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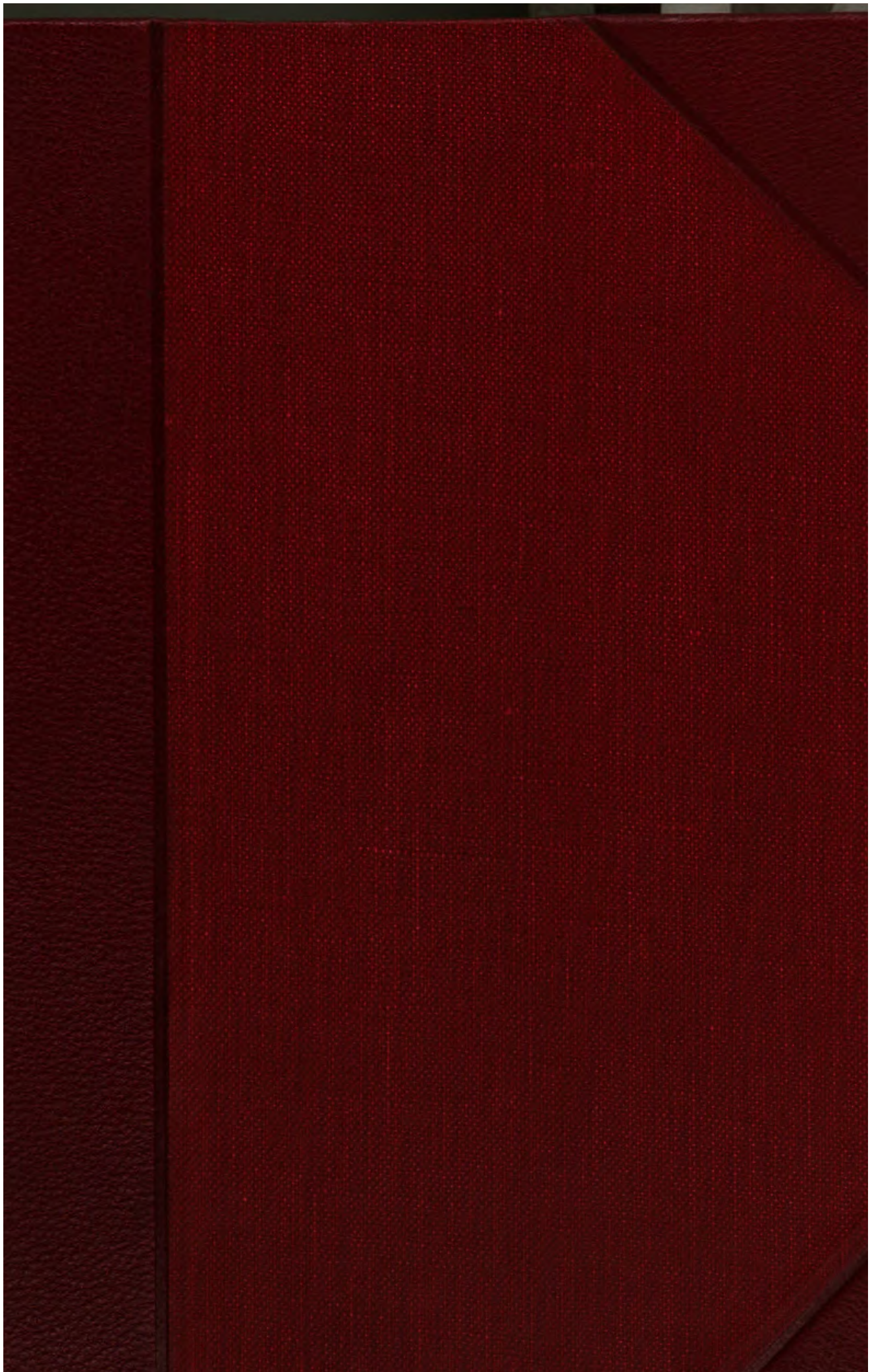
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THE WORKS
OF
ISRAEL ZANGWILL

EDITION DE LUXE

VOL. XIII
THE COCKPIT
TOO MUCH MONEY



“ There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. . . . Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues have they used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips : Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known.”—ST. PAUL : Epistle to the Romans.

“ He who chooses to avenge wrong with hatred is assuredly wretched, but he who strives to conquer hatred with love fights his battle in joy and confidence ; he withstands many as easily as one, and has very little need of fortune’s aid. Those whom he vanquishes yield joyfully, not through failure, but through increase in their powers. Hatred, which is completely vanquished by love, passes into love.”—SPINOZA.





- WOLMARK 1925 -

And is it not the law of Roxo? Whence comes his glory save from slaying thousands?

THE COCKPIT

ROMANTIC DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

TOO MUCH MONEY

A FARCICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

THE GLOBE PUBLISHING CO., LTD.

LONDON

1925

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THE COCKPIT



TO ALFRED SUTRO



MY DEAR ALFRED,—

Your inspiring criticism and commendation of this play while it was still plastic has suggested to me to dedicate it to our old friendship. That friendship was already well and truly laid before "The Walls of Jericho" rose, and it was cemented by holidays together in Europe ere, caught in the coil of passports, visas and commerce-strangling currencies, the inhabitants of that unhappy Continent had turned into a mutual irritation society. The multiplication of "Sovereign States" has intensified the old plague of Custom Houses, and on the eve of a fresh journey across the Channel, I think with horror of the swarms of able-bodied varlets, waiting, in fancy costumes, at every frontier, to turn me out of my train in the middle of the night in any weather, when they ought to be at work reconstructing the Continent of which we are all citizens.

For what, in effect, does one find even in the heart of "The Cockpit"? Peasant populations toiling from dawn to darkness, the women following the men to the fields, with distaffs on their backs, and their children tugging at their skirts, and all for a crust dipped in soup, a song, a folk-tale, or the smile in a baby's eyes. It is hard to tell one people from another. I have not yet learnt what has happened in Valdania or Bosnavina since I dropped the curtain on these quarrelsome countries, but of one thing I am certain—that their individuals are intermarrying. If the politicians would only leave it alone, "The

Cockpit," linked as never before by railways, telegraphs, cinematographs and aeroplanes, would become of itself "The Melting Pot."

Curiously enough, this pendant to my play on that theme was written near Geneva while the League of Nations was in session—in the Switzerland whose French, German and Italian provinces offer a working model and prophetic emblem of a saner Europe—and it receives its last touches on the eve of the Washington Conference, which provides our war-worn humanity with a fresh spurt of hope. One recalls that it was Abraham Lincoln who said of his countrymen: "We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last great hope of earth."

But I am forgetting that for the reader the curtain has not yet risen. I hasten to efface myself, with the perhaps superfluous assurance that in accepting the dedication of this play, you, dear Alfred, are in no way committed to its vision or analysis of the factors of "The Cockpit."

Believe me in admiration and affection,

Yours sincerely,

ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

October, 1921.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ :

NICHOLAS STONE . . .	<i>A New Yorker with a pass</i>
OLIVER RANDEL . . .	<i>An American Architect</i>
DUKE D'AZOLLO . . .	<i>Ex-Regent of Valdania</i>
COLONEL THE MARQUIS FIUMA	<i>Governor of the Palace of San Marco</i>
COUNT CAZOTTI . . .	<i>Prime Minister of Valdania</i>
BARON GRIPSTEIN . . .	<i>Financier, afterwards President of the Man-Power Board</i>
GENERAL ROXO . . .	<i>Governor of Scaletta, afterwards War Minister</i>
THE CARDINAL . . .	<i>Head of the Catholics of Valdania</i>
THE PATRIARCH . . .	<i>Head of the Greek Church in Valdania</i>
MARROBIO . . .	<i>A Mahdi, head of the Moslem rebels</i>
CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU . . .	<i>Of the Romenian Cavalry</i>
CORPORAL VANNI . . .	<i>Of the Palace Guards</i>
VITTORIO . . .	<i>A Pacifist Poet</i>
DUCHESS D'AZOLLO . . .	<i>Mistress of the Robes, and Grand Mistress of the Court</i>
COUNTESS CAZOTTI . . .	<i>First Lady of the Bedchamber</i>
NORAH . . .	<i>Nicholas Stone's Irish Servant</i>
PEGGY . . .	<i>Of New York and Scaletta</i>

*Court Officials, Dames and Maids of Honour, Pages,
Choristers, Priests and Guards*

*The action passes in our day. ACT I. at Nicholas Stone's
Sitting-room in New York, ACTS II. and III. in the
Throne Room of the old San Marco Palace at Scaletta, the
capital of Valdania.*

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strictly reserved by the author, to whom all applica-
tions should be addressed care of the publishers.]



THE COCKPIT

Act One

[The scene represents a spacious sitting-room in New York on a sunny afternoon in the spring. The room is soberly furnished, but with every sign of ease and refinement. A central table of fine wood. A grand piano littered with music stands by the right wall—right from the actor's point of view, not the spectator's; at L. a desk with a telephone, and a waste-paper basket holding a Sunday paper, etc. A door in the right wall leads to the kitchen regions, a curtained portal to the left towards the upper regions, while the door in the back wall gives access to the entrance hall. As the curtain rises, NORAH, an Irish servant of 45, is ushering in OLIVER RANDEL, a manly young American, who carries a portfolio.]

NORAH [*Grumpily, in an Irish accent modified by years of America*]

Sit right down! I'll tell Mr. Stone you're here again.

OLIVER

Oh, I know he's always busy on his books. Miss Stone will do as well.

NORAH [*With sardonic humour*]

Miss Peggy? You're sure she'll do as well?

OLIVER [*Enthusiastically*]

Quite!

I

B

NORAH
She's out.

OLIVER
Oh! . . . Where?

NORAH
On her horse.
[OLIVER *makes an instinctive move doorwards*]
She'd keep you on the run—like a movie. And
Mr. Stone'll keep you waiting, like a dentist.

OLIVER [*Sitting down*]
Oh, I've time to burn. May I look at that paper?
[*Points to waste-paper basket.*]

NORAH [*Astonished*]
Yesterday's?

OLIVER
The Sunday paper is like the Sunday roast—it lasts
days.
[NORAH *extracts it*]
Thanks . . . just the one I haven't seen . . . No,
never mind the comic part!

NORAH
Faith, there's nothing heartening in the rest—if half
the headlines is true, I'm sorry I ever came to America!

OLIVER [*Busy turning the pages*]
But think how you'd be oppressed, if you had stopped
in Ireland!

NORAH

I guess if we Irish got top-dog here, we'd oppress America!

[Turns to go upstairs. Her eye catches a comic illustration]

Gee! That's funny!

OLIVER *[Staring eagerly at a picture]*

Ah, here it is!

NORAH

Here what is?

[Turns back.]

OLIVER

Oh, nothing.

NORAH

Then why didn't you say so? . . .

[Resumes walk to stairs]

You're in luck. There's the master coming down. You can tell him you're here yourself.

[Moves slowly towards R., her head bent over paper, her face agrin. Enter NICHOLAS STONE, a noble, white-bearded, spectacled veteran, with the scholar's stoop and shabbiness. HE comes peering into his desk at L.]

NICHOLAS *[Surprised, as he perceives the visitor]*

Mr. Randel?

OLIVER *[Rising]*

I intrude, I fear. But I'm going West to-morrow.

NICHOLAS

Going West, young man? Obeying Horace Greeley?

OLIVER

It's the big new University they're to build——

NICHOLAS

Oh, ah—the how many million dollar University?
And have you sent in your design yet?

OLIVER

It's all over. I've won. Out of eighty-three competitors!

NICHOLAS [*Seizes his hand*]

I congratulate you.

OLIVER

My picture was in all the Sunday papers.

NICHOLAS [*Dropping his hand*]

I take back my congratulations.

OLIVER [*Smiling*]

Oh, sir, you may gird at our press—but at least they give an architect as much space as an assassin.

NICHOLAS

Not quite. You've got your hand on a full-page picture of General Roxo.

OLIVER [*Looking at it and reading*]

“Valdania's grand old man.” You are severe.

NICHOLAS

What are all these national heroes but glorified assassins?

[*As NORAH is going out*]

Coffee, Norah, please.

NORAH [*Gurgling over paper*]

Sure!

[*Exit with heaving shoulders.*]

OLIVER [*Proffering portfolio*]

Would you like to see my design?

NICHOLAS [*Waving it aside*]

Ah, I know how good American architecture is, and the best out of eighty-three——! If I could only be as sure the University will teach Americanism! People have such a mania for buildings—theatres before they've got plays, opera-houses before they've got music.

OLIVER [*Opening portfolio*]

But that's just what my design expresses—Americanism.

NICHOLAS

Mayflower Americanism?

OLIVER

Of course! Note the severe and solemn lines—the old Puritan Americanism which the slums of Europe are swamping.

NICHOLAS [*Waving it away*]
I thought you didn't understand. No man born here
can—no man who hasn't suffered from Europe! No,
Mr. Randel, that old Puritan America wasn't America.

OLIVER
Not America?

NICHOLAS
No. Only England over again—writ even narrower.
America is still being born—born out of the travail of
all races. God help the world if she proves an abortion
—if she hardens into the same old nationalism as
Europe—the same old fetish of the flag.

OLIVER [*Fiercely*]
Fetish?

NICHOLAS [*Laying a fatherly hand on his shoulder*]
Yes, I know you offered your life in the Great War——

OLIVER
Oh, I only flew—it was much safer than the trenches.

NICHOLAS
Tell that to the marines! But anyhow it was for our
ideal you adventured, not our flag.

OLIVER
The flag stands for it.
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NICHOLAS

Flags have a way of standing only for themselves. In all history there has been only one honest flag—the skull and crossbones!

OLIVER

You are cynical, sir.

NICHOLAS

On the contrary. My faith is so burning that it reduces the toughest shams to tinder.

[*Extends hand*]

I'm afraid I must get back to my book—*The Nemesis of Nationality*. A good title, is it not?

OLIVER [*Holding out his hand*]

Yes, but——

NICHOLAS [*Dropping his hand*]

You don't think it a good title?

OLIVER

It's a bully title. But . . . but unless I see Miss Stone to-day I mayn't be able to say good-bye to her.

NICHOLAS

I will convey your adieux.

OLIVER [*Embarrassed*]

I'd rather convey them myself. . . . You see, now that the papers . . .

[*Correcting himself hastily*]

I mean, now that I'm making good, I want—I want to ask—her advice.

NICHOLAS

Little Peggy's advice! Why, she's wrapped up in her music—she knows nothing of the world! No, no, my young friend, if you want advice, come to me. You mayn't think it, to see me buried in books, but I've been quite a man of affairs in my time—when you were both in your cradles! Come, now, what is the trouble?

OLIVER

You're so busy. I'd rather wait for her.

NICHOLAS

But that's so dull for you. What could you do? Ah, you could read my MS.!

OLIVER [*Joyously*]

The very thing I wanted!

NICHOLAS [*Beaming*]

Come along, then—I'll put you on the roof-garden.

[*The telephone bell rings*]

Ah, why would Peggy insist on that? Do get the MS. yourself—you know my study.

[*OLIVER exit L. NICHOLAS goes to telephone*]

Yes, I'm Mr. Stone . . . I can't hear . . . Of course I'm home, but who's speaking? General Secretary? General Secretary of what? *Corpo di Bacco*, they've rung off.

[*Enter NORAH with coffee-tray.*]

NORAH

I'm so glad you've got rid of him.

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NICHOLAS

Mr. Randel? He's waiting upstairs for Miss Peggy.

[*Her tray rattles*]

What's the matter?

NORAH

Can't you see he's a thief?—Oh, he won't pinch your books. It's a body-snatcher he is!

NICHOLAS [*Dazed*]

A body-snatcher?

NORAH

It's Miss Peggy he's after!

NICHOLAS

Eh? *Nome di Dio*, what would the house be without her? But no! no! He's going West. He only came to say good-bye!

NORAH

The most dangerous word of all! Get him West before he can put his tongue to it.

[*Puts tray on table.*]

NICHOLAS [*Agitated*]

I'll get rid of him at once. . . .

[*Goes L. Pause*]

But it's a pity to disturb him in the middle of my MS. After all, he can't carry her off this afternoon!

NORAH

He can carry her heart off.

NICHOLAS

Well, but why not? . . . Some years hence, of course . . . He seems a gifted young——

NORAH

A farmer's son for the likes of her!

NICHOLAS

Ah, but remember, Norah, in her peculiar situation it's not so easy to find a suitable—indeed, perhaps the humbler the young man's origin the better!

NORAH

Sure, you're joking.

NICHOLAS

Not at all. Because—don't you see?—his folks will make fewer enquiries. They won't go poking into the past, they and their lawyers, demanding pedigrees, birth-certificates, who knows? We are rich—that will cover everything.

NORAH

I guess you're right. I hadn't thought of the family ferreting out that Miss Peggy is a——

NICHOLAS

Sh!

NORAH

All the same, she can do better than this Mr. Randel. Besides, he's a Protestant! . . . I'll run up and tell

him the 'phone message was to say she won't be home till morning.

NICHOLAS [*Smiling*]
What a brilliant liar you are!

NORAH
Sure, it's as easy as truth!
[*Going L.*]

NICHOLAS [*Sighing*]
Ah, truth's not always so easy. . . . You've never breathed a word to her about Valdania?

NORAH
Faith, I've nigh forgotten the country exists—I almost believe with the darlint she was born in New York!
[*Going towards stairs L.*]
As for the language, divil a word do I remember except *Corpo di Bacco!*

NICHOLAS
Too late, Norah, I hear her latchkey.

NORAH [*Returning*]
That young man has the divil's own luck! Anyways, don't leave 'em alone, sir. Two's courtship and three's conversation.

[*Exit R. PEGGY in a riding-habit dashes through central door, flushed from her ride, a radiant figure, whose face mirrors with tremulous flashings an eager young soul untarnished by experience.*]

PEGGY [*Leaving door open and rushing to piano-music*]
Where's my "Neapolitan Fantasy"?

NICHOLAS
What's up?

PEGGY [*Searching wildly*]
I met Teresa—she wants to take the manuscript to Europe—she sails Saturday.

NICHOLAS
But why can't Teresa travel without your manuscript?

PEGGY
She's going to show it to a publisher, stupid. There's more chance over there.

NICHOLAS
But *I* offered to publish it——

PEGGY
No, no, it mustn't be paid for—my music must win out of itself. Ah, here it is!
[*Picks up MS. music*]
Heigho! Teresa set me just hungering for Europe!

NICHOLAS
You would leave Daddy?

PEGGY
I'd take him, too.

NICHOLAS

There's too much globe-trotting, *carissima*. People ought to stay put.

[*Closes door.*]

PEGGY

At that rate, Daddy, you'd be in England.

[*Rolling up MS.*]

NICHOLAS [*Embarrassed*]

Yes, but—— Is that the piece suggesting Naples during an earthquake?

PEGGY

An eruption of Vesuvius.

NICHOLAS

Ah, an eruption. It should be popular with pianists. They love fireworks.

PEGGY

Don't tease.

[*Lays music roll on table*]

What appalling cups!

[*Rings bell by door sharply, then starts taking off her riding-hat. Enter NORAH*]

Why these dreadful enamelled cups?

NORAH

Faith, the master is that fond of toasts, the gentlemen always crack 'em together—they forget it's coffee, not drink. I can't have my best china chipped.

PEGGY

Rubbish! You give the house too poor an appearance as it is, monopolising the work, scarcely allowing us even a cook.

NORAH [*Bridling*]

I guess I've made Mr. Stone comfortable all these years.

PEGGY

In our position we ought to have a proper staff.

NORAH

I'm not going to have more servants—they'd only make more work for me!

PEGGY

Don't talk to me in that tone!

NICHOLAS [*Upset*]

Peggy!

PEGGY

Take away those cups!

NORAH [*Overawed*]

Yes, miss.

PEGGY [*Stamping foot*]

But you're not doing it!

NORAH

I must get my tray, miss.

[*Exit humbly R.*]

PEGGY [*Smiling*]

You see, Daddy, you let her domineer too much!

NICHOLAS

I see you are your father's daughter!

PEGGY

I like that! Why, you don't even assert yourself.

NICHOLAS [*Confused*]

I—we—I mean I can't assert myself against Norah. We both owe her too much.

PEGGY

Oh, I know she nursed me and all that. But all the same——

[*NORAH returns with tray and the new china*]

I'm sorry, Norah, I spoke severely.

NORAH

Bless you, Miss Peggy, I like it when you talk like that—it's only natural.

PEGGY

No, it isn't, it's unnatural. Haven't you been almost a mother to me?

NORAH [*Blubbing*]

Don't, Miss Peggy, or I'll be dropping my best china. . . .

[*Goes to table and changes cups*]

Divil take the "Drys." I've been in many God-

forsaken places, but never one where you had a
detective down your throat!

[*Exit R.*]

NICHOLAS [*Laughingly*]

That's another reason for not going to Europe—you
said you were hungering for it, but people would think
you were thirsting!

PEGGY

Don't pretend to be a Philistine! You know very
well that we Americans have no romance, no art, no
music . . .

NICHOLAS

I ought to have known college turns out Europe-snobs!
Parasites on her decaying civilisation. I ought never
to have let you learn Italian. You'll end with the
gang in Florence who won't go home!

PEGGY

But if America shocks them!

NICHOLAS

A shock is God's message to set what shocks you right.

PEGGY

You can't remedy rawness.

NICHOLAS

More easily than rottenness. I wonder what your
idea of a European city is. Naples, I suppose, with
Vesuvius in continuous performance.

PEGGY

No, Daddy, my European city snuggles among snow-mountains that play bo-peep with you through the mists. And at their feet the women sing strange sad songs as they strip the vines.

NICHOLAS

What's the matter with California?

PEGGY [*Not listening, growing more and more rapt*]

And you look up in terror at the giant's castle perched on the crags and the waterfalls hurling themselves down upon you.

NICHOLAS [*Uneasily*]

How about Niagara?

PEGGY

But in the thirsty summer the giant drinks them up, and you see the mountain-girls coming down to the wells, with their wooden water-kegs strapped on their backs.

NICHOLAS [*More uneasily*]

Eh?

PEGGY

Such enchanting girls—just like those in Matthew Arnold's poem, you know:

“ The red-snooded Phrygian girls
Whom the summer evening sees
Flashing in the dance's whirls
Underneath the starlit trees
In the mountain villages.”

NICHOLAS [*Relieved*]
Ah, it's from Matthew Arnold you got it!

PEGGY
I suppose so. It makes me cry to feel it all so fresh and magical. And the white sails on the lake! Like giant butterflies poised on the water. And the steep cobbled streets with Madonnas and beggars at every corner. And the sleepy old mosques and bazaars——

NICHOLAS [*Visibly startled again*]
Mosques and Madonnas! Aren't you mixing things up?

PEGGY
Now you've blotted out my dream-city! And it was looking so beautiful! . . .
[Drops on the music stool, her fingers abstractedly strike out a strange barbaric melody.]

NICHOLAS [*Still more agitated*]
What are you playing?

PEGGY
Nothing—only a bit of tune that often comes into my head—I must develop it some day. . . . Ah, there's my dream-city again with the band playing it in the Piazza! What a motley sun-splashed crowd—fezzes, broidered bodices, gold-braided uniforms, gipsy rags, cockades, turbans, cassocks, gaberdines—and all, as the music crashes, turning into one great soul that strains up to the balcony!

NICHOLAS [*Alarmed*]
What balcony?

PEGGY
A side of the Palace gives on to the square—and one great shout goes up to it. *Viva Il Re! Viva Il Re!*

NICHOLAS [*Trying to laugh it off*]
I told you you'd end in Italy!

PEGGY [*Still dazedly*]
Is it Italy?

NICHOLAS
If your dream-mob cheers its King in Italian.

PEGGY [*Smiling at herself*]
I suppose it's because there are so few other Kings left!

NICHOLAS
Fortunately. But you mustn't indulge in day-dreaming.

PEGGY
But it's so lovely floating down on the raft.

NICHOLAS [*Startled again*]
The raft?

PEGGY
Seeing the old-world villages on the banks and——

NICHOLAS
Don't, Peggy!

PEGGY
One *must* forget Fifth Avenue.

NICHOLAS
Heavens! You've made me forget Mr. Randel. That coffee is for him.

PEGGY
Oliver? . . . Mr. Randel, junior, do you mean?

NICHOLAS
Yes, he's waiting for you—on the roof-garden. Won't you go up to him?

PEGGY
And why can't he come down—for his coffee?

NICHOLAS
Well, bring him down. He's got such interesting news.

PEGGY
The University? I'd already wired my congratulations. There's nothing else?

NICHOLAS
I fancy there is. A much greater subject for congratulation.

[*Exit* PEGGY L., *wondering, smoothing her hair.*
NICHOLAS *rings agitatedly.* NORAH *appears.*]

NICHOLAS

You said you'd never told Peggy about Valdania.

NORAH [*Indignantly*]

And have I ever even told her what her mother was like? "Look in the glass" is the most she's gotten out of me.

NICHOLAS

But she's just given me an exact description of Scaletta! And played the National Anthem!

NORAH

You don't say! The cute little memory!

NICHOLAS

But she wasn't three.

NORAH

I wasn't two when mammy gave dad a black eye, but I remember every word of the conversation. Says dad——

NICHOLAS

Never mind that now. I've sent her up to Mr. Randel, and I hope she'll say "Yes." The sooner Europe is blotted out the better. And she'll go West with him——still further from Europe. The very husband we need!

NORAH

But, Mr. Stone——!

NICHOLAS
Don't let us fly in the face of Providence.

NORAH
Providence? And him a Protestant?

NICHOLAS
And suppose she's the instrument to convert him?

NORAH
That's so. . . . But if she ain't stuck on him?

NICHOLAS
She calls him Oliver!

NORAH
If I had married all the men who called me Norah!
Did she hurry up to him when you said he was here?

NICHOLAS
I'm afraid not.

NORAH
Then she'll have him.
 [Wrings her hands]
Oh, acushla! Acushla!

NICHOLAS
Don't. It's harder on me. . . . Sh! They're coming
down!
 [Motions her kitchenwards.]

NORAH [*Blubbing*]

But the children must be brought up Catholics!

[*Exeunt, SHE R., HE C. Enter L., slowly and alone, OLIVER, vaguely looking for something. HE sees only the Sunday paper with his picture and disgustedly tears it in two.*]

PEGGY [*From stairs*]

Oliver!

OLIVER [*Dropping paper with a joyous cry*]

Peggy!

PEGGY [*Appearing L., coldly*]

You forgot your portfolio.

[*Tenders it.*]

OLIVER [*Frozen*]

Thank you. . . . I was looking for it down here.

PEGGY [*Smiling tremulously*]

Wouldn't do to go West without your design.

OLIVER

Oh, hang my design!

[*Hurls it away.*]

PEGGY

I guess they'll hang *all* the designs.

OLIVER

You're heartless.

PEGGY

Oh, no, Oliver, I do admire your University. And by the time it's ivy-covered——

OLIVER

I shall be grass-covered.

PEGGY

Laurel-covered, you mean. You are going to be famous. I am so glad.

OLIVER

You are spoiling all my success.

PEGGY

Exactly what I should do. We shouldn't get on together, dear Oliver.

OLIVER

Because I haven't come back from the war with your reverence for Europe?

PEGGY

Because I can't feel your reverence for America. I can't sink into this petty American domesticity. Oh, Oliver, can't you understand?

OLIVER

Of course I understand—it is the artist in you. But you could go on composing—I should be only too proud of my little singing-bird.

PEGGY

It isn't only the call of my music.

OLIVER

What else, then?

PEGGY

I don't know. Something strange, from afar—like a call to service—I can't settle down so—so finally.

OLIVER

But I can wait—years—if only there's an outlook—not a blank window.

PEGGY

That is not fair to you. No, you must go West untrammelled.

OLIVER

That's impossible.

[*Picks up portfolio. Huskily*]

Good-bye, then.

PEGGY

Good-bye.

[*Desperately*]

You'll write to me from the University scaffolding?

OLIVER [*Eagerly*]

May I?

PEGGY

Of course.

[Holds out hand]

Aren't you going to shake hands?

OLIVER *[Throwing down portfolio to take her hand in both of his]*

Oh, Peggy, then you do care a little?

PEGGY

You never asked me that. You only wanted to absorb me.

OLIVER

You darling!

[Their lips meet.]

PEGGY

How wonderful you are! . . . It almost seems as if the rest were irrelevant—even music.

OLIVER

And I thought I was happy when I won the competition!

PEGGY

I have never even thought I was happy.

OLIVER

Never happy! You?

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PEGGY

My mother died when I was a baby, and father has always been so busy prophesying.

OLIVER

My poor little girl! I must make up to her for everything.

PEGGY

Yes, for everything.

[SHE opens her arms to him]

Oh, Oliver, if I should lose you now!

OLIVER

Why should we lose each other? I will speak to your father at once.

PEGGY

No, no—it is all too sacred!

OLIVER

But, dearest, I leave New York to-morrow.

PEGGY [*Clinging to him*]

So soon. Oh!

[NICHOLAS heard deliberately humming in the doorway.]

OLIVER

Ah, here he comes!

[SHE retreats]

Don't run away!

PEGGY

I can't face even Daddy, yet. . . . Besides, I must change my riding-skirt. *A rivederla, carissimo.*

[*Kisses her hands to him and runs off L. Enter NICHOLAS with elaborate unconcern.*]

NICHOLAS

Well, young man. And how far did you get?

OLIVER [*Surprised*]

Eh?

[*Ecstatically*]

Oh, sir, Peggy—

NICHOLAS

Peggy? Didn't you read *any* of my MS.?

OLIVER [*Embarrassed*]

Oh, that! I—you see, Peggy came up—and we—we want to marry.

NICHOLAS

What!

OLIVER

I hope you're not angry.

NICHOLAS

I can't say I'm delighted to be robbed of her.

OLIVER

Then you consent?

NICHOLAS

You go as fast as your aeroplane. Sit down, sit down, young man, and let us talk.

[THEY sit]

You realise that there are great differences between you?

OLIVER

Naturally. Peggy is an angel.

NICHOLAS

That of course. But I had in mind such things as religion——

OLIVER

After you've come back from the war, you don't take much stock in religion—religious differences, I mean.

NICHOLAS [*Drily*]

Yes, religion does usually mean that. But there's race too. Peggy's not American.

OLIVER

Gee! Is there any race that's not American? But I knew you were English-born. That's no difference.

NICHOLAS

But we're not English. Moreover—I meant to carry the secret to my grave, but it is borne in on me as I speak to you that I ought to tell you this much—Peggy is not my daughter.

OLIVER

Not your——? But she calls you daddy!

NICHOLAS

She doesn't know. And she must never know.

OLIVER [*After a pause*]

I will keep your secret.

NICHOLAS

It doesn't mean that she won't inherit my wealth.

OLIVER

Oh, sir, I'm not worrying about that.

NICHOLAS

You mean you are worrying about her birth?

OLIVER

No, no. I thank God she was born at all. Why, even if she were nobody's daughter——!

NICHOLAS

Would she were! But she's somebody's daughter. That's the trouble.

OLIVER

Her father may claim her?

NICHOLAS

Not he—he's safely dead. Still, I can only consent to the marriage on one condition.

OLIVER

I accept.

NICHOLAS

But listen! You must take Peggy out West with you.

OLIVER

What! To-morrow?

NICHOLAS

Of course not, but as soon as possible.

OLIVER

Say, I told you I wasn't kicking. I guess I'd best put off my trip till she can come along.

NICHOLAS

Good. And you must always live in America.

OLIVER [*Disconcerted*]

Oh! Never go to Europe, you mean? But Peggy——!

NICHOLAS

Yes, I know. I've been trying to explain to her that we've got to stay here and make God's own country a fit place for God to live in. But it'll be all right if you keep away from the Balkan parts of Europe—not that Europe isn't all Balkans nowadays, a pit of steel-spurred cocks, each crowing on its own little dunghill. God! to think of all those millions of peaceful citizens turned into murderers as quails in Turkestan are turned into fighting-cocks by tobacco smoke.

OLIVER

You can't do away with war.

NICHOLAS

So the British once thought about cockfighting. Henry VIII. made it a national institution and cockpits grew almost as thick as cinemas to-day. At Shrovetide schoolchildren had to pay the masters cock-penny for a cock to pit against another school cock. But now if you want to pit the main openly, you must go to the Philippines.

OLIVER

Do I gather Peggy was born in the Balkans?

NICHOLAS [*Hesitating*]

Ahem! There or thereabouts. A mongrel State, Arabized Italian by lingo, with Catholics, Greek-Orthodox and Moslems always fighting one another or their neighbours. In the Second Crusade they all fought on the Moslem side under the Sultan of Ikonion, for it wasn't until the Armenians began assassinating them that any accepted Christianity. In fact, the Moslems are still the most numerous element, though the Christians combine to keep them under. Some twenty years ago a sanguine Chancellor arose who tried to modernise his people. But they murdered the Queen and blew up the Chancellery.

OLIVER

Sounds worse than Mexico.

NICHOLAS

A home for incurables. The Catholics ruled the roost, but if ever the Orthodox got top-dog they hanged Catholics and Jews. But the Catholics always got their own back and hanged Orthodox and Jews. Sometimes, of course, both had to combine and then the lamp-posts held Moslems and Jews! The only thing the three religions had in common except Jew-baiting was the hatred of a neighbour State, which a century ago had annexed a barren mountain-province, and their real God was their fifth-century filibuster, Alpastroom, whom they all expected to rise one day from his grave in Rome and win back the lost province.

OLIVER [*Smiling*]
Talk of Rip Van Winkle!

NICHOLAS

These lunatics took it seriously; there's a national proverb:

“ When Rome yields up our royal seed,
Bosnavina to death shall bleed.”

[*Starting up*]

Oh, but I didn't mean to give away names. I'm a forgetful old fool. And that coffee, too! Must be iced by now. Never mind. Let's drink confusion to the cockpit.

[*Goes to table and pours coffee for OLIVER.*]

OLIVER

I'd rather drink to Peggy's present country.

[*Takes cup.*]

NICHOLAS

Same thing.

[*Pours for himself*]

It's the Melting Pot versus the Cockpit.

[*Holds up cup*]

To America!

OLIVER

To America!

[*THEY clink cups. An unusually imperious rat-tat-tat. THEY pause in their drinking.*]

NICHOLAS

Who can that be?

[*NORAH appears door C. with a frightened face.*]

NORAH

It's soldiers!

NICHOLAS

Soldiers!

NORAH

Two autos-full. And General Roxo—him that used to be Captain Roxo.

NICHOLAS [*Alarmed*]

He recognised you?

NORAH

No, I recognised him.

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NICHOLAS

Tell him I'm engaged—I can see nobody.

OLIVER

But I can make myself scarce.

NICHOLAS

Nonsense! Drink your coffee. Leave us, Norah.

NORAH

Si, Signor—Mr. Stone.

[*Exit* NORAH.]

NICHOLAS [*Sipping his coffee*]

Strange how Europe will keep breaking in!

OLIVER

Is it that Valdanian headliner?

NICHOLAS

Yes, the fire-eater our fool-press has been booming.

[*Re-enter* NORAH.]

NORAH

The General's Secretary complains he 'phoned you and you said you'd be home.

NICHOLAS

Ah! I thought he said *general* secretary. Tell him I was cut off—I'm sorry, but I've business with a friend.

OLIVER

But, Mr. Stone, if I'm to cancel my journey to-morrow

I must get busy too. Let me do my wiring while you work off your visitors. May I leave my portfolio?

[Without waiting for a reply HE opens the door, revealing in the hall-way a group of officers in peaked caps, cloaks and swords, headed by GENERAL ROXO, a one-armed veteran, glittering under a loose cloak with stars and medals, and his secretary, the MARQUIS FIUMA, a handsome man in the thirties, carrying a wallet of papers. OLIVER bows to them as he passes, and ROXO seizes the opportunity to advance.]

ROXO

Pardon my persistence, Mr. Stone, we had meant to wait upon you later in the week, but in the midst of an official reception at our legation, a cable reached me necessitating instant arrangements for returning to Valdania by this afternoon's boat. Our only chance was to take you on our way back to the hotel. And I feel sure that as a good patriot——

NICHOLAS

So good a patriot, General——er——

ROXO

Roxo.

NICHOLAS

Roxo, that you find me toasting America.

ROXO

Ah, I thought from your name you'd been naturalised.

NICHOLAS

Fifteen years ago.

ROXO [*Advancing*]

Fifteen centuries cannot extinguish the flame of the fatherland. Even Valdanians born in the States——

NICHOLAS [*Coldly*]

May I ask you to come at once to the point of your visit?

ROXO

The Marquis Fiuma can put it more briefly.

[*The MARQUIS bows and NICHOLAS bows back. The SUITE drifts in behind the MARQUIS. But NICHOLAS, standing as on guard, does not invite anybody to sit down. FIUMA lays down his wallet.*]

FIUMA

As you doubtless know, Mr. Stone, the death of Tito the Fifth two years ago left us without an heir to the throne, and Polish and Bolshevist adventurers profited by the consequent anarchy to overrun Valdania. Thanks to our heroic General Roxo,

[*The GENERAL makes a deprecatory gesture*]

all were beaten off, and Valdania took advantage of the war-unity to turn herself into a constitutional country, clipping the wings of my class

[*Smiling*]

and replacing the Chancellor and the Council by a Parliament.

NICHOLAS

Really? I have not followed your politics. Our papers gave you no space till his Excellency arrived. So, General, you have made Valdania safe for democracy!

FIUMA

Not so safe as *money* could make it. We are in woeful need of the sinews of . . . peace. And the Government naturally thought that a mission—headed by our national hero—to our enriched *émigrés*—

NICHOLAS [*Coldly*]

Yes, I know America is the milch-cow of Europe. But why come to me?

FIUMA

Seven years ago, we are told, you subscribed fifty thousand dollars to our famine fund.

NICHOLAS

Only what other Americans did. To feed famished foreigners is one thing—to interfere in their politics another. My blood is English.

[*Rings.*]

ROXO

I am sorry. I am very sorry. We thought you were a Valdanian. This is truly an intrusion. My love for Valdania must be my excuse. . . .

[*To NORAH, who has answered the ring, from door C., where she has been waiting*]

Haven't I seen your face before?

NORAH

Sure, you haven't seen it behind.

ROXO

Come, *amici*, we shall have a little longer for packing.
God keep you, sir.

NICHOLAS

Thank you! A pleasant journey!

[*With a sudden impulse*]

But why should I stoop to mislead you? Only my
mother was English, my father *was* a Valdanian.

ROXO AND SUITE

Ah!

[*THEY turn back.*]

NICHOLAS

But my interest in Valdania has long been submerged
in a bigger ideal.

ROXO

There is nothing bigger than Valdania.

FIUMA AND SUITE

Bravo!

ROXO

And she will not be denied, you see, my brother.

NICHOLAS

She must be denied, she shall be denied. I am less brother to you than to the young American who has just left me. What is this mysterious tyranny of race, and birth? It is true I am a son of Valdania. But I have left her behind me as a barbarian camp.

FIUMA [*Half drawing sword*]
Signor!

NICHOLAS

You came for dollars, you shall have truths. My mother's English property has enabled me to help many causes. But for Valdania not a cent.

[*Angry murmurs.*]

ROXO

You would forsake your own flesh and blood!

NICHOLAS

You speak of my flesh and blood, I speak of my soul. In the Middle Ages every human soul was considered so important that God and Devil were at wrestle for it. To-day we are treated as mere dogs of a pack. But I am man, not animal, and I assert my spiritual freedom.

FIUMA

And are you not free to help Valdania?

NICHOLAS

Ah, if you had come to me with a petition. But you come with a claim, a demand. Valdania is no more to me than the rest of the cockpit you call Europe. Does she need food? I will help her again.

ROXO

Thank you—the hand I lost for my country is not held out for *alms*. Valdania calls on her sons to safeguard her renaissance. The Moslem extremists, unconciliated by the Constitution, still demand dominance, and under their rebel Mahdi, Marrobio——

NICHOLAS

Ah, then it is not all such plain sailing. And I don't suppose even your Catholics and Greek-Orthodox have quite buried the hatchet. And you come to ask America to finance your petty wrangles!

ROXO

No, to end them by strengthening the new Government. Otherwise Bosnavina, to say nothing of Italy or Greece, may seize the opportunity to absorb us. Had there been an heir to the throne, the whole people, weary of slaughter, would have rallied round the crown. But alas! with every scion of our royal house scrupulously assassinated——

NICHOLAS

And it is into this welter of blood you ask me to dip my hands! No, General, better for humanity if Italy or Greece does swallow you up—or even Bosnavina!

ROXO
Signor Stone!

FIUMA
Traitor!

SUITE
Tradittore!

} [*The swords of the SUITE flash out.*]

NICHOLAS
I am an American—and if you wish to get home
unelectrocuted——

ROXO
Put up your swords, Signori. Remember this man's
blood is not wholly Valdanian.

FIUMA
God be thanked!
[*HE and the others sheathe their swords.*]

ROXO
Ay, and may He forgive you, Signor, the wrong
you do your father's memory. Why, when Poland
menaced our freedom, your docks here in New York
were blocked by Valdanians struggling to board the
boats and die for the fatherland. Thousands were
prosperous—they had wives and families—but little
Valdania called, and her sons answered "Here!"

NICHOLAS
As I answer—"Here!" Here is my duty—to America.
To help Valdania would be to roll the world backward.

ROXO

A pretty excuse for disloyalty and meanness. Come, *amici!* Ah, Signor Stone, in our little Valdanian hospital in Brooklyn, a paralysed old pauper of eighty, when he heard who I was, *sat up*, and crying "*Viva Valdania*," lifted his poor withered hand that I might pull off his silver ring—his one little treasure—for the holy cause. You may imagine if I kissed him on both cheeks and if we wept together. *Addio*, Signor. You set me pining more than ever for the Piazza da Pietra.

NICHOLAS

The Piazza da Pietra?

ROXO

Ah, I suppose you knew it as the Piazza Grande. But we have re-named it in honour of our great murdered Chancellor.

NICHOLAS

In honour of—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ROXO

Signor! I will not hear our immortal martyr laughed at.

NICHOLAS

Like Figaro, I hasten to laugh lest I should weep. Ah, General, if only you had thought me such a great Chancellor when I was alive!

ROXO

Eh?

NICHOLAS

I am the immortal Da Pietra.

[*Sensation.*]

ROXO

You Niccolò da Pietra! The jest is ill-timed.

NICHOLAS

It would be, if you hadn't to catch your boat. Good-bye!

ROXO

Is it possible?

NICHOLAS

Pietra only means Stone!

ROXO

Then you were not blown to pieces and burnt with the Chancellery?

NICHOLAS

To the best of my belief.

ROXO

But—but I attended your funeral service.

NICHOLAS

I read of it with pleasure.

ROXO

Then—then you sneaked off to America, you! leaving us to struggle alone these twenty years!

NICHOLAS

And had I not reason? As I told you just now, I have not followed your struggles—I had wider horizons. But when *I* struggled to give Valdania the Constitution you now say has been achieved, did you not fight against me as desperately, if not as dishonestly, as the Cazotti journal?

ROXO

I thought you meant to question the King's divine right.

NICHOLAS

Tito himself understood me better. Despite his abominable cruelty to the young Queen, he had the intelligence to perceive that if our internal chaos continued, Bosnavina would bit off another province.

ROXO

It is what I have since learned to understand.

NICHOLAS

Ha! By granting equal rights even to the Moslem, I aimed to create a common Valdanian citizenship. By safeguarding the Jews, I encouraged the upbuilding of our industries. I won over King Tito to constitutionalism. The country began to take its place in the new Europe. You know my reward. I could have forgiven the reactionaries their attempt to murder me. But that they should have murdered the young Queen——!

ROXO

They said it was through her that you had won over the King.

NICHOLAS

Yes, I know, and that I was her lover.

ROXO

Were you not?

NICHOLAS

The Queen was as pure as our mountain snows. I had an immense pity for her in the cold, high loneliness. Poor Margherita! If ever sovereign wore a crown of thorns——

ROXO

Then why did you not remain to revenge her?

NICHOLAS

Revenge? The righteousness of fools. The eternal whirligig of blood. No, I preferred to shed only ink—to return to my early love, literature.

[*Goes to desk, takes cheque-book*]

But I have liberated my mind at the expense of your precious time. You *shall* have a cheque after all. It was worth it.

ROXO

No, Da Pietra. . . . Not your money now. It is *you* we want.

NICHOLAS

Me?

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ROXO

Come back with us!

[Excited murmurs of approval among the SUITE.]

NICHOLAS

Back? With the sentiments you have just heard?

ROXO

Your head spoke but not your heart. What is America to you or you to America? It is a childish people with its mouth always full of candies and sweet sentiments. Come, Niccolò da Pietra. We will build up the great Valdania of your early dream. Sail with us!

FIUMA AND SUITE

Bravo!

ROXO

You see! The news will spread like wild-fire. It will be a trumpet-call.

NICHOLAS

General Roxo, the trumpet of Resurrection Day could not blow me back to Valdania!

ROXO

Then you will let Cazotti rule?

NICHOLAS

Cazotti?

ROXO

You did not know Cazotti was Prime Minister?

NICHOLAS

Cazotti? Not the blackguardly journalist who fought against all my reforms?

ROXO

The same. He has now carried them all.

NICHOLAS

But it was his journal that provoked my assassination!

ROXO

I shouldn't be surprised if he threw the bombs.

FIUMA

You are imprudent, my General. Cazotti has his spies everywhere. Forget this, Signori.

NICHOLAS

I can believe anything of Cazotti. And you Catholics work under this upstart Greek Church adventurer!

ROXO

For Valdania's sake.

FIUMA

He is indispensable. With his own newspapers, his own cinemas, with a millionaire Jew, Baron Gripstein, to back him, with the bulk of the Moslems won over by equal suffrage, with his own Greek Church party solidly behind him, we Catholics had only the choice of joining his coalition or being swamped.

ROXO

But the Premiership is not enough for him. What he covets is the crown.

NICHOLAS

Nonsense! A pretty Napoleon!

ROXO

There is no nonsense about it. It is the cable warning me of it that drives me home. Since King Tito's death we have made shift with a Regent.

NICHOLAS

Who?

ROXO

The Duke D'Azollo.

NICHOLAS

That profligate dilettante, divided between his old masters and his young mistresses?

ROXO

Precisely. A mere warming-pan for Cazotti. You see, to get a suitable Prince is not easy.

NICHOLAS [*Smiling grimly*]

No, indeed, with the German factory under a ban!

ROXO

And if we took a Prince from a neighbour State, we should come hopelessly under its influence. As for the northern Powers, none sees any prestige in associa-

tion with our bankrupt finances, and the few possible Princes shrink from repeating the fate of the Queen.

NICHOLAS
I don't wonder.

ROXO
Moreover, by the Constitution our sovereign must be Catholic—we are still the ruling sect, you see.

NICHOLAS
Then that rules out Cazotti!

ROXO
No, alas! Cazotti will 'vert!

NICHOLAS
Ha! ha! ha!

ROXO
It is no laughing matter. In the difficulty of finding a Prince, Cazotti's papers and cinemas will propose and picture Cazotti, then Parliament will offer him the crown. Twice he will refuse, but the third time—ah, Niccolò da Pietra, if only in the assassination of the Queen, the infant had been spared! There would have been to-day a native sovereign for the nation to rally round——

NICHOLAS [*With sudden harshness*]
Let *Cazotti* be rallied round and murdered! I'm afraid I mustn't keep you any longer.
[*Holds out hand.*]

ROXO [*Not taking it*]

Then you persist in your living death!

FIUMA

You will let Cazotti king it—the jackal roaring while the lion blinks!

NICHOLAS [*Using his rejected hand to pick up
FIUMA'S wallet*]

Your papers!

ROXO

Come, Signori. Valdania shall hear of this recreant Yankee—his name shall stink in history.

NICHOLAS

It will be better policy, General, to keep it in good odour.

ROXO [*Turning*]

No! By the tombs of our fathers which you have deserted——

NICHOLAS

But I haven't—I'm lying in one of them. Bombed, incinerated, pedestalled on your Piazza, I'm a bigger national asset to you dead than alive. Think it over on the boat.

[*Enter PEGGY unmarked L., in her changed toilette.*]

ROXO [*Drawing sword with his left hand*]

And if I ensured our national asset——!

PEGGY [*Alarmed*]

Daddy!

[All turn towards the new-comer. ROXO'S sword droops and slides into its scabbard, then his body droops, and he falls on one knee, as if hypnotised.]

ROXO [*In a dazed awed whisper*]

The Queen!

NICHOLAS

Are you mad, General?

ROXO [*Unheeding*]

She alive too!

[With a sob]

O God of Valdania!

NICHOLAS

But this is my daughter! My daughter, Peggy!

ROXO [*Rising slowly, passing his hand across his forehead*]

Your daughter? And yet you say you were not the Queen's——!

NICHOLAS

Silence! Not before the child. Go back to your room, Peggy. These men are crazy specimens from the cockpit you hanker after! Why don't you go?

PEGGY

Ah!

[Rushes to the telephone.]

ROXO

Yes, ring up the police! And they shall arrest the gentleman you call father as a kidnapper.

NICHOLAS

What are you talking about?

ROXO

None of your innocence. I see it all now, Fiuma. The little Princess was no more blown up than he was. He took advantage of the wreck of the Palace to steal the nation's hope.

FIUMA } Traitor!
& }
SUITE } *Tradittore!*

ROXO

But the God of Valdania has not forgotten us. He has saved our royal seed for this fateful hour. It is our Queen, *amici*, our dear Margherita!

FIUMA AND SUITE [*Saluting her with flashing swords*]

Viva la Regina! Viva Margherita!

[PEGGY stands dazed, looking from them to her father.]

ROXO

Ah, Your Majesty, this is a great day for Valdania!

PEGGY

Valdania! Where exactly is Valdania?

NICHOLAS

Valdania, my child, is the very heart of the cockpit I rescued you from, and to which these race-bigots would drag you back.

PEGGY

By what right?

ROXO

By divine right, Madam. Are you not our Queen?

PEGGY

I their Queen, Daddy?

NICHOLAS

In a way, I suppose.

PEGGY

A Queen? I?

NICHOLAS

Alas!

PEGGY

I don't understand.

NICHOLAS

You are the last scion of the royal house of Valdania.

PEGGY

But then, Daddy, you must be King, not I Queen.

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NICHOLAS

No, Peggy. I love you—I have watched over you—
as a father. But that is all my claim——

PEGGY

You are not my father? Oh, this is some dream . . .
But here is my music . . . Here are the cups I scolded
Norah about . . . here is Oliver's portfolio . . .

ROXO

It is no dream, Your Majesty. . . . To revenge himself
on Valdania, this man has stolen and hidden you . . .

NICHOLAS

My child will not believe that.

PEGGY [*Fretfully*]

But what *am* I to believe, Daddy? Why did——?

NICHOLAS

I will explain to you, *carissima*, when these gentlemen
are gone.

ROXO

Gone? Do you suppose we will go without our
Queen?

NICHOLAS

Since you have gone without her so long!

FIUMA

Be serious, Signor. We demand our Queen, and this
very instant.

NICHOLAS

I am sorry. She remains here—under the American flag!

ROXO

She goes with us—under the Valdanian flag.

NICHOLAS

But I am naturalised.

ROXO

What of it? She is not your daughter.

NICHOLAS [*Staggering*]

My God! . . . All the same she is no criminal.

FIUMA

Criminal? Her Majesty?

NICHOLAS

Then you cannot extradite her.

ALL THE OTHERS [*Taken aback*]

Ah!

NICHOLAS [*Pursuing his advantage*]

And she is of age, thank God. You can't take her against her will.

ROXO

And do you suppose you could keep her against ours? That any place on earth would be safe from our loyal

devotion? Happily, we know her royal will. Our Sovereigns have never yet abandoned their people. And never did Valdania need a Sovereign so urgently.

PEGGY

The country needs me, you say?

ROXO

As it needs rain in drought and sun in winter. You alone can give it unity and happiness.

PEGGY

Is it so wretched, then?

ROXO

Madam, it is a beautiful country—our snowpeaks, our vineyards——

PEGGY

Ah, and the blue lake! Oh, Daddy, and you pretended it was all my fancy. . . . But it is a Paradise.

ROXO

Disunity has made it an Inferno. But when Your Majesty comes back——!

NICHOLAS

Into that lunatic asylum? Never!

PEGGY

But, Daddy, if the patients need my——?

NICHOLAS

You do not understand!

ROXO

Silence, Signor da Pietra! How dare you interrupt Her Majesty?

FIUMA [*Raising sword*]

Insolente!

PEGGY [*Pitifully*]

Signor da Pietra? Are you not even Nicholas Stone? Oh, why are you so wrapped up in mysteries? Why all this falsehood?

NICHOLAS

I could bite my tongue out for telling the truth. What devil drove you here, Roxo, to tempt me into it?

PEGGY

But what *is* the truth? Who are you? . . . Why don't you explain?

NICHOLAS

If, after all these years, Peggy, you cannot trust me——!

PEGGY

How can I trust you when you have torn me blindfolded from my own world—when you have let grow up in me—ah, but I knew inwardly I was called away from happiness!

[*Covers her eyes.*]

NICHOLAS

God! Why is life so complex? Believe me, *carissima*, I meant it all for the best.

PEGGY

But you took me from my country, my people, my duty!

ROXO

And your throne, Madam.

PEGGY [*Ignoring him*]

And my mother! How often I asked you about her, but you turned the question aside, so that I feared to ask it, I grew afraid she was a bad woman, of whom not even Norah would speak. And the gentle voice I remembered, the soft wet cheek pressed to mine, they were the Madonna's, I thought, pitying the lonely little girl. Ah, how often I cried in the night. All the other girls had mothers—and I—even the memory of one was denied.

[*Sobs.*]

NICHOLAS

Oh, Peggy; if only I had realised! But I suppose a man can't . . . Don't cry, *carissima*. Your mother *was* a Madonna. And in the land you remember as a Paradise, they murdered her.

PEGGY

Oh, my poor mother! My poor mother!

NICHOLAS

You see how knowledge hurts. I saved you that suffering at least.

PEGGY

Ah no! This is a beautiful suffering.

[*Comes closer*]

Oh, Daddy, and it was to save me you took me away?

NICHOLAS

Ah, you have understood. I knew you would! It was Norah that brought you to me by the subway to the Chancellery—when the left wing of the Palace blew up. There was a fashion for English-speaking nurses, and Norah had been chosen as a Catholic. I was Chancellor then, and I felt my house was no safe place for you; but I had hardly gone out with you and Norah when the Chancellery blew up too, with all the witnesses of your visit. It was really you that saved me, rather than the reverse.

PEGGY

I'm so glad, Daddy. I'm so glad.

NICHOLAS

For days, while the reactionaries held Scaletta, we lay hid in a mountain cave, you and I, while Norah, being unknown to the crowd, went foraging for us—fortunately there was plenty of money in my pocket, and she being so pretty——

PEGGY

Norah pretty?

NICHOLAS

Ah, it was more than twenty years ago. Anyhow, she managed everybody and everything, even got passages first in a gipsy-caravan, then on a timber-raft——

PEGGY

Ah, the raft!

NICHOLAS

We drifted with the timber-men to Bosnavina, thence got by way of Rolmenia to Genoa, where, finding an emigrant ship, I thought it simplest to wait in New York till Valdania settled down. Travelling as Mr. Stone, the English widower, with his orphaned daughter and her Irish nurse——

ROXO

I thought I recognised her.

PEGGY [*Stamping her foot*]

You are not to interrupt—nobody must interrupt.

[*ROXO withers.*]

NICHOLAS

When I got on board I was breathing fire and revenge—oh, my sentiments would have delighted General Roxo. I meant to come back, to counterplot—but that fortnight on the Atlantic——

ROXO [*Exhibiting a wrist-watch*]

We shall lose the boat—I beg Your Majesty's pardon!

NICHOLAS

But that fortnight on the Atlantic—the first breathing-space in my political career—the nights on the lonely sea under the silent stars—oh, it was like a religious revelation! Why go back—why drag you back to that cockpit of races and religions——?

PEGGY

Yes, Daddy, yes.

[*SHE holds out her hands to him.*]

NICHOLAS [*Taking them*]

You see, General, she chooses Columbia.

ROXO [*Solemnly*]

Her Majesty has no choice—she is chosen.

PEGGY

By whom?

ROXO

By God. Madam, if this man has left you a Catholic——

NICHOLAS [*Hotly*]

Do you suppose I would turn her from her mother's religion?

ROXO

And do you suppose her mother would have had her abandon her duty?

[*PEGGY winces. Her hands drop from NICHOLAS'S.*]

NICHOLAS

Duty to what? To a hornets' nest, to a den of cockatrices, to a kingdom where she must cross the ambitions of a desperado, who combines the modern democrat with the mediæval *condottiere*?

PEGGY

Is it the danger, Daddy, that you fear for me?

NICHOLAS

Not merely the danger. But they are deceiving you—you can bring the country no peace—the country will only rob you of yours—you will have terrible shocks.

PEGGY

Didn't you say a shock is God's way of telling us to put our country straight?

NICHOLAS

But you can't straighten a shambles. Shall you be murdered too?

PEGGY

If it is God's will——! Have I the right to shrink from the task?

ROXO

The royal blood has spoken.

FIUMA AND SUITE

Brava! Bravissima!

NICHOLAS

You would leave me, Peggy?

PEGGY

Of course not, we will go together.

NICHOLAS

Impossible! You don't understand the etiquette of a Court. It would no longer be the old relation. I couldn't sit without your command, or dine side by side with you. I should have to bow and smirk, call you Majesty, never contradict you——

PEGGY

Oh, no!

NICHOLAS

Oh, yes!

[*Growls from FIUMA and the SUITE*]

You hear! But it must not be, Peggy. You have wealth, beauty, youth—a brave young lover.

[*PEGGY winces again*]

What more can you ask of God?

PEGGY [*Slowly struggling with herself*]

Is it not what God asks of us?

NICHOLAS

O spare her, General, for her mother's sake! Have pity.

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ROXO

There is no place for pity in high politics. But why speak of pity? She will have the throne, the homage of millions. The eyes of Europe will be——

NICHOLAS

But she is so young. Ah, let me go in her stead.

ROXO

You? Nicholas the First! Ha! ha! ha!

NICHOLAS

You know what I mean—I can crush Cazotti, conciliate Marrobio, unify Valdania. It is what you just asked.

ROXO

I did not know then we had a bigger card to play—the Queen. We can't accept a substitute.

NICHOLAS

Then I must go *with* her?

ROXO

And lessen her prestige? No, no, we can afford no rival sensation. Her Majesty must arrive alone.

PEGGY [*Pitifully*]

Alone?

NICHOLAS

Alone? Do you suppose I would let her go without *me*?

ROXO

Where would you get a passport from?

NICHOLAS

From Washington, of course.

ROXO

And do you suppose our Consul would *viser* it?

PEGGY

I will viser it.

ROXO [*Bowing*]

Your Majesty's prerogatives do not override the law of Valdania—and that forbids entry to criminal aliens.

NICHOLAS

Criminal alien? I?

ROXO

And is a kidnapper not a criminal, or an American not an alien?

NICHOLAS

I will appeal to the American Government.

ROXO

You? Who are naturalised under a false name?
Ha! ha! ha! . . . Madam!

[*Bows*]

Excuse my left arm.

66

PEGGY [*Not taking it*]

I can't go without my—without Signor da Pietra.

ROXO

Your Majesty heard the State reason that makes his resurrection impossible——

FIUMA [*Catching PEGGY's shrinking eye*]

For the moment, at least.

PEGGY [*Relieved, with grateful look to FIUMA*]

Ah, for the moment.

NICHOLAS

You expect me to surrender a girl to a band of soldiery?

ROXO

Is a strange man's house a proper place for her?

[*NICHOLAS winces*]

My wife, Your Majesty, is waiting in a car below. You shall appoint her Dame of Honour. It will be the first expression of your royal will. Ah, Signor da Pietra, you know the game is up. You know you cannot keep a Sovereign from her State! Madam!

[*Offers arm again.*]

PEGGY [*Pitifully*]

I—I must decide at once?

ROXO [*Extending his wrist-watch*]

Boats do not wait.

PEGGY [*Wildly*]

But my trunks—my manuscripts——!

ROXO

Can come by the next boat—with Signorina Salvador.

[*Turning to one of the suite*]

Captain Salvador, your sister must remain behind.
We shall need her cabin and passport.

[*The CAPTAIN bows*]

She will provide the little Your Majesty will need for
the voyage—for, of course, you must remain in your
cabin.

PEGGY [*Dazedly*]

But—but—I have no Court gowns.

ROXO

I will cable the Duchess D'Azollo to meet us in Paris.
She will make an excellent Mistress of the Robes.

PEGGY

But it is all so sudden.

ROXO

History is sudden. Suppose Cazotti proclaims himself
King? What a work to undo it!

PEGGY

But Teresa—my friends—I must say good-bye——

ROXO

No, no, they would spread the news before we've
settled our story.

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PEGGY

Settled your story?

ROXO

We can't expose your kidnapper—un-name his Piazza. Besides, Cazotti would proclaim himself immediately. Not a whisper, Signori, till we are safe in Scaletta. Come, Madam!

[PEGGY makes a hesitant movement doorward. A rat-tat is heard at the street door.]

NICHOLAS

Ah, Oliver at last, thank God!

PEGGY [*Frenziedly*]

No, no! I dare not see him—don't let him come!

NICHOLAS

But you must see him! You shall!

PEGGY

Do you wish me to hate you? Haven't you made me suffer enough?

[Wincing, NICHOLAS goes silently to door C. and opens it, holding the handle and speaking into the hall-way.]

NICHOLAS

Tell him that my visitors are still here, that I shall expect him to dinner.

NORAH

Si, Signor.

[HE lets the door close. There is a tense moment in which the street door is heard opening, and then a muttered dialogue. Then the door C. opens and NORAH'S head is thrust in.]

NORAH

He wants his portfolio.

[PEGGY rushes to get it, clasps it to her breast, then slowly parts with it to NORAH, behind whom the door closes. Another tense silence till the bang of the street door is heard.]

PEGGY [*Frenziedly*]

But you'll explain to him, Daddy—you'll tell him that there are greater things than happiness.

NICHOLAS [*Icily*]

I will represent to him Your Majesty's point of view.

PEGGY [*Breaking down*]

Oh, Daddy. Don't talk to me like that!

NICHOLAS

Carissima!

[SHE falls into his arms and clings to him wildly. ROXO and his SUITE stand in silent dismay. ROXO frantically shows his wrist-watch to FIUMA. With a sudden inspiration the MARQUIS dashes to the piano and starts the wild barbaric national anthem, which PEGGY unconsciously played earlier. ROXO and his

SUITE stand at the salute. As the first notes break out, a strange thrill passes visibly through the girl, even DA PIETRA trembles, and as it goes on, SHE gradually and unconsciously detaches herself from him, and listens spellbound. As it reaches its close, the Valdanians take up the words in fiery emotion.

*Dio di Valdania,
Salva la patria,
Serva la gloria
Del suo monarca,
Del suo popolo!
Viva la Valdania!*

The song gets more and more frenzied. At its climax, in the intoxication of emotion, GENERAL ROXO again offers his arm, and this time PEGGY, hypnotised, takes it—the SUITE, now standing in a double row, lift their swords with a flash and clash them together into an arch, under which the QUEEN and ROXO pass out.]

THE SUITE

Viva la regina! Viva Margherita! Viva Margherita!
[NICHOLAS stands like a granite image of despair.]

CURTAIN.

Act Two

[*The throne-room in the old San Marco Palace at Scaletta. It is a vast oblong apartment, furnished only with heavy old chairs in embroidered Spanish leather against the rear wall. The throne, ornate and gilded, stands on a dais to the left under a purple canopy, with its back to the wall. Both chair and canopy are blazoned with the arms of Valdania, a serpent encircling an eagle, a crown is sculptured above the chair, and over it on the wall hangs a great old-fashioned sword and buckler, reputed to be Alpastrum's. The floor is mosaic, the rear wall barbaric with battle frescoes ("Alpastrum falling at Rome," etc.), above which hang captured flags. In the centre is a great hearth, now fireless. There are busts of kings or stone figures in niches, and here and there, on narrow oak tables by wall, candlesticks with wax candles. A worn stone step on either side of the rear wall mounts to a balconied casement of coloured glass: that on the right picturing the Madonna and Child, the other full of heraldic blazons of the old Valdanian provinces. The exit to the right is marked by two marble pillars, while rich Oriental hangings to the left denote the entrance to the more private parts of the Palace. Near the right casement is ranged a file of GUARDS under a corporal with fixed bayonets. They are dressed in kilts, with quaint feathered caps, and from their voluminous and brilliantly coloured silken sashes hang scimitars and yataghans. The casement behind is open outwards, showing the stone balcony*

and the far-off shimmering lake and snow-peaks, but not the Piazza da Pietra, which though immediately without, is too far below to be visible. Its existence announces itself, however, as the curtain rises, by the chaotic buzz and laughter of a great holiday crowd, and the festal animation is accentuated by the joyous carillon of bells and the stamping and trampling of police horses. COLONEL THE MARQUIS FIUMA, now Governor of the Palace, in a new military uniform, blazing with decorations, is writing in a notebook.]

VOICES FROM BELOW [*Dominant over the din and bells*]

Order of Procession, official!

Portrait of Queen Margherita—one lira!

Only two soldi—Postcards of the Convent!

Keep back, please, keep your line!

[Noise of horses wheeling and backing. Some shrieks]

Holy Virgin! Mind my baby!

The Convent at Rome where Her Majesty was educated—only two soldi!

FIUMA

Close the window—I cannot think!

[CORPORAL VANNI obeys: noises grow subdued, the high-pitched bells give the dominant festal note. The MARQUIS writes silently. Enter excitedly GENERAL ROXO, now Military Governor of Scaletta, booted and spurred, in full gala costume, but with a black band on his only arm. The GUARDS salute,

HE acknowledges the salute mechanically, hardly seeming to see it.]

ROXO

How many men have you guarding the Queen's apartments?

FIUMA

Nine, Excellency.

ROXO

Double them! Marrobio has been seen near the Chamber of Deputies.

FIUMA

The Mahdi? He has ventured down from his mountains?

ROXO

The Moslem dog is desperate. The Coronation amnesty robbed him of nearly all his followers.

FIUMA

But why didn't you order his arrest?

ROXO

In such a crowd! There'd be a panic—innocent people trampled on, while he perhaps got away. Ah, the rogue knows there's safety in numbers. But Captain Molp has closed all the city gates—we've cut off his retreat.

FIUMA

Better have cut off his advance. But I should have thought the danger-zone is Parliament, especially while the Queen stands reading her speech. He can't get in here.

ROXO

Marrobio is a man of genius. And profiting by his ancient acquaintance with the Palace, he may even get into the Queen's room. And it would scarcely be an auspicious inauguration of your new Palace duties, my dear Colonel, if——

FIUMA

Enough, Excellency. And thanks for the warning!
[*Hurried exit through the hangings L.*]

ROXO

Corporal Vanni! Your salute just now lacked snap. Be careful it is more precise for Her Majesty—why, that blackguard has never pipeclayed his belt! Let him have a day in the cells—to-morrow!

VANNI

Yes, my General!

ROXO

And go back to the ranks yourself.

VANNI

Yes, my General!

[*ROXO hurries out between the pillars. The GUARDS have scarcely time to salute. After an instant the men begin to titter at the CORPORAL.*]

VANNI

Silence, pigs! I am still swineherd to-day!

[THEY grow rigid. A pause]

Say, comrades, if any of you would like to buy those brooches with the Queen's picture, come to me. My brother-in-law makes 'em.

[GUARDS relax]

The Jew hawkers are all profiteers—do you know what they pay for the picture postcards of the Convent where our Margherita was hidden away all those years? . . . Not a single soldo! . . .

[A noise in the corridor]

Attention!

[GUARDS rigid]

Ah, false alarm!

[GUARDS relax]

As I was saying, my brother-in-law can afford to let me have the brooches cheap because, though this procession is nothing to the Coronation, he's let his shop front for double then—he ought to pay Entertainment Tax!

GUARDS [*In parasitic laughter*]

Ha! ha! ha!

VANNI [*Beaming*]

They should make *me* Chancellor of the Exchequer—

[*Curtains L. part, showing the MARQUIS FIUMA returning. GUARDS grow rigid.*]

FIUMA [*Crossing to CORPORAL*]

Be sure you let no one in a turban pass to-day unchallenged—except of course the Turkish Ambassador.

VANNI

Yes, my Colonel.

[MARQUIS *is moving out*]

But how shall I know it's the Turkish Ambassador?

FIUMA

By his coming to the State Banquet, imbecile. But that won't be till thirteen o'clock.

[HE *turns and smiles as the curtains part, revealing the DUCHESS D'AZOLLO, Mistress of the Robes and Grand Mistress of the Court, with her two beautiful MAIDS OF HONOUR. The DUCHESS is aged and stately, with a mantilla and a great necklace of rough uncut stones: the girls wear little red fezzes covered with seed-pearl and gold design, while their hair, coiled or plaited, is rolled under the edge of the cap.*]

FIUMA

Ha, aunt, you're up! Headache better?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Never mind my headache! Who are all these strange men hovering about our apartments?

FIUMA

Detectives, Duchess.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Drily*]

So I thought by our detecting them.

FIUMA

Ha! ha! ha! But seriously, aunt—if it won't frighten these charming damsels—Marrobio's on the war-path.

DUCHESS AND MAIDS [*In horror*]

Marrobio!

FIUMA

Oh, not in the Palace—only near Parliament.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

See how curses come home to roost! If King Tito had not had a Moslem mistress——

FIUMA [*Indicating* MAIDS OF HONOUR]

Sh!

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Oh, they know all about the Mahdi's parentage. I repeat, if King Tito had confined himself to Christian ladies——

FIUMA

My hair wouldn't be turning as grey as yours, aunt. However, let us be thankful for large mercies, seeing that Marrobio is the only jar in this wonderful harmony. Confess, Duchess, though you didn't like the Duke's Regency drying up, the Queen's coming has worked miracles. Moslem, Greek-Orthodox, Catholics are at one in adoration—it is a religion!

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Drily*]

With the Duke as High Priest.

FIUMA

Uncle always had an excellent taste in pictures. And when did a people have a more artistic head on its stamps and coins?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Ah, you are *all* in love with her!

FIUMA [*Smiling evasively*]

You don't include the Prime Minister?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Why else did Cazotti fish her up? If it wasn't that Margherita is her mother's image I should suspect he'd foisted some love-child of his own on the throne. Why didn't he tell us all these years he had rescued the infant Princess and was educating her in a Roman convent?

FIUMA [*A bit embarrassed*]

Hasn't he explained that he wanted the country to settle down constitutionally, that he couldn't risk her being murdered like her mother?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

But he could risk the Duke being murdered as Regent! Anyhow, it's too dreadful his making his wife a Dame of Honour. In King Tito's day she wouldn't even have been received at Court.

FIUMA

And do you suppose Cazotti can help himself? His wife is his cross.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

It's all a dreadful warning against democracy. Since the creature's been Lady of the Bedchamber, she considers herself one of the Royal Family. Have you noticed how she copies the Queen's dresses? By the way, I do think that horrible Jew-Baroness Gripstein should be forbidden to wear a necklace just like mine.

FIUMA

What do necklaces matter? What revolts me is her horrible husband wearing the Order of the Redeemer—

[*Boom of distant gun.* THE DUCHESS and MAIDS shriek]

No, no, that's not Marrobio, that's only the gun proclaiming the Queen has left Parliament.

[*Re-enter ROXO, R. The GUARDS present arms.*]

ROXO

Ah, Duchess, I'm glad your headache is better.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

My headache was only for royal consumption. The idea of expecting me to ride with the Countess Cazotti!

ROXO

It is with the Queen you would have been riding; it was your duty to accompany Her Majesty to the opening of Parliament.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

I am sure that the Queen prefers the company of my husband!

[*Sweeps out L. with her ladies.*]

FIUMA [*Laughingly to GENERAL ROXO*]
Dear aunt! She's jealous!

ROXO [*Smiling*]
How absurd! Why, the Duke told me over a cigar that the Virgin Queen fills him with a strange new reverence for womanhood, and that this is the first time he's ever been in love *innocently*.

FIUMA
And it's the first time the Duchess has ever been jealous! How funny! I suppose, having nothing to hide this time, he takes no precautions. But I sympathise with the old boy's latest passion. I'd propose myself, if I didn't know I'd be ordered off to instant execution.

ROXO
You are not far wrong. An asset like the Queen is not to be wasted.

FIUMA [*With a half-angry, half-comical grimace*]
Wasted?

ROXO
You know Valdania must lay her out to the best advantage—she can restore our political fortunes.

FIUMA [*Consciously shocked and unconsciously jealous*]
You are already devising her marriage?

ROXO

Already? Do you suppose there were no princes inspecting her at the Coronation?

FIUMA

Poor Queen! Surely a better way to restore our political fortunes would be to win back our lost province.

ROXO [*Roaring*]

What?

FIUMA

That's what they are saying at the Officers' Club—
Death to Bosnavina!

ROXO

Death to Valdania, they mean. You remember the old saying:

“Who draws the sword of Alpastroom
Writes our or Bosnavina's doom.”

FIUMA [*Laughingly*]

A safe prophecy. But our young bloods drink to “The Day” and believe the Queen is our war-mascot. They even toast her by her obsolete title of “Duchess of Bosnavina,” and they would die for her to a man.

ROXO

Hush!

[*Indicates soldiers.*]

FIUMA

They don't count.

ROXO [*In low tones*]

Bosnavina has her filthy spies everywhere—not to mention Cazotti's.

[*Aloud*]

Withdraw your men, Corporal, till I give the word.

VANNI

Yes, my General; into file, right turn, quick march.

[*Exeunt GUARDS, R.*]

FIUMA

You seem very agitated, General.

ROXO

Because we're not ready for war. And Bosnavina—our friend in her War Office informs us—grows stronger daily.

FIUMA

Then why not get our blow in before she's too strong? All the young officers keep asking me—thinking I'm in the know—When are we going to get our knife into the beastly Bosnavinians?

ROXO

These cockerels crow too soon.

FIUMA

No! They feel "The Day" dawning. Why, as Dramatic Censor, I've had three plays this month all breathing *Delenda est Bosnavina*.

ROXO [*Alarmed*]
Cristo! You stopped them, of course?

FIUMA
Of course. It's not for playwrights to interfere in politics.

ROXO
Nor for new-whelped officers. Let them stick to their dicing and womanising.
[*Going out R.*]

FIUMA
With all respect, General, you shouldn't have stopped duelling. It lets off some of the blood.

ROXO [*Turning*]
They don't meditate a raid, these hotheads?

FIUMA [*Hesitating*]
No.

ROXO
The truth!

FIUMA
I don't know that I've the right . . . I must see what my men are up to.
[*Goes L.*]

ROXO [*Red-hot*]
Because if they compromise us before we're ready, I shall hang them like dogs!

FIUMA

It—it isn't exactly a raid on our *irredenta*—that's too mountainous. But the delta of our river which Bosnavina has always possessed——

ROXO

Yes, damn her!

FIUMA

It is there. They claim that the land is only silt washed down by *our* waters, and therefore morally ours.

ROXO

Unquestionably. Nevertheless——

FIUMA

I only gathered vaguely, you know, but I fancy the plan is to swoop down and plant our flag on the Custom House.

ROXO

Tomfoolery! What good will that do?

FIUMA

Well, they think that this deed of derring-do—while you are dilly-dallying—will raise Valdania to blood-heat and——

ROXO

While I am dilly-dallying! My God, when I think of our Revenge day and night!—What else have I to think of now my poor Lisa's dead?

[*Wipes his eyes*]

They come, these cackling cubs, stuffed with military science from their French or Italian schools, and preach I'm only a slugabed, who must never be made a Marshal.

FIUMA

No, no, sir, you are still the nation's hero.

ROXO

I was—six months ago. But it takes less time to kill off a national hero than to bring a babe to birth. . . . They are right. I've lost my grip these black weeks.

[*Blows his nose*]

I didn't realise there's so much healthy war-spirit.

FIUMA

Isn't it natural, now we're so happy and prosperous?

ROXO

And it's all through the Queen, God bless her.

[*Wipes his eyes*]

But I understand now why Cazotti has put a larger army into the Queen's speech.

FIUMA

Has he? Trust him to keep his ear to the ground.

ROXO

And he pretended it was to conciliate me ! But if the country is coming along of itself . . . All the same, Colonel, warn our young bloods that with this new-

fangled League of Nations always making trouble for the weaker, the first blow must come from Bosnavina, not from us, and if they dare stir a finger before we're ready——

FIUMA

The aide-de-camp on service here to-day is the wildest—I'll speak to him at once.

[*Exit L. ROXO hums happily and moves R.*]

ROXO [*Calling genially*]
Come along, Corporal!

VANNI

Subito, my General! Left turn, march!

[*Re-enter GUARDS, and take up old position.*]

ROXO

You may keep your stripes.

VANNI

Thank you, my General!

[*Exit ROXO, R., humming on happily. GUARDS salute*]

You see, you swine!

[*Stretches himself*]

. . . Time the Queen got home! I'm ravenous. On duty since dawn. They never consider us, these grandees. I don't mean the Queen, God bless her—she'd chuck us her own macaroni if she knew! But I

suppose we're better off than those poor devils down there, standing all night on the Piazza, eh? True, they've got their grub with them. Good idea! Has anybody got any string?

[Various pieces are offered to the tyrant]

That! Wouldn't even go round your neck! . . . Ah, that's more like it! . . .

[HE ties pieces together to the end of a bayonet]

Fools hunger, wise men fish.

[GUARDS laugh. HE pushes open casement R., letting in noises as before. But the bells have ceased and the cries of the hawkers are now dominated by the gipsy-like strains of folk music from the guzlas (the two-stringed mandolines) and the shrill sounds of bagpipes. The CORPORAL goes out on the balcony and drops his fishing-line into the Piazza, shouting down]

Hi, there! Don't eat it all!

[Laughter and applause comes up from the crowd, other noises are stilled in the general interest. The CORPORAL'S men move from their file and crowd round casement]

Tie it on! Thanks! Ah, that's coming, coming, coming——

[A breathless moment, followed by a loud roar]

Damn!

[GUARDS join in laughter]

No, it's too dirty now . . . A tin of meat? Thanks, Abdullah Mashallah, or whatever your name is . . . May your shadow never grow less! . . . Pass it up to the urchin astride Tito's statue and he'll pass it to the rascal trespassing on the flagstaff . . . Tie it round

tight, you son of a squirrel! That's it. Coming—
coming—coming—come!

[*Crowd and GUARDS clap hands in vast amusement.
CORPORAL re-enters, closing casement, and begins
detaching the package from his fishing-rod*]

Cristo! He gives good weight!

USHER [*Without, R.*]

The saints preserve your Excellency!

[*A lightning rush of GUARDS to get into line, and of
the CORPORAL to pocket the package and string.*]

VANNI [*Looking off*]

Oh, it's only the Jew-Baron. But it pays to salute
him. Attention, pigs!

[*Enter BARON GRIPSTEIN in gala attire, wearing the
sash of the Order of the Redeemer. He is a some-
what florid personage of sympathetic and intelligent
appearance, with marked Semitic features. The
GUARDS present arms.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Beaming*]

Ah, Corporal, this is a great day for our country—you
must all drink to it.

[*Distributes notes.*]

VANNI AND GUARDS

The saints preserve your Excellency!

[*Re-enter FIUMA, L.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Turning*]

Buon giorno, Marquis. You're looking so much better

than when I carried a candle behind you in the Corpus Domini Procession.

[MARQUIS *stares frigidly*]

Ah, you are wondering why I am so early for the banquet. But I had business with the Comptroller of the Household, and I know I couldn't get through the crowd again even to escort the Baroness. Marvellous weather, is it not? Queen's weather we are beginning to call it. It was the same, you remember, when Cazotti brought her home from the Convent, and the same at the Coronation.

[FIUMA *has insolently turned his back on the BARON and is writing in his notebook*]

Oh, how she has pulled the country together—I never was so proud of being a Valdianian. But I see you have no time for gossip. I don't wonder, with your responsibilities to-day. *A rivederla* at the banquet.

[*Exit R. The GUARDS salute.*]

FIUMA

How dare you salute a Jew?

VANNI

So sorry, my Colonel. We salute everybody with the Order of the Redeemer. Attention!

[ROXO *re-enters and the fresh salute stops the discussion.*]

FIUMA

Did you see the Jew?

ROXO

I met him, but I didn't see him.

FIUMA

And I didn't hear him. Ha! ha! ha!

ROXO

This is no time for amusement. Marrobio has eluded us.

FIUMA

Escaped through a city gate?

ROXO

Would to God he had! Captain Molp got the Queen safely into the carriage and it is moving faster than the crowd likes. But what if Marrobio is lurking just below us to stab or shoot her as she alights?

FIUMA

He'd be torn in pieces.

ROXO

He'd think it worth while, and that Paradise and its hours awaited him.

FIUMA

We ought to have arrested him while we had the chance.

ROXO

Perhaps you were right. But I hate wasting life. I'll see if I can espy him.

[HE mounts step R., pushes open casement and

steps on balcony. The noises almost instantly change into one great cry of "Roxo! Roxo! Viva Roxo!" (HE shrinks back modestly)]

For heaven's sake!

[Closes casement]

This is not *my* day!

FIUMA *[Smiling]*

What about the forgotten national hero? Eh?

ROXO *[Steps down]*

We were speaking of silly young officers.

[Hums happily again, turns genially to CORPORAL]

Your men must be famished. What? There's time before the Queen arrives to snatch a mouthful.

VANNI

God bless you, my General. Right wheel, forward!

ROXO

But keep your ears open for the National Anthem—or I'll cut 'em off.

VANNI

Ah, my General, when shall we cut 'em off the beastly Bosnavinians?

ROXO

You prattle too much.

[Exeunt GUARDS, R.]

ROXO

One thing puzzles me, Colonel. How did Marrobio in his remote fastness know that to-day the Queen would open Parliament?

FIUMA

I suppose one of his amnestied followers passed on the date.

ROXO

Unless it was Cazotti!

FIUMA

The Prime Minister! Oh come, Excellency! That's too cynical.

[*Looks towards Piazza*]

I suppose there's no other measure we can take.

ROXO

None. In war there is always the unexpected. And this dare-devil descent of Marrobio's——! We can only pray that the God of Valdania will protect our Margherita.

FIUMA

Amen!

ROXO

And baffle Cazotti.

FIUMA

No, I won't say "Amen" to that. Cazotti has obviously abandoned his hopes of the crown and finds

consolation in the prestige he has extracted from the very collapse of them. Yes, he may rob your Excellency of the glory of restoring the Queen, he may stamp his fraud on the mob with films and picture postcards, but as for conniving with a rebel to murder her—no! no! What was it Da Pietra called him? A modern *condottiere*! And murder isn't modern.

ROXO

I wouldn't trust him if a mediæval opportunity came his way! Look how he had Marrobio's lieutenant murdered.

FIUMA

Do you mean the one who surrendered at the Coronation amnesty? But you acquiesced——!

ROXO

It was a painful State necessity. The amnesty was indiscreet, too wide—the man probably meant to spy. But what I might do or permit for State reasons, Cazotti is capable of doing to gain the throne. See, anyhow, that the office of royal taster isn't abolished—the most subtle poisons *are* modern.

FIUMA

But if you are right, what can one do against such a man?

ROXO

Only what I do do; work with him. It's the only means of keeping a check on him. Let him rob me of

my glory, I use him for the glory of God and Valdania. You see how he is coming our way with his Army Bill. As a matter of fact, I find it easier to handle a devil like Cazotti than an angel like the Queen.

FIUMA [*Smiling*]

What has Her Majesty done now?

ROXO

Oh, nothing new. I'm only thinking of the trouble she gave us over his convent story. These American college girls have such a primitive sense of truth.

FIUMA

I rather admired it.

ROXO

You're getting as sentimental as the Duke. Public personages cannot keep private consciences. I don't know what Cazotti would have done if his most reverend eminence, her confessor, hadn't instructed her that a fiction in the State interest is not merely venial but a virtue. Even so, you remember, the obstinate creature would go into a Roman convent for a term.

FIUMA

Which only gave Cazotti the opportunity of photographing the place, with Margherita in the background.

ROXO

And himself in the foreground.

FIUMA
And himself in the foreground.

USHER [*Outside, R.*]
Way there for the Prime Minister.

FIUMA
Talk of the——!

[*Enter CAZOTTI in gala dress, with stars and orders. He is short and stout, like Napoleon, with a big head carefully modelled on his. Manner genial. HE comes forward holding out both hands.*]

CAZOTTI
What luck to find you both before the banquet!

ROXO [*Taking one hand*]
What luck to be found!

FIUMA [*Taking the other*]
Dear Count Cazotti, what can we do for you?

CAZOTTI
Exercise your military censorship over the newspapers. The Queen has altered the Queen's speech!

ROXO
Your speech, you mean.

CAZOTTI
Ah, I know in your heart you militarists would like to bring back autocracy. But that's impossible in these

days of popular control. One would have thought all this glory and huzzahing quite enough for a young girl without her itching to interfere in State affairs—there must be fair division, what? Why, here am I who have carried the real burden of Valdania for years, and yet were I to go out into that crowd——!

FIUMA [*Silly*]

Your Excellency wasn't cheered, coming?

CAZOTTI

I dodged the route—I was in a hurry to stop her indiscretions getting into print.

ROXO

But the papers are in your own hands.

CAZOTTI

Mine? I parted with all such interests when I took office.

FIUMA

Ahem!

CAZOTTI

Word of honour, Marquis. To Baron Gripstein, if you want to know.

ROXO

Our press in Jewish hands!

CAZOTTI

The best way to keep it tame. No, it's not Gripstein's papers I'm afraid of—they had the official

speech in type before it was delivered—it's these irresponsible Pacifist organs——

ROXO [*Alarmed*]

She didn't cut out the increase of the army?

CAZOTTI

Oh no! I worded it "Reform of the Army" and she thought it meant diminution.

ROXO AND FIUMA

Ha! ha! ha!

CAZOTTI [*Smiling*]

Ah, but she poured out a programme that wouldn't leave a penny for our glorious army—roads, bridges, canals, railways, irrigation, schools, colleges,—all the things she found in America and can't find here. Would to God she *had* been brought up in my Roman Convent!

ROXO

Didn't she promise everybody a bathroom?

CAZOTTI

Ha! ha! We had enough worry building her own bathroom. You remember the trouble to put in the telephone. The old Palace doesn't lend itself to these new-fangled devices; especially as it began life as a monastery.

FIUMA

But how on earth did she know we need canals and bridges?

CAZOTTI

It's that old fool, the Duke D'Azollo, who motors her about—Oh, I'm sorry—I forgot he was your aunt's husband.

FIUMA

He often forgot it himself.

[*Laughter*]

But won't the Queen be angry if we cut out her canals and——?

CAZOTTI

That's all right. I just met the Baron in the corridor, and he'll have a special copy of the *Gazetta* printed off for her, with her indiscretions in full. That's the only paper she reads herself. The rest are summarised by her secretary and he will report that they are all enthusiastic about her bathrooms—I beg her pardon, canals.

[*ROXO and HE laugh.*]

FIUMA

How we all deceive her! Her position is pitiful.

CAZOTTI

Pitiful? It is magnificent!



FIUMA

It isn't very magnificent to be cut off from the people you've been brought up among! To have your letters and wires stopped without your knowledge! It's like writing to the dead, she said to me once, with tears in her eyes. To make me feel worse, I had to suggest that the reason she got no answers from Da Pietra and Oliver Randel was that they would not forgive her for deserting them—and now she goes about resigned, ecstatic even, like a young nun cut off from her past. You may imagine the relief to me to have no more letters to open!

ROXO

What! While I was at my poor wife's death-bed, you have let Her Majesty stop writing heart-to-heart letters!

FIUMA

I don't understand——

ROXO

What other means have we of discovering her secret thoughts? And when it comes to providing her with a Prince Consort——

CAZOTTI

Most true. We must at once find her another correspondent.

ROXO

Not possible. One can't suddenly create for her a friend to whom she'll pour herself out.

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CAZOTTI

I have it. I'll remove the Duke from the capital.

ROXO

Banish him?

CAZOTTI

No, no—send him on a mission. Then we can read her letters before delivery.

ROXO

Splendid!

FIUMA

I don't like it. And besides, he won't go.

CAZOTTI

I'll send him to study canals—then he won't dare displease her by refusing.

ROXO

Ha! ha! ha! One of your best combinations.

CAZOTTI

And, on second thoughts, why suppress her peace programme at all? It's the very thing to keep the Pacifists off the scent. Eh, General?

ROXO

I don't know what you mean.

CAZOTTI

Come, come! I play cards on table. If you're not out to smash Bosnavina, why all these ice-axes, cat-shoes, skis and alpenstocks that the War Office still accumulates against Marrobio under your demand? So many mountain-batteries, such heaps of munitions against one practically isolated individual?

ROXO

I don't deny that since my boyhood the Revenge has been my dream—if I have been converted to Da Pietra's policy and yours, it is to unite all Valdania for the great day. But the hour is not ripe.

CAZOTTI

It *is* ripe—the people are itching for their lost mountains—the young officers drink to “The Day!”

FIUMA [*Startled*]

You know?

CAZOTTI

Everything, my dear Marquis—even to the projected raid on the delta.

ROXO

A fatal folly. We are not ready.

CAZOTTI

So you said twenty years ago. You never really change.

ROXO

And you're always changing.

CAZOTTI

I change with the times—like the thermometer with the temperature.

ROXO

Or the weathercock with the wind. Then is politics only inconsistency raised to a career?

CAZOTTI

To a science. The science of public opinion. Val-dania feels her life tingling. Now is the moment to strike. Now or never.

ROXO

For you, perhaps—I, too, play cards on table. My Queen has trumped your kna—Jack. And you seek to recover your old ascendancy over the people.

CAZOTTI

It is the people that seeks to recover our old ascendancy over Bosnavina.

ROXO

The people's heart is sound, but its head is wood.

CAZOTTI

The better to butt with! Come, I'd make you *Marshal Roxo*.

ROXO [*Alarmed*]

For God's sake! There are five reasons that forbid war, any one sufficient.

CAZOTTI

And the first?

ROXO

Marrobio. So long as he is unchanged, we dare not draw off our forces.

CAZOTTI

But he is all but deserted.

ROXO

The opportunity would win him fresh followers. *A propos*, you know him from the old Tito days. Do step out on the balcony and see if he's in the crowd.

CAZOTTI [*Agitated*]

He's in Scaletta?

ROXO

Alas!

CAZOTTI

And you ask me to make myself a target for him! No, thank you.

FIUMA

I'll look if you like, though I don't know him from Adam.

[*Going to casement*]

Except by his clothes. Ha! ha! What sort of man is he?

ROXO

Tall, noble even.

[FIUMA mounts step L., and pushes open casement
L. *A military march is heard in the distance.*]

FIUMA

Ah, do you hear? The Queen must be close on the Strada da Pietra. That's her own peace-song . . .

[*Steps out on balcony and looks down*]

There's a whole group of Moslems just below—tall, short, and in-between.

ROXO

Never mind. We must trust to God.

[FIUMA comes in.]

FIUMA [*Closing casement*]

Jolly tune, isn't it? Makes a good march.

[*Descends step to the rhythm, now heard more plainly.*]

ROXO

The Queen has quite a little talent, musicians tell me. But it's a mistake for royal personages to expose themselves even to praise. The University can make them Doctors of Science or Music, but they oughtn't to know anything of either.

CAZOTTI

Ah, but look what an asset to have the Queen's own music for a war-march. Let us make it the Valdanian "Tipperary."

ROXO [*Roughly*]

It's a long, long way to Tipperary.

CAZOTTI

Ah, yes, your five reasons. And the second?

ROXO

We've no general! No, don't say me—I'm a cavalry man, not a mountain fighter. Besides, I'm getting too old for campaigning—my wife's death has not left me unshaken—my absent arm reports itself sometimes—even to-day—oh, only a twinge, I just mention it. Still, my present home duties are about all I'm fit for. But even if I felt as young as when I fought Da Pietra, Valdania lacks—and that's obstacle number three—an honest man at the War Office!

CAZOTTI

You accuse——!

FIUMA

But, General, if they've got you your ice-axes——!

ROXO

The commissions were good—I speak my mind. And suppose somebody tried a coup on the Bourse! No, by God, I won't be betrayed from the rear.

CAZOTTI

Well, take the War Office yourself. Only find me another great general.

ROXO

There is none. I make no pretences. Valdania has no great mountain-fighter—except the Mahdi!

CAZOTTI

Except Marrobio! Ha! ha! ha!

FIUMA

Ha! ha! ha! What a joke!

ROXO

But the grim truth. One needs guerilla experience, and all the military genius of his grandfather, Boris the Bloody, which skipped over Tito, has come for our sins to Marrobio . . .

[Pricks up his ears]

Why has the music stopped?

CAZOTTI

It must be the halt at the Palace of Justice. The Deputation of Judges——

ROXO

Damn the fools! Multiplying risks like that. That's where Marrobio will be.

[Bitterly]

He's a judge—of positions.

CAZOTTI

Don't let's get off the track. What's your fourthly?

ROXO

We dare not attack Bosnavina and have the League of Nations on our back.

CAZOTTI

Pooh! I'm surprised at you, General. Bosnavina shall open the ball. We've only got to insult that pod of pepper, her Ambassador.

FIUMA

Ha! ha! ha! It was just because Bosnavina did *not* open the ball that we nearly got our war months ago.

ROXO [*Agitated*]

Eh? What is this I hear?

FIUMA [*Smiling*]

You didn't know? At the Coronation Ball the Queen led off the cotillon with the American Minister instead of with Prince Condrexoulok. The Prince flung out of the ballroom, grinding his false teeth.

CAZOTTI

Seriously, it was all I could do to prevent war.

ROXO

Good God! Why wasn't I told?

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FIUMA

You were away. Your wife was dying.

ROXO

What did that matter? With the country in danger! But you were Chamberlain then, sir. Why did you convey the Queen's command to dance? Why didn't you warn her?

FIUMA

I did. Only she wouldn't take me seriously. She said she wanted to talk about America and that the poor Minister looked so drab amid all his parrot-coloured colleagues. Not that I quite understood myself why our best-hated neighbour must always have precedence.

ROXO

Prince Condrexoulok is the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps as well as a Highness, and, anyhow, an Ambassador is bigger than a Minister.

FIUMA

Well, we can't insult him in the ballroom any longer, for he can only walk with a stick now.

CAZOTTI

We'll find a way. What's your fifthly?

[Music strikes up again.]

ROXO

Ah, they're moving on. Thank God! . . . I beg your pardon?

CAZOTTI
Your fifthly?

ROXO
Ah yes, fifthly and finally, no money!

CAZOTTI
Pah! Now that the Queen has brought stability, and our standing on the Bourses has risen, a loan on the world-market, Gripstein assures me——

ROXO
The Baron? We're to go to the Jews!

CAZOTTI
Fiddlesticks! The man's as fervent a Catholic as you, and an even fiercer anti-Semite!

ROXO
And a Knight of the Order of the Redeemer! A man with no quarterings—not even a shield! Ah, Cazotti, how can I work with you, when you give a Jew——?

CAZOTTI
But it was the Duke who insisted on it—the outgoing Regent.

ROXO
Whose pictures Gripstein bought back for him.

FIUMA [*Smiling*]
The Baron certainly *pays* his way!

CAZOTTI

But the pictures are only to be the Duke's during his lifetime. Then Gripstein gives them to the nation.

ROXO

The nation shall refuse them if I'm alive!

CAZOTTI

Hoity-toity! We've already accepted two hospitals and an officers' orphanage. You tried raising money without him. You went to America. What did you bring back?

ROXO [*Roaring*]

I brought back the Queen!

CAZOTTI

Hush! Yes, of course. But the Queen is scarcely convertible into cash. Ah, here comes the converter himself——

FIUMA

The converted, you mean.

[*Laughter. HE and ROXO ostentatiously turn their backs on the BARON, who enters R.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

I've arranged it all, your Excellency.

CAZOTTI

Then 'phone it all off, please. We want the Queen's actual speech reported in full everywhere.

III

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Then you adopt her peace programme?

CAZOTTI

Enthusiastically. You approve?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

I am enchanted. It is just what Valdania needs to restore her position among the Powers.

CAZOTTI

Only it will mean money——

BARON GRIPSTEIN

And why not that loan on the world-market——?

CAZOTTI

Because—to tell the truth—these gentlemen object to your agency!

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Skirting suddenly round to face them, with oriental emotion and gesture*]

Ah, Signori! But I owe Valdania everything. My wealth, my nationality, my wife, my children, my religion.

[*Voice husky with tears*]

In Germany I was a pariah; my sons couldn't have been officers. And you refuse me the opportunity of proving my gratitude!

FIUMA

And increasing your profits!

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BARON GRIPSTEIN

No, Marquis. The State shall have my commission.

[*Wipes his eyes*]

On my honour as a Knight of the Redeemer!

ROXO

The man seems genuine . . .

[*Holds out his hand*]

Excuse my left hand!

[*The BARON grips it fervently*]

But . . . see how I trust your honour—suppose the loan was wanted for war!

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Ecstatically*]

For war against Bosnavina?

ROXO

Hush! You approve?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

I am enchanted. It is just what Valdania needs to restore her position among the Powers. The great Valdania! Ah, how happy my boys will be! The dream of "The Day" is their day-dream. When are we going to get our knives into those beastly Bosnavinians, they keep asking me. Only yesterday my Sigismondo repeated the old prophecy:

"When Rome yields up our royal seed,
Bosnavina to death shall bleed."

And I thought to myself, surely it means *now*—the Roman convent yielding up our beloved Queen!

[*The three look at one another like Roman augurs.*]

CAZOTTI

Ahem! Your reading may be—useful. Though it is usually read to mean the resurrection of our national hero, Alpastroom, who was buried in Rome and whose sword is piously preserved in this very room.

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Proudly*]

I know, I know.

[*Looking at it over the throne*]

“Who draws the sword of Alpastroom
Writes our or Bosnavina’s doom.”

FIUMA [*Laughing*]

Ha! ha! That oracle always amuses me. And if he fell in Rome, how came his sword here?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Ah, we must not question our old traditions. They are the poetry of life. I’ll ’phone at once about the newspapers and take soundings for the loan——

CAZOTTI

But to build canals, etc., remember. Indeed, we can always begin with strategic railways. What a blessing in disguise the Queen’s speech is proving!

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Your peace programme shall be welcomed in all my papers.

[*Going.*]

FIUMA

But won't that be awkward—if we do get our war?

CAZOTTI

Bless you, my young friend, the public has no memory. The head of wood, what? Ha! ha! ha! . . . Oh, and Baron, let there be telegrams from Bosnavina on the oppression of our co-nationals—school children lashed for speaking Valdanian, our women raped, and so on. And—wait a moment—the *Gazetta* must have a leader on the spread of Valdanian culture through the Balkans—

BARON GRIPSTEIN

My Sigismondo shall write it. He is particularly keen on our mission.

[*Exit R., murmuring unctuously*]

“When Rome yields up our royal seed——”

FIUMA

These Jews are incredible. . . .

[*Music swells. A fiery roll of the drums*]

Ah, she's coming!

ROXO

They won't have eyes for me now.

[*Rushes to balcony R., and peers down. Now only a mere buzz of intense expectation comes up, together with the marching and the music*]

My God! Fiuma! He's there!

FIUMA [*Rushing to join him*]

Where?

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ROXO

That towering figure—just where the Queen must
dismount! God help her!

FIUMA

What can we do?

ROXO

Rush your men at once——

FIUMA

Arrest him——?

ROXO

Not till she's passed. Wedge him in so that he can't
move a finger.

[National Anthem breaks out, as at end of First Act]

Quick! Quick!

*[As FIUMA rushes down, CAZOTTI deliberately rushes
up and blocks him a moment on the stone step.]*

CAZOTTI

So sorry . . .

[Rushes on balcony]

Where is he?

*[GUARDS hurry in R., munching and wiping their
mouths. Distant cheers begin, rolling rapidly
nearer.]*

VANNI

Halt, swine! Right wheel!

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CAZOTTI

Her milk-white horses are red with rose-leaves!

ROXO

God grant it may not be with blood.

[Desperately]

Where are our men? Why don't they come?

CAZOTTI

I can't bear to look.

[Comes down and sits on the step with his back to ROXO, his face betraying his real hopes.]

ROXO

Ah, there's our men! . . . But the soldiers won't let 'em pass—God damn their cabbage-heads!

CAZOTTI

Why this silence?

ROXO *[At white-heat]*

Another address! They've stopped the carriage.

[Stamps foot]

Corpo di Dio! Who allowed it?

CAZOTTI

The Master of Ceremonies, I suppose. I had nothing to do with it.

ROXO

Don't excuse yourself—who accuses you?

[Looks again]

Damnation! Little girls with bouquets—she's kissing them, curse them!

[Stamps foot]

Marrobio's eye is focussed on her like a burning glass.
Oh!

[Covers eyes, then when he re-opens them gives an exultant cry]

Ah! Our men have wriggled in! Bravo, Fiuma!
Bravo!

[Claps hands.]

CAZOTTI *[Disconcerted, dolefully clapping hands]*
Bravo! bravissimo!

ROXO

She's inside! Ouf!

[Drops on chair, trembling all over.]

CAZOTTI
Thank God!

[Wipes his forehead.]

[There is a stir in the Palace. From either side courtiers come trooping in, the DUCHESS and her maids, and other ladies of honour in elaborate and fantastic Court costumes not quite Western, some wearing gold sequins for decoration and others long earrings, officers and aides-de-camp glittering with epaulettes and gold lace, chamberlains, comptrollers, heralds in tabards, stewards with cocked hats and swords and strange traditional costumes. The National Anthem still vibrates in the back-

ground. *All dispose themselves looking towards R. From the corridor comes the stir of an advancing procession, and trumpeters are heard sounding a fanfare on silver trumpets. The excitement mounts to fever heat. The GENTLEMAN USHER, a magnificently gilded being, enters.]*

USHER

Way for the Queen!

[Preceded by trumpeters, equerries, grooms and other gentlemen-at-arms, and finally by two halberdiers walking backwards with their long staves, and accompanied by pages bearing bouquets, QUEEN MARGHERITA enters, stepping with hereditary dignity, the crown still on her head, her arms full of roses, and semi-barbaric heirloom jewels flashing from her gold-brocaded gown. Behind her comes an honorary guard of Mohammedan Aghas, in white kilts and scarlet fezzes, coats and shoes, with great sashes stuffed with weapons, and between them and the Queen walk the DUKE D'AZOLLO and the COUNTESS CAZOTTI. The COUNTESS is a vulgar golden-haired beauty, evidently made up, the DUKE is a white-haired courtly old figure with an artistic face. He carries a mass of parchment addresses, and his gold-epauletted coat is almost invisible beneath decorations. As the QUEEN enters, all those already assembled curtsey or bow elaborately.]

QUEEN *[Smiling and drawing a long breath]*

So that's over! . . . Well, General, you see how right I was to refuse your police escort.

ROXO [*Beaming*]
Your Majesty is always right.

QUEEN
But you surely didn't need all those soldiers!

ROXO
Pure decoration, Madam. By the way, when will your Majesty redeem your promise to review them?

QUEEN
When have I time? With all those papers Cazotti makes me sign. Ah, here he is! How *did* you get here before me?

COUNTESS CAZOTTI
That's just like my husband's little ways.
[*Titter of courtiers.*]

CAZOTTI [*With angry side-glance*]
I flew, Madam, to welcome you home after your Parliamentary success.

QUEEN
Then you didn't really mind my little additions?

CAZOTTI
Mind? The Government has gratefully adopted them.

QUEEN [*Clapping hands girlishly*]
You make me so happy! If only Daddy were here to see how wrong he was!

CAZOTTI

Ah, but King Tito lived in different times.

QUEEN [*Clouted*]

King Tito? Ah! Yes, of course——

[*Bites her lips and turns to DUCHESS*]

I am glad your headache is better. Your husband has been so kind with the addresses and bouquets. You'll put them all in water, won't you, Marchesa?

[*The DUKE hastens to hand the addresses to that Lady-in-Waiting. The QUEEN laughs a ringing, girlish laugh*]

No, not those, dry as they are!

[*The MARCHESA and the pages go off with the flowers and parchments, save a few roses retained by the QUEEN.*]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Your Majesty must prepare for the banquet.

CAZOTTI

Not before pacifying the people. Listen!

[*Cries of "Margherita! Margherita!" are coming up from the Piazza*]

You *must* show yourself a moment.

QUEEN

But they've just seen me!

ROXO

Quite so. Why expose yourself unnecessarily?

QUEEN

Those silly alarms again. I shall go just to frighten you.

[CAZOTTI hurries to open casement L. The QUEEN steps out, and the air becomes one vast vibration: "Viva, Margherita! Viva, Margherita!" SHE comes in again, shaken with emotion. But the cries redouble. "Speech! Speech!" Between laughter and crying]

Another Queen's speech?

[Laughter of the COURTIERS.]

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

But my husband makes those! Go along, Alexis!

CAZOTTI [*In fierce whisper*]

Hold your tongue!

[Enter BARON GRIPSTEIN, R. HE grasps the situation immediately, and waves his handkerchief.]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Speech! Speech!

COURTIERS [*Waving handkerchiefs*]

Speech! Speech!

[QUEEN returns to balcony. A magic silence falls.]

QUEEN [*In a clear but trembling voice*]

My own, my dear people, I thank you all—Moslems and Christians alike—for your welcome to me. I feel so happy to think that after all the years of unrest and

blood, our country is at peace—at peace for evermore.
I thank God that through me——

[*Breaks down with a sob. The COUNTESS CAZOTTI starts forward with her handkerchief.*]

CAZOTTI [*Aside to GRIPSTEIN*]

Splendid, that bit about perpetual peace. See it's reported.

[*GRIPSTEIN scribbles in notebook.*]

QUEEN [*Recovering*]

When at my Coronation I took the oath of fidelity to your service, I was afraid the burden would be too great for me. But your love is lightening it. I pray God that I may never lose that love or your faith in me, because it is all that I have in the world—all that—that——

[*Breaks into tears and retreats into the room amid frantic "Vivas!" from within and without. The COURTIERs shout and wave handkerchiefs. The National Anthem breaks out again. ROXO closes the casement in relief. The DUCHESS and COUNTESS rush to wipe the QUEEN'S tears, but the COUNTESS wins.*]

QUEEN [*Smiling through her tears*]

It's just like a first-night in New York!

CAZOTTI [*In icy reminder*]

So one reads, Your Majesty.

ROXO [*Equally alarmed*]

Her Majesty is tired.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Come, Madam.

[*The QUEEN goes with her L. MARQUIS FIUMA rushes in R. and whispers excitedly to ROXO. The QUEEN turns with a sudden thought.*]

QUEEN

Oh, as to that review, Roxo——

[*ROXO goes on talking, FIUMA nudges him*]

What are you so absorbed about?

ROXO

Nothing, Madam, just professional.

QUEEN [*Mockingly*]

More precautions on my account?

ROXO

The contrary. Colonel Fiuma has just captured the last of the Moslem rebels.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Marrobio! The saints be praised. *Bravo*, Marquis.

QUEEN

Captured? But I amnestied them all.

ROXO

This was their leader. He wouldn't accept your grace.

QUEEN [*Smiling*]

Well, I daresay he will now. But everybody seems so pleased, Fiuma, I feel I ought to give you something. The Order of the Redeemer—second class?

FIUMA [*Overwhelmed*]

Oh, Madam, that is too much!

[*SHE extends her hand graciously, which HE kisses, bowing low.*]

QUEEN

And you, too, Cazotti, you must let me express my gratitude for your kindness to-day.

CAZOTTI

Better wait, Madam, till I have carried out your reforms. I shall have the honour of submitting to you to-morrow the members of a roving Commission for Canals and Bridges under the Presidency of the Duke D'Azollo.

QUEEN

Splendid!

[*Claps her hands. The COURTIERS, led by GRIPSTEIN, clap theirs.*]

DUKE D'AZOLLO [*Startled*]

Me? I'm too old—I can't leave my wife!

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

What nonsense!

[*Laughter.*]

DUKE D'AZOLLO [*Making a wry face*]

Everybody wants to get rid of me.

QUEEN

You know I shall miss you very much. Come, sit down a moment, let me persuade you.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

But, Madam, your toilette for the banquet!

QUEEN

I've only to take off my crown and do my hair. But don't let me keep anybody else.

[Everybody melts away with backward bows while the dialogue proceeds.]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Well, give it to me now—it will save time.

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

Excuse me, Duchess. That is *my* crown.

[Takes it off.]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Your Majesty will find me in waiting.

[Exit, with dignity.]

QUEEN *[To Countess]*

No, nothing else now.

[Exit COUNTESS backward, with crown.]

And there's no need to keep your men like toy soldiers, Corporal. They can come back for the reception.

VANNI

God bless Your Majesty. Right turn, march.

[Exeunt GUARDS, R.]

QUEEN

Why don't you sit down? You know the D'Azollos have the right to sit, even were I standing.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I am not here as your premier Duke, but as your premier adorer.

QUEEN

Oh, please! Haven't I had enough to-day of bobbing statesmen and crawling councillors, not to mention the poem declaring my face turns even the sun to a rushlight?

[Laughs girlishly]

Ha! ha! ha!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

So it does, Your Majesty.

QUEEN

Oh, do forget my Majesty, now we're alone.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

If I can remember to forget it.

QUEEN

Ha! ha! ha! That's like Norah!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Who is Norah?

QUEEN
Never mind.
[Sighs]
Dear Norah!

DUKE D'AZOLLO
Now you're sad.

QUEEN [*Recovering herself*]
Because you're so disobedient. Sit down at once, or
I'll get up and then you'll have to melt away.

DUKE D'AZOLLO
Anything but that.
[Sits.]

QUEEN
That's right. Do you remember my first *levée*?
How I got up from that thing
[Points to throne]
to stretch my limbs, and everybody melted away.
Oh, how astonished I was! Ha! ha! ha! Do you
know, the only way I can reconcile myself to all this
literally religious ceremonial, is by reminding myself
I don't really exist.

DUKE D'AZOLLO
What! You've melted away, too?

QUEEN
As Queen, I mean, I don't exist—any more than
dryads and naiads in ancient Greece. They repre-
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sented the spirit of Nature and I represent the spirit of Valdania—it is themselves my people adore in me, the greatness of their own history, their heroic past—what are you smiling at?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

At your taking them seriously. It's their greatness that doesn't exist.

QUEEN

Oh, surely! A thousand years of national history——!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Of natural history—animal squabbles and superstitions. No art, no letters, nothing. A pity Italy has never annexed us.

QUEEN

That at least I shall not take seriously. I know what a devoted Regent you made!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Oh, yes, I could do my royal mumming with a grave face. But I had my royal robe cut with a specially large sleeve—to laugh in!

QUEEN

Then why did you cry at *my* coronation?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

That's another matter. The incense got into my eyes. And there was the organ music, the lovely hand holding the sceptre, the ecstatic face——

QUEEN

I didn't feel ecstatic, I assure you. When the Cardinal dumped the crown on my head, it felt like a cold iron clamp: the weight of responsibility turned me sick. I nearly fainted. And oh, how scared I was when I woke up this morning and remembered I had to read Cazotti's speech before all those great Ministers and officials! The dawn was just breaking over the mountains. Have you ever watched the dawn?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Only in landscape painting.

QUEEN

Don't jest. It was so beautiful as to be terrible—like God burning over the virgin snows. And below slept the city—a luminous twinkling network, like a second starry heaven. Ah, how I prayed to be worthy of my people's trust! And then there came into my head all that Valdania lacks, and I resolved to put into the speech the things Cazotti had so strangely forgotten.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

A very dangerous resolve, my dear, for both of us.

QUEEN

Do be serious, Duke.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I'm as serious as the Duchess. Queens who say things out of their own heads are apt to lose them. You are moving in a world of pitfalls and politicians. Be

content to charm the Court and give the people a vision. Neither you nor I were meant for Blue Books.

QUEEN

You say that! You who are always so interested in bridges and canals!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

When *you* speak of them. I watch your lovely lips like a deaf man.

QUEEN

Oh!

[Rises indignantly.]

DUKE D'AZOLLO *[Sitting stoutly]*

Does that mean I am to melt away? But you see I exercise the privilege of the D'Azollos.

QUEEN

You do yourself injustice. What about the day we saw all those crude floating bridges? Didn't you explain to me that they made the river unnavigable and shipping impossible?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I meant how delightful it was to escape the penny steamboats that have ruined Venice.

QUEEN *[Collapses into chair]*

Oh!

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DUKE D'AZOLLO

That's right!

QUEEN

But the day our car stuck in the river-swamp. You showed me how on the Bosnavinian bank there were flourishing cities, while on our own side only millions of reeds and willows——

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Precisely. Picturesqueness *plus* immunity from invasion.

QUEEN

Invasion! Why should Bosnavina invade us?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

To anticipate our invading them, of course. Don't they hold a province of ours?

QUEEN

If we drained that marshland, we'd gain a finer province than we lost. Besides, all that was before you were born.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Nations have long memories, as asses have long ears. Aren't you still called "Duchess of Bosnavina," though we haven't set foot there since the Middle Ages? Everybody knows the Revenge is inevitable.

QUEEN [*Springing up again*]

I will not hear of it!

[*HE rises too*]

I shall formally renounce the title. The Bosnavinian Ambassador specially congratulated me at the Coronation and said that peace was Bosnavina's supreme interest.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

And yet you are not uneasy?

QUEEN [*Moves from him*]

You men are all so cynical. You base politics on hate. Why do you never try Christian love?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I suppose because, like radium, it can only be got in minute quantities. Besides, one can't turn one's other cheek to a mosquito.

QUEEN

The Bosnavinians are not mosquitoes, but children of God like ourselves. And you call yourself a Christian!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I? Aren't you mixing me up with the Baron? The Church is only a State form—like your washing of the beggars' feet at Easter—after they had been soaped and scented! I never even thought there *could* be a God till you incarnated.

QUEEN

Now you are blasphemous!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Religious, my dear, for the first time. When you talked of God burning over the virgin snows, I felt like one of our mountain roads after a thaw, that keep miraculously amid their slush some little patch of purity. Have your way! I'll go and study canals till I die of rheumatism and boredom.

QUEEN [*Holding out hand impulsively*]

Oh, thank you! No——

[*Laughingly*]

I don't mean you're to die. Ha! ha! ha!

[*HE is kissing her hand and SHE is laughing, when a sudden shattering explosion vibrates through the Palace. THEY start apart*]

What's that?

[*A brief pause. Then the DUCHESS and COURTIERS run in pell-mell from L., some of the ladies caught in the middle of their toilettes, the COUNTESS CAZOTTI without her wig, revealing a comical grey head. The DUCHESS comes to nestle against her husband. ROXO and CAZOTTI rush in together, GRIPSTEIN in their rear.*]

ROXO

Ah, the Queen's safe!

CAZOTTI

Thank God!

BARON GRIPSTEIN

A thousand candles to Our Lady!

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

But what is it? What has happened?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Nothing to go grey about!

[The COUNTESS claps her hand to her head and runs back L.]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

One for the crown. Thank you, dear!

ROXO *[To the QUEEN]*

The fireworks stored up for to-night must have gone off in the vault.

QUEEN

I'm sure it's a bomb. I heard one once in New——

CAZOTTI *[Hastily]*

Forgive my interrupting you, Madam. But Fiuma is investigating.

QUEEN

I hope to God nobody is hurt. . . . Ah!

[MARQUIS FIUMA enters R., and whispers to ROXO]

Always these whisperings! Report to me, Fiuma. A bomb, is it not?

FIUMA

No, Your Majesty, only a hand-grenade.

QUEEN

Anybody hurt?

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ROXO [*Answering quickly*]
One man killed, Madam—Corporal Vanni!

QUEEN [*Wincing*]
Oh! . . . Not the corporal I just spoke to?

ROXO
I'm afraid it is.

QUEEN [*Overwhelmed*]
And he said to me as he went out, " God bless you! "

ROXO
A gross breach of discipline! And I gather that he owes his death to a still grosser breach. It seems he fished up the grenade from the Piazza, thinking the tin held food, and, being interrupted, put it in his pocket and forgot all about it, till taking it out just now——

QUEEN
Poor creature!

BARON GRIPSTEIN
But he was standing just here, General; we might any of us have been killed.

ROXO
Precisely.

BARON GRIPSTEIN
Hear, O Israel!
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QUEEN

But what demon——?

ROXO

Marrobio, Madam.

QUEEN

Marrobio? And who is Marrobio?

CAZOTTI

The brute you spoke of pardoning.

QUEEN

The Moslem rebel? But what can be his motive?

ROXO

It's a sort of Holy War he preaches. His followers believe he bears a charmed life.

QUEEN

Why was I not told about him? Have you ever spoken to him?

ROXO

Not since he was a boy. He was—about the Palace.

QUEEN

Then my parents knew him?

ROXO [*Embarrassed*]

Er—possibly . . .

[*Cries of "Margherita! Margherita!" break dully from without*]

But the people are calling for Your Majesty.

QUEEN
What again?

CAZOTTI
They want to see for themselves you are safe.

QUEEN
What do I matter, when that poor Corporal——?

DUKE D'AZOLLO
Come, Madam, it will relieve them.

ROXO [*To FIUMA*]
Not a word about the wounded!
[The DUKE opens the casement L., and leads her on to the balcony. The reception is more delirious than ever. The crowd starts singing the National Anthem.]

QUEEN [*Coming in, shaken*]
It is really very sweet of them!
[Cries of "Marrobio! Marrobio!" now resound from the Piazza]
What do they want now?

FIUMA
To lynch Marrobio.

QUEEN
How horrible! It's like the South——!
[Stops herself abruptly]
But you won't give him up?

ROXO

No, Madam, we can do our own lynching.

QUEEN

Not without trial?

ROXO

He'll be lucky if it's without torture.

QUEEN

You never torture, surely?

ROXO

Only to get a confession. And this man has publicly harried Your Majesty's forces for five years.

QUEEN

Where have you put him?

ROXO

For the moment in the Palace dungeon.

QUEEN

Has the Palace a dungeon?

ROXO

Naturally.

QUEEN

How strange! Things going on around and underneath and one knows nothing. Just bring him up a moment.

ROXO
I beg Your Majesty's pardon?

QUEEN
I want to see this Marrobio.

ROXO
To see him? A rebel who tried to blow up your
Palace?

QUEEN
And you are surprised I want to ask him why?

ROXO
To ask him why?

QUEEN
Yes, don't you think it's best to talk things out?
You have never spoken to him since he was a boy.

ROXO
But this is unheard-of. The Queen cannot come in
contact with criminals. It is not her sphere.

QUEEN
Whose sphere, then?

ROXO
The Law's.

QUEEN
But am *I* not the Law? Don't all your legal docu-
ments begin "The Queen *versus* ———"?

ROXO

That is a mere State form.

QUEEN

A form! A form! The Church! The Law! Everything to you men is a form. But don't you see that here—for once—it is a reality? The Queen *versus* Marrobio! Even a private plaintiff may see the defendant—the Queen has less rights than her meanest subject.

CAZOTTI

Infinitely greater rights, Madam. She has the prerogative of pardon.

QUEEN

And why should I pardon without enquiry? Let the man be brought at once.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

You are overwrought, Madam. The explosion——

QUEEN

Let me be left with General Roxo!

[DUKE bows. COURTIERS begin to melt away.]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Your toilette, Madam.

QUEEN [*Stamping foot*]

Let me be left with General Roxo!

CAZOTTI [*To FIUMA*]

Tito's daughter begins to peep out.

[*To QUEEN*]

I hope I may stay too. Your Majesty raises a serious constitutional question.

QUEEN

Ah, you must be two to one. Take the Marquis, take the Baron. Be four to one!

[*Throws her roses away.*]

FIUMA

If Your Majesty will excuse me, I must see to my casualties—my Corporal.

[*Bows and exit R.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Very upset*]

Please don't count *me* against you, Madam.

QUEEN

You treat me as a divinity, yet the first simple thing I ask of you, you refuse me. It's the same when I want to talk to somebody on our drives—my ladies always object to this or that—I begin to think you all have something to hide from me. Why are you hiding this Marrobio?

ROXO

Not hiding him, Madam. But it is utterly unprecedented that a Sovereign——

QUEEN

The rulers of Israel always spoke with the enemy in the gate. And didn't King Solomon judge cases himself? Am I not right, Baron?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Oh, please, I'm no authority on ancient history.

QUEEN

I only want to know why he tries to kill me.

CAZOTTI

But we know quite well, Your Majesty. He wants to rule Valdania, he and his fellow-Mussulmans.

QUEEN

On what ground?

CAZOTTI

He pretends they are the largest sect.

QUEEN

And isn't it true?

CAZOTTI

Er—in a way.

QUEEN

Then it's *not* so unreasonable.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

But we Christians united——

CAZOTTI

And even if they were an absolute majority, we can't submit to a degraded population whose children are educated by slaves; to tyrants who when they did rule, seized the peasants' crops and wanted to abolish even our Latin alphabet. Have you ever been in the Moslem quarter?

QUEEN

My ladies always objected.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Who has lingered anxiously*]
Forgive me, Madam, but your toilette——

ROXO [*Looks at his wrist-watch*]

I implore Your Majesty——there's only a quarter of an hour to the banquet.

QUEEN

Then why waste time?

CAZOTTI

After all, General, where's the harm?

ROXO [*At white heat*]

Because you let your speech be altered, you think——

[*Almost apoplectic*]

But military procedure is sacred!

QUEEN

Oh, very well.

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CAZOTTI
BARON GRIPSTEIN } Thank you, Madam.

QUEEN [*Going L.*]
I shall not appear at the banquet.

ROXO [*Gasping*]
Not appear?

QUEEN
I am only a State form. The Duchess can receive for me.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Upset*]
But what can I say?

QUEEN
That I have caught your headache.
[*The DUCHESS winces, bows and retires in a rage.*]

ROXO [*Abruptly*]
Have your way, Madam.

CAZOTTI
BARON GRIPSTEIN } Thank you, General.

QUEEN
Thank you.

ROXO

But first we'll have the guard in—and doubled.

QUEEN [*Dismayed*]

Oh, but I can't talk before others. Which is the way to the dungeon?

ROXO

Go down that slimy staircase? In that dress! I'll send for him.

QUEEN

But I must see him alone.

ROXO

See Marrobio alone! I shall resign first.

QUEEN [*In consternation*]

But why?

ROXO

I am responsible for Your Majesty's safety.

QUEEN

And allowed a grenade in my guard's pocket.

[*HE winces*]

No, I beg your pardon. But you must let me protect myself.

[*Smiles winningly.*]

ROXO [*Mastering himself*]

You shall see him alone. But on my conditions.

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QUEEN

Name them.

ROXO

That Marrobio be lashed to this pillar.

[*Points R.*]

That you sit on your throne and approach no nearer.
That the guards be doubled at each entrance. That
the interview lasts five minutes.

QUEEN

Ten.

ROXO [*Showing wrist-watch*]

Five.

QUEEN

Very well.

ROXO

And while Marrobio is being—prepared for the inter-
view—may I suggest that Your Majesty's toilette——?

QUEEN [*Smiling*]

How practical!

[*Bewitchingly*]

No wonder you win wars.

[*ROXO bows and hurries out R.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

O, Madam, may I have the honour of escorting you?

[*Parts the hangings and shouts pompously*]

Way for the Queen!

[*Exeunt L.*]

CAZOTTI [*Whistling*]

Whew! What a vixen!

[Walks about in perturbation, surveys throne, bites his nails, then trims them nervously with a little pocket-knife]

I wonder how it feels!

[Perches uneasily on the throne and darts off at the sound of ROXO returning R. Enter ROXO with a squad of soldiers carrying ropes: amid them MARROBIO stands, smiling disdainfully, a superb type of Oriental manhood in green turban and robes, with a touch of the Prophet and something of the King. The soldiers begin to rope him to the marble pillar. CAZOTTI approaches cautiously.]

MARROBIO [*With a terrible glance*]

Ah, Cazotti, Fate entwines our paths again.

CAZOTTI [*Shrinking back*]

Why haven't you handcuffed him?

MARROBIO

Handcuff *me*!

ROXO

Rebel as he is, he is a soldier—and of the blood!

CAZOTTI

But he is a serpent and tiger in one—have a care!

ROXO

Don't be alarmed. His day is done.

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MARROBIO

Says the poet: Even when dry—The fish cannot die
—Unless willed from on high.

CAZOTTI

We shall see.

MARROBIO

If Allah willed it, so be it. The mantle of life, Cazotti,
is not always the cloak of honour.

[Closing his eyes HE repeats piously]

La Ilaha illa Allah Muhammad rasul Allahi!

[With a sudden bound HE has escaped from his captors, almost overwhelming CAZOTTI, and is nearly L. when, aroused by the shouts, the other set of GUARDS from L. corridor rush through the curtains and hurl themselves at him. Even so, HE is not easily overpowered, and some are about to use their scimitars.]

ROXO

No, no! Not steel!

MARROBIO *[Ceasing to struggle as suddenly and folding his arms with a smile]*

Said I not the fish would live?

CAZOTTI

Only that Her Majesty may gaze on you.

MARROBIO *[Turning fierce again]*

To gloat over me? May a *div* prick the eyes from her unveiled visage!

[HE stands passive now, with smouldering eyes,

while they drag him back to the pillar and lash him afresh. ROXO bends to look at the cords]

Back, magician, would you breathe on the knots?

ROXO

Fudge! I'm only inspecting them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. The devil himself could not get out of that.

MARROBIO

The Prophet was tied with eleven knots, yet he had but to recite the last eleven verses of the Kur'an.

ROXO

Recite away! To your stations!

[SOLDIERS exeunt both ways. To CAZOTTI]
Would you mind receiving Her Majesty? The poor wounded are asking for me.

CAZOTTI

There are wounded?

ROXO

Four, including the Corporal.

MARROBIO

Ha! Allah is just.

CAZOTTI

I thought the Corporal was dead.

ROXO

He may yet live.

[Hastens out R.]

MARROBIO [*Uplifted*]

It is an oracle!

[*HE raises his eyes heavenwards, and commences murmuring his prayer*]

I put my trust in the God of the daybreak,
To deliver me from the evils which He hath created,
From the mischief of the moon when she is covered
with darkness,
From the malevolence of those who breathe upon
knots,

And from the——

[*CAZOTTI, who has been walking up and down ponderingly, now stops suddenly at the pillar.*]

CAZOTTI [*In a hoarse whisper*]

Would you like revenge and a fighting chance?

MARROBIO

Hell mocks the mocker.

[*Murmurs on*]

I put my trust in the God of mankind——

CAZOTTI

But listen! If I cut your knots, will you swear never
to betray or injure me?

MARROBIO [*Looks piercingly at him*]

Ha! Your fingers, too, thirst for her throat.

CAZOTTI

Hush! Swear!

MARROBIO [*Solemnly raising his eyes*]
Aksamtu Billahi!

CAZOTTI [*Sawing at first knot*]
Ah, they're tough. But it's best not to cut them quite. You can seize your moment for springing at her. And then—the balcony! You know the Palace.

MARROBIO [*With eyes heavenward*]
Allah answers the prayer of the faithful.

[*As CAZOTTI cuts*]
One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight . . . nine! Leave the knife!

CAZOTTI
No! Look above the throne!

MARROBIO
Ah, the sword of Alpastroom! Allah is great!

CAZOTTI
May He prosper your hand! . . . Ho, there! Guards!
[*They appear at both wings. MARROBIO still seems tied to his pillar*]
Keep your eye on the wretch while I inform——

GENTLEMAN USHER [*Parting hangings L.*]
Way for the Queen!

CAZOTTI
Ah, she is here.
[*Enter QUEEN her hair dressed for the banquet.*]
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QUEEN

Ah, thank you, Cazotti. See these men are withdrawn
—far—beyond eavesdropping.

CAZOTTI

Under protest, Madam.

*[Waves GUARDS back R. and L. Goes L. himself
towards QUEEN, who seats herself on throne.]*

QUEEN

You see, I fulfil the conditions!

*[CAZOTTI bows very low and exit through the hangings
L. The QUEEN and MARROBIO look at each other,
SHE with curiosity, and impressed, HE tense, with
glittering eyes, a wild beast couched for the spring.
SHE is the first to break the thrilling silence.]*

So you are Marrobio!

MARROBIO

And you are Margherita!

QUEEN

I wished to see you.

MARROBIO

You repaid my compliment. I left my mountains to
see you.

QUEEN

And to murder me.

MARROBIO

With Allah's help!

QUEEN [*Shrinks back*]
You glory in it!

MARROBIO
Even though I sup to-night in Paradise.

QUEEN
I came in the hope of saving your life. But this tone
on the brink of death——

MARROBIO
Death is as near to your throne, Margherita, as to my
pillar.

QUEEN
I know we are all in the hands of God, but remember
you are likewise in the hands of my ministers.

MARROBIO
When the cock crows, the eagle swoops. Allah can
change night to day, says the Book, and day to night.
[*Glares balefully at her, begins to wriggle at the cut
ropes*]
He can bring life from the bosom of death and death
from the bosom of life.

QUEEN
But it is you who have brought death into this Palace.
Why? Why?

MARROBIO
It is a *jihād*, a holy war. Kill your foes, says the
Prophet. Bathe yourselves in their blood.

QUEEN

How horrible! Is that the law of Islam?

MARROBIO

And is it not the law of Roxo? Whence comes his glory save from slaying thousands?

QUEEN

In fair fight and with fair weapons.

MARROBIO

No fight can be fair, no weapon unfair. *Ma sha'llah!*
You to condemn Islam—you with your peace-trap!

QUEEN

My peace-trap?

MARROBIO

Your proclamation of amnesty. My lieutenant surrendered and you butchered him.

QUEEN

It is not true!

MARROBIO

You lie! She-dragon with the eyes of a gazelle! It was your Coronation sacrifice to your God.

QUEEN

I swear by your God—by Allah——

MARROBIO

Astaghfir Allah! Profane not His name! It may be they hid their infamy, for your eyes seem wells of

truth and your eyelids flutter like the wings of a lovebird. But what of my brothers driven to baptism or the shambles—the veils torn from our women—the——?

QUEEN

By whom? When?

MARROBIO

Through the ages. Only Da Pietra knew tolerance. And him you Christians murdered.

QUEEN

But they tell me you Moslems ruled even worse—you seized our peasants' crops, you——

MARROBIO

Somebody must pay the taxes. But we did not force our faith by the sword.

QUEEN

Mahomet did.

MARROBIO

Muhammad was God's messenger. He was later than Moses or Jesus—the seal of the Prophets. But Satan is goading humanity to destroy us. The Cross spreads its giant arms over the firmament and the Crescent dwindles like a dying moon.

QUEEN

Because you misgovern! You don't catch up with Western civilisation.

MARROBIO

Western civilisation! When the Westernmost Continent has only just caught up with our ban on the wine-cup. Western civilisation! Have you ever visited our quarter?

QUEEN

My ladies objected.

MARROBIO

No wonder. There you would have found no rowdy streets filled with reeling wine-skins and unveiled females, no noisy hawkers and shop-keepers, no chambers open to the public gaze, only our cobblers and coffee-stall keepers on their carpets, never a knife raised, nor a voice, save that of the muezzin calling to prayer or the school children chanting the Kur'an. Cleanness of soul and body, charity, hospitality, love of our neighbour, equal chances for the poorest . . . And we are the Gadarene swine that must be driven out of Europe! Ah, but Allah is merciful and He has set your hands in murder against one another, and the sun of civilisation that rose in the East is setting in blood in the West and must rise again in glory in its ancient quarter!

[HE ends ecstatic, transfigured.]

QUEEN

If what you say is true, we have both to learn from each other. In any case this feud of Cross and Crescent can have no foothold in Valdania. Does not our proverb say:

Moslem, Christian, Jew or other,
Every Valdanian is my brother?

MARROBIO
Your brother? Ha! ha! ha! But I *am* your
brother.

QUEEN [*Puzzled*]
You my brother?

MARROBIO
Have they hidden that, too?

QUEEN
They have hidden something. Just now when I
pressed the Duchess, she——

MARROBIO
You did not know I am King Tito's son?

QUEEN
You? My mother had a son also?

MARROBIO
Your mother? Nay, *my* mother, Zarah, peace be to
her. She was kicked away like an old Turkish slipper
when policy brought a Northern princess here.

QUEEN
My father was married twice?

MARROBIO
Nay, not to two women at once, my guileless gazelle.
The pleasures which Allah in His mercy has permitted
the faithful are not enjoyed by the infidel—openly.
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Nor could my mother, peace to her, consent to marry a Nazarene. I am merely King Tito's eldest-born. . . . Ah, you start back. But the name wherewith you Christians brand innocent offspring is an infamy unknown to Islam.

QUEEN [*Slowly*]
Then—is it you who should be ruling here?

MARROBIO
Nay, nay, if I rule here, it will be by the sword.

QUEEN
But what need of the sword, brother? I would gladly surrender the throne.

MARROBIO [*Dazed*]
Yallah! You say?

QUEEN
If it is yours morally. If God released me. Your shoulders are broad—it is all too terrible and tangled for a girl. I would rather make my music.

MARROBIO
Wallahi! You make music, indeed. It is like the singing of bulbuls in my heart. What manner of Christian are you who talk like a Muslim?

QUEEN
I only talk like every other Christian.

MARROBIO

By the beard of the Prophet, I have talked with archbishops and archimandrites, patriarchs and cardinals, but never heard I talk like this. *Ya Walad!* You would resign your throne to the spawn of Tito, the rebel, the murderer awaiting the gibbet?

QUEEN

If he would repent, if he would render equal justice to Moslem and Christian?

MARROBIO

It is as if the air were full of the perfume of myrrh and rosewater. But do you imagine, O daughter of innocence, that if you yield up that throne, your fellow-Christians would set me upon it?

QUEEN

I could point out to them that your sect is the largest, and that on the principle of self-determination——

MARROBIO

Ha! ha! ha! If I did not know you were my father's daughter, I should say you were an American.

QUEEN [*Startled*]

An American?

MARROBIO

Was there not a great white prophet whose rumour reached even to my mountains? We deemed him a second Muhammad, for through him should the People

of the Book find justice. But what was the end of the matter? We are as frogs whose pond is dried up! The Sheikh-ul-Islam is dishonoured, the very capital of our faith in the hands of the *Kafir*! Ah!

[*With renewed fierceness*]

What proof have I that you, too, are not a snake whose slaver is steeped in honey?

QUEEN [*Sadly*]

Ah, *I* believe *you*. But *you* will not believe *me*.

MARROBIO

Quoth Lukmān the Wise: "Learn from the blind, who believe only what they touch." If you speak truth, my sister, come and cut my cords.

QUEEN

I have nothing to cut with.

MARROBIO

There is a sword over your head.

QUEEN [*Looking up*]

That old thing!

MARROBIO

It will be sharp enough.

[*The QUEEN stands on the throne and manages to pull the sword out of its scabbard. SHE gets down and begins to move forward.*]

QUEEN

Oh, but I can't leave my throne—I promised my ministers.

MARROBIO [*Derisively*]
Ha! ha! And you offered to leave it for me! Luk-
mān was wise indeed.

QUEEN
His wisdom was blind.
[*Calls towards hangings*]
Ho, there! Is there a chamberlain or squire on
service?
[CAZOTTI *answers the call: evidently he has been*
on tenterhooks.]

CAZOTTI
Can I do anything, Your Majesty? I have been so
anxious.
[*Startled*]
You have drawn the sword of Alpastroom!

QUEEN
To cut Marrobio's cords.
[*Hands it to him. HE takes it dazedly.*]

CAZOTTI
I am to cut Marrobio's cords?

QUEEN
If you please.
[*The two men's eyes meet. CAZOTTI walks slowly*
and nervously and pretends to slash at the already
cut knots.]

MARROBIO [*Counting as before*]

One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven
. . . eight . . . nine.

[*HE throws off the ropes with a tigerish movement, and drags the sword from CAZOTTI'S hand. CAZOTTI recoils instinctively. MARROBIO slowly walks over to the QUEEN, who awaits him, smiling. As he reaches the dais, and sees she does not flinch, he prostrates himself at her feet, his head in the dust, his sword spread out on the floor*]

My Sovereign!

QUEEN

Rise, my brother!

MARROBIO [*Rising*]

This sword that cut my bonds has cut a covenant 'twixt me and you. Henceforth it shall be sacred for the defence of Your Majesty's friends, for the destruction of Your Majesty's foes.

QUEEN [*Rising from the throne*]

Give me the scabbard!

[*MARROBIO mounts the dais and easily reaches the scabbard. HE shows the QUEEN an inscription on it, and she girds the sword on him. While the two are thus absorbed at L., ROXO enters hurriedly R., holding out his wrist-watch.*]

CAZOTTI [*Who has remained R.*]

Say nothing! Marrobio is won over!

ROXO [*Staring*]
Is it possible?

CAZOTTI
Ay, and by giving him the command against Bosnavina, we get two of your points in one. Then with Gripstein supplying the money, and you at the War Office——

ROXO
Ah, but the fifth point? How make Bosnavina declare war?

CAZOTTI [*Picking up the mass of cords*]
Trust Providence to cut that knot, too.
[*Beckoning, he throws the cords to a GUARD espied R.*]

QUEEN [*To MARROBIO*]
Now you are girded.
[*Turns, perceives ROXO*]
Prince Marrobio has consented to stay for the banquet—he will, of course, have the place of honour.

ROXO
But, Madam——!

QUEEN
Silence! I will hear no more of your miserable objections. I have done more in five minutes to bring peace than you in five years.
[*Turns her back on him and mounts haughtily to her throne.*]

ROXO [*To CAZOTTI*]
It is intolerable. I shall resign.

CAZOTTI [*Smiling*]
Naturally. To go to the War Office. For, fifthly
and finally——

ROXO [*In a low, awestruck voice*]
You are right! She gives a bastard Mussulman the
place of Prince Condrexoulok. It is the finger of God.

GENTLEMAN USHER [*Appearing R.*]
Is Your Majesty ready to receive?

QUEEN
Quite.
[*To MARROBIO, who begins to move down*]
Remain at my right hand, brother.

CURTAIN.

Act Three

[*The Throne Room in the San Marco Palace as before, save that a fire of logs is burning on the great hearth and two captured Bosnavinian flags hang on the wall in place of the sword of Alpastrum, and if ever the casement is opened, the mountains are seen snowy to their base. At a table drawn up near the fire the DUCHESS D'AZOLLO and various MAIDS OF HONOUR are making bandages. They are drably attired: some in mourning, and one in the Red Cross costume. At R. the old line of smart stalwart soldiers is replaced by a collection of aged or decrepit civilians in ill-fitting uniforms, under CORPORAL VANNI, now minus his right arm. For an instant the ladies work in silence, then faintly through the closed casement comes the high clear cry of the muezzin from the nearest minaret.*]

MUEZZIN [*From afar*]
Allah Akbar la ila ha illa Allah . . .

[*Two of the soldiers prostrate themselves.*]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Fifteen o'clock by the minaret.

[*Rising*]

I am afraid we oughtn't to waste these candles, and we shall spoil our eyes if we work much longer.

[*As the ladies gather up their work, a church-bell chimes three*]

Put back the table, Corporal.

VANNI [*Motioning to his men to obey*]
I have only one arm now, your Highness.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO
Ah, poor fellow. I hope it's not paining you.

VANNI
Not when I look at those captured flags and my brother-in-law's letter.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Eagerly*]
From the front?

VANNI
Yes, but I never found it till I came out of hospital this morning.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO
Ah, then the news will be stale. Thank you.
[*Exit with ladies L.*]

VANNI [*Prodding the praying Mussulmans with his foot*]

That's enough, you holy fakirs.

[*Goes and opens casement R.*]

Br-r-r! Come along, you stinking Pacifist.

[*VITTORIO, a decrepit-looking old soldier with a scholarly face, comes in, blowing his fingers*]

Hurry up, Abdullah, or I'll catch my death.

[*One of the Moslems goes out to replace the guard*]

You know what you have to look out for—the Rol-

menian envoy—blue and gold uniform, white cocked hat.

[Closes casement]

Atschew! Hi, there!

[To VITTORIO, who has sneaked to warm his fingers at the fire]

Get to your rank, you swine.

VITTORIO

I won't be called a swine.

VANNI

Silence, or I'll rip you up like one, you black-snouted son of a sow. You're a pro-Bosni, that's what you are, a beastly Bolshevist. D'you think I haven't heard of the sing-song you wrote about brotherhood? Brotherhood with Bosni butchers! Ugh! Stand at attention, you spy!

VITTORIO

I am a gentleman and I shall complain to the War Office.

VANNI

Gentleman! You're lucky to be conscripted and get decent rations, when other gentlefolk are glad of dry barley-bread. Ah, here *comes* the War Office. Complain, if you dare!

[Enter GENERAL ROXO, R., with a portfolio under his only arm. Salute. He is not wearing his decorations and walks bent and tottering. VITTORIO steps from the ranks, hesitates. ROXO disappears L.]

VANNI [*Mockingly*]
Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

VITTORIO
It's only because he looks so broken.

VANNI
Broken, you beastly defeatist! It's his arm worrying him, that's all. I'd gladly give him mine, only then he'd have two lefts and that wouldn't be right.

SOLDIERS [*In parasitic laughter*]
Ha! ha! ha! Good!

VANNI
Have I made a joke? Ha! ha! ha! ha!
[ROXO reappears L. *Laughter frozen.*]

ROXO
I nearly forgot, Corporal. Where is your look-out?

VANNI
On the balcony, my General.

ROXO
You lie.

VANNI
No, my General!

ROXO
I beg your pardon. But how was it when I looked up from the Piazza——?

VANNI

We were just changing the guard.

ROXO

Aha! So you did leave the Piazza unwatched!

VANNI

Only for an instant.

ROXO

In that instant the Rolmenian envoy might have driven up. The new look-out must mount guard before the old is relieved.

VANNI

Yes, my General.

[*Exit* ROXO]

Ah, he is a wonderful man. Nothing escapes him. The comrades in the hospital chaffed me about copying his arm. But *Dio*, if I could copy his brain! *Cristo!* The way he manœuvred the Bosnis into our river marshes, while he rushed across and took Ripo——!

VITTORIO

That was Marrobio.

VANNI

Yes, but where did the strategy come from? *Dio*, if I could have heard 'em screaming and gurgling as they sank slowly in the sucking mud! My brother-in-law

writes you could see hands clawing above the mud days after——

VITTORIO [*Looking ghastly*]
Don't!

VANNI
And what about *my* hand that they blew off! Don't say that was Marrobio, too. As if our General would cripple his own soldiers. No, no—it was one of those naturalised Bosnis we so confidingly gave papers to. But we've got 'em all interned now, these friends of yours, and they'll no more come out alive than out of that mud.

SOLDIERS
Ha! ha! ha!

VANNI [*Beaming*]
Ah, the fun when we took Ripo! My brother-in-law with one bayonet spiked—but read it for yourself, Vittorio, rub your nose in it.

[*Forces letter on VITTORIO, who reads with growing horror*]

And the Bosni women, eh, boys? Some of course asked for nothing better.

[*SOLDIERS laugh*]

Ah, it's a man's life, he says! Why go back to brooch-making when you can make necklaces of Bosni——!

[*VITTORIO falls fainting, the letter gripped in his hand*]

Hi! What's this? Get up, you old woman!

[Spurns him with his foot]

Time you got your blood-legs! Attention! Cover him!

[The SOLDIERS stand in front of their fallen comrade to conceal him, and CAZOTTI enters R., with portfolio, and the same harassed look as ROXO. He has nearly crossed the scene when he turns.]

CAZOTTI

Corporal!

VANNI

Yes, Excellency.

CAZOTTI

Should the Rolmenian envoy arrive while I am at the Privy Council——

VANNI

I am to send him to you—I understand.

CAZOTTI

No, you don't! And don't have the impertinence to interrupt.

VANNI *[With crawling humility]*

A thousand pardons.

CAZOTTI

Her Majesty will be at the Privy Council, and she'd be disturbed to see the envoy. The moment your look-out espies him, a chamberlain must come and say a crisis demands my immediate presence.

VANNI

I understand.

CAZOTTI

Be careful you do, this time.

VANNI

I *am* careful, Excellency. I always post a new look-out before the old goes off guard.

CAZOTTI

Admirable! I shall not forget your zeal. But when the light on the balcony fails, post him at the Palace gate!

VANNI

Sicuro, Excellency.

[*Exit CAZOTTI. The men turn to examine the fallen GUARD*]

Ah, you've come to! And I suppose you'll be writing that we cut off Bosni ears. But it's only trophies to bring home to the girls, stupid! The Bosni officers, they slice off the ears of their own men to get the cowards to advance. Up with you, Vittorio, you'll want some fresh air after your faint—get back on guard, do you hear?

[*Opens casement*]

Come along, Abdullah, you're relieved.

VITTORIO

And so am I—of such society!

[*Throws letter at him.*]

VANNI

I'll court-martial you for that!

[A parasite picks up the letter and hands it to VANNI, and the two GUARDS exchange places while he is talking on]

Corpo di Bacco! There's scarcely a brat of sixteen but has got his chance of Bosni-sticking, while I'm cooped up here with the queerest collection of crocks that ever disgraced Her Majesty's uniform. And any day now Marrobio may be looting the Bosni capital. Lucky beggars! Lucky beggars!

[Enter COLONEL THE MARQUIS FIUMA, haggard like the others, his hair lavishly sprinkled with grey; crape on his sword and on his arm. Salute.]

FIUMA

You know their Eminences, the Cardinal and the Patriarch?

VANNI

Yes, my Colonel—by their holy clothes. They came an hour ago.

FIUMA

They are not to leave the Palace.

VANNI

Prisoners, my Colonel?

FIUMA

Oh no——

[Smiling sadly]

Detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. The War Office's order, say. They may have to sleep here.

VANNI

I will have a watchman posted all night at the Palace gate.

FIUMA

Excellent. I shall remember your zeal.

[*Enter L., CAZOTTI in a raging passion, waving a newspaper.*]

CAZOTTI

Perdition, Colonel! Is this the way you censor? Look at that filthy rag smuggled into the Queen's blotter at the Council table!

FIUMA [*Taking it*]

The *Sera*! But this was never submitted to me!

CAZOTTI

Not submitted? Good God! Then it is Revolution! Withdraw your men, Corporal, well back!

VANNI

Yes, Excellency.

[*Signals. They withdraw R.*]

CAZOTTI

Read it—read it aloud—the letters dance before my eyes. Sit down.

FIUMA

I can't sit—oh, Excellency, if you knew how it racks me to think of my friends—the few not killed—freezing in Bosnavina, while I in warmth and safety——

CAZOTTI

It's not so blasted warm and it won't be so very safe once this wretched article rouses the people. Sit down. We need you, Roxo and I.

[*Sits. FIUMA sits too, though he soon rises again*]
Ah, I knew something was in the wind—the moment I saw coloured rags fluttering on the Moslem houses near the railway station.

FIUMA

In the wind—is it a pun?

CAZOTTI

Good God, no! Don't you know the Moslem superstition? Those living near a cemetery always hang out bits of cloth. What the scoundrels mean to suggest is that the station where our soldiers entrain is a cemetery. And if they, who are so proud of their Marrobio, venture on this rebel sally—no wonder the Christians—but read, read!

FIUMA

Headline: " Stop the War "—" Yesterday's Day of Intercession and Prayer for Victory celebrated in all the churches, synagogues and mosques of Val-dania—— "

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CAZOTTI

Ah, what did I tell Roxo? If you say "God help us," people know it's all up. . . . Excuse me.

FIUMA

"While it emphasised the unity of the country under its unexampled tribulations——"

CAZOTTI

Cut the cackle. Time presses.

FIUMA

Er—er—"Eight thousand men have been blinded by chips of granite blown off the mountains of Bosnavina, but still more tragic is the blinding of the whole people by the Government and the Jew-press."

CAZOTTI

Poor old Baron!

FIUMA

"As a matter of fact these first victories have been followed by overwhelming defeats. Despite three desperate attempts to take the pass—the gallantry of which does not compensate for the terrible casualties—Marrobio had to retire on Ripo. But the enemy, re-pouring through the pass, recaptured the town, and now holds us, foodless, frost-bitten and pneumonia-ridden, with our backs to the swollen river."

CAZOTTI

Abominable! There must be leakage at the War Office.

FIUMA

But if it is true——?

CAZOTTI

You, a censor, say that! Truth is always dangerous, in war it is suicidal. Is that all?

FIUMA

Not quite. “A glance at the uncleared snow in our streets will remind our readers that the period of mountain fighting is over for the year. Our utmost hope, therefore, is to escape annihilation, whether at the hands of the enemy or in attempting to regain Valdania across the bridgeless flood.” The Queen was right, you see. If we had built bridges——

CAZOTTI

There are so many things the Queen wanted that would have come in handy for war. More railways, for instance, and if we had had wireless apparatus, we shouldn't have been cut off from the front for two days by this snowstorm, not to mention we should know where the Rolmenian envoy was. But you young bloods wouldn't wait!

FIUMA [*Too broken to retort*]

It winds up: “Let us stop the war while some of our sons still survive to carry on our ancient valorous breed.” “Valorous breed!” How these Pacifists contradict themselves!

CAZOTTI

It's more important that they contradict us.

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FIUMA

What's to be done?

CAZOTTI

Roxo is already ordering the arrest of the staff and the break-up of the printers' plant. And the Press Bureau is sending out a statement that the retreat was strategic, according to plan.

FIUMA

But that won't alter the facts.

CAZOTTI

Oh, yes, it will. Facts don't exist till they're believed. When the wires are repaired we may learn the game's up. But for the moment we remain unbeaten.

FIUMA

Is that all that lies between us and ruin? Roxo was so sure Marrobio——

CAZOTTI

Even genius can't do the impossible. Marrobio's invasion of Bosnavina was premature. Roxo, when he ordered it, was counting on the two million Valdians there rising up and joining us.

FIUMA

But why haven't they, do you suppose?

CAZOTTI

It turns out they have no grievances.

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FIUMA

No grievances? They weren't martyred?

CAZOTTI

No. In one thing this rag was right—we were misled by the Jew-press.

FIUMA

To which you—excuse my reminding you—dictated atrocities.

CAZOTTI

I had heard them in my childhood from my grandfather.

FIUMA

But those false telegrams of yours stirred up reprisals against the Bosnavinians here.

CAZOTTI

Yes, they were useful in kindling the war-spirit. But they were never meant as data for the War Office. Roxo should have checked them. But it is wonderful, the power of print. I believed them myself when I read them. Even the Baron believes his own papers.

FIUMA

Poor Baron! How marvellously he bears up under his bereavements!

CAZOTTI [*Rising*]

Like Roxo, he trusts in God. But I say, keep your fireworks dry.

[*Going L.*]

The Palace must blaze with lights to-night and the streets too.

FIUMA

But we may be in darkness next week.

CAZOTTI

No matter. We've got to play for time. The cinemas must show our soldiers escalading the pass. Keep the bonfires burning and the rockets always ready.

[*Moving further L.*]

FIUMA

But ready for what?

CAZOTTI [*Roguishly*]

Aha! Go along now; you've plenty to see to. I thought you knew my motto, "One combination after another." By the way, impress upon the telegraph people to keep the line to Rolmenia clear. It's a matter of life and death.

FIUMA

Ah, I can't help seeing your hope lies in Rolmenia. But how? Rolmenia is Bosnavina's secret ally. But for Bosnavina being the attacker, Rolmenia would have had to join her. How, then, can she join *us*?

CAZOTTI [*Smiling*]

Ah, that's the puzzle!

[*As FIUMA exit R., enter ROXO, L.*]

You're looking for me?

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ROXO

I didn't want to go back to the Council before discussing what to tell the Queen. She didn't really believe your contradiction.

CAZOTTI

It was meant only for the rest of the Cabinet. You can't trust them, or anyhow, their secretaries. But so far as she is concerned, this rag may make it easier for us.

ROXO

You would tell her the whole truth—in *her* state?

CAZOTTI

The blacker she feels things the better—follow out your own combination.

ROXO

You are right, as usual.

CAZOTTI

And you were wrong, as usual, to stir up sleeping dogs with that Intercession Service.

ROXO

At such a critical moment we must go to God.

CAZOTTI

And make it more critical?

ROXO

Prayer is a reconciliation with heaven. Not forty per cent of our male adults go to Mass.

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CAZOTTI

You forget that our leader and our largest sect are Mussulmans, and pray five times a day. But if we don't get back to the Council, we may find Her Majesty has stopped the war.

ROXO

I can't smile. It is too serious a possibility. We must get the Council over, so as to get to business.

BARON [*Outside R.*]

My poor Corporal, glad to see you back!

CAZOTTI

Ah, I want a word with the Baron. I follow you.

ROXO

But I, too, want the Chairman of the Man-Power Board.

[*Enter BARON, in deep mourning; a broken man.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Ah, Excellencies, was it not beautiful yesterday in the cathedral? My slain son, my blinded Sigismondo, my wife dead of grief, the whole terrible burden was lifted from my heart. I felt the God of Valdania would not desert His people.

ROXO [*Grasping his hand*]

Amen. . . . How many more divisions can you promise Marrobio?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Not one, alas!

ROXO

You have combed to the last man?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

And the last boy. Outside indispensables the only man left under fifty-five is the Marquis Fiuma.

ROXO

For heaven's sake don't tell *him* that!

BARON GRIPSTEIN

As your Excellencies know, I have conscribed all our neutrals, though it is against the Constitution.

CAZOTTI

Yes, yes—would you please put all this in writing for the Queen?

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Startled*]

You are telling her the truth?

CAZOTTI

It can't always be avoided. Haven't you seen this?

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*After a hasty glance at paper*]

God of Israel! . . . I saw great crowds with it, but I didn't dare to be seen buying it. . . . But it's not true!

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CAZOTTI

That's what your papers are going to say. But it *is*
—every word.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Our poor Margherita! Think of the pride and glory of the day when as Colonel of the Queen's Hussars she bade God-speed to the army—the cheers, the bells, the flowers, the songs, the flags! How did this horrible fiasco come about?

ROXO

It's our own Valdanians, Baron, our two million Valdanians in Bosnavina, who have forgotten their patriotism, forgotten their mother tongue, forgotten the rock whence they were hewn, who even boast of being Bosnavinians.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

How horrible! I have lain awake night after night, puzzling how to get more men, but the only thing I can think of is mercenaries. There are shoals of Italian labourers who go over to America for a season. They would be happier fighting.

CAZOTTI

But the money, dear friend, the money?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

My last million is freely at your disposal. God knows I have little to live for but the glory and happiness of my country.

ROXO [*Moved*]
You shall yet witness it. Tell him, Cazotti—tell
him everything!
[*Exit L.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Brightening*]
There is hope?

CAZOTTI
Yes, but first a little private business.
[*Lowers voice*]
Have you succeeded in depositing my securities?

BARON GRIPSTEIN
Yes, with a man in Amsterdam.

CAZOTTI
But is he a Jew?

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Apologetically*]
I couldn't find anybody else.

CAZOTTI
I wouldn't trust anybody else.

BARON GRIPSTEIN
Ha! He is even a practising Jew—a mediæval bigot!

CAZOTTI
Still better. A man who sticks to his religion won't
stick to my money! . . . No offence, Baron. Hush,
here's Fiuma back. So that's understood.

[*Enter FIUMA, R.*]

FIUMA

The wires are just mended and the line for Romania is clear, subject, of course, to delay at Belgrade. The post-offices, they say, are besieged with people demanding to wire to the front.

CAZOTTI [*Crumpling the newspaper*]

Ah, the poison works!

[*Enter R. the COUNTESS CAZOTTI, tripping it gaily in a bewitching nurse's uniform.*]

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

Ah, there you are, you men, gossiping as usual, while I'm slaving for our poor wounded. And it's the same in the streets, my car had to crawl. Ah, how tired I get every evening.

CAZOTTI

But, my dear, the Queen offered to relieve you of your duties.

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

As if I would fail Her Majesty! Ah, Baron, you don't make enough of us women. There's no Woman-Power Board, what?

FIUMA

Because the power of women is incalculable.

COUNTESS CAZOTTI

How charming of you! But it's just what my patients tell me. I'm the only thing, they say, that reconciles them to being out of the fighting.

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FIUMA [*Exalted*]
They long to be back?

COUNTESS CAZOTTI
They cry if I only mention the trenches!

FIUMA
That ought to be stated in the papers, eh, Baron? It would give the country a fillip.

BARON GRIPSTEIN
I haven't much time for my papers now. But I'll see to it.

COUNTESS CAZOTTI
I *have* seen to it. I've been interviewed in them all. Don't you read them? While you cackle, I work. "The Queen of Workers" they always put under my picture.

[*Enter ROXO excitedly L.*]

Ah, here comes another prattler. Excuse me, General, I haven't time.

[*Consequential exit L.*]

ROXO
Guard your Palace, Governor.

FIUMA
What has happened?

ROXO
Barricade your doors first.

[*FIUMA rushes out R.*]

CAZOTTI

You've left the Council again?

ROXO

To call out the troops and the machine guns. The printers can't be arrested—the offices are blocked by a desperate mob, largely women.

CAZOTTI

Ah, I told Saldo it was a mistake to close the schools for the sake of the fuel—the worry of the children, taken on the mothers' empty stomachs—ah, listen!

[Confused sounds from the Piazza.]

ROXO

They're only in small groups so far — they know meetings are prohibited. The Piazza is black with demagogues, each on his tub.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Is it Bolshevism at last?

ROXO

Hardly. A few in red caps or cockades. But the wearers are aged.

CAZOTTI

It's lucky, Baron, we've no Man-Power left. What?

[Re-enter FIUMA, R.]

FIUMA

My men had already done the barricading. There was a nasty surge towards the Palace.

ROXO

Ah, the groups coalescing. I pray God we shall not have to fire on them.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

You would fire on your own people?

ROXO

I would fire on my own father, if duty demanded. May I suggest, Baron, you'd be more useful motoring down to your evening paper to hurry up the reassuring edition? Interview yourself and say we have a million fresh men.

BARON GRIPSTEIN

But what about my statement for Her Majesty?

CAZOTTI

Just write simply: "We have not a single man more."
[BARON *hurries off* R.]

ROXO

He's a good fellow. What would Valdania do without him?

CAZOTTI

And I haven't told him the real situation after all.

FIUMA

Nor me.

CAZOTTI

It's Roxo's combination, not mine.

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ROXO

The time has come when Her Majesty must know, so why not Fiuma?

CAZOTTI

Ha! ha! ha! The General has a dry humour sometimes.

FIUMA

And a leaky humour other times. Sometimes he tells me everything, and sometimes nothing.

ROXO

It's because you're so sentimental about the Queen. We were afraid you'd put a spoke in our wheel.

FIUMA

I? When the fate of Valdania——!

ROXO

I told you long ago of certain Princes who came to the Coronation.

FIUMA [*Bounding*]

Ah, Prince Igmor covets Margherita!

ROXO

Prince Igmor, though the younger son, is his father's favourite and the leader of the Rolmenian forces——

CAZOTTI

Roxo had already projected disengaging Rolmenia from her alliance with Bosnavina——

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ROXO

Bosnavina, sandwiched between us and Rolmenia, would be caught in a vice——

CAZOTTI

So imagine Roxo's delight when the Prince began making sheep's eyes at Margherita.

FIUMA

Pig's eyes, you mean. I never saw such mean little peepers.

ROXO

The Prince is an able soldier, but I don't pretend he's a beauty.

FIUMA

Outrageous!

CAZOTTI

We knew you'd say that. But your personal feelings——

FIUMA

My personal feelings? What about the Queen's? Do you think she'll look at the little ogre?

CAZOTTI

It's fortunate she didn't. He was whisked back before the Coronation Ball by a war-cable. Bosnavina was menaced by Poland and under her treaty Rolmenia stood to join Bosnavina.

FIUMA

And now Rolmenia is to attack Bosnavina!

CAZOTTI [*Shrugging his shoulders*]

The *chassé-croisé* of the Dance of Death.

ROXO

The menace to Bosnavina petered out, but it left a million Rolmenians splendidly strung up for war.

FIUMA

And these million men are the price of Margherita!

ROXO

The salvation of Valdania.

FIUMA

How so? Marrobio will be annihilated long before Prince Igmor can mobilise.

ROXO

Prince Igmor is already mobilised and on the very frontier of Bosnavina.

FIUMA

And Bosnavina doesn't protest?

CAZOTTI [*Chuckling*]

She thinks he's coming in on *her* side.

FIUMA

Rolmenia and her Prince are a pretty pair!

CAZOTTI

Don't talk like Da Pietra. One would think you, too, had English blood. All's fair in love and war, and here we have both!

ROXO

It's true the Prince has no sense of honour—or he'd believe in ours, and be satisfied with the *promise* of marriage. But he actually refuses to launch his offensive against Bosnavina till the marriage ceremony is performed.

FIUMA [*Relieved*]

Then the whole scheme breaks down. Before the Prince can get here——

ROXO

Oh, he won't come here. How can he leave his army?

FIUMA

Then how can they marry? By miracle?

CAZOTTI

By proxy.

FIUMA

What?

CAZOTTI

You've not heard of marriage by proxy? But it plays no small part in our annals.

ROXO

The Rolmenian envoy will represent his Prince.

FIUMA

That suffices?

CAZOTTI

Even a letter of consent suffices . . . Don't look so dazed—it's all according to law and religion—ask the Cardinal or the Patriarch.

FIUMA

Ah, that's why I have to keep them on the premises!

CAZOTTI

Of course. Go along—you'll find them playing chess.

FIUMA

Sacrificing their Queen!

ROXO

Saving her. Shall she be Bosnavina's captive when she can become really its Duchess?

CAZOTTI

She will be much happier married—she gets so hysterical nowadays. This fad of national mourning is a sign of it. Help us to persuade her—she has faith in you.

FIUMA

Which you ask me to abuse. She will never consent.

CAZOTTI

We think better of her patriotism.

ROXO

And of yours.

FIUMA

Marry that pig-eyed swaggerer!

CAZOTTI

The instant the ceremony is over, her proxy husband will cable a word to his Prince——

ROXO

They won't let us even know the word—they're afraid we'd trick him into launching his offensive for nothing.

CAZOTTI

They have got the whip-hand. It is useless protesting.

FIUMA [*Bitterly*]

So that's why the wires have to be kept free and the fireworks dry!

CAZOTTI

But we've got the better of them in the Commercial Treaty, if they don't doctor the clauses; and we've certainly come off with the best slice of Bosnavina. It looks the smaller. But I found out from the Baron where the oil deposits lie. Ha! ha! ha!

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FIUMA

So you've done well with our Margherita.

ROXO

And by her. Practically three kingdoms in her pocket.

FIUMA

Horrible! And if the Rolmenian envoy never turns up?

CAZOTTI

Ugh! Don't suggest such a thing. His car had already crossed into Bosnavina before the wires broke down.

FIUMA

Ha! ha! ha! So he cuts across the very country he is to destroy! Politics are certainly amusing.

CAZOTTI

It won't be very amusing if he's not here by to-night. Listen!

[Dull cries of "Stop the war." Enter CHAMBERLAIN, L., with a telegram on a salver]

Ha! At last! This will be news of him!

CHAMBERLAIN

Sent in from the Ministry by the subway, your Excellency.

[Bows and goes.]

CAZOTTI [*Tears envelope*]

Carento 13.5. He's already in Valdania, you see.

ROXO

Thank God!

CAZOTTI

What's this? "Warn danger to the Palace. Country seething with horrible rumours. Hope arrive early this evening.—D'AZOLLO."

ROXO

D'Azollo?

CAZOTTI

Damn! The old fool will be worse than the young one.

FIUMA

Thank you.

CAZOTTI [*Fuming*]

While he was pottering around on his Canal Commission, he kept the country confident. He was a symbol of stability. Now—oh, this is the last straw!

ROXO

It's natural he should rush back to protect his idol from the mob.

CAZOTTI

If only he won't protect her from us! Chamberlain!

[*The CHAMBERLAIN re-appears. CAZOTTI puts back the wire on the salver*]

Show this to the Duchess D'Azollo.

[*The CHAMBERLAIN bows and exit*]

We must trust to the Duchess monopolising her long-absent lord.

FIUMA

You won't prevent him from opposing the marriage.

CAZOTTI

If he succeeds, it is all over with Valdania.

ROXO [*Agitated*]

No, no.

CAZOTTI

"Who draws the sword of Alpastroom——"

ROXO [*Thundering*]

Silence!

CAZOTTI

You forget you are speaking to your chief.

ROXO

We punish doubt even in a plain citizen—in a chief it should be a capital offence. Tell the Queen, if you will, that this marriage is our only hope—that may be prudent—but do not blaspheme against God. He will yet save His people.

CAZOTTI

Oh, very well—go and get your miracle. I wash my hands of your combination.

[*Going L.*]

FIUMA

The crisis, Signori, is too grave for quarrels.

ROXO [*Joyously extending his hand*]

Ah, then you *will* work with us!

FIUMA [*Gripping it with a sob*]

It is the only chance I have had for heroism.

ROXO

Good lad! Don't think I don't feel for the Queen—
or for you. Don't go, Cazotti, my nerves are on edge.

[*DUCHESS enters L., further stopping CAZOTTI by
holding out the telegram to him.*]

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO [*Agitatedly*]

Danger to the Palace? What does it mean?

CAZOTTI [*Savagely*]

That your husband's coming home!

FIUMA [*Smiling a little*]

Don't be alarmed, Aunt. It's only the people want
the war stopped. Can't you hear?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

The people? What insolence!

[*Goes towards casement L.*]

Really the world seems topsy-turvy nowadays. The
Duke, I hear, goes to early Mass!

ROXO

There are worse revolutions than that. Your Highness
had better keep away from the balcony.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

They would never dare shoot *me!*

FIUMA

Have you never heard of the French Revolution?

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

But we are not in France!

CAZOTTI [*Smiling*]

No—they do things better there! Here there seems no leading spirit, no concentration. Do you note, Roxo, how spasmodic the shouting is? Fortunately it's too cold to stand about. However, I'm glad you've come, Duchess. I want you please to help with the wedding.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

The wedding! What wedding?

CAZOTTI

A Court lady's. This very hour, perhaps. You ladies had best dress at once.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Is this a jest, Carlo?

FIUMA

I wish to God it was!



CAZOTTI

We must do *something* to pacify the people. And it will cheer up the Court too to cast off mourning for the nonce.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

But who is it? I am dying of curiosity.

CAZOTTI

Enlighten your aunt before she expires. And let her stop all the cackle in advance.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

But will the Queen be present?

CAZOTTI

It will hardly take place without her.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

And will she permit grand toilette?

CAZOTTI

You will take all your instructions from the Lord Chamberlain.

DUCHESS D'AZOLLO

Quick, Carlo! I burn. Oh, I hope the Duke will be back for the wedding!

[Exit L. with FIUMA.]

CAZOTTI

Well, we've won Fiuma over. That's a great asset.

ROXO

It would be a greater asset to have the proxy safe on the premises. Why doesn't the Rolmenian rascal turn up? I trust the look-out is on the *qui vive*. Every instant is precious.

[HE opens casement R. and steps out on balcony.]

CROWD [*From Piazza*]
Stop the war! Stop the war! Boo!

ROXO [*Returning trembling*]
Good God!

CAZOTTI
Frightened of the mob? You!

ROXO
The sentry's dead.

CAZOTTI
Dead?

ROXO
Half-frozen already. Could you give me a hand?

CAZOTTI
Can't you call somebody? . . . Sh! Here's the Queen.
[*ROXO closes the casement. CAZOTTI conceals his agitation. The QUEEN, entering L., makes no attempt to conceal hers. She is in black, but wears by Valdanian custom the crown for the Council.*]

QUEEN
I've dismissed the Council!

CAZOTTI
Oh, Madam, why?

QUEEN
I could see the sunset from the windows.
[*The two men look at each other. SHE gazes at the coloured-glass Madonna*]

Here at least the Madonna shuts it out—that great ocean of blood.

[*Falls into a chair L. and covers her face*]

Oh, Holy Mother, if you *could* blot it all out!

[*Sobs.*]

CAZOTTI [*To ROXO*]

That's what comes of having women monarchs.

ROXO

Her father gave us more trouble with his mistresses.

CAZOTTI

D——n etiquette! I can't stand here dumb.

ROXO

No, no. Let her have her cry out.

CAZOTTI

Time presses. I must tell her.

CROWD [*Dully from Piazza*]

Stop the war!

QUEEN [*Listening suddenly*]

Ah, you hear!

CAZOTTI

Only a few Bolshevists, Madam. But we can't stop the war. The deadlock at the pass ended in our defeat. This rag is only too accurate.

QUEEN

Oh, I have known it all along—all these long winter nights that I lie tossing in the dark, thinking of our heroes in the icy trenches. Ah, the divine relief when the sun comes up over the mountain-tops and spreads the blue shadow of the firs on the snow!

ROXO

That divine relief, Madam, can be found even in the dark, if one seeks the peace of God.

QUEEN

The peace of God? As I lie sleepless I think of the eternal insomnia of God.

ROXO [*Shocked*]

Madam!

QUEEN

I only quote the Bible. God neither slumbers nor sleeps. Ah, it is the pain of God, not His peace, that passeth understanding. Last night, drugged by the incense and music of the Intercession Service, I felt I should sleep at last. But oh! it was worse than my nights of insomnia! I dreamed I was escaping from it all—drifting on a timber-raft, exulting in the rush along the river, the leaps down the roaring cataracts, the straining and snapping of the ropes. Suddenly came a strange calm. We had reached Bosnavina. But the sentries did not challenge. They stood frozen on the frontier.

CAZOTTI [*Superstitiously glancing at casement R.*]
Eh?

QUEEN

The cattle lay frozen in the fields, the chimneys dripped with icicles. The raftsmen began building a box with their timber. I said, "What is this?" They said, "It is your coffin, Duchess of Bosnavina. Would you survive all your subjects?" While they were closing me in it, I struggled vainly to move or speak, but when I heard the frozen clods rattle on the lid, I gave a great cry and the lid flew off, and the coffin soared over lands and seas until it descended at my own doorstep in New York. I tore in, calling "Daddy, Daddy!" But they were all three frozen like the others—Daddy, Oliver, Norah. Ah, for once I was glad to wake up, to think this at least was not true.

[*Springs up*]

Tell me, tell me it is not. All through the war I have never troubled you with enquiries. But now, now——!

CAZOTTI

Calm yourself, Madam! Our American espionage department would certainly have informed us, had anything happened to the Da Pietra household. But as for the other person, if by Oliver you mean the young architect, Oliver Randel, then I can give you the most reassuring news, for he is just happily married.

QUEEN

Married?

CAZOTTI

To a California heiress who adores his architecture.

QUEEN [*Visibly stricken*]

Oh!

[Turns away and drops into a chair. ROXO'S hand grasps CAZOTTI'S in congratulation of his cleverness. From L. there comes faintly a sound of a Greek Church chant in clear, boyish voices "Happy are those who fear the Lord," etc.]

What is that?

ROXO

Sounds like the chapel choir practising.

QUEEN

For what? More ceremonies? I'll have no more. Can heaven itself bring back our heroes? Ah, I deserved that coffin!

CAZOTTI

You are overwrought, Madam. You did your best to prevent the war.

QUEEN [*Feverishly*]

Yes, I did, didn't I? I wrote to the Ambassador, I explained.

ROXO

Never in our history has a Sovereign grovelled so!

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QUEEN

But you delivered my apologies—they *were* delivered?
[ROXO *hesitates.*]

CAZOTTI

Of course, Madam. The Bosnavinians were bent on war.

QUEEN

They were, weren't they? It's not my fault, really?

ROXO

They had been preparing for half a century.

QUEEN

And you all did your best, too, to prevent it—you wrote, you conferred——!

CAZOTTI

We appealed to the League of Nations—their Committee is still sitting—we cabled to the Pope and the Caliph—we sat up all night——

QUEEN

Then why don't you stop it now?

ROXO

Now? When we are losing?

QUEEN

But I asked you to stop it when Marrobio took Ripol!

ROXO

It's not in human nature to stop when you are winning.

CAZOTTI

There would have been a revolution—not so mild as to-day's.

QUEEN

But when there was a deadlock at the pass, I asked you to stop, too.

ROXO

Then we felt that with a little more pressure——

QUEEN

So whether you are winning, losing or drawing, you can never stop. The forest is smouldering and you work all night to stamp out the menace. Yet once the fire bursts out, then you are to fold your arms—or rather to pour oil on the flames!

ROXO

That is the law of war.

QUEEN

The law of lunacy! We all seem like the cat in the old Arab fable.

CAZOTTI

What cat, Madam?

QUEEN

The cat that bit the meat-knife and found such joy in the blood that she went on biting till she bled to death.

ROXO

There is no joy in blood, Madam. The joy is in sacrifice. War is God's instrument for exalting and purifying a nation.

CAZOTTI [*Impatient*]

These academic arguments——

[*Enter frenziedly BARON GRIPSTEIN, R., dishevelled, hysteric, muddy, blood oozing from his forehead.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Save me, Madam, give me shelter!

[*Sensation*]

QUEEN [*Springing up*]

What has happened?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

The mob has burnt our quarter.

QUEEN

What quarter?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

They say the Jews made the war—I saw them driven back into the flames—women and children.

QUEEN

God in heaven!

ROXO [*Roaring*]
Where are the troops?

BARON GRIPSTEIN
I don't know. As I passed, my car was stopped, surrounded, hooted, stoned. Yes, I remember, there *were* soldiers, but they joined in the jeering.

ROXO
I must 'phone to Molp.
[*Enter FIUMA, L., who stares at the BARON.*]
Ah, Fiuma, you have heard——?

BARON GRIPSTEIN
I thank God my wife did not live to see this day, my son is blind to it.

QUEEN
Compose yourself. Fiuma, will you see to the Baron? He has been hurt by the mob.

FIUMA
I am sorry, Baron. Come with me.
[*Is leading him out. The BARON submits dazedly. A raucous roar of glee is heard from the mob.*]

CAZOTTI
This is getting serious. Unfortunately we haven't enough Jews to last them long.

[*A red flame flickers up behind the casements*]
What did I say? The fire is spreading. The Palace——

FIUMA [*At exit*]

No danger, Excellency. They are only burning somebody in effigy.

CAZOTTI

Who is it?

FIUMA

Oh, it's only to warm themselves.

QUEEN

Ah, you are afraid to say—it must be me!

FIUMA

No, Madam, your figure doesn't lend itself to the grotesque.

QUEEN

Who is it, then?

FIUMA

The Prime Minister.

[*Exit L., with BARON.*]

CAZOTTI

Me? The ungrateful brutes! Think how they cheered my war speech from that very balcony, think of the boys of fourteen who tried to enlist! But this peril from your own people, Madam, added to the enemy's menace, makes it imperative that without a moment's delay, Roxo and I should now explain to you——

ROXO [*Nervously*]
If Your Majesty will excuse me——
[*Bowing and going R.*]

CAZOTTI [*Angrily*]
Why do you leave it to me?

ROXO
I must 'phone to Molp to protect the Jews. I don't
even know if the fire brigade——
[*Cries of "Margherita! Margherita!" penetrate
from the Piazza.*]

QUEEN
Ah, my people are calling me!
[*Goes to casement L.*]

ROXO [*Rushing back*]
For God's sake, Madam!

QUEEN
I faced the music when it was pleasant——
[*ROXO waves her aside and rushes out instead of
her. The red flame flickers more strongly.*]

CROWD [*From Piazza*]
Boo-oo!
Stop the war!
Death to Roxo!
Viva Roxo!
Death to Margherita!
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Down with Cazotti!
Silence for Roxo!
Boo—oo!

ROXO [*Raising his armless sleeve has obtained silence and shouts*]

Go home, my friends. The Pacifist rag has misled you! Wait till you see the *Gazetta*! We have a new army of a million.

[*Cheers. Voices, "Send them home," drowned in cheers*]

Victory is assured. *Viva Marrobio! Viva Margherita! Viva la Valdania!*

[*Closes casement amid confused cheering, mingled with some boos. All noise gradually dies down.*]

QUEEN

What is the use of feeding them with lies?

ROXO

It only rests with Your Majesty to make my words true.

QUEEN

With me?

ROXO

Yes, your people *are* calling you.

QUEEN

I do not understand.

ROXO

Cazotti will explain.

[*Bows and retires R.*]

CAZOTTI [*As ROXO passes*]

Coward! . . .

[*HE walks about embarrassed*]

QUEEN

I am waiting.

CAZOTTI

I—er—Just let me find a map, Your Majesty.

QUEEN

Never mind a map. Go on.

CAZOTTI

You have probably remarked that Bosnavina while bounded on the east and south-east by ourselves, has for its western neighbour, Rolmenia.

QUEEN

Is this the time for a lesson in geography?

CAZOTTI

I only wish to recall to Your Majesty the existence of Rolmenia.

QUEEN

I am not likely to forget how that pig-eyed little Prince impressed its greatness upon me, as he curled his detestable moustache.

CAZOTTI [*Disconcerted*]

Your Majesty's memory is . . . appalling. Prince Igmor is a genius.

QUEEN

So you all said of Marrobio. But never mind the Prince—he's not worth talking about—come to your point. Obviously you are thinking of getting help from his father.

CAZOTTI

Your Majesty's divination is as marvellous as your memory.

QUEEN

And your flattery as superfluous as your geography. It does not require much penetration to divine the idea of an alliance. But I refuse to drag other countries into the war, to slaughter unfortunate men who have nothing to do with our quarrel.

CAZOTTI

Then you prefer to slaughter Marrobio and his forces?

QUEEN

But if we stopped the war——!

CAZOTTI

Do you begin that again? That only means our swifter annexation to Bosnavina. Besides, the mere entry of Rolmenia into the war may stop it. Bosnavina, caught between two fires, will surrender, instead

of Valdania, and the fresh slaughter you fear will probably never take place. Ah, Madam, you have not the right to destroy your country.

QUEEN

I am destroying it?—I?

CAZOTTI

You drew the sword of Alpastroom—will you write *our* or Bosnavina's doom?

QUEEN [*Struggling with herself—after a pause*]

What does Rolmenia ask?

CAZOTTI

The conditions are hard.

QUEEN

But since we have no alternative——

CAZOTTI

Cannot your Majesty guess?

QUEEN

My brain is too tired. Don't waste time.

CAZOTTI

They ask various things. Prince Igmor, who is really an excellent fellow, was satisfied with one thing. But his father wanted not only a commercial treaty, but the lion's share of Bosnavina.

QUEEN

A share of what does not belong to us! Let them have it all. And for that they will give us a million men? Oh, why didn't you tell me before? My poor Marrobio!

CAZOTTI

Yes, Madam. But—but there is one last condition.

QUEEN

And that is——!

[BARON GRIPSTEIN *appears* L., *spruced up again, his cut neatly plastered*]

Ah, Baron, you are restored?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

To my senses, Madam. I am so ashamed. I don't know what I said except it was not "God bless you." May He reward you for your gracious kindness! And it is the Countess, Excellency, that has dressed my wound. And the Cardinal and the Patriarch have been so sympathetic.

QUEEN

The Cardinal and the Patriarch? They are both in the Palace?

CAZOTTI

I sent for them, Madam. They . . . are interested in the Rolmenian agreement.

QUEEN

Ah, those religious minority questions!

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CAZOTTI

Your Majesty would enormously oblige me by resuming your seat in the Council Chamber and letting their Eminences come to you. It is really their department—that last condition you were asking about. And I have to cope with this revolution.

QUEEN

But can't I leave the clause to them?

CAZOTTI

They rather make a point of your assent. Baron, will you not escort Her Majesty to the Council Chamber and send her their most reverend Eminences?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

I shall be most honoured.

[Precedes the QUEEN, L.]

Way for the Queen!

[Moves aside, lets her pass and follows.]

CAZOTTI *[Wiping his forehead]*

Ouf! Thank God for the Church!

[Turning R. he sees CORPORAL VANNI enter with some men and a stretcher]

What the devil——?

VANNI

General's orders, Excellency.

CAZOTTI

Eh?—Ah, that poor sentinel!

VANNI

Yes, we all liked him. Heart failure. He flopped just here.

CAZOTTI

But, then, *Corpo di Dio*, there's no look-out!

VANNI

The General's posted one in Da Pietra Street. The Piazza is impassable.

CAZOTTI

Ah!

VANNI

Apart from the Palace being barricaded. He's to bring the envoy by the War Office subway.

[*ROXO enters breathlessly R.*]

ROXO

He's come!

CAZOTTI

The proxy? Thank God! Where is he?

ROXO

Getting out of his snow-sodden motor coat. Fiuma's just bringing him.

[*Roaring as he perceives the stretcher moving to balcony*]

Don't do that now!

VANNI [*Passing on the roar to his men*]
Cabbage-heads! You must wait your chance!
[*Motions them out and exit R.*]

ROXO
It's a handsome proxy.

CAZOTTI
These Rolmenians are as handsome as they are tricky.

ROXO
Pity the Prince hasn't got his looks.

CAZOTTI
The Prince is a mongrel—his mother was a Bosnavinian—he seems to have picked out the worst points of both breeds.

ROXO
Ha! ha! ha!

CAZOTTI
But of the two give me the Bosnavinians. The Rolmenians are a rotten, priest-ridden lot.

ROXO
What can you expect of the Greek Church? . . . I beg your pardon.

CAZOTTI
What for? Do I believe in any church?
[*A gold-laced official enters L. with champagne and four glasses*]

Ah, we are to drink!

CROWD [*A dull roar from the Piazza*]
Death to Margherita!

ROXO

Here they are.

[*Enter L., FIUMA and CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU, a dashing young cavalry officer, in blue and gold, with marks of snow still on him. He carries a well-stuffed portfolio.*]

FIUMA

Captain Theopolou! Our Prime Minister.

CAZOTTI [*Shaking hands*]

It gives me the greatest happiness to welcome a representative of His Renowned Majesty of Rolmenia and his gallant and chivalrous son, Prince Igmor.

[*A pop from the champagne bottle the official is opening is like an ironic note of exclamation*]

You have had a hard journey, I fear.

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

It was brightened by the thought of seeing the historic capital of culture.

CAZOTTI

Your goodness overrates us, but, with God's blessing, your journey will be fruitful.

[*ALL take glasses*]

We drink to Rolmenia, the illustrious fatherland of antique faith and heroism, whose crystal-pure soul still engenders delicacy and chivalry.

[*THEY drink, but FIUMA merely sips.*]

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

You are too good. I raise my glass to the happiness of your beautiful and gifted Queen.

[FIUMA's glass smashes.]

CAZOTTI [*Covering up the situation*]

You will want to rest before the ceremony.

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

And you to examine and sign these.

[*Proffers portfolio.*]

FIUMA [*Murmuring*]

Ah, the funeral arrangements!

ROXO [*Perturbed*]

You promised——

CAZOTTI [*Quietly to ROXO*]

Hush!

[*Aloud to FIUMA*]

After attending to our honoured guest, will you find the Baron and explain things. He may be so easily swayed—we ought to have got him on our side long ago.

ROXO

You cannot get him on one side.

FIUMA

I will do my best. Come, Captain Theopolou!

[*Exeunt L.*]

CAZOTTI [*Reproachfully*]

Don't worry over Fiuma! His word is his bond.

[*Pulls out from portfolio documents with great pendent red seals*]

The Commercial Treaty — The War Treaty — The Marriage Contract — The Letter of Consent — The Nomination of the Proxy. With so tricky a people, they will need study, though, of course, we could always evade the clauses. But so far——

ROXO

Would I had two hands that I might rub them together!

[*The QUEEN bursts in furiously L. The CARDINAL and the PATRIARCH at her heels in full canonicals, their vestments evidently donned for the ceremony. The CARDINAL is all in red, save for the black mantle edged with it and the falling black bands, and wears a red skull cap, holding his black hat in his hand: the PATRIARCH is more gorgeous and jewelled.*]

QUEEN

Do not follow me—my decision is final!

[*ROXO and CAZOTTI bow, disconcerted*]

Ah, Cazotti, no wonder you dared not propose your monstrous combination!

CAZOTTI [*Shufflingly resentful.*]

My combination?

ROXO

It is *my* combination, Madam. The only way—under God—to save Valdania!

QUEEN

Then Valdania is lost!

CAZOTTI

And your throne, too.

QUEEN

I must go down with my people.

CAZOTTI

Nothing so heroic, Madam. Your people will tear you in pieces when they learn why the million men already announced——

QUEEN

My people threaten nothing so terrible as your proposition.

ROXO

You have not the right to die when you alone can save them. When you agreed to come back with me, you knew from your mother's fate that sovereignty meant sacrifice.

QUEEN

My mother was only murdered—she was not outraged.

CAZOTTI

We cannot accept that description of royal alliances; no Princess of your house has ever chosen her husband. Several have been betrothed at birth; and as for the

famous Jacinta, the Metropolitan Archbishop performed her marriage ceremony when she was five.

QUEEN
Loathsome!

CARDINAL
No, my daughter, in your exalted sphere, ordinary values are changed. Sovereigns must seek their happiness in duty. Yesterday Your Majesty prayed God for victory. To-day He offers you the means.

QUEEN [*Shocked*]
He offers—He——?

CARDINAL
Assuredly.

QUEEN
Ah, you do well to say “ He ”! A woman-God would be more understanding.

CARDINAL
As I may neither contradict nor condone your Majesty’s heresies, I must beg leave to retire.

PATRIARCH
I associate myself with His Most Reverend Eminence.

CAZOTTI [*Desperately*]
But surely, your Holiness, Her Majesty only refers to Our Blesséd Mary.

CARDINAL

Ah, in that case——

[BARON GRIPSTEIN *appears L., and draws back.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Ah, the Council is shifted here. I intrude.

QUEEN

No, come, Baron. I need somebody human. Do you know of this horrible suggestion?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

I have just been shocked to learn it.

QUEEN [*Relieved*]

Ha!

CAZOTTI

Then the martyrdom of your sons is to go for nothing—
your blinded Sigismondo, your slaughtered——!

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Bursting into tears*]

My poor children!

QUEEN

Don't! It's not fair argument.

[*Sinks into a chair.*]

CAZOTTI

Hush, Baron! Consider Her Majesty's feelings. You have the man-power statement?

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Mastering himself*]

Ah, pardon!

[*Fumbles in pocket.*]

QUEEN [*Waving it away*]

I don't want it. What you call man-power I call power of suffering. Oh, my poor tortured soldiers!

PATRIARCH

Their sufferings will be subtracted from their period of purgatory.

QUEEN

If my own Church cannot persuade me, how should yours?

PATRIARCH

By showing you that they are at one in the love of the Fatherland, that you are not alone in making sacrifices.

QUEEN

And what sacrifice does anybody else make?

PATRIARCH

Everybody makes sacrifices. Prince Igmor in accepting a Catholic wife——

QUEEN [*Bridling*]

Accepting?

PATRIARCH

Both our Churches in permitting the mixed marriage.

CARDINAL

And mine in letting the Prince's Church perform the ceremony.

PATRIARCH

And mine in permitting the children to be Catholic.

CAZOTTI

Is it necessary to go into these details? The contract——

CARDINAL

Her Majesty must clearly assent, your Excellency. The Vatican, which has given me *carte blanche* otherwise——

ROXO

And since this delicate matter has come up, may I add that in these turbulent times the sooner the dynasty is assured, the better. Not till the hundred and one guns announce the birth of a prince——

BARON GRIPSTEIN

Ah, but we must be certain marriage *minus* the bridegroom is legitimate.

CARDINAL

It is certain his absence is not among the *impedimenta diremptoria* or the——

CAZOTTI

We have been into all that! Even this letter of consent
[*Exhibiting it*]
suffices.

CARDINAL

Yes, the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* for the year 2——

CAZOTTI

Let us not go back.

CARDINAL

But even recently, Baron, the Sacred Congregation of
the Rota——

CAZOTTI

The Baron, I am sure——

PATRIARCH

I took the opinion of my brother the Archimandrite.
State necessity——

CAZOTTI

Knows no delay. We must to the ceremony.

[*The QUEEN, who has sat silent throughout, shoots
a startled glance at him.*]

PATRIARCH

You see, Baron, although Our Lord made matrimony
a sacrament, it did not cease to be a contract.

CARDINAL

And contracts do not need the joint presence of the
parties.

PATRIARCH

Our *rôle* is simply to bless the contract.

QUEEN

As you blessed the banners! As you turned church bells into cannon!

CARDINAL

The end sanctifies the means.

CAZOTTI

We are wandering from the point. If there is any flaw in the legality, so much the better. Her Majesty would remain unbound.

QUEEN

And do you think that after the Prince had fought for us, I would creep out through a legal flaw?

ROXO

Brava! Coals of fire for the Prince!

CAZOTTI

Even if there is no flaw, Madam, the Prince may be killed in the war.

QUEEN

A war widow! So, Cardinal, it's not a sacrament but a gamble!

CARDINAL

It was not I who put it so, my daughter.

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QUEEN

You overlook another way out, Cazotti. *I may die during the war.*

BARON GRIPSTEIN

God forbid!

QUEEN

I thought you were a friend of mine.

[Enter FIUMA, L.]

Ah, here comes a real friend.

[Hysterically]

Fiuma, if you know about this plan, tell them it is too horrible.

[A pause. FIUMA struggles with himself.]

FIUMA *[Slowly]*

It is a martyrdom. No woman in history ever had a ghastlier or a more glorious opportunity.

QUEEN

You too!

[Covers her face.]

ROXO

You will shine in our history like a star.

CAZOTTI

Come, Madam! The Prince at the other end of the telegraph line awaits his answer.

[The QUEEN is now ringed round with six men, like

*a hunted creature at bay. She sweeps out her arms
wildly.]*

QUEEN

You give me no breathing space.

CAZOTTI

What breathing space has Marrobio? Very soon our
soldiers may cease to breathe altogether!

ROXO

Rolmenia, outraged by our refusal, will join in
destroying us.

FIUMA

Bosnavina will certainly show us no mercy.

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Sobbing*]

Our immemorial glory will be extinct.

PATRIARCH

Bosnavina will impose her own bishops.

CARDINAL

Our Moslems will rise and crush the Church.

QUEEN

And *I* am to be the scapegoat! Here you stand, six
great men, two of you with the keys of heaven, yet
you can think of no way of saving your country but by
outraging a lonely girl!

CAZOTTI I protest, Madam——!	}	[<i>All speaking at once.</i>]
ROXO Your Majesty's language——!		
FIUMA I would give my life——!		
BARON GRIPSTEIN But it may turn out happy——!		
CARDINAL O, my daughter——!		
PATRIARCH I am not St. Peter——!	}	

QUEEN [*Springing magnificently to her feet like a lioness and sweeping them all away*]

No more! If I have listened thus far, it is not because of your arguments, it is because I feel blood-guilty. Not of the war—no, not of that! But when, despite all my grovelling, as Roxo calls it, Bosnavina sounded the war-trumpet, then out of the obscure depths of my being rose an answering blood-lust, a mad joy of battle. I longed to crush Bosnavina, to humble her haughty Ambassador in the dust, and with my foot on his neck, to hear his "grovelling" countrymen salute their Duchess. Ah, the flags, the cheers, the drums, the drugs that make one drunk! Prancing in an Amazonian uniform and a plumed busby as Colonel

of my Hussars, I sped the soldiers to the strains of my own music, crying "God and glory" as one urges dogs to the chase. When Marrobio took Ripo, victory shrilled through my veins like a trumpet, and I hastened to the Cathedral to offer a "Te Deum." Ah, how God has punished that savage vainglory! But is my expiation not yet complete? Must I—oh, why did they kill my mother when I need her so? Leave me, leave me, all of you! I must think, I must pray!

CARDINAL

Let me pray with you, my daughter.

QUEEN [*Stamps foot*]

Leave me. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

[*Collapsing on balcony step R., sobbing.*]

CAZOTTI [*Quietly to the Church dignitaries*]

You may prepare for the ceremonial. Come, Roxo, we must study the contracts to see they don't Jew us. Baron, we shall be glad of your help. Madam, your very humble servant.

[*All bow and exeunt except FIUMA, who stands surveying the QUEEN in silent sympathy. Then HE, too, goes out. The QUEEN turns to the painted Madonna on the casement.*]

QUEEN

O Mother of Sorrows, whose face I have scarcely known from my own mother's, help me, send me a Redeemer. . . . Or at least send me a sign. What shall I answer? What shall I answer?

CROWD [*From Piazza*]
Death to Margherita!

QUEEN

Death? Perhaps that is the answer.

[Twilight has now fallen and the flames leaping weirdly on the hearth alone illumine the scene. The

DUKE D'AZOLLO in thick motor-coat, snow-stained, perturbed, enters breathlessly R. The QUEEN turns at the sound and springs up with a great cry]

Ah, my Redeemer! You have come to save me from them!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Yes, yes, be calm, I have come to save you from them.

QUEEN

But how did you know?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

It is in the air.

QUEEN [*Puzzled*]

In the air?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

The terrible war-situation. I foresaw the Palace would be barricaded—lucky I knew of the subway. You must escape.

QUEEN

Escape! From the Palace?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Oh, my dear, I remember your mother's fate. Don't repeat it.

QUEEN

But if I escape, what happens to Valdania?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Valdania is doomed anyhow.

QUEEN

There are tears in your voice—yes, and in your eyes!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

I did not know I should feel it so bitterly. When they made me Regent, it all seemed a farcical flummery—see what you have made of the old dilettante. A thousand years of history to end in the dust!

[Brushes hand across eyes]

But I can't think of my country, only of you.

QUEEN

Only of me?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

You are dearer to me than all Valdania—oh, don't shrink, it's not a love like that. With you, your body

seems in your soul. I will get the Duchess—I know of a safe retreat for you both.

[*The crowd's cry "Death to Margherita" again penetrates*]

Ah, come!

QUEEN

But these poor ignorant people who are crying out there, I am to leave them at Bosnavina's mercy?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Whether you live or die, they are at Bosnavina's mercy.

QUEEN

But if I told you it depended only on me to hurl a million fresh troops upon Bosnavina!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Oh, God! Is it possible?
[*Half sobs.*]

QUEEN

It is certain. Victory is assured. Our heroes will not have died in vain. Bosnavina will be crushed between us and—but quick! Find Cazotti or Roxo and tell them my answer is "Yes."

DUKE D'AZOLLO [*In dazed ecstasy*]

Bosnavina will be crushed?

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QUEEN

Don't stand maundering—go before I change.

[HE hurries out L., transfigured, half-sobbing.
SHE falls on her knees before the Madonna at
the casement.]

O Holy Mother, help me up this Way of the Cross!

[The great room is now still dimmer, the flames leap
mystically.]

VANNI [At right wing, staring to L.]

All clear!

[Turns head R.]

Come along, you——!

[Sees QUEEN and is retiring in confusion and
motioning to his men to retreat.]

QUEEN

Don't be so frightened of me—glad to see you out of
hospital.

VANNI

Thank you, Your Majesty, for all your kindness there.

QUEEN

And your sister who was worrying so over her husband?

VANNI

Oh, we've heard from him now. And I've had such a
heavenly letter about our victories.

[Produces it.]

QUEEN [Puzzled]

Our victories?

VANNI [*Tendering it*]
Page two is the best, Your Majesty—I can't turn it.

QUEEN [*Taking it*]
Poor fellow!
[A weird pause as she reads. Suddenly she staggers and crumples the letter in her fist]
So this is what victory means! Go! Go!

VANNI [*Alarmed*]
Y-y-yes, Your Majesty.
[Hasty exit R.]

QUEEN
And Roxo said there was no joy of blood! They should have read this yesterday in the Cathedral.
[DUKE now divested of his motor-coat rushes back L.]

DUKE D'AZOLLO
You have tricked me!

QUEEN
I have tricked myself. I never realised before. . . .
[Rolls the letter still smaller]
Our heroes! Our heavenly heroes!
[CAZOTTI, the BARON and FIUMA tear in.]

CAZOTTI
A million thanks, Madam!

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Beaming*]
One per man.

FIUMA

You will live in history!

QUEEN

I have lived in blinkers . . . To be sacrificed to this——!

[*Hurls letter away.*]

DUKE D'AZOLLO

You shall *not* sacrifice yourself.

CAZOTTI

Pardon me, Duke. We have the royal promise.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

It was infamous to exact it.

CAZOTTI

Ah, I knew you would try to spoil everything. Roxo is already at the War Office wiring the glad news to Marrobio, dictating the campaign. Our Queen will not play us false.

QUEEN

False—true—it is all meaningless—let these wild beasts rend each other—let them devour me and be done with it. Bring back your priests.

CAZOTTI [*Drawing a breath of relief*]

Ah! . . . Come, Madam, they await you in the chapel.

QUEEN

In the chapel? Profane the sanctuary? Let them come here!

CAZOTTI

But, Madam——!

QUEEN

My consent is the real marriage. You heard their learned exposition.

[Imperiously]

You have our ultimatum.

[SHE walks haughtily to the throne and mounts the steps.]

BARON GRIPSTEIN *[Sotto voce]*

But this very hall was the chapel of the original monastery.

CAZOTTI

So it was! *Bravo!* And with a little sprinkling——

[Aloud, and with a deep obeisance to the QUEEN who has now seated herself on the throne]

Your Majesty's wish is law!

[Sotto voce to BARON]

By the way, wire your Jew to sell my Bosnavinian bonds before Amsterdam learns that——

[Exeunt BARON and CAZOTTI L.]

DUKE D'AZOLLO *[Aloud]*

Something must be done, Carlo!

FIUMA

Nothing can be done—now. But if the Prince dares claim his bride——!

[HE lays his hand on his sword.]

QUEEN

Ah, no, not that! It would be murder, trickery . . .
Oh!

[Covers her face]

[From L. bursts out a joyous carol in the fresh voices of boy choristers—"Roses, roses strew and cover"—and the stir of an advancing procession becomes audible. The QUEEN starts at the first strains.]

QUEEN

That melody!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

It is your own setting of our nuptial folk-song.

FIUMA [*Bitterly*]

Cazotti's cleverness again!

[Enter BOY CHORISTERS in white surplices, singing.]

BOY CHORISTERS

Roses, roses strew and cover

Happy lass and happy lover.

Sun on bride is but in keeping,

Rain is jealous angels weeping.

[Behind, and with the choir, come other priests in the gorgeous robes of the Greek Church, with tall candles

and swinging censers. The PATRIARCH in his jewelled vestments comes along, sprinkling from a little chalice and murmuring prayers. The CARDINAL is at his side. One of the acolytes bears two floral crowns on a tray, and another a wine-flask and a glass. Then comes the whole COURT in gala attire, the pages and maids of honour bearing great bouquets of flowers from the royal conservatories. The COUNTESS CAZOTTI carries a basket of flax and hemp seed for strewing after the ceremony. Lastly comes CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU, walking between CAZOTTI and BARON GRIPSTEIN, who, now acting as best man, carries a great fir branch, decorated with ribbon, and ending in a gilt cross tied with red silk. The QUEEN with her black dress and pale face makes a strange contrast with all this flamboyance as she sits rigid on her throne. While the procession is filing in, an official has been lighting the tall candles in the heavy old candlesticks, and another has been spreading a red silk carpet in the centre of the room. As CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU enters, he advances alone to do homage to the QUEEN; mechanically she puts out her hand, but as he kisses it, she draws it back as if scorched. The PATRIARCH motions to CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU to take up his stand on the carpet, which he does.]

PATRIARCH

If Your Majesty would deign to descend—

QUEEN [*Not moving, pointing to floral crown*].

What is that?

PATRIARCH

The bridal crown, Madam.

QUEEN

It is the heavier of the two.

[SHE takes off her crown, then rising, places it on the throne and descends, like a sleepwalker, and stands beside CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU. The DUCHESS and BARON GRIPSTEIN stand by as if supporting the couple, and the DUCHESS adjusts over the QUEEN'S head a wedding veil, glittering with gold sequins.]

PATRIARCH *[To CAPTAIN]*

You have brought the rings?

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU *[Producing them]*

Blessed by the Metropolitan.

PATRIARCH

Gold for the bridegroom, silver for the bride.

[Gives the silver ring to the QUEEN]

These you will exchange. Wherein, dear brethren and sisters, we may read an image——

CAZOTTI *[On pins and needles]*

Is this the place for the sermon, Monsignore?

PATRIARCH

I understand your Excellency's impatience.

[Joins the CAPTAIN'S right hand to the QUEEN'S left. SHE drops the ring. The BARON hastens to pick it up for her]

Are you, Demetrius, surnamed Theopolou, Captain of

Rolmenian cavalry, duly empowered by oath and by letter here to hand to represent in this rite of holy matrimony your lord and commander-in-chief, His Royal Highness Prince Igmor Alexander Constantino Moravieff Parma, Duke of Moldavia, second son of His Majesty Rodolpho, King of Rolmenia, Archduke of Wallachia?

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

I am.

PATRIARCH

And do you, Demetrius Theopolou, as his proxy and in his name, take to lawful wife our sister Margherita Cyprina Rosamonda, Queen of Valdania, Duchess of Bosnavina?

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

I do.

PATRIARCH

And do you, Margherita Cyprina——!

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Stop! If this be the Greek Church service——

CAZOTTI

This interruption is unseemly—Proceed.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

You interrupted, yourself, just now!

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FIUMA

Surely if there is any valid objection——

PATRIARCH

What is it your Highness wishes to say?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

That by your Church what you are doing now can never be undone.

CARDINAL

Nor by mine.

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Not so. Our Church, though it denies divorce, admits nullity. Besides, the Pope can always——

CAZOTTI

The form of service is beyond discussion.

QUEEN [*Wearily*]

Do get the ceremony over!

PATRIARCH

Do you, Margherita Cyprina Rosamonda, Queen of Valdania, Duchess of Bosnavina, accept Prince Igmor, as here represented by proxy——?

FIUMA

But what guarantee have we against imposture?

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU [*Withdrawing hand from the QUEEN's to grasp sword*]

Signor!

CAZOTTI

If these interruptions continue, Valdania is doomed.

CARDINAL

Proceed, your Beatitude.

PATRIARCH [*Rejoining their hands—the QUEEN'S falls passively, like a dead weight*]

Do you, Margherita Cyprina Rosamonda, Queen of Valdania, Duchess of Bosnavina, take as your lawful husband, as here represented by proxy——?

[*ROXO comes rushing in L., carrying the contracts and waving telegrams.*]

ROXO [*Throwing down the contracts*]

Stop the marriage! Marrobio has conquered!

[*Confusion. Joyous outcries*]

The first telegram, Your Majesty, delayed by the snow-storm, runs: "Allah is great. Following the panic of a munitions explosion in Ripo have recaptured the city and taking the pass by surprise have swooped down on Torax. Joined by thousands of Valdanians am marching on the capital.—MARROBIO."

COURTIERS

Viva Marrobio! Bravissimo! Viva Marrobio!

[*The COURTIERS clap hands and wave handkerchiefs.*]

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Heard hysterically above all the voices as he waves his fir-branch*]

I knew the God of Valdania would not desert us!

[*Breaks down, sobs.*]

COURTIERS

Sh!

ROXO [*Holding up the second wire till there is silence*]
Dated to-day. "Allah is merciful. Capital captured
at hour of the first prayer. 65,000 prisoners, 380 guns.
The two million Valdanians risen to join us. Royal
family and Government in flight. I present Bosnavina
to its Duchess, I kiss the hem of Her Majesty's robe
and will tapestry her Palace with conquered flags.—
MARROBIO."

COURTIERS

Viva Margherita! Viva the Duchess of Bosnavina!

BARON GRIPSTEIN [*Ecstatically*]

"When Rome yields up our royal seed——!"

ROXO [*Handing telegrams to FIUMA*]

Read them in the Piazza, post them up! Corporal,
let your men unbar the Palace and spread the news!

[*At a sign from VANNI, the men file out. Exit
VANNI.*]

FIUMA [*With a sob in his voice*]

My congratulations, Madam.

[*Bows and exit.*]

CAZOTTI [*In a hard tone*]

And my humble homage to the Duchess of Bosnavina.
Your Majesty will rank with Alpastroom!

COURTIERS

Bravo!

[They wave handkerchiefs.]

QUEEN

I rank with Alpastroom?

CAZOTTI

Did you not draw his sword?

QUEEN

God help me! But let the man who saved the throne enjoy it. Pay Marrobio your homage henceforth—congratulate me only on my escape.

ROXO

Your Majesty is overstrung. You must rest.

QUEEN *[Tearing off her wedding veil]*

Yes, I can rest at last. Gorged by spoils and glory, with a second Alpastroom to feed her rapacious patriotism, Valdania no longer needs me.

ROXO

Valdania needs you more than ever.

QUEEN *[Fiercely]*

What more does she ask of me? I offered her my heart to eat, my body to befoul. Beggared of all that makes life bearable, did I hold back even my one last possession—my loneliness? You saved me from

that pit—I bless you as one raised by Christ from hell.
Through you I can breathe the air and see the stars.
Be merciful once more and let me share my loneliness
with God.

DUKE D'AZOLLO
Go into a convent? You!

CAZOTTI
You would yield your throne to Marrobio?

BARON GRIPSTEIN
We Christians will never accept a Mohammedan
ruler!

CAZOTTI
Death sooner.

COURTIERS
Ay! Sooner death!

ROXO
You hear, Madam? You would unchain civil war. A
murderous rivalry of pretenders!

QUEEN [*Desperately*]
Then I must be prisoned here? All my life?

CAZOTTI
Who prisons you? But the moment when Marrobio
is swollen with triumph——

ROXO [*Turning on him*]

There will never be a moment, your Excellency. Her Majesty will never be false to her blood or her oath of fidelity.

[*The sound of the mob cheering outside penetrates dully. "Margherita! Margherita!"*]

Hark, Madam. Your people are calling for you!

QUEEN

That mob, mindless as the sea in its smiles and furies!

PATRIARCH

Your Majesty's God-given charge.

CARDINAL

To whose service I consecrated you.

PATRIARCH

On such a day you must rejoice together.

QUEEN

Let them rejoice alone. I will have no part in the saturnalia of the sword.

ROXO

Do not blaspheme the sword, Madam, nor the sacrifices by which God shapes the peoples.

QUEEN

By which the devil deforms them. Beasts are less savage than men under blood-lust. No, no, General, leave it to the Church to confuse the sword with the

cross. If you would have me stay Queen to fend off war within, you must swear to me, Signori, that there shall nevermore be war without.

CAZOTTI

Our conquest of Bosnavina assures that, Madam.

QUEEN

Would it not be surer if we gave Bosnavina her freedom back, keeping only our recovered province?

DUKE D'AZOLLO

Oh, Madam.

[Resentful murmurs from COURTIERs.]

ROXO

Give Bosnavina freedom for revenge?

QUEEN

Reason to desist from revenge! Our grace would turn her swords into ploughshares.

ROXO

It will be safer, Your Majesty, if we turn her swords into crutches.

[Sardonic laughter from COURTIERs.]

QUEEN

Then you mean to treat her as she treated our province?

CAZOTTI

Are we barbarians, Madam?

BARON GRIPSTEIN

We shall give her our culture.

CAZOTTI

Peace is our one aspiration. Under Your Majesty's benign rule Bosnavina will be blest. Marrobio would lash her to madness.

QUEEN [*Sinking into a great oaken chair L.C.*]

Then I am to be chained to a crown I do not want!

ROXO

Just because you do not want it, you are the one fit person to wear it. Will not your Eminence replace it on the royal head?

[*The CARDINAL brings the crown that has been lying on the throne. As HE moves to and fro the cries and cheering of the crowd penetrate again. "Margherita! Margherita!" The QUEEN, a broken figure, in black, sits motionless.*]

QUEEN [*As HE approaches her*]

Let me be! You have crowned me already!

CARDINAL

But not for Bosnavina, Madam.

[*Applause of COURTIERS. HE adjusts the crown*]
Receive as ruler of Bosnavina the crown of glory, honour and joy—and may God crown you with all princely virtues in this life and with an everlasting crown of glory in the life which is to come through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

COURTIERS

Amen.

QUEEN

I ask only that God should crown me with Peace!

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

Then—pardon me, Madam—had we not better complete the ceremony?

ROXO

You menace, Signor?

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

You do not suppose my Prince or my King will stomach your insult! After the Treaty was signed too!

ROXO [*Contemptuously returning the contracts*]

Take your scraps of paper! . . . Your Prince is too cautious—he looks too long before he leaps.

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU [*Taking them angrily*]

He will not have to leap far. Do not forget he is on the frontier of your new possession.

QUEEN [*Springing up*]

A new slaughter? O my God!

ROXO [*To Captain Theopolou*]

The God of Valdania has not saved us from Bosnavina to abase us before Rolmenia. Beware lest we annex you, too!

[*Sinister sympathetic murmurs from the COURTIERS.*]

CAPTAIN THEOPOLOU

Do not be too sure even of Bosnavina. She will yet witness her Revenge—with our help and God's! I salute you, Madam.

[*Haughty exit R.*]

QUEEN

No! No! Call him back! Let me be bound on your peace-altar.

ROXO

Sacrifice you to a petty princeling! No, Madam. The Queen of Valdania and Bosnavina can command a higher alliance.

QUEEN

And it was for this you saved me! For a yet unholy alliance! Oh!

[*Turns away as though to hide her shame.*]

CARDINAL

Come, Madam, a *Te Deum* in the Chapel!

QUEEN [*Flaming round*]

To thank God for Victory! When Bosnavina is praying Him for Revenge! When Rolmenia hangs like a thundercloud! When only the little candle of my life stands between Valdania and the blackness of civil war! Leave me, leave me, all of you!

[*Sinks huddled into the great chair and covers her eyes. ALL look at one another in hesitation. At a*

sign from CAZOTTI the procession begins to file out L.
The CHORISTERS start their Greek Church chant.]

CHORISTERS

“Happy are those who fear the Lord,” etc.

[The hymn mingles with the National Anthem which the crowd has now started outside. As the whole glittering company with its candles straggles out, the great mediæval room becomes much dimmer and the flames of the logs flicker more weirdly than ever over the blazoned casements and the stone kings. But after an instant the church bells clang out joyously, rockets and illuminations begin to be seen vaguely through the coloured glass, guzlas tinkle and bag-pipes shrill, and the National Anthem changes into Margherita's war-march sung by thousands of throats. CORPORAL VANNI and his men, thinking the room empty, enter R., with their stretcher and march unconsciously to its rhythm. They disappear on balcony R. Through the casement left open, the melody comes up in fuller volume, while in the frosty air the rockets are seen rising keenly against the sombre background of the mountains. Then the wind bangs the casement to behind the stretcher-bearers and the noises dwindle.]

QUEEN [*Shivering*]

How cold it is!

[SHE uncovers her eyes]

Night so soon!

[The stretcher-bearers re-enter, with the Pacifist's body under a white sheet, and the joyous street

sounds swell and subside with the opening and closing of the casement. Awed by their burden, they march out solemnly. The QUEEN, left alone, continues her frozen stare at the empty dusk. Then her lips shape a murmur.]

QUEEN

What was it Daddy said? . . . Queen in a cockpit!

SLOW CURTAIN.

TOO MUCH MONEY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

WHEN Lord Byron heard that his mother was dead, he is said to have sought relief in boxing: during the tragic tension of the Great War, I sought similar relief in writing a farce. The war took its revenge, for when after a triumphant tour in Scotland (where there is evidently a strong sense of humour) the play was brought to the Ambassadors' Theatre in London, the defeat of the Fifth Army that Spring killed off almost everything on the London stage, and, in spite of Miss Lillah McCarthy's brilliant performance, it did not get much beyond its fiftieth performance there. Since then, apart from some little provincial tours, in one of which Miss Viola Tree took over the leading rôle, its credit has been redeemed by successful presentations at Prague in Czech, and at Budapest in Hungarian, with other translations pending. The late H. W. Massingham in his generous criticism said that it came very near great comic portraiture, and ought to have been a comedy of manners; but I have left what William Archer called its "irresistible horse-play" unchanged, believing with Molière that farce need not exclude a background of contemporary satire and portraiture. In deference, however, to the modern conception, the piece is now styled "a farcical comedy."

September, 1924.

Application by amateurs for permission to perform this play must be addressed to Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton St., Strand, London, W.C.2. In America or Canada, amateur applications should be addressed to Samuel French, 25 West 45th Street, New York City. No performance may be given unless a licence has first been obtained.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:

MALES

THOMAS BROADLEY	<i>A born Millionaire</i>
SIR ROBERT MCCORBEL, BART.	<i>A self-made Millionaire</i>
GRANDISON TIPTREE	<i>A Futurist Painter</i>
SERGEANT QUIZZET	<i>A Limb of the Law</i>
BEWLISON	<i>A Butler with Soul</i>

FEMALES

ANNABEL BROADLEY	<i>A Daughter of the Gods</i>
THISBE LEACH	<i>A Struggle-for-lifer</i>
LILIAN ROSELEAF	<i>A Scientific Housekeeper</i>
MRS. CROW	<i>A Poplar Landlady</i>

CREATURES

*Footmen, Vanmen, Shopmen, Constable Trotter,
and the lady lap-dog, Isolde.*

ACT I.—*Mrs. Broadley's drawing-room in Mayfair. An April before the Great War.* ACT II.—*Mrs. Crow's garret in Poplar. Nearly a fortnight later.* ACT III.—*Mrs. Broadley's drawing-room in Mayfair. In the following April.*

TOO MUCH MONEY

Act One

[The curtain rises on ANNABEL BROADLEY'S drawing-room in Mayfair in an April before the Great War. It is a spacious, fantastic apartment, with central folding doors in the back wall leading to a corridor, and a side door in the right wall leading to an ante-room and ANNABEL'S boudoir. The walls are frescoed with a flamboyant futuristic pattern; a brilliant lamp hanging from the ceiling makes a colour-harmony with a gaily cushioned divan on the floor to the right, and a screen of strange hues and symbols at the back. The furniture is precious but minute, and dotted about in space-harmonies. It includes a writing-desk by the left wall, a central tea-table and an uncomfortable settee towards the left centre. There is a window with freakish curtains in this wall. Opposite is a gleam of fire in a low artistic grate, with a quaint coal-scuttle. The artistic impression of the whole is, however, shattered by a capacious Club armchair squatting pugnaciously in the foreground at the right centre. On an easel at the left centre is a large plain-framed, highly coloured chaos. Two immaculate FOOTMEN are seen coming in from the corridor bearing a similar riot of cubes and rainbows, which they substitute for the first, while two young ladies at the door seem to supervise this change of pictures. The one in outdoor toilette, MISS THISBE LEACH, is a tall, handsome, tailor-made sort of girl

with a vigorous personality radiating from the tip of her dashing hat-feather to the patent-leather point of her toe. The other, whose neatly parted brown hair seems haloed with old-world innocence, is MISS LILIAN ROSELEAF, an exquisitely pretty and petite Puritan figure, the apparent quintessence of early Victorian girlishness, but in reality a supremely efficient modern scientific housekeeper and a celebrated suffragist speaker.]

MISS ROSELEAF [*In a gentle musical voice*]
In the Blue Room, with the others.

FIRST FOOTMAN

Yes, Miss Roseleaf.

[*The FOOTMEN stolidly bear out the picture.*]

MISS ROSELEAF [*Going to the left*]

Won't you sit down, Miss Leach? Mrs. Broadley knows you've brought the picture of the week.

THISBE

Thank you.

[*Sits on the settee and stares in exaggerated ecstasy at the picture*]

Isn't it life-enhancing?

MISS ROSELEAF

I'm afraid I don't understand Mr. Tiptree's masterpieces.

THISBE [*Shocked*]

And you a Futurist in politics! Ah, Miss Roseleaf, if

only the politicians would make politics as Mr. Tiptree makes pictures!

MISS ROSELEAF [*Drily, as she looks at the chaos of cubes*]

They do! That's why we women must come in. But I forgot—you believe in muddles for men.

THISBE

Not since your lecture on the woman-made world.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Surprised and incredulous*]
Really? You were at the Poplar Town Hall?

THISBE

It was life-enhancing. Ah, what a pity Mrs. Broadley is still in darkness. Why don't you convert her?

MISS ROSELEAF

I was engaged as housekeeper, not as missionary. My lectures are open to her.

THISBE

She's too grand and too lazy to go to Poplar. But what can one expect of a woman with so much money?

MISS ROSELEAF [*Bitingly*]

Some people seem to expect the money.

[*Exit by central doors.*]

THISBE [*Her expression changing to angry contempt*]
Silly suffragette!

[*The door from the ante-room opens, revealing ANNABEL BROADLEY, a daughter of the gods, divinely*

tall and most divinely fair, but also sublimely sad, a tragedy-queen moving with a stately rustle of rich exotic gown. THISBE rushes into her arms.]

My gracious Annabel!

ANNABEL

My life-enhancing Thisbe!

[Holds her in a long silent embrace]

And to think that before we met at the Babylonian ballet my soul had never found a friend! Can it be only ten weeks ago?

THISBE

Poor Annabel! Were you always so lonely?

ANNABEL

Always! I had eleven sisters, and you know what a wilderness that is to an imaginative child.

THISBE

Eleven sisters? Your father, I suppose, was always wrapped up in his sermons.

ANNABEL *[Astonished]*

I never told you my father was a clergyman. How exquisitely intuitive you are! Yes, my father was an archdeacon, and my mother was Lady Jane Porter, and then—to add to my loneliness—there came a husband. . . .

[With sudden ecstasy as she perceives the riot of cubes and rainbows]

Ha! My new Monday picture!

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THISBE

By the first of the Paulo-Post-Futurists.

ANNABEL

Another Tiptree! How kind of you! However do you get hold of them?

THISBE

Just knowing the dealers. Only two hundred guineas.

ANNABEL

That swirl of leaves—stupendous!

THISBE [*Embarrassed*]

It isn't exactly leaves—it's lives.

ANNABEL

Yes, the whirligig of life.

THISBE

Or, more precisely, death.

ANNABEL

Yes, the Dance of Death! Macaberesque! Corybantic!

THISBE

And only two hundred guineas.

ANNABEL

And that stupendous change of key in the bravura passage——

THISBE
And all for two hundred guineas!

ANNABEL
The man is a Blake of the brush!
[*Rapt in it again.*]

THISBE
Shall I get your cheque-book, dear?

ANNABEL [*Negatively*]
It's in my boudoir, darling. And Isolde is asleep.

THISBE
I won't wake the precious.
[*Tiptoes out to ante-room. The petulant barking of a lap-dog breaks out, but does not reach ANNABEL'S consciousness, still rapt in the picture, before which she is almost kneeling. THISBE returns, carrying the be-ribboned toy dog squatting on the cheque-book.*]
Isolde had woke up, so I thought you would like her.

ANNABEL [*Taking her effusively with long-drawn osculatory salutations*]
My sweeting! And did she have a bad night? Look what her mummy has bought her!
[*Holds her up before the picture. ISOLDE howls.*]
You see how she understands! Dogs always howl at the sight of Death.

THISBE
Shall I write the cheque for you?

ANNABEL

That would be kind.

[THISBE goes to the desk.]

Oh, how shall I bear to change this next Monday!

THISBE [*Writing cheque with the big fantastic quill*]

Now, now, no backsliding. Only one piece of art in a room, and change that every week!

ANNABEL

Yes, I know the Japanese are right. But what's the use of building a harmony round my husband, when all he wants is to be "comfy"! Ugh,

[*Punching the armchair viciously*]

I hate the word!

THISBE

Yes, but think of the price he paid you for permission to plant his armchair here. If it does spoil your space-harmonies, remember that that chair was the foundation of the Home for Lost Arts. Thirty thousand pounds he gave you, wasn't it?

ANNABEL

Thirty or forty.

[*Lies languidly on the settee, toying with a gorgeous cardboard paroquet*]

But he spent a hundred thousand on his Poplar consumption hospital, and I can't see why arts aren't as important as Cockney coughs. Besides, why does he want to sit here at all? My guests only bore him; my pictures are caviare. He'd simply laugh at my

paying three hundred pounds for this—you did say three hundred?

THISBE [*After a slight hesitation of conscientious cowardice*]
Guineas.

ANNABEL
Yes, of course, three hundred *guineas*.

THISBE
Oh, how thoughtless of me! Do you mind my destroying this cheque? I've signed my own name.

ANNABEL
I've put you out by talking. I'm so sorry. Do write another. And while you are about it, you might write one for my bankers. They say I've overdrawn my account. Four hundred something——

THISBE
But you can't send your bankers your own cheque!

ANNABEL
Can't I?

THISBE
You must get a cheque from your husband first. Oh, and be quite sure you do, otherwise even this——
Ask him to make it eight hundred, so as to——

ANNABEL
Oh, I can't do that!

THISBE [*Alarmed*]
Why not?

ANNABEL
He never likes giving me less than four figures.

THISBE
Four figures!

ANNABEL
Four or five.

THISBE
I had no idea you were as rich as all that.

ANNABEL
My dear, we are abominably, unbearably rich. We have six country houses.

THISBE
Six country houses!

ANNABEL
Six or seven. And the wastefulness of that Miss Roseleaf! Do you know, I penetrated one night to the lower regions to get the leg of a blackbeetle for my microscope, and found twenty at supper!

THISBE
Blackbeetles?

ANNABEL
No—servants.

THISBE
Twenty servants!

ANNABEL
Twenty or thirty. And when all I want is the simple life—a maid and a cook, and a man to open the door, and one or two others to wait at table, and a few housemaids and kitchenmaids, and a chauffeur without even a groom. It's positively wicked. And the waste of food—when all I ask is a few calories.

THISBE
Cabbages?

ANNABEL
Darling, calories. You should study science, dear. Considering in one breakfast roll there are two hundred and twenty-two calories, why should I want ten dishes on the sideboard?

THISBE
Ten breakfast dishes?

ANNABEL
Ten or eleven.

THISBE
But where does all the money come from?

ANNABEL
From the Bank, of course.

THISBE

Yes—yes; but how does your husband get it?

ANNABEL

He just writes cheques.

THISBE [*Rising, with a sigh of desperation*]

Well, sign mine anyhow.

[*Tenders quill. ANNABEL takes it. BEWLISON, the butler, opens the door from corridor.*]

BEWLISON

Sir Robert McCorbel for Mr. Broadley. Mr. Broadley's out. Shall I show Sir Robert in here?

ANNABEL

Certainly not.

[*To THISBE*]

A mere money-spinner! Formerly a fishmonger. Methinks he hath an ancient and a fish-like smell.

[*To BEWLISON*]

You should have sent him away.

BEWLISON

Miss Roseleaf's instructions are to send nobody away—except the impecunious.

ANNABEL

The only interesting ones. In future, kindly remember I'm *never* in to tradesmen, whatever bell they ring at. . . . Except, of course, when I'm "at home."

BEWLISON

“ At home ” in inverted commas—I understand.

[*Exit.*]

ANNABEL [*Dropping her quill*]

Inverted commas! Thisbe! That man has soul!

THISBE [*Picking up quill*]

You haven't signed yet.

ANNABEL

That man has soul!

THISBE [*Thrusting quill firmly into her hand*]

Nobody with soul would wear livery.

ANNABEL [*Breaking down in sudden sobs*]

Oh! Oh! Oh! How could you be so cruel to me?

[*Drops quill. Rises.*]

THISBE [*Bewildered*]

My precious!

ANNABEL

Don't *I* wear livery?

[*Moves towards right centre.*]

THISBE

You?

ANNABEL

These gowns and gawds—aren't they the badge of

serfdom as much as Bewlison's shirtfront? Haven't we both to receive my husband's guests? Oh! Oh! Oh!

[Drops into the Club armchair, but jumps up as suddenly as though she had sat on a red-hot coal.]

His chair! His flabby, flobby, Philistine chair!

THISBE *[Still holding the cheque hopefully and moving towards ANNABEL]*

Calm yourself, dear. Concession is nine points of the law. After all, no woman ever had a more negligible husband.

ANNABEL *[Bitterly]*

Negligible? As negligible as that chair.

THISBE

And as easily sat on. Husbands are fading out. The best in this sort are but shadows—if I may quote Shakespeare.

ANNABEL

Oh, do! Blank verse reconciles me to anything.

[Wipes her eyes and moves towards the desk.]

THISBE

And your husband isn't even *your* shadow.

[ANNABEL sits at desk and picks up quill]

He knows he cannot follow you into your higher life-planes.

[Pressing quill pertinaciously into her hand. ANNA-BEL is about to sign.]

BROADLEY [*Outside, angrily*]
You sent Sir Robert away?

ANNABEL [*Dropping quill*]
The shadow!

[*Enter by central doors THOMAS BROADLEY, a born British millionaire, with a rosy air of benevolence, business, sport, and good tailoring, a jolly John Bull of affairs, capable of fun, and not incapable of chivalry; at the moment, however, his brow is clouded.*]

BROADLEY
Annabel, did you tell Bewli——?
[*Perceives MISS LEACH*]
Oh, how do you do?

THISBE [*Concealing her cheque and her chagrin at its being still unsigned*]
Very well, thank you.
[*Condescendingly*]
Glorious weather for golf, isn't it?

BROADLEY
Tophole. Annabel, did you send Sir Robert away?
I particularly——

ANNABEL
Hush! Isolde had such a bad night.

THISBE [*Tactfully*]
Shall I put her to bed again?

ANNABEL

It would be kind. Darling!

[*Kisses dog. Exit THISBE to the boudoir with ISOLDE.*]

BROADLEY

I particularly wanted to see him. Sir Robert is indispensable to my affairs.

ANNABEL

But not to my drawing-room.

BROADLEY

Blackbeetles were welcome to your drawing-room during your scientific craze.

ANNABEL

But not fish-barrows.

BROADLEY

Sir Robert is a financier now, not a fishmonger.

ANNABEL

He still keeps up his Billingsgate business.

BROADLEY

But he's a Warden of the Fishmongers' Company.

ANNABEL

Flaunts it, you see! I hate these self-made men, always singing the praises of their maker.

BROADLEY

And I hate these women on the make—always praising their picture-puzzles! I'll 'phone to Sir Robert's—

[Exit angrily to corridor as THISBE returns from boudoir.]

ANNABEL *[Outraged, surveying picture]*

Picture-puzzle!

THISBE *[Picking up quill]*

Your pen, dear.

ANNABEL

Picture-puzzle!

THISBE

You haven't signed.

ANNABEL *[Taking quill]*

Oh, haven't I?

[Is about to do so for the fourth time.]

BEWLISON *[Announcing]*

Mr. Grandison Tiptree.

[ANNABEL throws down her pen. THISBE swears under her breath. Enter TIPTREE, a child of nature, with unkempt mane and beard and fierce eyes and flaming tie, the untamed lion of the Bohemian jungle.]

ANNABEL

The Master! How miraculous! I was just admiring your stupendous picture. So delighted to know you in the flesh. And how does the Master do?

TIPTREE

Bit liverish, thank 'ee.

ANNABEL

Ah! like Carlyle. You know Miss Leach, of course?

[He goes eagerly towards THISBE, who petrifies him with a frigid bow]

I'll ring for tea.

[ANNABEL goes towards fireplace.]

TIPTREE *[Advancing amorously afresh]*

My darling!

THISBE

Sh! How dared you come here?

[Aloud]

Mr. Tiptree doesn't remember poor little me!

TIPTREE

Why, Thisbe——?

THISBE *[Glaring fiercely]*

Sh!

[TIPTREE controls himself, his face working wildly.

ANNABEL comes towards door. Enter BEWLISON.]

ANNABEL

Tea, please.

BEWLISON

Yes, ma'am.

[Anxiously indicating TIPTREE, whose face is still

*working wildly under THISBE'S whispered monitions
and information]*
That's not a business man?

ANNABEL
No, no, quite right this time.
[Exit BEWLISON]

TIPTREE [*Bursting out in uncontrollable honesty*]
Three hundred guineas! I don't get prices like that!

THISBE [*Hastily*]
I can't ask more from a friend.
[*Proffers quill and cheque again.*]

ANNABEL [*Surprised*]
I thought I just signed it.
[*Is for the fifth time about to sign. A yelping is heard
from the ante-room.*]
Poor Isolde! Awake again!
[*Hurries out to her pet, mechanically carrying off
cheque and quill.*]

THISBE
D——n Isolde! And what demon brought *you* here?

TIPTREE
I followed you.
[*Tries to take her hand.*]

THISBE [*Snatching it away*]
She mustn't know we're engaged to be married. You'll
ruin my sales of your——

TIPTREE [*Suddenly catching sight of his picture*]
What the blazes is this, Thisbe? It's upside down!

THISBE
There's no up or down to a swirl.

TIPTREE [*Disgusted*]
Swirl!
 [*Turns it*]
That's the Bank of England!

THISBE
Is it? Why didn't you tell me? But what's that?

TIPTREE
That's motor-buses.

THISBE
Well, *they* swirl.
 [*Reversing picture*]
Anyhow, it's too late now.

TIPTREE [*In horror*]
Thisbe!
 [*Seizes it.*]

THISBE [*Seizing it likewise*]
You'll ruin all our marriage prospects.
 [*A tug of war, each trying to turn it the opposite way.*
 Re-enter ANNABEL suddenly with an envelope.
 THISBE *lets go.* TIPTREE *reels.*]

ANNABEL

Miss Roseleaf is hushing her off again. There!
Signed at last!

[*Hands THISBE the envelope*]

With three hundred thanks.

[*To TIPTREE who, despite THISBE'S pantomimic protest, reverses the picture*]

Why have you turned it, Master?

THISBE [*Glibly*]

To show the space-harmonies. Just look at it from the fireplace.

[*ANNABEL obediently moves out of earshot. In a fierce whisper to TIPTREE*]

Sh! If you say another word, I'll break off our engagement.

TIPTREE [*His face working wildly in the effort not to speak*]

Oom—oom—oom!

ANNABEL [*From the fireplace*]

Even upside down it's life-enhancing. But I think I like it better the other way.

THISBE

Naturally.

[*Turns it again.*]

TIPTREE

But——

THISBE

Sh!

TIPTREE [*Almost bursting as he collapses on the settee*]
Oom—oom—oom!

ANNABEL [*Coming back to them*]
Ah, what a stupendous improvement!
 [*Perceives TIPTREE's labouring mouth*]
But I am interrupting the Master.

THISBE
No, no. Great Art is always dumb.
 [*Re-enter BROADLEY from corridor.*]

BROADLEY
I couldn't get Sir Robert, but——
 [*Catches sight of TIPTREE's wildly working face*]
Oh, lord!

ANNABEL
Thomas, this is the Master.

BROADLEY [*With a profound ironic bow*]
And this is his humble servant.
 [*TIPTREE bows silently, evidently still accepting the embargo on speech.*]

ANNABEL
Mr. Broadley doesn't appreciate Art.

TIPTREE [*With irrepressible bitterness*]

Ah, a critic!

[*Then afraid from THISBE's eye that he has slipped
into speech*]

Oom—oom!

BROADLEY

Frankly, Mr. Tiptree, I don't appreciate *this* Art.
You people seem to go out of your way to see things
upside down.

TIPTREE [*Almost exploding, despite THISBE's menacing
eye*]

Oom—oom—oom!

THISBE [*Touching his head every time he seems about
to bob up explosively*]

The artist *must* see things from his own point of view.

BROADLEY

Then I should have thought this was painted by an
aviator.

THISBE AND ANNABEL [*Simultaneously*]

An aviator!

BROADLEY

Looping the loop.

TIPTREE [*Driven frantic*]

Oom—oom—oom—oom!

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BROADLEY
Aren't you well?

TIPTREE
Oom—oom!

BROADLEY
Let me get you some brandy.
[TIPTREE'S *tortured face relaxes into an assenting smile.* BROADLEY *rings.*]

ANNABEL
I've just ordered tea.

BROADLEY
I beg your pardon—you don't like the tantalus here.

ANNABEL
Oh, it isn't so much the tantalus——!

BROADLEY
Sit down, sir. Take my arm! There!
[*Puts him into Club armchair*]
You'll be comfy in that. It's a chair I endowed for husbandry.
[*Enter BEWLISON*]
Brandy!
[*Exit BEWLISON.*]

ANNABEL
The Master's inner agony, Thomas, demands not alcohol, but appreciation.
[*Turns his head to the picture*]

Try to admire his Dance of Death.

[*At this TIPTREE, unseen behind them, jumps up with clenched fists of protest, and dances in dumb agony till THISBE'S eye quells him, and he subsides speechlessly.*]

BROADLEY [*Peering blandly*]

Oh, a dance, is it? Well, now I look at it, I do seem to see legs.

ANNABEL AND THISBE [*Simultaneously*]

Legs!

TIPTREE [*Bursting simultaneously*]

Oom!

BROADLEY

You can't have a dance without legs.

ANNABEL

Not in your musical plays, perhaps. But, in literature, even the sea dances.

BROADLEY [*Murmuring irrepressibly*]

There are sea-legs.

ANNABEL

Oh, Thomas! How can you look unmoved at that wistful whirl of souls, each swirling with its own restless rhythm, yet all part of the vast symphonic sweep of our poor pitiful humanity towards the great silence of the grave!

BROADLEY [*Cheerfully*]

Ah, here comes the brandy!

[BEWLISON *and two* FOOTMEN *bring in the tantalus, a siphon and glasses, and the tea-tray, with the cake-stand, etc. Exeunt. BROADLEY pours brandy for* TIPTREE]

Say when!

[*He pours and pours, THISBE glares and glares, but TIPTREE is speechless.*]

THISBE [*Alarmed, to BROADLEY*]

That must be too much.

[*Crosses over to right*]

Allow *me* to mix it. And get me a cup of tea, please.

BROADLEY

Certainly.

[*Goes to ANNABEL'S tea-table at centre.*]

THISBE [*Pouring back the bulk of the brandy. Sotto voce*]

I'm ashamed of you!

TIPTREE

You forbade me to speak.

THISBE

Only about your picture, stupid.

[*BROADLEY approaches with tea*]

Thank you.

ANNABEL

Milk and sugar, Thomas?

BROADLEY

Oh, Annabel, don't you know yet?

BEWLISON [*Announcing*]

Sir Robert McCorbel.

[*A small rugged Scotchman enters dourly. He carries a grey flat-crowned hat.*]

BROADLEY

Ah! I'm so glad you've come back.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*In a broad accent and darting a venomous glance at ANNABEL*]

I always coom back. I'm an obstinate beggar to bully.

ANNABEL [*Frigidly*]

How do you do?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Dinna fash yersel' aboot me!

BROADLEY [*Briskly covering it up*]

Just in time for tea!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Doubtfully, his eye on TIPTREE and the tantalus*]

Tea?

BROADLEY

Well, Scotch.

[*Pours out whiskey. SIR ROBERT drinks and converses, isolated with his host.*]

TIPTREE [*Bucked up by the brandy*]
Looping the loop, indeed! Art is what *I* feel, not
what *you* see.

BROADLEY [*Genially*]
And you're feeling better.

THISBE
Annabel's beautiful description of his picture was
medicine to him.

ANNABEL
I'm so glad.

TIPTREE
Yes, but we don't want so much money;
[THISBE *glares at him*]
We just want our bread and butter and the joy of our
job.

ANNABEL [*Catching fire*]
Like those grand old cathedral builders, those great-
souled mediæval craftsmen content to work anony-
mously!

TIPTREE
Five bob a day and their beer.
[*Drinks.*]

THISBE [*Jumping up to silence him*]
Well, good-bye, Annabel.

ANNABEL
Oh, not yet, dear!

THISBE
I must.

[*Produces cheque*]
By the way, I've just noticed you signed this "Isolde."

ANNABEL [*Taking cheque*]
Oh, how stupid! The darling distracted me.
[*Kisses the signature*]
I'll write another.
[*She goes to her cheque-book.*]

BROADLEY [*Cheerily commandeering THISBE's hand*]
Must you go? Good-bye.
[*Steers her to the door.*]

THISBE [*Calling helplessly, and with a helpless eye on her cheque*]
Good-bye, Mr. Tiptree. Don't forget me again.

TIPTREE [*Springing up*]
But, my dear——!
[*Collapses under her glare*]
Oom—oom!

THISBE
The Master says he must go too.

ANNABEL
Oh, Master—but you must come again. I'll post you that cheque, Thisbe.

THISBE

Don't forget it, dear.

[*Kisses ANNABEL. Suddenly perceives TIPTREE turning his picture right side up, and darts abruptly and turns it back*]

Good-bye, Mr. Tiptree.

[*Glares terribly.*]

TIPTREE

Oom—oom—oom!

[*Exit, carefully convoyed by THISBE. ANNABEL goes haughtily towards her boudoir.*]

BROADLEY

You're not leaving us, dear?

ANNABEL

I am not indispensable to your affairs.

BROADLEY

But we can spare a few moments for pleasure.

ANNABEL

I'm sorry; Isolde has a headache.

[*Majestically sweeps out.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Who has moved near the fire*]

Saints alive O! She puts you second to a measly lap-dog.

BROADLEY [*Uneasily*]
Nonsense! She doesn't like the smell of spirits.
[*Sits in his armchair.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
She doesna like the smell o' *me*. She canna dis-remember that as a laddie I cried "All alive O," though I've warked day and night to twist my tongue into "Saints alive O" instead. There's naething I canna conquer—except your mistress's prejudice. Turned away like a coster!

BROADLEY
I'm so sorry. It was my fault.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Ay, indeed. Ye're the laughing-stock o' London.

BROADLEY [*Angrily*]
Me? What for?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Ye ken.

BROADLEY
I don't ken.
[*Springs up*]
What the dickens do they hyena about?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
It's no the sort o' thing to say to a man's face.

BROADLEY [*Wheels round violently*]
Well, here's my back.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Dinna be an ass. I never meddle 'twixt man and wife.

BROADLEY [*Wheeling back violently*]
It concerns Annabel too!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Offering papers*]
Now as to that Tobacco Trust——

BROADLEY [*Scattering papers with his hand*]
What is it they cackle?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Losh, mon
 [*Picks up papers*]
they only say that your marriage was platonic
 [*BROADLEY looks guilty*]
—that ye treat your wife like a sister.

BROADLEY
The scandal-mongers! What business is it of theirs?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
It *is* the world's business. These new-fangled females
who have lap-dogs in place of bairns. And these male
traitors who cosset and feed 'em up.

BROADLEY
Meaning me?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Meaning all the clamjamfery! Gie a woman her head,
and she loses it.

BROADLEY

I don't give her her head. I chaff her off it.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

That's only to save your self-respect. *You* may strop
your razor on *her*, but *she* wipes her shoon on *you*.

BROADLEY

Look here, Sir Robert. I don't want to touch old
sores; but by all accounts your own marriage was not
such a howling success.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Never you mind *my* wife—she's in heaven, puir body
—we shallna meet again. But Maggie cooked my
dinner. *Your* fine leddy winna even order hers.

BROADLEY

But you were mighty pleased to eat it at her table.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

When did I say she wasna grand-looking?

BROADLEY

Well, take it that I've secured a wonderful work of art.
Aren't there men who do nothing but collect statues?
Suppose I had the Venus of Milo! She wouldn't
housekeep for me, or even embrace me. Now don't
say she hasn't got any arms!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Has she no? But your wife has got grand airms, and if she's a statue she ought never to have married you.

BROADLEY

I ought never to have worried her to—or rather her parents. She didn't know what marriage means.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Then teach the lass. A woman wants a man and a master. You behave like a mousie.

BROADLEY [*Smiling*]

Oh! if I were a mouse, she'd soon be reduced. Being, however, merely a——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Mollusc——

BROADLEY

That's enough! If you'd been my own size, you'd have got your head punched.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I kenned 'twas nae use talking to a henpecked athlete. If ye had punched your wife's head, ye'd be more of a man—and she more of a woman.

BROADLEY

Lucky Miss Roseleaf can't hear you. She's a feminist.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm no afear'd of Miss Roseleaf. Pity *she* hasna a husband to knock sense into her.

BROADLEY
Heaven forbid! I don't want to lose the best house-keeper and secretary man ever had.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
But ye dinna mind losing your best business friend.

BROADLEY
Don't be an ass.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Oh, vera weel! Vera weel.
[Takes his hat]
Wark that Tobacco Trust yersel'. I withdraw my million.

BROADLEY
You called *me* an ass—and a mouse and a mollusc into the bargain.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I take back the smaller creatures. . . . And I'm a bigger cuddy.

BROADLEY
I never said that.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Dinna contradict!
[Moves to door]
Ony man wha tells anither the truth *is* an ass; ony man wha tries to save his sex from masterful minxes—
[ANNABEL appears at the ante-room with a book of old engravings.]

BROADLEY [*Angrily*]
Sir Robert!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*At door of corridor*]
Is an aged—long-eared—obstinate—pachydermatous
—domesticated—quadruped!
[*Exit, banging door.*]

ANNABEL
Oh, Thomas! What was he calling you?

BROADLEY
Not me—he was soliloquising.

ANNABEL
Drinking. A drunken door-banger!

BROADLEY
No, only a little explosive. He always goes off with a bang.

ANNABEL
I wish they'd all go off with a bang.
[*Drops wearily on the divan—the firelight plays on her magnificent bare arms and voluptuous bust.*]

BROADLEY
Who?

ANNABEL
All these business friends of yours, whose elaborate gorgings and guzzlings I have to preside over, and who paw about all that is holy with their filthy financial fingers.

BROADLEY [*Bending insinuatingly near*]
And then would you make it up with me?

ANNABEL [*Turning over her engravings languidly*]
I've never quarrelled with you.

BROADLEY
No, confound it! But can't we kiss and be friends all
the same?

ANNABEL
Don't begin that again, Thomas. On a *Parsifal* day,
too!

BROADLEY [*Frozen, retreating wearily*]
You're not going to *Parsifal* again!

ANNABEL
How else shall I find strength to live and endure?

BROADLEY [*Sits in armchair*]
Endure? When you're Empress of all you survey!

ANNABEL [*Sitting bowed on her divan*]
Empresses are tragic figures—lonely and unhappy.

BROADLEY [*Amazed*]
You're not happy?

ANNABEL
Happy! Happy! With this horrible aching empti-
ness?

BROADLEY

You've just had tea.

ANNABEL

I who used to run barefoot in the summer brooks!

BROADLEY

You can kick off your shoes here if you like.

ANNABEL

Oh! I knew you would never understand me.

BROADLEY

Well, explain yourself. What do you want? A seat in Parliament?

ANNABEL

Heaven forbid! To step down into your dirty politics.

BROADLEY

Well, what else is it?

ANNABEL

How can I put it into words?

BROADLEY

Then it is you who don't understand yourself.

ANNABEL

I only know I feel asphyxiated in this atmosphere.

BROADLEY [*Sniffs*]

What's wrong with the atmosphere?

ANNABEL [*Rising*]

Can't you feel it—the taint that rises from our heavy foods, that exhales from our costly carpets? It hangs over our mansions like a miasma; our motor-cars reek with it!

BROADLEY

Petrol, do you mean?

ANNABEL

Money! Too much money! That's what I mean.

BROADLEY [*Dazed*]

Too much money?

ANNABEL

Don't you hear it jingling in the air? L.S.D.! L.S.D.!

BROADLEY

That's all right. Literature, Science, and the Drama.

ANNABEL

Yes, indeed. They are all prostituted to it. The social system must be transformed.

BROADLEY

By Liberalism, Socialism, or Democracy?

ANNABEL

By all three.

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BROADLEY

Ha! Ha! Ha! Can't get away from L.S.D., you see.

ANNABEL [*Stamping her foot*]
Oh!

BROADLEY

Anyhow, *I* can't get away. I was born a billionaire, as other men are born bilious.

ANNABEL

I do try to find that excuse for you. I know that fate showered too much money on your baby skull, stunning soul and brain——

BROADLEY [*Interjecting*]
Thank you.

ANNABEL

And that you no less than I are caught tragically in the great cosmic dance so beautifully pictured here!

[*Looks at picture. Enter MISS ROSELEAF from the corridor.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Excuse me, Mrs. Broadley. They are ringing up to know if you will give up your box for *Parsifal* to-night. Royalty would like it.

ANNABEL

Give up my box? Deprive Wagner of my worship?

Utterly impossible! Let them take Lady Bamberger's box. She's deaf.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Imperturbably*]
Then I am to refuse?

ANNABEL [*Still heated*]
You know I'm taking a party, and they're all coming here to dine.

[MISS ROSELEAF *turns to go.*]

BROADLEY [*Rising*]
Stop a moment.

ANNABEL
Why are you stopping her?
[*Their eyes meet in defiance.*]

BROADLEY
It would be an opportunity for us to spend an evening together.

ANNABEL
Together? Where?

BROADLEY
Where am I this evening, Miss Roseleaf—if it's not an indiscreet question?

MISS ROSELEAF [*Consults her book*]
You have a stall for the *Slap-Up Girls*.

BROADLEY

I'm glad it's no worse.

ANNABEL [*Outraged*]

And do you expect *me* to go to the *Slap-Up Girls*?

BROADLEY

Well, I'll go to *Parsifal*.

MISS ROSELEAF

Impossible, Mr. Broadley, if you give up the box!
The house is sold out.

BROADLEY

We can always go to the gallery.

[ANNABEL *withers him with a tragedy-queen glance*]

Well, anyhow, let's have supper together.

ANNABEL

One cannot eat after *Parsifal*.

BROADLEY

No, Wagner does take away the appetite.

[*With an awful look, ANNABEL rustles majestically into her boudoir, and bangs the door behind her*]

Sir Robert was right. . . .

[MISS ROSELEAF *goes imperturbably towards the other exit*]

Here, don't you go, too!

MISS ROSELEAF

I *must* tell them they can't have the box.

BROADLEY
Bewlison can do that.
[*He rings.*]

MISS ROSELEAF [*Looking at her book*]
And you won't forget that dinner is at 6.30?

BROADLEY
6.30! Good lord! Why?

MISS ROSELEAF
Wagner.

BROADLEY
D——n Wagner!
[*Explosively as BEWLISON enters*]
Bewlison!

BEWLISON
Yes, sir.

BROADLEY
Tell 'em at the 'phone that Mrs. Broadley has much
pleasure in giving up her box.

BEWLISON
Yes, sir.
[*Exit BEWLISON.*]

MISS ROSELEAF [*Her stylo poised imperturbably*]
Then dinner *not* at 6.30?

BROADLEY

No, at 8.30.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Calmly altering it in book*]

I 'phone everybody it's at 8.30?

BROADLEY

You 'phone everybody it's all off.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Altering, unruffled*]

Yes, Mr. Broadley. You will be just yourselves.

BROADLEY

Precisely.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Writing imperturbably*]

Dinner for two.

BROADLEY

Confound you! Why don't you look surprised?

MISS ROSELEAF

I am not paid to express emotions, but to execute orders.

BROADLEY

Gad, I wish I had your cold-bloodedness. . . . Makes everything seem so simple.

MISS ROSELEAF

Can I go now?

BROADLEY

Yes—wait a moment! Mrs. Broadley seems to think we spend too much money.

MISS ROSELEAF

Oh no, Mr. Broadley! Everything is organised most scientifically. I have effected considerable economies in every department.

BROADLEY

The deuce you have! No wonder we've too much money! Can't you effect a few extravagances?

MISS ROSELEAF

That is Mrs. Broadley's department.

BROADLEY

Ha! Ha! Ha! Those framed fireworks—what? How many have we of 'em?

MISS ROSELEAF

Futurist pictures, do you mean?

BROADLEY

Futurist fiddlesticks! The only pictures the future won't look at. The art that will never have a past.

MISS ROSELEAF

There are nine like that—one came every Monday.

BROADLEY

So I've remarked. A nice new Japanese swindle. Where are they all?

MISS ROSELEAF
Stowed in the Blue Room.

BROADLEY
Well, go to that Chamber of Horrors, and have 'em all
carted away instanter.

MISS ROSELEAF
Where, Mr. Broadley?

BROADLEY
Where? To the lunatic asylum they came from.

MISS ROSELEAF
There's a furniture store nearer. I'll send for their
van.

BROADLEY
Do! Then they *will* be in the van of Art. Ha! Ha!
That's a joke.

MISS ROSELEAF
Don't mention it. I know you can't resist a pun.
[*Going.*]

BROADLEY
That reminds me. Would you like to use my stall for
the *Slap-Up Girls*?

MISS ROSELEAF
Thank you, but I have to speak at a meeting.

BROADLEY [*Wearily*]
Ah, yes!

MISS ROSELEAF
My husband might be glad of it.

BROADLEY [*Almost jumping*]
Your *what*?

MISS ROSELEAF
My husband—*he* likes the theatre.

BROADLEY
But you're *Miss* Roseleaf.

MISS ROSELEAF
My professional name! Why should actresses monopolise the privilege? Besides, *his* name is Biggs.

BROADLEY
Ha!
 [*Takes her hand*]
But you've no wedding ring.

MISS ROSELEAF
My husband wears that. It protects our sex against him.

BROADLEY
I see. But does he approve of your speaking on the platform?

MISS ROSELEAF
Approve? I support him.

BROADLEY
On the platform?

MISS ROSELEAF
You know what I mean. He can't earn anything.

BROADLEY
Nothing at all?

MISS ROSELEAF
No. You see from youth upwards he has been a dramatist.

BROADLEY
Poor fellow. Is he quite incurable?

MISS ROSELEAF
Quite. And so are the managers. If you really want to effect extravagances you might produce his plays.

BROADLEY [*With comic horror*]
No, no. I'm not so rich as all that.
[*Seriously*]
But you ought to have told me about him when I engaged you.

MISS ROSELEAF
Why ever should I?

BROADLEY

Well, you see, I might have preferred somebody who—
who wasn't liable to leave us in the lurch for a month
or two.

MISS ROSELEAF

Oh, Mr. Broadley, that's so old-fashioned!

[Exit to boudoir.]

BROADLEY

Old-fashioned! . . .

[Collapses into his Club chair as if stricken]

Old-fashioned!

BEWLISON *[Announcing]*

Sir Robert McCorbel.

[Exit BEWLISON.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I've coom tae apologise. I was wrong.

BROADLEY

You were right. Even Miss Roseleaf won't have
children.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I should hope not. Why, whatever have ye——?

BROADLEY

You don't understand. She's married—under another
name.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

The brazen hussy! Anither of these comfortable cats without kittens.

BROADLEY

But Miss Roseleaf keeps her husband, whereas my fine lady—as you called her—lapped in every luxury, indulged in every fantasy, complains I've too much money.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

The pampered body! *I'd gie her too much money!*

BROADLEY

That's what I do do. But never again. Already I've cut off her Wagner.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Venomously rejoiced*]

Scots wha hae!

[*Shakes both his hands. Enter BEWLISON. Their hands drop.*]

BEWLISON [*Taking tea-tray*]

Beg pardon, sir, but Mrs. Broadley has dismissed me.

BROADLEY

Dismissed you?

BEWLISON

For 'phoning away her opera-box.

[*Enter FOOTMAN, goes to table R.*]

BROADLEY [*Embarrassed*]
Oh, ah!—I forgot to mention it to her. That'll be all
right. . . . Leave the brandy.
[*Exit FOOTMAN.*]

BEWLISON
Thank you, sir, I don't want to be out of place.

BROADLEY
You'd never be out of place, Bewlison, with your
appearance.

BEWLISON
Ah, sir, there's many a slip 'twixt the hand and the tip.
[*Exit gloomily with tray.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Ha! Ha! Ha!
[*Slaps knee in convulsions*]
Ha! Ha! Ha!

BROADLEY
Bewlison's professional proverb *is* funny, but not so
funny as all that.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
You humbug! It's *you* I'm laughing at. Forgot to
mention it! Brags of cutting off Wagner before he's
faced the music!

BROADLEY
And who's afraid to face the music? Why, I've sent
for a van to cart away her pictures.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Struck serious*]

Scots wha hae!

[*Shakes both hands again. A rumbling without*]

Ah! Ay, there it is!

BROADLEY [*Rushing to window*]

Already? Impossible! . . .

[*Vastly relieved*]

That's the laundry van.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Why, ye're trembling like a jelly-fish.

BROADLEY

Rubbish! . . . Have another drink.

[*Pours brandy.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Nae, thanks—I'm a widow man.

BROADLEY

Yes.

[*Drinks*]

And you've forgotten what it means to bullyrag a refined woman.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

To hell with her refinement! There's too much luxury and moonshine nowadays. The world needs a good shaking. My mither brocht up a dozen bairns on parritch, and thankful we were to get it. You stuff your statue with salmon and pineapples, and she only

grumbles she's fed up. Fed up! Starve her for a week—she'll talk less of her soul and mair of her stomach.

BROADLEY

What's the use of these wild suggestions?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Screaming*]

Wild? Didna I starve as a laddie? Eh, but she's got you fine under her manicured thumb.

BROADLEY

Because I won't starve her? Absurd!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye needna exactly starve her. Gie her a month of cheap lodgings, ye'll hear nae mair of too much money.

BROADLEY

But how can I get her into cheap lodgings? She wouldn't even go to the gallery for *Parsifal*. I can't force her—unless I turn her out of the house. And that would mean good-bye to all my hopes.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

That depends on *hoo* ye turn her oot o' the house.

BROADLEY

What do you mean?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Nae matter. I never meddle 'twixt man and wife.

BROADLEY

But how could I turn her out?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

By losing your bawbees!

BROADLEY

Losing my money, d'you mean?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ay; too much money, indeed! Tell her ye're ruined.

BROADLEY [*Starting up from his chair*]

By George! That's an idea.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

An idea! It's an inspiration. Ye didna think Bob McCOrbel rose frae a barrow tae a baronetcy without brains. 'Tak' your fine leddy to a boarding-hoose by the British Museum, where the steaks are tough and the slaveys slattern——

BROADLEY

And what about me?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Aweel, you've got to suffer too.

BROADLEY

Well, that's fair, anyhow. But she'll never believe it.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Believe it! A woman who believes in that!

[*Pointing to picture*]

Man, ye can stuff her wi' onything! She kens nae mair aboot beeziness than I aboot Wagner. Hooever, if ye're so parteecular aboot realism, I'm quite ready to mak' ye bankrupt.

BROADLEY

A friend in need is a friend indeed!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm in airnest.

BROADLEY

You really think it would cure her?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I tell ye, man, the day she gets back here out of those shabby lodgings, she'll fall on your neck and slobber ower you like a lost dog that's got hame again.

BROADLEY [*Pleased at the prospect*]

Ha!

[*Drinks more brandy*]

What sort of places are these Bloomsbury boarding-houses—can one really live in them?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Aweel, there's a smell of boiled cabbages and perambulators, but students and professors are as thick as herrings in Loch Fyne.

BROADLEY

Then I won't take Annabel there! She'll fall in love

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with some Egyptian professor with a parchment face
and ebony eyes and ears like scarabs.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Aweel, Bloomsbury isna the only uncomfatable place.
There's an auld pensioner of mine tak's in lodgers in
Highbury—Mistress Pennywhistle——

BROADLEY

But that's in Birmingham.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Man, ye're awful ignorant. Highbury is in London—
Islington way—not far frae the Angel.

BROADLEY

Not far from the Angel? That sounds nicely
sequestered.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

It is. Ye winna meet a soul from your warld. I'll
send Mistress Pennywhistle a wire.

[Going towards folding doors.]

BROADLEY

I say! Not so fast! This wants thinking over.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Funking ower, you mean.

BROADLEY

Not at all. Only——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Dinna apologise. It's no *my* fish-kettle. I never meddle 'twixt man and wife. There's her card.

[*Throws it to him.*]

BROADLEY [*Reading it*]

Mrs. Pennywhistle, 22—is she only 22? No, that's her number—my brain's wandering. Bah!

[*Tears card and throws it away*]

Your suggestion is lunacy.

[*Enter MISS ROSELEAF from the ante-room.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Broadley has dismissed me.

BROADLEY [*Bowled over*]

Eh? What for?

MISS ROSELEAF

For 'phoning to her friends not to come to dinner. She demanded an explanation.

BROADLEY [*With forced ease*]

Well, that was simple enough. No Wagner, no dinner. No song, no supper.

MISS ROSELEAF

That *was* my explanation, but Mrs. Broadley did not find it satisfactory. She is coming to ask yours—as soon as you are alone.

[*SIR ROBERT snatches at his hat.*]

BROADLEY [*Frantically*]

No, no, don't go! . . . That'll be all right, Miss Roseleaf.

MISS ROSELEAF

Yes, Mr. Broadley, but I have a husband to keep.

BROADLEY

That'll be all right. . . . I—I could always produce his plays.

MISS ROSELEAF

But would that keep *me*?

BROADLEY [*Embarrassed*]

Well, well . . . don't let me keep you now.

MISS ROSELEAF

But about the van, Mr. Broadley—it's on its way. I just caught the man.

BROADLEY [*Nervously snapping his fingers*]

Yes—yes—what about the van?

MISS ROSELEAF

The pictures.

BROADLEY

Oh, hang the pictures!

MISS ROSELEAF [*Stolidly noting down*]

Hang the pictures . . . then they're not to go?

[BROADLEY *hesitates*. SIR ROBERT, *with a demoniac*

*grin starts reciting "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace
bled."]*

BROADLEY

Of course they're to go. . . . And you too!
[Waves her back into ante-room.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And what explanation are ye going to gie her?

BROADLEY

The true one, of course! . . . Why should I be driven
into a morass of mendacity—not to mention cheap
lodgings?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Brawly spoken!

*[Dashes his hat down and shakes both BROADLEY'S
hands for the third time]*

Muckle better to put your foot doon openly.

BROADLEY

Muckle better. . . . Much better. . . . I don't
know, though, that it would be tactful to put my foot
down on her pictures . . . to-day, I mean. You see,
I've already put one foot on her dinner-party, and
another on her box. . . . To put down more feet—
isn't that rather . . . quadrupedal?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL *[Disgusted]*

Ye havena got feet. Ye're a mollusc.

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BROADLEY

I thought you withdrew the mollusc.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I put back even the mousie.

BROADLEY

It's *not* timidity, I tell you, it's tact. I lost my temper. . . . One shouldn't turn into a monster too violently. . . . She'd only hate me irredeemably. . . . No, I think—I think I'd best countermand the van. . . .

[*Goes towards door*]

Unless . . .

[*His eyes seek the floor.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

What are ye looking for?

BROADLEY

Nothing. . . . Of course, if it was bankruptcy that *compelled* me, that would explain everything . . . peaceably . . . even the opera-box. She'd just——

[*MISS ROSELEAF reappears at door of ante-room.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Broadley says, will you please go to her at once. She's too prostrate to come to you.

BROADLEY

Yes—yes.

[*MISS ROSELEAF disappears*]

I say, old chap, for heaven's sake go and send that wire!
'Phone it from the hall.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Bewildered*]
What wire?

BROADLEY [*Frantically*]
To the Angel—boiled perambulators—22 Penny-
whistles, you know.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*In pompous parody*]
Why should I be dreeven intae a morass of mendacity—
not tae mention cheap lodgings?

BROADLEY
Go to the devil!
[*Exit SIR ROBERT, cackling diabolically.*]

BROADLEY [*Pouncing on fragments of card*]
Ah!
[*MISS ROSELEAF re-enters.*]

MISS ROSELEAF
I forgot to mention that Mrs. Broadley keeps to the
dinner at 6.30.

BROADLEY [*Spurred up again*]
Oh, indeed! And I forgot to mention that it will
consist exclusively of bread and cheese.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Flashing forth her notebook*]
Stilton or Gorgonzola?

BROADLEY

Not your business any longer. The fact is, I'm ruined.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Not moving a muscle*]

Yes, Mr. Broadley.

BROADLEY

I said "ruined"!

MISS ROSELEAF [*Still more imperturbably*]

Yes.

BROADLEY

Yes, that's the real explanation why I cancelled the box and the dinner, and am selling off the pictures. I'm bankrupt.

MISS ROSELEAF

I see.

BROADLEY

In consequence your salary will be doubled.

MISS ROSELEAF

Retrospectively from the first of January, I presume.

BROADLEY

Eh? Oh, of course! Everybody else—all the servants, I mean—you pack off to one of our country houses—the remoter, the better.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Writing with her imperturbable
stylo*]
Essex Manor. And what about this house?

BROADLEY
Anything. Burn it down.

MISS ROSELEAF
No, Mr. Broadley, I never mix business and politics.
[*Violent ringing from ante-room*]
I'm afraid that must be Mrs. Broadley ringing for me.

BROADLEY
Don't answer her. Didn't she dismiss you?
[*SIR ROBERT rushes back excitedly.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Saints alive O! The van's coming.
[*A rumbling from below, and a knock as on street-
door*]
Ay, there it is!

BROADLEY
Miss Roseleaf, let me introduce you to my chief
creditor.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Disgusted*]
Ye havena put *her* in the plot?

BROADLEY
It wouldn't have much chance without her.
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MISS ROSELEAF [*Tactfully*]

Ah, yes! Sir Robert could seize the furniture.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Seize the furniture! And what would I do with these nipperty-tipperty gimcracks?

BROADLEY

Confound 'em!

[*Kicks a fragile chair*]

There's no getting rid of 'em.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Quietly*]

Not when there's a van at the door?

BROADLEY [*His face lighting up*]

By Jove!

[*More violent ringing from ante-room*]

Don't let anybody go to her. Keep the servants away from her.

MISS ROSELEAF

I'll see to everything, and explain to the vanmen.

[*Exit to corridor.*]

BROADLEY

She's a positive genius.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Hoots, mon! Ye're verra indiscreet to trust a woman.

BROADLEY

She's not a woman—she's a machine.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

A feminist, too.

BROADLEY

Look here, is this your bankruptcy or is it mine?

[The door from ante-room flies open and ANNABEL appears, flaming.]

ANNABEL

Thomas! Did I not ask you to come to me?

BROADLEY

Sir Robert has detained me. . . . So glad you're *not* prostrate.

ANNABEL

I can hardly stand on my feet.

BROADLEY

My poor Annabel!

[Wheels the Club chair towards her.]

ANNABEL

Take it away! That would make me worse.

BROADLEY

Poor darling! How fortunate you won't have to entertain to-night!

ANNABEL

And who told you I was not entertaining?

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SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Looking at his watch*]
I'm afeared I maun tear mysel' awa'.
[*Takes his hat again.*]

ANNABEL [*Hysterically*]
It's the first piece of consideration anybody has shown
me to-day.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Dinna mention it. I never meddle 'twixt man and
wife.

[*Throws open doors, revealing a perspective of
burly vanmen in shirt-sleeves, backed by the exquisite
and imperturbable MISS ROSELEAF*]

All alive O!

[*Exit as the men push by him and seize the nearest
objects.*]

BROADLEY

Oh, my darling, be brave!

[*Slips gold surreptitiously into foreman's hand with a
whispered*]

Take no notice of us!

[*MISS ROSELEAF disappears.*]

ANNABEL [*Wildly*]

What is it? What has happened?

BROADLEY

I was a coward not to tell you earlier.

[*The screen is borne off.*]

ANNABEL

Thomas!

[A man bears in a step-ladder and places it at window for removal of the curtains.]

BROADLEY

But I hoped up to the last. That was why I was so anxious to see Sir Robert. Ten minutes earlier he might have saved us.

ANNABEL

What are you maundering about?

[Looks at tantalus]

You've been drinking.

[Tray and tantalus are carried off.]

BROADLEY

Hush! Not before the lower orders.

ANNABEL

But what are they doing with my furniture?

[The divan and cushions are wafted away. She rings violently.]

BROADLEY

They're the Law!

ANNABEL

The Law! But this is *my* house. . . . Bewlison, where is Bewlison? Why doesn't he come?

BROADLEY

You dismissed him!

ANNABEL

Well, there are understudies.

[Rings still more violently.]

BROADLEY

It's of no use ringing. The rats always desert a sinking ship.

ANNABEL

Sinking?

[She totters.]

BROADLEY

We're ruined—sold up—bankrupt—broke. And our last friend, Sir Robert, you turned away. I told you he was indispensable to my affairs.

ANNABEL

Oh!

[Sinks on the settee before the flimsy round table]

But it can't be true!

[Sinks her head on the table just as the foreman jerks it away. She falls forward, then springs up]

Oh, do please be careful.

FOREMAN

So sorry.

ANNABEL

I mean of the furniture. It's all so delicate.

FOREMAN

Bless your 'eart, mum, we've moved Queen Halexandra.

BROADLEY

Don't *you* worry, dear—it's not *your* furniture any longer.

ANNABEL

Not mine?

[She staggers against the writing-desk; it is jerked away. He catches her.]

BROADLEY

Bear up! Think of what *I* suffered in cancelling your dinner and theatre-party!

[Steers her towards the settee]

But I kept my face even with the fox gnawing at my vitals!

ANNABEL

So that's why our bankers wrote to me?

BROADLEY

Yes—and why I jumped at getting back the ten guineas for your box. It'll be something to start the new life on.

ANNABEL

Oh!

[Is dropping on the settee.]

FOREMAN

Got it?

[He and another man pull the settee away. BROADLEY just saves her from collapse.]

ANNABEL [*Frantically*]
Doesn't the Law leave you *anything*?

BROADLEY
Only what you stand up in.
[*The carpet strip is snatched from under their feet.
He catches her.*]

ANNABEL [*Looking wildly round the emptying room*]
And will they do this all over the house?

BROADLEY
From Blue Room to wine-cellar.

ANNABEL
Good heavens! Not even a bed——! Then where
do you propose to sleep?

BROADLEY
Not far from the Angel.
[*Produces fragments of card.*]

ANNABEL
You may! I stay here.

BROADLEY
With the Man in Possession?
[*The curtains and pole are being lowered by the man
on the step-ladder*]
No, no! I'll have our bags packed at once.
[*Rings violently.*]

ANNABEL

But I thought we mustn't take——

BROADLEY

Oh, bare necessities of life—pyjamas, pomatums——

ANNABEL [*Breaking down hysterically*]

Oh! Oh! Oh!

BROADLEY

Don't. You unman me! . . . Why the devil doesn't Bewlison come?

ANNABEL [*Blubberingly*]

I dismissed him.

BROADLEY

Oh, d——n! I'll have to pack myself!

ANNABEL [*Frenziedly as they seize the ease!*]

Thomas! They are taking the Tiptree! !

BROADLEY

How dreadful!!! . . . But everything on the premises——

ANNABEL [*Hysterically*]

But it's not mine.

BROADLEY

Not yours?

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ANNABEL

No. The cheque was signed Isolde.

BROADLEY [*In terrible tones*]

You gave Isolde a cheque-book! You encouraged her to buy Futurist pictures! No wonder my money has gone to the dogs!

ANNABEL

No—no—it was a slip.

BROADLEY

A slip of the paw?

ANNABEL

Of course not. *I* signed Isolde.

BROADLEY [*In greater horror*]

You forged Isolde's name?

ANNABEL

She was barking when I signed.

BROADLEY

No wonder!

ANNABEL [*Frenziedly*]

You don't understand. I promised Thisbe to sign another.

BROADLEY

Then you *have* paid—with a Futurist cheque!

ANNABEL

I have *not* paid—it's a debt of honour—three hundred guineas!

BROADLEY

Then *you* are bankrupt too!

ANNABEL [*Breaking down*]

Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm so unhappy!

[*Suddenly perceives MISS ROSELEAF entering behind BROADLEY, carrying ISOLDE. ANNABEL utters a great cry*]

Come to me, darling! Comfort me!

[*She holds out her arms. BROADLEY, ignorant that ISOLDE is meant, rushes ecstatically into them*]

Not you, stupid!

[*She steps aside; HE reels forward clawing at the empty air, and then turns furiously to behold MISS ROSELEAF holding up ISOLDE.*]

MISS ROSELEAF [*Placidly*]

Where does *she* go?

BROADLEY [*Seizes the dog frenziedly*]

To the Home for Lost Arts—I mean, to the Creditors.

ANNABEL [*Shrieking*]

No! No!

BROADLEY

The Law must take its course.

[*Throws ISOLDE into the passing coal-scuttle, the*

last object but one to leave the room. ANNABEL'S shriek mingles with her pet's yelp.]

ANNABEL [*Stretching out her arms after the retreating scuttle in which the dog is still visible*]

Isolde!

[She sinks hopelessly into the Club armchair. They whisk it away ere she reaches the seat. She comes to the floor with a crash. The curtain falls on an absolutely emptied room.]

Act Two

[An afternoon nearly a fortnight later. A garret in Poplar in an old riverside mansion now decayed into lodgings, but bearing remains of grandeur in space and design, and with a picturesque view of the Thames and the tops of ships through a window in the back wall. The garret is cheaply furnished with bare necessities, all, however, crudely new. The door is in the left wall. The right half of the back wall, where the irregular conformation of the garret makes a recess, is pathetically partitioned off as a bedroom by a high floral screen. In the right wall is a fireplace with a small fire burning, a homely kettle on the hob, and a cheap new mirror above. By the left wall is a homely chest of drawers. At a tub near the centre ANNABEL, in a plain gown and a big apron, with her sleeves tucked up, is singing as she washes pyjamas, etc.]

ANNABEL

There was a jolly miller once
Lived by the river Dee.
He laughed and sang from morn till night,
No lark more blithe than——

[A knock]

Come in!

[Enter MRS. CROW, a full-blown Cockney landlady. She carries a pail of water, which she dumps down.]

MRS. CROW

Hexcuse me, mum, I don't want to be 'ard on you—I was broke once meself—but if your 'usband hexpects

me to lug up yer pails—a thing I've never done for no hunfurnished tenant afore—I do think I ought to hask—well—sixpence a week hextra.

ANNABEL

Most reasonable, Mrs. Crow. I'll write you a cheque at once—I mean, give you the sixpence.

[Putting hand in pocket and bringing out bag.]

No, that's my savings! I'll get my purse.

[Goes behind the screen and returns]

No, on second thoughts our furnished apartments at Highbury were simply ruinous, and till my husband gets work I must draw my own water. Hewers of wood and drawers of water—doesn't it sound literary? And aren't these old walls picturesque—they ought to be painted!

MRS. CROW *[Outraged]*

For three and six a week!

ANNABEL

I mean artistically. And you ought to be painted too.

MRS. CROW *[Still more outraged]*

Me?

ANNABEL

You have such a gay face. An old Dutchman would have loved it.

MRS. CROW

'Ere, what d'ye take me for?

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ANNABEL

I mean, you have so much character.

MRS. CROW

I should 'ope so. No policeman never came hinquiring about *my* character.

[*Going out in a huff. Perceives that ANNABEL has hung the dripping pyjamas over the back of a chair*]
'Ere, you'll spile the ceiling!

ANNABEL [*Looking up in surprise*]

The ceiling!

MRS. CROW

Below!

[*ANNABEL looks down in surprise*]
It's no good just rubbing—you must wring.

ANNABEL [*Looking round in surprise*]

But have you a bell?

MRS. CROW

Not ring! Wring! R-i-n-g! Squeeze! Like this!

[*Wrings the pyjamas over the tub*]
Then they dry.

[*Re-hangs them.*]

ANNABEL

How miraculous! . . . You see, I have never washed before.

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MRS. CROW

One can see that by the state of your 'ands. I don't s'pose you hever did a day's honest work in your life.

ANNABEL

Oh, but I've toiled terribly at literature, music, and science. I was very keen on insects.

MRS. CROW

All my lodgers are.

ANNABEL

Really?

[Fetches a hot flat-iron from the fire]

Ah, but insects aren't Life!

[MRS. CROW's face looks contradiction]

Even Art is only a shadow. Life is the real!

[Rubs vigorously]

Do you know, Mrs. Crow, since my husband lost his money I feel born again.

MRS. CROW

Just what I felt when mine lost his life.

ANNABEL *[Shocked. Leaves the iron on the pyjamas and returns to tub]*

Oh, Mrs. Crow! Didn't you love him? Your husband! The man whose struggles one shares!

MRS. CROW

'Usband, indeed! The man who drinks away all you

'ave 'usbanded, and then lays ill on your 'ands. Why, to bury 'im proper nearly broke me.

ANNABEL

But why spend money on his funeral?

MRS. CROW

'Ad my position to keep up. Besides, it's a poor 'art that never rejoices.

ANNABEL

But economy is itself a joy. To cut down a halfpenny, isn't it thrilling!

[*Wrings washing*]

To squeeze—and squeeze—and squeeze!

MRS. CROW

Not too 'ard. You'll make 'oles.

[*Going*]

And you'll let me 'ave the tub back soon—it's my own washing day, bein' Monday.

ANNABEL

Certainly. Oh! aren't these rainbowed bubbles glorious?

MRS. CROW [*Gloomily*]

Till they busts.

[*Exit.*]

ANNABEL

Ah, but we must seize the moment. And I must seize the moment.

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[Looks round cautiously and dramatically, then lifts up a board on the left, extracts a stocking, drops the bag into it, and covers it up again]

Thisbe's three hundred guineas saved at last!

[Sings]

And this the burden of his song
For ever used to be,
I care for . . . somebody—yes, I do,
And somebody cares for——

His footstep! At last!

[Enter BROADLEY. He is attired in a shabby jacket and a low hat, and has an air of bewildered bliss. A large strip of plaster on his cheek testifies to the poor shaving facilities. ANNABEL flies to him and flings her soapy arms around him]

Oh, Tom! Tom! And did you get work?

BROADLEY *[Shocked]*
Annie, what *are* you doing?

ANNABEL
The washing, of course. It's Monday.

BROADLEY
Yes, I know.
[Wipes soapsuds from his face and shoulders]
But you mustn't!

ANNABEL
But it's life-enhancing! And such a saving!
[She discovers the iron has burnt a great hole in the pyjamas. She conceals the hole hurriedly, while he sniffs suspiciously]

But why didn't you come home to lunch, I mean dinner? The red-herring was stupendous.

BROADLEY

I sent you a wire, dear.

ANNABEL

Yes—terribly reckless—thirteen words even.

BROADLEY

How unlucky! . . . I say, you don't wash clothes with Pears' soap.

ANNABEL

Yes, you do—it's the Monkey Brand that won't wash clothes. Oh dear, how unpractical you are! No wonder you lost your money! No wonder you can't find work.

BROADLEY [*With bowed head*]

It's not my fault. Too old at forty.

ANNABEL

Never mind, Tom. Your Annie only loves you the more for your cheery courage. How true is Browning's line—"Every man has two faces."

BROADLEY [*Alarmed*]

Eh?

ANNABEL

"One to face the world with,
And one to show a woman when he loves her."

BROADLEY [*Relieved, and rubbing his cheek against hers*]

Ah, yes, two faces are better than one. And so you are happy at last?

ANNABEL

Unspeakably. There's only one blot on the blue.

BROADLEY

And what's that?

ANNABEL

That's unspeakable, too.

BROADLEY

But you can tell your own hubby.

ANNABEL [*Shyly*]

Well—no bath.

BROADLEY

My darling! I'll run over to the Emporium at once.

ANNABEL

No—no—not yet. Not till you get work!

BROADLEY

But this tub! Why not use that in the mornings?

ANNABEL

Splendid! . . . Oh, but she wants it back at once!

BROADLEY

Then take your bath at once!

ANNABEL

No, no, dear. You take one. Your need is greater than mine.

BROADLEY

No, it isn't——!

ANNABEL

I insist! I shall heat that pail of water for you.

BROADLEY

Well, I do feel jolly miserable.

[Goes behind screen. ANNABEL lifts tub and staggers to window, where she pours it out. At the sound he rushes out in his shirt-sleeves]

You mustn't do that!

ANNABEL

But there's an April shower! They'll think it's the rain.

[A cry comes up.]

BROADLEY

What's that?

ANNABEL

Only a cat. . . . Oh, I've poured out the soap!

[A loud knock at the door. They pause guiltily, and bear back the not entirely emptied tub between them.]

BROADLEY
Who's there?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Outside*]
Me! Sir Robert——!

BROADLEY
Sir Robert! What does *he* want here?

ANNABEL
Sir Robert! How noble of him!
[*Dropping her side of the tub and clapping her hands.*]

BROADLEY [*Amazed, just saving its collapse*]
You don't want to see him?

ANNABEL
That splendidly real person who rose from a fish-
barrow? Rather!

BROADLEY [*Sullenly*]
Well, take off that apron.
[*Puts down tub.*]

ANNABEL
Take off my badge of service—the symbol of solidarity
with labouring humanity! Never! Besides, fish-
mongers are fond of aprons.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Outside, knocking again*]
May I coom in?

BROADLEY [*Sotto voce as he hustles on his coat again*]
Put down your sleeves—it's hardly proper.

ANNABEL
My arms aren't so bare as in evening dress.

BROADLEY
But you didn't go about dressed in bubbles!

ANNABEL
Then I'll hide them
 [*Plunges arms into wash-tub.*]

BROADLEY [*Frantically*]
No! No! You mustn't wash our dirty linen in public!
 [*He hurriedly seizes the hanging pyjamas and throws them over the screen. SIR ROBERT knocks more impatiently.*]

ANNABEL [*Smiling*]
Come in!
 [*SIR ROBERT, in a high hat and carrying an umbrella, enters, and looks round dazedly at the whitewashed destitution. BROADLEY gives him a sullen nod.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Saints alive O!

ANNABEL [*Drying her hands with a handkerchief and fixing SIR ROBERT with a fascinating smile*]
Oh, Sir Robert! How miraculous to see somebody
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from the old world! But why didn't you come to Mrs. Pennywhistle's—she often sang your praises!

[Rushes to him with dried and extended hands]

How do you do?

[She smiles bewitchingly. Remorse combines with his flattered feeling; he is conquered in a flash. Obviously only her disdain has suppressed his latent adoration.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I've been in bed—puir man's gout. And I only just got your address from Mistress Pennywhistle. What for did you leave Highbury?

BROADLEY *[Brusquely]*

Too much money!

ANNABEL

And too little life.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

But it's no far frae the Angel.

ANNABEL

Too far from the intoxication

[SIR ROBERT drops her hand with a start]

of the street-life. Here I have the swirl under my feet.

[Shows him the window]

Look! There's the great Poplar Emporium where we bought our bits of furniture. And see! the tops of ships, just like Holland! And the market-place at the corner — women with head - shawls — positively Italian! I've bought one for myself—it's——

BROADLEY [*Who has been looking at his watch impatiently*]
I wish you'd buy something for *me*—I've had no lunch
—I mean dinner—yet.

ANNABEL
Oh, my darling—how thoughtless of me! I'll get my
head-shawl.
[*Runs behind the screen.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Turning angrily on
BROADLEY*]
I say, mon, haven't ye been overdoing it?

BROADLEY
Sh!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
'Tis scandalous! I never meddle 'twixt man and
wife. But to drag a delicate leddy——!

BROADLEY
Sh! I tell you. Wait till she's gone.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
And what for are ye hustling her oot?

BROADLEY
Sh! I've just remembered Miss Roseleaf is coming
with the cheques.
[*Re-enter ANNABEL, looking still more bewitching in a
head-shawl, and carrying a cheap string bag.*]

ANNABEL [*To SIR ROBERT*]

So sorry I must go out. I wish there was a comfy chair to offer you—or a whiskey and soda. And I'm afraid there's only one pipe,

[*Gets a churchwarden from the chest of drawers*]
though it's long enough for two. You must come again—there shall always be a pipe for you.

[*Gives it to SIR ROBERT, kisses her hand to her husband, SIR ROBERT behind him smiling fatuously as though the salute was meant for him. Exit ANNABEL.*]

BROADLEY [*Calling after her*]

Don't get a steak!

ANNABEL [*Calling back*]

No, dear, a nice piece of fish.

BROADLEY

Not high!

ANNABEL

Of course not. As low as I can get it.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Pointing an accusing pipe*]

And that's the goddess ye treat like a scullery-wench!

BROADLEY [*Losing his temper*]

Why, you scoundrel, who suggested——?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I got ye decent lodgings.

BROADLEY

You heard she didn't like them.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Three rooms I got ye. Ye wanted to get closer together.

BROADLEY

A common sitting-room gets you close enough. It's her economies. She wouldn't rest till she drove me to Poplar—near my hospital, by the way.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Obstinately*]

Dinna tell me a luxurious leddy——

BROADLEY

But you saw for yourself! She takes it all as an artistic adventure—a romantic play-acting. But what is sport to her is misery to me!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You ungrateful humbug! When your Venus of Milo comes down to embracing——!

BROADLEY

And to housekeeping—don't forget that! She actually insists on cooking! Oh lord! I never was so happy in my life, nor so beastly uncomfortable.

[*They sit by the fire*]

Don't smoke that thing—have a cigar! I've got the finest cheroot in the world.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Clinging to the church-warden*]

Thank you, but I'd enjoy this—for auld lang syne.

BROADLEY

Rather you than I. . . . Here's tobacco.

[*Throws him a pouch from his jacket-pocket.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Thanks!

[*Catches it, but does not open it, as his attention is arrested by BROADLEY, who, after looking cautiously round, extracts a cigar box from a loose board on the right.*]

BROADLEY

Done her in the eye. She'd never think of that.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

But that's not playing the game.

BROADLEY

Well, I must have *something* to sustain life.

[*Lights a cigar and throws SIR ROBERT the matches*]

I pretended I had saved £50 and our dressing bags from the wreck. What does she do but collar the money and sell off even the jewelled hair-brushes, to scrape together three hundred guineas she insisted she owed as a debt of honour for that picture-puzzle. Where she hides the money heaven alone knows. Even if I could find a pretext for displaying any fresh cash—which I can't—she'd only commandeer it. I'm tied hand and foot, I tell you—I'm robbed, starved, poisoned——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Serve you richt! . . . Saints alive O! what sort of caked tobacco d'ye call this?

[Dragging something hard from the pouch.]

BROADLEY

Oh lord! I forgot to throw it away. That's yesterday's steak! Nothing else handy to smuggle it off my plate into! And they say there's nothing like leather!

[SIR ROBERT with a grimace drops it back into the pouch]

Try one of these.

[Passes box—SIR ROBERT takes cigar and lights it]

And yesterday was Sunday too—not even a cookshop open. My matches, please.

[Gets them back]

I was so ravenous this morning I had to get up in the raw dawn and feed at a riverside coffee stall with watermen and night birds.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Saints alive O! Was the coffee drinkable?

BROADLEY

Compared to Annabel's it was nectar.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Why dinna ye go to the Club?

BROADLEY

A good old dinner at the Club—don't tantalise me with that heavenly vision—you know I've gone up the Nile with Annabel.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ou, ay, I forgot. Not that they all swallow that story! Some say ye smashed up her furniture, and she left ye for an Egyptian prince.

BROADLEY [*Complacently*]

They're wrong this time.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And ithers say it was you that eloped.

BROADLEY [*Angrily*]

Me? With whom?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

With your wife!

BROADLEY

The scandal-mongers.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

There's nae smoke without fire.

[*Voluptuously puffs out a cloud*]

But it's a dom'd shame. Where's your *wife's* cigars?

BROADLEY

I know what you mean. D'ye think I enjoy half-starving her? But what can I do? She says, till I get work——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And why dinna ye get work—a great strappin' healthy brute like you?

BROADLEY

Don't be a fool! If I pretended to have work I'd have to moon about from 9 to 6 in all weathers. Pretending to *look* for work is bad enough. I can't go West because I'm in the Orient, and I can't go East for fear of meeting my own hospital staff. I have to slink about the docks, dodging steam-cranes and odd jobs. A nice hole you've got me into!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Me? I like that.

BROADLEY

And so does she. She enjoys it now, but how will it be in a month, a year, hence?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye white-livered loon! Ye propose to keep that grand leddy here a twelvemonth!

BROADLEY

Well, how can I confess to her that the man she's at last learned to love is a liar and a brute? The longer it goes on, the harder to explain.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye should ha' thocht of that before.

BROADLEY

You should ha' thought of it. Her love will turn to hate.

98

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Complacently*]
I shouldna wonder.

BROADLEY

I'm living on the verge of a precipice—my happiness hangs by a thread!

[*The door bursts open—ANNABEL flies in. He is caught with the cigar, which he vainly tries to hold behind him for SIR ROBERT to take.*]

Er—Sir Robert's given me a cigar. Where's the fish?

ANNABEL

I forgot my purse. The fishmonger doesn't give credit. He has a placard "Poor Trust is dead, bad debts killed him." Isn't it delightfully original? I do love marketing. But you mustn't use Tom to luxuries, Sir Robert. Give it up, you naughty boy.

[*She tugs at his cigar*]

There!

[*Throws it out of window*]

We must be economical.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*To himself*]
Bang goes three bob!

ANNABEL

Let me fill your pipe.

[*Takes up the pouch containing the steak.*]

BROADLEY [*Snatching it away frantically*]

No, no! I've smoked enough. We *must* be economical.

[*Conceals it in jacket pocket.*]

99



ANNABEL

Thank you, dear!

[*Snuggles to him*]

Why, I never noticed you're still wearing a gold pin.

[*Tugs at it.*]

BROADLEY

No, no—all that glitters is not gold!

ANNABEL

Must go into my savings-bank.

BROADLEY [*Grumbling*]

Where is this wonderful savings-bank of yours?

ANNABEL

That's my secret. But you won't be in darkness long. I've written to Thisbe to come for her money.

BROADLEY [*Upset*]

You gave away our address?

ANNABEL

I asked her to keep it secret. I explained that your bankruptcy hadn't leaked out, and that you had hidden away like a stricken deer.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Murmuring*]

Stricken deer! Healthy hippopotamus!

ANNABEL

But you're starving—I must get my purse.

[*Goes behind screen.*]

100

BROADLEY

You see how she robs me—and all to pay for that picture-puzzle.

[*A whistle is heard outside the door—“Coo-ey”*]

O lord! Here's Miss Roseleaf! I say, warn her to come later.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Do your own dirty wark. I never meddle 'twixt man and wife.

[*The whistle is repeated—“Coo-ey!”*]

BROADLEY

Oh, hang it all.

[*Exit. Re-enter ANNABEL.*]

ANNABEL

Why, where's Tom?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Called away a meenit.

ANNABEL

Ah, that landlady, I suppose! Poor Tom! How do you think he's looking?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Too dom'd weel.

ANNABEL

That's the brave face he puts on. But he can't stand privations like a woman. Oh! if I can only get him comfy again.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Get yersel' comfy first. Buy brawer furniture.

ANNABEL
But we've no money.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
On the Hire System. Ye've an Emporium across the road.

ANNABEL
No, no—no more debt! I *have* been into it with the Emporium, and there's a little lot of the most indispensable articles for Tom set aside in my name. But they're sixteen guineas.

[*Sighs hopelessly*]

Where am I to get sixteen guineas?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
There's Tammas's pin. Why do ye no buy the things one by one?

ANNABEL
Impossible! They would be *eighteen* guineas that way.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Well, *I'll* give ye the sixteen guineas.

ANNABEL
How horrid of you! That would spoil everything.
Good-bye.

[*Going.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Na, please—I maun help ye buy your fish. I'm an expairt.

ANNABEL

No! You'll try to pay for it.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Honour bricht. I'd only get it better and save ye a bob or sae.

ANNABEL

Ha! How many bobs are there in sixteen guineas?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Instantaneously*]

Three hundred and thirty-six.

ANNABEL

Oh dear! You'd have to buy my fish nearly a year to save sixteen guineas.

[*Pathetically*]

Sir Robert, how *does* one make money?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Pouting out his chest*]

By brains—and honesty!

ANNABEL

Yes, but how did you make yours? Fish, wasn't it?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

All alive O! Ye don't propose to cry fish! Nae, I made my real fortune on the Stock Exchange.

ANNABEL

But that's closed to women.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Not at all—ye deal through a broker.

ANNABEL

But it's gambling, isn't it?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Shocked*]

Havers! Intelligent antecipation! Why, I made my first thousand pounds by selling two hundred shares in a diamond mine, because I kenned it was a fraud.

ANNABEL

But was that honest?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Pairfectly—only it's deeficult to explain to a novice. Withoot the Stock Exchange eendustry would collapse.

ANNABEL

But how did you get the original money to—prop up the diamond trade?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

That was the fish. But ye could commence even with five pounds if ye ca' canny.

ANNABEL

And what could I buy for five pounds?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Or sell.

104

ANNABEL
Sell?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
For a fall.

ANNABEL
But I want to prop industry *up*. What would you advise now?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Na! Na! I never meddle 'twixt man and stock.
Here's a Stock Exchange List.
[*Produces one.*]

ANNABEL [*Seizing it eagerly, and giving him the string bag instead*]
All in alphabetical order! Why, it's as easy as A B C.
[*He looks dubious*]
We'll have something with an M.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
What for?

ANNABEL
Doesn't Mascotte begin with an M? Now, which is the cheapest?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Horrified*]
Lassie! Ye dinna buy the cheapest!

ANNABEL

I must lay out my money to the best advantage. Ha!
Mexican Premier Gold Mine.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Alarmed*]

Dinna touch it!

ANNABEL

But it's only 2s. a share. A £1 share for 2s.! Why,
it's the most wonderful bargain. Fifty shares for £5.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Sarcastically*]

Ye can buy 100 while ye are about it—they're no mair
than a bob to-day.

ANNABEL [*Ecstatic*]

A hundred pounds for five?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

If ye'll tak' my advice——

ANNABEL

But with the £95 profit I can buy all that Tom
wants!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Angrily*]

Hoots, woman! Buy Premiers and bang goes your
five pounds!

ANNABEL

But I tell you——

106

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Screaming*]
Ye shallna throw awa' five pounds.

ANNABEL
But I haven't got five pounds.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
That's true. I'm an ass.

ANNABEL [*Persistent*]
But if I *had* five pounds——

BROADLEY [*As he opens the door*]
My good woman, I've told you three times I'll settle with her.

MRS. CROW [*Appearing pertinaciously behind him*]
I don't want my 'ouse dragged into the police-court.
She come soppin' and screamin'——

ANNABEL
What's the matter, Tom?

BROADLEY
Oh, nothing! Says we poured water on a woman.

MRS. CROW
She's not a woman! She's the wife of a waterman.

BROADLEY [*Blandly*]
Ah, a mermaid!

MRS. CROW
Your Pears' soap fell on 'er 'ead.

BROADLEY
Let her keep it for her honesty.
[Closes door on MRS. CROW.]

ANNABEL [*Remorsefully*]
Oh, Tom! Will she send the police?

BROADLEY
We'll buy her a new dress.

ANNABEL
But where's the money?

BROADLEY [*Embarrassed*]
Oh, Sir Robert——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Me!

ANNABEL
No! No!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Na! Na!

BROADLEY
It's no use crying over spilt water. Cut along, dear.
[Perceiving SIR ROBERT is carrying the string bag]
Why, where are you going?
108

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Fish-buying in Poplar is nae wark for leddies!

[*Going towards door. BROADLEY smiles knowingly.*]

ANNABEL [*To SIR ROBERT*]

You've forgotten your cigars!

[*Picks up box. BROADLEY'S smile dies.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Embarrassed*]

Ou, ay—I brocht 'em for Tammas.

ANNABEL

No! no! no! I tell you. We are not paupers.

[*Shoves them into SIR ROBERT'S tail pocket as he goes out. To BROADLEY*]

Take your tub now, dear.

[*Exeunt.*]

BROADLEY [*Disgusted*]

Take my tub with Miss Roseleaf coming! . . . Well, I suppose any smoke's better than none.

[*Takes up pipe, humming brokenly throughout*]

There was a filthy fisherman

Who filched my best cigars.

He smoked a pipe from morn till night,

It smelt like motor cars.

[*He takes out pouch and mechanically extracts again the forgotten piece of steak*]

D——n!

[*Holding the meat gingerly, he goes to throw it out of the window; then remembering the row over the tub, he takes it to the fire, then murmuring, "No, that'll*

*smell," pulls up the loose board. There is a knock.
He buries it with guilty haste and jumps up]*

Come in!

*[Enter MISS ROSELEAF, bland and exquisite as usual,
with a reticule and a dainty umbrella]*

Oh, you! I thought you had to whistle.

MISS ROSELEAF

But I saw Mrs. Broadley go out with——

BROADLEY

Ah, yes! impeccable one. And I must apologise again for keeping you hanging about in these April showers.

MISS ROSELEAF

But I told you I met some local feminists, and we held a council of war under your window. Here's your weekly report.

[Hands a long blue envelope.]

BROADLEY *[Taking it, not opening]*

Nothing wrong, I suppose?

[His eyes go roving all over the floor.]

MISS ROSELEAF

Nothing to bring you back from the Nile.

[Sits at centre table]

Mr. Lewis's statement shows that your share of last week's profits was £10,419 6s., only £33 below the same week for last year. I'm afraid your super-tax—— Are you looking for anything?

110

BROADLEY [*Almost under the table*]
Only a cigar-end. I was hoping Sir Robert——

MISS ROSELEAF
Here's your own that fell on us—quite dry—I was
collecting it for the Cause.
[*Produces it out of a neat envelope.*]

BROADLEY
My preserver!
[*Seizes it.*]

MISS ROSELEAF
My friends thought it was an anti-feminist missile, but
I took it as a danger-signal.

BROADLEY [*Laughingly*]
And so it was.
[*MISS ROSELEAF tenders him a fat cheque-book*]
Let me light my end up! Spread 'em out!
[*MISS ROSELEAF tears out the cheques and spreads
them over the table, while he, sitting at its left edge,
lights up and goes on talking*]
I say!
[*Puffing out pleasantly*]
Your husband must be a lucky man. Are you still
keeping him?

MISS ROSELEAF
Naturally—he still writes plays.

BROADLEY
But it's not natural to keep a man!

MISS ROSELEAF

But how could I love a man who kept *me*?

BROADLEY

Eh? Why not?

MISS ROSELEAF

I should feel I *had* to love him—and that would make me hate him.

BROADLEY [*Blankly*]

Oh!

MISS ROSELEAF

Besides, a woman wants to be her husband's mother, not his mistress.

BROADLEY

I say! This is illuminating!

MISS ROSELEAF [*Imperturbably producing stylo*]

Sign, please!

[*Perpending her words, he begins mechanically signing the sea of cheques. A knock.*]

BROADLEY

Come in!

MRS. CROW [*More meekly*]

'Ave yer done with the tub now?

BROADLEY

Done? I haven't begun!

112

MRS. CROW
But I need it.

BROADLEY
Not so much as I. Just leave it half an hour, will you — we want it for a bath. Here — here's a sovereign!

MRS. CROW
Eh?
[Gasps.]

BROADLEY
Sorry I've got nothing smaller.

MRS. CROW
Don't mention it!
[Bites the coin to test it. Looks at the sea of cheques on the table, gasps again, opens and bangs the door, but remains within, her back to it.]

MISS ROSELEAF
That was too much money.

BROADLEY
When I'm coining ten thousand a week!

MISS ROSELEAF
When you have the position of a pauper to keep up.
[MRS. CROW makes a gasping noise and hurries out, not unseen]
That woman suspects something.

MRS. CROW [*Genially from without*]
Certainly, Mrs. Broadley, it shall be biling.

BROADLEY

My wife!

[MISS ROSELEAF *and he frenziedly sweep the cheques together*]

Get behind the screen.

MISS ROSELEAF

Certainly not. This isn't a French farce. I'll come later.

[*Enter ANNABEL.*]

ANNABEL

You here?

MISS ROSELEAF

Yes, I came for a testimonial.

ANNABEL

We can't give you one. You spent too much money.

BROADLEY

But, Annabel——

ANNABEL

My dear, be guided by me! Good afternoon, Miss Roseleaf.

[MISS ROSELEAF *bows and exit.*]

ANNABEL [*Perceiving cigar*]

Why, where——?

114

BROADLEY

Sir Robert threw it away.

ANNABEL

You pick up cigar ends?

BROADLEY

Must make ends meet.

*[She remorselessly takes his cigar away and throws it
in the fire]*

But where *is* Sir Robert?

ANNABEL

The Poplar fish is too dear, he says. He's taken a taxi to his own place in Billingsgate. I hurried back because I remembered you had no soap. Here!

[Gives him soap]

Mrs. Crow is boiling your water—she seems quite changed.

BROADLEY

Yes, I gave her a—piece of my mind.

[Goes behind screen]

But, I say, you won't let Sir Robert in. An Englishman's tub is his castle—what?

ANNABEL

I'll lock the door and put a placard on it.

*[Writes. In the silence one of his boots is dumped
down]*

There! Will this do, Tom? "Leave bag and money with bill on landing." All in capital letters, as it's so dark there.

BROADLEY [*Behind screen*]
Sounds all right.
 [*Another boot dumped down*]
But what money?

ANNABEL
The change. I gave him half a crown.

BROADLEY
How rash!

ANNABEL
And he has to bring back the bill—to show he's not
cheating himself.

BROADLEY
Ah! one can't be too careful with Scotchmen.
 [*ANNABEL opens the door and pins up paper outside.*]

ANNABEL
Oh dear, this place is a pigsty!
 [*Gets the pail and a housecloth, and kneels down to
scrub.*]

BROADLEY [*Looking round screen*]
I say, you mustn't do that!

ANNABEL
But it's filthy!
116

BROADLEY [*Hurrying out in his slippers and shirt-sleeves*]

I forbid it. You'll spoil your hands! This is *my* job.

[*With much joint wrangling and chattering he wrests the housecloth from her and falls on his knees. THISBE and TIPTREE come through the open door. The artist carries an easel with a replica of his picture of the Bank of England.*]

BROADLEY [*Startled, then blandly waving the bucket*]
Just practising fire-drill!

[*Exit behind screen with bucket.*]

THISBE

Annabel!

[*Embraces her.*]

ANNABEL

So you got my letter?

THISBE

Yes, but I didn't realise—oh, my dear! How brave you are!

ANNABEL [*Perceiving TIPTREE behind his picture*]
The Master!

THISBE [*With mock humility*]
My Master now!

ANNABEL

You've married him?

TIPTREE

Not yet. We marry to-morrow.

[Embraces her, hampered by the picture. Its back, becoming visible, is seen to bear added legends, "The Bank of England," "This Side Up with Care."]

THISBE

And then we go—where *you* are supposed to be—up the Nile.

ANNABEL

Then how lucky I've got a wedding-present for the Master!

[Thrusts pin into his tie.]

TIPTREE *[Pricked]*

Oh!

THISBE

What a lovely pin!

[Takes possession of it]

Thank you, Annabel.

TIPTREE

Yes, but if Mrs. Broadley's so poor, we can't take her money too.

THISBE

How else can we go up the Nile?

TIPTREE

I'd rather honeymoon here. Such a jolly North light.

118

Never mind, my picture shall enjoy it.

[*Adjusts it on easel*]

Yes, dear lady, though your creditors seized my masterpiece, here we are again! You shan't pay through the nose for nothing.

ANNABEL

But what is this?

[*THISBE turns it hastily*]

Ah, my Dance of Death!

TIPTREE

Nothing of the sort!

[*THISBE glares*]

Oom!

THISBE

Grandison means it's only a copy he has made for you——

TIPTREE

Gratis.

[*Re-enter BROADLEY from behind screen, re-clothed.*]

BROADLEY [*Perceiving picture*]

Ah, there's my old friend!

ANNABEL [*Dramatically*]

And just in time to witness the Redemption——

ALL

The Redemption?

119

ANNABEL

Of our honour. Observe.

[*Approaches her cache with stagey movements*]
This is quite Wagnerian. They ought to play the
Dwarf *Motif* from the Ring.

[*Lifts board*]
Isn't it thrilling?
[*Exhumes stocking*]
The Dwarves' treasure!

BROADLEY

So that's where she sinks our capital!

[ANNABEL *holds it up.*]

TIPTREE

Santa Claus in April?

ANNABEL

No, Master, the three hundred guineas I owe Thisbe
for your picture.

BROADLEY [*Poising it*]

I had no idea our liabilities were so heavy.

TIPTREE

Too heavy. Why, thirty pounds——

THISBE [*Taking bag hurriedly*]

Thank you, Annabel.

[*Seizes TIPTREE's arm*]
We must hurry, dearest, or——

120

ANNABEL
But you haven't counted it!

THISBE
Oh, but——

ANNABEL
I insist.
 [Takes it back.]

BROADLEY
Why didn't you give her a cheque?

ANNABEL
When we've no banking account!

BROADLEY *[Embarrassed]*
Oh, ah!

ANNABEL
Besides, I've cheated her with a cheque already.
Cheques are not real, they are only scraps of paper.

*[Sits at right of table, distributing the money-bags.
 TIPTREE sits opposite, and THISBE in between]*

These three, each with a hundred sovereigns; these
three, each with a hundred shillings. Now, if each of
us takes one bag——

[Business.]

BROADLEY
And what about me? Don't I count?

ANNABEL

Not in money matters. But you might hammer down the empty savings-bank.

BROADLEY

But there's no hammer.

ANNABEL

The poker! Oh, how unpractical men are!

[Following ANNABEL'S example, THISBE and TIPTREE pour out their sovereigns. The table becomes one great mass of glittering gold. ANNABEL hums the Dwarf Motif as she counts. BROADLEY, on his knees, bangs at the board, humming a popular air. There is a knock, but everybody is too engrossed to hear it. MRS. CROW opens the door, and appears with a pail of hot water. As she catches sight of the bags, the sea of gold, the three eager faces bending over it, their lips humming and muttering mysteriously, while a strange, lonely figure beats with a poker, her eyes nearly bulge out of her head.]

MRS. CROW *[To herself]*

Swell mobsmen! I'll get you 'ot water.

[Puts down the pail and flees silently.]

ANNABEL

Ninety-nine, one hundred.

THISBE

Ninety-nine, one hundred.

TIPTREE

Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred.

BROADLEY [*Rising*]

Rien ne va plus.

[*Picks up shovel, and like a mock croupier shovels to each bag its gold.*]

THISBE [*Rising*]

We'll take the silver for granted.

[*Sweeps the six bags into her stocking.*]

TIPTREE [*Perturbed*]

But we must leave Mrs. Broadley something.

[*THISBE glares at him.*]

ANNABEL [*Graciously*]

You've left me the picture.

TIPTREE

But that's the wrong way.

THISBE

It's the right way—to express our appreciation of our treatment. Good-bye, Annabel.

[*Kisses her hastily*]

Come along, dear—we haven't too much time.

TIPTREE

But——

123

THISBE

If you talk any more, I won't go to your wedding.

[Hurries him out.]

TIPTREE [*Hurrying after her*]

Oom—oom!

[Bangs against the bucket]

Oh, gurroo!

[Exit, limping.]

BROADLEY

How did it get there?

ANNABEL

Never mind the bucket. Come to me, darling!

[Opens her arms—he flies to them]

At last we are purged of debt. Now begins the new clean life. Together.

[Kisses him]

And now for its symbol—the bath.

BROADLEY

That can't be together. We must toss.

ANNABEL

No, no, it's *your* hot water.

BROADLEY

I've tried twice to get into it. Providence evidently means it for you.

ANNABEL

But truly, dear—I only need my hair washed. Don't

waste that beautiful hot water on a mere head. Besides, can one wash one's hair without a maid?

BROADLEY

We'll ask Providence.

[*Spins a sovereign*]

Head, you wash it—tail, I tub it! Head—I've lost!

ANNABEL

But where did you get a sovereign from?

BROADLEY

Eh? That's only a shilling gilded over. They sell 'em on the pavement for a penny. I mean——Come along, or it'll get cold.

[*Carries the bucket behind screen.*]

ANNABEL [*Lingering by the picture*]

Do you know I'm afraid this can't be a good copy? I don't seem to like it half so much.

BROADLEY [*Coming back*]

Come along!

ANNABEL

But you mustn't let anybody in.

BROADLEY

Not the King of England. There!

[*Turns key*]

And there!

[*Shoots bolt.*]

ANNABEL

How unselfish you are! These days will always be a beautiful memory.

[Goes behind screen.]

BROADLEY

Till she finds out. Oh lord!

[Drops dejectedly into a chair.]

ANNABEL

Oh, Tom, what *have* you done?

[His pyjamas come flying over the screen]

Damped all the bed.

BROADLEY *[Looks round for a place to hang them. Sounds of hair-washing begin behind the screen]*

Ha! How handy! Done you in the eye!

[Spreads them on easel over picture. A knock]

You can't come in!

SERGEANT QUIZZET *[Outside]*

Hopen in the name of the Law!

BROADLEY

The devil! Annabel, how far are you?

[No reply]

Annabel!

[Great splashing]

Oh lord, if she——

[Runs to screen]

Annabel, don't you hear?

ANNABEL

How can I hear with my head in the tub?

BROADLEY

So much the better. It's only about the waterman's wife.

[Sounds of hair-washing resumed.]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Hopen, or I'll break down the door!

BROADLEY *[Unlocking and unbolting]*

Sh! My wife's asleep.

[SERGEANT QUIZZET and a CONSTABLE appear at the door. BROADLEY bars their further advance.]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Why was the door locked?

BROADLEY

It's our early closing day.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Early rising day, you mean. Corfy at the waterside.

BROADLEY

Sh! I tell you.

[Glances guiltily towards screen.]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Trotter, guard the door! See the female does not escape.

BROADLEY

Stop that foolery!

[Produces purse]

How much does the mermaid——?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Take care! It's my duty to warn you that——

BROADLEY

Don't waste the public time. How much?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Penal servitude for life!

BROADLEY *[Drops purse]*

What! She hasn't died of the chill?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Stow that spoof!

[Produces handcuffs]

You'd best come along quietly.

BROADLEY

What on earth for? Where's your warrant?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Under the Coinage Offences Act we need no warrant.

BROADLEY *[Picking up his purse]*

But you need evidence, my dear Dogberry.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Quizzet, sir; Sergeant Quizzet.

BROADLEY [*Murmuring*]

Exquisite!

[*Enter MRS. CROW.*]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Mrs. Crow!

MRS. CROW

Yes, Sergeant.

BROADLEY [*To MRS. CROW as she enters*]

What was it you say you saw?

MRS. CROW [*Venomously banging the table*]

I saw too much money.

BROADLEY [*His face falling*]

Eh? Shall I never get away from it?

MRS. CROW

And I 'eard you tell 'er you was coinin' it!

BROADLEY

Tell who?

MRS. CROW

That lady crook you was forgin' cheques with——

BROADLEY

Sh!

[*Glances uneasily at the screen.*]

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MRS. CROW

Sh! yerself! And who looked as if margarine
wouldn't melt in her mouth.

BROADLEY

Sh! You crimson criminal. You've been listening
at the keyhole.

MRS. CROW

Rather! I'm respectable, I am. Coinin' ten thousand
a week! No wonder you could pay a quid for my tub.

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Pricks up his ears*]

Your tub! That's to wash the stuff!

[*Tries to get past BROADLEY.*]

BROADLEY

What do you want?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

The tub and the woman.

BROADLEY [*Seizes poker*]

Back! She's in it.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

You said she was asleep.

BROADLEY

You woke her up! Always takes a bath when she
wakes up.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

I must hexamine her anyhow . . . Hullo! Are you there? . . . Why don't she answer?

BROADLEY

She didn't hear. Ring up again, I mean, speak louder.

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Shouting*]

Hullo there!

ANNABEL [*Behind the screen*]

Who's there? Go away, or I'll give you in charge.

[*Her face and dripping soapy hair appear above screen*]

Tom! You promised me—— Ha!

[*Screams as she perceives police.*]

BROADLEY [*Poking the fire furiously to explain away the poker*]

I *had* to let 'em in. They only want to ask a few questions.

ANNABEL [*Angrily*]

I call it most inconsiderate. I'm just as wet as the waterman's wife.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Silence! What's your name?

ANNABEL

Now really! As if Mr. Broadley couldn't have told you that!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

No trifling. Are you married or single?

ANNABEL

Oh, do ask my husband!

[Disappears.]

MRS. CROW

'Usband indeed! She wanted *me* to paint my face and make up to an old Dutchman.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

And which board did you say he concealed the moulds and dies under?

MRS. CROW

That, Sergeant.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Trotter, prise the board.

[TROTTER prises ANNABEL's board.]

MRS. CROW

Nothing!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Nothing? That's suspicious. Ha! What's this?

[Treading on BROADLEY's loose board]

Oho!

[He pulls it up, and draws out the meat]

Another clue!

MRS. CROW
Murder!

BROADLEY [*Smiling blandly*]
A scrap of steak, hardly of evidence!

MRS. CROW
So that's where the cat 'oards it all!

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Venting his disappointment
on her*]
Get hout! You put me hoff my game.

MRS. CROW [*Indignantly*]
And who put you hon to the flash female with the
feather?

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Pushing her towards door*]
Get hout!

MRS. CROW
And the Hitalian hanarchist as pretended to be
dumb——?

SERGEANT QUIZZET
Get hout, I tell you.
[*He hurls the meat at her, she dodges and exit, and
it hits the picture*]
Aha! What's this covered up?
[*Takes off the pyjamas.*]

BROADLEY

That is the question. Looks like a bad Easter-egg—what?

[SERGEANT QUIZZET *turns it upside down, then studies the back.*]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

“The Bank of England!” A plan of the Bank! Trotter, this is a dangerous gang. Lucky I applied for a pistol. “This side up with care.”

[*Puts it correct way upward*]

We’ll mark this “Hexhibit A.”

BROADLEY [*In silent convulsions, holding his sides*]

Mercy, Sergeant, I’ll split in a moment!

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Occupied in pencilling back of picture*]

That’ll shorten your sentence. Help us to nab Bill.

BROADLEY

Bill?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Who meets the boat.

BROADLEY

The boat?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Don’t prevaricate. The game’s hup. We’ve got your warning to your pals.

[*Produces placard*]

“Leave bag and money with Bill *on landing.*”

BROADLEY [*Writhing helplessly*]
Oh lord!

SERGEANT QUIZZET
“Hexhibit B.”

[*Pencils on back*]
Now, my man, drop that poker and come along quietly.
[*Waves handcuffs.*]

BROADLEY [*Grows serious*]
Look here, Sergeant, you’ll be the laughing-stock of the Force. I’m Thomas Broadley, who built the Poplar Consumption Hospital—opened by Royalty. My wife and I are trying to realise what it means to be poor and to pig in one room. See?

SERGEANT QUIZZET
Quite! You don’t happen to have read this morning’s *Daily Trump*?

BROADLEY
No.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
Ha!
[*Produces it and reads unctuously*]

“A Millionaire Hup the Nile.
Hinterview with Thomas Broadley.
By our Cairo Correspondent.”

BROADLEY [*Drops the poker*]
D——n that interviewer! He’s the eleventh plague of Egypt.

[*Calls over screen*]
Annabel! Annabel!

ANNABEL [*Popping a towelled head excitedly over screen*]

What is it, dear?

BROADLEY

Tell the Sergeant my name.

ANNABEL [*Disgusted*]

Surely you can tell him that!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Just what I was thinking! Of course, mum, you've all got the same story!

[*With grim amusement*]

Ye're living here to study the life of the poor, aren't you, *Mrs. Broadley*?

ANNABEL

Nothing of the sort. We live here because we can't afford any better.

[*Disappears.*]

BROADLEY

Oh, d——n!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

You see!

[*Slips handcuffs on him.*]

BROADLEY [*Angry*]

You ineffable idiot!

[*Dashes his handcuffed hands into his pyjamas and holds them to the fire, pretending to dry them. Shouts*]

But Annabel!

[*Her head pops up again*]

Tell him where we lived before!

ANNABEL [*Crossly*]

Well, you know as well as I. Not far from the Angel!

[*Disappears again.*]

BROADLEY [*Desperately*]

Look here, Sergeant, you take me to your Inspector—

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Knocking at door*]

May I coom in?

BROADLEY [*Ecstatically*]

The very man! Come in, you scoundrel!

[*Enter SIR ROBERT, with string bag.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Recoiling before police*]

All alive O!

BROADLEY

Look what you've brought me to!

[*Displays handcuffs.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Serve you right! Woman-torturer!

BROADLEY

Shut up! Tell Sherlock Holmes I'm——

SERGEANT QUIZZET

I daresay.

[*To SIR ROBERT McCORBEL*]

And who may *you* be?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Haughtily*]

Everybody kens Sir Robert McCOrbel.

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Amused*]

Ha! You a millionaire too?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Three times ower.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

You don't say? What have you got there?

[*Snatches bag, pulls out piece of cod.*]

BROADLEY [*Amused*]

Fishy! Fishy!

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Pulling out bill*]

McCOrbel, Billingsgate—aha! that's where you got the name. Two pounds of cod, eightpence. Thank you, Mr. Millionaire.

[*Feigns to give back bag, and slips handcuffs on SIR ROBERT, who struggles furiously.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You blithering blatherskite!

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SERGEANT QUIZZET
'Ere, none o' your Billingsgate!
 [Pencils bill]
"Hexhibit C."

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL *[Apoplectic]*
But I'm a Baronet, I tell ye.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
And what is a Baronet doing in Poplar?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I can popple if I like.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
And who certifies you're a Baronet?

BROADLEY
I do, of course.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
Of course. Two drunken men leaning on each other.
 [Calls towards screen]
Now my good woman! How long——?
 [Produces handcuffs.]

BROADLEY *[With desperate politeness]*
Look here, Sergeant, I can explain everything. Take
me along to your Inspector, and I'll give you the finest
box of cigars in the world.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

You heard, Trotter, that shameless hattempt at corruption. They want to lure me hoff the premises. They hexpect more pals. *You* take this crook to the station.

BROADLEY

Thank you, Sergeant. . . . Annabel!
[*Knocks at screen with handcuffs.*]

ANNABEL [*Behind*]

Oh, do let me dry my hair!

BROADLEY

By all means. I'm off to settle the matter with the Inspector.

ANNABEL [*In relieved tone*]

So glad.

BROADLEY

But Sir Robert's back—he'll look after you.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Trotter, by the right, march.

[*Exit* TROTTER. BROADLEY *is following.* SER-
GEANT *tugs at his coat*]

My cigars!

BROADLEY [*Turning on SIR ROBERT*]

Fork 'em out, filcher!

[*Exit.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Agitating his handcuffed hands*]

Hoo can I fork 'em out, ye donnered idiot? What the devil am I padlocked for?

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Humorously*]

For filching cigars, of course.

[*Pulls them from his coat tail and smells them approvingly, and strikes a match.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye canna smoke in a leddy's bedroom. Stand guard outside.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Don't mind. You're safe from mischief. Better to trap your pals too.

[*Going.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Wait! Wait!

[*Gestures wildly towards his high hat*]

Pit on my hat!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

You've got your hat on!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Na, na! On my hands! We mauna skeer her.

[*SERGEANT QUIZZET removes SIR ROBERT'S hat and drops it over his handcuffs*]

Muckle obleeged.

[*Exit* SERGEANT QUIZZET. *Enter* ANNABEL, *her hair charmingly fresh and loosely arranged.*]

ANNABEL

Ah, you've brought the fish! How kind! Won't you put down your hat?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Na, thanks—I'm just awa'! What on airth brings the bobbies here?

ANNABEL

Didn't Tom tell you? We poured water on a waterman's wife.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Eh? What for?

ANNABEL

There was nowhere else to pour it.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Except on a waterman's wife? For shame!

ANNABEL

But it was raining. The waterman's wife was wet when we wetted her.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Screams dazedly*]

But *I* never wetted the waterman's wife!

ANNABEL

Of course not.

[*Opens bag*]

Where's the bill?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Embarrassed*]

It—was only eightpence.

ANNABEL

Then where's the change?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Still more embarrassed
by handcuffs*]

Er—ye can get it oot o' my waistcoat pouch—puir
man's gout, ye ken.

ANNABEL

Oh! Poor Sir Robert!

[*Touching his waistcoat gingerly.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Dinna be skeart. I winna hug ye.

ANNABEL [*Smiling*]

I'm not afraid of that.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye're no?

[*Palpitates impotently under his hat. A knock at
the door*]

Dahmnation!

ANNABEL

Come in!

[TIPTREE *rushes in breathlessly with flying mane, waving a money-bag.*]

TIPTREE

You *must* take this back, dear lady.

ANNABEL

No—no!

TIPTREE

But it's discount on cash. Only a hundred shillings.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And *my* hundred shillings.

ANNABEL

Yours?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ay. Ye keppit arguing sae in the street that I *did* buy ye your Mexican muck.

ANNABEL [*Wildly excited*]

You did?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Yes, I 'phoned frae Billingsgate tae my stockbrokers. But I dauredna tell ye till ye had the siller.

ANNABEL [*Emphatic*]

You bought me a hundred Mexican Premiers?

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SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ay, and sold a hundred thousand for myself.

ANNABEL

Sold a hundred thousand. What for?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

To teach ye a lesson. Pit your brains against a male expairt, indeed! I shall win £2000 and you will lose every penny! D'ye still stick to your bargain?

ANNABEL

I must. Business is business.

[Takes bag from TIPTREE]

Thank you, Master.

[Offers it to SIR ROBERT]

Count it and give me a receipt.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL *[Embarrassed by handcuffs, crossly]*

Count it yourself.

[She tries to undo the string, but is too excited and cuts it with a table-knife, then pours out the stream of silver on the table. TIPTREE turns and perceives his picture is now right side up.]

TIPTREE

At last! Thank you, dear lady, thank you. Ah, it is only in a garret that Art is understood.

[Takes up table-knife and scrapes at picture]

145

Only in a garret can one paint freely, breathe freely,
speak freely——

[*Door flies open and closes.* SERGEANT QUIZZET,
with back to it, points pistol.]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Hands up, Bill!

[ANNABEL *screams.* TIPTREE *drops knife with a*
clash. SERGEANT *handcuffs him*]

And you, madam, red-handed!

[*Handcuffs ANNABEL.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ye dir-r-ty dog!

[*Jets his hat at him.*]

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Imperturbably marking bag*]
“Hexhibit D.”

ANNABEL [*Bewildered*]

What are these bracelets for?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

For the false coin, of course.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Eh?

ANNABEL [*Still more dazed*]

That little gilded coin they sell on the pavement for a
penny?

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TIPTREE

But *I'm* a painter, not a gilder!

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Pricking up his ears*]

Aha! Did *you* paint that?

[*Points to picture.*]

TIPTREE

Of course.

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Well, hain't that enough?

TIPTREE

What do you mean? What will they do to me?

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Get your hair cut!

TIPTREE

You blunderin' son of a jibberin' jackass, with the mug of a mule and the brains of a half-witted critic——

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Stow that!

[*Levels pistol*]

Another word and I'll blow your brains out!

TIPTREE

Oom—oom—oom——!

[*A knock.*]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Sh! No warning!

[*Threatens ANNABEL with pistol*]

Say "Come in!"

ANNABEL [*Tremulously*]

Come in!

[*Enter THISBE, hugging the great stocking.*]

THISBE

Is my fiancé——?

[*Screams*]

Ah!

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Hands up!

[*THISBE drops the stocking with a heavy thud. The SERGEANT handcuffs her.*]

THISBE

Grandison! What does it mean?

TIPTREE

You shouldn't have followed me, darling, especially with your stocking.

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Pulls up bag after bag with increasing unction*]

"Hexhibit E."

THISBE [*Breaks down blubberingly*]

But how are we to get married with these on?

[*A whistle outside—"Coo-ey."*]

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SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Threatens them with pistol*]
Turn to hide your hands!

[*The four prisoners all execute a melancholy manœuvre,
and stand dismally with manacles clanking as he
throws open the door*]

Miss Roseleaf!

MISS ROSELEAF [*Entering*]
Sergeant Quizzet!

SERGEANT QUIZZET [*Lowering pistol shame-
facedly*]
You know these people?

MISS ROSELEAF

As well as you know every feminist speaker. Oh,
Sergeant, Sergeant, I thought that constant attendance
at our meetings and my lectures had improved your
brains!

[*He hangs his head*]

I came, Mrs. Broadley, to ask you to reconsider your
decision.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
Then she *is* Mrs. Broadley?

MISS ROSELEAF
Of course. I am happy to give her a testimonial.

SERGEANT QUIZZET
And this?

MISS ROSELEAF

Is Sir Robert McCorbel. These papers will prove——

SERGEANT QUIZZET

That's henough. A woman speaker's word is a haffidavit. I beg your pardon, everybody. And to think what I owe to Mr. Broadley's Hospital. My mother-in-law died there. I'll run and release him at once.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Stop! Stop! What about us?

[Clanks handcuffs.]

SERGEANT QUIZZET

Hexcuse my hoversight.

[Automatically]

Line up in your queue—I beg your pardon. Ladies first!

[Frees ANNABEL, who at once collects her silver; and THISBE, who at once collects her bags; and SIR ROBERT, who picks up his hat and smooths it resentfully; and TIPTREE, who starts scraping his picture]

Don't be hard on me, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Well, fork out those cigars.

SERGEANT QUIZZET *[Doing it glumly]*

Rotten luck!

[Looking at picture]

I did think that was a clue.

[Exit.]

THISBE [*Looking at her watch*]
Good gracious! Nearly four! The Bank will be
closing! Good-bye, everybody. Come along!

TIPTREE
This Bank's more important.

THISBE [*Snatching knife from him*]
Not if we're to go up the Nile!
[TIPTREE *is dragged away, protesting inarticulately.*]

ANNABEL [*Offering bag to SIR ROBERT*]
And there's *your* money! Give me my Mexican
Premiers.

MISS ROSELEAF
You've been buying Mexican Premiers. I con-
gratulate you.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Startled*]
Eh?

MISS ROSELEAF
Haven't you seen the tape? Great new gold veins
just discovered——!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
What?

[*Turns to ANNABEL*]
Ye've ruined me, woman!!!

ANNABEL
Me?
151

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*To MISS ROSELEAF*]
Run to the first 'phone—tell my brokers to buy me
100,000.

[*Hustles her out. Looks frantically at watch*]
The Stock Exchange is closing. They'll be up to
8 or 10 bob to-morrow. Bang gaes £40,000!

ANNABEL
Never mind your loss—how much do I *win*?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
And what does your beggarly forty pounds matter?

ANNABEL [*Ecstatic*]
Forty pounds! I've won forty pounds!
[*Thrusts money-bag into his hand*]
Over to the Emporium!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Clutching it dazedly*]
The Emporium?

ANNABEL
To buy Tom's things! You may advance the rest
now. Oh, what a joyous surprise for Tom when he
comes back from the police-station!
[*Clapping her hands*]
Run! Run!
[*Throws open door*]
If you get 'em here before he comes back, I'll—I'll
hug you!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*With a shriek of ecstasy*]
You will?

[*He bounds madly forward, and the sounds of his wild career come up from the stairs.*]

ANNABEL

Forty pounds! Why, it's a fortune! Dear Tom!

[*Wipes her eyes*]

Won't he be surprised?

[*Sees fish*]

Oh, my poor, famished boy!

[*Begins to prepare fish for the pot*]

Sixteen guineas for the furniture. Sixteen from forty leaves twenty-four. Now, if there's £40 profit on £5, how much would there be on twenty-four? Why, nearly £200! Hurrah! It's the road back to comfort. Dear little Tommie!

[*Sings at her work*]

There was a jolly *winner* once
Lived by the River Thames,
She staked and won from morn till night,
Till they grew rich again!

Not much of a rhyme, I'm afraid, but, oh, if it could only come true . . . !

[*BROADLEY rushes in, leaving the door open. She springs to him with a great cry.*]

ANNABEL

Tom!

BROADLEY

My prisoner.

[*Hugs her.*]

ANNABEL

Oh, Tom! Tom! And what did they do to my poor boy?

BROADLEY

Nothing. Gave me a whisky and apoll—I mean apology. I say, isn't Miss Roseleaf wonderful?

ANNABEL

What is there wonderful in being known to the police?

BROADLEY

You're jealous.

ANNABEL

I'm not. In a moment you'll think *me* wonderful.

BROADLEY

I always think that.

ANNABEL

My own hubby!

[*Hugs him.* SIR ROBERT *appears at the door, panting.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Saints alive O! I've lost!

BROADLEY

Lost? Lost what?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Sullenly*]

Never *you* mind.

[*Shouts angrily towards stairs*]

Slow-coaches! Ye get nae cigars now! I've saved that onyway.

[A breathless, aproned showman, bounding up behind him with a tantalus and a shaving-stand, barges into him and hurls him to one side]

Dahmnation!

BROADLEY

What's this?

ANNABEL *[In ecstasies]*

I've *bought* them for you!

BROADLEY *[Dazed]*

For me?

[MRS. CROW with a big bath barges into SIR ROBERT'S back, and hurls him to the other side.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Deil tak' ye!

BROADLEY

Why, wherever did you get the money?

ANNABEL *[Almost dancing]*

I made it!

BROADLEY

You made it! How? Where?

ANNABEL

At the real place to coin money—the Stock Exchange!

BROADLEY

What!

[Turns to SIR ROBERT]

Ah, you gave her a tip!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Me! Why, she's ruined me! £40,000!!!

BROADLEY

No?

[Collapses. A great Club armchair with casters, exactly like his old one, is being wheeled briskly into the room. It just arrives under him as he falls. He plumps into it with a voluptuous thud.]

CURTAIN

Act Three

[The following April. MRS. BROADLEY'S drawing-room as before, save that the finikin furniture, and the divan, screen, etc., have been replaced by solid comfort, with a broad guard round the fire, and there are conventional pictures on the walls that tone down the decoration, and a large writing-table in place of the desk, with a telephone on it. The Club armchair, however, still stands out unique in the foreground, while the Tiptree picture still glares on its easel the wrong way up. MISS ROSELEAF enters from the ante-room, and a terrible tic-tac of typewriters comes through till the door springs to behind her. Exquisite and imperturbable as before, she is a shade graver, as though weighed down by responsibilities. She gets a paper from the desk. Enter BEWLISON by the central doors, with a toppling tower of business letters, great and small, on a tray.]

MISS ROSELEAF
Ah, the afternoon post!

BEWLISON
All for Mrs. Broadley.

MISS ROSELEAF
Leave them there!

BEWLISON
Yes, Miss. But is Mrs. Broadley at home to Mr. and Mrs. Tiptree?

MISS ROSELEAF

The Tiptrees back from the Nile?

BEWLISON

Yes, Miss; but my instructions being to admit only business people——

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Tiptree is a business person.

BEWLISON

And man and wife are one. I see.

MISS ROSELEAF

Quite so. Show them in. I daresay *Mrs.* Broadley will see them.

BEWLISON

Yes, Miss.

[Exit MISS ROSELEAF by the ante-room, through the tic-tac accentuated by a telephone bell. Enter FOOTMAN with a letter.]

FOOTMAN

You left one in the box, Mr. Bewlison.

BEWLISON

That's only one for *Mr.* Broadley, stupid. And do put that picture the other way up. It'll madden the Master.

FOOTMAN

Mr. Broadley?

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BEWLISON

No, you Philistine, Mr. Tiptree. Mrs. Broadley never looks at it now—nothing but Stock Exchange Lists.

FOOTMAN

No, Mr. Bewlison.

BEWLISON

That's the worst of women; they always run to extremes—especially when she wears the breeches.

FOOTMAN

Yes, Mr. Bewlison.

BEWLISON

Don't stand chattering. Be quick. Tiptree's here.

[FOOTMAN turns picture. Exit BEWLISON, who comes back ushering in the TIPTREES. The lion, who follows at his wife's heels, is now covered up in a frock coat, his mane is cropped close, and he carries a high hat; his claws are cut and concealed under gloves; only a portfolio under his arm suggests the artist. The FOOTMAN hardly succeeds in suppressing a titter at the transformation. TIPTREE drops the portfolio as soon as his eyes catch sight of his picture.]

THISBE [*Catching the portfolio*]

What's the matter now? It's right side up!

TIPTREE

Yes, but it's rotten. It ought to be burnt. And I for painting it.

[Snatches up a paper-knife and scrapes desperately at it, going back with odd attitudes to squint at it from different angles. Re-enter MISS ROSELEAF through the tic-tac.]

MISS ROSELEAF *[Bowing]*

How do you do, Mrs. Tiptree? Why, Mr. Tiptree, I hardly recognised you.

THISBE *[Beaming]*

Yes, isn't he improved?

TIPTREE *[With an ominous growl of the old lion]*

Oom—oom!

MISS ROSELEAF

But Mrs. Broadley is so sorry. She asks you to excuse her. She's so very busy.

THISBE *[Thunderstruck]*

Eh? Annabel too busy to see *me*!

MISS ROSELEAF

She sees nobody socially between 10 and 6.

THISBE *[Outraged]*

But I've come to her first the day after our landing, and when I ought to be looking for a studio. And after I've had the trouble of tracking her in a taxi from Poplar to Mayfair——

160

MISS ROSELEAF

But it's a Special Mining Settlement on the Stock Exchange. The old boudoir and ante-room simply swarm with typists.

THISBE

Typists! The Stock Exchange! What has that to do with *Mrs. Broadley*?

MISS ROSELEAF

What! Didn't you know that she has become one of the greatest and most daring operators in London, that in one short year she has turned a five-pound note into a colossal fortune——

THISBE [*Breathlessly*]

No?

MISS ROSELEAF

And that passing back almost as rapidly as your taxi from Poplar to Mayfair, she now holds this house in her own name.

THISBE

Grandison, do you hear that?

TIPTREE [*Absorbed in his scraping and squinting*]

Im—im——!

MISS ROSELEAF

Even *Isolde* is now run at a profit. Her puppies fetch twelve guineas apiece.

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THISBE

And *we* imagined it was *Mr.* Broadley who had won back his position.

MISS ROSELEAF

No—*Mr.* Broadley's position remains absolutely unchanged since we all met in Poplar—under somewhat peculiar circumstances.

THISBE [*Dropping on central couch*]

Do not recall that horrible experience. But if *Mrs.* Broadley is no longer dependent on her husband's cheque-book, all the more reason she should see our sketches up the Nile.

MISS ROSELEAF

I'm afraid I must ask you to leave them.

THISBE

Oh, I can't do that. Won't you take them in?

MISS ROSELEAF [*Doubtfully*]

I'll try——

[*Exit with portfolio through the tic-tac.*]

THISBE [*Excitedly*]

Grandison!

TIPTREE

Im—im——

THISBE

Nothing under five hundred guineas.

162

TIPTREE

Why not?

THISBE

It was Annabel that won back the money. Didn't you hear? Mr. Broadley lives on her.

TIPTREE

Poor chap!

[MISS ROSELEAF *returns with portfolio.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Broadley is most sorry, but really she has not a moment. In any case she finds the market for water-colours not speculative enough. But if Mr. Tiptree has brought back any oil-paintings, she is open to purchase any quantity at five hundred guineas apiece.

THISBE [*In disgusted accents*]

Five hundred guineas! When Tiptree is booming from Kensington to Khartoum! Why, even the donkey-boys at Cairo pointed him out—didn't they, dear?

TIPTREE [*Growling savagely*]

Before you had my hair cut! Surely five hundred guineas is a long enough price.

THISBE [*Glaring at him*]

For one of these.

[*Picks up portfolio*]

For oils, nothing under a thousand.

163

MISS ROSELEAF

I will tell Mrs. Broadley what you say, but I know in wholesale transactions she expects considerable concessions.

[*Exit through the tic-tac.*]

THISBE [*Angrily*]

I wish you hadn't interfered.

TIPTREE

I must interfere. You make my prices too long and my hair too short.

THISBE [*Stamps her foot*]

Silence! Say another word and I get a separation.

TIPTREE

What?

THISBE

I mean it.

TIPTREE [*Overjoyed*]

You do? Another word! Another word! Another word! Another——

THISBE [*Bursting into tears*]

Oh, Grandison! And we've not been married a twelvemonth!

TIPTREE

Is that all?

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THISBE

You're a brute. You men get everything out of a woman and then throw her aside like an old paint-brush.

TIPTREE

Just what we don't throw aside. It is you women that cut off our old friends and our old pipes and our old hair.

THISBE [*Weeping*]

You said it was *my* hair you loved.

TIPTREE

We can't be always up the Nile. . . . Now don't cry into my water-colours.

[*Re-enter MISS ROSELEAF through the tic-tac. THISBE blows her nose. TIPTREE continues his scraping and squinting.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Broadley's compliments, but five hundred guineas is her last word.

THISBE

What! With this Tiptree boom——

MISS ROSELEAF

Booms are not born, they are made. To sell off all those pictures of yours, Mrs. Broadley had to insert your husband's praises in the papers at advertisement rates. Don't forget she paid you three hundred guineas when nobody else would have paid thirty.

TIPTREE [*Enthusiastically*]
They wouldn't have paid twenty. You remember my
"Doss-house in Baden-Baden."

BEWLISON [*Announcing*]
Sir Robert McCorbel.
[*Enter SIR ROBERT MCCORBEL, likewise spruced up
and with a high hat.*]

MISS ROSELEAF
Will you please go to Mrs. Broadley at once? She's
been waiting for you.

SIR ROBERT MCCORBEL [*Complacently*]
Aha! Wants news of the irrigation scheme.

MISS ROSELEAF [*To the TIPTREES*]
Good-bye.
[*They murmur a reply. Exit MISS ROSELEAF to the
ante-room. SIR ROBERT is following her.*]

THISBE [*Getting in his way*]
How do you do? You've forgotten your companions
in misfortune.

SIR ROBERT MCCORBEL
Ou, ay! Saints alive O, Tiptree! Did they clap you
in gaol after all?

THISBE
No, no, he had his hair cut in Cairo on our way home.
Would you like to buy a sketch up the Nile?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm no patron of painting. Unless ye've got a picture of Mistress Broadley.

THISBE [*Eagerly*]

Why don't you ask her to sit?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

That's no a bad idea.

THISBE

What price would you——?

TIPTREE [*Disgustedly hurling knife at table and nearly hitting SIR ROBERT*]

Art is not concerned with the Beautiful. If Sir Robert wants a portrait, I'll do Mrs. Crow.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Holding up hands of horror*]

Mistress Crow! Saints alive O!

[*Exit hurriedly.*]

THISBE

Paint a pauper!

TIPTREE

The only people worth painting. I've always wanted her garret for a studio. Come along, Thisbe, we'll go back and take it.

[*Seizes his hat and portfolio.*]

THISBE [*Outraged*]
Poke ourselves in Poplar!

TIPTREE
It's much more picturesque than the Nile.

THISBE
But, dearest——

TIPTREE
Silence! Another word and I'll chuck my chimney-
pot into the Serpentine. Oom—oom—oom!
[*Exeunt. They cross BEWLISON and a FOOTMAN
bringing in tea.*]

BEWLISON
You see how much happier he looks.
[*Surveying the picture*]
We'll leave it like that—Mrs. Broadley never looks at
it now. I'm the only friend of art in this house. Ah,
Reginald!
[*Rings tea-bell*]
I liked the place far better in the olden days. Then a
bourgeois like Sir Robert hardly dared show his nose
here. Now——
[*Enter SIR ROBERT from the ante-room.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Bewlison, you scoundrel, where's my whiskey?

BEWLISON [*Cringingly*]
Coming, Sir Robert, with the *aqua pura*.
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SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Never mind the irrigation.

[*Drinks. Exit BEWLISON with FOOTMAN.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Speaking to ante-room through the terrible tic-tac of typists*]

Come along, partner, the tea will be cold.

ANNABEL [*Appearing at door, preoccupied with a mass of papers*]

Oh, do help yourself, won't you?

[*The door closes behind her, but she remains as if petrified.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Thank you.

[*Pours out whiskey.*]

ANNABEL [*Not raising her eyes from a letter*]

But isn't that too strong, Sir Robert?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Misunderstanding, ceasing to pour*]

Eh?

ANNABEL

I should soften the language and strengthen the demand.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Oh, that!

[*Pours more profusely.*]

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ANNABEL

Yes—that's *my* diplomacy.

[*Calls to ante-room*]

Miss Roseleaf! Send me a stenographer.

MISS ROSELEAF [*Appearing with her notebook*]

They're all busy. Can't I take it?

ANNABEL

How kind of you!

[*Dictates while SIR ROBERT drinks*]

Dear Sirs,—With regard to the contango in your account of to-day, I think the carry-over might have been arranged at one-eighth per cent less.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Shocked*]

Ye canna reasonably ask more than one-sixteenth.

ANNABEL [*Remorselessly*]

One-eighth per cent less, as the market was amply provided with funds, and there seems to have been even some difficulty in placing them. Yours, etc.

[*Hands letter.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

I'll get that done in two ticks.

[*Exit to ante-room.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Smiling*]

Ye're verra unscrupulous.

ANNABEL

Not against you. I do appreciate your faith in me.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And what for should I no have faith? Losh! Your Mesopotamia scheme is the biggest thing since the Punjaub irrigation.

ANNABEL

Bigger. That only paid 18·8 per cent; this will pay 25.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

If the Young Turks really grant the concession.

ANNABEL [*Alarmed*]

But didn't you say that at twelve to-morrow——?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Provided our million and a half is forthcoming——

ANNABEL

But it will be, won't it?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

My million is ready.

ANNABEL

And so is my half-million. But it has taken some getting.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Naturally. Even *your* financial genius—oh, by the way, it canna be in your name, I'm afeared.

ANNABEL

Oh, but it must be!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Turks dinna understand a female financier.

ANNABEL [*Disgusted*]

No wonder they need irrigating.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

But you're an exception. A man's a man for a' that.

[*Drinks complacently.*]

ANNABEL

A Turk isn't a man—he's a turkey-cock. Look at that Under-Secretary. By the way, was he satisfied with his thousand pounds?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Dropping his glass*]

I am an auld ass.

ANNABEL [*In terrible accents*]

You didn't forget to give him his baksheesh?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Saints alive O! And he may go over to the enemy.

[*Is rushing out, but rushes back to gulp down the rest of his drink*]

Bewlison! A taxi!

ANNABEL

Oh, these men!

[*MISS ROSELEAF returns, with the letter. ANNABEL sits at table, reading it*]

Ah, that's better!

[*Signs it. MISS ROSELEAF passes it into the ante-room.*]

MISS ROSELEAF

Shan't I give you some tea?

ANNABEL

Not to-day. It distracts me. *You* have some.

[*MISS ROSELEAF takes tea. ANNABEL ponders papers*]
And how is your husband getting on with my new play?

MISS ROSELEAF [*Eating bread and butter*]

Oh, Mr. Biggs seems as fatuously pleased as ever.

ANNABEL

But do warn him that the love-interest must be all-dominating. I won't take up my option if it isn't.

MISS ROSELEAF

He won't listen to a woman.

ANNABEL

But it was a woman who had the insight to see that he could write winners.

MISS ROSELEAF

And a woman who brought them to you. But he's already forgotten that no male manager would look at them.

[*Drinks tea*]

Since his success, his head has swelled so he's quite another man. He makes me feel like a bigamist.

[*Speaking with her mouth full of bread and butter*]

I foresee we shall have to separate.

173

ANNABEL [*Shocked*]
My dear Miss Roseleaf!

MISS ROSELEAF
He's getting too much money.
[*Drinks tea*]
He actually wants me to give up my post here.

ANNABEL
Give up your work! Which I only gave you back
because of your sex. What a dreadful idea!

MISS ROSELEAF
He even begins to murmur against my feminist
activities.

ANNABEL
The monster!

MISS ROSELEAF
My only hope is that his new play will be a failure.

ANNABEL
Miss Roseleaf!

MISS ROSELEAF
Oh, I don't want *you* to lose, of course. But then
you'd be sure to let the theatre at a profit. Look at
the profit you made on *Parsifal*. You have such
wonderful luck.

ANNABEL [*Outraged*]

Luck? There's no such thing. It's intelligent anticipation. And do pray show some as regards your husband. If you do separate, get hold of his money first, for he'll only make ducks and drakes of it. Look at Mr. Broadley. Began life as a billionaire and now has to come to me for his pocket-money.

[*Resumes study of papers*]

Ah, talk of the angel!

[*BROADLEY comes in. He is beautifully dressed as by a fond mamma, but looks profoundly miserable.*]

ANNABEL [*Looking up from her papers*]

Late for tea again, Tommy.

BROADLEY [*Sulkily*]

Don't want tea!

[*Looks at tantalus*]

I see, *he* has been here again.

ANNABEL

Sir Robert is indispensable to my affairs.

BROADLEY

But not to my drawing-room.

ANNABEL

Whose drawing-room? I do hope Tommy didn't get his little feet wet.

BROADLEY [*Crossly*]

No!

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2 F

ANNABEL
We don't want toothache again.

BROADLEY [*Grimacing angrily*]
Oh!

ANNABEL [*Solicitously*]
Was that a twinge?

BROADLEY
No!

ANNABEL [*Her head immersed in papers*]
And did he have a pleasant afternoon at the picture-palace?

BROADLEY
No!!
[*Plumps violently into the Club chair.*]

ANNABEL
No? I expressly picked out an amusing programme.
Wasn't it funny?

BROADLEY
No!!
[*MISS ROSELEAF offers him a teacup*]
I told you, no!!!!

ANNABEL
You sound cross.
176

BROADLEY

I *am*! You might give me your society at tea.

ANNABEL

You're not taking tea.

BROADLEY

Don't quibble.

ANNABEL

But it's a Special Settlement day.

BROADLEY

Can't you get a special man?

ANNABEL

I wouldn't even trust a woman. . . . That reminds me, Miss Roseleaf, did you make a note to warn your husband the love-interest must be all-dominating?

MISS ROSELEAF

I'll do so now.

ANNABEL

Thank you. . . . Oh, and not *devilled* oysters to-night!

[MISS ROSELEAF *notes that too.*]

BROADLEY

But I love them devilled.

ANNABEL

Sir Robert prefers them raw.

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BROADLEY

He's dining here, too!!!

[*Enter BEWLISON and FOOTMAN to clear away tea.*]

ANNABEL

There's such lots to discuss over the walnuts—we have a big irrigation scheme in Mesopotamia. And, on second thoughts, Miss Roseleaf, let the *poularde* be *à la Valenciennes*, not *à la Millicent*; Sir Robert hates wine in his sauces.

[*Exit MISS ROSELEAF*]

Bewlison, put out the '68 port. Sir Robert loves the '68 when there's a heavy operation forward.

[*Exit BEWLISON and FOOTMAN with tea.*]

BROADLEY

Unless the oysters are devilled, I dine at the Club.

ANNABEL

Do!

BROADLEY [*Bitterly*]

You would prefer it?

ANNABEL

Well, I don't like to pay your subscription for nothing. And business only bores you.

[*Telephone rings*]

Ye-es?

BROADLEY [*Jumping up*]

That's the last straw!

178

ANNABEL

Sh! I can't hear.

BROADLEY [*Taking receiver away by force*]

Listen to me!

ANNABEL

But it's an American millionaire who wants to buy this Tiptree.

BROADLEY [*Eagerly returning the receiver*]

Oh, go ahead! Go ahead!

[*Makes faces at the hated picture.*]

ANNABEL

Hulloa! . . . Yes, I was cut off. . . . You would prefer Tiptree's "Pauper Funeral in Poplar"? But that's two thousand guineas. . . . Yes, the "Chrysanthemums near Cromer" is only fifteen hundred. . . . You'd still rather have the "Pauper Funeral." . . . Very well. Yes, you can send up for it at once. . . . Good-bye.

BROADLEY

Oh lord! And I thought you'd got rid of *that!*

[*Looks miserably at picture.*]

ANNABEL

I *have!* And at 1700 guineas profit.

BROADLEY

But that's "The Dance of Death."

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ANNABEL

Not this season.

[Rubs off title from back]

My tame critics worked so hard to sell off Tiptree's slum subjects that now *everything* sells best under East End names.

BROADLEY

But is that honest?

ANNABEL *[Rubbing]*

Perfectly. The art's in the picture, not in the title. Besides, from a "Dance of Death" to a "Pauper Funeral in Poplar" is not such a far cry. Look at the hearse.

[Points to the adumbration of a motor-bus.]

BROADLEY

But I didn't know you had his "Chrysanthemums near Cromer" as well.

ANNABEL

This *is* the Chrysanthemums as well—for those who prefer Tiptree in a sunny mood.

BROADLEY *[Shocked]*

Oh, Annie!

[Telephone rings again.]

ANNABEL *[At telephone]*

Yes? . . . You'll take "The Chrysanthemums" too?

BROADLEY [*Chuckling*]
Ha! Ha! Ha! Caught!

ANNABEL [*Frowning*]
Sh! . . . By all means. Then 3500 guineas the
two . . . no, don't send up to-day—to-morrow . . .
Good-bye.

BROADLEY [*Smiling maliciously*]
You're nicely cornered!

ANNABEL
Rubbish! I've got out of tighter bear squeezes. At
the worst I can get one of Tiptree's Egyptian mysteries
for a thousand guineas and make five hundred.

BROADLEY.
But chrysanthemums don't grow in Egypt.

ANNABEL
In that strong sunshine it isn't so easy to tell chrysan-
themums from crocodiles.

BROADLEY [*Sarcastically*]
Wonder you don't call it *Crocodiles* in Cromer. Well,
anyhow, it's gone at last. And now—dear——
[*Advances amorously. Telephone goes again*]
You really must throttle that!

ANNABEL
Does it worry the boy? I'll switch it on to my office.
There!
[*Gathers up her papers to go.*]

BROADLEY

But, Annie! I want *you*!

ANNABEL

To-morrow.

BROADLEY

To-day, now, at once!

ANNABEL

What's the matter with my pet?

[*Caresses his hair*]

Has it been spending too much? Shall I write it a little cheque?

BROADLEY [*Maddened*]

No! I've got too much money.

ANNABEL [*Quietly*]

But not too much gratitude for it.

BROADLEY

Then let me earn my own money.

ANNABEL

By what? Have you forgotten the crash you came?

BROADLEY

There can't be a crash if I just get a job in the city.

ANNABEL

And what would be the good of that?

BROADLEY

It will save you from planning out my every hour. I should have regular work.

ANNABEL

My poor Tommy! I couldn't dream of it. While I can work for two, my pet shall not soil his fingers with a pen. A man's place is the Club.

[Smooths his cheek. He tries to embrace her. MISS ROSELEAF appears at the door of the ante-room.]

MISS ROSELEAF

I'm so sorry, but Sir Robert insists on speaking to you from the Embassy.

ANNABEL

In a moment. Hold on.

[He clings to her hand]

Not you, silly.

[MISS ROSELEAF disappears]

Good-bye, precious. Till after dinner.

[Gives him a maternal kiss on the brow; he returns it passionately on the lips and holds her to him.]

ANNABEL

Let me go—Sir Robert——!

BROADLEY

D——n Sir Robert!

[Strains her tighter. At last she extricates herself, and smoothing her ruffled hair, vanishes into the tic-tac.]

BROADLEY

Fool!

[Wipes his lips]

I've embraced slavery again. I've hugged my chains.

[Re-enter MISS ROSELEAF. She goes towards desk.]

MISS ROSELEAF

Mrs. Broadley left some papers.

BROADLEY *[Desperately throwing them towards her]*
This must end!

MISS ROSELEAF

Just what I've been thinking. The complications and legal fictions are getting too much even for scientific management. Why, Mrs. Broadley has twice all but collided with *your* business transactions, and I must draw the line at downright lying.

[Is going back.]

BROADLEY

But stop—I want to talk to you.

MISS ROSELEAF

Very sorry—I'm Mrs. Broadley's employee now.

BROADLEY

But I pay you twice as much as she.

MISS ROSELEAF

I can't help that. I could hardly tell her I was already engaged to you at double salary, could I?

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BROADLEY

I don't say you could. But considering you get three salaries——!

MISS ROSELEAF

And have six clandestine country-houses to look after——!

BROADLEY

I quite realise that without you I should burst like a bubble.

MISS ROSELEAF

You'd better own up.

BROADLEY

Too late. Mrs. Broadley would never forgive my cruel trick—especially now she has her own money. She'd want a separation.

MISS ROSELEAF

Then you and my husband could console each other.

BROADLEY

You are leaving him?

MISS ROSELEAF

Now that he has money, he wants to be my master.

BROADLEY

And you want to be his mother—I remember. And yet you expect me to confess to *my* wife! To rob her

of the joyous illusion of restoring my fortunes! To tell her she is not my mother, but my martyr! No, I must go on lying.

[*Drops into his chair.* MISS ROSELEAF *goes with the papers to her door*]

Oh, Miss Roseleaf, why have you women this terrible power over us?

MISS ROSELEAF [*Turning with her hand on the door-knob*]

I suppose it's because you want us more than we want you.

BROADLEY

That's true in my case at least.

[*He broods miserably*]

But we must emancipate ourselves!

[*Springs up resolutely*]

If we can't have you and our self-respect together, we must give you up. Ask Mrs. Broadley to come in.

MISS ROSELEAF

You're not going to confess *now*!

BROADLEY

I must——!

MISS ROSELEAF

But you know how busy she is.

BROADLEY

If I put it off, I may grow cool again.

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MISS ROSELEAF

Well, I'm sure she won't come.

BROADLEY

Tell her it's a matter of life and death.

MISS ROSELEAF

I'll tell her it's a matter of business.

[Exit.]

BROADLEY

Ah, thank heaven, I've at last found the strength!

[Pours out whiskey. As he is drinking, ANNABEL, her hands full of her papers, re-enters through the tic-tac and switches on the 'phone.]

ANNABEL *[Annoyed]*

I thought you had gone to the Club.

BROADLEY *[Puts down his glass confusedly]*

I hadn't finished here.

ANNABEL

Couldn't you have had more at the Club? Interrupting me like this! What business can *you* have?

BROADLEY *[Sulkily]*

I had plenty once.

ANNABEL

My dear Tommy, you didn't call me out to tell me that! You know it's a Special Settlement day.

BROADLEY

That's why I want to have ours.

[Takes her paperless hand.]

ANNABEL

Ha!

[Pulling her hand away]

You only want to make love again!

BROADLEY

No, I don't. But I can't say what I have to say to a business woman.

ANNABEL

And yet you pretended you wanted me on business.

BROADLEY

I wanted to talk about my losses.

ANNABEL

But, my dear, have I ever reproached you?

BROADLEY

No, but——

ANNABEL

And haven't I enough for both?

BROADLEY

Yes, but——

ANNABEL

Then why not let by-gones be by-gones?

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BROADLEY

With all my heart, only——

ANNABEL

Only you want to waste my precious time.

[*Returning.*]

BROADLEY

No! No! I haven't spoken yet.

ANNABEL [*Half turning back*]

Why, you've done nothing but speak.

[*Going.*]

BROADLEY [*Desperately*]

But listen! The day our furniture was seized——

[*Telephone rings. Frenziedly*]

I thought you'd throttled that!

ANNABEL

I switched it on again when you lured me in.

[*Speaks through it*]

Ye-es? No, no—not to take up for cash! . . . For

the account, of course! . . . I say, are you there?

How's the option quoted? . . . Yes, for three months.

. . . No, I don't want the put *and* call. Good-bye.

[*Hangs up receiver*]

Yes, my poor darling, you were speaking of your losses.

But what could be expected? You were handicapped

from the start by having too much money.

BROADLEY [*Savagely*]

You mean too little brains.

ANNABEL

Don't let us split hairs. I was silly enough myself when I had too much time.

[Opens her door; the tic-tac is heard.]

BROADLEY *[Desperately following her and closing door]*

But, Annie! I want you to understand——

ANNABEL

Of course I understand. To know all is to forgive all, and I do forgive you.

BROADLEY

But you don't know all!

ANNABEL

But I forgive you all the same. . . . Now do run away and play.

BROADLEY

But I haven't told you yet! Wait! For heaven's sake!

ANNABEL

Don't be such a cry-baby. There!

[Turns as if to humour a child]

Tell Mummy, then!

BROADLEY

Not if you rustle those papers.

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ANNABEL

There!

[Lays them down]

They shall go bye-bye!

BROADLEY

But I can't tell you when you're standing perched like a bird ready to fly.

ANNABEL

Well, I sit.

[Perches on the arm of the Club chair.]

BROADLEY

But give me your hand—what I have to say can only be said in an atmosphere of sympathy and tenderness.

ANNABEL

There is my hand. Next, please.

BROADLEY

But you mustn't laugh at me.

[Slips down beside her on the chair-arm]

I want you to be thinking of those lines from Browning about my having a double-chin

[Confused]

—two faces, I mean.

ANNABEL

I am thinking. And I remember that you said two faces are better than one. Do you want my face?

BROADLEY
It would be an improvement.

ANNABEL
There is my face!
[*Puts it to his.*]

BROADLEY
Thank you, darling! Well, the fact is——
[*Telephone rings. He jumps up*]
To blazes!

ANNABEL [*Jumping up to speak through it*]
Ye-es? Oh, Mrs. Tiptree! So sorry I couldn't see you. Eh? You *will* let me have an oil at five hundred guineas? "Natives up the Nile." Thank you. . . . Eh? Oh! Only if I promise to take two water-colours for another five hundred guineas. I see. Rather a lot of money. . . . But look here! Hullo! Are you there? Give me three water-colours for two. . . . Yes, one thousand guineas in all. . . . Good. . . . Send them up at once, please. . . . Oh, hullo! Are there chrysanthemums in the oil? Yes, I know they don't grow there. . . . What's that? Cotton in flower? Yes, that will do quite well. Good-bye.

[*Hangs up receiver*]

You see, dear, while you are fooling and philandering, I've made a thousand guineas at least.

BROADLEY
Yes, yes, but sit down.

ANNABEL

I can't—I'm too excited to-day. There's Mesopotamia—but, of course, you couldn't understand. It's too big.

BROADLEY

There is nothing bigger than me. You *must* sit down.

ANNABEL

Oh! Oh! Of course, little Tommy is a big thing in his way.

[*Strokes his hair*]

But he can't be his Mummy's whole existence.

BROADLEY

I *was*, in Poplar.

ANNABEL [*Moves away, frowning*]

In Poplar I had nothing else. In normal life love must take a back seat.

BROADLEY

You won't even do that. . . . Go on stroking my hair at least.

[*Tries to nestle his head on her breast. She flings apart.*]

ANNABEL

There are moments, Tommy, when you remind me irresistibly of Isolde!

[*Seizes her papers and runs out through the tic-tac.*]

BROADLEY [*Wounded to the quick*]

Isolde! Isolde!

[*Collapses into the Club chair. SIR ROBERT enters unannounced, and without perceiving him goes straight to the ante-room and lays his hand on the door-knob. BROADLEY turns his head*]

Where the devil are you going?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

That's *my* beezness.

BROADLEY

Your business.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

My *beezness*. Ye ken verra weel it's a Special Settlement.

BROADLEY

Yes, I haven't had it with my wife, but I'll have it with you.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

What on airth do you want?

BROADLEY

To see a little more of my wife and considerably less of you.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Well, of all the ungrateful blatherskites. And who got ye your wife? Thanks to me, ye're enjoying all the pleasures of poverty and all the luxuries of a lap-dog!

BROADLEY [*Springs up frenziedly*]
Lap-dog! You——!
[*About to rend him.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Facing him fearlessly*]
Losh, man, I see what it is, ye've been drinking my
whiskey.

BROADLEY
Your whiskey?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
And would it have been here but for me? Who taught
your wife all the tricks of Threadneedle Street, who
made her Mistress Midas?

BROADLEY
You old humbug! Why, it's her financial genius
that's doubled your fortune.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I dinna deny it. She's got a wonderful nose for money
—but who trained her to gae smellin' about with it?
All *you* did was to give her silk pocket-handkerchers.
Ye treated her like a dressmaker's dummy. And now
that she gangs her ain gait, Tammis, ye're jealous.

BROADLEY
Jealous of you? Ha! Ha! Ha!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Jealous that I now do all my big financial combinations
with the mistress instead of with you.

BROADLEY

To hell with your combinations! I've got too much money already—there's a million and a quarter on deposit, eating its head off.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Why not ask the mistress to find you a profitable investment?

BROADLEY

Spare me your irony. You know the position your devilish advice has landed me in.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

My advice, ye auld runt! I only advised you to keep up the reek a fortnight.

BROADLEY

The reek?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Was it no a reek? A game, a farce, a frolic. Is it my fault ye're minus the spunk to unfool her, that ye havena the speerit of a tapeworm?

BROADLEY [*Beside himself*]

Leave my house!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Your house, indeed! It's Mistress Broadley's house.

BROADLEY

Only by a legal fiction.

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SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Well, you gae intae the box and prove that. I am here under Mistress Broadley's protection.

BROADLEY

You have the brazenness to——

[*Speechless with fury.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I never meddle 'twixt man and wife, but I'm an obstinate beggar to bully.

[BROADLEY *advances menacingly*]

Lay a finger on me, and it all cooms oot in Court.

[BROADLEY *stops, paralysed.*]

BROADLEY

You filthy fishmonger!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Cheerfully*]

All alive O!

[BROADLEY *moves towards the ante-room*]

Where are ye gaeing?

BROADLEY

To tell Mrs. Broadley to turn you out.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Bide a wee! Bide a wee! Or it all cooms oot in camera—richt here before your wife!

BROADLEY [*Paralysed afresh*]

You mean skunk!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You meeserable mollusc! Ha! Ha! Ha! I kenned richt weel ye'd no daur.

BROADLEY

I do dare—but I won't have *you* blab, you Billingsgate blighter! Reek, indeed! You'd make it smell even worse than it does.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Stung at last to shouting*]
It couldna stink much stronger. To turn your wife out o' the house, to tak' the carpet from under her feet and the chair from under her——

BROADLEY

Ha!!!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I've been mighty magnanimous not to blab before and show her the sort of man I wasna.

[*Enter ANNABEL excitedly.*]

ANNABEL

Do I hear Sir Robert back?

[*Breathlessly*]

Well—have you nobbled the Turkish Under-Secretary?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Drily*]

I think Tammas has something mair important to tell ye.

ANNABEL [*Exasperated*]

I am fed up with Thomas's affairs. He ought to be at the Club.

[*BROADLEY's brow blackens impotently.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
But it's verra pressing.

ANNABEL
Yes, I know it is. Tell me about Mesopotamia!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Gestures to BROADLEY*]
Tell her about molluscs.
[*BROADLEY writhes impotently.*]

ANNABEL
Still harping on your devilled oysters? Don't be so greedy, Tommy. When I'm *so* excited about Mesopotamia.

BROADLEY
Mesopotamia! Mesopotamia! I'm sick of the blessed word.
[*Going distractedly towards central exit.*]

ANNABEL
Where are you going?

BROADLEY [*Turns back*]
To Jericho!
[*Exit, with a bang.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Grins triumphant*]
Ha! Ha! Ha! Is he no comical?

ANNABEL
You mustn't laugh at Tommy! He gets fretful some-

times—I think it's his teeth. And what did the Under-Secretary——?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I've saved a hundred poonds!

ANNABEL [*Delighted*]
No? How?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Paid him in poonds Turkish.

ANNABEL
You genius!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Am I no? And the concession at twelve to-morrow!

ANNABEL
Hurrah! And in my name?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
They agree—provided there's a man with you!

ANNABEL
Shake, partner!
[*Sits beside him on couch near fire.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Seizing both her hands*]
Ah, why didna we coom thegither when my wife died?
We'd have cornered creation.

ANNABEL

Yes, what a pity!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Both with big brains and iron backbones! Me from
a barrow and you from a garret! Fecks, 'tis a marriage
made in heaven.

ANNABEL [*Laughingly*]

For better or worse, for richer or poorer.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Ay, for rise or fall.

[*Shakes her hands.*]

ANNABEL

For premium or discount.

[*Shakes.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

For flotation or liquidation.

[*Shakes.*]

ANNABEL

For options or margins.

[*Shakes.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

For bulling or bearing.

[*Shakes.*]

ANNABEL
For assets or liabilities.
[*Shakes.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Solemnly*]
Till death us do part.

ANNABEL [*Rising, smilingly*]
Or debt.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Still clinging to her hands*]
Nae fear of that.
[*Rises*]
Why, I call ye Mistress Midas. Everything ye touch
turns tae gold.
[*Tries to draw her to him.*]

ANNABEL [*Still smiling*]
Well, hadn't you better let go my hands? You look a
bit yellow already.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
It's my heart ye've touched.

ANNABEL
Then why not pay it into the syndicate?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I gave it ye long ago—a heart of bur-r-ning gold! Oh,
Annie!
[*Embraces her.*]

ANNABEL

Sir Robert! What do you mean? Take your arms away!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

But ye're my partner!

ANNABEL

Not unlimited.

[*Throws off his grasp*]
I'm ashamed of you.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm prood o' mysel'. I have spoke out. I canna live without ye.

ANNABEL

You've lost your senses. Do you think I'm transferable like a signed debenture?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

And what for no? Who's your registered proprietor? A man without a vertebra, a man with neither feck nor——

ANNABEL

Silence! You know I love my husband. A man of your age!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm a young man inside—a gey young man.

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ANNABEL
Leave my house!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
That's the only order of yours I willna obey. But
pit your foot on my head and I will kiss it.

ANNABEL
Thanks, I am not an acrobat.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
There, then!
[*Goes on his knees*]
Wipe your shoon on me, and like the doormat I will
cry, "Welcome."

ANNABEL
My shoes are not muddy. Do get up. You've
fallen low enough in my estimation.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
I'm a sound stock. I shall rise.

ANNABEL
The sooner the better, then.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Not till you gie me a hand.

ANNABEL
Neither a hand nor a foot. Good-bye.
[*Going.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Stop! Ye're forgetting Mesopotamia.

ANNABEL
We can irrigate by correspondence.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Never! If you blast my life like this, I blast your
beezness.

[*Holds up a hand for a lift*]
Your hand, or I withdraw my million.

ANNABEL
You can't frighten me. You know you'd lose far
more.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
We'll suffer together. That's a sweet thought,
Mistress Midas.

ANNABEL [*Alarmed*]
You don't really mean——? When you know I've
only till twelve to-morrow——!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Be thankful I dinna collar the concession.

ANNABEL
I know you're too honest for that. But to leave me
in the lurch unless I—— Oh! aren't you ashamed?

[*Re-enter BROADLEY. He hears the last words.*]
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BROADLEY

You scoundrel! What are you doing on your knees?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

What's that to you? They're my ain knees.

BROADLEY

And you shall beg pardon on them.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

'Tis *you* should be begging pardon of her.

BROADLEY

Then why are you in my place?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Because I've got the gumption to appreciate her. I tak' nae shame for that.

ANNABEL

Get up—some one will be coming in!

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Let them. Let the whole world see a true man at warship!

BROADLEY [*Menacingly*]

Get up——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You gae back to Jericho.

BROADLEY

Get up, or I'll——

ANNABEL

No violence, please.

BROADLEY

Does he propose to be a permanent ornament of the drawing-room?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

I'm an obstinate beggar to bully. I gang my ain gait. I kneel when I please and I rise when I please.

BROADLEY

That's all very well in kirk. But not in *my* house.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

In *whose* house?

BROADLEY

Get up, you obstinate mule—you pig-headed——

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Dinna slang a fishmonger. He can beat ye.

ANNABEL

Let him alone, dear. Our partnership has been dissolved. Come!

[*Takes his arm.*]

BROADLEY

But he can't be *always* on the tapis! I've heard of a carpet knight, but a carpet Baronet——

[*Telephone rings.*]

ANNABEL [*Speaking into it*]
Hullo! Yes. Sir Robert McCorbel is still here.
You want to speak to him? Hold on a moment.
Sir Robert——

[*Tenders the receiver.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Ye dinna fool me.

ANNABEL
Oh, very well.

[*About to hang it up.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL
Stop! Stop!

[*He slides along obstinately and awkwardly on his
knees till he gets to the 'phone*]

Who is speaking? Mistress Tiptree? What do ye
want? Will I ask Mistress Broadley to sit? Ask
her yerself. Eh? Will I sit? Never! . . . What?
Or *stand*? Gae to the devil!

[*Bangs down the receiver.*]

ANNABEL
Come along, Tommy.

BROADLEY
To the devil?

ANNABEL
To let Sir Robert get over *his* devil. Would you like
a hassock, Sir Robert?

[*Offers him cushion.*]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Roaring*]
Na!

ANNABEL
May as well be comfy.
[*Adjusting it near his knees.*]

BROADLEY
How to be happy though cranky!
[SIR ROBERT *hurls the hassock away.*]

ANNABEL
Best let him be, dear.
[*Drawing him out.*]

BROADLEY
But how can we explain him away?

ANNABEL
Mat fever. It's a disease a missionary told me they have in Malaysia. A native gets glued to his mat and can't move.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Pathetically*]
You too, woman!

BROADLEY
Mat fever might explain why Sir Robert can't move. But not why we don't move him. I shall ring for a carpet-sweeper.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL [*Glaring*]
What!!

BROADLEY

I shall have you swept off the premises.

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You will have me sweppit off the premises?

BROADLEY

Into the dustbin.

[Moves towards bell.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Let me see you daur! I've spared you so far, but ring that bell and you shall be sweppit off the premises *with* me!

BROADLEY

You threaten that again?

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

You shall be draggit in the dust to the same dustbin. Touch that button and I do the rest. Ha! I thought that would petrify the mollusc.

BROADLEY *[Galvanised by the epithet]*

Indeed!

[Rings.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL *[Jumping to his feet in sheer surprise]*

Eh? Ye've daured me?

BROADLEY

So it seems.

[Folds his arms]

There's my wife! Now, sir!

[Their eyes meet in dramatic defiance—two strong men testing each other.]

SIR ROBERT McCORBEL

Do your own dir-r-ty wark!

[To BUTLER entering with his hat]

Och, I can find my ain way oot.

[Snatches his hat]

I never meddle 'twixt man and wife.

[Exit.]

BROADLEY

Ha! Ha! Ha! And all the while I was sure Miss Roseleaf would have only a vacuum cleaner!

ANNABEL *[Bursting into hysterical laughter and tears]*

Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha! Oh! oh! oh!

[Takes out handkerchief.]

BROADLEY

You're not crying over Sir Robert?

ANNABEL

Of course not—but to lose the Mesopotamia Concession——

BROADLEY

Don't cry—you mustn't cry—otherwise I shan't have the strength to speak.

ANNABEL
To speak about what?

BROADLEY
To prove Sir Robert was wrong about molluscs——

ANNABEL [*Frenziedly*]
Do leave off about those oysters!

BROADLEY
But, sweetheart——

ANNABEL [*Blubberingly*]
Of course they can be devilled
 [*With heartrending pathos*]
now!
 [*Weeps.*]

BROADLEY [*Distracted*]
Don't! Don't! What *are* you crying about?

ANNABEL [*Blubberingly*]
I want to irrigate Mesopotamia.

BROADLEY [*Wiping away her tears*]
Well, you haven't enough water for that. And I've something much more serious to tell you. Now, do please leave off—if you cry before I begin, how can I have the cruelty to go on?

ANNABEL
What can possibly be worse than Mesopotamia?

BROADLEY
Highbury.

ANNABEL
Highbury?

BROADLEY
And Poplar.

[*Nervously*]
You see, when we lived there I—hadn't really—lost
my money.

ANNABEL
When then?

BROADLEY
Never. Only, you see, I was distracted for love of
you——

ANNABEL
You went mad and thought you had lost it?

BROADLEY
I was mad to be such a brute. But *you* had maddened
me by complaining I had too much money, and so——

ANNABEL
Don't go so fast. Do I understand you were *not*
bankrupt?

[*Begins drying her eyes.*]

BROADLEY

There was never a time when I couldn't have paid twenty hundred shillings in the pound. And yet, my darling, with a cruelty——

ANNABEL [*Impatiently*]

Then you are really richer than before?

BROADLEY

Richer in your love, and yet with a cruelty——

ANNABEL

With our expenses so reduced for a whole year, and with the other money at compound interest——!

BROADLEY

And yet with a cruelty——

ANNABEL

And have you any capital not tied up?

BROADLEY

A million and a quarter——yet with a cruelty——

ANNABEL

Hurrah! The very man and the very million! Sit down, dear, and let me tell you all about it.

[*Presses the bewildered BROADLEY into the Club chair and settles herself almost unconsciously on his knees; she pours out breathlessly*]

You see, the Concession will be for a million and a half acres on the old Narwhan canal, and if we irrigate

them at a cost of eight millions, they will be worth thirty-eight millions even before the Bagdad Railway reduces the portorage to sea-board of agricultural products, which is at present from thirty to fifty per cent. of their gross value, so that when we turn over our Concession to an Irrigation Company——

BROADLEY [*Who by this time is himself again*]
Shall we water the shares too?

ANNABEL [*Sublimely serious*]
No need for that with a billionaire like you on the Board. How lucky you are so much richer than Sir Robert—you see, darling, for these great operations one can't have TOO MUCH MONEY.

QUICK CURTAIN.



