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**The Stronger Woman**

**Motherly Love**



The Stronger Woman, Motherly  
Love *Two Plays by August  
Strindberg* Translated by  
Horace B. Samuel

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# THE STRONGER WOMAN

## CHARACTERS

MRS X., actress, married.

MISS Y., actress, unmarried.

## SCENE

*A nook in a ladies' café ; two small tables, a red plush sofa and some chairs.*

*MRS X. enters in winter dress, in a hat and cloak, with a light Japanese basket over her arm.*

*MISS Y. sits in front of an unfinished bottle of beer and reads an illustrated paper, which she subsequently exchanges for another.*

MRS X.

How are you, my dear Millie ? You look awfully lonely, at this gay time of year, sitting here all by yourself, like a poor bachelor girl.

MISS Y.

*[Looks up from her paper, nods and continues her reading.]*

MRS X.

It makes me really quite sorry to look at you. All alone at a café when all the rest of us are having such a good time of it ! It reminds me of how I felt when I

saw a wedding party once, in a Paris restaurant, and the bride sat and read a comic paper while the bridegroom played billiards with the witnesses. If they begin like this, I said to myself, how will they go on, and how will they end? Fancy! He was playing billiards on the night of his wedding—and she was reading an illustrated paper! Oh, well, but you are not quite in the same box! [*Waitress enters, puts a cup of chocolate in front of MRS X., and exits.*] I say, Millie, I'm not at all sure that you wouldn't have done better to have kept him. If you come to think of it, I was the first to ask you to forgive him at the time. Don't you remember? Why, you could have been married now, and have had a home! Do you remember how delighted you were at Christmas when you stayed with your *fiancé's* people in the country? You were quite enthusiastic over domestic happiness and quite keen on getting away from the theatre. After all, my dear Amelia, there's nothing like home, sweet home—after the profession, of course!—and the kids. Isn't it so? But you couldn't understand that!

MISS Y.

[*Looks contemptuous.*]

MRS X.

[*Drinks some spoonfuls of chocolate out of her cup, then opens the basket and looks at the Xmas presents.*] There, let me show you what I've bought for my little chicks. [*Takes up a doll.*] Just look at this! That's for Lisa. Just look, it can roll its eyes and waggle its neck. What? And here's Maja's cork pistol. [*Loads and shoots at Miss Y.*]

MISS Y.

[*Gives a start.*]

MRS X.

Are you frightened? Did you think I wanted to shoot you, dear? Upon my word I'd never have thought you'd have thought that. I'd have been much less surprised if you'd wanted to shoot me, for getting in your way (I know that you can never forget anything), although I was absolutely innocent. You believed of course that I worked it to get you out of the Grand Theatre, but I didn't do that. I didn't do it, although you think I did. But it makes no odds my saying all this, for you always think it was me. . . . [*Takes out a pair of embroidered slippers.*] These are for my hubby, with tulips on them which I embroidered myself. I can't stand tulips, you know, but he's awfully keen on them.

MISS Y.

[*Looks up ironically and curiously from her paper.*]

MRS X.

[*Holds a slipper up in each hand.*] Just look what small feet Bob has, Eh! You should just see, dear, how well he carries himself. But of course you've never seen him in slippers, have you, dear?

MISS Y.

[*Laughs loudly.*]

MRS X.

Look, you must see. [*She walks the slippers upon the table.*]

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MISS Y.

[*Laughs loudly.*]

MRS X.

Just see here. This is the way he always stamps about whenever he's out of sorts, like this. "Eh, that damned girl will never learn how to make coffee! Ugh! And now the confounded idiot has trimmed the lamp wrong!" The next minute there's a draught and his feet get cold. "Oof, how cold it is, and that blighted fool can never manage to keep the fire going." [*She rubs the soles of the slippers one against the other.*]

MISS Y.

[*Laughs out loud.*]

MRS X.

And this is how he goes on when he comes home and looks for his slippers, which Mary puts under the chest of drawers. Oh, but it's a shame for me to sit here and give my husband away. He's a good sort, at any rate, and that's something, I can tell you. Yes, you should have a husband like that, Amelia; yes, you, my dear. What are you laughing at? Eh? Eh? And I'll tell you how I know that he's faithful! I am sure of it, for he told me so of his own accord . . . what are you giggling at? Why, when I went for a trip in Norway that ungrateful Frederique ran after him and tried to seduce him—can you think of anything so disgraceful! [*Pause.*] I'd have scratched the eyes out of the creature's head, that I would, if she'd come playing around when I was on the scene! [*Pause.*] It was lucky that Bob told me of his own accord so that I didn't get to hear of it first from a lot of sneaking scandalmongers. [*Pause.*]

But Frederique was not the only one, you may say. I didn't know it, but the women are absolutely crazy over my husband. They think he is awfully influential in getting engagements just because he holds an official position! It may be that you, too, have tried to run after him—I don't trust you more than need be—anyway I *know* that he doesn't bother about you and that you seem to have a grudge against him, and consequently against me, the whole time! [*Pause; they look at each other with embarrassment.*] Come round and see us to-night, dear, just to show that you don't feel badly about us, or at any rate about me! I don't know why, but somehow I feel that it would be particularly ungracious of me to be unfriendly towards you of all people. It may be because I cut you out. [*Speaking more slowly.*] Or—or—I can't tell the reason.

MISS Y.

[*Stares at MRS X. curiously.*]

MRS X.

[*Reflectively.*] But everything went wrong, when you came to our house, because I saw that my husband couldn't stand you—and I felt quite uncomfortable as though there was a hitch somewhere, and I did all I could to make him show himself friendly towards you, but without success—until you went and got engaged and then a keen friendship sprang up, so that it seemed for a moment as though you had only first dared to show your true feelings when you were in safety—and then it went on! . . . I didn't get jealous—strangely enough—and I remember the christening when you stood godmother and I made him kiss you. Yes, I did that, and you got



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so embarrassed—I mean I didn't notice it at the time—I haven't thought of it since then either, I haven't thought of it from then till now. [*Gets up sharply.*] Why don't you say something? You haven't said a word the whole time, but have just let me sit and talk; you have sat there with those eyes of yours and picked up all my thoughts—thoughts!—hallucinations perhaps—and worked them into your chain link by link. Ah, let me see. Why did you break off your engagement, and why, from that day to this, have you never come any more to our house? Why won't you come in in the evening?

MISS Y.

[*Seems as though she were about to speak.*]

MRS X.

Stop! You needn't say it! I quite understand now. It was because and because and because. Yes, it all fits in! That's what it is. Ugh, I won't sit at the same table with you. [*Moves her things to another table.*] That was why I had to embroider tulips on his slippers though I couldn't stand them; that was why. [*Throws the slippers on the floor.*] That was why I had to spend the summer at Lake Mälarn, because *you* couldn't stand sea air; that was why my boy had to be called Eskil, because that was your father's name; that was why I had to wear your colours, read your authors, eat your favourite dishes, drink your drinks—chocolate, for instance; that was why. O my God! it is ghastly to think of, ghastly; everything I got came from you to me, even your passions! Your soul crept into mine like a worm into an apple, ate and ate—burrowed and burrowed, till there was nothing left but the rotten core.

I wanted to avoid you, but I could not ; you lay there like a serpent with your black eyes of fascination—I knew that you would succeed at last in dragging me down ; I was lying in a swamp with my feet tied, and the more violently I struggled with my hands the deeper did I work down, down to the bottom, while you lay there like a giant crab, and gripped me in your claws ; and now here I am at the bottom ! Oh, how I hate you, hate you, hate you ! But you, you just sit there and say nothing, quiet, indifferent—indifferent. It is all the same to you if it is the beginning or the end of the month ; Christmas or New Year ; if the rest of the world is happy or unhappy ; you can neither hate nor love ; you sit as stolidly as a stork over a rat-trap. But you couldn't capture your prey, mind you ; you couldn't pursue it ; you could only wait for it. Here you sit in your lair—this nook, you know, has been called the Rat Trap—and you read your papers to see if somebody's having a bad time of it, if somebody's had a misfortune, if somebody's been sacked from the theatre ; here you sit and survey your victims, reckon out your chances like a pilot his shipwrecks ; take your toll.

My poor Amelia, do you know, I feel quite sorry for you, because I know that you are wretched, wretched, like a wounded creature, and malicious because you are wounded. I cannot be angry with you, although I should like to be, because you are the weaker—why, as to that little affair with Bob, I am not bothering about that—what did it really matter to me ? Supposing it was you or somebody else who taught me to eat chocolate, what does it matter ? [*Drinks a spoonful out of her cup.*] Besides, chocolate is very wholesome, and if I did learn to dress myself in your model, well *tant mieux*—it only



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strengthens my hold upon my husband—and you were the loser by it while I was the winner. Why, I had ample grounds for coming to the conclusion that you had already lost him—but it was you still thought that I should go my way! But now you carry on as though you were sitting and repenting; but, you see, I don't do that. One mustn't be petty, you know.

Why should I just take what nobody else will have? Perhaps you—taking it all round—are stronger than I am at this particular moment—you never got anything out of me, but you gave me something of yourself. Oh, it's really a case of thieving, in my case, isn't it?—and when you woke up I had possessed myself of the very thing you missed.

How else does it come about that everything you touched became worthless and sterile? You couldn't keep any man's love, with those tulips and those passions of yours—but I could; you weren't able to learn the art of my life out of your authors, but I learnt it; you haven't got any little Eskil, although your papa was called Eskil.

Else why do you sit there without a word, and brood and brood and brood? I thought it was strength, but perhaps the reason is just that you haven't anything to say, that's because you couldn't think of anything to say. [*Rises and takes up the slippers.*] I'm going home now—and taking these tulip things with me—your tulips, my dear; you couldn't learn anything from others—you couldn't yield, and that's why you crumpled up like a dried-up leaf. I didn't do that. I must really thank you, Amelia, for the excellent training you have given me—thank you for teaching my husband how to love. And now I'm going home to love him. [*Exit.*]

[*Curtain.*]

# MOTHERLY LOVE

## CHARACTERS

The MOTHER

A DRESSER

The DAUGHTER

LISE

## SCENE I

*[The MOTHER and the DRESSER are smoking cigars, drinking stout, and playing cards. The DAUGHTER sits by the window and looks out with intentness.]*

MOTHER

Come along, Helen—it's your deal.

DAUGHTER

Oh, please let me off playing cards on a fine summer day like this.

DRESSER

That's right. Nice and affectionate to her mother, as usual.

MOTHER

Don't sit like that on the verandah and get scorched.

DAUGHTER

The sun isn't a bit hot here.

## MOTHER

Well, there's a draught, anyway. [*To the DRESSER.*]  
Your deal, dear. Righto!

## DAUGHTER

Mayn't I go and bathe this morning with the other girls?

## MOTHER

Not without your mamma, you know that once for all.

## DAUGHTER

Oh, but the girls can swim, mamma, and you can't swim at all.

## MOTHER

That's not the question, whether a body can swim or can't, but you know, my child, that you mustn't go out without your mamma.

## DAUGHTER

Do I know it? Since I've been able to understand the simplest thing, that's been dinned into my ears.

## DRESSER

That only shows that Helen has had a most affectionate mother, who has always tried her best. Yes—yes; no doubt about it.

## MOTHER

[*Holds out her hand to the DRESSER.*] Thank you for your kindly words, Augusta—whatever else I may have been—that—but I was always a tender-hearted mother. I can say that with a clear conscience.

DAUGHTER

Then I suppose it's no good my asking you if I can go down and have a game of tennis with the others ?

DRESSER

No, no, young lady. A girl shouldn't sauce her mamma. And when she won't oblige those who are nearest and dearest to her, by taking part in their harmless fun, it's in a manner of speaking adding insult to injury for her to come and ask on top of it, if she can't go and amuse herself with other people.

DAUGHTER

Yes—yes—yes. I know all that already. I know—I know !

MOTHER

You're making yourself disagreeable again. Get something proper to do, and don't sit slacking there in that fashion. A grown-up girl like you !

DAUGHTER

Then why do you always treat me like a child if I'm grown up ?

MOTHER

Because you behave like one.

DAUGHTER

You have no right to rag me—you yourself wanted me to remain like this.

MOTHER

Look here, Helen ; for some time past I think you've

been a bit too bloomin' smart. Come, whom have you been talking to down here ?

DAUGHTER

With you two, amongst others.

MOTHER

You don't mean to say you're going to start having secrets from your own mother ?

DAUGHTER

It's about time.

DRESSER

Shame on you, you young thing, being so cheeky to your own mother ?

MOTHER

Come, let's do something sensible instead of jangling like this. Why not come here, and read over your part with me ?

DAUGHTER

The manager said I wasn't to go through it with anyone, because if I did, I should only learn something wrong.

MOTHER

I see ; so that's the thanks one gets for trying to help you. Of course, of course ! Everything that I do is always silly, I suppose.

DAUGHTER

Why do you do it then ? And why do you put the blame on to me, whenever you do anything wrong ?

## DRESSER

Of course you want to remind your mother that she ain't educated ? Ugh, 'ow common !

## DAUGHTER

You say I want to, aunt, but it's not the case. If mother goes and teaches me anything wrong, I've got to learn the whole thing over again, if I don't want to lose my engagement. We don't want to find ourselves stranded.

## MOTHER

I see. You're now letting us know that we're living on what you earn. But do you really know what you owe Aunt Augusta here ? Do you know that she looked after us when your blackguard of a father left us in the lurch ?—that she took care of us and that you therefore owe her a debt which you can never pay off—in all your born days ? Do you know that ? [DAUGHTER *is silent.*] Do you know that ? Answer !

## DAUGHTER

I refuse to answer.

## MOTHER

You do—do you ? You won't answer ?

## DRESSER

Steady on, Amelia. The people next door might hear us, and then they'd start gossiping again. So you go steady.



## MOTHERLY LOVE

MOTHER

[*To DAUGHTER.*] Put on your things and come out for a walk.

DAUGHTER

I'm not going out for a walk to-day.

MOTHER

This is now the third day that you've refused to go out for a walk with your mother. [*Reflecting.*] Would it be possible—— Go out on to the verandah, Helen. I want to say something to Aunt Augusta. [*DAUGHTER exit on to the verandah.*]

## SCENE II

MOTHER

Do you think it's possible ?

DRESSER

What ?

MOTHER

That she's found out something ?

DRESSER

It ain't possible.

MOTHER

It might 'appen, of course. Not that I think anybody could be so heartless as to tell it to her to her face. I had a nephew who was thirty-six years old before he found out that his father was a suicide, but Helen's manner's changed, and there's something at the bottom of it. For the last eight days I've noticed that she

couldn't bear my being with her on the promenade. She would only go along lonely paths ; when anyone met us she looked the other way ; she was nervous, couldn't manage to get a single word out. There's something behind all this.

**DRESSER**

Do you mean, if I follow you aright, that the society of her mother is painful to her ?—the society of her own mother ?

**MOTHER**

Yes.

**DRESSER**

No ; that's really a bit too bad.

**MOTHER**

Well, I'll tell you something which is even worse. Would you believe it, that when we came here, she didn't introduce me to some of her friends on the steamer ?

**DRESSER**

Do you know what I think ? She's met someone or other who's come here during the last week. Come, we'll just toddle down to the post office and find out about the latest arrivals.

**MOTHER**

Yes, let's do that. I say, Helen, just mind the house a minute. We're only going down to the post for a moment.

**DAUGHTER**

Yes, mamma.



## MOTHER

[*To DRESSER.*] It's just as though I'd dreamt all this before.

## DRESSER

Yes ; dreams come true sometimes—I know that all right—but not the nice ones.

[*Exeunt R.*

## SCENE III

[*DAUGHTER gives a nod out of the window ; LISE enters. She wears a tennis costume quite white, and a white hat.*]

## LISE

Have they gone ?

## DAUGHTER

Yes ; but they're soon coming back.

## LISE

Well, what did your mother say ?

## DAUGHTER

I haven't even had the pluck to ask her. She was in such a temper.

## LISE

Poor Helen ! So you can't come with us on the excursion ? And I was looking forward to it so much. If you only knew how fond I am of you. [*Kisses her.*]

## DAUGHTER

If you only knew, dear, what these days have meant to me since I've made your acquaintance and visited

your house—have meant to a girl like me, who's never mixed with decent people in her whole life. Just think what it must have been for me. Up to the present I've been living in a den where the air was foul, where shady, mysterious people came in and out, who spied and brawled and wrangled ; where I have never heard a kind word, much less ever got a caress, and where my soul was watched like a prisoner. Oh, I'm talking like this about my mother, and it hurts me ! And you will only despise me for it.

LISE

One can't be made responsible for one's parents.

DAUGHTER

No ; but you've got to pay the penalty for them. At any rate they say that very often one doesn't find out before the end of one's life the kind of people one's own parents, with whom one's lived all one's life, have really been. And I've picked up this as well, that even if one does get to hear about it one doesn't believe a word.

LISE

[*Uneasily.*] Have you heard anything ?

DAUGHTER

Yes. When I was in the Bath-house three days ago I heard through the wall what people were saying about my mother. Do you know what it was ?

LISE

Don't bother about it.

## DAUGHTER

They said my mother had been just a common creature ! I wouldn't believe it ; I won't yet believe it. But I feel that it is true ; it all fits in—to make it probable—and I am ashamed—ashamed of going near her, because I think that people stare at us—that the men throw us looks. It's too awful. But is it true ? Tell me if you think that it's true ?

## LISE

People tell so many lies—and I don't know anything.

## DAUGHTER

Yes, you do know—you do know something. You won't tell me, and I thank you for it ; but I am equally miserable whether you tell me or whether you don't—

## LISE

My darling friend, knock that thought out of your head and come home to us—you'll find you'll get on splendidly with everyone. My father arrived early this morning. He asked after you, and wanted to see you—I ought, of course, to tell you they have written to him about you—and Cousin Gerhard as well, because I think—

## DAUGHTER

Yes, you—you have a father and I had one too, when I was still quite, quite tiny.

## LISE

What became of him, then ?

## DAUGHTER

Mother always says he left us because he was a bad lot.

## LISE

It's hard to find where the truth lies. But—I tell you what ; if you come home to us now you'll meet the director of the Imperial Theatre, and it's possible it might be a question of an engagement.

## DAUGHTER

What do you say ?

## LISE

Yes, yes—that's it. And he takes an interest in you—I mean Gerhard—and I have made him take an interest in you, and you know quite well what trifles often decide one's whole life ; a personal interview, a good recommendation at the right moment—well, now, you can't refuse any longer, without standing in the way of your own career.

## DAUGHTER

Oh, darling, I should think I did want to come. You know that quite well ; but I don't go out without mamma.

## LISE

Why not ? Can you give me any reason ?

## DAUGHTER

I don't know. She taught me to say that when I was a child. And now it's got deeply rooted,

LISE

Has she extracted some promise from you ?

DAUGHTER

No, she didn't have any need to do that. She just said " Say that ! " and I said it.

LISE

Do you think then that you're doing her a wrong if you leave her for an hour or two ?

DAUGHTER

I don't think that she would miss me, because when I am at home she's always got some fault to find with me. But I should find it painful if I went to a house when she wasn't allowed to come too.

LISE

Do you mean to say you've thought of the possibility of her visiting us ?

DAUGHTER

No—God forgive me, I never thought of it for a moment.

LISE

But supposing you were to get married ?

DAUGHTER

I shall never get married.

LISE

Has your mother taught you to say that as well ?

DAUGHTER

Yes, probably. She has always warned me of men.

LISE

Of married men as well ?

DAUGHTER

Presumably.

LISE

Look here, Helen ; you should really emancipate yourself.

DAUGHTER

Ugh ! I haven't the faintest desire to be a new woman.

LISE

No, I don't mean that. But you must free yourself from a position of dependence which you have grown out of, and which may make you unhappy for life.

DAUGHTER

I scarcely think I shall ever be able to. Just consider how I've been tied down to my mother since I was a child ; that I've never dared to think a thought that wasn't hers ; have never wished anything but her wishes. I know that it's a handicap ; that it stands in my way, but I can't do anything against it.

LISE

And if your mother goes to rest, one fine day, you'll be all alone in the world.

DAUGHTER

That's how I shall find myself.

LISE

But you've got no set, no friend ; and no one can live as lonely as all that. You must find some firm support. Have you never been in love ?

DAUGHTER

I don't know. I've never dared to think of anything like that, and mother has never allowed young men even to look at me. Do you yourself think of such things ?

LISE

Yes. If anyone's fond of me and I should like to have him.

DAUGHTER

You'll probably marry your cousin Gerhard.

LISE

I shall never do that—because he does not love me.

DAUGHTER

Not love you ?

LISE

No ; because he's fond of you.

DAUGHTER

Me ?

LISE

Yes—and he has commissioned me to inquire if he can call on you ?



## DAUGHTER

Here? No, that's impossible. And besides, do you think I would stand in your way? Do you think I could supplant you in his regard, you who are so pretty, so delicate. [*Takes LISE's hand in hers.*] What a hand! And the wrists! I saw your foot when we were in the Bath-house together. [*Falls on her knees before LISE, who has sat down.*] A foot on which there isn't even a crooked nail, on which the toes are as round and as rosy as a baby's hand. [*Kisses LISE's foot.*] You belong to the nobility—you're made of different stuff from what I am.

## LISE

Leave off, please, and don't talk so sillily. [*Gets up.*] If you only knew—but——

## DAUGHTER

And I'm sure you're as good as you're beautiful; we always think that down below here when we look up at you above there, with your delicate chiselled features, where trouble hasn't made any wrinkles, where envy and jealousy have not drawn their hateful lines——

## LISE

Look here, Helen; I really think you're quite mad on me.

## DAUGHTER

Yes, I am that, too. I wish I were like you a bit, just as a miserable whitlow-grass is like an anemone, and that's why I see in you my better self, something that I should like to be and never can be. You have



tripped into my life during the last summer days as lightly and as delicately as an angel ; now the autumn's come : the day after to-morrow we go back to town—then we sha'n't know each other any more—and we mustn't know each other any more. You can never draw me up, dear, but I can draw you down—and I don't want to do that ! I want to have you so high, so high and so far away, that I can't see your blemishes. And so good-bye, Lise, my first and only friend.

LISE

No, that's enough. Helen, do you know—who I am ? Well—I—am your sister.

DAUGHTER

You—— What can you mean ?

LISE

We have—the same father.

DAUGHTER

And you are my sister, my little sister ? But what is my father then ? But of course he must be captain of a yacht, because your father is one. How silly I am ! But then he married, after. Is he kind to you ? He wasn't to my mother.

LISE

You don't know. But aren't you awfully glad to have found a little sister—one too who isn't so very loud ?

DAUGHTER

Oh, rather ; I'm so glad that I really don't know what

to say. [*Embrace.*] But I really daren't be properly glad because I don't know what's going to happen after all this. What will mother say, and what will it be like if we meet papa ?

LISE

Just leave your mother to me. She can't be far away now. And you keep in the background till your are wanted. And now come and give me a kiss, little 'un. [*They kiss.*]

DAUGHTER

My sister. How strange the word sounds, just like the word father when one has never uttered it.

LISE

Don't let's go on chattering now, but let's stick to the point. Do you think that your mother would still refuse her permission if we were to invite you—to come and see your sister and your father ?

DAUGHTER

Without my mother ? Oh, she hates your—my father so dreadfully.

LISE

But suppose she has no reason to do so ? If you only knew how full the world is of concoctions and lies and mistakes and misunderstandings. My father used to tell the story of a chum he used to have when he first went to sea as a cadet. A gold watch was stolen from one of the officers' cabins and—God knows why !—suspicion fell on the cadet. His mates avoided him, practically sent him to Coventry, and that embittered

him to such an extent that he became impossible to associate with, got mixed up in a row and had to leave. Two years afterwards the thief was discovered, in the person of a boatswain ; but no satisfaction could be given to the innocent boy, because people had only been suspicious of him. And the suspicion will stick to him for the rest of his life, although it was refuted, and the wretch still keeps a nickname which was given to him at the time. His life grew up like a house that's built and based on its own bad fame, and when the false foundation is cut away the building remains standing all the same ; it floated in the air like the castle in "The Arabian Nights." You see—that's what happens in the world. But even worse things can happen, as in the case of that instrument-maker in Arboga, who got the name of being an incendiary because his house had been set fire to ; or as happened to a certain Anderson, whom people called Thief Anders because he had been the victim of a celebrated burglary.

#### DAUGHTER

Do you mean to say that my father hasn't been what I always thought he was ?

#### LISE

Yes, that's just it.

#### DAUGHTER

This is how I see him sometimes in dreams, since I lost all recollection of him—isn't he fairly tall, with a dark beard and big blue sailor eyes ?

#### LISE

Yes—more or less !

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## DAUGHTER

And then—wait, now I remember. Do you see this watch? There's a little compass fastened on to the chain, and on the compass at the north there's an eye. Who gave me that?

## LISE

Your father. I was there when he bought it.

## DAUGHTER

Then it's he whom I've seen so often in the theatre when I was playing. He always sat in the left stage box, and held his opera-glasses trained on me. I never dared tell mother because she was always so very nervous about me. And once he threw me flowers—but mother burned them. Do you think it was he?

## LISE

It was he; you can count on it that during all these years his eye has followed you like the eye of the needle on the compass.

## DAUGHTER

And you tell me that I shall see him—that he wants to meet me? It's like a fairy tale.

## LISE

The fairy tale's over now. I hear your mother. You get back—I'm going first, to face the fire.

## DAUGHTER

Something dreadful's going to happen now, I feel it. Why can't people agree with each other and be at peace?

Oh, if only it were all over ! If mamma would only be nice. I will pray to God outside there to make her soft-hearted—but I'm certain He can't do it—I don't know why.

LISE

He can do it, and He will, if you can only have faith, have a little faith in happiness and your own strength.

DAUGHTER

Strength ? What for ? To be selfish ? I can't do it. And the enjoyment of a happiness that is bought at the cost of someone else's unhappiness cannot be lasting.

LISE

Indeed ? Now go out.

DAUGHTER

How can you possibly believe that this will turn out all right ?

LISE

Hush !

#### SCENE IV

*Previous characters. The MOTHER*

LISE

Madam.

MOTHER

Miss—if you don't mind.

LISE

Your daughter——

MOTHER

Yes, I have a daughter, even though I'm only a "Miss," and indeed that happens to many of us, and I'm not a bit ashamed of it. But what's it all about?

LISE

The fact is, I'm commissioned to ask you if Miss Helen can join in an excursion which some visitors have got up?

MOTHER

Hasn't Helen herself answered you?

LISE

Yes; she has very properly answered that I should address myself to you.

MOTHER

That wasn't a straightforward answer. Helen, my child, do you want to join a party to which your mother isn't invited?

DAUGHTER

Yes, if you allow it.

MOTHER

If I allow it! How can I decide what a big girl like you is to do? You yourself must tell the young lady what you want; if you want to leave your mother alone in disgrace, while you gad about and have a good time; if you want people to ask after mamma, and



for you to have to try and wriggle out of the answer :  
“ She has been left out of the invitation, because and  
because and because.” Now say what you really want  
to do.

LISE

My dear lady, don't let's beat about the bush. I  
know perfectly well the view Helen takes of this busi-  
ness, and I also know your method of getting her to  
make that particular answer which happens to suit you.  
If you are as fond of your daughter as you say you are,  
you ought to wish what is best for her, even though it  
might be humiliating for you.

MOTHER

Look here, my girl ; I know what your name is,  
and who you are, even though I haven't had the  
privilege of being introduced to you ; but I should  
really like to know what a girl of your years has got to  
teach a woman of mine.

LISE

Who knows ? For the last six years, since my mother  
died, I have spent all my time in bringing up my young  
sisters and brothers, and I've found out that there are  
people who never learn anything from life, however old  
they get.

MOTHER

What do you mean ?

LISE

I mean this. Your daughter has now got an oppor-  
tunity of taking her place in the world ; of either getting

recognition for her talent or of contracting an alliance with a young man in good position.

**MOTHER**

That sounds all very fine, but what do you propose to do about me ?

**LISE**

You're not the point, your daughter is ! Can't you think about her for a single minute without immediately thinking of yourself ?

**MOTHER**

Ah, but, mind you, when I think of myself I think of my daughter at the same time, because she has learnt to love her mother.

**LISE**

I don't think so. She depends on you because you've shut her off from all the rest of the world, and she must have someone to depend on, since you've stolen her away from her father.

**MOTHER**

What's that you say ?

**LISE**

That you took the child away from her father when he refused to marry you, because you hadn't been faithful to him. You then prevented him from seeing his child, and avenged your own misconduct on him and upon your child.

**MOTHER**

Helen, don't you believe a single word of anything



that she says—that I should live to see such a day! For a stranger to intrude into my house and insult me in the presence of my own child!

## DAUGHTER

[*Comes forward.*] You have no business to say anything bad about my mother.

## LISE

It's impossible to do otherwise, if I'm to say anything good about my father. Anyway I observe that the conversation is nearly over, so allow me to give you one or two pieces of advice. Get rid of the procuress who finds herself so at home here under the name of Aunt Augusta if you don't want your daughter's reputation to be absolutely ruined. That's tip number one. Further, put in order all your receipts for the money which you had from my father for Helen's education, because settlement day's precious near. That's tip number two. And now for an extra tip. Leave off persecuting your daughter with your company in the street and, above all, at the theatre, because if you don't she's barred from any engagement; and then you'll go about trying to sell her favours, just as, up to the present, you've been trying to buy back your lost respectability at the expense of her father.

## MOTHER

[*Sits, crushed.*]

## DAUGHTER

[*To LISE.*] Leave this house. You find nothing sacred, not even motherhood.

LISE

A sacred motherhood, I must say !

DAUGHTER

It seems now as though you've only come into this house to destroy us, and not for a single minute to put matters right.

LISE

Yes, I did ! I came here to—to put right the good name of my father, who was perfectly guiltless—as guiltless as that incendiary whose house had been set on fire. I came also to put you right, you who've been the victim of a woman whose one and only chance of rehabilitation is by retiring to a place where she won't be disturbed by anybody, and where she on her side won't disturb anybody's peace. That's why I came. I have done my duty. Good-bye.

MOTHER

Miss Lise—don't go before I've said one thing—you came here, apart from all the other tomfoolery, to invite Helen out to your place.

LISE

Yes. She was to meet the director of the Imperial Theatre, who takes quite an interest in her.

MOTHER

What's that ? The director ? And you've never mentioned a word about it. Yes—Helen may go—alone. Yes, without me !

## MOTHERLY LOVE

DAUGHTER

*[Makes a gesture.]*

LISE

Well, after all, it was only human nature that you should have carried on like that. Helen, you must come, do you see ?

DAUGHTER

Yes, but now I don't want to any more.

MOTHER

What are you talking about ?

DAUGHTER

No, I'm not fitted for society. I shall never feel comfortable anywhere where my mother is despised.

MOTHER

Stuff and nonsense ! You surely ain't going to go and cut your own throat ? Now just you go and dress so as to look all right !

DAUGHTER

No, I can't, mother. I can't leave you now that I know everything. I shall never have another happy hour. I can never believe in anything again.

LISE

*[To MOTHER.]* Now you shall reap what you have sown—if one day a man comes and makes your daughter his bride, then you'll be alone in your old age, and then you'll have time to be sorry for your foolishness.

## MOTHERLY LOVE

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Good-bye. [*Goes and kisses HELEN'S forehead.*] Good-bye, sister.

DAUGHTER

Good-bye.

LISE

Look me in the face and try and seem as though you had some hope in life.

DAUGHTER

I can't. I can't thank you either for your good-will, for you have given me more pain than you know—you woke me with a snake when I lay in the sunshine by a woodland precipice and slept.

LISE

Give me another chance, and I'll wake you with songs and flowers. Good-night. Sleep well. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE V

*Previous characters. Later the DRESSER*

MOTHER

An angel of light in white garments I suppose! No! She's a devil, a regular devil! And you! How silly you've been behaving! What madness next, I wonder! Playing the sensitive when other people's hides are so thick.

DAUGHTER

To think of your being able to tell me all those

untruths. Deceiving me so that I talked thus about my father during so many years.

MOTHER

Oh, come on ! It's no good crying over spilt milk.

DAUGHTER

And then again, Aunt Augusta !

MOTHER

Stop it. Aunt Augusta is a most excellent woman, to whom you are under a great obligation.

DAUGHTER

That's not true either—it was my father, I'm sure, who had me educated.

MOTHER

Well, yes, it was, but I too have to live. You're so petty ! And you're vindictive as well. Can't you forget a little taradiddle like that ? Hello ! Augusta's turned up already. Come along, now lets us humble folk amuse ourselves as best as we can.

## SCENE VI

*Previous characters.* DRESSER

DRESSER

Yes, it was he right enough. You see, I'd guessed quite right.

MOTHER

Oh, well, don't let's bother about the blackguard.

## MOTHERLY LOVE

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DAUGHTER

Don't speak like that, mother ; it's not a bit true !

DRESSER

What's not true ?

DAUGHTER

Come along. We'll play cards. I can't pull down the wall which you've taken so many years to build up. Come along then. [*She sits down at the card-table and begins to shuffle the cards.*]

MOTHER

Well, you've come to your senses at last, my gal.

[*Curtain.*]





2

The Stronger Woman,  
Motherly Love *Two*  
*Plays by August Strind-*  
*berg* Translated by Horace B.  
Samuel

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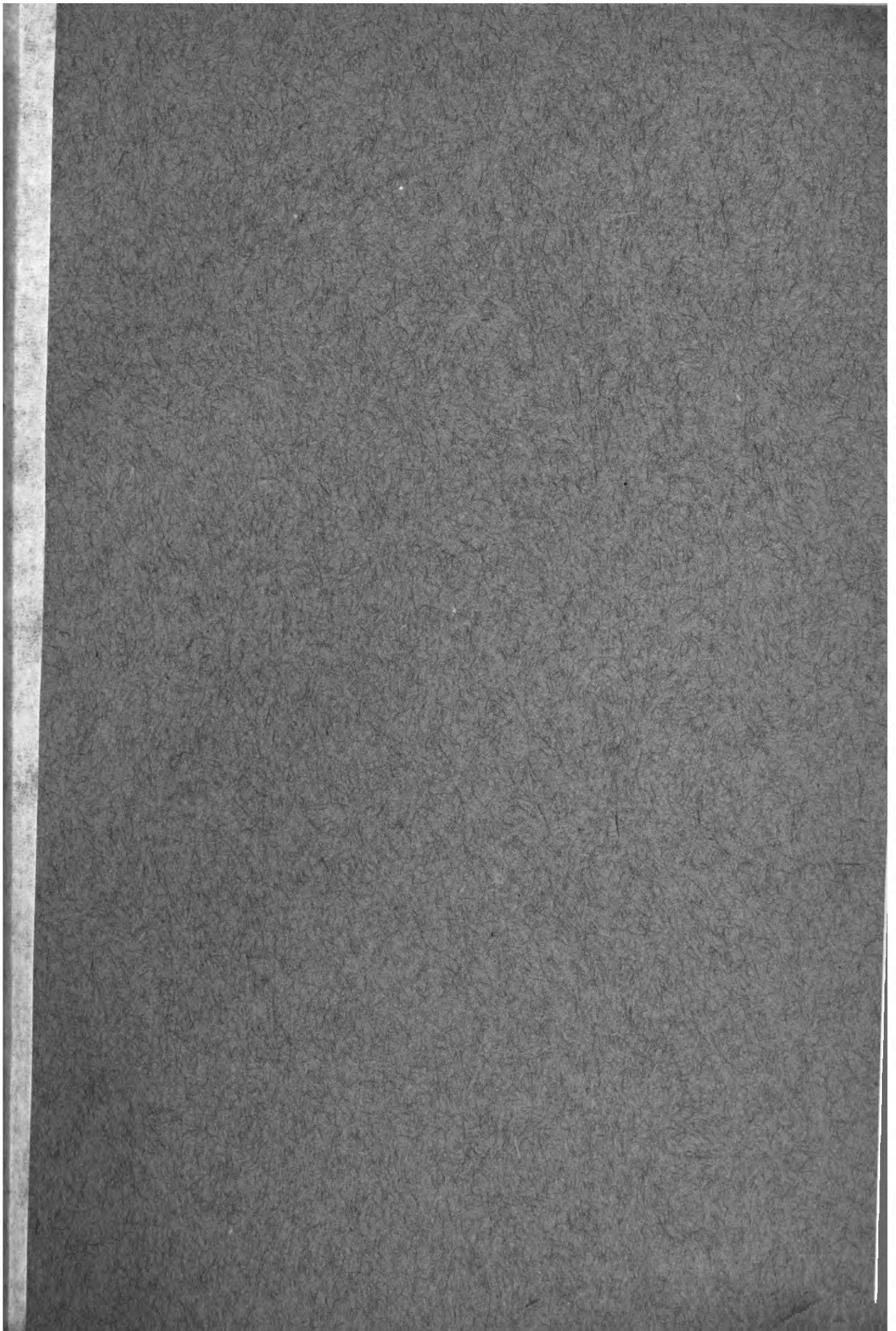


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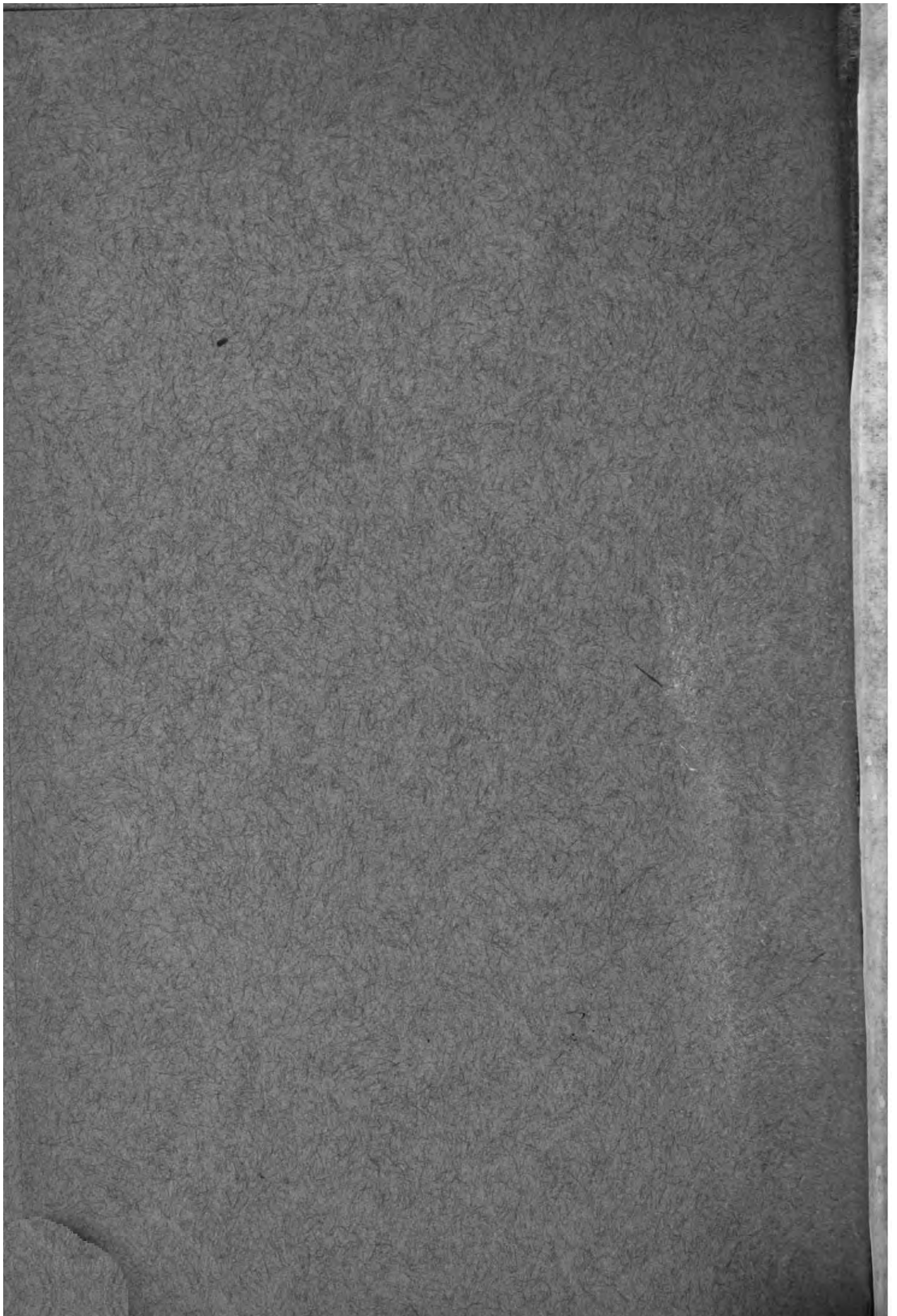
*Henry Tresawna Gerrans*

*Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, 1882-1921*

*A. E. G.*







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