovery—that caught your attention?

COKESON. Ye-es—a woman.

THE JUDGE. How is *this* relevant, Mr. Frome?

FROME. I am trying to establish the state of mind in which the prisoner committed this act, my lord.

THE JUDGE. I quite appreciate that. But this was long after the act.

FROME. Yes, my lord, but it contributes to my contention.

THE JUDGE. Well!

FROME. You say a woman. Do you mean that she came to the office?

COKESON. Ye-es.

FROME. What for?

COKESON. Asked to see young Falder; he was out at the moment.

FROME. Did you see her?

COKESON. I did.

FROME. Did she come alone?

COKESON. [*Confidentially*] Well, there you put me in a difficulty. I mustn't tell you what the office-boy told me.

FROME. Quite so, Mr. Cokeson, quite so——

COKESON. [*Breaking in with an air of "You are young—leave it to me"*] But I think we can get round it. In answer to a question put to her by a third party the woman said to me: "They're mine, sir."

THE JUDGE. What are? What were?

COKESON. Her children. They were outside.

THE JUDGE. How do you know?

COKESON. Your lordship mustn't ask me that, or I shall have to tell you what I was told—and that'd never do.

PLAYS

ACT II

THE JUDGE. [*Smiling*] The office-boy made a statement.

COKESON. Egg-zactly.

FROME. What I want to ask you, Mr. Cokeson, is this. In the course of her appeal to see Falder, did the woman say anything that you specially remember?

COKESON. [*Looking at him as if to encourage him to complete the sentence*] A leetle more, sir.

FROME. Or did she not?

COKESON. She did. I shouldn't like you to have led me to the answer.

FROME. [*With an irritated smile*] Will you tell the jury what it was?

COKESON. "It's a matter of life and death."

FOREMAN OF THE JURY. Do you mean the woman said that?

COKESON. [*Nodding*] It's not the sort of thing you like to have said to you.

FROME. [*A little impatiently*] Did Falder come in while she was there?

COKESON *nods*.

FROME. And she saw him, and went away?

COKESON. Ah! there I can't follow you. I didn't see her go.

FROME. Well, is she there now?

COKESON. [*With an indulgent smile*] No!

FROME. Thank you, Mr. Cokeson.

[*He sits down.*]

CLEAVER. [*Rising*] You say that on the morning of the forgery the prisoner was jumpy. Well, now, sir, what precisely do you mean by that word?

COKESON. [*Indulgently*] I *want* you to understand. Have you ever seen a dog that's lost its master? He was kind of everywhere at once with his eyes.

CLEAVER. Thank you; I was coming to his eyes. You called them "funny." What are we to understand by that? Strange, or what?

COKESON. Ye-es, funny.

CLEAVER. [*Sharply*] Yes, sir, but what may be funny to you may not be funny to me, or to the jury. Did they look frightened, or shy, or fierce, or what?

COKESON. You make it very hard for me. I give you the word, and you want me to give you another.

CLEAVER. [*Rapping his desk*] Does "funny" mean mad?

COKESON. Not mad, fun——

CLEAVER. Very well! Now you say he had his collar unbuttoned? Was it a hot day?

COKESON. Ye-es; I think it was.

CLEAVER. And did he button it when you called his attention to it?

COKESON. Ye-es, I think he did.

CLEAVER. Would you say that that denoted insanity?

He sits down. COKESON, who has opened his mouth to reply, is left gaping.

FROME. [*Rising hastily*] Have you ever caught him in that dishevelled state before?

COKESON. No! He was *always* clean and quiet.

FROME. That will do, thank you.

COKESON turns blandly to the JUDGE, as though to rebuke counsel for not remembering that the JUDGE might wish to have a chance; arriving at the conclusion that he is to be asked nothing further, he turns and descends from the box, and sits down next to JAMES and WALTER.

FROME. Ruth Honeywill.

RUTH comes into court, and takes her stand stoically in the witness-box. She is sworn.

FROME. What is your name, please?

RUTH. Ruth Honeywill.

FROME. How old are you?

RUTH. Twenty-six.

FROME. You are a married woman, living with your husband? A little louder.

RUTH. No, sir; not since July.

FROME. Have you any children?

RUTH. Yes, sir, two.

FROME. Are they living with you?

RUTH. Yes, sir.

FROME. You know the prisoner?

RUTH. [*Looking at him*] Yes.

FROME. What was the nature of your relations with him?

RUTH. We were friends.

THE JUDGE. Friends?

RUTH. [*Simply*] Lovers, sir.

THE JUDGE. [*Sharply*] In what sense do you use that word?

RUTH. We love each other.

THE JUDGE. Yes, but——

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No, your lordship— not yet.

THE JUDGE. Not yet! H'm! [*He looks from RUTH to FALDER*] Well!

FROME. What is your husband?

RUTH. Traveller.

FROME. And what was the nature of your married life?

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] It don't bear talking about.

FROME. Did he ill-treat you, or what?

RUTH. Ever since my first was born.

FROME. In what way?

RUTH. I'd rather not say. All sorts of ways.

THE JUDGE. I am afraid I must stop this, you know.

RUTH. [*Pointing to FALDER*] *He* offered to take me out of it, sir. We were going to South America.

FROME. [*Hastily*] Yes, quite—and what prevented you?

RUTH. I was outside his office when he was taken away. It nearly broke my heart.

FROME. You knew, then, that he had been arrested?

RUTH. Yes, sir. I called at his office afterwards, and [*pointing to COKESON*] that gentleman told me all about it.

FROME. Now, do you remember the morning of Friday, July 7th?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. Why?

RUTH. My husband nearly strangled me that morning.

THE JUDGE. Nearly strangled you!

RUTH. [*Bowing her head*] Yes, my lord.

FROME. With his hands, or——?

RUTH. Yes, I just managed to get away from him. I went straight to my friend. It was eight o'clock.

THE JUDGE. In the morning? Your husband was not under the influence of liquor then?

RUTH. It wasn't always that.

FROME. In what condition were you?

RUTH. In very bad condition, sir. My dress was torn, and I was half choking.

FROME. Did you tell your friend what had happened?

RUTH. Yes. I wish I never had.

FROME. It upset him?

RUTH. Dreadfully.

FROME. Did he ever speak to you about a cheque?

RUTH. Never.

FROME. Did he ever give you any money?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. When was that?

RUTH. On Saturday.

FROME. The 8th?

RUTH. To buy an outfit for me and the children, and get all ready to start.

FROME. Did that surprise you, or not?

RUTH. What, sir?

FROME. That he had money to give you.

RUTH. Yes, because on the morning when my husband nearly killed me my friend cried because he hadn't the money to get me away. He told me afterwards he'd come into a windfall.

FROME. And when did you last see him?

RUTH. The day he was taken away, sir. It was the day we were to have started.

FROME. Oh, yes, the morning of the arrest. Well, did you see him at all between the Friday and that morning?

RUTH *nods*.

FROME. What was his manner then?

RUTH. Dumb-like—sometimes he didn't seem able to say a word.

FROME. As if something unusual had happened to him?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. Painful, or pleasant, or what?

RUTH. Like a fate hanging over him.

FROME. [*Hesitating*] Tell me, did you love the defendant very much?

RUTH. [*Bowing her head*] Yes.

FROME. And had he a very great affection for you?

RUTH. [*Looking at FALDER*] Yes, sir.

FROME. Now, ma'am, do you or do you not think that your danger and unhappiness would seriously affect his balance, his control over his actions?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. His reason, even?

RUTH. For a moment like, I think it would.

FROME. Was he very much upset that Friday morning, or was he fairly calm?

RUTH. Dreadfully upset. I could hardly bear to let him go from me.

FROME. Do you still love him?

RUTH. [*With her eyes on FALDER*] He's ruined himself for me.

FROME. Thank you.

He sits down. RUTH remains stoically upright in the witness-box.

CLEAVER. [*In a considerate voice*] When you left him on the morning of Friday the 7th you would not say that he was out of his mind, I suppose?

RUTH. No, sir.

CLEAVER. Thank you; I've no further questions to ask you.

RUTH. [*Bending a little forward to the jury*] I would have done the same for him; I would indeed.

THE JUDGE. Please, please! You say your married life is an unhappy one? Faults on both sides?

RUTH. Only that I never bowed down to him. I don't see why I should, sir, not to a man like that.

THE JUDGE. You refused to obey him?

RUTH. [*Avoiding the question*] I've always studied him to keep things nice.

THE JUDGE. Until you met the prisoner—was that it?

RUTH. No; even after that.

THE JUDGE. I ask, you know, because you seem to me to glory in this affection of yours for the prisoner.

RUTH. [*Hesitating*] I—I do. It's the only thing in my life now.

THE JUDGE. [*Staring at her hard*] Well, step down, please.

RUTH *looks at FALDER, then passes quietly down and takes her seat among the witnesses.*

FROME. I call the prisoner, my lord.

FALDER *leaves the dock; goes into the witness-box, and is duly sworn.*

FROME. What is your name?

FALDER. William Falder.

FROME. And age?

FALDER. Twenty-three.

FROME. You are not married?

FALDER *shakes his head.*

FROME. How long have you known the last witness?

FALDER. Six months.

FROME. Is her account of the relationship between you a correct one?

FALDER. Yes.

FROME. You became devotedly attached to her, however?

FALDER. Yes.

THE JUDGE. Though you knew she was a married woman?

FALDER. I couldn't help it, your lordship.

THE JUDGE. Couldn't help it?

FALDER. I didn't seem able to.

The JUDGE slightly shrugs his shoulders.

FROME. How did you come to know her?

FALDER. Through my married sister.

FROME. Did you know whether she was happy with her husband?

FALDER. It was trouble all the time.

FROME. You knew her husband?

FALDER. Only through her—he's a brute.

THE JUDGE. I can't allow indiscriminate abuse of a person not present.

FROME. [*Bowing*] If your lordship pleases. [*To FALDER*] You admit altering this cheque?

FALDER *bows his head.*

FROME. Carry your mind, please, to the morning of Friday, July the 7th, and tell the jury what happened.

FALDER. [*Turning to the jury*] I was having my breakfast when she came. Her dress was all torn, and she was gasping and couldn't seem to get her breath at all; there were the marks of his fingers

round her throat; her arm was bruised, and the blood had got into her eyes dreadfully. It frightened me, and then when she told me, I felt—I felt—well—it was too much for me! [*Hardening suddenly*] If you'd seen it, having the feelings for her that I had, you'd have felt the same, I know.

FROME. Yes?

FALDER. When she left me—because I had to go to the office—I was out of my senses for fear that he'd do it again, and thinking what I could do. I couldn't work—all the morning I was like that—simply couldn't fix my mind on anything. I couldn't think at all. I seemed to have to keep moving. When Davis—the other clerk—gave me the cheque—he said: “It'll do you good, Will, to have a run with this. You seem half off your chump this morning.” Then when I had it in my hand—I don't know how it came, but it just flashed across me that if I put the t y and the nought there would be the money to get her away. It just came and went—I never thought of it again. Then Davis went out to his luncheon, and I don't really remember what I did till I'd pushed the cheque through to the cashier under the rail. I remember his saying “Notes?” Then I suppose I knew what I'd done. Anyway, when I got outside I wanted to chuck myself under a 'bus; I wanted to throw the money away; but it

seemed I was in for it, so I thought at any rate I'd save her. Of course the tickets I took for the passage and the little I gave her's been wasted, and all, except what I was obliged to spend myself, I've restored. I keep thinking over and over however it was I came to do it, and how I can't have it all again to do differently!

FALDER *is silent, twisting his hands before him.*

FROME. How far is it from your office to the bank?

FALDER. Not more than fifty yards, sir.

FROME. From the time Davis went out to lunch to the time you cashed the cheque, how long do you say it must have been?

FALDER. It couldn't have been four minutes, sir, because I ran all the way.

FROME. During those four minutes you say you remember nothing?

FALDER. No, sir; only that I ran.

FROME. Not even adding the t y and the nought?

FALDER. No, sir. I don't really.

FROME *sits down, and CLEAVER rises.*

CLEAVER. But you remember running, do you?

FALDER. I was all out of breath when I got to the bank.

CLEAVER. And you don't remember altering the cheque?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No, sir.

CLEAVER. Divested of the romantic glamour which my friend is casting over the case, is this anything but an ordinary forgery? Come.

FALDER. I was half frantic all that morning, sir.

CLEAVER. Now, now! You don't deny that the t y and the nought were so like the rest of the handwriting as to thoroughly deceive the cashier?

FALDER. It was an accident.

CLEAVER. [*Cheerfully*] Queer sort of accident, wasn't it? On which day did you alter the counterfoil?

FALDER. [*Hanging his head*] On the Wednesday morning.

CLEAVER. Was that an accident too?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No.

CLEAVER. To do that you had to watch your opportunity, I suppose?

FALDER. [*Almost inaudibly*] Yes.

CLEAVER. You don't suggest that you were suffering under great excitement when you did that?

FALDER. I was haunted.

CLEAVER. With the fear of being found out?

FALDER. [*Very low*] Yes.

THE JUDGE. Didn't it occur to you that the only

thing for you to do was to confess to your employers, and restore the money?

FALDER. I was afraid.

There is silence.

CLEAVER. You desired, too, no doubt to complete your design of taking this woman away?

FALDER. When I found I'd done a thing like that, to do it for nothing seemed so dreadful. I might just as well have chucked myself into the river.

CLEAVER. You knew that the clerk Davis was about to leave England—didn't it occur to you when you altered this cheque that suspicion would fall on him?

FALDER. It was all done in a moment. I thought of it afterwards.

CLEAVER. And that didn't lead you to avow what you'd done?

FALDER. [*Sullenly*] I meant to write when I got out there—I would have repaid the money.

THE JUDGE. But in the meantime your innocent fellow clerk might have been prosecuted.

FALDER. I knew he was a long way off, your lordship. I thought there'd be time. I didn't think they'd find it out so soon.

FROME. I might remind your lordship that as Mr. Walter How had the cheque-book in his pocket till after Davis had sailed, if the discovery

had been made only one day later Falder himself would have left, and suspicion would have attached to him, and not to Davis, from the beginning.

THE JUDGE. The question is whether the prisoner knew that suspicion would light on himself, and not on Davis. [*To FALDER sharply*] Did you know that Mr. Walter How had the cheque-book till after Davis had sailed?

FALDER. I—I—thought—he——

THE JUDGE. Now speak the truth—yes or no!

FALDER. [*Very low*] No, my lord. I had no means of knowing.

THE JUDGE. That disposes of your point, Mr. Frome.

FROME *bows to the JUDGE.*

CLEAVER. Has any aberration of this nature ever attacked you before?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No, sir.

CLEAVER. You had recovered sufficiently to go back to your work that afternoon?

FALDER. Yes, I had to take the money back.

CLEAVER. You mean the *nine* pounds. Your wits were sufficiently keen for you to remember that? And you still persist in saying you don't remember altering this cheque. [*He sits down.*]

FALDER. If I hadn't been mad I should never have had the courage.

FROME. [*Rising*] Did you have your lunch before going back?

FALDER. I never ate a thing all day; and at night I couldn't sleep.

FROME. Now, as to the four minutes that elapsed between Davis's going out and your cashing the cheque: do you say that you recollect *nothing* during those four minutes?

FALDER. [*After a moment*] I remember thinking of Mr. Cokeson's face.

FROME. Of Mr. Cokeson's face! Had that any connection with what you were doing?

FALDER. No, sir.

FROME. Was that in the office, before you ran out?

FALDER. Yes, and while I was running.

FROME. And that lasted till the cashier said: "Will you have notes?"

FALDER. Yes, and then I seemed to come to myself—and it was too late.

FROME. Thank you. That closes the evidence for the defence, my lord.

The JUDGE nods, and FALDER goes back to his seat in the dock.

FROME. [*Gathering up notes*] If it please your lordship—members of the jury,—My friend in cross-examination has shown a disposition to sneer at the defence which has been set up in this

case, and I am free to admit that nothing I can say will move you, if the evidence has not already convinced you that the prisoner committed this act in a moment when to all practical intents and purposes he was not responsible for his actions; a moment of such mental and moral vacuity, arising from the violent emotional agitation under which he had been suffering, as to amount to temporary madness. My friend has alluded to the "romantic glamour" with which I have sought to invest this case. Gentlemen, I have done nothing of the kind. I have merely shown you the background of "life"—that palpitating life which, believe me—whatever my friend may say—always lies behind the commission of a crime. Now, gentlemen, we live in a highly civilised age, and the sight of brutal violence disturbs us in a very strange way, even when we have no personal interest in the matter. But when we see it inflicted on a woman whom we love—what then? Just think of what your own feelings would have been, each of you, at the prisoner's age; and then look at him. Well! he is hardly the comfortable, shall we say bucolic, person likely to contemplate with equanimity marks of gross violence on a woman to whom he was devotedly attached. Yes, gentlemen, look at him! He has not a strong face; but neither has he a vicious face. He is just the

sort of man who would easily become the prey of his emotions. You have heard the description of his eyes. My friend may laugh at the word "funny"—*I* think it better describes the peculiar uncanny look of those who are strained to breaking-point than any other word which could have been used. I don't pretend, mind you, that his mental irresponsibility was more than a flash of darkness, in which all sense of proportion became lost; but I do contend, that, just as a man who destroys himself at such a moment may be, and often is, absolved from the stigma attaching to the crime of self-murder, so he may, and frequently does, commit other crimes while in this irresponsible condition, and that he may as justly be acquitted of criminal intent and treated as a patient. I admit that this is a plea which might well be abused. It is a matter for discretion. But here you have a case in which there is every reason to give the benefit of the doubt. You heard me ask the prisoner what he thought of during those four fatal minutes. What was his answer? "I thought of Mr. Cokeson's face!" Gentlemen, no man could invent an answer like that; it is absolutely stamped with truth. You have seen the great affection (legitimate or not) existing between him and this woman, who came here to give evidence for him at the risk of her life. It is

impossible for you to doubt his distress on the morning when he committed this act. We well know what terrible havoc such distress can make in weak and highly nervous people. It was all the work of a moment. The rest has followed, as death follows a stab to the heart, or water drops if you hold up a jug to empty it. Believe me, gentlemen, there is nothing more tragic in life than the utter impossibility of changing what you have done. Once this cheque was altered and presented, the work of four minutes—four mad minutes—the rest has been silence. But in those four minutes the boy before you has slipped through a door, hardly opened, into that great cage which never again quite lets a man go—the cage of the Law. His further acts, his failure to confess, the alteration of the counterfoil, his preparations for flight, are all evidence—not of deliberate and guilty intention when he committed the prime act from which these subsequent acts arose; no—they are merely evidence of the weak character which is clearly enough his misfortune. But is a man to be lost because he is bred and born with a weak character? Gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight which sees them as they are, patients, and not criminals. If the prisoner be found guilty, and treated as though he were a

criminal type, he will, as all experience shows, in all probability become one. I beg you not to return a verdict that may thrust him back into prison and brand him for ever. Gentlemen, Justice is a machine that, when some one has once given it the starting push, rolls on of itself. Is this young man to be ground to pieces under this machine for an act which at the worst was one of weakness? Is he to become a member of the luckless crews that man those dark, ill-starred ships called prisons? Is that to be his voyage—from which so few return? Or is he to have another chance, to be still looked on as one who has gone a little astray, but who will come back? I urge you, gentlemen, do not ruin this young man! For, as a result of those four minutes, ruin, utter and irretrievable, stares him in the face. He can be saved now. Imprison him as a criminal, and I affirm to you that he will be lost. He has neither the face nor the manner of one who can survive that terrible ordeal. Weigh in the scales his criminality and the suffering he has undergone. The latter is ten times heavier already. He has lain in prison under this charge for more than two months. Is he likely ever to forget that? Imagine the anguish of his mind during that time. He has had his punishment, gentlemen, you may depend. The rolling of the chariot-wheels of Justice over

this boy began when it was decided to prosecute him. We are now already at the second stage. If you permit it to go on to the third I would not give—that for him.

He holds up finger and thumb in the form of a circle, drops his hand, and sits down.

The jury stir, and consult each other's faces; then they turn towards the counsel for the Crown, who rises, and, fixing his eyes on a spot that seems to give him satisfaction, slides them every now and then towards the jury.

CLEAVER. May it please your lordship. [*Rising on his toes*] Gentlemen of the jury,—The facts in this case are not disputed, and the defence, if my friend will allow me to say so, is so thin that I don't propose to waste the time of the Court by taking you over the evidence. The plea is one of temporary insanity. Well, gentlemen, I daresay it is clearer to me than it is to you why this rather—what shall we call it?—bizarre defence has been set up. The alternative would have been to plead guilty. Now, gentlemen, if the prisoner had pleaded guilty my friend would have had to rely on a simple appeal to his lordship. Instead of that, he has gone into the byways and hedges and found this—er—peculiar plea, which has enabled him to show you the proverbial woman, to put

her in the box—to give, in fact, a romantic glow to this affair. I compliment my friend; I think it highly ingenious of him. By these means, he has—to a certain extent—got round the Law. He has brought the whole story of motive and stress out in court, at first hand, in a way that he would not otherwise have been able to do. But when you have once grasped that fact, gentlemen, you have grasped everything. [*With good-humoured contempt*] For look at this plea of insanity; we can't put it lower than that. You have heard the woman. She has every reason to favour the prisoner, but what did she say? She said that the prisoner was *not* insane when she left him in the morning. If he were going out of his mind through distress, that was obviously the moment when insanity would have shown itself. You have heard the managing clerk, another witness for the defence. With some difficulty I elicited from him the admission that the prisoner, though jumpy (a word that he seemed to think you would understand, gentlemen, and I'm sure I hope you do), was *not* mad when the cheque was handed to Davis. I agree with my friend that it's unfortunate that we have not got Davis here, but the prisoner has told you the words with which Davis in turn handed him the cheque; he obviously, therefore, was *not* mad when he re-

ceived it, or he would not have remembered those words. The cashier has told you that he was certainly in his senses when he cashed it. We have therefore the plea that a man who is sane at ten minutes past one, and sane at fifteen minutes past, may, for the purposes of avoiding the consequences of a crime, call himself insane between those points of time. Really, gentlemen, this is so peculiar a proposition that I am not disposed to weary you with further argument. You will form your own opinion of its value. My friend has adopted this way of saying a great deal to you—and very eloquently—on the score of youth, temptation, and the like. I might point out, however, that the offence with which the prisoner is charged is one of the most serious known to our law; and there are certain features in this case, such as the suspicion which he allowed to rest on his innocent fellow clerk, and his relations with this married woman, which will render it difficult for you to attach too much importance to such pleading. I ask you, in short, for that verdict of guilty which, in the circumstances, I regard you as, unfortunately, bound to record.

Letting his eyes travel from the JUDGE and the jury to FROME, he sits down.

THE JUDGE. [*Bending a little towards the jury, and speaking in a businesslike voice*] Members of

the jury, you have heard the evidence, and the comments on it. My only business is to make clear to you the issues you have to try. The facts are admitted, so far as the alteration of this cheque and counterfoil by the prisoner. The defence set up is that he was not in a responsible condition when he committed the crime. Well, you have heard the prisoner's story, and the evidence of the other witnesses—so far as it bears on the point of insanity. If you think that what you have heard establishes the fact that the prisoner was insane at the time of the forgery, you will find him guilty but insane. If, on the other hand, you conclude from what you have seen and heard that the prisoner was sane—and nothing short of insanity will count—you will find him guilty. In reviewing the testimony as to his mental condition you must bear in mind very carefully the evidence as to his demeanour and conduct both before and after the act of forgery—the evidence of the prisoner himself, of the woman, of the witness—er—Cokeson, and—er—of the cashier. And in regard to that I especially direct your attention to the prisoner's admission that the idea of adding the t y and the nought did come into his mind at the moment when the cheque was handed to him; and also to the alteration of the counterfoil, and to his subsequent conduct gen-

erally. The bearing of all this on the question of premeditation (and premeditation will imply sanity) is very obvious. You must not allow any considerations of age or temptation to weigh with you in the finding of your verdict. Before you can come to a verdict guilty but insane, you must be well and thoroughly convinced that the condition of his mind was such as would have qualified him at the moment for a lunatic asylum. [*He pauses ; then, seeing that the jury are doubtful whether to retire or no, adds*] You may retire, if you wish to do so.

The jury retire by a door behind the JUDGE.

The JUDGE bends over his notes. FALDER, leaning from the dock, speaks excitedly to his solicitor, pointing down at RUTH. The solicitor in turn speaks to FROME.

FROME. [*Rising*] My lord. The prisoner is very anxious that I should ask you if your lordship would kindly request the reporters not to disclose the name of the woman witness in the Press reports of these proceedings. Your lordship will understand that the consequences might be extremely serious to her.

THE JUDGE. [*Pointedly—with the suspicion of a smile*] Well, Mr. Frome, you deliberately took this course which involved bringing her here.

FROME. [*With an ironic bow*] If your lordship

thinks I could have brought out the full facts in any other way?

THE JUDGE. H'm! Well.

FROME. There is very real danger to her, your lordship.

THE JUDGE. You see, I have to take your word for all that.

FROME. If your lordship would be so kind. I can assure your lordship that I am not exaggerating.

THE JUDGE. It goes very much against the grain with me that the name of a witness should ever be suppressed. [*With a glance at FALDER, who is gripping and clasping his hands before him, and then at RUTH, who is sitting perfectly rigid with her eyes fixed on FALDER*] I'll consider your application. It must depend. I have to remember that she may have come here to commit perjury on the prisoner's behalf.

FROME. Your lordship, I really——

THE JUDGE. Yes, yes—I don't suggest anything of the sort, Mr. Frome. Leave it at that for the moment.

As he finishes speaking, the jury return, and file back into the box.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. Members of the jury, are you agreed on your verdict?

FOREMAN. We are.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. Is it Guilty, or Guilty, but insane?

FOREMAN. Guilty.

The JUDGE nods ; then, gathering up his notes, he looks at FALDER, who sits motionless.

FROME. [*Rising*] If your lordship would allow me to address you in mitigation of sentence. I don't know if your lordship thinks I can add anything to what I have said to the jury on the score of the prisoner's youth, and the great stress under which he acted.

THE JUDGE. I don't think you can, Mr. Frome.

FROME. If your lordship says so—I do most earnestly beg your lordship to give the utmost weight to my plea. [*He sits down.*]

THE JUDGE. [*To the Clerk*] Call upon him.

THE CLERK. Prisoner at the bar, you stand convicted of felony. Have you anything to say for yourself why the Court should not give you judgment according to Law?

FALDER *shakes his head.*

THE JUDGE. William Falder, you have been given fair trial and found guilty, in my opinion rightly found guilty, of forgery. [*He pauses ; then, consulting his notes, goes on*] The defence was set up that you were not responsible for your actions at the moment of committing this crime. There is no doubt, I think, that this was a device to bring

out at first hand the nature of the temptation to which you succumbed. For throughout the trial your counsel was in reality making an appeal for mercy. The setting up of this defence of course enabled him to put in some evidence that might weigh in that direction. Whether he was well advised to do so is another matter. He claimed that you should be treated rather as a patient than as a criminal. And this plea of his, which in the end amounted to a passionate appeal, he based in effect on an indictment of the march of Justice, which he practically accused of confirming and completing the process of criminality. Now, in considering how far I should allow weight to his appeal, I have a number of factors to take into account. I have to consider on the one hand the grave nature of your offence, the deliberate way in which you subsequently altered the counter-foil, the danger you caused to an innocent man—and that, to my mind, is a very grave point—and finally I have to consider the necessity of deterring others from following your example. On the other hand, I bear in mind that you are young, that you have hitherto borne a good character, that you were, if I am to believe your evidence and that of your witnesses, in a state of some emotional excitement when you committed this crime. I have every wish, consistently with my

duty—not only to you, but to the community, to treat you with leniency. And this brings me to what are the determining factors in my mind in my consideration of your case. You are a clerk in a lawyer's office—that is a very serious aggravation in this case; no possible excuse can be made for you on the ground that you were not fully conversant with the nature of the crime you were committing and the penalties that attach to it. It is said, however, that you were carried away by your emotions. The story has been told here to-day of your relations with this—er—Mrs. Honeywill; on that story both the defence and the plea for mercy were in effect based. Now what is that story? It is that you, a young man, and she a young woman unhappily married, had formed an attachment, which you both say—with what truth I am unable to gauge—had not yet resulted in immoral relations, but which you both admit was about to result in such relationship. Your counsel has made an attempt to palliate this, on the ground that the woman is in what he describes, I think, as “a hopeless position.” As to that I can express no opinion. She is a married woman, and the fact is patent that you committed this crime with the view of furthering an immoral design. Now, however I might wish, I am not able to justify to my conscience a plea for

mercy which has a basis inimical to morality. It is vitiated *ab initio*. Your counsel has made an attempt also to show that to punish you with further imprisonment would be unjust. I do not follow him in these flights. *The Law, is what it is*—a majestic edifice, sheltering all of us, each stone of which rests on another. I am concerned only with its administration. The crime you have committed is a very serious one. I cannot feel it in accordance with my duty to society to exercise the powers I have in your favour. You will go to penal servitude for three years.

FALDER, *who throughout the JUDGE's speech has looked at him steadily, lets his head fall forward on his breast. RUTH starts up from her seat as he is taken out by the warders. There is a bustle in court.*

THE JUDGE. [*Speaking to the reporters*] Gentlemen of the Press, I think that the name of the female witness should not be reported.

The reporters bow their acquiescence.

THE JUDGE. [*To RUTH, who is staring in the direction in which FALDER has disappeared*] Do you understand, your name will not be mentioned?

COKESON. [*Pulling her sleeve*] The judge is speaking to you.

RUTH *turns, stares at the JUDGE, and turns away.*

PLAYS

ACT II

THE JUDGE. I shall sit rather late to-day. Call the next case.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. [*To a warder*] Put up John Booley.

To cries of "Witnesses in the case of Booley"

The curtain falls.

ACT III

SCENE I

A prison. A plainly furnished room, with two large barred windows, overlooking the prisoners' exercise yard, where men, in yellow clothes marked with arrows, and yellow brimless caps, are seen in single file at a distance of four yards from each other, walking rapidly on serpentine white lines traced on the concrete floor of the yard. Two warders in blue uniforms, with peaked caps and swords, are stationed amongst them. The room has distempered walls, a bookcase with numerous official-looking books, a cupboard between the windows, a plan of the prison on the wall, a writing-table covered with documents. It is Christmas Eve.

The GOVERNOR, a neat, grave-looking man, with a trim, fair moustache, the eyes of a theorist, and grizzled hair, receding from the temples, is standing close to this writing-table looking at a sort of rough saw made out of a piece of metal. The band in which he holds it is gloved, for two fingers are missing. The chief warder, WOODER, a tall, thin, military-looking man of sixty, with grey moustache and melancholy,

monkey-like eyes, stands very upright two paces from him.

THE GOVERNOR. [*With a faint, abstracted smile*] Queer-looking affair, Mr. Wooder! Where did you find it?

WOODER. In his mattress, sir. Haven't come across such a thing for two years now.

THE GOVERNOR [*With curiosity*] Had he any set plan?

WOODER. He'd sawed his window-bar about that much.

He holds up his thumb and finger a quarter of an inch apart.

THE GOVERNOR. I'll see him this afternoon. What's his name? Moaney! An old hand, I think?

WOODER. Yes, sir—fourth spell of penal. You'd think an old lag like him would have had more sense by now. [*With pitying contempt*] Occupied his mind, he said. Breaking in and breaking out—that's all they think about.

THE GOVERNOR. Who's next him?

WOODER. O'Cleary, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. The Irishman.

WOODER. Next him again there's that young fellow, Falder—star class—and next him old Clipton.

THE GOVERNOR. Ah, yes! "The philosopher." I want to see him about his eyes.

WOODER. Curious thing, sir: they seem to know when there's one of these tries at escape going on. It makes them restive—there's a regular wave going through them just now.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Meditatively*] Odd things—those waves. [*Turning to look at the prisoners exercising*] Seem quiet enough out here!

WOODER. That Irishman, O'Cleary, began banging on his door this morning. Little thing like that's quite enough to upset the whole lot. They're just like dumb animals at times.

THE GOVERNOR. I've seen it with horses before thunder—it'll run right through cavalry lines.

The prison CHAPLAIN has entered. He is a dark-haired, ascetic man, in clerical undress, with a peculiarly steady, tight-lipped face and slow, cultured speech.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Holding up the saw*] Seen this, Miller?

THE CHAPLAIN. Useful-looking specimen.

THE GOVERNOR. Do for the Museum, eh! [*He goes to the cupboard and opens it, displaying to view a number of quaint ropes, books, and metal tools with labels tied on them*] That'll do, thanks, Mr. Wooder.

WOODER. [*Saluting*] Thank you, sir.

[*He goes out.*]

THE GOVERNOR. Account for the state of the men last day or two, Miller? Seems going through the whole place.

THE CHAPLAIN. No. I don't know of anything.

THE GOVERNOR. By the way, will you dine with us to-morrow?

THE CHAPLAIN. Christmas Day? Thanks very much.

THE GOVERNOR. Worries me to feel the men discontented. [*Gazing at the saw*] Have to punish this poor devil. Can't help liking a man who tries to escape.

He places the saw in his pocket and locks the cupboard again.

THE CHAPLAIN. Extraordinary perverted will-power—some of them. Nothing to be done till it's broken.

THE GOVERNOR. And not much afterwards, I'm afraid. Ground too hard for golf?

WOODER comes in again.

WOODER. Visitor to speak to you, sir. I told him it wasn't usual.

THE GOVERNOR. What about?

WOODER. Shall I put him off, sir?

THE GOVERNOR. [*Resignedly*] No, no. Let's see him. Don't go, Miller.

WOODER *motions to some one without, and as the visitor comes in withdraws.*

The visitor is COKESON, who is attired in a thick overcoat to the knees, woollen gloves, and carries a top hat.

COKESON. I'm sorry to trouble you. But it's about a young man you've got here.

THE GOVERNOR. We have a good many.

COKESON. Name of Falder, forgery. [*Producing a card, and handing it to the GOVERNOR*] Firm of James and Walter How. Well known in the law.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Receiving the card—with a faint smile*] What do you want to see me about, sir?

COKESON. [*Suddenly seeing the prisoners at exercise*] Why! what a sight!

THE GOVERNOR. Yes, we have that privilege from here; my office is being done up. [*Sitting down at his table*] Now, please!

COKESON. [*Dragging his eyes with difficulty from the window*] I wanted to say a word to you; I shan't keep you long. [*Confidentially*] Fact is, I oughtn't to be here by rights. His sister came to me—he's got no father and mother—and she was in some distress. "My husband won't let me go and see him," she said; "says he's disgraced the family. And his other sister," she said, "is an

invalid." And she asked me to come. Well, I take an interest in him. He was our junior—I go to the same chapel—and I didn't like to refuse.

THE GOVERNOR. I'm afraid he's not allowed a visitor yet—he's only here for his one month's separate confinement.

COKESON. You see I saw him while he was shut up waiting for his trial and he was lonely.

THE GOVERNOR. [*With faint amusement*] Ring the bell—would you, Miller. [*To COKESON*] You'd like to hear what the doctor says about him, perhaps.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Ringing the bell*] You are not accustomed to prisons, it would seem, sir.

COKESON. No. But it's a pitiful sight. He's quite a young fellow. I said to him: "Be patient," I said. "Patient!" he said. "A day," he said, "shut up in your cell thinking and brooding as I do, it's longer than a year outside. I can't help it," he said; "I try—but I'm built that way, Mr. Cokeson." And he held his hand up to his face. I could see the tears trickling through his fingers. It wasn't nice.

THE CHAPLAIN. He's a young man with rather peculiar eyes, isn't he? Not Church of England, I think?

COKESON. No.

THE CHAPLAIN. I know.

THE GOVERNOR. [*To WOODER, who has come in*] Ask the doctor to be good enough to come here for a minute.

WOODER *salutes, and goes out.*

THE GOVERNOR. Let's see, he's not married?

COKESON. No. [*Confidentially*] But there's a party he's very much attached to, not altogether com-il-fo. It's a sad story.

THE CHAPLAIN. If it wasn't for drink and women, sir, this prison might be closed.

COKESON. [*Looking at the CHAPLAIN over his spectacles*] Ye-es, but I wanted to tell you about that, special. It preys on his mind.

THE GOVERNOR. Well!

COKESON. Like this. The woman had a nahsty, spiteful feller for a husband, and she'd left him. Fact is, she was going away with our young friend. It's not nice—but I've looked over it. Well, after the trial she said she'd earn her living apart, and wait for him to come out. That was a great consolation to him. But after a month she came to me—I *don't* know her personally—and she said: "I can't earn the children's living, let alone my own—I've got no friends. I'm obliged to keep out of everybody's way, else my husband'd get to know where I was. I'm very much reduced," she said. And she has lost flesh. "I'll have to go in the workhouse!" It's a painful

story. I said to her: "No," I said, "not that! I've got a wife an' family, but sooner than you should do that I'll spare you a little myself." "Really," she said—she's a nice creature—"I don't like to take it from you. I think I'd better go back to my husband." Well, I know he's a nahsty, spiteful feller—drinks—but I didn't like to persuade her not to.

THE CHAPLAIN. Surely—no.

COKESON. Ye-es, but I'm sorry now. He's got his three years to serve. I *want* things to be pleasant for him.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*With a touch of impatience*] The Law hardly shares your view, I'm afraid.

COKESON. He's all alone there by himself. I'm afraid it'll turn him silly. And nobody wants that, I s'pose. He cried when I saw him. I don't like to see a man cry.

THE CHAPLAIN. It's a very rare thing for them to give way like that.

COKESON. [*Looking at him—in a tone of sudden dogged hostility*] I keep dogs.

THE CHAPLAIN. Indeed?

COKESON. Ye-es. And I say this: I wouldn't shut one of them up all by himself, week after week, not if he'd bit me all over.

THE CHAPLAIN. Unfortunately, the criminal is not a dog; he has a sense of right and wrong.

COKESON. But that's not the way to make him feel it.

THE CHAPLAIN. Ah! there I'm afraid we must differ.

COKESON. It's the same with dogs. If you treat 'em with kindness they'll do anything for you; but to shut 'em up alone, it only makes 'em savage.

THE CHAPLAIN. Surely you should allow those who have had a little more experience than yourself to know what is best for prisoners.

COKESON. [*Doggedly*] I know this young feller, I've watched him for years. He's eurotic—got no stamina. His father died of consumption. I'm thinking of his future. If he's to be kept there shut up by himself, without a cat to keep him company, it'll do him harm. I said to him: "Where do you feel it?" "I can't tell you, Mr. Cokeson," he said, "but sometimes I could beat my head against the wall." It's not nice.

During this speech the DOCTOR has entered.

He is a medium-sized, rather good-looking man, with a quick eye. He stands leaning against the window.

THE GOVERNOR. This gentleman thinks the separate is telling on Q 3007—Falder, young thin fellow, star class. What do you say, Doctor Clements?

THE DOCTOR. He doesn't like it, but it's not doing him any harm, it's only a month.

COKESON. But he was weeks before he came in here.

THE DOCTOR. We can always tell. He's lost no weight since he's been here.

COKESON. It's his state of mind I'm speaking of.

THE DOCTOR. His mind's all right so far. He's nervous, rather melancholy. I don't see signs of anything more. I'm watching him carefully.

COKESON. [*Nonplussed*] I'm glad to hear you say that.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*More suavely*] It's just at this period that we are able to make some impression on them, sir. I am speaking from my special standpoint.

COKESON. [*Turning bewildered to the GOVERNOR*] I *don't* want to be unpleasant, but I do feel it's awkward.

THE GOVERNOR. I'll make a point of seeing him to-day.

COKESON. I'm much obliged to you. I thought perhaps seeing him every day you wouldn't notice it.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Rather sharply*] If any sign of injury to his health shows itself his case will be reported at once. That's fully provided for.

[*He rises.*]

COKESON. [*Following his own thoughts*] Of course, what you don't see doesn't trouble you; but I don't want to have him on my mind.

THE GOVERNOR. I think you may safely leave it to us, sir.

COKESON. [*Mollified and apologetic*] I thought you'd understand me. I'm a plain man—never set myself up against authority. [*Expanding to the CHAPLAIN*] Nothing personal meant. Good-morning.

As he goes out the three officials do not look at each other, but their faces wear peculiar expressions.

THE CHAPLAIN. Our friend seems to think that prison is a hospital.

COKESON. [*Returning suddenly with an apologetic air*] There's just one little thing. This woman—I suppose I mustn't ask you to let him see her. It'd be a rare treat for them both. He'll be thinking about her all the time. Of course she's not his wife. But he's quite safe in here. They're a pitiful couple. You couldn't make an exception?

THE GOVERNOR. [*Wearily*] As you say, my dear sir, I couldn't make an exception; he won't be allowed a visit till he goes to a convict prison.

COKESON. I see. [*Rather coldly*] Sorry to have troubled you. [*He again goes out.*]

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Sbrugging his sboulders*] The

PLAYS

ACT III

plain man indeed, poor fellow. Come and have some lunch, Clements?

[He and the DOCTOR go out talking.]

The GOVERNOR, with a sigh, sits down at his table and takes up a pen.

The curtain falls.

SCENE II

Part of the ground corridor of the prison. The walls are coloured with greenish distemper up to a stripe of deeper green about the height of a man's shoulder, and above this line are white-washed. The floor is of blackened stones. Daylight is filtering through a heavily barred window at the end. The doors of four cells are visible. Each cell door has a little round peep-hole at the level of a man's eye, covered by a little round disc, which, raised upwards, affords a view of the cell. On the wall, close to each cell door, hangs a little square board with the prisoner's name, number, and record.

Overhead can be seen the iron structures of the first-floor and second-floor corridors.

The WARDER INSTRUCTOR, a bearded man in blue uniform, with an apron, and some dangling keys, is just emerging from one of the cells.

INSTRUCTOR. [*Speaking from the door into the cell*] I'll have another bit for you when that's finished.

O'CLEARY. [*Unseen—in an Irish voice*] Little doubt o' that, sirr.

INSTRUCTOR. [*Gossiping*] Well, you'd rather have it than nothing, I s'pose.

O'CLEARY. An' that's the blessed truth.

Sounds are heard of a cell door being closed and locked, and of approaching footsteps.

INSTRUCTOR. [*In a sharp, changed voice*] Look alive over it!

He shuts the cell door, and stands at attention.

The GOVERNOR comes walking down the corridor, followed by WOODER.

THE GOVERNOR. Anything to report?

INSTRUCTOR. [*Saluting*] Q 3007 [*he points to a cell*] is behind with his work, sir. He'll lose marks to-day.

The GOVERNOR nods and passes on to the end cell. The INSTRUCTOR goes away.

THE GOVERNOR. This is our maker of saws, isn't it?

He takes the saw from his pocket as WOODER throws open the door of the cell. The convict MOANEY is seen lying on his bed, atwart the cell, with his cap on. He springs up and stands in the middle of the cell. He is a raw-boned fellow, about fifty-six years old, with outstanding bat's ears and fierce, staring, steel-coloured eyes.

WOODER. Cap off!

MOANEY removes his cap.

WOODER. Out here!

MOANEY *comes to the door.*

THE GOVERNOR. [*Beckoning him out into the corridor, and holding up the saw—with the manner of an officer speaking to a private*] Anything to say about this, my man?

MOANEY *is silent.*

THE GOVERNOR. Come!

MOANEY. It passed the time.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Pointing into the cell*] Not enough to do, eh?

MOANEY. It don't occupy your mind.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Tapping the saw*] You might find a better way than this.

MOANEY. [*Sullenly*] Well! What way? I must keep my hand in against the time I get out. What's the good of anything else to me at my time of life? [*With a gradual change to civility, as his tongue warms*] Ye know that, sir. I'll be in again within a year or two, after I've done this lot. I don't want to disgrace meself when I'm out. You've got your pride keeping the prison smart; well, I've got mine. [*Seeing that the GOVERNOR is listening with interest, he goes on, pointing to the saw*] I *must* be doin' a little o' this. It's no harm to any one. I was five weeks makin' that saw—a bit of all right it is, too; now I'll get cells, I suppose, or seven days' bread and water. You can't

help it, sir, I know that—I quite put meself in your place.

THE GOVERNOR. Now, look here, Moaney, if I pass it over will you give me your word not to try it on again? Think!

He goes into the cell, walks to the end of it, mounts the stool, and tries the window-bars.

THE GOVERNOR. [Returning] Well?

MOANEY. [*Who has been reflecting*] I've got another six weeks to do in here, alone. I can't do it and think o' nothing. I must have something to interest me. You've made me a sporting offer, sir, but I can't pass my word about it. I shouldn't like to deceive a gentleman. [*Pointing into the cell*] Another four hours' steady work would have done it.

THE GOVERNOR. Yes, and what then? Caught, brought back, punishment. Five weeks' hard work to make this, and cells at the end of it, while they put a new bar to your window. Is it worth it, Moaney?

MOANEY. [*With a sort of fierceness*] Yes, it is.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Putting his hand to his brow*] Oh, well! Two days' cells—bread and water.

MOANEY. Thank 'e, sir.

He turns quickly like an animal and slips into his cell.

The GOVERNOR looks after him and shakes

his head as WOODER closes and locks the cell door.

THE GOVERNOR. Open Clijton's cell.

WOODER *opens the door of CLIPTON's cell.*

CLIPTON *is sitting on a stool just inside the door, at work on a pair of trousers. He is a small, thick, oldish man, with an almost shaven head, and smouldering little dark eyes behind smoked spectacles. He gets up and stands motionless in the doorway, peering at his visitors.*

THE GOVERNOR. [*Beckoning*] Come out here a minute, Clijton.

CLIPTON, *with a sort of dreadful quietness, comes into the corridor, the needle and thread in his hand. The GOVERNOR signs to WOODER, who goes into the cell and inspects it carefully.*

THE GOVERNOR. How are your eyes?

CLIPTON. I don't complain of them. I don't see the sun here. [*He makes a stealthy movement, protruding his neck a little*] There's just one thing, Mr. Governor, as you're speaking to me. I wish you'd ask the cove next door here to keep a bit quieter.

THE GOVERNOR. What's the matter? I don't want any tales, Clijton.

CLIPTON. He keeps me awake. I don't know

who he is. [*With contempt*] One of this *star* class, I expect. Oughtn't to be here with *us*.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Quietly*] Quite right, Clipton. He'll be moved when there's a cell vacant.

CLIPTON. He knocks about like a wild beast in the early morning. I'm not used to it—stops me getting my sleep out. In the evening too. It's not fair, Mr. Governor, as you're speaking to me. Sleep's the comfort I've got here; I'm entitled to take it out full.

WOODER *comes out of the cell, and instantly, as though extinguished, CLIPTON moves with stealthy suddenness back into his cell.*

WOODER. All right, sir.

The GOVERNOR nods. The door is closed and locked.

THE GOVERNOR. Which is the man who banged on his door this morning?

WOODER. [*Going towards O'CLEARY'S cell*] This one, sir; O'Cleary.

He lifts the disc and glances through the peephole.

THE GOVERNOR. Open.

WOODER *throws open the door. O'CLEARY, who is seated at a little table by the door as if listening, springs up and stands at attention just inside the doorway. He is a broad-faced, middle-aged man, with a wide, thin,*

flexible mouth, and little holes under his high cheek-bones.

THE GOVERNOR. Where's the joke, O'Cleary?

O'CLEARY. The joke, your honour? I've not seen one for a long time.

THE GOVERNOR. Banging on your door?

O'CLEARY. Oh! that!

THE GOVERNOR. It's womanish.

O'CLEARY. An' it's that I'm becoming this two months past.

THE GOVERNOR. Anything to complain of?

O'CLEARY. No, sirr.

THE GOVERNOR. You're an old hand; you ought to know better.

O'CLEARY. Yes, I've been through it all.

THE GOVERNOR. You've got a youngster next door; you'll upset him.

O'CLEARY. It cam' over me, your honour. I can't always be the same steady man.

THE GOVERNOR. Work all right?

O'CLEARY. [*Taking up a rusb mat he is making*] Oh! I can do it on me head. It's the miserablest stuff—don't take the brains of a mouse. [*Working bis mouth*] It's here I feel it—the want of a little noise—a terrible little wud aise me.

THE GOVERNOR. You know as well as I do that if you were out in the shops you wouldn't be allowed to talk.

O'CLEARY. [*With a look of profound meaning*]
Not with my mouth.

THE GOVERNOR. Well, then?

O'CLEARY. But it's the great conversation I'd
be havin'.

THE GOVERNOR. [*With a smile*] Well, no more
conversation on your door.

O'CLEARY. No, sirr, I wud not have the little
wit to repate meself.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Turning*] Good-night.

O'CLEARY. Good-night, your honour.

*He turns into his cell. The GOVERNOR shuts
the door.*

THE GOVERNOR. [*Looking at the record card*]
Can't help liking the poor blackguard.

WOODER. He's an amiable man, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Pointing down the corridor*]
Ask the doctor to come here, Mr. Wooder.

*WOODER salutes and goes away down the cor-
ridor.*

*The GOVERNOR goes to the door of FALDER'S
cell. He raises his uninjured hand to un-
cover the peep-hole; but, without uncovering
it, sbakes his head and drops his hand;
then, after scrutinising the record board, he
opens the cell door. FALDER, who is standing
against it, lurches forward, with a gasp.*

THE GOVERNOR. [*Beckoning him out*] Now tell me: can't you settle down, Falder?

FALDER. [*In a breathless voice*] Yes, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. You know what I mean? It's no good running your head against a stone wall, is it?

FALDER. No, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. Well, come.

FALDER. I try, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. Can't you sleep?

FALDER. Very little. Between two o'clock and getting up's the worst time.

THE GOVERNOR. How's that?

FALDER. [*His lips twitch with a sort of smile*] I don't know, sir. I was always nervous. [*Suddenly voluble*] Everything seems to get such a size then. I feel I'll never get out as long as I live.

THE GOVERNOR. That's morbid, my lad. Pull yourself together.

FALDER. [*With an equally sudden dogged resentment*] Yes—I've got to——

THE GOVERNOR. Think of all these other fellows?

FALDER. They're used to it.

THE GOVERNOR. They all had to go through it once for the first time, just as you're doing now.

FALDER. Yes, sir, I shall get to be like them in time, I suppose.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Rather taken aback*] H'm! Well! That rests with you. Now, come. Set your mind to it, like a good fellow. You're still quite young. A man can make himself what he likes.

FALDER. [*Wistfully*] Yes, sir.

THE GOVERNOR. Take a good hold of yourself. Do you read?

FALDER. I don't take the words in. [*Hanging his head*] I know it's no good; but I can't help thinking of what's going on outside.

THE GOVERNOR. Private trouble?

FALDER. Yes.

THE GOVERNOR. You mustn't think about it.

FALDER. [*Looking back at his cell*] How can I help it, sir?

He suddenly becomes motionless as WOODER and the DOCTOR approach. The GOVERNOR motions to him to go back into his cell.

FALDER. [*Quick and low*] I'm quite right in my head, sir. [*He goes back into his cell.*]

THE GOVERNOR. [*To the DOCTOR*] Just go in and see him, Clements.

The DOCTOR goes into the cell. The GOVERNOR pushes the door to, nearly closing it, and walks towards the window.

WOODER. [*Following*] Sorry you should be troubled like this, sir. Very contented lot of men, on the whole.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Shortly*] You think so?

WOODER. Yes, sir. It's Christmas doing it, in my opinion.

THE GOVERNOR. [*To himself*] Queer, that!

WOODER. Beg pardon, sir?

THE GOVERNOR. Christmas!

He turns towards the window, leaving WOODER looking at him with a sort of pained anxiety.

WOODER. [*Suddenly*] Do you think we make show enough, sir? If you'd like us to have more holly?

THE GOVERNOR. Not at all, Mr. Wooder.

WOODER. Very good, sir.

The DOCTOR has come out of FALDER'S cell, and the GOVERNOR beckons to him.

THE GOVERNOR. Well?

THE DOCTOR. I can't make anything much of him. He's nervous, of course.

THE GOVERNOR. Is there any sort of case to report? Quite frankly, Doctor.

THE DOCTOR. Well, I don't think the separate's doing him any good; but then I could say the same of a lot of them—they'd get on better in the shops, there's no doubt.

THE GOVERNOR. You mean you'd have to recommend others?

THE DOCTOR. A dozen at least. It's on his nerves. There's nothing tangible. This fellow

here [*pointing to O'CLEARY'S cell*], for instance—feels it just as much, in his way. If I once get away from physical facts—I shan't know where I am. Conscientiously, sir, I don't know how to differentiate him. He hasn't lost weight. Nothing wrong with his eyes. His pulse is good. Talks all right. It's only another week before he goes.

THE GOVERNOR. It doesn't amount to melancholia?

THE DOCTOR. [*Shaking his head*] I can report on him if you like; but if I do I ought to report on others.

THE GOVERNOR. I see. [*Looking towards FALDER'S cell*] The poor devil must just stick it then.

As he says this he looks absently at WOODER.

WOODER. Beg pardon, sir?

For answer the GOVERNOR stares at him, turns on his heel, and walks away.

There is a sound as of beating on metal.

THE GOVERNOR. [*Stopping*] Mr. Wooder?

WOODER. Banging on his door, sir. I thought we should have more of that.

He hurries forward, passing the GOVERNOR, who follows slowly.

The curtain falls.

SCENE III

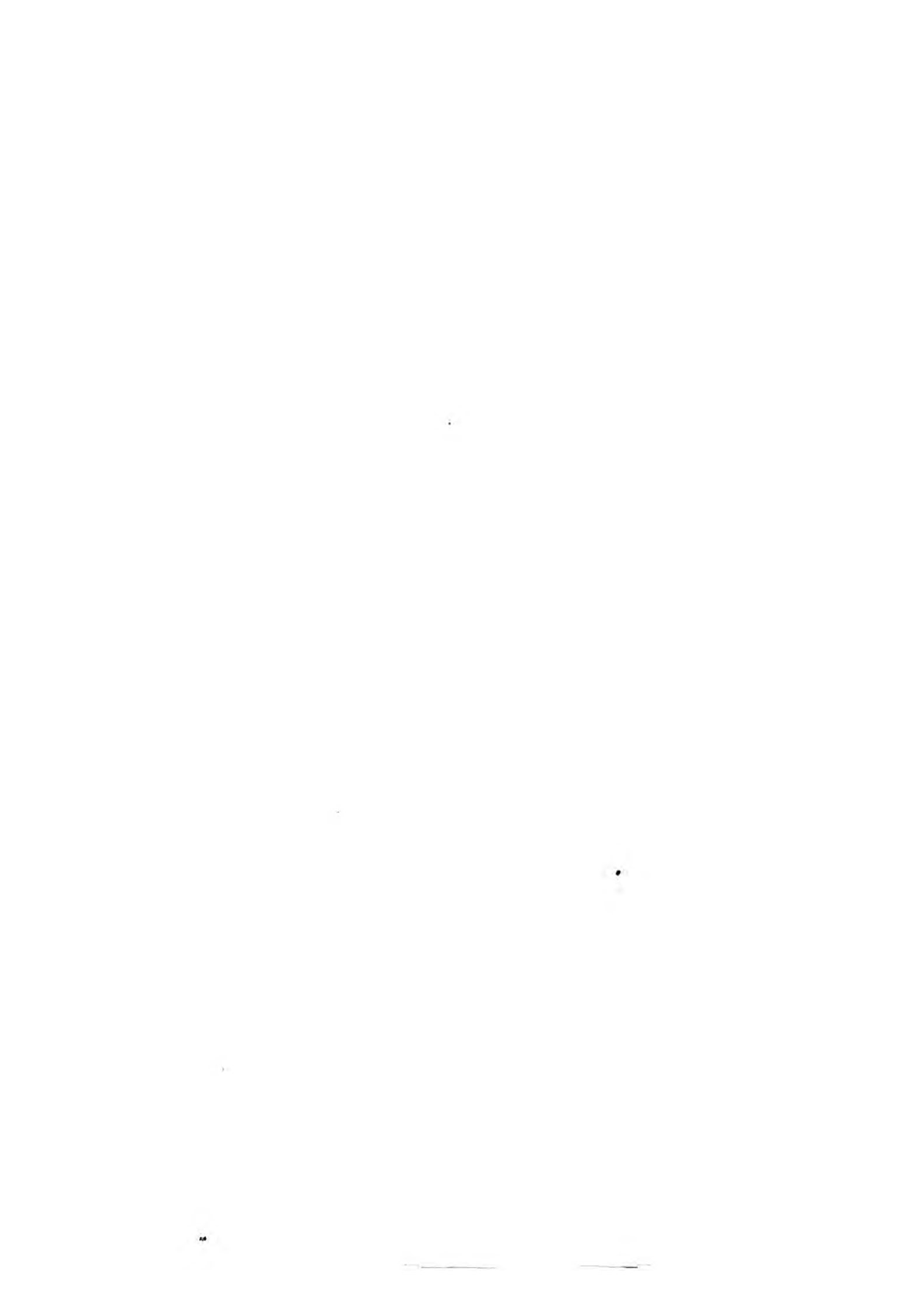
FALDER'S cell, a whitewashed space thirteen feet broad by seven deep, and nine feet high, with a rounded ceiling. The floor is of shiny blackened bricks. The barred window, with a ventilator, is high up in the middle of the end wall. In the centre of the opposite end wall is the narrow door. In a corner are the mattress and bedding rolled up (two blankets, two sheets, and a coverlet). Above them is a quarter-circular wooden shelf, on which is a Bible and several little devotional books, piled in a symmetrical pyramid; there are also a black hair-brush, tooth-brush, and a bit of soap. In another corner is the wooden frame of a bed, standing on end. There is a dark ventilator under the window, and another over the door. FALDER'S work (a shirt to which he is putting buttonholes) is hung to a nail on the wall over a small wooden table, on which the novel "Lorna Doone" lies open. Low down in the corner by the door is a thick glass screen, about a foot square, covering the gas-jet let into the wall. There is also a wooden stool, and a pair of shoes beneath it. Three bright round tins are set under the window.

In fast-failing daylight, FALDER, in his stockings, is seen standing motionless, with his head inclined towards the door, listening. He moves a little closer to the door, his stockinged feet making no noise. He stops at the door. He is trying harder and harder to hear something, any little thing that is going on outside. He springs suddenly upright—as if at a sound—and remains perfectly motionless. Then, with a heavy sigh, he moves to his work, and stands looking at it, with his head down; he does a stitch or two, having the air of a man so lost in sadness that each stitch is, as it were, a coming to life. Then, turning abruptly, he begins pacing the cell, moving his head, like an animal pacing its cage. He stops again at the door, listens, and, placing the palms of his hands against it with his fingers spread out, leans his forehead against the iron. Turning from it presently, he moves slowly back towards the window, tracing his way with his finger along the top line of the distemper that runs round the walls. He stops under the window, and, picking up the lid of one of the tins, peers into it, as if trying to make a companion of his own face. It has grown very nearly dark. Suddenly the lid falls out of his hand with a clatter—the only sound that has broken the silence—and he stands

staring intently at the wall where the stuff of the shirt is banging rather white in the darkness—he seems to be seeing somebody or something there. There is a sharp tap and click; the cell light behind the glass screen has been turned up. The cell is brightly lighted. FALDER is seen gasping for breath.

A sound from far away, as of distant, dull beating on thick metal, is suddenly audible. FALDER shrinks back, not able to bear this sudden clamour. But the sound grows, as though some great tumbril were rolling towards the cell. And gradually it seems to hypnotise him. He begins creeping inch by inch nearer to the door. The banging sound, travelling from cell to cell, draws closer and closer; FALDER'S hands are seen moving as if his spirit had already joined in this beating, and the sound swells till it seems to have entered the very cell. He suddenly raises his clenched fists. Panting violently, he flings himself at his door, and beats on it.

The curtain falls.



ACT IV

The scene is again COKESON'S room, at a few minutes to ten of a March morning, two years later. The doors are all open. SWEEDLE, now blessed with a sprouting moustache, is getting the offices ready. He arranges papers on COKESON'S table; then goes to a covered washstand, raises the lid, and looks at himself in the mirror. While he is gazing his fill RUTH HONEYWILL comes in through the outer office and stands in the doorway. There seems a kind of exultation and excitement behind her habitual impassivity.

SWEEDLE. [*Suddenly seeing her, and dropping the lid of the washstand with a bang*] Hello! It's you!

RUTH. Yes.

SWEEDLE. There's only me here! They don't waste their time hurrying down in the morning. Why, it must be two years since we had the pleasure of seeing you. [*Nervously*] What have you been doing with yourself?

RUTH. [*Sardonically*] Living.

SWEEDLE. [*Impressed*] If you want to see *him*

[*he points to COKESON's chair*], he'll be here directly—never misses—not much. [*Delicately*] I hope our friend's back from the country. His time's been up these three months, if I remember.

RUTH *nods*.

SWEEDLE. I was awful sorry about that. The governor made a mistake—if you ask me.

RUTH. He did.

SWEEDLE. He ought to have given him a chanst. And, *I* say, the judge ought to ha' let him go after that. They've forgot what human nature's like. Whereas *we* know.

RUTH *gives him a boneyed smile*.

SWEEDLE. They come down on you like a cart-load of bricks, flatten you out, and when you don't swell up again they complain of it. I know 'em—seen a lot of that sort of thing in my time. [*He shakes his head in the plenitude of wisdom*] Why, only the other day the governor—

But COKESON has come in through the outer office; brisk with east wind, and decidedly greyer.

COKESON. [*Drawing off his coat and gloves*] Why! it's you! [*Then motioning SWEEDLE out, and closing the door*] Quite a stranger! Must be two years. D'you want to see me? I can give you a minute. Sit down! Family well?

RUTH. Yes. I'm not living where I was.

COKESON. [*Eyeing her askance*] I hope things are more comfortable at home.

RUTH. I couldn't stay with Honeywill, after all.

COKESON. You haven't done anything rash, I hope. I should be sorry if you'd done anything rash.

RUTH. I've kept the children with me.

COKESON. [*Beginning to feel that things are not so jolly as he had hoped*] Well, I'm glad to have seen you. You've not heard from the young man, I suppose, since he came out?

RUTH. Yes, I ran across him yesterday.

COKESON. I hope he's well.

RUTH. [*With sudden fierceness*] He can't get anything to do. It's dreadful to see him. He's just skin and bone.

COKESON. [*With genuine concern*] Dear me! I'm sorry to hear that. [*On his guard again*] Didn't they find him a place when his time was up?

RUTH. He was only there three weeks. It got out.

COKESON. I'm sure I don't know what I can do for you. I don't like to be snubby.

RUTH. I can't bear his being like that.

COKESON. [*Scanning her not unprosperous figure*] I know his relations aren't very forthy about him. Perhaps you can do something for him, till he finds his feet.

RUTH. Not now. I could have—but not *now*.

COKESON. I don't understand.

RUTH. [*Proudly*] I've seen *him* again—that's all over.

COKESON. [*Staring at her—disturbed*] I'm a family man—I don't want to hear anything unpleasant. Excuse me—I'm very busy.

RUTH. I'd have gone home to my people in the country long ago, but they've never got over me marrying Honeywill. I never was waywise, Mr. Cokeson, but I'm proud. I was only a girl, you see, when I married him. I thought the world of him, of course . . . he used to come travelling to our farm.

COKESON. [*Regretfully*] I did hope you'd have got on better, after you saw me.

RUTH. He used me worse than ever. He couldn't break my nerve, but I lost my health; and then he began knocking the children about. . . . I couldn't stand that. I wouldn't go back now, if he were dying.

COKESON. [*Who has risen and is shifting about as though dodging a stream of lava*] We mustn't be violent, must we?

RUTH. [*Smouldering*] A man that can't behave better than that—

There is silence.

COKESON. [*Fascinated in spite of himself*] Then there you were! And what did you do then?

RUTH. [*With a sbrug*] Tried the same as when I left him before . . . making skirts . . . cheap things. It was the best I could get, but I never made more than ten shillings a week, buying my own cotton and working all day; I hardly ever got to bed till past twelve. I kept at it for nine months. [*Fiercely*] Well, I'm not fit for that; I wasn't made for it. I'd rather die.

COKESON. My dear woman! We mustn't talk like that.

RUTH. It was starvation for the children too—after what they'd always had. I soon got not to care. I used to be too tired. [*She is silent.*]

COKESON. [*With fearful curiosity*] And—what happened then?

RUTH. [*With a laugh*] My employer happened then—he's happened ever since.

COKESON. Dear! Oh dear! I never came across a thing like this.

RUTH. [*Dully*] He's treated me all right. But I've done with that. [*Suddenly her lips begin to quiver, and she hides them with the back of her hand*] I never thought I'd see *him* again, you see. It was just a chance I met him by Hyde Park. We went in there and sat down, and he told me all about himself. Oh! Mr. Cokeson, give him another chance.

COKESON. [*Greatly disturbed*] Then you've both lost your livings! What a horrible position!

RUTH. If he could only get here—where there's nothing to find out about him!

COKESON. We can't have anything derogative to the firm.

RUTH. I've no one else to go to.

COKESON. I'll speak to the partners, but I don't think they'll take him, under the circumstances. I don't really.

RUTH. He came with me; he's down there in the street. *[She points to the window.]*

COKESON. *[On his dignity]* He shouldn't have done that until he's sent for. *[Then softening at the look on her face]* We've got a vacancy, as it happens, but I can't promise anything.

RUTH. It would be the saving of him.

COKESON. Well, I'll do what I can, but I'm not sanguine. Now tell him that I don't want him here till I see how things are. Leave your address? *[Repeating her]* 83 Mullingar Street? *[He notes it on blotting-paper]* Good-morning.

RUTH. Thank you.

She moves towards the door, turns as if to speak, but does not, and goes away.

COKESON. *[Wiping his head and forehead with a large white cotton handkerchief]* What a business!

Then, looking amongst his papers, he sounds his bell. SWEEDLE answers it.

COKESON. Was that young Richards coming here to-day after the clerk's place?

SWEEDLE. Yes.

COKESON. Well, keep him in the air; I don't want to see him yet.

SWEEDLE. What shall I tell him, sir?

COKESON. [*With asperity*] Invent something. Use your brains. Don't stump him off altogether.

SWEEDLE. Shall I tell him that we've got illness, sir?

COKESON. No! Nothing untrue. Say I'm not here to-day.

SWEEDLE. Yes, sir. Keep him hankering?

COKESON. Exactly. And look here. You remember Falder? I may be having him round to see me. Now, treat him like you'd have him treat you in a similar position.

SWEEDLE. I naturally should do.

COKESON. That's right. When a man's down never hit 'im. 'Tisn't necessary. Give him a hand up. That's a metaphor I recommend to you in life. It's sound policy.

SWEEDLE. Do you think the governors will take him on again, sir?

COKESON. Can't say anything about that. [*At the sound of some one having entered the outer office*] Who's there?

SWEEDLE. [*Going to the door and looking*] It's Falder, sir.

COKESON. [*Vexed*] Dear me! That's very naughty of her. Tell him to call again. I don't want——

He breaks off as FALDER comes in. FALDER is thin, pale, older, his eyes have grown more restless. His clothes are very worn and loose.

SWEEDLE, *nodding cheerfully, withdraws.*

COKESON. Glad to see you. You're rather previous. [*Trying to keep things pleasant*] Shake hands! She's striking while the iron's hot. [*He wipes his forehead*] I don't blame her. She's anxious.

FALDER *timidly takes COKESON's hand and glances towards the partners' door.*

COKESON. No—not yet! Sit down!

FALDER *sits in the chair at the side of COKESON's table, on which he places his cap.*

COKESON. Now you are here I'd like you to give me a little account of yourself. [*Looking at him over his spectacles*] How's your health?

FALDER. I'm alive, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. [*Preoccupied*] I'm glad to hear that. About this matter. I don't like doing anything out of the ordinary; it's not my habit. I'm a plain man, and I want everything smooth and straight.

But I promised your friend to speak to the partners, and I always keep my word.

FALDER. I just want a chance, Mr. Cokeson. I've paid for that job a thousand times and more. I have, sir. No one knows. They say I weighed more when I came out than when I went in. They couldn't weigh me here [*he touches his head*] or here [*he touches his heart, and gives a sort of laugh*]. Till last night I'd have thought there was nothing in here at all.

COKESON. [*Concerned*] You've not got heart disease?

FALDER. Oh! they passed me sound enough.

COKESON. But they got you a place, didn't they?

FALDER. Yes; very good people, knew all about it—very kind to me. I thought I was going to get on first rate. But one day, all of a sudden, the other clerks got wind of it. . . . I couldn't stick it, Mr. Cokeson, I couldn't, sir.

COKESON. Easy, my dear fellow, easy.

FALDER. I had one small job after that, but it didn't last.

COKESON. How was that?

FALDER. It's no good deceiving you, Mr. Cokeson. The fact is, I seem to be struggling against a thing that's all round me. I can't explain it: It's as if I was in a net; as fast as I cut it here, it

grows up there. I didn't act as I ought to have, about references; but what are you to do? You must have them. And that made me afraid, and I left. In fact, I'm—I'm afraid all the time now.

He bows his head and leans dejectedly silent over the table.

COKESON. I feel for you—I do really. Aren't your sisters going to do anything for you?

FALDER. One's in consumption. And the other—

COKESON. Ye...es. She told me her husband wasn't quite pleased with you.

FALDER. When I went there—they were at supper—my sister wanted to give me a kiss—I know. But he just looked at her, and said: "What have you come for?" Well, I pocketed my pride and I said: "Aren't you going to give me your hand, Jim? Cis is, I know," I said. "Look here!" he said, "that's all very well, but we'd better come to an understanding. I've been expecting you, and I've made up my mind. I'll give you twenty-five pounds to go to Canada with." "I see," I said—"good riddance! No, thanks; keep your twenty-five pounds." Friendship's a queer thing when you've been where I have.

COKESON. I understand. Will you take the twenty-five pound from me? [*Flustered, as FAL-*

DER *regards him with a queer smile*] Quite without prejudice; I meant it kindly.

FALDER. They wouldn't let me in.

COKESON. Oh! Ah! No! You aren't looking the thing.

FALDER. I've slept in the Park three nights this week. The dawns aren't all poetry there. But meeting her—I feel a different man this morning. I've often thought the being fond of her's the best thing about me; it's sacred, somehow—and yet it did for me. That's queer, isn't it?

COKESON. I'm sure we're all very sorry for you.

FALDER. That's what I've found, Mr. Cokeson. Awfully sorry for me. [*With quiet bitterness*] But it doesn't do to associate with criminals!

COKESON. Come, come, it's no use calling yourself names. That never did a man any good. Put a face on it.

FALDER. It's easy enough to put a face on it, sir, when you're independent. Try it when you're down like me. They talk about giving you your deserts. Well, I think I've had just a bit over.

COKESON. [*Eyeing him askance over his spectacles*] I hope they haven't made a Socialist of you.

FALDER *is suddenly still, as if brooding over his past self; he utters a peculiar laugh.*

COKESON. You must give them credit for the

best intentions. Really you must. Nobody wishes you harm, I'm sure.

FALDER. I believe that, Mr. Cokeson. Nobody wishes you harm, but they down you all the same. This feeling—— [*He stares round him, as though at something closing in*] It's crushing me. [*With sudden impersonality*] I know it is.

COKESON. [*Horribly disturbed*] There's nothing there! We must try and take it quiet. I'm sure I've often had you in my prayers. Now leave it to me. I'll use my gumption and take 'em when they're jolly.

As he speaks the two partners come in.

COKESON. [*Rather disconcerted, but trying to put them all at ease*] I didn't expect you quite so soon. I've just been having a talk with this young man. I think you'll remember him.

JAMES. [*With a grave, keen look*] Quite well. How are you, Falder?

WALTER. [*Holding out his hand almost timidly*] Very glad to see you again, Falder.

FALDER. [*Who has recovered his self-control, takes the hand*] Thank you, sir.

COKESON. Just a word, Mr. James. [*To FALDER, pointing to the clerks' office*] You might go in there a minute. You know your way. Our junior won't be coming this morning. His wife's just had a little family.

FALDER goes uncertainly out into the clerks' office.

COKESON. [*Confidentially*] I'm bound to tell you all about it. He's quite penitent. But there's a prejudice against him. And you're not seeing him to advantage this morning; he's under-nourished. It's very trying to go without your dinner.

JAMES. Is that so, Cokeson?

COKESON. I wanted to ask you. He's had his lesson. Now *we* know all about him, and we want a clerk. There is a young fellow applying, but I'm keeping him in the air.

JAMES. A gaol-bird in the office, Cokeson? I don't see it.

WALTER. "The rolling of the chariot-wheels of Justice!" I've never got that out of my head.

JAMES. I've nothing to reproach myself with in this affair. What's he been doing since he came out?

COKESON. He's had one or two places, but he hasn't kept them. He's sensitive—quite natural. Seems to fancy everybody's down on him.

JAMES. Bad sign. Don't like the fellow—never did from the first. "Weak character" 's written all over him.

WALTER. I think we owe him a leg up.

JAMES. He brought it all on himself.

WALTER. The doctrine of full responsibility doesn't quite hold in these days.

JAMES. [*Rather grimly*] You'll find it safer to hold it for all that, my boy.

WALTER. For oneself, yes—not for other people, thanks.

JAMES. Well! I don't want to be hard.

COKESON. I'm glad to hear you say that. He seems to see something [*spreading his arms*] round him. 'Tisn't healthy.

JAMES. What about that woman he was mixed up with? I saw some one uncommonly like her outside as we came in.

COKESON. *That!* Well, I can't keep anything from you. He has met her.

JAMES. Is she with her husband?

COKESON. No.

JAMES. Falder living with her, I suppose?

COKESON. [*Desperately trying to retain the new-found jollity*] I don't know that of my own knowledge. 'Tisn't my business.

JAMES. It's *our* business, if we're going to engage him, Cokeson.

COKESON. [*Reluctantly*] I ought to tell you, perhaps: I've had the party here this morning.

JAMES. I thought so. [*To WALTER*] No, my dear boy, it won't do. Too shady altogether!

COKESON. The two things together make it very awkward for you—I see that.

WALTER. [*Tentatively*] I don't quite know what we have to do with his private life.

JAMES. No, no! He must make a clean sheet of it, or he can't come here.

WALTER. Poor devil!

COKESON. Will you have him in? [*And as JAMES nods*] I think I can get him to see reason.

JAMES. [*Grimly*] You can leave that to me, Cokeson.

WALTER. [*To JAMES, in a low voice, while COKESON is summoning FALDER*] His whole future may depend on what we do, Dad.

FALDER *comes in. He has pulled himself together, and presents a steady front.*

JAMES. Now look here, Falder. My son and I want to give you another chance; but there are two things I must say to you. In the first place: It's no good coming here as a victim. If you've any notion that you've been unjustly treated—get rid of it. You can't play fast and loose with morality and hope to go scot-free. If society didn't take care of itself, nobody would—the sooner you realise that the better.

FALDER. Yes, sir; but—may I say something?

JAMES. Well?

FALDER. I had a lot of time to think it over in prison. [*He stops.*]

COKESON. [*Encouraging him*] I'm sure you did.

FALDER. There were all sorts there. And what I mean, sir, is, that if we'd been treated differently the first time, and put under somebody that could look after us a bit, and not put in prison, not a quarter of us would ever have got there.

JAMES. [*Shaking his head*] I'm afraid I've very grave doubts of that, Falder.

FALDER. [*With a gleam of malice*] Yes, sir, so I found.

JAMES. My good fellow, don't forget that you began it.

FALDER. I never wanted to do wrong.

JAMES. Perhaps not. But you did.

FALDER. [*With all the bitterness of his past suffering*] It's knocked me out of time. [*Pulling himself up*] That is, I mean, I'm not what I was.

JAMES. This isn't encouraging for us, Falder.

COKESON. He's putting it awkwardly, Mr. James.

FALDER. [*Throwing over his caution from the intensity of his feeling*] I mean it, Mr. Cokeson.

JAMES. Now, lay aside all those thoughts, Falder, and look to the future.

FALDER. [*Almost eagerly*] Yes, sir, but you don't

understand what prison is. It's here it gets you. *[He grips his chest.]*

COKESON. *[In a whisper to JAMES]* I told you he wanted nourishment.

WALTER. Yes, but, my dear fellow, that'll pass away. Time's merciful.

FALDER. *[With his face twitching]* I hope so, sir.

JAMES. *[Much more gently]* Now, my boy, what you've got to do is to put all the past behind you and build yourself up a steady reputation. And that brings me to the second thing. This woman you were mixed up with—you must give us your word, you know, to have done with that. There's no chance of your keeping straight if you're going to begin your future with such a relationship.

FALDER. *[Looking from one to the other with a hunted expression]* But sir . . . but sir . . . it's the one thing I looked forward to all that time. And she too . . . I couldn't find her before last night.

During this and what follows COKESON becomes more and more uneasy.

JAMES. This is painful, Falder. But you must see for yourself that it's impossible for a firm like this to close its eyes to everything. Give us this proof of your resolve to keep straight, and you can come back—not otherwise.

FALDER. *[After staring at JAMES, suddenly stiffens himself]* I couldn't give her up. I couldn't!

Oh, sir! I'm all she's got to look to. And I'm sure she's all I've got.

JAMES. I'm very sorry, Falder, but I must be firm. It's for the benefit of you both in the long run. No good can come of this connection. It was the cause of all your disaster.

FALDER. But, sir, it means—having gone through all that—getting broken up—my nerves are in an awful state—for nothing. I did it for her.

JAMES. Come! If she's anything of a woman she'll see it for herself. She won't want to drag you down further. If there were a prospect of your being able to marry her—it might be another thing.

FALDER. It's not my fault, sir, that she couldn't get rid of him—she would have if she could. That's been the whole trouble from the beginning. [*Looking suddenly at WALTER*] . . . If anybody would help her! It's only money wanted now, I'm sure.

COKESON. [*Breaking in, as WALTER hesitates, and is about to speak*] I don't think we need consider that—it's rather far-fetched.

FALDER. [*To WALTER, appealing*] He must have given her full cause since; she could prove that he drove her to leave him.

WALTER. I'm inclined to do what you say, Falder, if it can be managed.

FALDER. Oh, sir!

He goes to the window and looks down into the street.

COKESON. [*Hurriedly*] You don't take me, Mr. Walter. I have my reasons.

FALDER. [*From the window*] She's down there, sir. Will you see her? I can beckon to her from here.

WALTER *hesitates, and looks from COKESON to JAMES.*

JAMES. [*With a sharp nod*] Yes, let her come.

FALDER *beckons from the window.*

COKESON. [*In a low fluster to JAMES and WALTER*] No, Mr. James. She's not been quite what she ought to ha' been, while this young man's been away. She's lost her chance. We can't consult how to swindle the Law.

FALDER *has come from the window. The three men look at him in a sort of awed silence.*

FALDER. [*With instinctive apprehension of some change—looking from one to the other*] There's been nothing between us, sir, to prevent it. . . . What I said at the trial was true. And last night we only just sat in the Park.

SWEEDLE *comes in from the outer office.*

COKESON. What is it?

SWEEDLE. Mrs. Honeywill.

There is silence.

JAMES. Show her in.

RUTH comes slowly in, and stands stoically with FALDER on one side and the three men on the other. No one speaks. COKESON turns to his table, bending over his papers as though the burden of the situation were forcing him back into his accustomed groove.

JAMES. [*Sharply*] Shut the door there.

SWEEDLE shuts the door.

JAMES. We've asked you to come up because there are certain facts to be faced in this matter. I understand you have only just met Falder again.

RUTH. Yes—only yesterday.

JAMES. He's told us about himself, and we're very sorry for him. I've promised to take him back here if he'll make a fresh start. [*Looking steadily at RUTH*] This is a matter that requires courage, ma'am.

RUTH, who is looking at FALDER, begins to twist her hands in front of her as though prescient of disaster.

FALDER. Mr. Walter How is good enough to say that he'll help us to get you a divorce.

RUTH flashes a startled glance at JAMES and WALTER.

JAMES. I don't think that's practicable, Falder.

FALDER. But, sir——!

JAMES. [*Steadily*] Now, Mrs. Honeywill. You're fond of him.

RUTH. Yes, sir; I love him.

[*She looks miserably at FALDER.*]

JAMES. Then you don't want to stand in his way, do you?

RUTH. [*In a faint voice*] I could take care of him.

JAMES. The best way you can take care of him will be to give him up.

FALDER. Nothing shall make me give you up. You can get a divorce. There's been nothing between us, has there?

RUTH. [*Mournfully shaking her head—without looking at him*] No.

FALDER. We'll keep apart till it's over, sir; if you'll only help us—we promise.

JAMES. [*To RUTH*] You see the thing plainly, don't you? You see what I mean?

RUTH. [*Just above a whisper*] Yes.

COKESON. [*To himself*] There's a dear woman.

JAMES. The situation is impossible.

RUTH. Must I, sir?

JAMES. [*Forcing himself to look at her*] I put it to you, ma'am. His future is in your hands.

RUTH. [*Miserably*] I want to do the best for him.

JAMES. [*A little buskily*] That's right, that's right!

FALDER. I don't understand. You're not going

to give me up—after all this? There's something— [*Starting forward to JAMES*] Sir, I swear solemnly there's been nothing between us.

JAMES. I believe you, Falder. Come, my lad, be as plucky as she is.

FALDER. Just now you were going to help us. [*He stares at RUTH, who is standing absolutely still; his face and hands twitch and quiver as the truth dawns on him*] What is it? You've not been—

WALTER. Father!

JAMES. [*Hurriedly*] There, there! That'll do, that'll do! I'll give you your chance, Falder. Don't let me know what you do with yourselves, that's all.

FALDER. [*As if he has not heard*] Ruth?

RUTH looks at him; and FALDER covers his face with his hands. There is silence.

COKESON. [*Suddenly*] There's some one out there. [*To RUTH*] Go in here. You'll feel better by yourself for a minute.

He points to the clerks' room and moves towards the outer office. FALDER does not move. RUTH puts out her hand timidly. He shrinks back from the touch. She turns and goes miserably into the clerks' room. With a brusque movement he follows, seizing her by the shoulder just inside the doorway. COKESON shuts the door.

ACT IV

JUSTICE

JAMES. [*Pointing to the outer office*] Get rid of that, whoever it is.

SWEEDLE. [*Opening the office door, in a scared voice*] Detective-Sergeant Wister.

The detective enters, and closes the door behind him.

WISTER. Sorry to disturb you, sir. A clerk you had here, two years and a half ago. I arrested him in this room.

JAMES. What about him?

WISTER. I thought perhaps I might get his whereabouts from you.

There is an awkward silence.

COKESON. [*Pleasantly, coming to the rescue*] We're not responsible for his movements; you know that.

JAMES. What do you want with him?

WISTER. He's failed to report himself lately.

WALTER. Has he to keep in touch with the police then?

WISTER. We're bound to know his whereabouts. I dare say we shouldn't interfere, sir, but we've just heard there's a serious matter of obtaining employment with a forged reference. What with the two things together—we must have him.

Again there is silence. WALTER and COKESON

steal glances at JAMES, who stands staring steadily at the detective.

COKESON. [*Expansively*] We're very busy at the moment. If you could make it convenient to call again we might be able to tell you then.

JAMES. [*Decisively*] I'm a servant of the Law, but I dislike peaching. In fact, I can't do such a thing. If you want him you must find him without us.

As he speaks his eye falls on FALDER'S cap, still lying on the table, and his face contracts.

WISTER. [*Noting the gesture—quietly*] Very good, sir. I ought to warn you that sheltering—

JAMES. I shelter no one. But you mustn't come here and ask questions which it's not my business to answer.

WISTER. [*Dryly*] I won't trouble you further then, gentlemen.

COKESON. I'm sorry we couldn't give you the information. You quite understand, don't you? Good morning!

WISTER turns to go, but instead of going to the door of the outer office he goes to the door of the clerks' room.

COKESON. The other door . . . the other door!

WISTER opens the clerks' door. RUTH'S voice is heard: "Oh, do!" and FALDER'S: "I

ACT IV

JUSTICE

can't!" There is a little pause; then, with sharp fright, RUTH says: "Who's that?" WISTER has gone in.

The three men look aghast at the door.

WISTER. [*From within*] Keep back, please!

He comes swiftly out with his arm twisted in FALDER'S. The latter gives a white, staring look at the three men.

WALTER. Let him go this time, for God's sake!

WISTER. I couldn't take the responsibility, sir.

FALDER. [*With a queer, desperate laugh*] Good!

Flinging a look back at RUTH, he throws up his head, and goes out through the outer office, half dragging WISTER after him.

WALTER. [*With despair*] That finishes him. It'll go on for ever now.

SWEEDLE can be seen staring through the outer door. There are sounds of footsteps descending the stone stairs; suddenly a dull thud, a faint "My God!" in WISTER'S voice.

JAMES. What's that?

SWEEDLE dashes forward. The door swings to behind him. There is dead silence.

WALTER. [*Starting forward to the inner room*] The woman—she's fainting!

He and COKESON support the fainting RUTH from the doorway of the clerks' room.

COKESON. [*Distracted*] Here, my dear! There, there!

WALTER. Have you any brandy?

COKESON. I've got sherry.

WALTER. Get it, then. Quick!

He places RUTH in a chair—which JAMES has dragged forward.

COKESON. [*With sherry*] Here! It's good strong sherry.

They try to force the sherry between her lips. There is the sound of feet, and they stop to listen. The outer door is reopened—WISTER and SWEEDLE are seen carrying some burden.

JAMES. [*Hurrying forward*] What is it?

They lay the burden down in the outer office, out of sight, and all but RUTH cluster round it, speaking in husbed voices.

WISTER. He jumped—neck's broken.

WALTER. Good God!

WISTER. He must have been mad to think he could give me the slip like that. And what was it—just a few months!

WALTER. [*Bitterly*] Was that all?

JAMES. What a desperate thing! [*Then, in a voice unlike his own*] Run for a doctor—you!

SWEEDLE rushes from the outer office.

JAMES. An ambulance!

WISTER goes out. *On RUTH's face an expression of fear and horror has been seen growing, as if she dared not turn towards the voices. She now rises and steals towards them.*

WALTER. [*Turning suddenly*] Look!

The three men shrink back out of her way.

RUTH drops on her knees by the body.

RUTH. [*In a whisper*] What is it? He's not breathing. [*She crouches over him*] My dear! My pretty!

In the outer office doorway the figures of men are seen standing.

RUTH. [*Leaping to her feet*] No, no! No, no! He's dead!

The figures of the men shrink back.

COKESON. [*Stealing forward. In a hoarse voice*] There, there, poor dear woman!

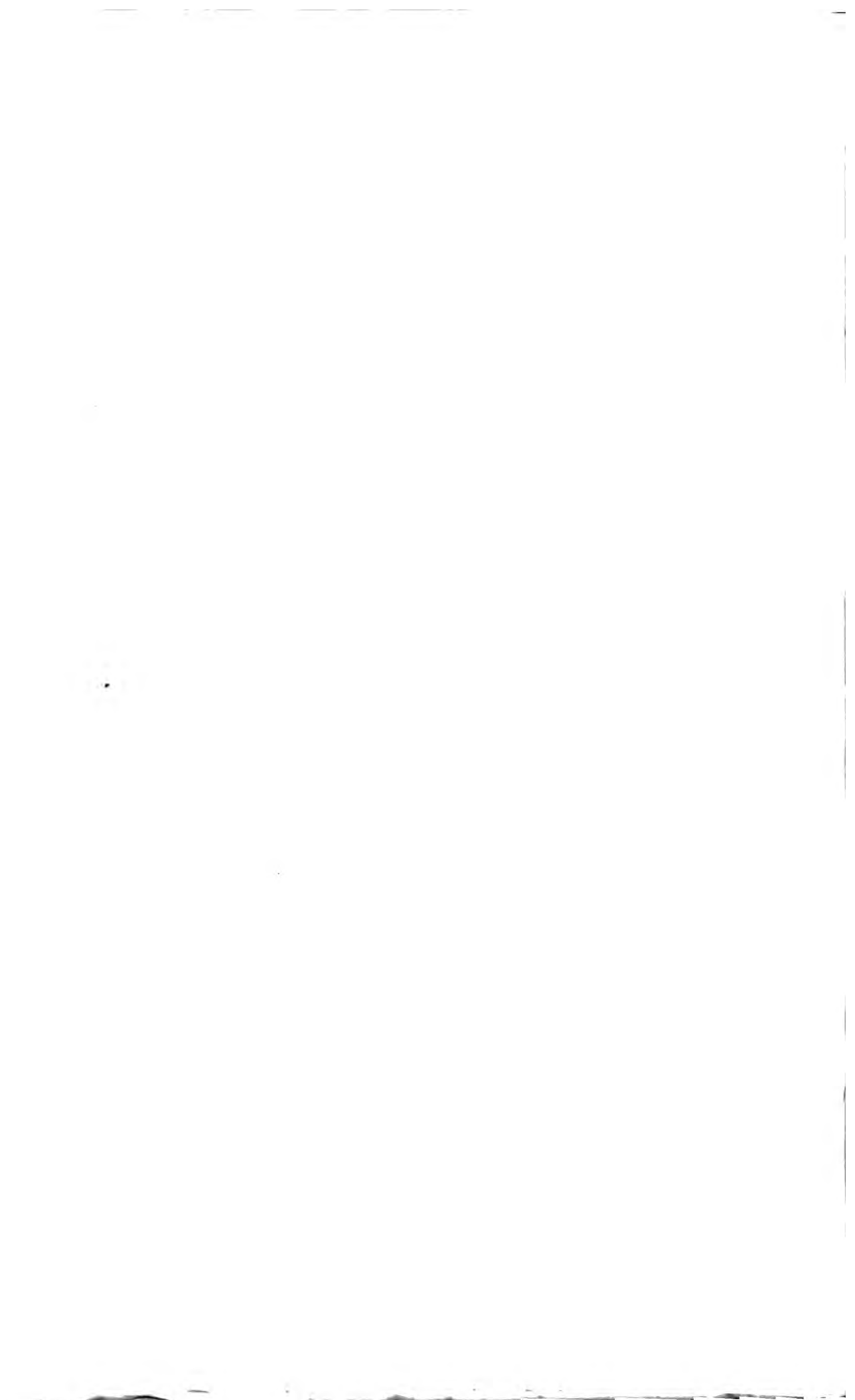
At the sound behind her RUTH faces round at him.

COKESON. No one'll touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!

RUTH stands as though turned to stone in the doorway staring at COKESON, who, bending humbly before her, holds out his hand as one would to a lost dog.

The curtain falls.

THE LITTLE DREAM
AN ALLEGORY IN SIX SCENES



CHARACTERS

SEELCHEN, *a mountain girl*
LAMOND, *a climber*
FELSMAN, *a guide*

CHARACTERS IN THE DREAM

THE GREAT HORN }
THE COW HORN } *mountains*
THE WINE HORN }
EDELWEISS }
ALPENROSE } *flowers*
GENTIAN }
MOUNTAIN DANDELION }

FIGURES IN THE DREAM

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| MOTH CHILDREN | FLOWER CHILDREN |
| DANCING LIGHTS | GOATHERD |
| DEATH BY SLUMBER | GOAT-BOYS |
| DEATH BY DROWNING | THE FORMS OF SLEEP |

*The music for this play, arranged either
for orchestra or piano, has been composed*

BY

WOLFGANG VON BARTELS

SCENE I

It is just after sunset of an August evening. The scene is a room in a mountain hut, furnished only with a dresser and a low broad window seat. Through this window three rocky peaks are seen by the light of a moon, which is slowly whitening the last hues of sunset. An oil lamp is burning. SEELCHEN, a mountain girl, eighteen years old, is humming a folk-song, and putting away in a cupboard freshly washed soup-bowls and glasses. She is dressed in a tight-fitting black velvet bodice, square-cut at the neck, and partly filled in with a gay handkerchief, coloured rose-pink, blue, and golden, like the alpenrose, the gentian, and the mountain dandelion; alabaster beads, pale as edelweiss, are round her throat; her stiffened, white linen sleeves finish at the elbow; and her full well-worn skirt is of gentian blue. The two thick plaits of her hair are crossed, and turned round her head. As she puts away the last bowl, there is a knock; and LAMOND opens the outer door. He is young, tanned, and good-looking, dressed like a climber, and carries a plaid, a rucksack, and an ice-axe.

LAMOND. Good evening!

SEELCHEN. Good evening, gentle sir!

LAMOND. My name is Lamond. I'm very late, I fear.

SEELCHEN. Do you wish to sleep here?

LAMOND. Please.

SEELCHEN. All the beds are full—it is a pity. I will call mother.

LAMOND. I've come to go up the Great Horn at sunrise.

SEELCHEN. [*Awed*] The Great Horn! But he is impossible.

LAMOND. I am going to try that.

SEELCHEN. There is the Wine Horn, and the Cow Horn.

LAMOND. I have climbed them.

SEELCHEN. But he is so dangerous—it is perhaps—death.

LAMOND. Oh! that's all right! One must take one's chance.

SEELCHEN. And father has hurt his foot. For guide, there is only Hans Felsman.

LAMOND. The celebrated Felsman?

SEELCHEN. [*Nodding; then looking at him with admiration*] Are you that Herr Lamond who has climbed all our little mountains this year?

LAMOND. All but that big fellow.

sc. 1 THE LITTLE DREAM

SEELCHEN. We have heard of you. Will you not wait a day for father's foot?

LAMOND. Ah! no. I must go back home tomorrow.

SEELCHEN. The gracious sir is in a hurry.

LAMOND. [*Looking at her intently*] Alas!

SEELCHEN. Are you from a great city? Is it very big?

LAMOND. Six million souls.

SEELCHEN. Oh! [*After a little pause*] I have seen Cortina twice.

LAMOND. Do you live here all the year?

SEELCHEN. In winter in the valley.

LAMOND. And don't you want to see the world?

SEELCHEN. Sometimes. [*Going to a door, she calls softly*] Hans! [*Then pointing to another door*] There are seven German gentlemen asleep in there!

LAMOND. Oh God!

SEELCHEN. Please! They are here to see the sunrise. [*She picks up a little book that has dropped from LAMOND's pocket*] I have read several books.

LAMOND. This is by a great poet. Do you never make poetry here, and dream dreams, among your mountains?

SEELCHEN. [*Slowly shaking her head*] See! It is the full moon.

While they stand at the window looking at the

moon, there enters a lean, well-built, taciturn young man dressed in Loden.

SEELCHEN. Hans!

FELSMAN. [*In a deep voice*] The gentleman wishes me?

SEELCHEN. [*Awed*] The Great Horn for tomorrow. [*Whispering to him*] It is the celebrated city one.

FELSMAN. The Great Horn is not possible.

LAMOND. You say that? And you're the famous Felsman?

FELSMAN. [*Grimly*] We start at dawn.

SEELCHEN. It is the first time for years!

LAMOND. [*Placing his plaid and rucksack on the window bench*] Can I sleep here?

SEELCHEN. I will see! [*She runs out.*]

FELSMAN. [*Taking blankets from the cupboard and spreading them on the window seat*] So!

As he goes out into the air, SEELCHEN comes slipping in again.

SEELCHEN. There is still one bed. This is too hard for you.

LAMOND. Oh! thanks; but that's all right.

SEELCHEN. To please me!

LAMOND. May I ask your name?

SEELCHEN. Seelchen.

LAMOND. Little soul, that means—doesn't it?

To please you I would sleep with seven German gentlemen.

SEELCHEN. Oh! no; it is not necessary.

LAMOND. [*With a grave bow*] At your service, then. [*He prepares to go.*]

SEELCHEN. Is it very nice in towns, in the World, where you come from?

LAMOND. When I'm there I would be here; but when I'm here I would be there.

SEELCHEN. [*Clasping her hands*] That is like me—but *I* am always *here*.

LAMOND. Ah! yes; there is no one like you in towns.

SEELCHEN. In two places one cannot be. [*Suddenly*] In the towns there are theatres, and there is beautiful fine work, and—dancing, and—churches—and trains—and all the things in books—and—

LAMOND. Misery.

SEELCHEN. But there is life.

LAMOND. And there is death.

SEELCHEN. To-morrow, when you have climbed—will you not come back?

LAMOND. No.

SEELCHEN. You have all the world; and I have nothing.

LAMOND. Except Felsman, and the mountains.

SEELCHEN. It is not good to eat only bread.

LAMOND. [*Looking at her hand*] *I would like to eat you!*

SEELCHEN. But I am not nice; I am full of big wants—like the cheese with holes.

LAMOND. I shall come again.

SEELCHEN. There will be no more hard mountains left to climb. And if it is not exciting, you do not care.

LAMOND. O wise little soul!

SEELCHEN. No. I am not wise. In here it is always aching.

LAMOND. For the moon?

SEELCHEN. Yes. [*Then suddenly*] From the big world you will remember?

LAMOND. [*Taking her hand*] There is nothing in the big world so sweet as this.

SEELCHEN. [*Wisely*] But there is the big world itself.

LAMOND. May I kiss you, for good night?

She puts her face forward; and he kisses her cheek, and, suddenly, her lips. Then as she draws away.

LAMOND. I am sorry, little soul.

SEELCHEN. That's all right!

LAMOND. [*Taking the candle*] Dream well! Good night!

SEELCHEN. [*Softly*] Good night!

SC. I

THE LITTLE DREAM

FELSMAN. [*Coming in from the air, and eyeing them*] It is cold—it will be fine.

LAMOND, *still looking back, goes ; and FELSMAN waits for him to pass.*

SEELCHEN. [*From the window seat*] It was hard for him here, I thought.

He goes up to her, stays a moment looking down, then bends and kisses her hungrily.

SEELCHEN. Art thou angry?

He does not answer, but turning out the lamp, goes into an inner room.

SEELCHEN *sits gazing through the window at the peaks bathed in full moonlight. Then, drawing the blankets about her, she snuggles down on the window seat.*

SEELCHEN. [*In a sleepy voice*] They kissed me—
both. [*She sleeps.*]

The scene falls quite dark.



SCENE II

The scene is slowly illumined as by dawn. SEELCHEN is still lying on the window seat. She sits up, freeing her face and hands from the blankets, changing the swathings of deep sleep for the filmy coverings of a dream. The wall of the hut has vanished; there is nothing between her and the three dark mist-veiled mountains save a trough of black space.

Close to SEELCHEN, on the edge of the trough of dark space that divides her from the mountains, are four little flower figures, EDELWEISS and GENTIAN, MOUNTAIN DANDELION and ALPENROSE, peering up at her through the darkness. On their heads are crowns of their several flowers, all powdered with dewdrops which ring like little bells.

SEELCHEN. Oh! They have faces!

All around the peaks there is nothing but almost blue-black sky. The peaks brighten.

EDELWEISS. [*In a tiny voice*] Would you? Would you? Would you? Ah! ha!

GENTIAN, M. DANDELION, ALPENROSE. [*With their bells ringing enviously*] Oo-oo-oo!

*And suddenly the Peak of THE COW HORN
speaks in a voice as of one unaccustomed.*

THE COW HORN. I am the mountains. Amongst kine and my black-brown sheep I live; I am silence, and monotony; I am the solemn hills. I am fierceness, and the mountain wind; clean pasture, and wild rest. Look in my eyes, love *me* alone!

SEELCHEN. [*Breathless*] The Cow Horn! He is speaking—for Felsman and the mountains. It is the half of my heart!

THE FLOWERS *laugh happily.*

THE COW HORN. I stalk the eternal hills—I drink the mountain snows. My eyes are the colour of burned wine; in them lives melancholy. The lowing of the kine, the wind, the sound of falling rocks, the running of the torrents; no other talk know I. Thoughts simple, and blood hot, strength huge—the cloak of gravity.

SEELCHEN. Yes, yes, I want him. He is strong!

THE COW HORN. Little soul! Hold to me! Love me! Live with me under the stars!

SEELCHEN. [*Below her breath*] I am afraid.

*And suddenly the Peak of THE WINE HORN
speaks in a youth's voice.*

THE WINE HORN. I am the town—the will-o'-the-wisp that dances through the streets; I am the cooing dove, from the plane-trees' and the

chestnuts' shade. From day to day all changes, where I burn my incense to my thousand little gods. In white palaces I dwell, and passionate dark alleys. The life of men in crowds is mine—of lamplight in the streets at dawn. [*Softly*] I have a thousand loves, and never one too long; for I am nimbler than your heifers playing in the sunshine.

THE FLOWERS, *ringing in alarm, cry:*

"We know them!"

THE WINE HORN. I hear the rustlings of the birth and death of pleasure; and the rattling of swift wheels. I hear the hungry oaths of men; and love kisses in the airless night. Without *me*, little soul, you starve and die.

SEELCHEN. He is speaking for the gentle sir, and the big world of the Town. It pulls my heart.

THE WINE HORN. My thoughts surpass in number the flowers in your meadows; they fly more swiftly than your eagles on the wind. I drink the wine of aspiration, and the drug of disillusion. Thus am I never dull!

SEELCHEN. I am afraid.

THE WINE HORN. Love *me*, little soul! I paint life fifty colours. I make a thousand pretty things! I twine about your heart!

SEELCHEN. He is honey!

THE FLOWERS ring their bells jealously and cry :

“*Bitter! Bitter!*”

THE COW HORN. Stay with me, Seelchen! I wake thee with the crystal air.

THE FLOWERS laugh happily.

THE WINE HORN. Come with me, Seelchen! My fan, Variety, shall wake you!

THE FLOWERS moan.

SEELCHEN. [*In grief*] My heart! It is torn!

THE WINE HORN. With me, little soul, you shall race in the streets, and peep at all secrets. We will hold hands, and fly like the thistle-down.

M. DANDELION. My puff-balls fly faster!

THE WINE HORN. I will show you the sea.

GENTIAN. My blue is deeper!

THE WINE HORN. I will shower on you blushes.

ALPENROSE. I can blush redder!

THE WINE HORN. Little soul, listen! My Jewels! Silk! Velvet!

EDELWEISS. I am softer than velvet!

THE WINE HORN. [*Proudly*] My wonderful rags!

THE FLOWERS. [*Moaning*] Of those we have none.

SEELCHEN. He has all things.

THE COW HORN. Mine are the clouds with the dark silvered wings; mine are the rocks on fire

sc. II THE LITTLE DREAM

with the sun; and the dewdrops cooler than pearls. Away from my breath of snow and sweet grass, thou wilt droop, little soul.

THE WINE HORN. The dark Clove is *my* fragrance!

SEELCHEN. [*Distracted*] Oh! it is hard!

THE COW HORN. *I* will never desert thee.

THE WINE HORN. A hundred times *I* will desert you, a hundred times come back, and kiss you.

SEELCHEN. [*Whispering*] Peace for my heart!

THE COW HORN. With me thou shalt lie on the warm wild thyme.

THE FLOWERS *laugh happily.*

THE WINE HORN. With me you shall lie on a bed of dove's feathers.

THE FLOWERS *moan.*

THE WINE HORN. *I* will give you old wine.

THE COW HORN. *I* will give thee new milk.

THE WINE HORN. Hear my song!

From far away comes a sound as of mandolins.

SEELCHEN. [*Clasping her breast*] My heart—it is leaving me!

THE COW HORN. Hear my song!

From the distance floats the piping of a Shepherd's reed.

SEELCHEN. [*Curving her hand at her ears*] The piping! Ah!

THE COW HORN. *Stay with me, Seelchen!*

THE WINE HORN. *Come with me, Seelchen!*

THE COW HORN. I give thee certainty!

THE WINE HORN. I give you chance!

THE COW HORN. I give thee peace.

THE WINE HORN. I give you change.

THE COW HORN. I give thee stillness.

THE WINE HORN. I give you voice.

THE COW HORN. I give thee one love.

THE WINE HORN. I give you many.

SEELCHEN. [*As if the words were torn from her heart*] Both, both—I will love!

And suddenly the Peak of THE GREAT HORN speaks.

THE GREAT HORN. And both thou shalt love, little soul! Thou shalt lie on the hills with Silence; and dance in the cities with Knowledge. Both shall possess thee! The sun and the moon on the mountains shall burn thee; the lamps of the Town singe thy wings, small Moth! Each shall seem all the world to thee, each shall seem as thy grave! Thy heart is a feather blown from one mouth to the other. But be not afraid! For the life of a man is for all loves in turn. 'Tis a little raft moored, then sailing out into the blue; a tune caught in a hush, then whispering on; a new-born babe, half courage and half sleep. There is a hidden rhythm. Change, Quietude. Chance, Certainty. The One, The Many. Burn on—thou

sc. II THE LITTLE DREAM

pretty flame, trying to eat the world! Thou shalt
come to me at last, my little soul!

SEELCHEN, *enraptured, stretches her arms to
embrace the sight and sound, but all fades
slowly into dark sleep.*



SCENE III

The dark scene again becomes glamorous under a night sky. SEELCHEN is standing with her hand stretched out towards the gateway of a Town from which is streaming a pathway of light. On one side of the gate stands the glowing figure of a youth. On the other side of the gateway is a cloaked statue in shadow. Above the centre of the gateway is a dimly seen sphynx-like stone head.

The Youth of THE WINE HORN sings :

*“Little star soul
Through the frost fields of night
Roaming alone, disconsolate—
From out the cold
I call thee in—
Striking my dark mandolin—
Beneath this moon of gold.”*

SEELCHEN. [*Whispering*] Is it the Town—the big world?

The Youth of THE WINE HORN sings on :

*“Pretty grey moth,
Where the strange candles shine,*

*Seeking for warmth, so desperate—
 Ah! fluttering dove
 I bid thee win—
 Striking my dark mandolin—
 The crimson flame of love.”*

SEELCHEN. [*Gazing enraptured at the gateway*] In there it is warm and light!

As she speaks, from either side come moth-children, meeting and fluttering up the path of light to the gateway; then wheeling aside, they form again, and again flutter forward.

SEELCHEN. [*Holding out her hands*] They are real—their wings are windy.

*They rush past her and vanish into the Town.
 The Youth of THE WINE HORN sings on:*

*“Lips of my song,
 To the white maiden’s heart
 Go ye, and whisper, passionate
 These words that burn—
 ‘O listening one!
 Love that flieth past is gone
 Nor ever may return!”*”

SEELCHEN runs towards him—but the glow around him fades, he has become shadow. There in the gateway stands LAMOND in a dark cloak.

SEELCHEN. It is you!

SC. III THE LITTLE DREAM

LAMOND. Without my little soul I am cold.
Come! *[He holds out his arms to her.]*

SEELCHEN. Shall I be safe?

LAMOND. What is safety? Are you safe in your mountains?

SEELCHEN. Where am I, here?

LAMOND. The Town.

Smiling, he points to the gateway. There come dancing out all the firefly lights of the streets.

SEELCHEN. *[Whispering]* What are they?

LAMOND. The lights, little one—street lights. The lamps—the gold of life!

SEELCHEN. Are they always so bright?

The Youth of THE WINE HORN is again illumined. He strikes a loud chord; then, as SEELCHEN moves towards that sound, the glow dies; there is again only blue shadow, and all the firefly lights have vanished through the gateway.

SEELCHEN. Is he laughing at me?

LAMOND. Come!

SEELCHEN. I am afraid!

LAMOND. Of what is new? Would you know but one-half of the moon? Ah! Little Soul, will you live for ever with your goats—when I can show you such wonders?

SEELCHEN. Are they good?

LAMOND. They are everything.

SEELCHEN. [*Creeping a little nearer to the gateway*] It is so strange and bright in the Town! Is it not dark in there too?

LAMOND. I will keep the darkness from you with love.

SEELCHEN. Oh! but I do not love.

LAMOND. Child! To love is to live—seeking for wonder. When a feather flies is it not loving the wind, the unknown? If darkness and light did not change, could we breathe? [*And as she draws nearer*] To love is to peer over the edge, and, spying the little grey flower, to climb down! It has wings; it has flown—again you must climb; it shivers, 'tis but air in your hand—you must crawl, you must cling, you must leap, and still it is there and not there—for the grey flower flits like a moth, and the wind of its wings is all you shall catch. But your eyes shall be shining, your cheeks shall be burning, your breast shall be panting.—Ah! little heart! [*The scene falls darker*] And when the night comes—there it is still, thistle-down blown on the dark, and your white hands will reach for it, and your honey breath waft it, and never, never, shall you grasp it—but life shall be lovely. [*His voice dies to a whisper. He stretches out his arms*] Come to my Town!—Come!

SEELCHEN. [*Touching his breast*] I will come.

LAMOND. [*Drawing her to the gateway*] Love me!

SEELCHEN. I love!

The mandolin twangs out; they pass through into the Town. Illumined in his crimson glow the Youth of THE WINE HORN is seen again. And slowly to the chords of his mandolin he begins to sing:

*“The windy hours through darkness fly—
Canst bear them, little heart?
New loves are born, and old loves die,
And kissing lips must part.
The dusky bees of passing years—
Canst see them, soul of mine—
From flower and flower supping tears,
And pale sweet honey wine?”*

[His voice grows strange and passionate.

*“O flame that treads the marsh of time,
Flitting for ever low,
Where, through the black enchanted slime,
We, desperate, following go—
Untimely fire, we bid thee stay!
Into dark air above,
The golden gipsy thins away—
So has it been with love!”*

While he is singing it falls dark, save for the glow around him. As his song ends he fades

away, and the dawn breaks. Then from the dark gateway of the Town, in the chill grey light, SEELCHEN comes forth. She is pale, as if wan with living; her eyes like pitch against the powdery whiteness of her face.

SEELCHEN. My heart is old.

But as she speaks from far away is heard a faint chiming of COWBELLS; and while she stands listening, LAMOND appears in the gateway of the Town.

LAMOND. Little soul!

SEELCHEN. You! Always you!

LAMOND. I have new wonders.

SEELCHEN *shakes her head.*

LAMOND. I swear it. You have not tired of me, who am never the same. That cannot be.

SEELCHEN. Listen!

The chime of THE COWBELLS is heard again.

LAMOND. [*Jealously*] The music of dull sleep! Has life, then, with me been sorrow?

SEELCHEN. I do not regret.

LAMOND. Come!

SEELCHEN. [*Pointing to her breast*] The bird is tired with flying. [*Touching her lips*] The flowers have no dew.

LAMOND. Would you leave me?

SEELCHEN. See!

There, in a streak of the dawn, close to the gate-

way, but pointing away from the Town, the dim cloaked statue has turned into the Shepherd of THE COW HORN.

LAMOND. What is it?

SEELCHEN. My mountains!

LAMOND. There is nothing. [*He holds her fast*] Do not go! Do not go! I have given you the marvels of my Town. I will give you more!

But SEELCHEN turns from him.

LAMOND. If with you I may no longer live, then together let us die! See! Here are sweet Deaths by Slumber and by Drowning!

From the dim gateway of the Town come forth the shadowy forms, DEATH BY SLUMBER and DEATH BY DROWNING, who dance slowly towards SEELCHEN, stand smiling at her, and as slowly dance away.

SEELCHEN. [*Following*] Yes. They are good and sweet.

While she moves again towards the Town LAMOND'S face becomes transfigured with joy. But just as she reaches the gateway there is heard again the distant chime of COWBELLS, and the sound of the blowing of pipes; the Shepherd of THE COW HORN sings:

*“To the wild grass come, and the dull far roar
Of the falling rock; to the flowery meads*

*Of thy mountain home, where the eagles soar,
And the grizzled flock in the sunshine feeds.
To the Alp, where I, in the pale light
crowned
With the moon's thin horns, to my pasture
roam ;
To the silent sky, and the wistful sound
Of the rosy dawns—my daughter, come!"*

*While he sings, the sun has risen ; and SEEL-
CHEN has turned, with parted lips, and
hands stretched out ; and the Forms of
Death have vanished back into the Town.*

SEELCHEN. I come.

LAMOND. [*Clasping her knees*] Little soul ! Must I then die, like a gnat when the sun goes down ? Without you I am nothing.

SEELCHEN. [*Releasing herself*] Poor heart—I am gone !

LAMOND. It is dark.

He covers his face with his cloak, in the gateway of the Town.

Then as SEELCHEN reaches the Shepherd of THE COW HORN, there is blown a long note of a pipe ; the scene falls black ; and there rises a far, continual, mingled sound of Cowbells, and Flower-Bells, and Pipes.

SCENE IV

The scene slowly brightens with the misty flush of dawn. SEELCHEN stands on a green alp, with, all around, nothing but blue sky. A slip of a crescent moon is lying on her back. On a low rock sits a brown-faced GOATHERD blowing on a pipe, and the four FLOWER-CHILDREN are dancing in their shifts of grey-white, and blue, rose-pink, and burnt gold. Their bells are ringing, as they pelt each other with flowers of their own colours; and each in turn, wheeling, flings one flower at SEELCHEN, who puts them to her lips and eyes.

SEELCHEN. The dew! [*She moves towards the rock*] Goatherd!

But THE FLOWERS encircle her; and when they wheel away he has vanished. She turns to THE FLOWERS, but they too vanish. The veils of mist are rising.

SEELCHEN. Gone! [*She rubs her eyes; then turning once more to the rock, sees FELSMAN standing there, with his arms folded*] Thou!

FELSMAN. So thou hast come—like a sick heifer to be healed. Was it good in the Town—that kept thee so long?

SEELCHEN. I do not regret.

FELSMAN. Why then return?

SEELCHEN. I was tired.

FELSMAN. Never again shalt thou go from me!

SEELCHEN. [*Mocking*] With what wilt thou keep me?

FELSMAN. [*Grasping her*] Thus.

SEELCHEN. I have known Change—I am no timid maid.

FELSMAN. [*Moodily*] Aye, thou art different. Thine eyes are hollow—thou art white-faced.

SEELCHEN. [*Still mocking*] Then what hast thou here that shall keep me?

FELSMAN. The sun.

SEELCHEN. To burn me.

FELSMAN. The air.

There is a faint wailing of wind.

SEELCHEN. To freeze me.

FELSMAN. The silence.

The noise of the wind dies away.

SEELCHEN. Yes, it is lonely.

FELSMAN. The flowers shall dance to thee.

*And to a ringing of their bells, THE FLOWERS
come dancing; till, one by one, they cease,
and sink down, nodding, falling asleep.*

SEELCHEN. See! Even they grow sleepy here!

FELSMAN. The goats shall wake them.

THE GOATHERD is seen again sitting upright

on his rock and piping. And there come four little brown, wild-eyed, naked Boys, with Goat's legs and feet, who dance gravely in and out of the sleeping FLOWERS; and THE FLOWERS wake, spring up, and fly; till each Goat, catching his flower, has vanished, and THE GOATHERD has ceased to pipe, and lies motionless again on his rock.

FELSMAN. Love me!

SEELCHEN. Thou art rude!

FELSMAN. Love me!

SEELCHEN. Thou art grim!

FELSMAN. Aye, I have no silver tongue. Listen! This is my voice! [*Sweeping his arm round all the still alp*] From dawn to the first star all is quiet. [*Laying his hand on her heart*] And the wings of the bird shall be still.

SEELCHEN. [*Touching his eyes*] Thine eyes are fierce. In them I see the wild beasts crouching. In them I see the distance. Are they always fierce?

FELSMAN. Never—to look on thee, my flower.

SEELCHEN. [*Touching his hands*] Thy hands are rough to pluck flowers. [*She breaks away from him—to the rock where THE GOATHERD is lying*] See! Nothing moves. The very day stands still. Boy! [*But THE GOATHERD neither stirs nor answers*] He is lost in the blue. [*Passionately*] Boy!

He will not answer me. No one will answer me here.

FELSMAN. [*With fierce longing*] Am I no one?
The scene darkens with evening.

SEELCHEN. See! Sleep has stolen the day! It is night already.

There come the female shadow-forms of SLEEP, in grey cobweb garments, waving their arms drowsily, wheeling round her.

SEELCHEN. Are you Sleep? My lover Sleep! My lover—Rest!

Smiling, she holds out her arms to FELSMAN. He takes her swaying form. They vanish, encircled by the forms of SLEEP. It is dark, save for the light of the thin-horned moon suddenly grown bright. Then on his rock, to a faint piping, THE GOATHERD sings:

*“My goat, my little speckled one,
My yellow eyed, sweet-smelling,
Let moon and wind and golden sun
And stars beyond all telling
Make, every day, a sweeter grass,
And multiply thy leaping!
And may the mountain foxes pass
And never scent thee sleeping!
Ob! let my pipe be clear and far,
And let me find sweet water!*

*No hawk, nor udder-seeking jar
Come near thee, little daughter!
May fiery rocks defend, at noon,
Thy tender feet from slipping!
Oh! bear my prayer beneath the moon—
Great Master, Goat-God—skipping!”*

With a long wail of the pipe THE GOATHERD BOY is silent. Then the moon fades, and all is black; till, in the faint grisly light of the false dawn creeping up, SEELCHEN is seen rising from the side of the sleeping FELSMAN. THE GOATHERD BOY has gone; but by the rock stands the Shepherd of THE COW HORN in his cloak.

SEELCHEN. Years, years I have slept. My spirit is hungry. [*Then as she sees the Shepherd of THE COW HORN standing there*] I know thee now—Life of the earth—the smell of thee, the sight of thee, the taste of thee, and all thy music. I have passed thee and gone by. [*She moves away.*]

FELSMAN. [*Waking*] Where wouldst thou go?

SEELCHEN. To the edge of the world.

FELSMAN. [*Rising and trying to stay her*] Thou shalt not leave me!

But against her smiling gesture he struggles as though against solidity.

SEELCHEN. Friend! The time has come.

FELSMAN. Were my kisses, then, too rude? Was I too dull?

SEELCHEN. I do not regret, but I must go.

The Youth of THE WINE HORN is seen suddenly standing opposite the motionless Shepherd of THE COW HORN; and his mandolin twangs out.

FELSMAN. The cursed music of the Town. Is it to *him* thou wilt return? [*Groping for sight of the bated figure*] I cannot see.

SEELCHEN. Fear not! I go ever onward.

FELSMAN. Do not leave me to the wind in the rocks! Without thee love is dead, and I must die.

SEELCHEN. Poor heart! I am gone.

FELSMAN. [*Crouching against the rock*] It is cold.

At the blowing of the Shepherd's pipe, THE COW HORN stretches forth his hand to her. The mandolin twangs out, and THE WINE HORN holds out his hand. She stands unmoving.

SEELCHEN. Companions, I must go. In a moment it will be dawn.

In silence THE COW HORN and THE WINE HORN cover their faces. The false dawn dies. It falls quite dark.

SCENE V

Then a faint glow stealing up, lights the snowy Peak of THE GREAT HORN, and streams forth on SEELCHEN. No other peak is visible, but to either side of that path of light, like shadows, THE COW HORN and THE WINE HORN stand with cloaked heads.

SEELCHEN. Great One! I come!

The Peak of THE GREAT HORN speaks in a far-away voice, growing, with the light, clearer and stronger:

*“Wandering flame, thou restless fever
Burning all things, regretting none;
The winds of fate are stilled for ever—
Thy little generous life is done,
And all its wistful wonderings cease!
Thou traveller to the tideless sea,
Where light and dark, and change and peace,
Are One—Come, little soul, to MYSTERY!”*

SEELCHEN, *falling on her knees, bows her head to the ground. The glow slowly fades till the scene is black.*

SCENE VI

Then as the blackness lifts, in the dim light of the false dawn filtering through the window of the mountain hut, LAMOND and FELSMAN are seen standing beside SEELCHEN looking down at her asleep on the window seat.

FELSMAN. [*Putting out his hand to wake her*] In a moment it will be dawn.

She stirs, and her lips move, murmuring.

LAMOND. Let her sleep. She's dreaming.

FELSMAN *raises a lantern, till its light falls on her face. Then the two men move stealthily towards the door, and, as she speaks, pass out.*

SEELCHEN. [*Rising to her knees, and stretching out her hands with ecstasy*] Great One, I come! [*Waking, she looks around, and struggles to her feet*] My little dream!

Through the open door, the first flush of dawn shows in the sky. There is a sound of goat-bells passing.

The curtain falls.

THE PIGEON

A FANTASY IN THREE ACTS

*“Without that, Monsieur, all is dry as a
parched skin of orange.”*

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

CHRISTOPHER WELLWYN, *an artist*

ANN, *his daughter*

GUINEVERE MEGAN, *a flower-seller*

RORY MEGAN, *her husband*

FERRAND, *an alien*

TIMSON, *once a cabman*

EDWARD BERTLEY, *a Canon*

ALFRED CALWAY, *a Professor*

SIR THOMAS HOXTON, *a Justice of the Peace*

ALSO A POLICE CONSTABLE, THREE HUMBLE-MEN, AND
SOME CURIOUS PERSONS

The action passes in Wellwyn's Studio, and the street outside.

ACT I. *Christmas Eve.*

ACT II. *New Year's Day.*

ACT III. *The First of April.*

CAST OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION BY
MESSRS. J. E. VEDRENNE AND
DENNIS EADIE

AT THE

ROYALTY THEATRE, LONDON

ON JANUARY 30TH, 1912

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Christopher Wellwyn | MR. WHITFORD KANE |
| Ann | MISS GLADYS COOPER |
| Ferrand | MR. DENNIS EADIE |
| Timson | MR. WILFRED SHINE |
| Mrs. Megan | MISS MARGARET MORRIS |
| Megan | MR. STANLEY LOGAN |
| Canon Bertley | MR. HUBERT HARBEN |
| Professor Calway | MR. FRANK VERNON |
| Sir Thomas Hoxton | MR. FREDERICK LLOYD |
| Police Constable | MR. ARTHUR B. MURRAY |
| First Humble-Man | MR. W. LEMMON WARDE |
| Second Humble-Man | MR. F. B. J. SHARP |
| Third Humble-Man | MR. ARTHUR BOWYER |
| A Loafer | MR. ARTHUR BAXENDELL |



ACT I

It is the night of Christmas Eve, the scene is a Studio flush with the street, having a skylight darkened by a fall of snow. There is no one in the room, the walls of which are whitewashed, above a floor of bare dark boards. A fire is cheerfully burning. On a model's platform stands an easel and canvas. There are busts and pictures; a screen, a little stool, two arm-chairs, and a long old-fashioned settle under the window. A door in one wall leads to the house, a door in the opposite wall to the model's dressing-room, and the street door is in the centre of the wall between. On a low table a Russian samovar is hissing, and beside it on a tray stands a teapot, with glasses, lemon, sugar, and a decanter of rum. Through a huge uncurtained window close to the street door the snowy lamplit street can be seen, and beyond it the river and a night of stars.

The sound of a latchkey turned in the lock of the street door, and ANN WELLWYN enters, a girl of seventeen, with hair tied in a ribbon and covered by a scarf. Leaving the door open, she

turns up the electric light and goes to the fire. She throws off her scarf and long red cloak. She is dressed in a high evening frock of some soft white material. Her movements are quick and substantial. Her face, full of no nonsense, is decided and sincere, with deep-set eyes, and a capable, well-shaped forehead. Shredding off her gloves she warms her hands.

*In the doorway appear the figures of two men. The first is rather short and slight, with a soft short beard, bright soft eyes, and a crumply face. Under his squash hat his hair is rather plentiful and rather grey. He wears an old brown ulster and woollen gloves, and is puffing at a hand-made cigarette. He is ANN'S father, WELLWYN, the artist. His companion is a well-wrapped clergyman of medium height and stoutish build, with a pleasant, rosy face, rather shining eyes, and rather chubby clean-shaped lips; in appearance, indeed, a grown-up boy. He is the Vicar of the parish—*CANON BERTLEY.

BERTLEY. My dear Wellwyn, the whole question of reform is full of difficulty. When you have two men like Professor Calway and Sir Thomas Hoxton taking diametrically opposite points of view, as we've seen to-night, I confess, I——

WELLWYN. Come in, Vicar, and have some grog.

BERTLEY. Not to-night, thanks! Christmas to-morrow! Great temptation, though, this room! Good night, Wellwyn; good night, Ann!

ANN. [*Coming from the fire towards the tea-table*] Good night, Canon Bertley.

He goes out, and WELLWYN, shutting the door after him, approaches the fire.

ANN. [*Sitting on the little stool, with her back to the fire, and making tea*] Daddy!

WELLWYN. My dear?

ANN. You say you liked Professor Calway's lecture. Is it going to do you any good, that's the question?

WELLWYN. I—I hope so, Ann.

ANN. I took you on purpose. Your charity's getting simply awful. Those two this morning cleared out all my housekeeping money.

WELLWYN. Um! Um! I quite understand your feeling.

ANN. They both had your card, so I couldn't refuse—didn't know what you'd said to them. Why don't you make it a rule never to give your card to anyone except really decent people, and—picture dealers, of course.

WELLWYN. My dear, I have—often.

ANN. Then why don't you keep it? It's a fright-

ful habit. You *are* naughty, Daddy. One of these days you'll get yourself into most fearful complications.

WELLWYN. My dear, when they—when they look at you?

ANN. You know the house wants all sorts of things. Why do you speak to them at all?

WELLWYN. I don't—they speak to me.

He takes off his ulster and hangs it over the back of an arm-chair.

ANN. They see you coming. Anybody can see you coming, Daddy. That's why you ought to be so careful. I shall make you wear a hard hat. Those squashy hats of yours are hopelessly inefficient.

WELLWYN. [*Gazing at his hat*] Calway wears one.

ANN. As if anyone would beg of Professor Calway.

WELLWYN. Well—perhaps not. You know, Ann, I admire that fellow. Wonderful power of—of—theory! How a man can be so absolutely tidy in his mind! It's most exciting.

ANN. Has anyone begged of you to-day?

WELLWYN. [*Doubtfully*] No—no.

ANN. [*After a long, severe look*] Will you have rum in your tea?

WELLWYN. [*Crestfallen*] Yes, my dear—a good deal.

ANN. [*Pouring out the rum, and handing him the glass*] Well, who was it?

WELLWYN. He didn't beg of me. [*Losing himself in recollection*] Interesting old creature, Ann—real type. Old cabman.

ANN. Where?

WELLWYN. Just on the Embankment.

ANN. Of course! Daddy, you know the Embankment ones are *always* rotters.

WELLWYN. Yes, my dear; but this wasn't.

ANN. Did you give him your card?

WELLWYN. I—I—don't—

ANN. *Did* you, Daddy?

WELLWYN. I'm rather afraid I may have!

ANN. May have! It's simply immoral.

WELLWYN. Well, the old fellow was so awfully human, Ann. Besides, I didn't give him any money—hadn't got any.

ANN. Look here, Daddy! Did you ever ask anybody for anything? You know you never did, you'd starve first. So would anybody decent. Then, why won't you see that people who beg are rotters?

WELLWYN. But, my dear, we're not all the same. They wouldn't do it if it wasn't natural to them. One likes to be friendly. What's the use of being alive if one isn't?

ANN. Daddy, you're hopeless.

WELLWYN. But, look here, Ann, the whole thing's so jolly complicated. According to Calway, we're to give the State all we can spare, to make the undeserving deserving. He's a Professor; he ought to know. But old Hoxton's always dinning it into me that we ought to support private organisations for helping the deserving, and damn the undeserving. Well, that's just the opposite. And he's a J.P. Tremendous experience. And the Vicar seems to be for a little bit of both. Well, what the devil——? My trouble is, whichever I'm with, he always converts me. [*Ruefully*] And there's no fun in any of them.

ANN. [*Rising*] Oh! Daddy, you are so—don't you know that you're the despair of all social reformers? [*She envelops him*] There's a tear in the left knee of your trousers. You're not to wear them again.

WELLWYN. Am I likely to?

ANN. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if it isn't your only pair. D'you know what I live in terror of?

WELLWYN *gives her a queer and apprehensive look.*

ANN. That you'll take them off some day, and give them away in the street. Have you got any money? [*She feels in his coat, and he in his trou-*

sers—they find nothing] Do you know that your pockets are one enormous hole?

WELLWYN. No!

ANN. Spiritually.

WELLWYN. Oh! Ah! H'm!

ANN. [*Severely*] Now, look here, Daddy! [*She takes him by his lapels*] Don't imagine that it isn't the most disgusting luxury on your part to go on giving away things as you do! You know what you really are, I suppose—a sickly sentimentalist!

WELLWYN. [*Breaking away from her, disturbed*] It isn't sentiment. It's simply that they seem to me so—so—jolly. If I'm to give up feeling sort of—nice in here [*he touches his chest*] about people—it doesn't matter *who* they are—then I don't know what I'm to do. I shall have to sit with my head in a bag.

ANN. I think you ought to.

WELLWYN. I suppose they see I like them—then they tell me things. After that, of course you can't help doing what you can.

ANN. Well, if you *will* love them up!

WELLWYN. My dear, I don't want to. It isn't *them* especially—why, I feel it even with old Calway sometimes. It's only Providence that he doesn't want anything of me—except to make me like himself—confound him!

ANN. [*Moving towards the door into the house—impressively*] What you don't see is that other people aren't a bit like you.

WELLWYN. Well, thank God!

ANN. It's so old-fashioned too! I'm going to bed—I just leave you to your conscience.

WELLWYN. Oh!

ANN. [*Opening the door—severely*] Good night—
[*with a certain weakening*] you old—Daddy!

She jumps at him, gives him a bug, and goes out.

WELLWYN *stands perfectly still. He first gazes up at the skylight, then down at the floor. Slowly he begins to shake his head, and mutter, as he moves towards the fire.*

WELLWYN. Bad lot. . . . Low type—no backbone, no stability!

There comes a fluttering knock on the outer door. As the sound slowly enters his consciousness, he begins to wince, as though he knew, but would not admit its significance. Then he sits down, covering his ears. The knocking does not cease. WELLWYN drops first one, then both hands, rises, and begins to sidle towards the door. The knocking becomes louder.

WELLWYN. Ah dear! Tt! Tt! Tt!

After a look in the direction of ANN'S disap-

pearance, he opens the street door a very little way. By the light of the lamp there can be seen a young girl in dark clothes, huddled in a shawl to which the snow is clinging. She has on her arm a basket covered with a bit of sacking.

WELLWYN. I can't, you know; it's impossible.
The girl says nothing, but looks at him with dark eyes.

WELLWYN. [*Wincing*] Let's see—I don't know you—do I?

The girl, speaking in a soft hoarse voice, with a faint accent of reproach: "Mrs. Megan—you give me this——" She holds out a dirty visiting card.

WELLWYN. [*Recoiling from the card*] Oh! Did I? Ah! When?

MRS. MEGAN. You 'ad some vi'lets off of me larst spring. You give me 'arf a crown.

[A smile tries to visit her face.

WELLWYN. [*Looking stealthily round*] Ah! Well, come in—just for a minute—it's very cold—and tell us what it is.

She comes in stolidly, a sphinx-like figure, with her pretty tragic little face.

WELLWYN. I don't remember you. [*Looking closer*] Yes, I do. Only—you weren't the same—were you?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Dully*] I seen trouble since.

WELLWYN. Trouble! Have some tea?

He looks anxiously at the door into the house, then goes quickly to the table, and pours out a glass of tea, putting rum into it.

WELLWYN. [*Handing her the tea*] Keeps the cold out! Drink it off!

MRS. MEGAN *drinks it off, chokes a little, and almost immediately seems to get a size larger.*

WELLWYN *watches her with his head held on one side, and a smile broadening on his face.*

WELLWYN. Cure for all evils, um?

MRS. MEGAN. It warms you. [*She smiles.*

WELLWYN. [*Smiling back, and catching himself out*] Well! You know, I oughtn't.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Conscious of the disruption of his personality, and withdrawing into her tragic abyss*] I wouldn't 'a come, but you told me if I wanted an 'and—

WELLWYN. [*Gradually losing himself in his own nature*] Let me see—corner of Flight Street, wasn't it?

MRS. MEGAN. [*With faint eagerness*] Yes, sir, an' I told you about me vi'lets—it was a luvly spring day.

WELLWYN. Beautiful! Beautiful! Birds singing, and the trees, &c.! We had quite a talk. You had a baby with you.

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. I got married since then.

WELLWYN. Oh! Ah! Yes! [*Cheerfully*] And how's the baby?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Turning to stone*] I lost her.

WELLWYN. Oh! poor—Um!

MRS. MEGAN. [*Impassive*] You said something abaht makin' a picture of me. [*With faint eagerness*] So I thought I might come, in case you'd forgotten.

WELLWYN. [*Looking at her intently*] Things going badly?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Stripping the sacking off her basket*] I keep 'em covered up, but the cold gets to 'em. Thruppence—that's all I've took.

WELLWYN. Ho! Tt! Tt! [*He looks into the basket*] Christmas, too!

MRS. MEGAN. They're dead.

WELLWYN. [*Drawing in his breath*] Got a good husband?

MRS. MEGAN. He plays cards.

WELLWYN. Oh, Lord! And what are you doing out—with a cold like that? [*He taps his chest.*

MRS. MEGAN. We was sold up this morning—he's gone off with 'is mates. Haven't took enough yet for a night's lodgin'.

WELLWYN. [*Correcting a spasmodic dive into his pockets*] But who buys *flowers* at this time of night?

MRS. MEGAN *looks at him, and faintly smiles.*

WELLWYN. [*Rumpling his hair*] Saints above us! Here! Come to the fire!

She follows him to the fire. He shuts the street door.

WELLWYN. Are your feet wet?

She nods.

WELLWYN. Well, sit down here, and take them off. That's right.

She sits on the stool. And after a slow look up at him, which has in it a deeper knowledge than belongs of right to her years, begins taking off her shoes and stockings. WELLWYN goes to the door into the house, opens it, and listens with a sort of stealthy casualness. He returns whistling, but not out loud. The girl has finished taking off her stockings, and turned her bare toes to the flames. She shuffles them back under her skirt.

WELLWYN. How old are you, my child?

MRS. MEGAN. Nineteen, come Candlemas.

WELLWYN. And what's your name?

MRS. MEGAN. Guinevere.

WELLWYN. What? Welsh?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes—from Battersea.

WELLWYN. And your husband?

MRS. MEGAN. No. Irish, 'e is. Notting Dale, 'e comes from.

WELLWYN. Roman Catholic?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. My 'usband's an atheist as well.

WELLWYN. I see. [*Abstractedly*] How jolly! And how old is he—this young man of yours?

MRS. MEGAN. 'E'll be twenty soon.

WELLWYN. Babes in the wood! Does he treat you badly?

MRS. MEGAN. No.

WELLWYN. Nor drink?

MRS. MEGAN. No. He's not a bad one. Only he gets playin' cards—then 'e'll fly the kite.

WELLWYN. I see. And when he's not flying it, what does he do?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Touching her basket*] Same as me. Other jobs tires 'im.

WELLWYN. That's very nice! [*He checks himself*] Well, what am I to do with you?

MRS. MEGAN. Of course, I could get me night's lodging if I like to do—the same as some of them.

WELLWYN. No! no! Never, my child! Never!

MRS. MEGAN. It's easy that way.

WELLWYN. Heavens! But your husband! Um?

MRS. MEGAN. [*With stoical vindictiveness*] He's after one I know of.

WELLWYN. Tt! What a pickle!

MRS. MEGAN. I'll 'ave to walk about the streets.

WELLWYN. [*To himself*] Now how can I?

MRS. MEGAN *looks up and smiles at him, as if she had already discovered that he is peculiar.*

WELLWYN. You see, the fact is, I mustn't give you anything—because—well, for one thing I haven't got it. There are other reasons, but that's the—real one. But, now, there's a little room where my models dress. I wonder if you could sleep there. Come, and see.

The girl gets up lingeringly, loth to leave the warmth. She takes up her wet stockings.

MRS. MEGAN. Shall I put them on again?

WELLWYN. No, no; there's a nice warm pair of slippers. [*Seeing the steam rising from her*] Why, you're wet all over. Here, wait a little!

He crosses to the door into the house, and after stealthily listening, steps through. The girl, like a cat, steals back to the warmth of the fire. WELLWYN returns with a candle, a canary-coloured bath-gown, and two blankets.

WELLWYN. Now then! [*He precedes her towards the door of the model's room*] Hsssh! [*He opens the door and holds up the candle to show her the room*] Will it do? There's a couch. You'll find some washing things. Make yourself quite at home. See!

The girl, perfectly dumb, passes through with

ber basket—and her shoes and stockings. WELLWYN hands her the candle, blankets, and bath-gown.

WELLWYN. Have a good sleep, child! Forget that you're alive! [*He closes the door, mournfully*] Done it again! [*He goes to the table, cuts a large slice of cake, knocks on the door, and hands it in*] Chow-chow! [*Then, as he walks away, he sights the opposite door*] Well—damn it, what could I have done? Not a farthing on me! [*He goes to the street door to shut it, but first opens it wide to confirm himself in his hospitality*] Night like this!

A sputter of snow is blown in his face. A voice says: "Monsieur, pardon!" WELLWYN recoils spasmodically. A figure moves from the lamp-post to the doorway. He is seen to be young and to have ragged clothes. He speaks again: "You do not remember me, Monsieur? My name is Ferrand—it was in Paris, in the Champs-Élysées—by the fountain. . . . When you came to the door, Monsieur—I am not made of iron. . . . Tenez, here is your card—I have never lost it." He holds out to WELLWYN an old and dirty visiting card. As inch by inch he has advanced into the doorway, the light from within falls on him, a tall gaunt young pagan with fair hair and reddish golden

stubble of beard, a long ironical nose a little to one side, and large, grey, rather prominent eyes. There is a certain grace in his figure and movements ; his clothes are nearly dropping off him.

WELLWYN. [*Yielding to a pleasant memory*] Ah ! yes. By the fountain. I was sitting there, and you came and ate a roll, and drank the water.

FERRAND. [*With faint eagerness*] My breakfast. I was in poverty—veree bad off. You gave me ten francs. I thought I had a little the right [WELLWYN *makes a movement of disconcertion*], seeing you said that if I came to England——

WELLWYN. Um ! And so you've come ?

FERRAND. It was time that I consolidated my fortunes, Monsieur.

WELLWYN. And you—have——

[*He stops embarrassed.*]

FERRAND. [*Sbrugging his ragged shoulders*] One is not yet Rothschild.

WELLWYN. [*Sympathetically*] No. [*Yielding to memory*] We talked philosophy.

FERRAND. I have not yet changed my opinion. We other vagabonds, we are exploited by the bourgeois. This is always my idea, Monsieur.

WELLWYN. Yes—not quite the general view, perhaps ! Well— [*Heartily*] Come in ! Very glad to see you again.

FERRAND. [*Brushing his arm over his eyes*] Pardon, Monsieur—your goodness—I am a little weak. [*He opens his coat, and shows a belt drawn very tight over his ragged shirt*] I tighten him one hole for each meal, during two days now. That gives you courage.

WELLWYN. [*With cooing sounds, pouring out tea, and adding rum*] Have some of this. It'll buck you up. [*He watches the young man drink.*]

FERRAND. [*Becoming a size larger*] Sometimes I think that I will never succeed to dominate my life, Monsieur—though I have no vices, except that I guard always the aspiration to achieve success. But I will not roll myself under the machine of existence to gain a nothing every day. I must find with what to fly a little.

WELLWYN. [*Delicately*] Yes; yes—I remember, you found it difficult to stay long in any particular—yes.

FERRAND. [*Proudly*] In one little corner? No—Monsieur—never! That is not in my character. I must see life.

WELLWYN. Quite, quite! Have some cake?

[*He cuts cake.*]

FERRAND. In your country they say you cannot eat the cake and have it. But one must always try, Monsieur; one must never be content. [*Refusing the cake*] *Grand merci*, but for the moment

I have no stomach—I have lost my stomach now for two days. If I could smoke, Monsieur!

[He makes the gesture of smoking.]

WELLWYN. Rather! *[Handing his tobacco pouch]* Roll yourself one.

FERRAND. *[Rapidly rolling a cigarette]* If I had not found you, Monsieur—I would have been a little hole in the river to-night—I was so discouraged. *[He inhales and puffs a long luxurious whiff of smoke. Very bitterly]* Life! *[He disperses the puff of smoke with his finger, and stares before him]* And to think that in a few minutes HE will be born! Monsieur! *[He gazes intently at WELLWYN]* The world would reproach you for your goodness to me.

WELLWYN. *[Looking uneasily at the door into the house]* You think so? Ah!

FERRAND. Monsieur, if HE himself were on earth now, there would be a little heap of gentlemen writing to the journals every day to call Him sloppee sentimentalist! And what is verree funny, these gentlemen they would all be most strong Christians. *[He regards WELLWYN deeply]* But that will not trouble you, Monsieur; I saw well from the first that you are no Christian. You have so kind a face.

WELLWYN. Oh! Indeed!

FERRAND. You have not enough the Pharisee in

your character. You do not judge, and you are judged. [*He stretches his limbs as if in pain.*]

WELLWYN. Are you in pain?

FERRAND. I 'ave a little the rheumatism.

WELLWYN. Wet through, of course! [*Glancing towards the house*] Wait a bit! I wonder if you'd like these trousers; they've—er—they're not quite——

He passes through the door into the house.

FERRAND stands at the fire, with his limbs spread as it were to embrace it, smoking with abandonment. WELLWYN returns stealthily, dressed in a Jaeger dressing-gown, and bearing a pair of drawers, his trousers, a pair of slippers, and a sweater.

WELLWYN. [*Speaking in a low voice, for the door is still open*] Can you make these do for the moment?

FERRAND. *Je vous remercie, Monsieur.* [*Pointing to the screen*] May I retire?

WELLWYN. Yes, yes.

FERRAND goes behind the screen. WELLWYN closes the door into the house, then goes to the window to draw the curtains. He suddenly recoils and stands petrified with doubt.

WELLWYN. Good Lord!

There is the sound of tapping on glass. Against the window-pane is pressed the face of a

man. WELLWYN motions to him to go away. He does not go, but continues tapping. WELLWYN opens the door. There enters a square old man, with a red, pendulous-jawed, shaking face under a snow-sprinkled bowler hat. He is holding out a visiting card with tremulous hand.

WELLWYN. Who's that? Who are you?

TIMSON. [*In a thick, hoarse, shaking voice*] 'Appy to see you, sir; we 'ad a talk this morning. Timson—I give you me name. You invited of me, if ye remember.

WELLWYN. It's a little late, really.

TIMSON. Well, ye see, I never expected to 'ave to call on yer. I was 'itched up all right when I spoke to yer this mornin', but bein' Christmas, things 'ave took a turn with me to-day. [*He speaks with increasing thickness*] I'm reg'lar disgusted—not got the price of a bed abaht me. Thought you wouldn't like me to be delicate—not at my age.

WELLWYN. [*With a mechanical and distracted dive of his hands into his pockets*] The fact is, it so happens I haven't a copper on me.

TIMSON. [*Evidently taking this for professional refusal*] Wouldn't arsk you if I could 'elp it. 'Ad to do with 'orses all me life. It's this 'ere cold I'm frightened of. I'm afraid I'll go to sleep.

WELLWYN. Well, really, I——

TIMSON. To be froze to death—I mean—it's awkward.

WELLWYN. [*Puzzled and unbappy*] Well—come in a moment, and let's—think it out. Have some tea!

He pours out the remains of the tea, and finding there is not very much, adds rum rather liberally. TIMSON, who walks a little wide at the knees, steadying his gait, has followed.

TIMSON. [*Receiving the drink*] Yer 'ealth. 'Ere's—soberiety! [*He applies the drink to his lips with sbaking hand. Agreeably surprised*] Blimey! Thish yer tea's foreign, ain't it?

FERRAND. [*Reappearing from behind the screen in his new clothes of which the trousers stop too soon*] With a needle, Monsieur, I would soon have with what to make face against the world.

WELLWYN. Too short! Ah!

He goes to the dais on which stands ANN'S work-basket, and takes from it a needle and cotton.

While he is so engaged FERRAND is sizing up old TIMSON, as one dog will another. The old man, glass in hand, seems to have lapsed into coma.

FERRAND. [*Indicating TIMSON*] Monsieur!

He makes the gesture of one drinking, and sbakes his head.

WELLWYN. [*Handing him the needle and cotton*]
Um! Afraid so!

They approach TIMSON, who takes no notice.

FERRAND. [*Gently*] It is an old cabby, is it not,
Monsieur? *Ceux sont tous des buveurs.*

WELLWYN. [*Concerned at the old man's stupefaction*] Now, my old friend, sit down a moment.
[*They manœuvre TIMSON to the settle*] Will you
smoke?

TIMSON. [*In a drowsy voice*] Thank 'ee—smoke
pipe of 'baccor. Old 'orse—standin' abaht in th'
cold. [*He relapses into coma.*]

FERRAND. [*With a click of his tongue*] *Il est parti.*

WELLWYN. [*Doubtfully*] He hasn't really left a
horse outside, do you think?

FERRAND. *Non, non, Monsieur*—no 'orse. He is
dreaming. I know very well that state of him—
that catches you sometimes. It is the warmth
sudden on the stomach. He will speak no more
sense to-night. At the most, drink, and fly a little
in his past.

WELLWYN. Poor old buffer!

FERRAND. Touching, is it not, Monsieur? There
are many brave gents among the old cabbies—
they have philosophy—that comes from 'orses,
and from sitting still.

WELLWYN. [*Touching TIMSON'S shoulder*]
Drenched!

FERRAND. That will do 'im no 'arm, Monsieur —no 'arm at all. He is well wet inside, remember —it is Christmas to-morrow. Put him a rug, if you will, he will soon steam.

WELLWYN *takes up ANN'S long red cloak, and wraps it round the old man.*

TIMSON. [*Faintly roused*] Tha's right. Put—the rug on th' old 'orse.

He makes a strange noise, and works his head and tongue.

WELLWYN. [*Alarmed*] What's the matter with him?

FERRAND. It is nothing, Monsieur; for the moment he thinks 'imself a 'orse. *Il joue "cache-cache,"* 'ide and seek, with what you call—'is bitt.

WELLWYN. But what's to be done with him? One can't turn him out in this state.

FERRAND. If you wish to leave him 'ere, Monsieur, have no fear. I charge myself with him.

WELLWYN. Oh! [*Dubiously*] You—er—I really don't know, I—hadn't contemplated— You think you could manage if I—if I went to bed?

FERRAND. But certainly, Monsieur.

WELLWYN. [*Still dubiously*] You—you're sure you've everything you want?

FERRAND. [*Bowing*] *Mais oui, Monsieur.*

WELLWYN. I don't know what I can do by staying.

FERRAND. There is nothing you can do, Monsieur. Have confidence in me.

WELLWYN. Well—keep the fire up quietly—very quietly. You'd better take this coat of mine, too. You'll find it precious cold, I expect, about three o'clock. [*He hands FERRAND his ulster.*]

FERRAND. [*Taking it*] I shall sleep in praying for you, Monsieur.

WELLWYN. Ah! Yes! Thanks! Well—good-night! By the way, I shall be down rather early. Have to think of my household a bit, you know.

FERRAND. *Très bien, Monsieur.* I comprehend. One must well be regular in this life.

WELLWYN. [*With a start*] Lord! [*He looks at the door of the model's room*] I'd forgotten—

FERRAND. Can I undertake anything, Monsieur?

WELLWYN. No, no! [*He goes to the electric light switch by the outer door*] You won't want this, will you?

FERRAND. *Merci, Monsieur.*

WELLWYN *switches off the light.*

FERRAND. *Bon soir, Monsieur!*

WELLWYN. The devil! Er—good-night!

He hesitates, rumples his hair, and passes rather suddenly away.

FERRAND. [*To himself*] Poor pigeon! [*Looking long at old TIMSON*] *Espèce de type anglais!*

He sits down in the firelight, curls up a foot on his knee, and taking out a knife, rips the stitching of a turned-up end of trouser, pinches the cloth double, and puts in the preliminary stitch of a new hem—all with the swiftness of one well-accustomed. Then, as if hearing a sound behind him, he gets up quickly and slips behind the screen. MRS. MEGAN, attracted by the cessation of voices, has opened the door, and is creeping from the model's room towards the fire. She has almost reached it before she takes in the torpid crimson figure of old TIMSON. She halts and puts her hand to her chest—a queer figure in the firelight, garbed in the canary-coloured bath-gown and rabbits-wool slippers, her black matted hair straggling down on her neck. Having quite digested the fact that the old man is in a sort of stupor, MRS. MEGAN goes close to the fire, and sits on the little stool, smiling sideways at old TIMSON. FERRAND, coming quietly up behind, examines her from above, drooping his long nose as if inquiring with it as to her condition in life; then he steps back a yard or two.

FERRAND. [*Gently*] Pardon, Ma'moiselle.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Springing to her feet*] Oh!

FERRAND. All right, all right! We are brave gents!

TIMSON. [*Faintly roused*] 'Old up, there!

FERRAND. Trust in me, Ma'moiselle!

MRS. MEGAN *responds by drawing away.*

FERRAND. [*Gently*] We must be good comrades. This asylum—it is better than a doss-'ouse.

He pushes the stool over towards her, and seats himself. Somewhat reassured, MRS. MEGAN again sits down.

MRS. MEGAN. You frightened me.

TIMSON. [*Unexpectedly—in a drowsy tone*] Purple foreigners!

FERRAND. Pay no attention, Ma'moiselle. He is a philosopher.

MRS. MEGAN. Oh! I thought 'e was boozed.

They both look at TIMSON.

FERRAND. It is the same—veree 'armless.

MRS. MEGAN. What's that he's got on 'im?

FERRAND. It is a coronation robe. Have no fear Ma'moiselle. Veree docile potentate.

MRS. MEGAN. I wouldn't be afraid of him. [*Challenging FERRAND*] I'm afraid o' you.

FERRAND. It is because you do not know me, Ma'moiselle. You are wrong, it is always the unknown you should love.

MRS. MEGAN. I don't like the way you—speaks to me.

FERRAND. Ah! You are a Princess in disguise?

MRS. MEGAN. No fear!

FERRAND. No? What is it then you do to make face against the necessities of life? A living?

MRS. MEGAN. Sells flowers.

FERRAND. [*Rolling his eyes*] It is not a career.

MRS. MEGAN. [*With a touch of devilry*] You don't know what I do.

FERRAND. Ma'moiselle, whatever you do is charming.

MRS. MEGAN *looks at him, and slowly smiles.*

MRS. MEGAN. You're a foreigner.

FERRAND. It is true.

MRS. MEGAN. What do you do for a livin'?

FERRAND. I am an interpreter.

MRS. MEGAN. You ain't very busy, are you?

FERRAND. [*With dignity*] At present I am resting.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Looking at him and smiling*] How did you and 'im come here?

FERRAND. Ma'moiselle, we would ask you the same question.

MRS. MEGAN. The gentleman let me. 'E's funny.

FERRAND. *C'est un ange!* [*At MRS. MEGAN'S blank stare he interprets*] An angel!

MRS. MEGAN. Me luck's out—that's why I come.

FERRAND. [*Rising*] Ah! Ma'moiselle! Luck! There is the little God who dominates us all. Look at this old! [*He points to TIMSON*] He is finished. In his day that old would be doing good business. He could afford himself—[*He makes a sign of drinking*] Then come the motor cars. All goes—he has nothing left, only 'is 'abits of a cocher! Luck!

TIMSON. [*With a vague gesture—drowsily*] Kick the foreign beggars out.

FERRAND. A real Englishman. . . . And look at me! My father was merchant of ostrich feathers in Brussels. If I had been content to go in his business, I would 'ave been rich. But I was born to roll—"rolling stone"—to voyage is stronger than myself. Luck! . . . And you, Ma'moiselle, shall I tell your fortune? [*He looks in her face*] You were born for *la joie de vivre*—to drink the wines of life. *Et vous voilà!* Luck!

Though she does not in the least understand what he has said, her expression changes to a sort of glee.

FERRAND. Yes. You were born loving pleasure. Is it not? You see, you cannot say, No. All of us, we have our fates. Give me your hand. [*He kneels down and takes her hand*] In each of us there is

ACT I

THE PIGEON

that against which we cannot struggle. Yes, yes!

He holds her hand, and turns it over between his own. MRS. MEGAN remains stolid, half-fascinated, half-reluctant.

TIMSON. [*Flickering into consciousness*] Be'ave yourselves! Yer crimson canary birds!

MRS. MEGAN *would withdraw her hand, but cannot.*

FERRAND. Pay no attention, Ma'moiselle. He is a Puritan.

TIMSON *relapses into comatosity, upsetting his glass, which falls with a crash.*

MRS. MEGAN. Let go my hand, please!

FERRAND. [*Relinquishing it, and staring into the fire gravely*] There is one thing I have never done—'urt a woman—that is hardly in my character. [*Then, drawing a little closer, he looks into her face*] Tell me, Ma'moiselle, what is it you think of, all day long?

MRS. MEGAN. I dunno—lots, I thinks of.

FERRAND. Shall I tell you?

Her eyes remain fixed on his, the strangeness of him preventing her from telling him to "get along." He goes on in his ironic voice.

FERRAND. It is of the streets—the lights—the faces—it is of all which moves, and is warm—it is of colour—it is [*he brings his face quite close to*

bers] of Love. That is for you what the road is for me. That is for you what the rum is for that old—
[He jerks his thumb back at TIMSON. Then bending swiftly forward to the girl] See! I kiss you—Ah!

He draws her forward off the stool. There is a little struggle, then she resigns her lips. The little stool, overturned, falls with a clatter. They spring up, and move apart. The door opens and ANN enters from the house in a blue dressing-gown, with her hair loose, and a candle held high above her head. Taking in the strange half-circle round the fire, she recoils. Then, standing her ground, calls in a voice sharpened by fright: "Daddy—Daddy!"

TIMSON. [Stirring uneasily, and struggling to his feet] All ri——! I'm comin'!

FERRAND. Have no fear, Madame!

In the silence that follows, a clock begins loudly striking twelve. ANN remains, as if carved in stone, her eyes fastened on the strangers. There is the sound of some one falling downstairs, and WELLWYN appears, also holding a candle above his head.

ANN. Look!

WELLWYN. Yes, yes, my dear! It—it happened.

ANN. [With a sort of groan] Oh! Daddy!

ACT I

THE PIGEON

*In the renewed silence, the church clock ceases
to chime.*

FERRAND. [*Softly, in his ironic voice*] HE is
come, Monsieur! 'Appy Christmas! Bon Noël!

There is a sudden chime of bells.

The stage is blotted dark.

Curtain.

ACT II

It is four o'clock in the afternoon of New Year's Day. On the raised dais MRS. MEGAN is standing, in her rags, with bare feet and ankles, her dark hair as if blown about, her lips parted, holding out a disbevelled bunch of violets. Before his easel, WELLWYN is painting her. Behind him, at a table between the cupboard and the door to the model's room, TIMSON is washing brushes, with the movements of one employed upon relief works. The samovar is hissing on the table by the stove, the tea-things are set out.

WELLWYN. Open your mouth.

MRS. MEGAN opens her mouth.

ANN. [*In hat and coat, entering from the house*]
Daddy!

WELLWYN goes to her; and, released from restraint, MRS. MEGAN looks round at TIMSON and grimaces.

WELLWYN. Well, my dear?

They speak in low voices.

ANN. [*Holding out a note*] This note from Canon Bertley. He's going to bring her husband here this afternoon. [*She looks at MRS. MEGAN.*]

WELLWYN. Oh!

[He also looks at MRS. MEGAN.]

ANN. And I met Sir Thomas Hoxton at church this morning, and spoke to him about Timson.

WELLWYN. Um!

They look at TIMSON. Then ANN goes back to the door, and WELLWYN follows her.

ANN. *[Turning]* I'm going round now, Daddy, to ask Professor Calway what we're to do with that Ferrand.

WELLWYN. Oh! One each! I wonder if they'll like it.

ANN. They'll have to lump it.

[She goes out into the house.]

WELLWYN. *[Back at his easel]* You can shut your mouth now.

MRS. MEGAN *shuts her mouth, but opens it immediately to smile.*

WELLWYN. *[Spasmodically]* Ah! Now that's what I want. *[He dabs furiously at the canvas. Then standing back, runs his hands through his hair and turns a painter's glance towards the skylight]* Dash! Light's gone! Off you get, child—don't tempt me!

MRS. MEGAN *descends. Passing towards the door of the model's room she stops, and stealthily looks at the picture.*

TIMSON. Ah! Would yer!

WELLWYN. [*Wheeling round*] Want to have a look? Well—come on!

He takes her by the arm, and they stand before the canvas. After a stolid moment, she giggles.

WELLWYN. Oh! You think so?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Who has lost her hoarseness*] It's not like my picture that I had on the pier.

WELLWYN. No—it wouldn't be.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Timidly*] If I had an 'at on, I'd look better.

WELLWYN. With feathers?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes.

WELLWYN. Well, you can't! I don't like hats, and I don't like feathers.

MRS. MEGAN *timidly tugs his sleeve*. TIMSON, *screened as he thinks by the picture, has drawn from his bulky pocket a bottle and is taking a stealthy swig.*

WELLWYN. [*To MRS. MEGAN, affecting not to notice*] How much do I owe you?

MRS. MEGAN. [*A little surprised*] You paid me for to-day—all 'cept a penny.

WELLWYN. Well! Here it is. [*He gives her a coin*] Go and get your feet on!

MRS. MEGAN. You've give me 'arf a crown.

WELLWYN. Cut away now!

MRS. MEGAN, *smiling at the coin, goes*

towards the model's room. She looks back at WELLWYN, as if to draw his eyes to her, but he is gazing at the picture; then, catching old TIMSON'S sour glance, she grimaces at him, kicking up her feet with a little squeal. But when WELLWYN turns to the sound, she is demurely passing through the doorway.

TIMSON. [*In his voice of dubious sobriety*] I've finished these yer brushes, sir. It's not a man's work. I've been thinkin' if you'd keep an 'orse, I could give yer satisfaction.

WELLWYN. Would the horse, Timson?

TIMSON. [*Looking him up and down*] I knows of one that would just suit yer. Reel 'orse, you'd like 'im.

WELLWYN. [*Shaking his head*] Afraid not, Timson! Awfully sorry, though, to have nothing better for you than this, at present.

TIMSON. [*Faintly waving the brushes*] Of course, if you can't afford it, I don't press you—it's only that I feel I'm not doing meself justice. [*Confidentially*] There's just one thing, sir; I can't bear to see a gen'leman imposed on. That foreigner—'e's not the sort to 'ave about the place. Talk? Oh! ah! But 'e'll never do any good with 'imself. He's a alien.

WELLWYN. Terrible misfortune to a fellow, Timson.

TIMSON. Don't you believe it, sir; it's his *fault*. I says to the young lady yesterday: Miss Ann, your father's a gen'leman [*with a sudden accent of boarse sincerity*], and so you are—I don't mind sayin' it—but, I said, he's too easy-goin'.

WELLWYN. Indeed!

TIMSON. Well, see that girl now! [*He shakes his head*] I never did believe in goin' behind a person's back—I'm an Englishman—but [*lowering his voice*] she's a bad hat, sir. Why, look at the street she comes from!

WELLWYN. Oh! you know it?

TIMSON. Lived there meself larst three years. See the difference a few days' corn's made in her. She's that saucy you can't touch 'er head.

WELLWYN. Is there any necessity, Timson?

TIMSON. Artful too. Full o' vice, I call 'er. Where's 'er 'usband?

WELLWYN. [*Gravely*] Come, Timson! You wouldn't like *her* to——

TIMSON. [*With dignity, so that the bottle in his pocket is plainly visible*] I'm a man as always beared inspection.

WELLWYN. [*With a well-directed smile*] So I see.

TIMSON. [*Curving himself round the bottle*] It's not for me to say nothing—but I can tell a gen'leman as quick as ever I can tell an 'orse.

WELLWYN. [*Painting*] I find it safest to assume

that every man is a gentleman, and every woman a lady. Saves no end of self-contempt. Give me the little brush.

TIMSON. [*Handing him the brush—after a considerable introspective pause*] Would yer like me to stay and wash it for yer again? [*With great resolution*] I will—I'll do it for you—never grudged workin' for a gen'leman.

WELLWYN. [*With sincerity*] Thank you, Timson—very good of you, I'm sure. [*He hands him back the brush*] Just lend us a hand with this. [*Assisted by TIMSON he pushes back the dais*] Let's see! What do I owe you?

TIMSON. [*Reluctantly*] It so 'appens, you advanced me to-day's yesterday.

WELLWYN. Then I suppose you want to-morrow's?

TIMSON. Well, I 'ad to spend it, lookin' for a permanent job. When you've got to do with 'orses, you can't neglect the publics, or you might as well be dead.

WELLWYN. Quite so!

TIMSON. It mounts up in the course o' the year.

WELLWYN. It would. [*Passing him a coin*] This is for an exceptional purpose—Timson—see? Not——

TIMSON. [*Touching his forehead*] Certainly, sir. I quite understand. I'm not that sort, as I think

I've proved to yer, comin' here regular day after day, all the week. There's one thing, I ought to warn you perhaps—I might 'ave to give this job up any day.

He makes a faint demonstration with the little brush, then puts it, absent-mindedly, into his pocket.

WELLWYN. [*Gravely*] I'd never stand in the way of your bettering yourself, Timson. And, by the way, my daughter spoke to a friend about you to-day. I think something may come of it.

TIMSON. Oh! Oh! She did! Well, it might do me a bit o' good. [*He makes for the outer door, but stops*] That foreigner! 'E sticks in my gizzard. It's not as if there wasn't plenty o' pigeons for 'im to pluck in 'is own Gawd-forsaken country. Reg-lar jay, that's what I calls 'im. I could tell yer something——

He has opened the door, and suddenly sees that FERRAND himself is standing there. Sticking out his lower lip, TIMSON gives a roll of his jaw and lurches forth into the street. Owing to a slight miscalculation, his face and raised arms are plainly visible through the window, as he fortifies himself from his bottle against the cold. FERRAND, having closed the door, stands with his thumb acting as pointer towards this spectacle. He is now

remarkably dressed in an artist's squashy green hat, a frock coat too small for him, a bright blue tie of knitted silk, the grey trousers that were torn, well-worn brown boots, and a tan waistcoat.

WELLWYN. What luck to-day?

FERRAND. [*With a shrug*] Again I have beaten all London, Monsieur—not one bite. [*Contemplating himself*] I think perhaps, that, for the bourgeoisie, there is a little too much colour in my costume.

WELLWYN. [*Contemplating him*] Let's see—I believe I've an old top hat somewhere.

FERRAND. Ah! Monsieur, merci, but *that* I could not. It is scarcely in my character.

WELLWYN. True!

FERRAND. I have been to merchants of wine, of *tabac*, to hotels, to Leicester Square. I have been to a—Society for spreading Christian knowledge—I thought there I would have a chance perhaps as interpreter. *Toujours même chose*—we regret, we have no situation for you—same thing everywhere. It seems there is nothing doing in this town.

WELLWYN. I've noticed, there never is.

FERRAND. I was thinking, Monsieur, that in aviation there might be a career for me—but it seems one must be trained.

WELLWYN. Afraid so, Ferrand.

FERRAND. [*Approaching the picture*] Ah! You are always working at this. You will have something of very good there, Monsieur. You wish to fix the type of wild savage existing ever amongst our high civilisation. *C'est très chic, ça!* [WELLWYN manifests the quiet delight of an English artist actually understood] In the figures of these good citizens, to whom she offers her flower, you would give the idea of all the cage doors open to catch and make tame the wild bird, that will surely die within. *Très gentil!* Believe me, Monsieur, you have there the greatest comedy of life! How anxious are the tame birds to do the wild birds good. [*His voice changes*] For the wild birds it is not funny. There is in some human souls, Monsieur, what cannot be made tame.

WELLWYN. I believe you, Ferrand.

The face of a young man appears at the window, unseen. Suddenly ANN opens the door leading to the house.

ANN. Daddy—I want you.

WELLWYN. [*To FERRAND*] Excuse me a minute!
[*He goes to his daughter, and they pass out.*

FERRAND remains at the picture. MRS. MEGAN dressed in some of ANN's discarded garments, has come out of the model's room. She steals up behind FERRAND like a cat,

reaches an arm up, and curls it round his mouth. He turns, and tries to seize her; she disingenuously slips away. He follows. The chase circles the tea-table. He catches her, lifts her up, swings round with her, so that her feet fly out; kisses her bent-back face, and sets her down. She stands there smiling. The face at the window darkens.

FERRAND. *La Valse!*

He takes her with both hands by the waist, she puts her hands against his shoulders to push him off—and suddenly they are whirling. As they whirl, they bob together once or twice, and kiss. Then, with a warning motion towards the door, she wrenches herself free, and stops beside the picture, trying desperately to appear demure. WELLWYN and ANN have entered. The face has vanished.

FERRAND. [*Pointing to the picture*] One does not comprehend all this, Monsieur, without well studying. I was in train to interpret for Ma'moiselle the chiaroscuro.

WELLWYN. [*With a queer look*] Don't take it too seriously, Ferrand.

FERRAND. It is a masterpiece.

WELLWYN. My daughter's just spoken to a friend, Professor Calway. He'd like to meet you. Could you come back a little later?

FERRAND. Certainly, Ma'moiselle. That will be an opening for me, I trust.

[He goes to the street door.]

ANN. *[Paying no attention to him]* Mrs. Megan, will you too come back in half an hour?

FERRAND. *Très bien, Ma'moiselle!* I will see that she does. We will take a little promenade together. That will do us good.

He motions towards the door; MRS. MEGAN, all eyes, follows him out.

ANN. Oh! Daddy, they *are* rotters. Couldn't you see they were having the most high jinks?

WELLWYN. *[At his picture]* I seemed to have noticed something.

ANN. *[Preparing for tea]* They were kissing.

WELLWYN. Tt! Tt!

ANN. They're hopeless, all three—especially her. Wish I hadn't given her my clothes now.

WELLWYN. *[Absorbed]* Something of wild-savage.

ANN. Thank goodness it's the Vicar's business to see that married people live together in his parish.

WELLWYN. Oh! *[Dubiously]* The Megans are Roman Catholic-Atheists, Ann.

ANN. *[With beat]* Then they're all the more bound.

WELLWYN *gives a sudden and alarmed whistle.*

ANN. What's the matter?

WELLWYN. Didn't you say you spoke to Sir Thomas, too? Suppose he comes in while the Professor's here. They're cat and dog.

ANN. [*Blankly*] Oh! [*As WELLWYN strikes a match*] The samovar is lighted. [*Taking up the nearly empty decanter of rum and going to the cupboard*] It's all right. He won't.

WELLWYN. We'll hope not.

[He turns back to his picture.]

ANN. [*At the cupboard*] Daddy!

WELLWYN. Hi!

ANN. There were *three bottles.*

WELLWYN. Oh!

ANN. Well! Now there aren't any.

WELLWYN. [*Abstracted*] That'll be Timson.

ANN. [*With real horror*] But it's awful!

WELLWYN. It is, my dear.

ANN. In seven days. To say nothing of the stealing.

WELLWYN. [*Vexed*] I blame myself—very much. Ought to have kept it locked up.

ANN. You ought to keep *him* locked up!

There is heard a mild but authoritative knock.

WELLWYN. Here's the Vicar!

ANN. What are you going to do about the rum?

WELLWYN. [*Opening the door to CANON BERTLEY*] Come in, Vicar! Happy New Year!

BERTLEY. Same to you! Ah! Ann! I've got into touch with her young husband—he's coming round.

ANN. [*Still a little out of her place*] Thank Go—— Goodness!

BERTLEY. [*Faintly surprised*] From what I hear he's not really a bad youth. Afraid he bets on horses. The great thing, Wellwyn, with those poor fellows is to put your finger on the weak spot.

ANN. [*To herself—gloomily*] *That's* not difficult. What would you do, Canon Bertley, with a man who's been drinking father's rum?

BERTLEY. Remove the temptation, of course.

WELLWYN. He's done that.

BERTLEY. Ah! Then—[*WELLWYN and ANN bang on his words*] then I should—er——

ANN. [*Abruptly*] Remove *him*.

BERTLEY. Before I say that, Ann, I must certainly see the individual.

WELLWYN. [*Pointing to the window*] There he is!

In the failing light TIMSON's face is indeed to be seen pressed against the window-pane.

ANN. Daddy, I do wish you'd have thick glass put. It's so disgusting to be spied at!

WELLWYN *going quickly to the door, has opened it.*

WELLWYN. What do you want?

TIMSON *enters with dignity. He is fuddled.*

TIMSON. [*Slowly*] Arskin' yer pardon—thought it me duty to come back—found thish yer little brishel on me.

[He produces the little paint-brush.

ANN. [*In a deadly voice*] Nothing else?

TIMSON *accords her a glassy stare.*

WELLWYN. [*Taking the brush hastily*] That'll do, Timson, thanks!

TIMSON. As I am 'ere, can I do anything for yer?

ANN. Yes, you can sweep out that little room. [*She points to the model's room*] There's a broom in there.

TIMSON. [*Disagreeably surprised*] Certainly; never make bones about a little extra—never 'ave in all me life. Do it at onsh, I will. [*He moves across to the model's room at that peculiar broad gait so perfectly adjusted to his habits*] You quite understand me—couldn't bear to 'ave anything on me that wasn't mine. [*He passes out.*

ANN. Old fraud!

WELLWYN. "In" and "on." Mark my words, he'll restore the—bottles.

BERTLEY. But, my dear Wellwyn, that is stealing.

WELLWYN. We all have our discrepancies, Vicar.

ANN. Daddy! Discrepancies!

WELLWYN. Well, Ann, my theory is that as regards solids Timson's an Individualist, but as regards liquids he's a Communist . . . or *vice versa*, according to taste.

BERTLEY. No, no, we mustn't joke about it. [*Gravely*] I do think he should be spoken to.

WELLWYN. Yes, but not by me.

BERTLEY. Surely you're the proper person.

WELLWYN. [*Shaking his head*] It was my rum, Vicar. Look so personal.

There sound a number of little tat-tat knocks.

WELLWYN. Isn't that the Professor's knock?

While ANN sits down to make tea, he goes to the door and opens it. There, dressed in an ulster, stands a thin, clean-shaved man, with a little hollow sucked into either cheek, who, taking off a grey squash hat, discloses a majestically bald forehead, which completely dominates all that comes below it.

WELLWYN. Come in, Professor! So awfully good of you! You know Canon Bertley, I think?

CALWAY. Ah! How d'you do?

WELLWYN. Your opinion will be invaluable, Professor.

ANN. Tea, Professor Calway?

They have assembled round the tea-table.

CALWAY. Thank you; no tea; milk.

WELLWYN. Rum?

[He pours rum into CALWAY'S milk.

CALWAY. A little—thanks! *[Turning to ANN]*
You were going to show me someone you're trying to rescue, or something, I think.

ANN. Oh! Yes. He'll be here directly—simply perfect rotter.

CALWAY. *[Smiling]* Really! Ah! I think you said he was a congenital?

WELLWYN. *[With great interest]* What!

ANN. *[Low]* Daddy! *[To CALWAY]* Yes; I—I think that's what you call him.

CALWAY. Not old?

ANN. No; and quite healthy—a vagabond.

CALWAY. *[Sipping]* I see! Yes. Is it, do you think chronic unemployment with a vagrant tendency? Or would it be nearer the mark to say: Vagrancy—

WELLWYN. Pure! Oh! pure! Professor. Awfully human.

CALWAY. *[With a smile of knowledge]* Quite! And—er—

ANN. *[Breaking in]* Before he comes, there's another—

BERTLEY. *[Blandly]* Yes, when you came in, we were discussing what should be done with a man

who drinks rum— [CALWAY *pauses in the act of drinking*] that doesn't belong to him.

CALWAY. Really! Dipsomaniac?

BERTLEY. Well—perhaps you could tell us—drink certainly changing thine to mine. The Professor could see him, Wellwyn?

ANN. [*Rising*] Yes, do come and look at him, Professor Calway. He's in there.

[*She points towards the model's room.*]

CALWAY *smiles deprecatingly.*

ANN. No, *really*; we needn't open the door. You can see him through the glass. He's more than half—

CALWAY. Well, I hardly—

ANN. Oh! Do! Come on, Professor Calway! We *must* know what to do with him.

CALWAY *rises.*

ANN. You can stand on a chair. It's all science.

She draws CALWAY to the model's room, which is lighted by a glass panel in the top of the high door. CANON BERTLEY also rises and stands watching. WELLWYN hovers, torn between respect for science and dislike of espionage.

ANN. [*Drawing up a chair*] Come on!

CALWAY. Do you seriously wish me to?

ANN. Rather! It's quite safe; he can't see you.

CALWAY. But he might come out.

ANN *puts her back against the door*. CALWAY *mounts the chair dubiously, and raises his head cautiously, bending it more and more downwards*.

ANN. Well?

CALWAY. He appears to be—sitting on the floor.

WELLWYN. Yes, that's all right!

BERTLEY *covers his lips*.

CALWAY. [*To ANN—descending*] By the look of his face, as far as one can see it, I should say there was a leaning towards mania. I know the treatment.

There come three loud knocks on the door.

WELLWYN and ANN *exchange a glance of consternation*.

ANN. Who's that?

WELLWYN. It sounds like Sir Thomas.

CALWAY. Sir Thomas Hoxton?

WELLWYN. [*Nodding*] Awfully sorry, Professor. You see, we—

CALWAY. Not at all. Only, I must decline to be involved in argument with him, please.

BERTLEY. He has experience. We might get his opinion, don't you think?

CALWAY. On a point of reform? A J.P.!

BERTLEY. [*Deprecating*] My dear sir—we needn't take it.

The three knocks resound with extraordinary fury.

ANN. You'd better open the door, Daddy.

WELLWYN *opens the door*. SIR THOMAS HOXTON *is disclosed in a fur overcoat and top hat. His square, well-coloured face is remarkable for a massive jaw, dominating all that comes above it. His voice is resolute.*

HOXTON. Afraid I didn't make myself heard.

WELLWYN. So good of you to come, Sir Thomas. Canon Bertley! [*They greet*] Professor Calway you know, I think.

HOXTON. [*Ominously*] I do.

They almost greet. An awkward pause.

ANN. [*Blurting it out*] That old cabman I told you of's been drinking Father's rum.

BERTLEY. We were just discussing what's to be done with him, Sir Thomas. One wants to do the very best, of course. The question of reform is always delicate.

CALWAY. I beg your pardon. There is no question here.

HOXTON. [*Abruptly*] Oh! Is he in the house?

ANN. In there.

HOXTON. Works for you, eh?

WELLWYN. Er—yes.

HOXTON. Let's have a look at him!

An embarrassed pause.

BERTLEY. Well—the fact is, Sir Thomas——

CALWAY. When last under observation——

ANN. He was sitting on the floor.

WELLWYN. I don't want the old fellow to feel he's being made a show of. Disgusting to be spied at, Ann.

ANN. You can't, Daddy! He's drunk.

HOXTON. Never mind, Miss Wellwyn. Hundreds of these fellows before me in my time. [At CALWAY] The only thing is a sharp lesson!

CALWAY. I disagree. I've seen the man; what he requires is steady control, and the Dobbins treatment.

WELLWYN approaches them with fearful interest.

HOXTON. Not a bit of it! He wants one for his knob! Brace 'em up! It's the only thing.

BERTLEY. Personally, I think that if he were spoken to seriously——

CALWAY. I cannot walk arm in arm with a crab.

HOXTON. [Approaching CALWAY] I beg your pardon?

CALWAY. [Moving back a little] You're moving backwards, Sir Thomas. I've told you before, convinced reactionaryism, in these days——

There comes a single knock on the street door.

BERTLEY. [Looking at his watch] D'you know,

I'm rather afraid this may be our young husband, Wellwyn. I told him half-past four.

WELLWYN. Oh! Ah! Yes. [*Going towards the two reformers*] Shall we go into the house, Professor, and settle the question quietly while the Vicar sees a young man?

CALWAY. [*Pale with uncompleted statement, and gravitating insensibly in the direction indicated*] The merest sense of continuity—a simple instinct for order——

HOXTON. [*Following*] The only way to get order, sir, is to bring the disorderly up with a round turn.

CALWAY *turns to him in the doorway.*

HOXTON. You people without practical experience——

CALWAY. If you'll listen to me a minute.

HOXTON. I can show you in a mo——

[They vanish through the door.]

WELLWYN. I was afraid of it.

BERTLEY. The two points of view. Pleasant to see such keenness. I may want you, Wellwyn. And Ann perhaps had better not be present.

WELLWYN. [*Relieved*] Quite so! My dear!

ANN *goes reluctantly.* WELLWYN *opens the street door. The lamp outside has just been lighted, and, by its gleam, is seen the figure of RORY MEGAN, thin, pale, youthful.* ANN

turning at the door into the house gives him a long, inquisitive look, then goes.

WELLWYN. Is that Megan?

MEGAN. Yus.

WELLWYN. Come in.

MEGAN comes in. There follows an awkward silence, during which WELLWYN turns up the light, then goes to the tea-table and pours out a glass of tea and rum.

BERTLEY. [*Kindly*]. Now, my boy, how is it that you and your wife are living apart like this?

MEGAN. I dunno.

BERTLEY. Well, if you don't, none of us are very likely to, are we?

MEGAN. That's what I thought, as I was comin' along.

WELLWYN. [*Twinkling*] Have some tea, Megan? [*Handing him the glass*] What d'you think of her picture? 'Tisn't quite finished.

MEGAN. [*After scrutiny*] I seen her look like it—once.

WELLWYN. Good! When was that?

MEGAN. [*Stoically*] When she 'ad the measles.

[*He drinks.*]

WELLWYN. [*Ruminating*] I see—yes. I quite see—feverish!

BERTLEY. My dear Wellwyn, let me—— [*To*

MEGAN] Now, I hope you're willing to come together again, and to maintain her?

MEGAN. If she'll maintain me.

BERTLEY. Oh! but—— I see, you mean you're in the same line of business?

MEGAN. Yus.

BERTLEY. And lean on each other. Quite so!

MEGAN. I leans on 'er mostly—with 'er looks.

BERTLEY. Indeed! Very interesting—that!

MEGAN. Yus. Sometimes she'll take 'arf a crown off of a toff. [He looks at WELLWYN.

WELLWYN. [Twinkling] I apologise to you, Megan.

MEGAN. [With a faint smile] I could do with a bit more of it.

BERTLEY. [Dubiously] Yes! Yes! Now, my boy, I've heard you bet on horses.

MEGAN. No, I don't.

BERTLEY. Play cards, then? Come! Don't be afraid to acknowledge it.

MEGAN. When I'm 'ard up—yus.

BERTLEY. But don't you know that's ruination?

MEGAN. Depends. Sometimes I wins a lot.

BERTLEY. You know that's not at all what I mean. Come, promise me to give it up.

MEGAN. I dunno abaht that.

BERTLEY. Now, there's a good fellow. Make a big effort and throw the habit off!

MEGAN. Comes over me—same as it might over you.

BERTLEY. Over me! How do you mean, my boy?

MEGAN. [*With a look up*] To tork!

WELLWYN, *turning to the picture, makes a funny little noise.*

BERTLEY. [*Maintaining his good humour*] A hit! But you forget, you know, to talk's my business. It's not yours to gamble.

MEGAN. You try sellin' flowers. If that ain't a—gamble——

BERTLEY. I'm afraid we're wandering a little from the point. Husband and wife should be together. You were brought up to that. Your father and mother——

MEGAN. Never was.

WELLWYN. [*Turning from the picture*] The question is, Megan: Will you take your wife home? She's a good little soul.

MEGAN. She never let me know it.

There is a feeble knock on the door.

WELLWYN. Well, now, come. Here she is!

He points to the door, and stands regarding MEGAN with his friendly smile.

MEGAN. [*With a gleam of responsiveness*] I might, perhaps, to please you, sir.

BERTLEY. [*Appropriating the gesture*] Capital, I thought we should get on in time.

MEGAN. Yus.

WELLWYN *opens the door*. MRS. MEGAN and FERRAND *are revealed*. They are about to enter, but catching sight of MEGAN, *hesitate*.

BERTLEY. Come in! Come in!

MRS. MEGAN *enters stolidly*. FERRAND, *following, stands apart with an air of extreme detachment*. MEGAN, *after a quick glance at them both, remains unmoved*. No one has noticed that the door of the model's room has been opened, and that the unsteady figure of old TIMSON is standing there.

BERTLEY. [*A little awkward in the presence of FERRAND—to the MEGANS*] This begins a new chapter. We won't improve the occasion. No need.

MEGAN, *turning towards his wife, makes her a gesture as if to say*: "Here! let's get out of this!"

BERTLEY. Yes, yes, you'll like to get home at once—I know.

[*He holds up his hand mechanically*].

TIMSON. I forbids the banns.

BERTLEY. [*Startled*] Gracious!

TIMSON. [*Extremely unsteady*] Just cause and imejiment. There 'e stands. [*He points to FERRAND*] The crimson foreigner! The mockin' jay!

WELLWYN. Timson!

TIMSON. You're a gen'leman—I'm aweer o' that—but I must speak the truth— [*he waves his hand*] an' shame the devil!

BERTLEY. Is this the rum——?

TIMSON. [*Struck by the word*] I'm a teetotaler.

WELLWYN. Timson, Timson!

TIMSON. Seein' as there's ladies present, I won't be conspicuous. [*Moving away, and making for the door, he strikes against the dais, and mounts upon it*] But what I do say, is: He's no better than 'er and she's worse.

BERTLEY. This is distressing.

FERRAND. [*Calmly*] On my honour, Monsieur!

TIMSON *growls*.

WELLWYN. Now, now, Timson!

TIMSON. That's all right. You're a gen'leman, an' I'm a gen'leman, but he ain't, an' she ain't.

WELLWYN. We shall not believe you.

BERTLEY. No, no; we shall not believe you.

TIMSON. [*Heavily*] Very well, you doubts my word. Will it make any difference, Guv'nor, if I speaks the truth?

BERTLEY. No, certainly not — that is — of course, it will.

TIMSON. Well, then, I see 'em plainer than I see
[*pointing at BERTLEY*] the two of you.

WELLWYN. Be quiet, Timson!

BERTLEY. Not even her husband believes you.

MEGAN. [*Suddenly*] Don't I!

WELLWYN. Come, Megan, you can see the old
fellow's in Paradise.

BERTLEY. Do you credit such a—such an ob-
ject?

He points at TIMSON, who seems falling asleep.

MEGAN. Naow!

Unseen by anybody, ANN has returned.

BERTLEY. Well, then, my boy?

MEGAN. I seen 'em meself.

BERTLEY. Gracious! But just now you were
willing——

MEGAN. [*Sardonically*] There wasn't nothing
against me honour, then. Now you've took it
away between you, comin' aht with it like this. I
don't want no more of 'er, and I'll want a good
deal more of 'im; as 'e'll soon find.

*He jerks his chin at FERRAND, turns slowly on
his heel, and goes out into the street.*

There follows a profound silence.

ANN. What did I say, Daddy? Utter! All three.

Suddenly alive to her presence, they all turn.

TIMSON. [*Waking up and looking round him*]
Well, p'raps I'd better go.

Assisted by WELLWYN he lurches gingerly off the dais towards the door, which WELLWYN holds open for him.

TIMSON. [*Mechanically*] Where to, sir?

Receiving no answer he passes out, touching his hat; and the door is closed.

WELLWYN. Ann!

ANN goes back whence she came.

BERTLEY, *steadily regarding MRS. MEGAN, who has put her arm up in front of her face, beckons to FERRAND, and the young man comes gravely forward.*

BERTLEY. Young people, this is very dreadful.

MRS. MEGAN lowers her arm a little, and looks at him over it.

BERTLEY. Very sad!

MRS. MEGAN. [*Dropping her arm*] Megan's no better than what I am.

BERTLEY. Come, come! Here's your home broken up!

MRS. MEGAN smiles.

BERTLEY. [*Shaking his head gravely*] Surely—surely—you mustn't smile.

MRS. MEGAN becomes tragic.

BERTLEY. That's better. Now, what is to be done?

FERRAND. Believe me, Monsieur, I greatly regret.

BERTLEY. I'm glad to hear it.

FERRAND. If I had foreseen this disaster.

BERTLEY. Is that your only reason for regret?

FERRAND. [*With a little bow*] Any reason that you wish, Monsieur. I will do my possible.

MRS. MEGAN. I could get an unfurnished room if [*she slides her eyes round at WELLWYN*] I 'ad the money to furnish it.

BERTLEY. But suppose I can induce your husband to forgive you, and take you back?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Shaking her head*] 'E'd 'it me.

BERTLEY. I said to forgive.

MRS. MEGAN. That wouldn't make no difference. [*With a flash at BERTLEY*] An' I ain't forgiven him!

BERTLEY. That is sinful.

MRS. MEGAN. *I'm a Catholic.*

BERTLEY. My good child, what difference does that make?

FERRAND. Monsieur, if I might interpret for her.

BERTLEY *silences him with a gesture.*

MRS. MEGAN. [*Sliding her eyes towards WELLWYN*] If I 'ad the money to buy some fresh stock.

BERTLEY. Yes; yes; never mind the money. What I want to find in you both, is repentance.

MRS. MEGAN. [*With a flash up at him*] I can't get me livin' off of repentin'.

BERTLEY. Now, now! Never say what you know to be wrong.

FERRAND. Monsieur, her soul is very simple.

BERTLEY. [*Severely*] I do not know, sir, that we shall get any great assistance from your views. In fact, one thing is clear to me, she must discontinue your acquaintanceship at once.

FERRAND. Certainly, Monsieur. We have no serious intentions.

BERTLEY. All the more shame to you, then!

FERRAND. Monsieur, I see perfectly your point of view. It is very natural.

[*He bows and is silent.*]

MRS. MEGAN. I don't want 'im hurt 'cos o' me. Megan'll get his mates to belt him—bein' foreign like he is.

BERTLEY. Yes, never mind that. It's you I'm thinking of.

MRS. MEGAN. I'd sooner they'd hit *me*.

WELLWYN. [*Suddenly*] Well said, my child!

MRS. MEGAN. 'Twasn't his fault.

FERRAND. [*Without irony—to WELLWYN*] I cannot accept that Monsieur. The blame—it is all mine.

ANN. [*Entering suddenly from the house*] Daddy, they're having an awful——!

The voices of PROFESSOR CALWAY and SIR THOMAS HOXTON are distinctly heard.

CALWAY. The question is a much wider one, Sir Thomas.

HOXTON. As wide as you like, you'll never——

WELLWYN *pushes ANN back into the house and closes the door behind her. The voices are still faintly heard arguing on the threshold.*

BERTLEY. Let me go in here a minute, Wellwyn. I must finish speaking to her. [*He motions MRS. MEGAN towards the model's room*] We can't leave the matter thus.

FERRAND. [*Suavely*] Do you desire my company, Monsieur?

BERTLEY, *with a prohibitive gesture of his hand, shepherds the reluctant MRS. MEGAN into the model's room.*

WELLWYN. [*Sorrowfully*] You shouldn't have done this, Ferrand. It wasn't the square thing.

FERRAND. [*With dignity*] Monsieur, I feel that I am in the wrong. It was stronger than me.

As he speaks, SIR THOMAS HOXTON and PROFESSOR CALWAY enter from the house. In the dim light, and the full cry of argument, they do not notice the figures at the fire. SIR THOMAS HOXTON leads towards the street door.

HOXTON. No, sir, I repeat, if the country once

commits itself to your views of reform, it's as good as doomed.

CALWAY. I seem to have heard that before, Sir Thomas. And let me say at once that your hitty-missy cart-load of bricks *régime*—

HOXTON. Is a deuced sight better, sir, than your grandmotherly methods. What the old fellow wants is a shock! With all this socialistic mollycoddling, you're losing sight of the individual.

CALWAY. [*Swiftly*] You, sir, with your "devil take the hindmost," have never even seen him.

SIR THOMAS HOXTON, *throwing back a gesture of disgust, steps out into the night, and falls heavily. PROFESSOR CALWAY, hastening to his rescue, falls more heavily still.*

TIMSON, *momentarily roused from slumber on the doorstep, sits up.*

HOXTON. [*Struggling to his knees*] Damnation!

CALWAY. [*Sitting*] How simultaneous!

WELLWYN and FERRAND *approach hastily.*

FERRAND. [*Pointing to TIMSON*] Monsieur, it was true, it seems. They had lost sight of the individual.

A policeman has appeared under the street lamp. He picks up HOXTON'S bat.

CONSTABLE. Anything wrong, sir?

HOXTON. [*Recovering his feet*] Wrong? Great Scott! Constable! Why do you let things lie about in the street like this? Look here, Wellwyn!

They all scrutinise TIMSON.

WELLWYN. It's only the old fellow whose reform you were discussing.

HOXTON. How did he come here?

CONSTABLE. Drunk, sir. [*Ascertaining TIMSON to be in the street*] Just off the premises, by good luck. Come along, Father.

TIMSON. [*Assisted to his feet—drowsily*] Cert'nly, by no means; take my arm.

They move from the doorway. HOXTON and

CALWAY re-enter, and go towards the fire.

ANN. [*Entering from the house.*] What's happened?

CALWAY. Might we have a brush?

HOXTON. [*Testily*] Let it dry!

He moves to the fire and stands before it. PROFESSOR

CALWAY following stands a little behind him. ANN returning begins to brush the PROFESSOR'S sleeve.

WELLWYN. [*Turning from the door, where he has stood looking after the receding TIMSON*] Poor old Timson!

FERRAND. [*Softly*] Must be philosopher, Monsieur! They will but run him in a little.

From the model's room MRS. MEGAN *has come out, shepherded by* CANON BERTLEY.

BERTLEY. Let's see, your Christian name is——?

MRS. MEGAN. Guinevere.

BERTLEY. Oh! Ah! Ah! Ann, take Gui—— take our little friend into the study a minute; I am going to put her into service. We shall make a new woman of her, yet.

ANN. [*Handing* CANON BERTLEY *the brush, and turning to* MRS. MEGAN] Come on!

She leads into the house, and MRS. MEGAN *follows stolidly.*

BERTLEY. [*Brushing* CALWAY'S *back*] Have you fallen?

CALWAY. Yes.

BERTLEY. Dear me! How was that?

HOXTON. That old ruffian drunk on the doorstep. Hope they'll give him a sharp dose! These rag-tags!

He looks round, and his angry eyes light by chance on FERRAND.

FERRAND. [*With his eyes on* HOXTON—*softly*] Monsieur, something tells me it is time I took the road again.

WELLWYN. [*Fumbling out a sovereign*] Take this, then!

FERRAND. [*Refusing the coin*] Non, Monsieur. To abuse 'ospitality is not in my character.

BERTLEY. We must not despair of anyone.

HOXTON. Who talked of despairing? Treat him, as I say, and you'll see!

CALWAY. The interest of the State——

HOXTON. The interest of the individual citizen, sir——

BERTLEY. Come! A little of both, a little of both!

They resume their brushing.

FERRAND. You are now debarrassed of us three, Monsieur. I leave you instead—these sirs. [*He points*] *Au revoir, Monsieur!* [*Motioning towards the fire*] 'Appy New Year!

He slips quietly out. WELLWYN, turning, contemplates the three reformers. They are all now brushing away, scratching each other's backs, and gravely bissing. As he approaches them, they speak with a certain unanimity.

HOXTON. My theory——!

CALWAY. My theory——!

BERTLEY. My theory——!

They stop surprised. WELLWYN makes a gesture of discomfort, as they speak again with still more unanimity.

HOXTON. My——!

PLAYS

ACT II

CALWAY. My——!

BERTLEY. My——!

They stop in greater surprise.

The stage is blotted dark.

Curtain.

ACT III

It is the first of April—a white spring day of gleams and driving showers. The street door of WELLWYN'S studio stands wide open, and, past it, in the street, the wind is whirling bits of straw and paper bags. Through the door can be seen the butt end of a stationary furniture van with its flap let down. To this van three humblen men in shirt sleeves and aprons, are carrying out the contents of the studio. The hissing samovar, the teapot, the sugar, and the nearly empty decanter of rum stand on the low round table in the fast-being-gutted room. WELLWYN in his ulster and soft hat, is squatting on the little stool in front of the blazing fire, staring into it, and smoking a hand-made cigarette. He has a moulting air. Behind him the humblen men pass, embracing busts and other articles of vertu.

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. [*Stopping, and standing in the attitude of expectation*] We've about pinched this little lot, sir. Shall we take the—reservoir?

[*He indicates the samovar.*]

WELLWYN. Ah! [*Abstractedly feeling in his*

pockets, and finding coins] Thanks—thanks—
heavy work, I'm afraid.

HUMBLE-MAN. [*Receiving the coins—a little surprised and a good deal pleased*] Thank'ee, sir. Much obliged, I'm sure. We'll 'ave to come back for this. [*He gives the dais a vigorous push with his foot*] Not a fixture, as I understand. Perhaps you'd like us to leave these 'ere for a bit.

[He indicates the tea-things.]

WELLWYN. Ah! do.

The humble-men go out. There is the sound of horses being started, and the butt end of the van disappears. WELLWYN stays on the stool, smoking and brooding over the fire. The open doorway is darkened by a figure. CANON BERTLEY is standing there.

BERTLEY. Wellwyn!

WELLWYN *turns and rises.*

BERTLEY. It's ages since I saw you. No idea you were moving. This is very dreadful.

WELLWYN. Yes, Ann found this—too exposed. That tall house in Flight Street—we're going there. Seventh floor.

BERTLEY. Lift?

WELLWYN *shakes his head.*

BERTLEY. Dear me! No lift? Fine view, no doubt.

WELLWYN *nods.*

BERTLEY. You'll be greatly missed.

WELLWYN. So Ann thinks. Vicar, what's become of that little flower-seller I was painting at Christmas? You took her into service.

BERTLEY. Not we—exactly! Some dear friends of ours. Painful subject!

WELLWYN. Oh!

BERTLEY. Yes. She got the footman into trouble.

WELLWYN. Did she, now?

BERTLEY. Disappointing. I consulted with Calway, and he advised me to try a certain institution. We got her safely in—excellent place; but, d'you know, she broke out three weeks ago. And since—I've heard—[*he holds his hands up*] hopeless, I'm afraid—quite!

WELLWYN. I *thought* I saw her last night. You can't tell me her address, I suppose?

BERTLEY. [*Shaking his head*] The husband too has quite passed out of my ken. He betted on horses, you remember. I'm sometimes tempted to believe there's nothing for some of these poor folk but to pray for death.

ANN has entered from the house. Her hair bangs from under a knitted cap. She wears a white wool jersey, and a loose silk scarf.

BERTLEY. Ah! Ann. I was telling your father of that poor little Mrs. Megan.

ANN. Is she dead?

BERTLEY. Worse, I fear. By the way—what became of her accomplice?

ANN. We haven't seen him since. [*She looks searchingly at WELLWYN*] At least—have you—Daddy?

WELLWYN. [*Rather hurt*] No, my dear; I have not.

BERTLEY. And the—old gentleman who drank the rum?

ANN. He got fourteen days. It was the fifth time.

BERTLEY. Dear me!

ANN. When he came out he got more drunk than ever. Rather a score for Professor Calway, wasn't it?

BERTLEY. I remember. He and Sir Thomas took a kindly interest in the old fellow.

ANN. Yes, they fell over him. The Professor got him into an Institution.

BERTLEY. Indeed!

ANN. He was perfectly sober all the time he was there.

WELLWYN. My dear, they only allow them milk.

ANN. Well, anyway, he was reformed.

WELLWYN. Ye—yes!

ANN. [*Terribly*] Daddy! You've been seeing him!

WELLWYN. [*With dignity*] My dear, I have not.

ANN. How do you know, then?

WELLWYN. Came across Sir Thomas on the Embankment yesterday; told me old Timson had been had up again for sitting down in front of a brewer's dray.

ANN. Why?

WELLWYN. Well, you see, as soon as he came out of the what d'you call 'em, he got drunk for a week, and it left him in low spirits.

BERTLEY. Do you mean he deliberately sat down, with the intention—of—er?

WELLWYN. Said he was tired of life, but they didn't believe him.

ANN. Rather a score for Sir Thomas! I suppose he'd told the Professor? What did *he* say?

WELLWYN. Well, the Professor said [*with a quick glance at BERTLEY*] he felt there was nothing for some of these poor devils but a lethal chamber.

BERTLEY. [*Shocked*] Did he really!

[*He has not yet caught WELLWYN'S glance.*]

WELLWYN. And Sir Thomas agreed. Historic occasion. And you, Vicar—H'm!

BERTLEY *winces.*

ANN. [*To herself*] Well, there isn't.

BERTLEY. And yet! Some good in the old fellow, no doubt, if one could put one's finger on it. [*Preparing to go*] You'll let us know, then, when you're settled. What was the address?

WELLWYN *takes out and hands him a card.*

BERTLEY. Ah! yes. Good-bye, Ann. Good-bye, Wellwyn. [*The wind blows his hat along the street*] What a wind! [*He goes, pursuing.*]

ANN. [*Who has eyed the card askance*] Daddy, have you told those other two where we're going?

WELLWYN. Which other two, my dear?

ANN. The Professor and Sir Thomas.

WELLWYN. Well, Ann, naturally I——

ANN. [*Jumping on to the dais with disgust*] Oh, dear! When I'm trying to get you away from all this atmosphere. I don't so much mind the Vicar knowing, because he's got a weak heart——

[*She jumps off again.*]

WELLWYN. [*To himself*] Seventh floor! I felt there was something.

ANN. [*Preparing to go*] I'm going round now. But you must stay here till the van comes back. And don't forget you tipped the men after the first load.

WELLWYN. Oh! yes, yes. [*Uneasily*] Good sorts they look, those fellows!

ANN. [*Scrutinising him*] What have you done?

WELLWYN. Nothing, my dear, really——!

ANN. What?

WELLWYN. I—I rather think I may have tipped them twice.

ANN. [*Dryly*] Daddy! If it is the first of April, it's not necessary to make a fool of *oneself*. That's the last time you ever do these ridiculous things.

WELLWYN *eyes her askance*.

ANN. I'm going to see that you spend your money on yourself. You needn't look at me like that! I *mean* to. As soon as I've got you away from here, and all—these——

WELLWYN. Don't rub it in, Ann!

ANN. [*Giving him a sudden bug—then going to the door—with a sort of triumph*] Deeds, not words, Daddy!

She goes out, and the wind catching her scarf blows it out beneath her firm young chin.

WELLWYN *returning to the fire, stands brooding, and gazing at his extinct cigarette.*

WELLWYN. [*To himself*] Bad lot—low type! No method! No theory!

In the open doorway appear FERRAND and MRS. MEGAN. They stand, unseen, looking at him. FERRAND is more ragged, if possible, than on Christmas Eve. His chin and cheeks are clothed in a reddish-golden beard.

MRS. MEGAN'S *dress is not so woebegone, but her face is white, her eyes dark-circled. They whisper. She slips back into the shadow of the doorway. WELLWYN turns at the sound, and stares at FERRAND in amazement.*

FERRAND. [*Advancing*] Enchanted to see you, Monsieur. [*He looks round the empty room*] You are leaving?

WELLWYN. [*Nodding—then taking the young man's hand*] How goes it?

FERRAND. [*Displaying himself, simply*] As you see, Monsieur. I have done of my best. It still flies from me.

WELLWYN. [*Sadly—as if against his will*] Ferrand, it will always fly.

The young foreigner shivers suddenly from head to foot; then controls himself with a great effort.

FERRAND. Don't say that, Monsieur. It is too much the echo of my heart.

WELLWYN. Forgive me! I didn't mean to pain you.

FERRAND. [*Drawing nearer the fire*] That old cabby, Monsieur, you remember—they tell me, he nearly succeeded to gain happiness the other day.

WELLWYN *nods.*

FERRAND. And those sirs, so interested in him, with their theories? He has worn them out?

WELLWYN *nods*.

FERRAND. That goes without saying. And now they wish for him the lethal chamber.

WELLWYN. [*Startled*] How did you know that?

There is silence.

FERRAND. [*Staring into the fire*] Monsieur, while I was on the road this time I fell ill of a fever. It seemed to me in my illness that I saw the truth—how I was wasting in this world—I would never be good for anyone—nor anyone for me—all would go by, and I never of it—fame, and fortune, and peace, even the necessities of life, ever mocking me.

He draws closer to the fire, spreading his fingers to the flame. And while he is speaking, through the doorway MRS. MEGAN creeps in to listen.

FERRAND. [*Speaking on into the fire*] And I saw, Monsieur, so plain, that I should be vagabond all my days, and my days short, I dying in the end the death of a dog. I saw it all in my fever—clear as that flame—there was nothing for us others, but the herb of death.

WELLWYN *takes his arm and presses it*.

FERRAND. And so, Monsieur, I *wished* to die.

I told no one of my fever. I lay out on the ground—it was verree cold. But they would not let me die on the roads of their parishes—they took me to an Institution. Monsieur, I looked in their eyes while I lay there, and I saw more clear than the blue heaven that they thought it best that I should die, although they would not let me. Then Monsieur, naturally my spirit rose, and I said: “So much the worse for you. I will live a little more.” One is made like that! Life is sweet, Monsieur.

WELLWYN. Yes, Ferrand; Life is sweet.

FERRAND. That little girl you had here, Monsieur— [WELLWYN *nods*] in her too there is something of wild-savage. She must have joy of life. I have seen her since I came back. She has embraced the life of joy. It is not quite the same thing. [*He lowers his voice*] She is lost, Monsieur, as a stone that sinks in water. I can see, if she cannot. [*As WELLWYN makes a movement of distress*] Oh! I am not to blame for that, Monsieur. It had well begun before I knew her.

WELLWYN. Yes, yes—I was afraid of it, at the time.

MRS. MEGAN *turns silently, and slips away.*

FERRAND. I do my best for her, Monsieur, but look at me! Besides, I am not good for her—it is not good for simple souls to be with those

who see things clear. For the great part of mankind, to see anything—is fatal.

WELLWYN. Even for you, it seems.

FERRAND. No, Monsieur. To be so near to death has done me good; I shall not lack courage any more till the wind blows on my grave. Since I saw you, Monsieur, I have been in three Institutions. They are palaces. One may eat upon the floor—though it is true—for Kings—they eat too much of skilly there. One little thing they lack—those palaces. It is understanding of the 'uman heart. In them tame birds pluck wild birds naked.

WELLWYN. They mean well.

FERRAND. Ah! Monsieur, I am loafer, waster—what you like—for all that [*bitterly*] poverty is my only crime. If I were rich, should I not be simply verree original, 'ighly respected, with soul above commerce, travelling to see the world? And that young girl, would she not be “that charming ladee,” “verree *chic*, you know!” And the old Tims—good old-fashioned gentleman—drinking his liquor well. *Eb! bien*—what are we now? Dark beasts, despised by all. That is life, Monsieur. [*He stares into the fire.*]

WELLWYN. We're our own enemies, Ferrand. I can afford it—you can't. Quite true!

FERRAND. [*Earnestly*] Monsieur, do you know

this? You are the sole being that can do us good—we hopeless ones.

WELLWYN. [*Shaking his head*] Not a bit of it; I'm hopeless too.

FERRAND. [*Eagerly*] Monsieur, it is just that. You *understand*. When we are with you we feel something—here—[*he touches his heart*]. If I had one prayer to make, it would be, Good God, give me to understand! Those sirs, with their theories, they can clean our skins and chain our 'abits—that soothes for them the æsthetic sense; it gives them too their good little importance. But our spirits they cannot touch, for they nevere understand. Without that, Monsieur, all is dry as a parched skin of orange.

WELLWYN. Don't be so bitter. Think of all the work they do!

FERRAND. Monsieur, of their industry I say nothing. They do a good work while they attend with their theories to the sick, and the tame old, and the good unfortunate deserving. Above all to the little children. But, Monsieur, when all is done, there are always us hopeless ones. What can they do with me, Monsieur, with that girl, or with that old man? Ah! Monsieur, we, too, 'ave our qualities, we others—it wants you courage to undertake a career like mine, or like that young girl's. We wild ones—we know a thousand times

more of life than ever will those sirs. They waste their time trying to make rooks white. Be kind to us if you will, or let us alone like Mees Ann, but do not try to change our skins. Leave us to live, or leave us to die when we like in the free air. If you do not wish of us, you have but to shut your pockets and your doors—we shall die the faster.

WELLWYN. [*With agitation*] But that, you know—we can't do—now can we?

FERRAND. If you cannot, how is it our fault? The harm we do to others—is it so much? If I am criminal, dangerous—shut me up! I would not pity myself—nevere. But we in whom something moves—like that flame, Monsieur, that *cannot* keep still—we others—we are not many—that must have motion in our lives, do not let them make us prisoners, with their theories, because we are not like them—it is life itself they would enclose! [*He draws up his tattered figure, then bending over the fire again*] I ask your pardon; I am talking. If I could smoke, Monsieur?

WELLWYN *hands him a tobacco pouch ; and he rolls a cigarette with his yellow-stained fingers.*

FERRAND. The good God made me so that I would rather walk a whole month of nights, hungry, with the stars, than sit one single day

making round business on an office stool! It is not to my advantage. I cannot help it that I am a vagabond. What would you have? It is stronger than me. [*He looks suddenly at WELLWYN*] Monsieur, I say to you things I have never said.

WELLWYN. [*Quietly*] Go on, go on.

There is silence.

FERRAND. [*Suddenly*] Monsieur! Are you really English? The English are so civilised.

WELLWYN. And am I not?

FERRAND. You treat me like a brother.

WELLWYN *has turned towards the street door at a sound of feet, and the clamour of voices.*

TIMSON. [*From the street*] Take her in 'ere. I knows 'im.

Through the open doorway come a police constable and a loafer, bearing between them the limp white-faced form of MRS. MEGAN, hatless and with drowned hair, enveloped in the policeman's waterproof. Some curious persons bring up the rear, jostling in the doorway, among whom is TIMSON carrying in his hands the policeman's dripping waterproof leg pieces.

FERRAND. [*Starting forward*] Monsieur, it is that little girl!

WELLWYN. What's happened? Constable! What's happened?

The CONSTABLE and loafer have laid the body down on the dais; with WELLWYN and FERRAND they stand bending over her.

CONSTABLE. 'Tempted sooicide, sir; but she hadn't been in the water 'arf a minute when I got hold of her. [*He bends lower*] Can't understand her collapsin' like this.

WELLWYN. [*Feeling her heart*] I don't feel anything.

FERRAND. [*In a voice sharpened by emotion*] Let me try, Monsieur.

CONSTABLE. [*Touching his arm*] You keep off, my lad.

WELLWYN. No, constable—let him. He's her friend.

CONSTABLE. [*Releasing FERRAND—to the loafer*] Here, you! Cut off for a doctor—sharp now! [*He pushes back the curious persons*] Now then, stand away there, please—we can't have you round the body. Keep back—Clear out, now!

He slowly moves them back, and at last shepherds them through the door and sbuts it on them, TIMSON being last.

FERRAND. The rum!

WELLWYN fetches the decanter. With the little there is left, FERRAND chafes the girl's hands and forehead, and pours some between her

lips. But there is no response from the inert body.

FERRAND. Her soul is still away, Monsieur.

WELLWYN, *seizing the decanter, pours into it tea and boiling water.*

CONSTABLE. It's never drownin', sir—her head was hardly under; I was on to her like knife.

FERRAND. [*Rubbing her feet*] She has not yet her philosophy, Monsieur, at the beginning they often try. If she is dead! [*In a voice of awed rapture*] What fortune!

CONSTABLE. [*With puzzled sadness*] True enough, sir—that! We'd just begun to know 'er. If she 'as been taken—her best friends couldn't wish 'er better.

WELLWYN. [*Applying the decanter to her lips*] Poor little thing! I'll try this hot tea.

FERRAND. [*Whispering*] *La mort—le grand ami!*

WELLWYN. Look! Look at her! She's coming round!

A faint tremor passes over MRS. MEGAN'S body. He again applies the hot drink to her mouth. She stirs and gulps.

CONSTABLE. [*With intense relief*] That's brave! Good lass! She'll pick up now, sir.

Then, seeing that TIMSON and the curious persons have again opened the door, he drives

them out, and stands with his back against it. MRS. MEGAN comes to herself.

WELLWYN. [*Sitting on the dais and supporting her—as if to a child*] There you are, my dear. There, there—better now! That's right. Drink a little more of this tea.

MRS. MEGAN *drinks from the decanter.*

FERRAND. [*Rising*] Bring her to the fire, Monsieur.

They take her to the fire and seat her on the little stool. From the moment of her restored animation FERRAND has resumed his air of cynical detachment, and now stands apart with arms folded, watching.

WELLWYN. Feeling better, my child?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes.

WELLWYN. That's good. That's good. Now, how was it? Um?

MRS. MEGAN. I dunno. [*She shivers*] I was standin' here just now when you was talkin', and when I heard 'im, it cam' over me to do it—like.

WELLWYN. Ah, yes, *I* know.

MRS. MEGAN. I didn't seem no good to meself nor anyone. But when I got in the water, I didn't want to any more. It was cold in there.

WELLWYN. Have you been having such a bad time of it?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. And listenin' to him upset

me. [*She signs with her head at FERRAND*] I feel better now I've been in the water.

[*She smiles, and shivers.*]

WELLWYN. There, there! Shivery? Like to walk up and down a little?

They begin walking together up and down.

WELLWYN. Beastly when your head goes under?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. It frightened me. I thought I wouldn't come up again.

WELLWYN. I know—sort of world without end, wasn't it? What did you think of, um?

MRS. MEGAN. I wished I 'adn't jumped—an' I thought of my baby—that died—and—[*in a rather surprised voice*] and I thought of d-dancin'.

Her mouth quivers, her face puckers, she gives a choke and a little sob.

WELLWYN. [*Stopping and stroking her*] There, there—there!

For a moment her face is buried in his sleeve, then she recovers herself.

MRS. MEGAN. Then 'e got hold o' me, an' pulled me out.

WELLWYN. Ah! what a comfort—um?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. The water got into me mouth. [*They walk again*] I wouldn't have gone to do it but for *him*. [*She looks towards FERRAND*] His

talk made me feel all funny, as if people wanted me to.

WELLWYN. My dear child! Don't think such things! As if anyone would——!

MRS. MEGAN. [*Stolidly*] I thought they did. They used to look at me so sometimes, where I was before I ran away—I couldn't stop there, you know.

WELLWYN. Too cooped-up?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. No life at all, it wasn't—not after sellin' flowers, I'd rather be doin' what I am.

WELLWYN. Ah! Well—it's all over, now! How d'you feel—eh? Better?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes. I feels all right now.

She sits up again on the little stool before the fire.

WELLWYN. No shivers, and no aches; quite comfy?

MRS. MEGAN. Yes.

WELLWYN. That's a blessing. All well now, Constable—thank you!

CONSTABLE. [*Who has remained discreetly apart at the door—cordially*] First rate, sir! That's capital! [*He approaches and scrutinises MRS. MEGAN*] Right as rain, eh, my girl?

MRS. MEGAN. [*Sbrinking a little*] Yes.

CONSTABLE. That's fine. Then I think perhaps, for 'er sake, sir, the sooner we move on and get her a change o' clothin', the better.

WELLWYN. Oh! don't bother about that—I'll send round for my daughter—we'll manage for her here.

CONSTABLE. Very kind of you, I'm sure, sir. But [*with embarrassment*] she seems all right. She'll get every attention at the station.

WELLWYN. But I assure you, we don't mind at all; we'll take the greatest care of her.

CONSTABLE. [*Still more embarrassed*] Well, sir, of course, I'm thinkin' of—— I'm afraid I can't depart from the usual course.

WELLWYN. [*Sharply*] What! But—oh! No! No! That'll be all right, Constable! That'll be all right! I assure you.

CONSTABLE. [*With more decision*] I'll have to charge her, sir.

WELLWYN. Good God! You don't mean to say the poor little thing has got to be——

CONSTABLE. [*Consulting with him*] Well, sir, we can't get over the facts, can we? There it is! You know what soocide amounts to—it's an awkward job.

WELLWYN. [*Calming himself with an effort*] But look here, Constable, as a reasonable man—— This poor wretched little girl—you know what

that life means better than anyone! Why! It's to her credit to try and jump out of it!

The CONSTABLE shakes his head.

WELLWYN. You said yourself her best friends couldn't wish her better! [*Dropping his voice still more*] Everybody feels it! The Vicar was here a few minutes ago saying the very same thing—the Vicar, Constable!

The CONSTABLE shakes his head.

WELLWYN. Ah! now, look here, I know something of her. Nothing can be done with her. We all admit it. Don't you see? Well, then, hang it—you needn't go and make fools of us all by—

FERRAND. Monsieur, it is the first of April.

CONSTABLE. [*With a sharp glance at him*] Can't neglect me duty, sir; that's impossible.

WELLWYN. Look here! She—slipped. She's been telling me. Come, Constable, there's a good fellow. May be the making of her, this.

CONSTABLE. I quite appreciate your good 'eart, sir, an' you make it very 'ard for me—but, come now! I put it to you as a gentleman, would you go back on yer duty if you was me?

WELLWYN raises his bat, and plunges his fingers through and through his hair.

WELLWYN. Well! God in heaven! Of all the d—d topsy-turvy—! Not a soul in the world

wants her alive—and now she's to be prosecuted for trying to be where everyone wishes her.

CONSTABLE. Come, sir, come! Be a man!

Throughout all this MRS. MEGAN has sat stolidly before the fire, but as FERRAND suddenly steps forward she looks up at him.

FERRAND. Do not grieve, Monsieur! This will give her courage. There is nothing that gives more courage than to see the irony of things. [*He touches MRS. MEGAN'S shoulder*] Go, my child; it will do you good.

MRS. MEGAN *rises, and looks at him dazedly.*

CONSTABLE. [*Coming forward, and taking her by the hand*] That's my good lass. Come along! We won't hurt you.

MRS. MEGAN. I don't want to go. They'll stare at me.

CONSTABLE. [*Comforting*] Not they! I'll see to that.

WELLWYN. [*Very upset*] Take her in a cab, Constable, if you must—for God's sake! [*He pulls out a shilling*] Here!

CONSTABLE. [*Taking the shilling*] I will, sir, certainly. Don't think I want to——

WELLWYN. No, no, I know. You're a good sort.

CONSTABLE. [*Comfortable*] Don't you take on, sir! It's her first try; they won't be hard on 'er.

Like as not only bind 'er over in her own recogs. not to do it again. Come, my dear.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Trying to free herself from the policeman's cloak*] I want to take this off. It looks so funny.

As she speaks the door is opened by ANN; behind whom is dimly seen the form of old TIMSON, still heading the curious persons.

ANN. [*Looking from one to the other in amaze*] What is it? What's happened? Daddy!

FERRAND. [*Out of the silence*] It is nothing, Ma'moiselle! She has failed to drown herself. They run her in a little.

WELLWYN. Lend her your jacket, my dear; she'll catch her death.

ANN, feeling MRS. MEGAN'S arm, strips off her jacket, and helps her into it without a word.

CONSTABLE. [*Donning his cloak*] Thank you, Miss—very good of you, I'm sure.

MRS. MEGAN. [*Mazed*] It's warm!

She gives them all a lost half-smiling look, and passes with the CONSTABLE through the doorway.

FERRAND. That makes the third of us, Monsieur. We are not in luck. To wish us dead, it seems, is easier than to let us die.

He looks at ANN, who is standing with her eyes

fixed on her father. WELLWYN has taken from his pocket a visiting card.

WELLWYN. [*To FERRAND*] Here, quick; take this, run after her! When they've done with her tell her to come to us.

FERRAND. [*Taking the card, and reading the address*] "No. 7, Haven House, Flight Street!" Rely on me, Monsieur—I will bring her myself to call on you. *Au revoir, mon bon Monsieur!*

He bends over WELLWYN's hand; then, with a bow to ANN, goes out; his tattered figure can be seen through the window, passing in the wind. WELLWYN turns back to the fire. The figure of TIMSON advances into the doorway, no longer holding in either hand a waterproof leg-piece.

TIMSON. [*In a croaky voice*] Sir!

WELLWYN. What—you, Timson?

TIMSON. On me larst legs, sir. 'Ere! You can see 'em for yerself! Shawn't trouble yer long.

WELLWYN. [*After a long and desperate stare*] Not now—Timson—not now! Take this! [*He takes out another card, and hands it to TIMSON*] Some other time.

TIMSON. [*Taking the card*] Yer new address! You are a gen'leman. [*He lurches slowly away.*

ANN *shuts the street door and sets her back*

against it. The rumble of the approaching van is heard outside. It ceases.

ANN. [*In a fateful voice*] Daddy! [*They stare at each other*] Do you know what you've done? Given your card to those six rotters.

WELLWYN. [*With a blank stare*] Six?

ANN. [*Staring round the naked room*] What was the good of this?

WELLWYN. [*Following her eyes—very gravely*] Ann! It is stronger than me.

Without a word ANN opens the door, and walks straight out. With a heavy sigh, WELLWYN sinks down on the little stool before the fire. The three bumble-men come in.

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. [*In an attitude of expectation*] This is the larst of it, sir.

WELLWYN. Oh! Ah! yes!

He gives them money; then something seems to strike him, and he exhibits certain signs of vexation. Suddenly he recovers, looks from one to the other, and then at the tea-things. A faint smile comes on his face.

WELLWYN. You can finish the decanter.

[He goes out in haste.

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. [*Clinking the coins*] Third time of arskin'! April fool! Not 'arf! Good old pigeon!

SECOND HUMBLE-MAN. 'Uman being, I call 'im.

PLAYS

ACT III

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. [*Taking the three glasses from the last packing-case, and pouring very equally into them*] That's right. Tell you wot, I'd never 'a touched this unless 'e'd told me to, I wouldn't—not with 'im.

SECOND HUMBLE-MAN. Ditto to that! This is a bit of orl right! [*Raising his glass*] Good luck!

THIRD HUMBLE-MAN. Same 'ere!

Simultaneously they place their lips smartly against the liquor, and at once let fall their faces and their glasses.

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. [*With great solemnity*] Crikey! Bill! Tea! . . . 'E's got us!

The stage is blotted dark.

Curtain.

THE FUGITIVE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

*“With a bey-bo chivy—
Hark-forrard, Hark-forrard tantivy!”*

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GEORGE DEDMOND, *a civilian*
CLARE, *his wife*
GENERAL SIR CHARLES DEDMOND, K.C.B., *his father*
LADY DEDMOND, *his mother*
REGINALD HUNTINGDON, *Clare's brother*
EDWARD FULLARTON } *her friends*
DOROTHY FULLARTON }
PAYNTER, *a manservant*
BURNEY, *a maid*
TWISDEN, *a solicitor*
HAYWOOD, *a tobacconist*
MALISE, *a writer*
MRS. MILER, *his caretaker*
THE PORTER *at his lodgings*
A BOY *messenger*
ARNAUD, *a waiter at "The Gascony"*
MR. VARLEY, *manager of "The Gascony"*
TWO LADIES WITH LARGE HATS, A LADY AND GENTLEMAN,
A LANGUID LORD, HIS COMPANION, A YOUNG MAN, A
BLOND GENTLEMAN, A DARK GENTLEMAN.

ACT I. *George Dedmond's Flat. Evening.*

ACT II. *The rooms of Malise. Morning.*

ACT III. SCENE I. *The rooms of Malise. Late Afternoon.*

SCENE II. *The rooms of Malise. Early Afternoon.*

ACT IV. *A small supper room at "The Gascony."*

Between Acts I and II three nights elapse.

Between Act II and Act III, Scene I, three months.

Between Act III, Scene I, and Act III, Scene II, three months.

Between Act III, Scene II, and Act IV, six months.



CAST OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION

AT THE

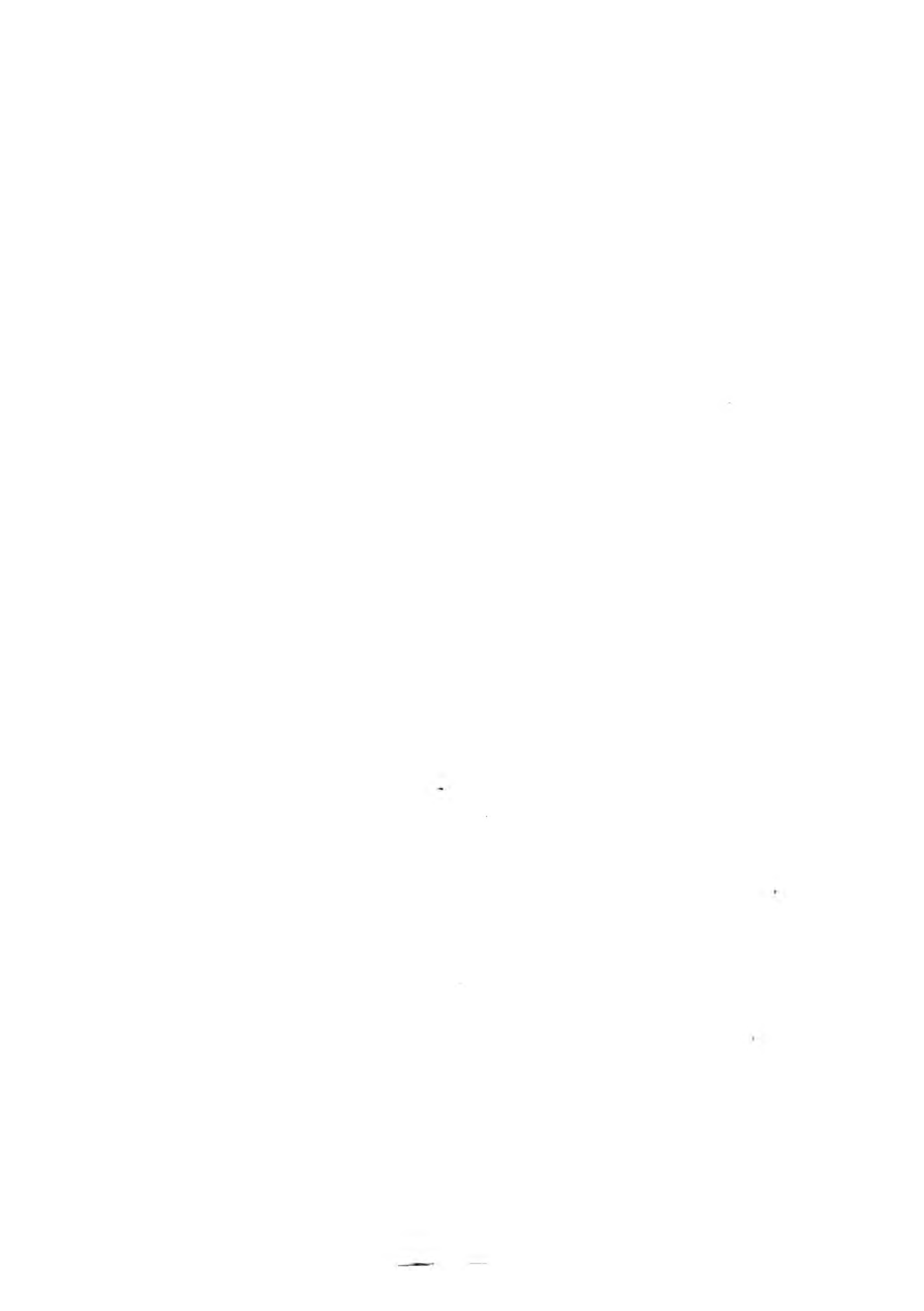
ROYAL COURT THEATRE, LONDON,

SEPTEMBER 16, 1913

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| George Dedmond | MR. CLAUDE KING |
| Clare | MISS IRENE ROOKE |
| General Sir Charles Dedmond, K.C.B. | |
| | MR. NIGEL PLAYFAIR |
| Lady Dedmond | MISS ALMA MURRAY |
| Reginald Huntingdon | MR. HYLTON ALLEN |
| Edward Fullarton | MR. LESLIE REA |
| Mrs. Fullarton | MISS ESTELLE WINWOOD |
| Paynter | MR. FRANK MACRAE |
| Burney | MISS DORIS BATEMAN |
| Twisden | MR. J. H. ROBERTS |
| Haywood | MR. CHARLES GROVES |
| Malise | MR. MILTON ROSMER |
| Mrs. Miler | MRS. A. B. TAPPING |
| Porter | MR. ERIC BARBER |
| A Messenger Boy | |

CHARACTERS IN ACT FOUR

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A Young Man | MR. VINCENT CLIVE |
| Arnaud | MR. CLARENCE DERWENT |
| Mr. Varley | MR. CHARLES GROVES |
| A Languid Lord | MR. J. H. ROBERTS |
| His Companion | MISS MORE-DUNPHIE |
| A Blond Gentleman | MR. LESLIE REA |
| Two Ladies with large hats | { MISSES BATEMAN and NEWCOMBE |



ACT I

The scene is the pretty drawing-room of a flat. There are two doors, one open into the hall, the other shut and curtained. Through a large bay window, the curtains of which are not yet drawn, the towers of Westminster can be seen darkening in a summer sunset; a grand piano stands across one corner. The manservant PAYNTER, clean-shaven and discreet, is arranging two tables for bridge.

BURNEY, *the maid, a girl with one of those flowery Botticellian faces only met with in England, comes in through the curtained door, which she leaves open, disclosing the glimpse of a white wall. PAYNTER looks up at her; she shakes her head with an expression of concern.*

PAYNTER. Where's she gone?

BURNEY. Just walks about, I fancy.

PAYNTER. She and the Governor don't hit it! One of these days she'll flit—you'll see. I like her—she's a lady; but these thoroughbred 'uns—it's their skin and their mouths. They'll go till they drop if they like the job, and if they don't, it's nothing but jib—jib—jib. How was it down there before she married him?

BURNEY. Oh! Quiet, of course.

PAYNTER. Country homes—I know 'em. What's her father, the old Rector, like?

BURNEY. Oh! very steady old man. The mother dead long before I took the place.

PAYNTER. Not a penny, I suppose?

BURNEY. [*Shaking her head*] No; and seven of them.

PAYNTER. [*At sound of the ball door*] The Governor!

BURNEY *withdraws through the curtained door.*

GEORGE DEDMOND *enters from the ball. He is in evening dress, opera hat, and overcoat; his face is broad, comely, glossily shaved, but with neat moustaches. His eyes, clear, small, and blue-grey, have little speculation. His hair is well brushed.*

GEORGE. [*Handing PAYNTER his coat and hat*] Look here, Paynter! When I send up from the Club for my dress things, always put in a black waistcoat as well.

PAYNTER. I asked the mistress, sir.

GEORGE. In future—see?

PAYNTER. Yes, sir. [*Signing towards the window*] Shall I leave the sunset, sir?

But GEORGE has crossed to the curtained door; he opens it and says: "Clare!" Receiving no answer, he goes in. PAYNTER switches up

the electric light. His face, turned towards the curtained door, is apprehensive.

GEORGE. [*Re-entering*] Where's Mrs. Dedmond?

PAYNTER. I hardly know, sir.

GEORGE. Dined in?

PAYNTER. She had a mere nothing at seven, sir.

GEORGE. Has she gone out, since?

PAYNTER. Yes, sir—that is, yes. The—er—mistress was not dressed at all. A little matter of fresh air, I think, sir.

GEORGE. What time did my mother say they'd be here for bridge?

PAYNTER. Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond were coming at half-past nine; and Captain Huntingdon, too—Mr. and Mrs. Fullarton might be a bit late, sir.

GEORGE. It's that now. Your mistress said nothing?

PAYNTER. Not to me, sir.

GEORGE. Send Burney.

PAYNTER. Very good sir. [*He withdraws.*]

GEORGE *stares gloomily at the card-tables.*

BURNEY *comes in from the ball.*

GEORGE. Did your mistress say anything before she went out?

BURNEY. Yes, sir.

GEORGE. Well?

BURNEY. I don't think she meant it, sir.

GEORGE. I don't want to know what you don't think, I want the fact.

BURNEY. Yes, sir. The mistress said: "I hope it'll be a pleasant evening, Burney!"

GEORGE. Oh!—Thanks.

BURNEY. I've put out the mistress's things, sir.

GEORGE. Ah!

BURNEY. Thank you, sir. [She withdraws.]

GEORGE. Damn!

He again goes to the curtained door, and passes through. PAYNTER, coming in from the hall, announces: "General Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond." SIR CHARLES is an upright, well-groomed, grey-moustached, red-faced man of sixty-seven, with a keen eye for molehills, and none at all for mountains. LADY DEDMOND has a firm, thin face, full of capability and decision, not without kindness; and faintly weathered, as if she had faced many situations in many parts of the world. She is fifty-five.

PAYNTER *withdraws.*

SIR CHARLES. Hullo! Where are they? H'm!

As he speaks, GEORGE re-enters.

LADY DEDMOND. [Kissing her son] Well, George. Where's Clare?

GEORGE. Afraid she's late.

LADY DEDMOND. Are we early?

GEORGE. As a matter of fact, she's not in.

LADY DEDMOND. Oh?

SIR CHARLES. H'm! Not—not had a rum-
pus?

GEORGE. Not particularly. [*With the first real
sign of feeling*] What I can't stand is being made a
fool of before other people. Ordinary friction one
can put up with. But that——!

SIR CHARLES. Gone out on purpose? What!

LADY DEDMOND. What was the trouble?

GEORGE. I told her this morning you were com-
ing in to bridge. Appears she'd asked that fellow
Malise, for music.

LADY DEDMOND. Without letting you know?

GEORGE. I believe she did tell me.

LADY DEDMOND. But surely——

GEORGE. I don't want to discuss it. There's
never anything in particular. We're all anyhow,
as you know.

LADY DEDMOND. I see. [*She looks sbrewdly at her
son*] My dear, I should be rather careful about
him, I think.

SIR CHARLES. Who's that?

LADY DEDMOND. That Mr. Malise.

SIR CHARLES. Oh! That chap!

GEORGE. Clare isn't that sort.

LADY DEDMOND. I know. But she catches up

notions very easily. I think it's a great pity you ever came across him.

SIR CHARLES. Where did you pick him up?

GEORGE. Italy—this Spring—some place or other where they couldn't speak English.

SIR CHARLES. Um! That's the worst of travellin'.

LADY DEDMOND. I think you ought to have dropped him. These literary people— [*Quietly*] From exchanging ideas to something else, isn't very far, George.

SIR CHARLES. We'll make him play bridge. Do him good, if he's that sort of fellow.

LADY DEDMOND. Is anyone else coming?

GEORGE. Reggie Huntingdon, and the Fullartons.

LADY DEDMOND. [*Softly*] You know, my dear boy, I've been meaning to speak to you for a long time. It is such a pity you and Clare— What is it?

GEORGE. God knows! I try, and I believe she does.

SIR CHARLES. It's distressin' for us, you know, my dear fellow—distressin'.

LADY DEDMOND. I know it's been going on for a long time.

GEORGE. Oh! leave it alone, Mother.

LADY DEDMOND. But, George, I'm afraid this

man has brought it to a point—put ideas into her head.

GEORGE. You can't dislike him more than I do. But there's nothing one can object to.

LADY DEDMOND. Could Reggie Huntingdon do anything, now he's home? Brothers sometimes——

GEORGE. I can't bear my affairs being messed about with.

LADY DEDMOND. Well! it would be better for you and Clare to be supposed to be out together, than for her to be out alone. Go quietly into the dining-room and wait for her.

SIR CHARLES. Good! Leave your mother to make up something. She'll do it! [*A bell sounds.*

LADY DEDMOND. That may be he. Quick!

GEORGE *goes out into the hall, leaving the door open in his haste.* LADY DEDMOND, *following, calls "Paynter!"* PAYNTER *enters.*

LADY DEDMOND. Don't say anything about your master and mistress being out. I'll explain.

PAYNTER. The master, my lady?

LADY DEDMOND. Yes, I know. But you needn't say so. Do you understand?

PAYNTER. [*In polite dudgeon*] Just so, my lady.
[*He goes out.*]

SIR CHARLES. By Jove! That fellow smells a rat!

LADY DEDMOND. Be careful, Charles!

SIR CHARLES. I should think so.

LADY DEDMOND. I shall simply say they're dining out, and that we're not to wait bridge for them.

SIR CHARLES. [*Listening*] He's having a palaver with that man of George's.

PAYNTER, *reappearing, announces*: "Captain Huntingdon." SIR CHARLES and LADY DEDMOND *turn to him with relief*.

LADY DEDMOND. Ah! It's you, Reginald!

HUNTINGDON. [*A tall, fair soldier, of thirty*] How d'you do? How are you, sir? What's the matter with their man?

SIR CHARLES. What!

HUNTINGDON. I was going into the dining-room to get rid of my cigar; and he said: "Not in there, sir. The master's there, but my instructions are to the effect that he's not."

SIR CHARLES. I knew that fellow——

LADY DEDMOND. The fact is, Reginald, Clare's out, and George is waiting for her. It's so important people shouldn't——

HUNTINGDON. Rather!

They draw together, as people do, discussing the misfortunes of members of their families.

LADY DEDMOND. It's getting serious, Reginald.

I don't know what's to become of them. You don't think the Rector—you don't think your father would speak to Clare?

HUNTINGDON. Afraid the Governor's hardly well enough. He takes anything of that sort to heart so—especially Clare.

SIR CHARLES. Can't you put in a word yourself?

HUNTINGDON. Don't know where the mischief lies.

SIR CHARLES. I'm sure George doesn't gallop her on the road. Very steady-goin' fellow, old George.

HUNTINGDON. Oh, yes; George is all right, sir.

LADY DEDMOND. They ought to have had children.

HUNTINGDON. Expect they're pretty glad now they haven't. I really don't know what to say, ma'am.

SIR CHARLES. Saving your presence, you know, Reginald, I've often noticed parsons' daughters grow up queer. Get too much morality and rice puddin'.

LADY DEDMOND. [*With a clear look*] Charles!

SIR CHARLES. What was she like when you were kids?

HUNTINGDON. Oh, all right. Could be rather a little devil, of course, when her monkey was up.

SIR CHARLES. I'm fond of her. Nothing she wants that she hasn't got, is there?

HUNTINGDON. Never heard her say so.

SIR CHARLES. [*Dimly*] I don't know whether old George is a bit too matter of fact for her. H'm?

A short silence.

LADY DEDMOND. There's a Mr. Malise coming here to-night. I forget if you know him.

HUNTINGDON. Yes. A thorough-bred mongrel.

LADY DEDMOND. He's literary. [*With hesitation*] You—you don't think he—puts—er—ideas into her head?

HUNTINGDON. I asked Greyman, the novelist, about him; seems he's a bit of an Ishmaelite, even among those fellows. Can't see Clare—

LADY DEDMOND. No. Only, the great thing is that she shouldn't be encouraged. Listen!—It is her—coming in. I can hear their voices. Gone to her room. What a blessing that man isn't here yet! [*The door-bell rings*] Tt! There he is, I expect.

SIR CHARLES. What are we goin' to say?

HUNTINGDON. Say they're dining out, and we're not to wait bridge for them.

SIR CHARLES. Good!

The door is opened, and PAYNTER announces
"Mr. Kenneth Malise." MALISE enters.
He is a tall man, about thirty-five, with a strongly marked, dark, irregular, ironic

face, and eyes which seem to have needles in their pupils. His thick hair is rather untidy, and his dress clothes not too new.

LADY DEDMOND. How do you do? My son and daughter-in-law are so very sorry. They'll be here directly.

MALISE *bows with a queer, curly smile.*

SIR CHARLES. [*Shaking hands*] How d'you do, sir?

HUNTINGDON. We've met, I think.

He gives MALISE that peculiar smiling stare, which seems to warn the person bowed to of the sort of person he is. MALISE'S eyes sparkle.

LADY DEDMOND. Clare will be so grieved. One of those invitations——

MALISE. On the spur of the moment.

SIR CHARLES. You play bridge, sir?

MALISE. Afraid not!

SIR CHARLES. Don't mean that? Then we shall have to wait for 'em.

LADY DEDMOND. I forget, Mr. Malise—you write, don't you?

MALISE. Such is my weakness.

LADY DEDMOND. Delightful profession.

SIR CHARLES. Doesn't tie you! What!

MALISE. Only by the head.

SIR CHARLES. I'm always thinkin' of writin' my experiences.

MALISE. Indeed!

There is the sound of a door banged.

SIR CHARLES. [*Hastily*] You smoke, Mr. Malise?

MALISE. Too much.

SIR CHARLES. Ah! Must smoke when you think a lot.

MALISE. Or think when you smoke a lot.

SIR CHARLES. [*Genially*] Don't know that I find that.

LADY DEDMOND. [*With her clear look at him*] Charles!

The door is opened. CLARE DEDMOND in a cream-coloured evening frock comes in from the hall, followed by GEORGE. She is rather pale, of middle height, with a beautiful figure, wavy brown hair, full, smiling lips, and large grey mesmeric eyes, one of those women all vibration, iced over with a trained stoicism of voice and manner.

LADY DEDMOND. Well, my dear!

SIR CHARLES. Ah! George. Good dinner?

GEORGE. [*Giving his hand to MALISE*] How are you? Clare! Mr. Malise!

CLARE. [*Smiling—in a clear voice with the faintest possible lisp*] Yes, we met on the door-mat.

[*Pause.*]

ACT I

THE FUGITIVE

SIR CHARLES. Deuce you did!

[An awkward pause.]

LADY DEDMOND. *[Acidly]* Mr. Malise doesn't play bridge, it appears. Afraid we shall be rather in the way of music.

SIR CHARLES. What! Aren't we goin' to get a game?

PAYNTER *has entered with a tray.*

GEORGE. Paynter! Take that table into the dining-room.

PAYNTER. *[Putting down the tray on a table behind the door]* Yes, sir.

MALISE. Let me give you a hand.

PAYNTER *and* MALISE *carry one of the bridge tables out, GEORGE making a half-hearted attempt to relieve* MALISE.

SIR CHARLES. Very fine sunset!

Quite softly CLARE *begins to laugh. All look at her first with surprise, then with offence, then almost with horror. GEORGE is about to go up to her, but HUNTINGDON heads him off.*

HUNTINGDON. Bring the tray along, old man.

GEORGE takes up the tray, stops to look at CLARE, then allows HUNTINGDON to shepherd him out.

LADY DEDMOND. *[Without looking at CLARE]*
Well, if we're going to play, Charles?

[She jerks his sleeve.]

PLAYS

ACT I

SIR CHARLES. What? [*He marches out.*]

LADY DEDMOND. [*Meeting MALISE in the doorway*] Now you will be able to have your music.

[*She follows the GENERAL out.*]

CLARE stands perfectly still, with her eyes closed.

MALISE. Delicious!

CLARE. [*In her level, clipped voice*] Perfectly beastly of me! I'm so sorry. I simply can't help running amok to-night.

MALISE. Never apologise for being fey. It's much too rare.

CLARE. On the door-mat! And they'd white-washed me so beautifully! Poor dears! I wonder if I ought— [*She looks towards the door.*]

MALISE. Don't spoil it!

CLARE. I'd been walking up and down the Embankment for about three hours. One does get desperate sometimes.

MALISE. Thank God for that!

CLARE. Only makes it worse afterwards. It seems so frightful to them, too.

MALISE. [*Softly and suddenly, but with a difficulty in finding the right words*] Blessed be the respectable! May they dream of—me! And blessed be all men of the world! May they perish of a surfeit of—good form!

CLARE. I like that. Oh, won't there be a row!

[*With a faint movement of her shoulders*] And the usual reconciliation.

MALISE. Mrs. Dedmond, there's a whole world outside yours. Why don't you spread your wings?

CLARE. My dear father's a saint, and he's getting old and frail; and I've got a sister engaged; and three little sisters to whom I'm supposed to set a good example. Then, I've no money, and I can't do anything for a living, except serve in a shop. I shouldn't be free, either; so what's the good? Besides, I oughtn't to have married if I wasn't going to be happy. You see, I'm not a bit misunderstood or ill-treated. It's only——

MALISE. Prison. Break out!

CLARE. [*Turning to the window*] Did you see the sunset? That white cloud trying to fly up?

She holds up her bare arms, with a motion of flight.

MALISE. [*Admiring her*] Ah-h-h! [*Then, as she drops her arms suddenly*] Play me something.

CLARE. [*Going to the piano*] I'm awfully grateful to you. You don't make me feel just an attractive female. I wanted somebody like that. [*Letting her hands rest on the notes*] All the same, I'm glad not to be ugly.

MALISE. Thank God for beauty!

PAYNTER. [*Opening the door*] Mr. and Mrs. Fullarton.

MALISE. Who are *they*?

CLARE. [*Rising*] She's my chief pal. He was in the Navy.

She goes forward. MRS. FULLARTON is a rather tall woman, with dark hair and a quick eye. He, one of those clean-shaven naval men of good presence who have retired from the sea, but not from their susceptibility.

MRS. FULLARTON. [*Kissing CLARE, and taking in both MALISE and her husband's look at CLARE*] We've only come for a minute.

CLARE. They're playing bridge in the dining-room. Mr. Malise doesn't play. Mr. Malise—Mrs. Fullarton, Mr. Fullarton. [*They greet.*]

FULLARTON. Most awfully jolly dress, Mrs. Dedmond.

MRS. FULLARTON. Yes, lovely, Clare.

FULLARTON *abases eyes which mechanically readjust themselves.*

MRS. FULLARTON. We can't stay for bridge, my dear; I just wanted to see you a minute, that's all. [*Seeing HUNTINGDON coming in she speaks in a low voice to her husband*] Edward, I want to speak to Clare. How d'you do, Captain Huntingdon?

MALISE. I'll say good night.

He shakes hands with CLARE, bows to MRS. FULLARTON, and makes his way out. HUNT-

INGDON and FULLARTON foregather in the doorway.

MRS. FULLARTON. How *are* things, Clare?

CLARE *just moves her shoulders.*

MRS. FULLARTON. Have you done what I suggested? Your room?

CLARE. No.

MRS. FULLARTON. Why not?

CLARE. I don't want to torture him. If I strike—I'll go clean. I expect I *shall* strike.

MRS. FULLARTON. My dear! You'll have the whole world against you.

CLARE. Even you won't back me, Dolly?

MRS. FULLARTON. Of course I'll back you, all that's possible, but I can't invent things.

CLARE. You wouldn't let me come to you for a bit, till I could find my feet?

MRS. FULLARTON, *taken aback, cannot refrain from her glance at FULLARTON automatically gazing at CLARE while he talks with HUNTINGDON.*

MRS. FULLARTON. Of course—the only thing is that——

CLARE. [*With a faint smile*] It's all right, Dolly. I'm not coming.

MRS. FULLARTON. Oh! don't do anything desperate, Clare—you are so desperate sometimes. You ought to make terms—not tracks.

CLARE. Hagggle? [*She shakes her head*] What have I got to make terms with? What he still wants is just what I hate giving.

MRS. FULLARTON. But, Clare—

CLARE. No, Dolly; even you don't understand. All day and every day—just as far apart as we can be—and still— Jolly, isn't it? If you've got a soul at all.

MRS. FULLARTON. It's awful, really.

CLARE. I suppose there are lots of women who feel as I do, and go on with it; only, you see, I happen to have something in me that—comes to an end. Can't endure beyond a certain time, ever.

She has taken a flower from her dress, and suddenly tears it to bits. It is the only sign of emotion she has given.

MRS. FULLARTON. [*Watching*] Look here, my child; this won't do. You must get a rest. Can't Reggie take you with him to India for a bit?

CLARE. [*Shaking her head*] Reggie lives on his pay.

MRS. FULLARTON. [*With one of her quick looks*] That was Mr. Malise then?

FULLARTON. [*Coming towards them*] I say, Mrs. Dedmond, you wouldn't sing me that little song you sang the other night. [*He bums*] "If I might be the falling bee and kiss thee all the day." Remember?

MRS. FULLARTON. "The falling *dew*," Edward. We simply must go, Clare. Good night.

[*She kisses her.*]

FULLARTON. [*Taking half-cover between his wife and CLARE*] It suits you down to the ground—that dress.

CLARE. Good night.

HUNTINGDON *sees them out. Left alone CLARE clenches her hands, moves swiftly across to the window, and stands looking out.*

HUNTINGDON. [*Returning*] Look here, Clare!

CLARE. Well, Reggie?

HUNTINGDON. This is working up for a mess, old girl. You can't do this kind of thing with impunity. No man'll put up with it. If you've got anything against George, better tell me.

CLARE *shakes her head.*

HUNTINGDON. You ought to know I should stick by you. What is it? Come?

CLARE. Get married, and find out after a year that she's the wrong person; so wrong that you can't exchange a single real thought; that your blood runs cold when she kisses you—then you'll know.

HUNTINGDON. My dear old girl, I don't want to be a brute; but it's a bit difficult to believe in that, except in novels.

CLARE. Yes, incredible, when you haven't tried.

HUNTINGDON. I mean, you—you chose him yourself. No one forced you to marry him.

CLARE. It does seem monstrous, doesn't it?

HUNTINGDON. My dear child, do give us a reason.

CLARE. Look! [*She points out at the night and the darkening towers*] If George saw that for the first time he'd just say, "Ah, Westminster! Clock Tower! Can you see the time by it?" As if one cared where or what it was—beautiful like that! Apply that to every—every—everything.

HUNTINGDON. [*Staring*] George may be a bit prosaic. But my dear old girl, if that's all—

CLARE. It's not all—it's nothing. I can't explain, Reggie—it's not reason, at all; it's—it's like being underground in a damp cell; it's like knowing you'll never get out. Nothing coming—never anything coming again—never anything.

HUNTINGDON. [*Moved and puzzled*] My dear old thing; you mustn't get into fantods like this. If it's like that, don't think about it.

CLARE. When every day and every night!—Oh! I know it's my fault for having married him, but that doesn't help.

HUNTINGDON. Look here! It's not as if George wasn't quite a decent chap. And it's no use blinking things; you *are* absolutely dependent on him.

At home they've got every bit as much as they can do to keep going.

CLARE. I know.

HUNTINGDON. And you've got to think of the girls. Any trouble would be very beastly for them. And the poor old Governor would feel it awfully.

CLARE. If I didn't know all that, Reggie, I should have gone home long ago.

HUNTINGDON. Well, what's to be done? If my pay would run to it—but it simply won't.

CLARE. Thanks, old boy, of course not.

HUNTINGDON. Can't you try to see George's side of it a bit?

CLARE. I *do*. Oh! don't let's talk about it.

HUNTINGDON. Well, my child, there's just one thing—you won't go sailing near the wind, will you? I mean, there are fellows always on the lookout.

CLARE. "That chap Malise, you'd better avoid him!" Why?

HUNTINGDON. Well! I don't know him. He may be all right, but he's not our sort. And you're too pretty to go on the tack of the New Woman and that kind of thing—haven't been brought up to it.

CLARE. British home-made summer goods, light and attractive—don't wear long. [*At the*

sound of voices in the hall] They seem to be going, Reggie.

HUNTINGDON *looks at her vexed, unhappy.*

HUNTINGDON. Don't head for trouble, old girl. Take a pull. Bless you! Good night.

CLARE *kisses him, and when he has gone turns away from the door holding herself in, refusing to give rein to some outburst of emotion. Suddenly she sits down at the untouched bridge table, leaning her bare elbows on it and her chin on her hands, quite calm. GEORGE is coming in. PAYNTER follows him.*

CLARE. Nothing more wanted, thank you, Paynter. You can go home, and the maids can go to bed.

PAYNTER. We are much obliged, ma'am.

CLARE. I ran over a dog, and had to get it seen to.

PAYNTER. Naturally, ma'am!

CLARE. Good night.

PAYNTER. I couldn't get you a little anything, ma'am?

CLARE. No, thank you.

PAYNTER. No, ma'am. Good night, ma'am.

[He withdraws.]

GEORGE. You needn't have gone out of your way to tell a lie that wouldn't deceive a guinea-

pig. [*Going up to her*] Pleased with yourself tonight?

CLARE *shakes her head.*

GEORGE. Before that fellow Malise; as if our own people weren't enough!

CLARE. Is it worth while to rag me? I know I've behaved badly, but I couldn't help it, really!

GEORGE. Couldn't help behaving like a shop-girl? My God! You were brought up as well as I was.

CLARE. Alas!

GEORGE. To let everybody see that we don't get on—there's only one word for it—Disgusting!

CLARE. I know.

GEORGE. Then why do you do it? I've always kept *my* end up. Why in heaven's name do you behave in this crazy way?

CLARE. I'm sorry.

GEORGE. [*With intense feeling*] You like making a fool of me!

CLARE. No—— Really! Only—I must break out sometimes.

GEORGE. There are things one does not do.

CLARE. I came in because I was sorry.

GEORGE. And at once began to do it again! It seems to me you delight in rows.

CLARE. You'd miss your—reconciliations.

GEORGE. For God's sake, Clare, drop cynicism!

CLARE. And truth?

GEORGE. You are my wife, I suppose.

CLARE. And they twain shall be one—spirit.

GEORGE. Don't talk wild nonsense!

There is silence.

CLARE. [*Softly*] I *don't* give satisfaction. Please give me notice!

GEORGE. Pish!

CLARE. Five years, and four of them like this! I'm sure we've served our time. Don't you really think we might get on better together—if I went away?

GEORGE. I've told you I won't stand a separation for no real reason, and have your name banded about all over London. I have some primitive sense of honour.

CLARE. You mean *your* name, don't you?

GEORGE. Look here. Did that fellow Malise put all this into your head?

CLARE. No; my own evil nature.

GEORGE. I wish the deuce we'd never met him. Comes of picking up people you know nothing of. I distrust him—and his looks—and his infernal satiric way. He can't even dress decently. He's not—good form.

CLARE. [*With a touch of rapture*] Ah-h!

GEORGE. Why do you let him come? What d'you find interesting in him?

CLARE. A mind.

GEORGE. Deuced funny one! To have a mind—as you call it—it's not necessary to talk about Art and Literature.

CLARE. We don't.

GEORGE. Then what do you talk about—your minds?

CLARE *looks at him.*

GEORGE. Will you answer a straight question? Is he falling in love with you?

CLARE. You had better ask him.

GEORGE. I tell you plainly, as a man of the world, I don't believe in the guide, philosopher, and friend business.

CLARE. Thank you.

A silence. CLARE suddenly clasps her hands behind her head.

CLARE. Let me go! You'd be much happier with any other woman.

GEORGE. Clare!

CLARE. I believe—I'm sure I could earn my living. Quite serious.

GEORGE. Are you mad?

CLARE. It has been done.

GEORGE. It will never be done by you—understand that!

CLARE. It really is time we parted. I'd go clean out of your life. I don't want your support unless I'm giving you something for your money.

GEORGE. Once for all, I don't mean to allow you to make fools of us both.

CLARE. But if we are already! Look at us. We go on, and on. We're a spectacle!

GEORGE. That's not my opinion; nor the opinion of anyone, so long as you behave yourself.

CLARE. That is—behave as you think right.

GEORGE. Clare, you're pretty riling.

CLARE. I don't want to be horrid. But I am in earnest this time.

GEORGE. So am I.

CLARE *turns to the curtained door.*

GEORGE. Look here! I'm sorry. God knows I don't want to be a brute. I know you're not happy.

CLARE. And you—are you happy?

GEORGE. I don't say I am. But why can't we be?

CLARE. I see no reason, except that you are you, and I am I.

GEORGE. We can try.

CLARE. I *have*—haven't you?

GEORGE. We used—

CLARE. I wonder!

GEORGE. You know we did.

ACT I

THE FUGITIVE

CLARE. Too long ago—if ever.

GEORGE. [*Coming closer*] I—still——

CLARE. [*Making a barrier of her hand*] You know that's only cupboard love.

GEORGE. We've got to face the facts.

CLARE. I thought I was.

GEORGE. The facts are that we're married—for better or worse, and certain things are expected of us. It's suicide for you, and folly for me, in my position, to ignore that. You have all you can reasonably want; and I don't—don't wish for any change. If you could bring anything against me—if I drank, or knocked about town, or expected too much of you. I'm not unreasonable in any way, that I can see.

CLARE. Well, I think we've talked enough.

She again moves towards the curtained door.

GEORGE. Look here, Clare; you don't mean you're expecting me to put up with the position of a man who's neither married nor unmarried? That's simple purgatory. You ought to know.

CLARE. Yes. I haven't yet, have I?

GEORGE. Don't go like that! Do you suppose we're the only couple who've found things aren't what they thought, and have to put up with each other and make the best of it.

CLARE. Not by thousands.

GEORGE. Well, why do you imagine they do it?

CLARE. I don't know.

GEORGE. From a common sense of decency.

CLARE. Very!

GEORGE. By Jove! You can be the most maddening thing in all the world! [*Taking up a pack of cards, he lets them fall with a long slithering flutter*] After behaving as you have this evening, you might try to make some amends, I should think.

CLARE *moves her head from side to side, as if in sight of something she could not avoid. He puts his hand on her arm.*

CLARE. No, no—no!

GEORGE. [*Dropping his hand*] Can't you make it up?

CLARE. I don't feel very Christian.

She opens the door, passes through, and closes it behind her. GEORGE steps quickly towards it, stops, and turns back into the room. He goes to the window and stands looking out; shuts it with a bang, and again contemplates the door. Moving forward, he rests his hand on the deserted card-table, clutching its edge, and muttering. Then he crosses to the door into the hall and switches off the light. He opens the door to go out, then stands again irresolute in the darkness and heaves a heavy sigh. Suddenly he mutters: "No!" Crosses resolutely back to the curtained door,

ACT I

THE FUGITIVE

and opens it. In the gleam of light CLARE is standing, unhooking a necklet. He goes in, shutting the door behind him with a thud.

Curtain.



ACT II

The scene is a large, whitewashed, disordered room, whose outer door opens on to a corridor and stairway. Doors on either side lead to other rooms. On the walls are unframed reproductions of fine pictures, secured with tintacks. An old wine-coloured armchair of low and comfortable appearance, near the centre of the room, is surrounded by a litter of manuscripts, books, ink, pens and newspapers, as though someone had already been up to his neck in labour, though by a grandfather's clock it is only eleven. On a smallish table close by, are sheets of paper, cigarette ends, and two claret bottles. There are many books on shelves, and on the floor, an overflowing pile, whereon rests a soft hat, and a black knobby stick. MALISE sits in his armchair, garbed in trousers, dressing-gown, and slippers, unshaved and uncollared, writing. He pauses, smiles, lights a cigarette, and tries the rhythm of the last sentence, holding up a sheet of quarto MS.

MALISE. "Not a word, not a whisper of Liberty from all those excellent frock-coated gentlemen—not a sign, not a grimace. Only the monumental

silence of their profound deference before triumphant Tyranny."

While he speaks, a substantial woman, a little over middle-age, in old dark clothes and a black straw hat, enters from the corridor. She goes to a cupboard, brings out from it an apron and a Bissell broom. Her movements are slow and imperturbable, as if she had much time before her. Her face is broad and dark, with Chinese eyebrows.

MALISE. Wait, Mrs. Miler!

MRS. MILER. I'm gettin' be'ind'and, sir.

She comes and stands before him. MALISE writes.

MRS. MILER. There's a man 'angin' about below.

MALISE looks up; seeing that she has roused his attention, she stops. But as soon as he is about to write again, goes on.

MRS. MILER. I see him first yesterday afternoon. I'd just been out to get meself a pennyworth o' soda, an' as I come in I passed 'im on the second floor, lookin' at me with an air of suspicion. I thought to meself at the time, I thought: You're a 'andy sort of 'ang-dog man.

MALISE. Well?

MRS. MILER. Well—peekin' down through the balusters, I see 'im lookin' at a photograft. That's

a funny place, I thinks, to look at pictures—it's so dark there, ye 'ave to use yer eyesight. So I giv' a scrape with me 'eel [*She illustrates*] and he pops it in his pocket, and puts up 'is 'and to knock at number three. I goes down an' I says: "You know there's no one lives there, don't yer?" "Ah!" 'e says with an air of innercence, "I wants the name of Smithers." "Oh!" I says, "try round the corner, number ten." "Ah!" 'e says, tactful, "much obliged." "Yes," I says, "you'll find 'im in at this time o' day. Good evenin'!" And I thinks to meself [*She closes one eye*] Rats! There's a good many corners hereabouts.

MALISE. [*With detached appreciation*] Very good, Mrs. Miler.

MRS. MILER. So this mornin', there 'e was again on the first floor with 'is 'and raised, pretendin' to knock at number two. "Oh! you're still lookin' for 'im?" I says, lettin' him see I was 'is grandmother. "Ah!" 'e says, affable, "you misdirected me; it's here I've got my business." "That's lucky," I says, "cos nobody lives there neither. Good mornin'!" And I come straight up. If you want to see 'im at work you've only to go downstairs, 'e'll be on the ground floor by now, pretendin' to knock at number one. Wonderful resource!

MALISE. What's he like, this gentleman?

MRS. MILER. Just like the men you see on the front page o' the daily papers. Nasty, smooth-lookin' feller, with one o' them billycock hats you can't abide.

MALISE. Isn't he a dun?

MRS. MILER. *They don't be've like that; you ought to know, sir. He's after no good. [Then, after a little pause] Ain't he to be put a stop to? If I took me time I could get 'im, innercent-like, with a jug o' water.*

MALISE, *smiling, shakes his head.*

MALISE. You can get on now; I'm going to shave.

He looks at the clock, and passes out into the inner room. MRS. MILER gazes round her, pins up her skirt, sits down in the armchair, takes off her hat and puts it on the table, and slowly rolls up her sleeves; then with her hands on her knees she rests. There is a soft knock on the door. She gets up leisurely and moves flat-footed towards it. The door being opened CLARE is revealed.

CLARE. Is Mr. Malise in?

MRS. MILER. Yes. But 'e's dressin'.

CLARE. Oh.

MRS. MILER. Won't take 'im long. What name?

CLARE. Would you say—a lady?

MRS. MILER. It's against the rules. But if you'll sit down a moment I'll see what I can do. [*She brings forward a chair and rubs it with her apron. Then goes to the door of the inner room and speaks through it*] A lady to see you. [*Returning she removes some cigarette ends*] This is my hour. I shan't make much dust. [*Noting CLARE'S eyebrows raised at the débris round the armchair*] I'm particular about not disturbin' things.

CLARE. I'm sure you are.

MRS. MILER. He likes 'is 'abits regular.

Making a perfunctory pass with the Bissell broom, she runs it to the cupboard, comes back to the table, takes up a bottle and holds it to the light; finding it empty, she turns it upside down and drops it into the waste-paper basket; then, holding up the other bottle, and finding it not empty, she corks it and drops it into the fold of her skirt.

MRS. MILER. He takes his claret fresh-opened—not like these 'ere bawgwars.

CLARE. [*Rising*] I think I'll come back later.

MRS. MILER. Mr. Malise is not in my confidence. We keep each other to ourselves. Perhaps you'd like to read the paper; he has it fresh every mornin'—the *Westminister*.

She plucks that journal from out of the arm-

chair and hands it to CLARE, who sits down again unhappily to brood. MRS. MILER makes a pass or two with a very dirty duster, then stands still. No longer hearing sounds, CLARE looks up.

MRS. MILER. I wouldn't interrupt yer with my workin', but 'e likes things clean. [*At a sound from the inner room*] That's 'im; 'e's cut 'isself! I'll just take 'im the tobaccer!

She lifts a green paper screw of tobacco from the débris round the armchair and taps on the door. It opens. CLARE moves restlessly across the room.

MRS. MILER. [*Speaking into the room*] The tobaccer. The lady's waitin'.

CLARE has stopped before a reproduction of Titian's picture "Sacred and Profane Love."

MRS. MILER *stands regarding her with a Chinese smile. MALISE enters, a thread of tobacco still hanging to his cheek.*

MALISE. [*Taking MRS. MILER's hat off the table and banding it to her*] Do the other room.

Enigmatically she goes.

MALISE. Jolly of you to come. Can I do anything?

CLARE. I want advice—badly.

MALISE. What! Spreading your wings?

CLARE. Yes.

MALISE. Ah! Proud to have given you *that* advice. When?

CLARE. The morning after you gave it me . . .

MALISE. Well?

CLARE. I went down to my people. I knew it would hurt my dad frightfully, but somehow I thought I could make him see. No good. He was awfully sweet, only—he couldn't.

MALISE. [*Softly*] We English love liberty in those who don't belong to us. Yes.

CLARE. It was horrible. There were the children—and my old nurse. I could never live at home now. They'd think I was— Impossible—utterly! I'd made up my mind to go back to my owner—And then—he came down himself. I couldn't stand it. To be hauled back and begin all over again; I simply couldn't. I watched for a chance; and ran to the station, and came up to an hotel.

MALISE. Bravo!

CLARE. I don't know—no pluck this morning! You see, I've got to earn my living—no money; only a few things I can sell. All yesterday I was walking about, looking at the women. How does anyone ever get a chance?

MALISE. Sooner than you should hurt his dignity by working, your husband would pension you off.

CLARE. If I don't go back to him I couldn't take it.

MALISE. Good!

CLARE. I've thought of nursing, but it's a long training, and I do so hate watching pain. The fact is, I'm pretty hopeless; can't even do art work. I came to ask you about the stage.

MALISE. Have you ever acted?

CLARE *shakes her head.*

MALISE. You mightn't think so, but I've heard there's a prejudice in favour of training. There's Chorus—I don't recommend it. How about your brother?

CLARE. My brother's got nothing to spare, and he wants to get married; and he's going back to India in September. The only friend I should care to bother is Mrs. Fullarton, and she's—got a husband.

MALISE. I remember the gentleman.

CLARE. Besides, I should be besieged day and night to go back. I must lie doggo somehow.

MALISE. It makes my blood boil to think of women like you. God help all ladies without money.

CLARE. I expect I shall have to go back.

MALISE. No, no! We shall find something. Keep your soul alive at all costs. What! let him hang on to you till you're nothing but—empti-

ness and ache, till you lose even the power to ache. Sit in his drawing-room, pay calls, play bridge, go out with him to dinners, return to—duty; and feel less and less, and be less and less, and so grow old and—die!

The bell rings.

MALISE. [*Looking at the door in doubt*] By the way—he'd no means of tracing you?

She shakes her head. The bell rings again.

MALISE. Was there a man on the stairs as you came up?

CLARE. Yes. Why?

MALISE. He's begun to haunt them, I'm told.

CLARE. Oh! But that would mean they thought I—oh! no!

MALISE. Confidence in *me* is not excessive.

CLARE. Spying!

MALISE. Will you go in there for a minute? Or shall we let them ring—or—what? It may not be anything, of course.

CLARE. I'm not going to hide.

The bell rings a third time.

MALISE. [*Opening the door of the inner room*] Mrs. Miler, just see who it is; and then go, for the present.

MRS. MILER *comes out with her hat on, passes enigmatically to the door, and opens it. A*

man's voice says: "Mr. Malise? Would you give him these cards?"

MRS. MILER. [*Re-entering*] The cards.

MALISE. Mr. Robert Twisden. Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond. [*He looks at CLARE.*

CLARE. [*Her face scornful and unmoved*] Let them come.

MALISE. [*To MRS. MILER*] Show them in!

TWISDEN *enters*—*a clean-shaved, sbrewd-looking man, with a fighting underlip, followed by SIR CHARLES and LADY DEDMOND. MRS. MILER goes. There are no greetings.*

TWISDEN. Mr. Malise? How do you do, Mrs. Dedmond? Had the pleasure of meeting you at your wedding.

CLARE *inclines her head.*

TWISDEN. I am Mr. George Dedmond's solicitor, sir. I wonder if you would be so very kind as to let us have a few words with Mrs. Dedmond alone?

At a nod from CLARE, MALISE passes into the inner room, and sbuts the door. A silence.

SIR CHARLES. [*Suddenly*] What!

LADY DEDMOND. Mr. Twisden, will you——?

TWISDEN. [*Uneasy*] Mrs. Dedmond—I must apologise, but you—you hardly gave us an alternative, did you? [*He pauses for an answer, and,*

not getting one, goes on] Your disappearance has given your husband great anxiety. Really, my dear madam, you must forgive us for this—attempt to get into communication.

CLARE. Why did you spy *here*?

SIR CHARLES. No, no! Nobody's spied on you. What!

TWISDEN. I'm afraid the answer is that we appear to have been justified. [*At the expression on CLARE's face he goes on hastily*] Now, Mrs. Dedmond, I'm a lawyer and I know that appearances are misleading. Don't think I'm unfriendly; I wish you well.

CLARE *raises her eyes. Moved by that look, which is exactly as if she had said: "I have no friends," he hurries on.*

TWISDEN. What we want to say to you is this: Don't let this split go on! Don't commit yourself to what you'll bitterly regret. Just tell us what's the matter. I'm sure it can be put straight.

CLARE. I have nothing against my husband—it was quite unreasonable to leave him.

TWISDEN. Come, that's good.

CLARE. Unfortunately, there's something stronger than reason.

TWISDEN. I don't know it, Mrs. Dedmond.

CLARE. No?

TWISDEN. [*Disconcerted*] Are you—you ought-

n't to take a step without advice, in your position.

CLARE. Nor with it?

TWISDEN. [*Approaching her*] Come, now; isn't there anything you feel you'd like to say—that might help to put matters straight?

CLARE. I don't think so, thank you.

LADY DEDMOND. You must see, Clare, that—

TWISDEN. In your position, Mrs. Dedmond—a beautiful young woman without money. I'm quite blunt. This is a hard world. Should be awfully sorry if anything went wrong.

CLARE. And if I go back?

TWISDEN. Of two evils, if it be so—choose the least!

CLARE. I am twenty-six; he is thirty-two. We can't reasonably expect to die for fifty years.

LADY DEDMOND. That's morbid, Clare.

TWISDEN. What's open to you if you don't go back? Come, what's your position? Neither fish, flesh, nor fowl; fair game for everybody. Believe me, Mrs. Dedmond, for a pretty woman to strike, as it appears you're doing, simply because the spirit of her marriage has taken flight, is madness. You must know that no one pays attention to anything but facts. If now—excuse me—you—you had a lover, [*bis eyes travel round the room and again rest on her*] you would, at all events,

have some ground under your feet, some sort of protection, but [*he pauses*] as you have not—you've none.

CLARE. Except what I make myself.

SIR CHARLES. Good God!

TWISDEN. Yes! Mrs. Dedmond! There's the bedrock difficulty. As you haven't money, you should never have been pretty. You're up against the world, and you'll get no mercy from it. We lawyers see too much of that. I'm putting it brutally, as a man of the world.

CLARE. Thank you. Do you think you quite grasp the alternative?

TWISDEN. [*Taken aback*] But, my dear young lady, there are two sides to every contract. After all, your husband's fulfilled his.

CLARE. So have I up till now. I shan't ask anything from him—nothing—do you understand?

LADY DEDMOND. But, my dear, you must live.

TWISDEN. Have you ever done any sort of work?

CLARE. Not yet.

TWISDEN. Any conception of the competition nowadays?

CLARE. I can try.

TWISDEN, *looking at her, shrugs his shoulders.*

CLARE. [*Her composure a little broken by that look*] It's real to me—this—you see!

SIR CHARLES. But, my dear girl, what the devil's to become of George?

CLARE. He can do what he likes—it's nothing to me.

TWISDEN. Mrs. Dedmond, I say without hesitation you've no notion of what you're faced with, brought up to a sheltered life as you've been. Do you realise that you stand at the parting of the ways, and one leads into the wilderness.

CLARE. Which?

TWISDEN. [*Glancing at the door through which MALISE has gone*] Of course, if you want to play at wild asses there are plenty who will help you.

SIR CHARLES. By Gad! Yes!

CLARE. I only want to breathe.

TWISDEN. Mrs. Dedmond, go back! You can now. It will be too late soon. There are lots of wolves about. [*Again he looks at the door.*]

CLARE. But not where you think. You say I need advice. I came here for it.

TWISDEN. [*With a curiously expressive shrug*] In that case I don't know that I can usefully stay. [*He goes to the outer door.*]

CLARE. Please don't have me followed when I leave here. Please!

LADY DEDMOND. George is outside, Clare.

CLARE. I don't wish to see him. By what right have you come here? [*She goes to the door through*

which MALISE has passed, opens it, and says]
Please come in, Mr. Malise.

MALISE *enters.*

TWISDEN. I am sorry. [*Glancing at MALISE, he inclines his head*] I am sorry. Good morning.
[*He goes.*]

LADY DEDMOND. Mr. Malise, I'm sure, will see——

CLARE. Mr. Malise will stay here, please, in his own room.

MALISE *bows.*

SIR CHARLES. My dear girl, 'pon my soul, you know, I can't grasp your line of thought at all!

CLARE. No?

LADY DEDMOND. George is most willing to take up things just as they were before you left.

CLARE. Ah!

LADY DEDMOND. Quite frankly—what is it you want?

CLARE. To be left alone. Quite frankly, he made a mistake to have me spied on.

LADY DEDMOND. But, my good girl, if you'd let us know where you were, like a reasonable being. You can't possibly be left to yourself without money or position of any kind. Heaven knows what you'd be driven to!

[*She looks at MALISE.*]

MALISE. [*Softly*] Delicious!

SIR CHARLES. You will be good enough to repeat that out loud, sir.

LADY DEDMOND. Charles! Clare, you must know this is all a fit of spleen; your duty and your interest—marriage is sacred, Clare.

CLARE. Marriage! *My marriage has become the—the reconciliation—of two animals—one of them unwilling. That's all the sanctity there is about it.*

SIR CHARLES. What!

LADY DEDMOND. You ought to be horribly ashamed.

CLARE. Of the fact—I am.

LADY DEDMOND. [*Darting a glance at MALISE*] If we are to talk this out, it must be in private.

MALISE. [*To CLARE*] Do you wish me to go?

CLARE. No.

LADY DEDMOND. [*At MALISE*] I should have thought ordinary decent feeling— Good heavens, girl! Can't you see that you're being played with?

CLARE. If you insinuate anything against Mr. Malise, you lie.

LADY DEMOND. If you *will* do these things— come to a man's rooms—

CLARE. I came to Mr. Malise because he's the only person I know with imagination enough to see what my position is; I came to him a quarter

of an hour ago, for the first time, for definite advice, and you instantly suspect him. That is disgusting.

LADY DEDMOND. [*Frigidly*] Is this the natural place for me to find my son's wife?

CLARE. His woman.

LADY DEDMOND. Will you listen to Reginald?

CLARE. I have.

LADY DEDMOND. Haven't you any religious sense at all, Clare?

CLARE. None, if it's religion to live as we do.

LADY DEDMOND. It's terrible—this state of mind! It's really terrible!

CLARE breaks into the soft laugh of the other evening. As if galvanised by the sound, SIR CHARLES comes to life out of the transfixed bewilderment with which he has been listening.

SIR CHARLES. For God's sake don't laugh like that!

CLARE *stops*.

LADY DEDMOND. [*With real feeling*] For the sake of the simple right, Clare!

CLARE. Right? Whatever else is right—*our* life is not. [*She puts her hand on her heart*] I swear before God that I've tried and tried. I swear before God, that if I believed we could ever again love each other only a little tiny bit, I'd go back. I

swear before God that I don't want to hurt anybody.

LADY DEDMOND. But you are hurting everybody. Do—do be reasonable!

CLARE. [*Losing control*] Can't you see that I'm fighting for all my life to come—not to be buried alive—not to be slowly smothered. Look at me! I'm not wax—I'm flesh and blood. And you want to prison me for ever—body and soul.

They stare at her.

SIR CHARLES. [*Suddenly*] By Jove! I don't know, I don't know! What!

LADY DEDMOND. [*To MALISE*] If you have any decency left, sir, you will allow my son, at all events, to speak to his wife alone. [*Beckoning to her husband*] We'll wait below.

SIR CHARLES. I—I want to speak. [*To CLARE*] My dear, if you feel like this, I can only say as a—
—as a gentleman—

LADY DEDMOND. Charles!

SIR CHARLES. Let me alone! I can only say that—
—damme, I don't know that I can say anything!

He looks at her very grieved, then turns and marches out, followed by LADY DEDMOND, whose voice is heard without, answered by his: "What!" In the doorway, as they pass, GEORGE is standing; he comes in.

GEORGE. [*Going up to CLARE, who has recovered*

all her self-control] Will you come outside and speak to me?

CLARE. No.

GEORGE *glances at MALISE, who is leaning against the wall with folded arms.*

GEORGE. [*In a low voice*] Clare!

CLARE. Well!

GEORGE. You try me pretty high, don't you, forcing me to come here, and speak before this fellow? Most men would think the worst, finding you like this.

CLARE. You need not have come—or thought at all.

GEORGE. Did you imagine I was going to let you vanish without an effort—

CLARE. To save me?

GEORGE. For God's sake be just! I've come here to say certain things. If you force me to say them before him—on your head be it! Will you appoint somewhere else?

CLARE. No.

GEORGE. Why not?

CLARE. I know all those "certain things." "You must come back. It is your duty. You have no money. Your friends won't help you. You can't earn your living. You are making a scandal." You might even say for the moment: "Your room shall be respected."

GEORGE. Well, it's true and you've no answer.

CLARE. Oh! [*Suddenly*] Our life's a lie. It's stupid; it's disgusting. I'm tired of it! Please leave me alone!

GEORGE. You rather miss the point, I'm afraid. I didn't come here to tell you what you know perfectly well when you're sane. I came here to say this: Anyone in her senses could see the game your friend here is playing. It wouldn't take a baby in. If you think that a gentleman like that [*His stare travels round the disbevelled room till it rests on MALISE*] champions a pretty woman for nothing, you make a fairly bad mistake.

CLARE. Take care.

But MALISE, after one convulsive movement of his hands, has again become rigid.

GEORGE. I don't pretend to be subtle or that kind of thing; but I have ordinary common sense. I don't attempt to be superior to plain facts——

CLARE. [*Under her breath*] Facts!

GEORGE. Oh! for goodness' sake drop that hifalutin' tone. It doesn't suit you. Look here! If you like to go abroad with one of your young sisters until the autumn, I'll let the flat and go to the Club.

CLARE. Put the fire out with a penny hose. [*Slowly*] I am not coming back to you, George. The farce is over.

GEORGE. [*Taken aback for a moment by the finality of her tone, suddenly fronts MALISE*] Then there is something between you and this fellow.

MALISE. [*Dangerously, but without moving*] I beg your pardon!

CLARE. There—is—nothing.

GEORGE. [*Looking from one to the other*] At all events, I won't—I won't see a woman who once——

CLARE *makes a sudden effacing movement with her hands.*

GEORGE. I won't see her go to certain ruin without lifting a finger.

CLARE. That is noble.

GEORGE. [*With intensity*] I don't know that you deserve anything of me. But on my honour, as a gentleman, I came here this morning for your sake, to warn you of what you're doing. [*He turns suddenly on MALISE*] And I tell this precious friend of yours plainly what I think of him, and that I'm not going to play into his hands.

MALISE, *without stirring from the wall, looks at CLARE, and his lips move.*

CLARE. [*Shakes her head at him—then to GEORGE*] Will you go, please?

GEORGE. I will go when you do.

MALISE. A man of the world should know better than that.

GEORGE. Are you coming?

MALISE. That is inconceivable.

GEORGE. I'm not speaking to you, sir.

MALISE. You are right. Your words and mine will never kiss each other.

GEORGE. Will you come?

CLARE *shakes her head.*

GEORGE. [*With fury*] D'you mean to stay in this pigsty with that rhapsodical swine?

MALISE. [*Transformed*] By God, if you don't go, I'll kill you.

GEORGE. [*As suddenly calm*] That remains to be seen.

MALISE. [*With most deadly quietness*] Yes, I will kill you.

He goes stealthily along the wall, takes up from where it lies on the pile of books the great black knobby stick, and stealthily approaches GEORGE, his face quite fiendish.

CLARE. [*With a swift movement, grasping the stick*] Please.

MALISE resigns the stick, and the two men, perfectly still, glare at each other. CLARE, letting the stick fall, puts her foot on it. Then slowly she takes off her hat and lays it on the table.

CLARE. Now will you go!

There is silence.

GEORGE. [*Staring at her hat*] You mad little fool! Understand this; if you've not returned home by three o'clock I'll divorce you, and you may roll in the gutter with this high-souled friend of yours. And mind this, you sir—I won't spare you—by God! Your pocket shall suffer. That's the only thing that touches fellows like you.

Turning, he goes out, and slams the door.

CLARE and MALISE remain face to face.
Her lips have begun to quiver.

CLARE. Horrible!

She turns away, shuddering, and sits down on the edge of the armchair, covering her eyes with the backs of her hands. MALISE picks up the stick, and fingers it lovingly. Then putting it down, he moves so that he can see her face. She is sitting quite still, staring straight before her.

MALISE. Nothing could be better.

CLARE. I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!

MALISE. Thank the stars for your good fortune.

CLARE. He means to have revenge on you! And it's all my fault.

MALISE. Let him. Let him go for his divorce. Get rid of him. Have done with him—somehow.

She gets up and stands with face averted. Then swiftly turning to him.

CLARE. If I must bring you harm—let me pay you back! I can't bear it otherwise! Make some use of me, if you don't mind!

MALISE. My God!

She puts up her face to be kissed, shutting her eyes.

MALISE. You poor——

He clasps and kisses her, then, drawing back, looks in her face. She has not moved, her eyes are still closed; but she is shivering; her lips are tightly pressed together; her hands twitching.

MALISE. [*Very quietly*] No, no! This is not the house of a "gentleman."

CLARE. [*Letting her head fall, and almost in a whisper*] I'm sorry.

MALISE. I understand.

CLARE. I don't feel. And without—I can't, can't.

MALISE. [*Bitterly*] Quite right. You've had enough of *that*.

There is a long silence. Without looking at him she takes up her hat, and puts it on.

MALISE. Not going?

CLARE *nods*.

MALISE. You don't trust me?

CLARE. I *do*! But I can't take when I'm not giving.

MALISE. I beg—I beg you! What does it matter? Use me! Get free somehow.

CLARE. Mr. Malise, I know what I ought to be to you, if I let you in for all this. I know what you want—or will want. Of course—why not?

MALISE. I give you my solemn word—

CLARE. No! if I can't be *that* to you—it's not real. And I *can't*. It isn't to be manufactured, is it?

MALISE. It is not.

CLARE. To make use of you in such a way! No.

[She moves towards the door.]

MALISE. *Where* are you going?

CLARE *does not answer. She is breathing rapidly. There is a change in her, a sort of excitement beneath her calmness.*

MALISE. Not back to *him*?

CLARE *shakes her head.*

MALISE. Thank God! But where? To your people again?

CLARE. No.

MALISE. Nothing—desperate?

CLARE. Oh! no.

MALISE. Then what—tell me—come!

CLARE. I don't know. Women manage somehow.

MALISE. But *you*—poor dainty thing!

CLARE. It's all right! Don't be unhappy! Please!

MALISE. [*Seizing her arm*] D'you imagine they'll let you off, out there—you with your face? Come, trust me—trust me! You must!

CLARE. [*Holding out her hand*] Good-bye!

MALISE. [*Not taking that hand*] This great damned world, and—you! Listen! [*The sound of the traffic far down below is audible in the stillness*] Into *that!* alone—helpless—without money. The men who work with you; the men you make friends of—d'you think they'll let you be? The men in the streets, staring at you, stopping you—pudgy, bull-necked brutes; devils with hard eyes; senile swine; and the “chivalrous” men, like me, who don't mean you harm, but can't help seeing you're made for love! Or suppose you *don't* take covert but struggle on in the open. Society! The respectable! The pious! Even those who love you! Will they let you be? Hue and cry! The hunt was joined the moment you broke away! It will never let up! Covert to covert—till they've run you down, and you're back in the cart, and God pity you!

CLARE. Well, I'll die running!

MALISE. No, no! Let me shelter you! Let me!

CLARE. [*Shaking her head and smiling*] I'm going to seek my fortune. Wish me luck!

MALISE. I *can't* let you go.

CLARE. You *must*.

He looks into her face; then, realising that she means it, suddenly bends down to her fingers, and puts his lips to them.

MALISE. Good luck, then! Good luck!

He releases her hand. Just touching his bent head with her other hand, CLARE turns and goes. MALISE remains with bowed head, listening to the sound of her receding footsteps. They die away. He raises himself, and strikes out into the air with his clenched fist.

Curtain.



ACT III

SCENE I

MALISE'S sitting-room. An afternoon, three months later. On the table are an open bottle of claret, his hat, and some tea-things. Down by the hearth is a kettle on a lighted spirit-stand. Near the door stands HAYWOOD, a short, round-faced man, with a tobacco-coloured moustache; MALISE, by the table, is contemplating a piece of blue paper.

HAYWOOD. Sorry to press an old customer, sir, but a year and an 'alf without any return on your money——

MALISE. Your tobacco is too good, Mr. Haywood. I wish I could see my way to smoking another.

HAYWOOD. Well, sir—that's a funny remedy.

With a knock on the half-opened door, a BOY appears.

MALISE. Yes. What is it?

BOY. Your copy for *The Watchfire*, please, sir.

MALISE. [*Motioning him out*] Yes. Wait!

The BOY withdraws. MALISE goes up to the

pile of books, turns them over, and takes up some volumes.

MALISE. This is a very fine unexpurgated translation of Boccaccio's "Decameron," Mr. Haywood—illustrated. I should say you would get more than the amount of your bill for them.

HAYWOOD. [*Shaking his head*] Them books worth three pound seven!

MALISE. It's scarce, and highly improper. Will you take them in discharge?

HAYWOOD. [*Torn between emotions*] Well, I 'ardly know what to say— No, sir, I don't think I'd like to 'ave to do with that.

MALISE. You could read them first, you know?

HAYWOOD. [*Dubiously*] I've got my wife at 'ome.

MALISE. You could both read them.

HAYWOOD. [*Brought to his bearings*] No, sir, I couldn't.

MALISE. Very well; I'll sell them myself, and you shall have the result.

HAYWOOD. Well, thank you, sir. I'm sure I didn't want to trouble you.

MALISE. Not at all, Mr. Haywood. It's for me to apologise.

HAYWOOD. So long as I give satisfaction.

MALISE. [*Holding the door for him*] Certainly. Good evening.

HAYWOOD. Good evenin', sir; no offence, I hope.

MALISE. On the contrary.

Doubtfully HAYWOOD goes. And MALISE stands scratching his head; then slipping the bill into one of the volumes to remind him, he replaces them at the top of the pile. The BOY again advances into the doorway.

MALISE. Yes, now for you.

He goes to the table and takes some sheets of MS. from an old portfolio. But the door is again timidly pushed open, and HAYWOOD reappears.

MALISE. Yes, Mr. Haywood?

HAYWOOD. About that little matter, sir. If—if it's any convenience to you—I've—thought of a place where I could——

MALISE. Read them? You'll enjoy them thoroughly.

HAYWOOD. No, sir, no! Where I can dispose of them.

MALISE. [*Holding out the volumes*] It might be as well.

HAYWOOD takes the books gingerly.

MALISE. I congratulate you, Mr. Haywood; it's a classic.

HAYWOOD. Oh, indeed—yes, sir. In the event of there being any——

MALISE. Anything over? Carry it to my credit.

Your bill—— [*He hands over the blue paper*] Send me the receipt. Good evening!

HAYWOOD, *nonplussed, and trying to hide the books in an evening paper, fumbles out:* “Good evenin’, sir!” *and departs.* MALISE *again takes up the sheets of MS. and cons a sentence over to himself, gazing blankly at the stolid Boy.*

MALISE. “Man of the world—good form your god! Poor buttoned-up philosopher” [*the Boy shifts his feet*] “inbred to the point of cretinism, and founded to the bone on fear of ridicule [*the Boy breathes heavily*]—you are the slave of facts!”

There is a knock on the door.

MALISE. Who is it?

The door is pushed open, and REGINALD HUNTINGDON stands there.

HUNTINGDON. I apologise, sir; can I come in a minute?

MALISE *bows with ironical hostility.*

HUNTINGDON. I don’t know if you remember me—Clare Dedmond’s brother.

MALISE. I remember you.

He motions to the stolid Boy to go outside again.

HUNTINGDON. I’ve come to you, sir, as a gentleman——

MALISE. Some mistake. There is one, I believe, on the first floor.

HUNTINGDON. It's about my sister.

MALISE. D—n you! Don't you know that I've been shadowed these last three months? Ask your detectives for any information you want.

HUNTINGDON. We know that you haven't seen her, or even known where she is.

MALISE. Indeed! You've found that out? Brilliant!

HUNTINGDON. We know it from my sister.

MALISE. Oh! So you've tracked her down?

HUNTINGDON. Mrs. Fullarton came across her yesterday in one of those big shops—selling gloves.

MALISE. Mrs. Fullarton—the lady with the husband. Well! you've got her. Clap her back into prison.

HUNTINGDON. We have not got her. She left at once, and we don't know where she's gone.

MALISE. Bravo!

HUNTINGDON. [*Taking hold of his bit*] Look here, Mr. Malise, in a way I share your feeling, but I'm fond of my sister, and it's damnable to have to go back to India knowing she must be all adrift, without protection, going through God knows what! Mrs. Fullarton says she's looking awfully pale and down.

MALISE. [*Struggling between resentment and sympathy*] Why do you come to me?

HUNTINGDON. We thought——

MALISE. *Who?*

HUNTINGDON. My—my father and myself.

MALISE. Go on.

HUNTINGDON. We thought there was just a chance that, having lost that job, she might come to you again for advice. If she does, it would be really generous of you if you'd put my father in touch with her. He's getting old, and he feels this very much. [*He hands MALISE a card*] This is his address.

MALISE. [*Twisting the card*] Let there be no mistake, sir; I do nothing that will help give her back to her husband. She's out to save her soul alive, and I don't join the hue and cry that's after her. On the contrary—if I had the power. If your father wants to shelter her, that's another matter. But she'd her own ideas about that.

HUNTINGDON. Perhaps you don't realise how unfit my sister is for rough and tumble. She's not one of this new sort of woman. She's always been looked after, and had things done for her. Pluck she's got, but that's all, and she's bound to come to grief.

MALISE. Very likely—the first birds do. But if she drops half-way it's better than if she'd never flown. Your sister, sir, is trying the wings of her spirit, out of the old slave market. For women as

for men, there's more than one kind of dishonour, Captain Huntingdon, and worse things than being dead, as you may know in your profession.

HUNTINGDON. Admitted—but——

MALISE. We each have our own views as to what they are. But they all come to—death of our spirits, for the sake of our carcasses. Anything more?

HUNTINGDON. My leave's up. I sail to-morrow. If you do see my sister I trust you to give her my love and say I begged she would see my father.

MALISE. If I have the chance—yes.

He makes a gesture of salute, to which HUNTINGDON responds. Then the latter turns and goes out.

MALISE. Poor fugitive! Where are you running now?

He stands at the window, through which the evening sunlight is powdering the room with smoky gold. The stolid BOY has again come in. MALISE stares at him, then goes back to the table, takes up the MS., and booms it at him; he receives the charge, breathing hard.

MALISE. "Man of the world—product of a material age; incapable of perceiving reality in motions of the spirit; having 'no use,' as you would say, for 'sentimental nonsense'; accus-

tomed to believe yourself the national spine—your position is unassailable. You will remain the idol of the country—arbiter of law, parson in mufti, darling of the play-wright and the novelist—God bless you!—while waters lap these shores.”

He places the sheets of MS. in an envelope, and hands them to the Boy.

MALISE. You're going straight back to *The Watchfire*?

BOY. [*Stolidly*] Yes, sir.

MALISE. [*Staring at him*] You're a masterpiece. D'you know that?

BOY. No, sir.

MALISE. Get out, then.

He lifts the portfolio from the table, and takes it into the inner room. The Boy, putting his thumb stolidly to his nose, turns to go. In the doorway he sbies violently at the figure of CLARE, standing there in a dark-coloured dress, skids past her and goes. CLARE comes into the gleam of sunlight, her white face alive with emotion or excitement. She looks round her, smiles, sighs; goes swiftly to the door, closes it, and comes back to the table. There she stands, fingering the papers on the table, smoothing MALISE'S hat—wistfully, eagerly, waiting.

MALISE. [*Returning*] You!

CLARE. [*With a faint smile*] Not very glorious, is it?

He goes towards her, and checks himself, then slews the armchair round.

MALISE. Come! Sit down, sit down!

CLARE, *heaving a long sigh, sinks down into the chair.*

MALISE. Tea's nearly ready.

He places a cushion for her, and prepares tea; she looks up at him softly, but as he finishes and turns to her, she drops that glance.

CLARE. Do you think me an awful coward for coming? [*She has taken a little plain cigarette case from her dress*] Would you mind if I smoked?

MALISE *shakes his head, then draws back from her again, as if afraid to be too close. And again, unseen, she looks at him.*

MALISE. So you've lost your job?

CLARE. How did you——?

MALISE. Your brother. You only just missed him.

CLARE *starts up.*

MALISE. They had an idea you'd come. He's sailing to-morrow—he wants you to see your father.

CLARE. Is Father ill?

MALISE. Anxious about you.

CLARE. I've written to him every week. [*Excited*] They're still hunting me!

MALISE. [*Touching her shoulder gently*] It's all right—all right.

She sinks again into the chair, and again he withdraws. And once more she gives him that soft, eager look, and once more averts it as he turns to her.

CLARE. My nerves have gone funny lately. It's being always on one's guard, and stuffy air, and feeling people look and talk about you, and dislike your being there.

MALISE. Yes; that wants pluck.

CLARE. [*Shaking her head*] I curl up all the time. The only thing I know for certain is, that I shall never go back to him. The more I've hated what I've been doing, the more sure I've been. I might come to anything—but not that.

MALISE. Had a very bad time?

CLARE. [*Nodding*] I'm spoilt. It's a curse to be a lady when you have to earn your living. It's not really been so hard, I suppose; I've been selling things, and living about twice as well as most shop girls.

MALISE. Were they decent to you?

CLARE. Lots of the girls are really nice. But somehow they don't want me, can't help thinking

I've got airs or something; and in here [*She touches her breast*] I don't want them!

MALISE. I know.

CLARE. Mrs. Fullarton and I used to belong to a society for helping reduced gentlewomen to get work. I know now what they want: enough money *not* to work—that's all! [*Suddenly looking up at him*] Don't think me worse than I am—please! It's working *under* people; it's *having* to do it, being driven. I *have* tried, I've not been altogether a coward, really! But every morning getting there the same time; every day the same stale "dinner," as they call it; every evening the same "Good evening, Miss Clare," "Good evening, Miss Simpson," "Good evening, Miss Hart," "Good evening, Miss Clare." And the same walk home, or the same 'bus; and the same men that you mustn't look at, for fear they'll follow you. [*She rises*] Oh! and the feeling—always, always—that there's no sun, or life, or hope, or anything. It was just like being ill, the way I've wanted to ride and dance and get out into the country. [*Her excitement dies away into the old clipped composure, and she sits down again*] Don't think too badly of me—it really is pretty ghastly!

MALISE. [*Gruffly*] H'm! Why a shop?

CLARE. References. I didn't want to tell more lies than I could help; a married woman on strike

can't tell the truth, you know. And I can't type-write or do shorthand yet. And chorus—I thought—you wouldn't like.

MALISE. I? What have I——? [*He checks himself*] Have men been brutes?

CLARE. [*Stealing a look at him*] One followed me a lot. He caught hold of my arm one evening. I just took this out [*She draws out her batpin and holds it like a dagger, her lip drawn back as the lips of a dog going to bite*] and said: "Will you leave me alone, please?" And he did. It was rather nice. And there was one quite decent little man in the shop—I was sorry for *bim*—such a humble little man!

MALISE. Poor devil—it's hard not to wish for the moon.

At the tone of his voice CLARE looks up at him; his face is turned away.

CLARE. [*Softly*] How have you been? Working very hard?

MALISE. As hard as God will let me.

CLARE. [*Stealing another look*] Have you any typewriting I could do? I could learn, and I've still got a brooch I could sell. Which is the best kind?

MALISE. I had a catalogue of them somewhere.

He goes into the inner room. The moment he is gone, CLARE stands up, her hands pressed

to her cheeks as if she felt them flaming. Then, with hands clasped, she stands waiting. He comes back with the old portfolio.

MALISE. Can you typewrite where you are?

CLARE. I have to find a new room anyway. I'm changing—to be safe. [*She takes a luggage ticket from her glove*] I took my things to Charing Cross—only a bag and one trunk. [*Then, with that queer expression on her face which prefaces her desperations*] You don't want me now, I suppose.

MALISE. What?

CLARE. [*Hardly above a whisper*] Because—if you still wanted me—I could—now.

MALISE. [*Staring hard into her face that is quivering and smiling*] You mean it? You could? You care——?

CLARE. I've thought of you—so much! But only—if you're sure.

He clasps her and kisses her closed eyes; and so they stand for a moment, till the sound of a latch-key in the door sends them apart.

MALISE. It's the housekeeper. Give me that ticket; I'll send for your things.

Obediently she gives him the ticket, smiles, and goes quietly into the inner room. MRS. MILER has entered; her face, more Chinese than ever, shows no sign of having seen.

MALISE. That lady will stay here, Mrs. Miler.

Kindly go with this ticket to the cloak-room at Charing Cross station, and bring back her luggage in a cab. Have you money?

MRS. MILER. 'Arf a crown. [*She takes the ticket—then impressively*] In case you don't know—there's two o' them men about the stairs now.

The moment she is gone MALISE makes a gesture of maniacal fury. He steals on tiptoe to the outer door, and listens. Then, placing his hand on the knob, he turns it without noise, and wrenches back the door. Transfigured in the last sunlight streaming down the corridor are two men, close together, listening and consulting secretly. They start back.

MALISE. [*With strange, almost noiseless ferocity*] You've run her to earth; your job's done. Kennel up, hounds!

[And in their faces he slams the door.]

Curtain.

SCENE II

SCENE II.—*The same, early on a winter afternoon, three months later. The room has now a certain daintiness. There are curtains over the doors, a couch under the window, all the books are arranged on shelves. In small vases, over the fireplace, are a few violets and chrysanthemums. MALISE sits huddled in his armchair drawn close to the fire, paper on knee, pen in hand. He looks rather grey and drawn, and round his chair is the usual litter. At the table, now nearer to the window, CLARE sits working a typewriter. She finishes a line, puts sheets of paper together, makes a note on a card—adds some figures, and marks the total.*

CLARE. Kenneth, when this is paid, I shall have made two pound seventeen in the three months, and saved you about three pounds. One hundred and seventeen shillings at tenpence a thousand is one hundred and forty thousand words at fourteen hundred words an hour. It's only just over an hour a day. *Can't you get me more?*

MALISE lifts the hand that holds his pen and lets it fall again. CLARE puts the cover on the typewriter, and straps it.

CLARE. I'm quite packed. Shall I pack for you? [*He nods*] Can't we have more than three days at the sea? [*He shakes his head. Going up to him*] You *did* sleep last night.

MALISE. Yes, I slept.

CLARE. Bad head? [*MALISE nods*] By this time the day after to-morrow the case will be heard and done with. You're not worrying for me? Except for my poor old dad, *I* don't care a bit.

MALISE *heaves himself out of the chair, and begins pacing up and down.*

CLARE. Kenneth, do you understand why he doesn't claim damages, after what he said that day—here? [*Looking suddenly at him*] It is true that he doesn't?

MALISE. It is not.

CLARE. But you told me yourself—

MALISE. I lied.

CLARE. Why?

MALISE. [*Sbrugging*] No use lying any longer—you'd know it to-morrow.

CLARE. How much am I valued at?

MALISE. Two thousand. [*Grimly*] He'll settle it on you. [*He laughs*] Masterly! By one stroke, destroys his enemy, avenges his "honour," and gilds his name with generosity!

CLARE. Will you *have* to pay?

MALISE. Stones yield no blood.

CLARE. Can't you borrow?

MALISE. I couldn't even get the costs.

CLARE. Will they make you bankrupt, then?

MALISE *nods*.

CLARE. But that doesn't mean that you won't have your *income*, does it?

MALISE *laughs*.

CLARE. What is your income, Kenneth?

He is silent.

CLARE. A hundred and fifty from *The Watch-fire*, I know. What else?

MALISE. Out of five books I have made the sum of forty pounds.

CLARE. What else? Tell me.

MALISE. Fifty to a hundred pounds a year. Leave me to gnaw my way out, child.

CLARE *stands looking at him in distress, then goes quickly into the room behind her.*

MALISE *takes up his paper and pen. The paper is quite blank.*

MALISE. [*Feeling his head*] Full of smoke.

He drops paper and pen, and crossing to the room on the left goes in. CLARE re-enters with a small leather box. She puts it down on her typing table as MALISE returns followed by MRS. MILER, wearing her hat, and carrying his overcoat.

MRS. MILER. Put your coat on. It's a bitter wind.

He puts on the coat.

CLARE. Where are you going?

MALISE. To *The Watchfire*.

The door closes behind him, and MRS. MILER goes up to CLARE holding out a little blue bottle with a red label, nearly full.

MRS. MILER. You know he's takin' this [*She makes a little motion towards her mouth*] to make 'im sleep?

CLARE. [*Reading the label*] Where was it?

MRS. MILER. In the bathroom chest o' drawers, where 'e keeps 'is odds and ends. I was lookin' for 'is garters.

CLARE. Give it to me!

MRS. MILER. He took it once before. He must get his sleep.

CLARE. Give it to me!

MRS. MILER resigns it, CLARE takes the cork out, smells, then tastes it from her finger.

MRS. MILER, twisting her apron in her hands, speaks.

MRS. MILER. I've 'ad it on my mind a long time to speak to yer. Your comin' 'ere's not done 'im a bit o' good.

CLARE. Don't!

MRS. MILER. I don't want to, but what with the

worry o' this 'ere divorce suit, an' you bein' a lady an' 'im havin' to be so careful of yer, and tryin' to save, not smokin' all day like 'e used, an' not gettin' 'is two bottles of claret regular; an' losin' his sleep, an' takin' that stuff for it; and now this 'ere last business. I've seen 'im sometimes holdin' 'is 'ead as if it was comin' off. [*Seeing CLARE wince, she goes on with a sort of compassion in her Chinese face*] I can see yer fond of him; an' I've nothin' against yer—you don't trouble me a bit; but I've been with 'im eight years—we're used to each other, and I can't bear to see 'im not 'imself, really I can't.

She gives a sudden sniff. Then her emotion passes, leaving her as Chinese as ever.

CLARE. This last business—what do you mean by that?

MRS. MILER. If 'e a'nt told yer, I don't know that I've any call to.

CLARE. Please.

MRS. MILER. [*Her hands twisting very fast*] Well, it's to do with this 'ere *Watchfire*. One of the men that sees to the writin' of it—'e's a old friend of Mr. Malise, 'e come 'ere this mornin' when you was out. I was doin' my work in there [*She points to the room on the right*] an' the door open, so I 'eard 'em. Now you've 'ung them curtains, you can't 'elp it.

CLARE. Yes?

MRS. MILER. It's about your divorce case. This 'ere *Watchfire*, ye see, belongs to some fellers that won't 'ave their men gettin' into the papers. So this 'ere friend of Mr. Malise—very nice 'e spoke about it—"If it comes into Court," 'e says, "you'll 'ave to go," 'e says. "These beggars, these dogs, these logs," 'e says, "they'll 'oof you out," 'e says. An' I could tell by the sound of his voice, 'e meant it—proper upset 'e was. So that's that!

CLARE. It's inhuman!

MRS. MILER. That's what I thinks; but it don't 'elp, do it? "'Tain't the circulation," 'e says, "it's the principle," 'e says; and then 'e starts in swearin' horrible. E's a very nice man. And Mr. Malise, 'e says: "Well, that about does for me!" 'e says.

CLARE. Thank you, Mrs. Miler—I'm glad to know.

MRS. MILER. Yes; I don't know as I ought to 'ave told you. [*Desperately uncomfortable*] You see, I don't take notice of Mr. Malise, but I know 'im very well. 'E's a good-'earted gentleman, very funny, that'll do things to help others, and what's more, keep on dcin' 'em, when they hurt 'im; very obstinate 'e is. Now, when you first come 'ere three months ago, I says to meself: "He'll

enjoy this 'ere for a bit, but she's too much of a lady for 'im." What 'e wants about 'im permanent is a woman that thinks an' talks about all them things he talks about. And sometimes I fancy 'e don't want nothin' permanent about 'im at all.

CLARE. Don't!

MRS. MILER. [*With another sudden sniff*] Gawd knows I don't want to upset ye. You're situated very 'ard; an' women's got no business to 'urt one another—that's what I thinks.

CLARE. Will you go out and do something for me?

MRS. MILER *nods*. CLARE *takes up the sheaf of papers and from the leather box a note and an emerald pendant*.

CLARE. Take this with the note to that address—it's quite close. He'll give you thirty pounds for it. Please pay these bills and bring me back the receipts, and what's over.

MRS. MILER. [*Taking the pendant and note*] It's a pretty thing.

CLARE. Yes. It was my mother's.

MRS. MILER. It's a pity to part with it; ain't you got another?

CLARE. Nothing more, Mrs. Miler, not even a wedding ring.

MRS. MILER. [*Without expression*] You make my heart ache sometimes.

She wraps pendant and note into her handkerchief and goes out to the door.

MRS. MILER. [*From the door*] There's a lady and gentleman out here. Mrs. Fuller—wants *you*, not Mr. Malise.

CLARE. Mrs. Fullarton?

MRS. MILER *nods*.

CLARE. Ask them to come in.

MRS. MILER *opens the door wide, says* "Come in," *and goes*. MRS. FULLARTON *is accompanied not by FULLARTON, but by the lawyer, TWISDEN. They come in.*

MRS. FULLARTON. Clare! My dear! How are you after all this time?

CLARE. [*Her eyes fixed on TWISDEN*] Yes?

MRS. FULLARTON. [*Disconcerted by the strange greeting*] I brought Mr. Twisden to tell you something. May I stay?

CLARE. Yes. [*She points to the chair at the same table: MRS. FULLARTON sits down*] Now!

TWISDEN *comes forward*.

TWISDEN. As you're not defending this case, Mrs. Dedmond, there is nobody but yourself for me to apply to.

CLARE. Please tell me quickly, what you've come for.

TWISDEN. [*Bowing slightly*] I am instructed by Mr. Dedmond to say that if you will leave your present companion and undertake not to see him again, he will withdraw the suit and settle three hundred a year on you. [*At CLARE'S movement of abhorrence*] Don't misunderstand me, please—it is not—it could hardly be, a request that you should go back. Mr. Dedmond is *not* prepared to receive you again. The proposal—forgive my saying so—remarkably Quixotic—is made to save the scandal to his family and your own. It binds you to nothing but the abandonment of your present companion, with certain conditions of the same nature as to the future. In other words, it assures you a position—so long as you live quietly by yourself.

CLARE. I see. Will you please thank Mr. Dedmond, and say that I refuse?

MRS. FULLARTON. Clare, Clare! For God's sake don't be desperate.

CLARE, *deathly still, just looks at her.*

TWISDEN. Mrs. Dedmond, I am bound to put the position to you in its naked brutality. You know there's a claim for damages?

CLARE. I have just learnt it.

TWISDEN. You realise what the result of this suit must be: You will be left dependent on an undischarged bankrupt. To put it another way,

you'll be a stone round the neck of a drowning man.

CLARE. You are cowards.

MRS. FULLARTON. Clare, Clare! [*To TWISDEN*] She doesn't mean it; *please* be patient.

CLARE. I *do* mean it. You ruin him because of me. You get him down, and kick him to intimidate me.

MRS. FULLARTON. My dear girl! Mr. Twisden is not personally concerned. How can you?

CLARE. If I were dying, and it would save me, I wouldn't take a penny from my husband.

TWISDEN. Nothing could be more bitter than those words. Do you really wish me to take them back to him?

CLARE. Yes. [*She turns from them to the fire.*]

MRS. FULLARTON. [*In a low voice to TWISDEN*] Please leave me alone with her; don't say anything to Mr. Dedmond yet.

TWISDEN. Mrs. Dedmond, I told you once that I wished you well. Though you have called me a coward, I still do that. For God's sake, think—before it's too late.

CLARE. [*Putting out her hand blindly*] I'm sorry I called you a coward. It's the whole thing, I meant.

TWISDEN. Never mind that. Think!

With the curious little movement of one who

sees something he does not like to see, he goes. CLARE is leaning her forehead against the mantelsbelf, seemingly unconscious that she is not alone. MRS. FULLARTON approaches quietly till she can see CLARE'S face.

MRS. FULLARTON. My dear sweet thing, don't be cross with me!

CLARE turns from her. It is all the time as if she were trying to get away from words and people to something going on within herself.

MRS. FULLARTON. How can I help wanting to see you saved from all this ghastliness?

CLARE. Please don't, Dolly! Let me be!

MRS. FULLARTON. I must speak, Clare! I do think you're hard on George. It's generous of him to offer to withdraw the suit—considering. You do owe it to us to try and spare your father and your sisters and—and all of us who care for you.

CLARE. [*Facing her*] You say George is generous! If he wanted to be that he'd never have claimed those damages. It's revenge he wants—I heard him here. You think I've done him an injury. So I did—when I married him. I don't know what I shall come to, Dolly, but I shan't fall so low as to take money from him. That's as certain as that I shall die.

MRS. FULLARTON. Do you know, Clare, I think

it's awful about you! You're too fine, and not fine enough, to put up with things; you're too sensitive to take help, and you're not strong enough to do without it. It's simply tragic. At any rate, you might go home to your people.

CLARE. After *this!*

MRS. FULLARTON. To us, then?

CLARE. "If I could be the falling bee, and kiss thee all the day!" No, Dolly!

MRS. FULLARTON *turns from her asbamed and baffled, but her quick eyes take in the room, trying to seize on some new point of attack.*

MRS. FULLARTON. You can't be—you aren't—happy, *here?*

CLARE. Aren't I?

MRS. FULLARTON. Oh! Clare! Save yourself—and all of us!

CLARE. [*Very still*] You see, I love him.

MRS. FULLARTON. You used to say you'd never love; did not want it—would never want it.

CLARE. Did I? How funny!

MRS. FULLARTON. Oh! my dear! Don't look like that, or you'll make me cry.

CLARE. One doesn't always know the future, does one? [*Desperately*] I love him! I love him!

MRS. FULLARTON. [*Suddenly*] If you love him, what will it be like for you, knowing you've ruined him?

CLARE. Go away! Go away!

MRS. FULLARTON. Love!—you said!

CLARE. [*Quivering at that stab—suddenly*] I must—I will keep him. He's all I've got.

MRS. FULLARTON. Can you—*can* you keep him?

CLARE. Go!

MRS. FULLARTON. I'm going. But, men are hard to keep, even when you've not been the ruin of them. You know whether the love this man gives you is really love. If not—God help you! [*She turns at the door, and says mournfully*] Good-bye, my child! If you can——

Then goes. CLARE, almost in a whisper, repeats the words: "Love! you said!" At the sound of a latch-key she runs as if to escape into the bedroom, but changes her mind and stands blotted against the curtain of the door. MALISE enters. For a moment he does not see her standing there against the curtain that is much the same colour as her dress. His face is that of a man in the grip of a rage that he feels to be impotent. Then, seeing her, he pulls himself together, walks to his arm-chair, and sits down there in his hat and coat.

CLARE. Well? *The Watchfire?* You may as well tell me.

MALISE. Nothing to tell you, child.

At that touch of tenderness she goes up to his chair and kneels down beside it. Mechanically MALISE takes off his hat.

CLARE. Then you are to lose that, too?

MALISE *stares at her.*

CLARE. I know about it—never mind how.

MALISE. Sanctimonious dogs!

CLARE. [*Very low*] There are other things to be got, aren't there?

MALISE. Thick as blackberries. I just go out and cry, "Malise, unsuccessful author, too honest journalist, freethinker, co-respondent, bankrupt," and they tumble!

CLARE. [*Quietly*] Kenneth, do you care for me?

MALISE *stares at her.*

CLARE. Am I anything to you but just prettiness?

MALISE. Now, now! This isn't the time to brood! Rouse up and fight.

CLARE. Yes.

MALISE. We're not going to let them down us, are we?

She rubs her cheek against his hand, that still rests on her shoulder.

MALISE. Life on sufferance, breath at the pleasure of the enemy! And some day in the fullness of his mercy to be made a present of the right to eat and drink and breathe again. [*His*

gesture sums up the rage within him] Fine! [He puts his hat on and rises] That's the last groan they get from me.

CLARE. Are you going out again? [*He nods*] Where?

MALISE. Blackberrying! Our train's not till six.

He goes into the bedroom. CLARE gets up and stands by the fire, looking round in a dazed way. She puts her hand up and mechanically gathers together the violets in the little vase. Suddenly she twists them to a button-hole, and sinks down into the armchair, which he must pass. There she sits, the violets in her hand. MALISE comes out and crosses towards the outer door. She puts the violets up to him. He stares at them, shrugs his shoulders, and passes on. For just a moment CLARE sits motionless.

CLARE. [*Quietly*] Give me a kiss!

He turns and kisses her. But his lips, after that kiss, have the furtive bitterness one sees on the lips of those who have done what does not suit their mood. He goes out. She is left motionless by the armchair, her throat working. Then, feverishly, she goes to the little table, seizes a sheet of paper, and writes. Looking up suddenly she sees that MRS. MILER has let herself in with her latch-key.

MRS. MILER. I've settled the baker, the milk, the washin' an' the groceries—this 'ere's what's left.

She counts down a five-pound note, four pound notes, and two shillings on to the little table.

CLARE *folds the letter into an envelope, then takes up the five-pound note and puts it into her dress.*

CLARE. [*Pointing to the money on the table*] Take your wages; and give him this when he comes in. I'm going away.

MRS. MILER. Without him? When'll you be comin' back?

CLARE. [*Rising*] I shan't be coming back. [*Gazing at MRS. MILER'S hands, which are plaiting at her dress*] I'm leaving Mr. Malise, and shan't see him again. And the suit against us will be withdrawn—the divorce suit—you understand?

MRS. MILER. [*Her face all broken up*] I never meant to say nothing to yer.

CLARE. It's not you. I can see for myself. Don't make it harder; help me. Get a cab.

MRS. MILER. [*Disturbed to the heart*] The porter's outside, cleanin' the landin' winder.

CLARE. Tell him to come for my trunk. It is packed. [*She goes into the bedroom.*]

MRS. MILER. [*Opening the door—desolately*] Come 'ere!

The PORTER appears in sbirt-sleeves at the door.

MRS. MILER. The lady wants a cab. Wait and carry 'er trunk down.

CLARE *comes from the bedroom in her hat and coat.*

MRS. MILER. [*To the PORTER*] Now.

They go into the bedroom to get the trunk.

CLARE *picks up from the floor the bunch of violets, her fingers play with it as if they did not quite know what it was; and she stands by the armchair very still, while MRS. MILER and the PORTER pass her with trunk and bag. And even after the PORTER has shouldered the trunk outside, and marched away, and MRS. MILER has come back into the room, CLARE still stands there.*

MRS. MILER. [*Pointing to the typewriter*] D'you want this 'ere, too?

CLARE. Yes.

MRS. MILER *carries it out. Then, from the doorway, gazing at CLARE taking her last look, she sobs, suddenly. At sound of that sob CLARE throws up her head.*

CLARE. Don't! It's all right. Good-bye!

She walks out and away, not looking back.

MRS. MILER *chokes her sobbing into the black stuff of her thick old jacket.*

Curtain.

ACT IV

SUPPER-TIME *in a small room at "The Gascony" on Derby Day. Through the windows of a broad corridor, out of which the door opens, is seen the dark blue of a summer night. The walls are of apricot-gold; the carpets, curtains, lamp-shades, and gilded chairs, of red; the wood-work and screens white; the palms in gilded tubs. A doorway that has no door leads to another small room. One little table behind a screen, and one little table in the open, are set for two persons each. On a service table, above which hangs a speaking-tube, are some dishes of hors d'œuvres, a basket of peaches, two bottles of champagne in ice-pails, and a small barrel of oysters in a gilded tub. ARNAUD, the waiter, slim, dark, quick, his face seamed with a quiet, soft irony, is opening oysters and listening to the robust joy of a distant supper party, where a man is playing the last bars of: "Do ye ken John Peel" on a horn. As the sound dies away, he murmurs: "Très Joli!" and opens another oyster. Two Ladies with bare shoulders and large hats pass down the*

corridor. *Their talk is faintly wafted in: "Well, I never like Derby night! The boys do get so bobbish!" "That horn—vulgar, I call it!" ARNAUD'S eyebrows rise, the corners of his mouth droop. A Lady with bare shoulders, and crimson roses in her hair, comes along the corridor, and stops for a second at the window, for a man to join her. They come through into the room. ARNAUD has sprung to attention, but with: "Let's go in here, shall we?" they pass through into the further room. The MANAGER, a gentleman with neat moustaches, and buttoned into a frock-coat, has appeared, brisk, noiseless, his eyes everywhere; he inspects the peaches.*

MANAGER Four shillin' apiece to-night, see?

ARNAUD. Yes, Sare.

From the inner room a young man and his partner have come in. She is dark, almost Spanish-looking; he fair, languid, pale, clean-shaved, slackly smiling, with half-closed eyes—one of those who are bred and dissipated to the point of having lost all save the capacity for hiding their emotions. He speaks in a:

LANGUID VOICE. Awful row they're kickin' up in there, Mr. Varley. A fellow with a horn.

MANAGER. [*Blandly*] Gaddesdon Hunt, my lord

—always have their supper with us, Derby night.
Quiet corner here, my lord. Arnaud!

ARNAUD is already at the table, between screen and palm. And, there ensconced, the couple take their seats. Seeing them safely landed, the MANAGER, brisk and noiseless, moves away. In the corridor a lady in black, with a cloak falling open, seems uncertain whether to come in. She advances into the doorway. It is CLARE.

ARNAUD. [*Pointing to the other table as he flies with dishes*] Nice table, Madame.

CLARE moves to the corner of it. An artist in observation of his clients, ARNAUD takes in her face—very pale under her wavy, simply-dressed hair; shadowy beneath the eyes; not powdered; her lips not reddened; without a single ornament; takes in her black dress, finely cut, her arms and neck beautifully white, and at her breast three gardenias. And as he nears her, she lifts her eyes. It is very much the look of something lost, appealing for guidance.

ARNAUD. Madame is waiting for someone?
She shakes her head.

ARNAUD. Then Madame will be verree well here—verree well. I take Madame's cloak?

He takes the cloak gently and lays it on the

back of the chair fronting the room, that she may put it round her when she wishes. She sits down.

LANGUID VOICE. [*From the corner*] Waiter!

ARNAUD. Milord!

LANGUID VOICE. The Roederer.

ARNAUD. At once, milord.

CLARE *sits tracing a pattern with her finger on the cloth, her eyes lowered. Once she raises them, and follows ARNAUD'S dark rapid figure.*

ARNAUD. [*Returning*] Madame feels the 'eat? [*He scans her with increased curiosity*] You wish something, Madame?

CLARE. [*Again giving him that look*] Must I order?

ARNAUD. Non, Madame, it is not necessary. A glass of water. [*He pours it out*] I have not the pleasure of knowing Madame's face.

CLARE. [*Faintly smiling*] No.

ARNAUD. Madame will find it verree good 'ere, verree quiet.

LANGUID VOICE. Waiter!

ARNAUD. Pardon! [*He goes.*

The bare-necked ladies with large hats again pass down the corridor outside, and again their voices are wafted in: "Tottie! Not she! Oh! my goodness, she has got a pride

on her!" "Bobbie'll never stick it!"
 "Look here, dear——" *Galvanised by those sounds, CLARE has caught her cloak and half-risen; they die away and she subsides.*

ARNAUD. [*Back at her table, with a quaint sbrug towards the corridor*] It is not rowdy here, Madame, as a rule—not as in some places. To-night a little noise. Madame is fond of flowers? [*He whisks out, and returns almost at once with a bowl of carnations from some table in the next room*] These smell good!

CLARE. You are very kind.

ARNAUD. [*With courtesy*] Not at all, Madame; a pleasure. [*He bows.*]

A young man, tall, thin, hard, straight, with close-cropped, sandyish hair and moustache, a face tanned very red, and one of those small, long, lean heads that only grow in Britain; clad in a thin dark overcoat thrown open, an opera hat pushed back, a white waistcoat round his lean middle, he comes in from the corridor. He looks round, glances at CLARE, passes her table towards the further room, stops in the doorway, and looks back at her. Her eyes have just been lifted, and are at once cast down again. The young man wavers, catches ARNAUD'S eye,

jerks his head to summon him, and passes into the further room. ARNAUD takes up the vase that has been superseded, and follows him out. And CLARE sits alone in silence, broken by the murmurs of the languid lord and his partner, behind the screen. She is breathing as if she had been running hard. She lifts her eyes. The tall young man, divested of hat and coat, is standing by her table, holding out his hand with a sort of bashful hardness.

YOUNG MAN. How d'you do? Didn't recognise you at first. So sorry—awfully rude of me.

CLARE'S eyes seem to fly from him, to appeal to him, to resign herself all at once. Something in the YOUNG MAN responds. He drops his hand.

CLARE. [*Faintly*] How d'you do?

YOUNG MAN. [*Stammering*] You—you been down there to-day?

CLARE. Where?

YOUNG MAN. [*With a smile*] The Derby. What? Don't you generally go down? [*He touches the other chair*] May I?

CLARE. [*Almost in a whisper*] Yes.

As he sits down, ARNAUD returns and stands before them.

ARNAUD. The plovers' eggs verree good to-night,

Sare. Veree good, Madame. A peach or two, after. Veree good peaches. The Roederer, Sare—not bad at all. Madame likes it *frappé*, but not too cold—yes?

[He is away again to his service-table.]

YOUNG MAN. *[Burying his face in the carnations]* I say—these are jolly, aren't they? They do you pretty well here.

CLARE. Do they?

YOUNG MAN. You've never been here?

CLARE *shakes her head.*

YOUNG MAN. By Jove! I thought I didn't know your face.

CLARE *looks full at him. Again something moves in the YOUNG MAN, and he stammers.*

YOUNG MAN. I mean—not——

CLARE. It doesn't matter.

YOUNG MAN. *[Respectfully]* Of course, if I—if you were waiting for anybody, or anything—I—— *[He half rises.]*

CLARE. It's all right, thank you.

The YOUNG MAN sits down again, uncomfortable, nonplussed. There is silence, broken by the inaudible words of the languid lord, and the distant merriment of the supper party. ARNAUD brings the plovers' eggs.

YOUNG MAN. The wine, quick.

ARNAUD. At once, Sare.

YOUNG MAN. [*Abruptly*] Don't you ever go racing, then?

CLARE. No.

ARNAUD *pours out champagne.*

YOUNG MAN. I remember awfully well my first day. It was pretty thick—lost every blessed bob, and my watch and chain, playin' three cards on the way home.

CLARE. Everything has a beginning, hasn't it?

She drinks. The YOUNG MAN stares at her.

YOUNG MAN. [*Floundering in these waters deeper than he had bargained for*] I say—about things having beginnings—did you mean anything?

CLARE *nods.*

YOUNG MAN. What! D'you mean it's really the first——?

CLARE *nods. The champagne has flicked her courage.*

YOUNG MAN. By George! [*He leans back*] I've often wondered.

ARNAUD. [*Again filling the glasses*] Monsieur finds——

YOUNG MAN. [*Abruptly*] It's all right.

He drains his glass, then sits bolt upright. Chivalry and the camaraderie of class have begun to stir in him.

YOUNG MAN. Of course I can see that you're not—I mean, that you're a—a lady.

CLARE *smiles*.

YOUNG MAN. And I say, you know—if you have to—because you're in a hole—I should feel a cad. Let me lend you——?

CLARE. [*Holding up her glass*] *Le vin est tiré, il faut le boire!*

She drinks. The French words, which he does not too well understand, completing his conviction that she is a lady, he remains quite silent, frowning. As CLARE held up her glass, two gentlemen have entered. The first is blond, of good height and a comely insolence. His crisp, fair hair, and fair brushed-up moustache are just going grey; an eyeglass is fixed in one of two eyes that lord it over every woman they see; his face is broad, and coloured with air and wine. His companion is a tall, thin, dark bird of the night, with sly, roving eyes, and hollow cheeks. They stand looking round, then pass into the further room; but in passing, they have stared unreservedly at CLARE.

YOUNG MAN. [*Seeing her wince*] Look here! I'm afraid you must feel me rather a brute, you know.

CLARE. No, I don't; really.

YOUNG MAN. Are you absolute stoney?

CLARE *nods*.

YOUNG MAN. But [*Looking at her frock and cloak*] you're so awfully well——

CLARE. I had the sense to keep them.

YOUNG MAN. [*More and more disturbed*] I say, you know—I wish you'd let me lend you something. I had quite a good day down there.

CLARE. [*Again tracing her pattern on the cloth—then looking up at him full*] I can't take, for nothing.

YOUNG MAN. By Jove! I don't know—really, I don't—this makes me feel pretty rotten. I mean, it's your being a lady.

CLARE. [*Smiling*] That's not your fault, is it? You see, I've been beaten all along the line. And I really don't care what happens to me. [*She has that peculiar fey look on her face now*] I really don't; except that I don't take charity. It's lucky for me it's you, and not some——

The supper party is getting still more boisterous, and there comes a long view holloa, and a blast of the horn.

YOUNG MAN. But I say, what about your people? You must have people of some sort.

He is fast becoming fascinated, for her cheeks have begun to flush and her eyes to shine.

CLARE. Oh, yes; I've had people, and a hus-

band, and—everything—— And here I am! Queer, isn't it? [*She touches her glass*] This is going to my head! Do you mind? I shan't sing songs and get up and dance, and I won't cry, I promise you!

YOUNG MAN. [*Between fascination and chivalry*] By George! One simply can't believe in this happening to a lady——

CLARE. Have you got sisters? [*Breaking into her soft laughter*] My brother's in India. I shan't meet him, anyway.

YOUNG MAN. No, but—I say—are you really quite cut off from everybody?

CLARE *nods*.

YOUNG MAN. Something rather awful must have happened?

She smiles. The two gentlemen have returned.

The blond one is again staring fixedly at

CLARE. *This time she looks back at him, flaming; and, with a little laugh, he passes with his friend into the corridor.*

CLARE. Who are those two?

YOUNG MAN. Don't know—not been much about town yet. I'm just back from India myself. You said your brother was there; what's his regiment?

CLARE. [*Shaking her head*] You're not going to find out my name. I haven't got one—nothing.

She leans her bare elbows on the table, and her face on her hands.

CLARE. First of June! This day last year I broke covert—I've been running ever since.

YOUNG MAN. I don't understand a bit. You—must have had a—a—someone——

But there is such a change in her face, such rigidity of her whole body, that he stops and averts his eyes. When he looks again she is drinking. She puts the glass down, and gives a little laugh.

YOUNG MAN. [*With a sort of awe*] Anyway it must have been like riding at a pretty stiff fence, for you to come here to-night.

CLARE. Yes. What's the other side?

The YOUNG MAN puts out his hand and touches her arm. It is meant for sympathy, but she takes it for attraction.

CLARE. [*Shaking her head*] Not yet—please! I'm enjoying this. May I have a cigarette?

He takes out his case, and gives her one.

CLARE. [*Letting the smoke slowly forth*] Yes, I'm enjoying it. Had a pretty poor time lately; not enough to eat, sometimes.

YOUNG MAN. Not really! How damnable! I say—do have something more substantial.

CLARE *gives a sudden gasp, as if going off into*

hysterical laughter, but she stifles it, and shakes her head.

YOUNG MAN. A peach?

ARNAUD *brings peaches to the table.*

CLARE. [*Smiling*] Thank you.

He fills their glasses and retreats.

CLARE. [*Raising her glass*] Eat and drink, for to-morrow we—— Listen!

From the supper party comes the sound of an abortive chorus: "With a hey ho, chivy, hark forrard, hark forrard, tantivy!" Jar-ring out into a discordant whoop, it sinks.

CLARE. "This day a stag must die." Jolly old song!

YOUNG MAN. Rowdy lot! [*Suddenly*] I say—I admire your pluck.

CLARE. [*Shaking her head*] Haven't kept my end up. Lots of women do! You see: I'm too fine, and not fine enough! My best friend said that. Too fine, and not fine enough. [*She laughs*] I couldn't be a saint and a martyr, and I wouldn't be a soulless doll. Neither one thing nor the other—that's the tragedy.

YOUNG MAN. You must have had awful luck!

CLARE. I *did* try. [*Fiercely*] But what's the good—when there's nothing before you?—I've been ill. Do I look ill?

YOUNG MAN. No; simply awfully pretty.

CLARE. [*With a laugh*] A man once said to me: "As you haven't money, you should never have been pretty!" But, you see, it is some good. If I hadn't been, I couldn't have risked coming here, could I? Don't you think it was rather sporting of me to buy these [*She touches the gardenias*] with the last shilling over from my cab fare?

YOUNG MAN. Did you really? D—d sporting!

CLARE. It's no use doing things by halves, is it? I'm—in for it—wish me luck! [*She drinks, and puts her glass down with a smile*] In for it—deep! [*She flings up her hands above her smiling face*] Down, down, till they're just above water, and then—down, down, down, and—all over! Are you sorry now you came and spoke to me?

YOUNG MAN. By Jove, no! it may be caddish, but I'm not.

CLARE. Thank God for beauty! I hope I shall die pretty! Do you think I shall *do well*?

YOUNG MAN. I say—*don't* talk like that!

CLARE. I want to know. *Do you*?

YOUNG MAN. Well, then—yes, I do.

CLARE. That's splendid. Those poor women in the streets would give their eyes, wouldn't they?—that have to go up and down, up and down! Do you think I—shall—

The YOUNG MAN, half-rising, puts his hand on her arm.

YOUNG MAN. I think you're getting much too excited. You look all—— Won't you eat your peach? [*She shakes her head*] Do! Have something else, then—some grapes, or something?

CLARE. No, thanks.

[She has become quite calm again.]

YOUNG MAN. Well, then, what d'you think? It's awfully hot in here, isn't it? Wouldn't it be jollier drivin'? Shall we—shall we make a move?

CLARE. Yes.

The YOUNG MAN turns to look for the waiter, but ARNAUD is not in the room. He gets up.

YOUNG MAN. [*Feverishly*] D—n that waiter! Wait half a minute, if you don't mind, while I pay the bill.

As he goes out into the corridor, the two gentlemen re-appear. CLARE is sitting motionless, looking straight before her.

DARK ONE. A fiver you don't get her to!

BLOND ONE. Done!

He advances to her table with his inimitable insolence, and taking the cigar from his mouth, bends his stare on her, and says: "Charmed to see you lookin' so well! Will you have supper with me here to-morrow night?" Startled out of her reverie, CLARE looks up. She sees those eyes, she sees beyond him the eyes of his companion—sly, malevo-

lent, amused—watching; and she just sits gazing, without a word. At that regard, so clear, the Blond One does not wince. But rather suddenly he says: “That’s arranged then. Half-past eleven. So good of you. Good night!” He replaces his cigar, and strolls back to his companion, and in a low voice says: “Pay up!” Then at a languid “Hullo, Charles!” they turn to greet the two in their nook behind the screen. CLARE has not moved, nor changed the direction of her gaze. Suddenly she thrusts her hand into the pocket of the cloak that hangs behind her, and brings out the little blue bottle which, six months ago, she took from MALISE. She pulls out the cork and pours the whole contents into her champagne. She lifts the glass, holds it before her—smiling, as if to call a toast, then puts it to her lips and drinks. Still smiling, she sets the empty glass down, and lays the gardenia flowers against her face. Slowly she droops back in her chair, the drowsy smile still on her lips; the gardenias drop into her lap; her arms relax, her head falls forward on her breast. And the voices behind the screen talk on, and the sounds of joy from the supper party wax and wane. The waiter, ARNAUD, returning from the cor-

ridor, passes to his service-table with a tall, be-ribboned basket of fruit. Putting it down, he goes towards the table behind the screen, and sees. He runs up to CLARE.

ARNAUD. Madame! Madame! [*He listens for her breathing; then suddenly catching sight of the little bottle, smells at it*] Bon Dieu!

At that queer sound they come from behind the screen—all four, and look. The dark night-bird says: "Hallo; fainted!" ARNAUD holds out the bottle.

LANGUID LORD. [*Taking it, and smelling*] Good God!

The woman bends over CLARE, and lifts her hands; ARNAUD rushes to his service-table, and speaks into his tube:

ARNAUD. The boss. Quick! [*Looking up he sees the YOUNG MAN, returning*] Monsieur, elle a fui! Elle est morte!

LANGUID LORD. [*To the YOUNG MAN standing there agbast*] What's this? Friend of yours?

YOUNG MAN. My God! She was a lady. That's all I know about her.

LANGUID LORD. A lady!

The blond and dark gentleman have slipped from the room; and out of the supper party's distant laughter comes suddenly a long, sbrill: "Gone away!" And the sound of the

born playing the seven last notes of the old song: "This day a stag must die!" From the last note of all the sound flies up to an octave higher, sweet and thin, like a spirit passing, till it is drowned once more in laughter. The YOUNG MAN has covered his eyes with his hands; ARNAUD is crossing himself fervently; the LANGUID LORD stands gazing, with one of the dropped gardenias twisted in his fingers; and the woman, bending over CLARE, kisses her forehead.

Curtain.

