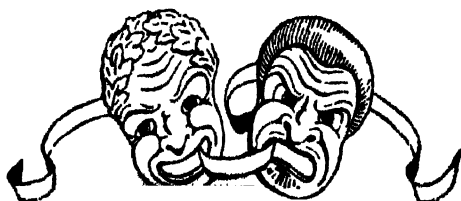


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A TREASURY OF
THE THEATRE
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ABRIDGED EDITION

A TREASURY OF THE THEATRE

AN ANTHOLOGY OF GREAT PLAYS
ABRIDGED EDITION

Revised and Adapted for Colleges by

PHILO M. BUCK, JR.
The University of Wisconsin

JOHN GASSNER
Hunter College The Theatre Guild

H. S. ALBERSON
The University of Wisconsin



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Eugene O'Neill

(1888-)

EUGENE O'NEILL is the greatest dramatist who has yet appeared on this continent. He is also the only one whose international reputation is already firmly established, a fact that was formally recognized when he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Since he experimented in many forms and explored a variety of themes, it is not easy to find a comprehensive description of his efforts. But they were all made with the same intention—namely, the promotion of a theatre that would illuminate the inner man and would embrace as much of the world as the drama can hold.

Born in a Broadway hotel as the son of the successful actor James O'Neill, who toured the country extensively in the popular melodrama *Monte Cristo*, Eugene O'Neill lacked stability in his childhood. He was educated intermittently at various Catholic schools while his parents went roving under the banner of art; his stay at college was of brief duration. He married early and entered business, but he felt the call of the sea and he ultimately dissolved his marriage. In 1909 he went prospecting for gold in the Spanish Honduras, returning in ill health. Then, after serving his father's company as assistant manager, he enlisted for a voyage from Boston to Buenos Aires on a Norwegian vessel. In Argentina he worked at various occupations, in the Westinghouse Electrical Company, in a packing plant, and in the office of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Once more tiring of the circumspect world, he tended mules on a cattle-steamer from Buenos Aires to South Africa and back. Subsequently, he experienced a long period of destitution "on the beach" until he found a berth on a British tramp steamer bound for New York, where he lived for some time on the waterfront at a bar. He became an able seaman on the *American Line*, making a last trip that took him to Southampton. Finally, the prodigal returned to his disappointed parent, played a small part for him in *Monte Cristo in the West*, and took a position on a Connecticut newspaper, to which he contributed a humorous column, as well as some light verse. But his wayward life had undermined his health; having contracted tuberculosis, he spent six months in a sanatorium, "thinking it over," as he later declared.

During his convalescence O'Neill devoted himself to the study of the drama, being particularly affected by Strindberg. He began to write short plays, and, feeling the need of some formal training, enrolled in Professor George Pierce Baker's workshop course in the drama at Harvard during 1914-1915. In 1916 the budding dramatist associated himself with the Provincetown Players, a group of New York intellectuals at Provincetown, Mass., writing short plays

for that nascent organization. When it settled in Greenwich Village, O'Neill became a charter member of the intrepid little circles that were introducing the modern drama to the metropolis. All his early short plays were produced by the Provincetown Playhouse and later by the Washington Square Players, who soon founded The Theatre Guild. At that time the American theatre was undergoing a radical transformation that carried it far beyond the work of earlier dramatists like Herne, Fitch, and Augustus Thomas. "Little theatres," devoted to art instead of to the prevailing commercialism of the stage, arose throughout the country, and O'Neill became the leading playwright of this movement. Although he soon emerged into the larger theatrical world with the production of *Beyond the Horizon*, which also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1920, he remained a persistent experimentalist who never made deliberate concessions to the box-office.

O'Neill's work has taken him into every conceivable field except the militant social drama of the nineteen-thirties, and even this genre owes much to his pioneering in realism. His vigorously descriptive and colloquial one-act plays, assembled in the S.S. Glencairn cycle, presented the loneliness and bedevilment of common sailors. Despite a romantically charged atmosphere, these dramatic pictures comprised a triumph for the realistic or, actually, naturalistic theatre. His first full-length work, *Beyond the Horizon*, a tragedy of frustration on a farm, as well as in marriage, extended this victory; and *Anna Christie* confirmed it in 1921 by setting forth the life of the waterfront and the struggles of a fallen woman.

Minor and unsuccessful efforts like *The First Man and Welded*, in 1924, revealed Strindbergian influences in the psychological tensions of their content. During the same year, O'Neill presented bleak naturalistic backgrounds in the slum environment of *All God's Chillun Got Wings* and in the New England farm-life of *Desire Under the Elms*. But by now his interest was primarily psychological, and both plays placed erotic complications in the foreground. The love tragedy of a sodden white woman and a Negro, who is destroyed by her frantic resentment of his innate superiority, made *All God's Chillun* an original work that went far beyond the actual problem of miscegenation. *Desire Under the Elms* was likewise psychologically centered—in a tense father-son conflict—as well as socially rooted in a narrow life and a hard religion.

O'Neill, however, did not confine himself to any single style; nor was he ever content with mere representation of reality. As early as 1920, he wrote one of the first expressionistic plays in America, *Emperor Jones*, turning it into a tour de force. It dramatized a self-confident Negro dictator's growing fears and atavism in short, rapidly shifting subjective scenes which were intensified by the incessant sound of native tom-toms. Two years later, in *The Hairy Ape*, he added symbolism to the expressionistic presentation of a brutish stoker's search for a place in society, converting it into an allegory of modern man's bedevilment. In 1915, after *The Fountain*, a mild, romantic play about Ponce de Leon's

search for eternal youth, O'Neill went even further in the direction of subjective drama with *The Great God Brown*. This remarkable if somewhat puzzling tragedy of dual personality represented the emotional perturbations of an artist, Dion Anthony, who is torn between the sensual and ascetic elements of his nature. Three other symbolic plays followed this exploration of the inner self: *Lazarus Laughed* (1927), a poetic but somewhat static and fulsome defiance of death; *Dynamo* (1929), a strained tragedy of the quest for a new, modern religion, which materialism fails to supply; and *Days Without End* (1934), another study of "split personality" here concluded with a reconciliation between a self-tortured intellectual and the Catholic faith of his youth.

These and other works gave effective testimony to their author's conviction that "it is only by means of some form of 'super-naturalism' that we may express in the theatre what we comprehend intuitively of that self-obsession which is the particular discount we moderns have to pay for the loan of life." The "old audacity" of simple realism struck him as blague; "we have taken too many snapshots of each other in every graceless position," he maintained. "We have endured too much from the banality of surfaces."

Committed, moreover, to no single dispensation whereby the surfaces might be penetrated, O'Neill climaxed his work thus far with his two most original works. After composing an excellent satire on the materialistic soul, *Marco Polo*, in 1927, he produced during the same year his novelistic nine-act drama *Strange Interlude*. Striving to present the complex inner life of a woman from girlhood to middle age (that is, the "strange interlude" of her sexual awakening and maturity), he invented the device of the "interior monologue," a variant of the old-fashioned aside. Each character spoke both his conscious and unconscious thoughts, thereby revealing himself more completely than ordinary dialogue could allow. And the inner conflicts represented by his characters' speech and conduct amply justified this complicated procedure; his heroine, originally frustrated by her father's jealousy and the loss of the lover who could have fulfilled her, is driven to complete herself with simultaneous attachments to three men who are respectively father-image, husband, and lover.

For his other ambitious venture, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, he needed no new methods of representation; the story of his New England aristocrats, the Mannons, was told without deviation from realism or formal embellishment, so that it could be superficially considered a psychological melodrama of corruption in the seats of the mighty, of hereditary evil and hate, adultery, murder, incestuous drives, and suicide. Nevertheless, this drama possessed the originality of greater tragic depth and scope than any American play written before or after. This modern transcription of the Oresteian tragedies of Aeschylus and of the other Greek *Electra* plays was a trilogy in thirteen acts. Its treatment, socially related to the influence of puritanical religion and possessiveness, unearthed the complexes and frustrations that psychoanalysis had brought to the attention of the age; and its effect, when its New England mercantile

dynasty came to an end, was that of tragic catharsis on an almost epic scale. O'Neill defined his masterpiece perhaps better than any of his critics when he framed the question in his first note on Mourning Becomes Electra, five years before its completion: "Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of the Greek sense of fate into such a play which an intelligent audience of today, possessed by no belief in gods or supernatural retribution, could accept and be moved by?" This play appears to have provided purgation even for its author, since it was followed in 1933 by his genial comedy of adolescence and small-town life, Ah, Wilderness.

Obviously no single play can adequately convey O'Neill's quest in the theatre. One can, nevertheless, make several claims for Anna Christie. If it lacks the scope of many of its author's later works, it has the merit of compactness; and if it does not probe as deeply into human nature as some of them, it is also free from their occasional obscurities, schematization of inner forces, and straining. A simple human drama, it provides emotions readily accessible to the reader. Its pungently colloquial speech and its seedy heroine represent the early portion of his career when he imbedded the American theatre in realism. It also suggests some of the trends of his later career—namely, his poetic vein, present here in his feeling for the sea, his concern with bedeviled characters, and his saturnine observation of fate in human experience.

J. G.

ANNA CHRISTIE

A Play in Four Acts

BY EUGENE O'NEILL

CHARACTERS

"JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST"

TWO LONGSHOREMEN

A POSTMAN

LARRY, *bartender*

CHRIS CHRISTOPHERSON, *captain of the barge Simeon Winthrop*

MARTHY OWEN

ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON, *Chris' daughter*

THREE MEN OF A STEAMER'S CREW

MAT BURKE, *a stoker*

JOHNSON, *deckhand on the barge*

ACT I.

SCENE: "Johnny-the-Priest's" saloon near South Street, New York City. The stage is divided into two sections, showing a small back room on the right. On the left, forward, of the barroom, a large window looking out on the street. Beyond it, the main entrance—a double swinging door. Farther back, another window. The bar runs from left to right nearly the whole length of the rear wall. In back of the bar, a small show-case displaying a few bottles of case goods, for which there is evidently little call. The remainder of the rear space in front of the large mirrors is occupied by half-barrels of cheap whisky of the "nickel-a-shot" variety, from which the liquor is drawn by means of spigots. On the right is an open doorway leading to the back room. In the back room are four round wooden tables with five chairs grouped about each. In the rear, a family entrance opening on a side street.

It is late afternoon of a day in fall.

As the curtain rises, Johnny is discovered. "Johnny-the-Priest" deserves his nickname. With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispel this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all his mildness one senses the man behind the mask—cynical, callous, hard as nails. He is lounging at ease behind the bar, a pair of spectacles on his nose, reading an evening paper.

Two longshoremen enter from the street, wearing their working aprons, the button of the union pinned conspicuously on the caps pulled sideways on their heads at an aggressive angle.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: [*As they range themselves at the bar*] Gimme a shock. Number Two.

[*He tosses a coin on the bar*]

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: Same here.

[Johnny sets two glasses of barrel whisky before them]

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: Here's luck!

[The other nods. They gulp down their whisky]

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: [Putting money on the bar] Give us another.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: Gimme a scoop this time—lager and porter. I'm dry.

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: Same here.

[Johnny draws the lager and porter and sets the big, foaming schooners before them. They drink down half the contents and start to talk together hurriedly in low tones. The door on the left is swung open and Larry enters. He is a boyish, red-cheeked, rather good-looking young fellow of twenty or so]

LARRY: [Nodding to Johnny—cheerily] Hello, boss.

JOHNNY: Hello, Larry. [With a glance at his watch] Just on time.

[Larry goes to the right behind the bar, takes off his coat, and puts on an apron]

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: [Abruptly] Let's drink up and get back to it.

[They finish their drinks and go out left. The Postman enters as they leave. He exchanges nods with Johnny and throws a letter on the bar]

THE POSTMAN: Addressed care of you, Johnny. Know him?

JOHNNY: [Picks up the letter, adjusting his spectacles. Larry comes and peers over his shoulders. Johnny reads very slowly] Christopher Christopherson.

THE POSTMAN: [Helpfully] Square-head name.

LARRY: Old Chris—that's who.

JOHNNY: Oh, sure. I was forgetting Chris carried a hell of a name like that. Letters come here for him sometimes before, I remember now. Long time ago, though.

THE POSTMAN: It'll get him all right then?

JOHNNY: Sure thing. He comes here whenever he's in port.

THE POSTMAN: [Turning to go] Sailor, eh?

JOHNNY: [With a grin] Captain of a coal barge.

THE POSTMAN: [Laughing] Some job! Well, s'long.

JOHNNY: S'long. I'll see he gets it.

[The Postman goes out. Johnny scrutinizes the letter]

You got good eyes, Larry. Where's it from?

LARRY: [After a glance] St. Paul. That'll be in Minnesota, I'm thinkin'. Looks like a woman's writing, too, the old divil!

JOHNNY: He's got a daughter somewheres out West, I think he told me once.

[He puts the letter on the cash register]

Come to think of it, I ain't seen old Chris in a dog's age.

[Putting his overcoat on, he comes around the end of the bar]

Guess I'll be gettin' home. See you tomorrow.

LARRY: Good-night to ye, boss.

[As Johnny goes toward the street door, it is pushed open and Christopher Christopherson enters. He is a short, squat, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a round, weather-beaten, red face from which his light blue eyes peer short-sightedly, twinkling with a simple good humor. His large mouth, overhung by a thick,

drooping, yellow mustache, is childishly self-willed and weak, of an obstinate kindness. A thick neck is jammed like a post into the heavy trunk of his body. His arms with their big, hairy, freckled hands, and his stumpy legs terminating in large flat feet, are awkwardly short and muscular. He walks with a clumsy, rolling gait. His voice, when not raised in a hollow boom, is toned down to a sly, confidential half-whisper with something vaguely plaintive in its quality. He is dressed in a wrinkled, ill-fitting dark suit of shore clothes, and wears a faded cap of gray cloth over his mop of grizzled, blond hair. Just now his face beams with a too-blissful happiness, and he has evidently been drinking. He reaches his hand out to Johnny]

CHRIS: Hello, Yohnny! Have drink on me. Come on, Larry. Give us drink. Have one yourself.

[Putting his hand in his pocket]

Ay gat money—plenty money.

JOHNNY: *[Shakes Chris by the hand]* Speak of the devil. We was just talkin' about you.

LARRY: *[Coming to the end of the bar]* Hello, Chris. Put it there.

[They shake hands]

CHRIS: *[Beaming]* Give us drink.

JOHNNY: *[With a grin]* You got a half-snootful now. Where'd you get it?

CHRIS: *[Grinning]* Oder fallar on oder barge—Irish fallar—he gat bottle whisky and we drank it, yust us two. Dot whisky gat kick, by yingo! Ay yust come ashore. Give us drink, Larry. Ay vas little drunk, not much. Yust feel good.

[He laughs and commences to sing, in a nasal, high-pitched quaver]

"My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay wait for you.

De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looka yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

[To the accompaniment of this last he waves his hand as if he were conducting an orchestra]

JOHNNY: *[With a laugh]* Same old Yosie, eh Chris?

CHRIS: You don't know good song when you hear him. Italian fallar on oder barge, he learn me dat. Give us drink.

[He throws change on the bar]

LARRY: *[With a professional air]* What's your pleasure, gentlemen?

JOHNNY: Small beer, Larry.

CHRIS: Whisky—Number Two.

LARRY: *[As he gets their drinks]* I'll take a cigar on you.

CHRIS: *[Lifting his glass]* Skoall
[He drinks]

JOHNNY: Drink hearty.

CHRIS: *[Immediately]* Have oder drink.

JOHNNY: No. Some other time. Got to go home now. So you've just landed? Where are you in from this time?

CHRIS: Norfolk. Ve make slow vovage—dirty vedder—yust fog, fog, fog, all bloody time!

[There is an insistent ring from the doorbell at the family entrance in the back room. Chris gives a start—hurriedly]

Ay go open, Larry. Ay forgat. It vas Marthy. She come with me.

[He goes into the back room]

LARRY: *[With a chuckle]* He's still got that same cow livin' with him, the old fool!

JOHNNY: [*With a grin*] A sport, Chris is. Well, I'll beat it home. S'long.

[*He goes to the street door*]

LARRY: So long, boss.

JOHNNY: Oh—don't forget to give him his letter.

LARRY: I won't

[*Johnny goes out. In the meantime, Chris has opened the family entrance door, admitting Marthy. She might be forty or fifty. Her jowly, mottled face, with its thick red nose, is streaked with interlacing purple veins. Her thick, gray hair is piled anyhow in a greasy mop on top of her round head. Her figure is flabby and fat; her breath comes in wheezy gasps; she speaks in a loud, manish voice, punctuated by explosions of hoarse laughter. But there still twinkles in her blood-shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle, a sense of humor mocking, but good-tempered. She wears a man's cap, double-breasted man's jacket, and a grimy, calico skirt. Her bare feet are encased in a man's brogans several sizes too large for her, which gives her a shuffling, wobbly gait*]

MARTHY: [*Grumblingly*] What yuh tryin' to do, Dutchy—keep me standin' out there all day?

[*She comes forward and sits at the table in the right corner, fronts*]

CHRIS: [*Mollifyingly*] Ay'm sorry, Marthy. Ay talk to Yohnny. Ay forgat. What you goin' take for drink?

MARTHY: [*Appeased*] Gimme a scoop of lager an' ale.

CHRIS: Ay go bring him back.

[*He returns to the bar*]

Lager and ale for Marthy, Larry. Whisky for me.

[*He throws change on the bar*]

LARRY: Right you are.

[*Then remembering, he takes the letter from in back of the bar*]

Here's a letter for you—from St. Paul, Minnesota—and a lady's writin'.

[*He grins*]

CHRIS: [*Quickly—taking it*] Oh, den it come from my daughter, Anna. She live dere. [*He turns the letter over in his hands uncertainly*] Ay don't gat letter from Anna—must be a yeast.

LARRY: [*Jokingly*] That's a fine fairy tale to be tellin'—your daughter! Sure I'll bet it's some bum.

CHRIS: [*Soberly*] No. Dis come from Anna. [*Engrossed by the letter in his hand—uncertainly*] By golly, Ay tank Ay'm too drunk for read dis letter from Anna. Ay tank Ay sat down for a minute. You bring drinks in back room, Larry.

[*He goes into the room on right*]

MARTHY: [*Angrily*] Where's my lager an' ale, yuh big stiff?

CHRIS: [*Preoccupied*] Larry bring him.

[*He sits down opposite her. Larry brings in the drinks and sets them on the table. He and Marthy exchange nods of recognition. Larry stands looking at Chris curiously. Marthy takes a long draught of her schooner and heaves a huge sigh of satisfaction, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. Chris stares at the letter for a moment—slowly opens it, and, squinting his eyes, commences to read laboriously, his lips moving as he spells out the words. As he reads his face lights up with an expression of mingled joy and bewilderment*]

LARRY: Good news?

MARTHY: [*Her curiosity also aroused*]
What's that yuh got—a letter, fur
Gawd's sake?

CHRIS: [*Pauses for a moment, after finishing the letter, as if to let the news sink in—then suddenly pounds his fist on the table with happy excitement*] Py yiminy! Yust tank, Anna say she's comin' here right away! She gat sick on yob in St. Paul, she say. It's short letter, don't tal me much more'n dat. [*Beaming*] Py golly, dat's good news all at one time for ole fallar! [*Then turning to Marthy, rather shamefacedly*] You know, Marthy, Ay've tole you Ay don't sec my Anna since she vas little gel in Sveden five year ole.

MARTHY: How old'll she be now?

CHRIS: She must be—lat me see—she must be twenty year ole, py Yo!

LARRY: [*Surprised*] You've not seen her in fifteen years?

CHRIS: [*Suddenly growing somber—in a low tone*] No. Ven she vas little gel, Ay vas bo'sun on vindjammer. Ay never gat home only few time dem year. Ay'm fool sailor fallar. My voman—Anna's mother—she gat tired vait all time Sveden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage, Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole davil, sea, she don't know fa'der like me.

LARRY: [*With a wink at Marthy*] This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood.

CHRIS: [*Suddenly springing to his feet and smashing his fist on the table in a rage*]
No, py God! She don't do dat!

MARTHY: [*Grasping her schooner hastily—angrily*] Hey, look out, yuh nut! Wanta spill my suds for me?

LARRY: [*Amazed*] Oho, what's up with you? Ain't you a sailor yourself now, and always been?

CHRIS: [*Slowly*] Dat's yust vhy Ay say it. [*Forcing a smile*] Sailor vas all right fallar, but not for marry gel. No. Ay know dat. Anna's mo'der, she know it, too.

LARRY: [*As Chris remains sunk in gloomy reflection*] When is your daughter comin'? Soon?

CHRIS: [*Roused*] Py yiminy, Ay forgat. [*Reads through the letter hurriedly*] She say she come right away, dat's all.

LARRY: She'll maybe be comin' here to look for you, I s'pose.

[*He returns to the bar, whistling. Left alone with Marthy, who stares at him with a twinkle of malicious humor in her eyes, Chris suddenly becomes desperately ill-at-ease. He fidgets, then gets up hurriedly*]

CHRIS: Ay gat speak with Larry. Ay be right back. [*Mollifyingly*] Ay bring you oder drink.

MARTHY: [*Emptying her glass*] Sure. That's me.

[*As he retreats with the glass she guffaws after him derisively*]

CHRIS: [*To Larry in an alarmed whisper*]
Py yingo, Ay gat gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, py golly!

LARRY: [*With a chuckle*] Serve ye right, ye old divil—havin' a woman at your age!

CHRIS: [*Scratching his head in a quandary*] You tal me lie for tal Marthy, Larry, so's she gat off barge quick.

LARRY: She knows your daughter's comin'. Tell her to get the hell out of it.

CHRIS: No. Ay don't like make her feel bad.

LARRY: You're an old mush! Keep your girl away from the barge, then. She'll likely want to stay ashore anyway. [*Curiously*] What does she work at, your Anna?

CHRIS: She stay on dem cousins' farm 'till two year ago. Dan she gat yob nurse gel in St. Paul. [*Then shaking his head resolutely*] But Ay don't vant for her gat yob now. Ay vant for her stay with me.

LARRY: [*Scornfully*] On a coal barge! She'll not like that, I'm thinkin'.

MARTHY: [*Shouts from next room*] Don't I get that bucket o' suds, Dutchy?

CHRIS: [*Startled—in apprehensive confusion*] Yes, Ay come, Marthy.

LARRY: [*Drawing the lager and ale, hands it to Chris—laughing*] Now you're in for it! You'd better tell her straight to get out!

CHRIS: [*Shaking in his boots*] Py golly. [*He takes her drink in to Marthy and sits down at the table. She sips it in silence. Larry moves quietly close to the partition to listen, grimacing with expectation. Chris seems on the verge of speaking, hesitates, gulps down his whisky desperately as if seeking for courage. He attempts to whistle a few bars of "Yosephine" with careless bravado, but the whistle peters out futilely. Marthy stares at him keenly, taking in his embarrassment*

with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye. Chris clears his throat]

Marthy—

MARTHY: [*Aggressively*] Wha's that? [*Then, pretending to fly into a rage, her eyes enjoying Chris' misery*] I'm wise to what's in back of your nut, Dutchy. Yuh want to git rid o' me, huh?—now she's comin'. Gimme the hum's rush ashore, huh? Lemme tell yuh, Dutchy, there ain't a square-head workin' on a boat man enough to git away with that. Don't start nothin' yuh can't finish!

CHRIS: [*Miserably*] Ay don't start nutting, Marthy.

MARTHY: [*Glances at him for a second—then cannot control a burst of laughter*] Ho-ho! Yuh're a scream, Square-head—an honest-ter-Gawd knockout! Ho-ho! [*She wheezes, panting for breath*]

CHRIS: [*With childish pique*] Ay don't see nutting for laugh at.

MARTHY: Take a slant in the mirror and yuh'll see. Ho-ho! [*Recovering from her mirth—chuckling, scornfully*] A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!—after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to the game, up, down, and sideways. I ain't been boum and dragged up on the water front for nothin'. Think I'd make trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it. I'm quittin' yuh, get me? I'm tellin' yuh I'm sick of stickin' with yuh, and I'm leavin' yuh flat, see? There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me. Always was, I always found. [*She claps the astonished Chris on the back*] So cheer up, Dutchy! I'll be offen the barge before she comes. You'll be rid o' me for good—and me o' you—good riddance for both of us. Ho-ho!

CHRIS: [*Seriously*] Ay don' tank dat. You vas good gel, Marthy.

MARTHY: [*Griming*] Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square, yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty. Nobody's sore at nobody. We're still good frien's. huh? [*Larry returns to bar*]

CHRIS: [*Beaming now that he sees his troubles disappearing*] Yes, py golly.

MARTHY: That's the talkin'! In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about—that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way. [*Scornfully*] Think I'd break my heart to lose yuh? Commit suicide, huh? Ho-ho! Gawd! The world's full o' men if that's all I'd worry about! [*Then with a grin, after emptying her glass*] Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh.

CHRIS: [*Eagerly*] Sure tang. 'Ay go gat him.

[*He takes the two glasses into the bar*]

Oder drink. Same for both.

LARRY:

[*Getting the drinks and putting them on the bar*]

She's not such a bad lot, that one.

CHRIS: [*Jovially*] She's good gel, Ay tal you! Py golly, Ay calabrate now! Give me whisky here at bar, too.

[*He puts down money. Larry serves him*]

You have drink, Larry.

LARRY: [*Virtuously*] You know I never touch it.

CHRIS: You don't know what you miss. Skoal!

[*He drinks—then begins to sing loudly*]

"My Yosephine, come board de ship—"

[*He picks up the drinks for Marthy and himself and walks unsteadily into the back room, singing*]

"De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looks yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchce-tchee, tchee-tchee tchee-tchee."

MARTHY. [*Griming, hands to ears*] Gawd!

CHRIS: [*Sitting down*] Ay'm good singer, yes? Vc drink, eh? Skoal! Ay calabrate! [*He drinks*] Ay calabrate 'cause Anna's coming home. You know, Marthy, Ay never write for her to come, 'cause Ay tank Ay'm no good for her. But all time Ay hope likc hell some day she vant for see me and den she come. And dat's vay it happen now, py yiminy! [*His face beaming*] What you tank she look like, Marthy? Ay bet you she's fine, good, strong gel, pooty like hell! Living on farm made her like dat. And Ay bet you some day she marry good, steady land fallar here in East, have home all her own, have kits—and dan Ay'm ole grandtader, py golly! And Ayc go visit dem every time Ay gat in port near! [*Bursting with joy*] By yiminy crickens, Ay calabrate dat! [*Shouts*] Bring oder drink, Larry! [*He smashes his fist on the table with a bang*]

LARRY: [*Coming in from bar—irritably*] Easy there! Don't be breakin' the table, you old goat!

CHRIS: [*By way of reply, grins foolishly and begins to sing*] "My Yosephine, come board de ship—"

MARTHY: [*Touching Chris' arm persuasively*] You're soused to the ears, Dutchy. Go out and put a feed into you. It'll sober you up.

[*Then as Chris shakes his head obstinately*]

Listen, yuh old nut! Yuh don't know what time your kid's liable to show up. Yuh want to be sober when she comes, don't yuh?

CHRIS: [*Aroused—gets unsteadily to his feet*] Py golly, yes.

LARRY: That's good sense for you. A good beef stew'll fix you. Go round the corner.

CHRIS: All right. Ay be back soon, Marthy.
[*Chris goes through the bar and out the street door*]

LARRY: He'll come round all right with some grub in him.

MARTHY: Sure.

[*Larry goes back to the bar and resumes his newspaper. Marthy sips what is left of her schooner reflectively. There is the ring of the family entrance bell. Larry comes to the door and opens it a trifle—then, with a puzzled expression, pulls it wide. Anna Christopherson enters. She is a tall, blond, jolly-developed girl of twenty, handsome after a large, Viking-daughter fashion but now run down in health and plainly showing all the outward evidences of belonging to the world's oldest profession. Her youthful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up. Her clothes are the tawdry finery of peasant stock turned prostitute. She comes and sinks wearily in a chair by the table, left front*]

ANNA: Gimme a whisky—ginger ale on the side.

[*Then, as Larry turns to go, forcing a winning smile at him*]

And don't be stingy, baby.

LARRY: [*Sarcastically*] Shall I serve it in a pail?

ANNA: [*With a hard laugh*] That suits me down to the ground.

[*Larry goes into the bar. The two women size each other up with frank stares. Larry comes back with the drink which he sets before Anna and returns to the bar again. Anna downs her drink at a gulp. Then, after a moment, as the alcohol begins to rouse her, she turns to Marthy with a friendly smile*]

Gee, I needed that bad, all right, all right!

MARTHY: [*Nodding her head sympathetically*] Sure—yuh look all in. Been on a bat?

ANNA: No—traveling—day and a half on the train. Had to sit up all night in the dirty coach, too. Gawd, I thought I'd never get here!

MARTHY: [*With a start—looking at her intently*] Where'd yuh come from, huh?

ANNA: St. Paul—out in Minnesota.

MARTHY: [*Staring at her in amazement—slowly*] So—yuh're— [*She suddenly bursts out into hoarse, ironical laughter*] Gawd!

ANNA: All the way from Minnesota, sure. [*Flaring up*] What you laughing at? Me?

MARTHY: [*Hastily*] No, honest, kid. I was thinkin' of somethin' else.

ANNA: [*Mollified—with a smile*] Well, I wouldn't blame you, at that. Guess I do look rotten—just out of the hospital two weeks. I'm going to have another 'ski. What d'you say? Have something on me?

MARTHY: Sure I will. T'anks. [*She calls*] Hey, Larry! Little service!
[*He comes in*]

ANNA: Same for me.

MARTHY: Same here.

[Larry takes their glasses and goes out]

ANNA: Why don't you come sit over here, be sociable. I'm a dead stranger in this burg—and I ain't spoke a word with no one since dav before yesterday.

MARTHY: Sure thing.

[She shuffles over to Anna's table and sits down opposite her. Larry brings the drinks and Anna pays him]

ANNA: Skoal! Here's how! [She drinks]

MARTHY: Here's luck! [She takes a gulp from her schooner]

ANNA: [Taking a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes from her bag] Let you smoke in here, won't they?

MARTHY: [Doubtfully] Sure. [Then with evident anxiety] On'y trow it away if yuh hear someone comin'.

ANNA: [Lighting one and taking a deep inhale] Gee, they're fussy in this dump, ain't they?

[She puffs, staring at the table top. Marthy looks her over with a new penetrating interest, taking in every detail of her face. Anna suddenly becomes conscious of this appraising stare—resentfully]

Ain't nothing wrong with me, is there? You're looking hard enough.

MARTHY: [Irritated by the other's tone—scornfully] Ain't got to look much. I got your number the minute you stepped in the door.

ANNA: [Her eyes narrowing] Ain't you smart! Well, I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now. That's you! [She gives a hard little laugh]

MARTHY: [Angrily] Is that so? Well, I'll tell you straight, kiddo, that Marthy Owen never— [She catches herself up short—with a grin] What are you and me scroppin' over? Let's cut it out, huh? Me, I don't want no hard feelin's with no one. [Extending her hand] Shake and forget it, huh?

ANNA: [Shakes her hand gladly] Only too glad to. I ain't looking for trouble. Let's have 'nother. What d'you say?

MARTHY: [Shaking her head] Not for mine. I'm full up. And you— Had anythin' to eat lately?

ANNA: Not since this morning on the train.

MARTHY: Then yuh better go easy on it, hadn't yuh?

ANNA: [After a moment's hesitation] Guess you're right. I got to meet someone, too. But my nerves is on edge after that rotten trip.

MARTHY: Yuh said yuh was just outa the hospital?

ANNA: Two weeks ago.

[Leaning over to Marthy confidentially]

The joint I was in out in St. Paul got raided. That was the start. The judge give all us girls thirty days. The others didn't seem to mind being in the cooler much. Some of 'em was used to it. But me, I couldn't stand it. It got my goat right—couldn't eat or sleep or nothing. I never could stand being caged up nowhere. I got good and sick and they had to send me to the hospital. It was nice there. I was sorry to leave it, honest!

MARTHY: [After a slight pause] Did yuh say yuh got to meet someone here?

ANNA: Yes. Oh, not what you mean. It's my Old Man I got to meet. Honest! It's funny, too. I ain't seen him since I was a kid—don't even know what he looks like—just had a letter every now and then. This was always the only address he give me to write him back. He's yanitor of some building here now—used to be a sailor.

MARTHY: [*Astonished*] Janitor!

ANNA: Sure. And I was thinking maybe, seeing he ain't never done a thing for me in my life, he might be willing to stake me to a room and eats till I get rested up. [*Wearily*] Gee, I sure need that rest! I'm knocked out. [*Then resignedly*] But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. [*With sudden passion*] Men, I hate 'em—all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest. [*Then with sudden interest*] Say, do you hang out around this dump much?

MARTHY: Oh, off and on.

ANNA: Then maybe you know him—my Old Man—or at least seen him?

MARTHY: It ain't old Chris, is it?

ANNA: Old Chris?

MARTHY: Chris Christopherson, his full name is.

ANNA: [*Excitedly*] Yes, that's him! Anna Christopherson—that's my real name—only out there I called myself Anna Christie. So you know him, eh?

MARTHY: [*Evasively*] Seen him about for years.

ANNA: Say, what's he like, tell me, honest?

MARTHY: Oh, he's short and—

ANNA [*Impatiently*] I don't care what he looks like. What kind is he?

MARTHY: [*Earnestly*] Well, yuh can bet your life, kid, he's as good an old guy as ever walked on two feet. That goes!

ANNA: [*Pleased*] I'm glad to hear it. Then you think's he'll stake me to that rest cure I'm after?

MARTHY: [*Emphatically*] Surest thing you know. [*Disgustedly*] But where'd yuh get the idea he was a janitor?

ANNA: He wrote me he was himself.

MARTHY: Well, he was lyin'. He ain't. He's captain of a barge—five men under him.

ANNA: [*Disgusted in her turn*] A barge? What kind of a barge?

MARTHY: Coal, mostly.

ANNA: A coal barge! [*With a harsh laugh*] If that ain't a swell job to find your long lost Old Man working at! Gee, I knew something'd be bound to turn out wrong—always does with me. That puts my idea of his giving me a rest on the bum.

MARTHY: What d'yuh mean?

ANNA: I s'pose he lives on the boat, don't he?

MARTHY: Sure. What about it? Can't you live on it, too?

ANNA: [*Scornfully*] Me? On a dirty coal barge! What d'you think I am?

MARTHY: [*Resentfully*] What d'yuh know about barges, huh? Bet yuh ain't never seen one. That's what comes of his bringing yuh up inland—away from the old devil sea—where yuh'd be safe—Gawd! [*The irony of it strikes her sense of humor and she laughs hoarsely*]

ANNA: [*Angrily*] His bringing me up! Is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! He let them cousins of my Old Woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog.

MARTHY: Well, he's got queer notions on some things. I've heard him say a farm was the best place for a kid.

ANNA: Sure. That's what he'd always answer back—and a lot of crazy stuff about staying away from the sea—stuff I couldn't make head or tail to. I thought he must be nutty.

MARTHY: He is on that one point. [*Casually*] So yuh didn't fall for life on the farm, huh?

ANNA: I should say not! The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons—I had to slave for all of 'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat a hired girl. [*After a moment's hesitation—somerberly*] It was one of the sons—the youngest—started me—when I was sixteen. After that, I hated 'em so I'd killed 'em all if I'd stayed. So I run away—to St. Paul.

MARTHY: [*Who has been listening sympathetically*] I've heard Old Chris talkin' about your bein' a nurse girl out there. Was that all a bluff yuh put up when yuh wrote him?

ANNA: Not on your life, it wasn't. It was true for two years. I didn't go wrong all at one jump. Being a nurse girl was júst what finished me. Taking care of 'other people's kids, always listening to their bawling and crying, caged in, when you're only a kid yourself and want to go out and see things. At last I got the chance—to get into that house. And you bet your life I took it! [*Defiantly*] And I ain't sorry neither. [*After a pause—with bitter hatred*] It was all men's fault—the whole business. It was men on the farm ordering and beating me—and giving me the wrong start. Then when I was a nurse, it was men again hanging around, bothering me,

trying to see what they could get. [*She gives a hard laugh*] And now it's men all the time. Gawd, I hate 'em all, every mother's son of 'em! Don't you?

MARTHY: Oh, I dunno. There's good ones and bad ones, kid. You've just had a run of bad luck with 'em, that's all. Your Old Man, now—Old Chris—he's a good one.

ANNA: [*Sceptically*] He'll have to show me.

MARTHY: Yuh kept right on writing him yuh was a nurse girl still, even after yuh was in the house, didn't yuh?

ANNA: Sure. [*Cynically*] Not that I think he'd care a darn.

MARTHY: Yuh're all wrong about him, kid. [*Earnestly*] I know Old Chris well for a long time. He's talked to me 'bout you lots o' times. He thinks the world o' you, honest he does.

ANNA: Aw, quit the kiddin'!

MARTHY: Honest! Only, he's a simple old guy, see? He's got nutty notions. But he means well, honest. Listen to me, kid—

[*She is interrupted by the opening and shutting of the street door in the bar and by hearing Chris' voice*]

Sssh!

ANNA: What's up?

CHRIS: [*Who has entered the bar. He seems considerably sobered up*] Py golly, Larry, dat grub taste good. Marthy in back?

LARRY: Sure—and another tramp with her. [*Chris starts for the entrance to the back room*]

MARTHY: [*To Anna in a hurried, nervous whisper*] That's him now. He's comin' in here. Brace up!

ANNA: Who?

[Chris opens the door]

MARTHY: [*As if she were greeting him for the first time*] Why hello, Old Chris.

[*Then before he can speak, she shuffles hurriedly past him into the bar, beckoning him to follow her*]

Come here. I wanta tell yuh somethin'.

[*He goes out to her. She speaks hurriedly in a low voice*]

Listen! I'm goin' to beat it down to the barge—pack up me duds and blow. That's her in there—your Anna—just come—waitin' for yuh. Treat her right, see? She's been sick. Well, s'long!

[*She goes into the back room—to Anna*]

S'long, kid. I gotta beat it now. See yuh later.

ANNA: [*Nervously*] So long.

[*Marthy goes quickly out of the family entrance*]

LARRY: [*Looking at the stupefied Chris curiously*] Well, what's up now?

CHRIS: [*Vaguely*] Nutting—nutting.

[*He stands before the door to the back room in an agony of embarrassed emotion—then he forces himself to a bold decision, pushes open the door and walks in. He stands there, casts a shy glance at Anna, whose brilliant clothes, and, to him, high-toned appearance, awe him terribly. He looks about him with pitiful nervousness as if to avoid the appraising look with which she takes in his face, his clothes, etc.—his voice seeming to plead for her forbearance*]

Anna!

ANNA: [*Acutely embarrassed in her turn*] Hello—father. She told me it was you. I yust got here a little while ago.

CHRIS: [*Goes slowly over to her chair*] It's good—for see you—after all dem years, Anna.

[*He bends down over her. After an embarrassed struggle they manage to kiss each other*]

ANNA: [*A trace of genuine feeling in her voice*] It's good to see you, too.

CHRIS: [*Grasps her arms and looks into her face—then overcome by a wave of fierce tenderness*] Anna lilla! Anna lilla! [*Takes her in his arms*]

ANNA: [*Shrinks away from him, half-frightened*] What's that—Swedish? I don't know it. [*Then as if seeking relief from the tension in a voluble chatter*] Gee, I had an awful trip coming here. I'm all in. I had to sit up in the dirty coach all night—couldn't get no sleep, hardly—and then I had a hard job finding this place. I never been in New York before, you know, and—

CHRIS: [*Who has been staring down at her face admiringly, not hearing what she says—impulsively*] You know you vas awful pooty gel, Anna? Ay bet all men see you fall in love with you, py yiminy!

ANNA: [*Repelled—harshly*] Cut it! You talk same as they all do.

CHRIS: [*Hurt—humbly*] Ain't no harm for your fader talk dat vay, Anna.

ANNA: [*Forcing a short laugh*] No—course not. Only—it's funny to see you and not remember nothing. You're like—a stranger.

CHRIS: [*Sadly*] Ay s'pose. Ay never come home only few times ven you vas kit in Sveden. You don't remember dat?

ANNA: No. [*Resentfully*] But why didn't you never come home them days? Why didn't you never come out West to see me?

CHRIS: [*Slowly*] Ay tank, after your mo'der die, ven Ay vas away on voyage, it's better for you you don't never see me!

[*He sinks down in the chair opposite her dejectedly—then turns to her—sadly*]

Ay don't know, Anna, why Ay never come home Sveden in ole year. Ay vant come home end of every voyage. Ay vant see your mo'der, your two bro'der before dey vas drowned, you ven you vas born—but—Ay—don't go. Ay sign on oder ships—go South America, go Australia, go China, go every port all over world many times—but Ay never go aboard ship sail for Sveden. Ven Ay gat money for pay passage home as passenger den— [*He bows his head guiltily*] Ay forgat and Ay spend all money. Ven Ay tank again, it's too late. [*He sighs*] Ay don't know why but dat's way with most sailor fallar, Anna. Dat ole davil sea make dem crazy fools with her dirty tricks. It's so.

ANNA: [*Who has watched him keenly while he has been speaking—with a trace of scorn in her voice*] Then you think the sea's to blame for everything, eh? Well, you're still workin' on it, ain't you, spite of all you used to write me about hating it. That dame was here told me you was captain of a coal barge—and you wrote me you was yanitor of a building!

CHRIS: [*Embarrassed but lying glibly*] Oh, Ay work on land long time as yanitor. Yust short time ago Ay got dis yob cause Ay vas sick, need open air.

ANNA: [*Sceptically*] Sick? You? You'd never think it.

CHRIS: And Anna, dis ain't real sailor yob. Dis ain't real boat on sea. She's yust ole tub—like piece of land with house on

it dat float. Yob on her ain't sea yob. No. Ay don't gat yob on sea, Anna, if Ay die first. Ay swear dat ven your mo'der die. Ay keep my word, py yingol

ANNA: [*Perplexed*] Well, I can't see no difference. [*Dismissing the subject*] Speaking of being sick, I been there myself—yust out of the hospital two weeks ago.

CHRIS: [*Immediately all concern*] You, Anna? Py golly! [*Anxiously*] You feel better now, dough, don't you? You look little tired, dat's all!

ANNA: [*Wearily*] I am. Tired to death. I need a long rest and I don't see much chance of getting it.

CHRIS: What you mean, Anna?

ANNA: Well, when I made up my mind to come to see you, I thought you was a yanitor—that you'd have a place where, maybe, if you didn't mind having me, I could visit a while and rest up—till I felt able to get back on the yob again.

CHRIS: [*Eagerly*] But Ay gat place, Anna—nice place. You rest all you want, py yiminy! You don't never have to vork as nurse gel no more. You stay with me, py golly!

ANNA: [*Surprised and pleased by his eagerness—with a smile*] Then you're really glad to see me—honest?

CHRIS: [*Pressing one of her hands in both of his*] Anna, Ay like see you like hell, Ay tal you! And don't you talk no more about gattin' yob. You stay with me. Ay don't see you for long time, you don't forgat dat. [*His voice trembles*] Ay'm gattin' ole. Ay gat no one in world but you.

ANNA: [*Touched—embarrassed by this unfamiliar emotion*] Thanks. It sounds good to hear someone—talk to me that

way. Say, though—if you're so lonely—it's funny—why ain't you ever married again?

CHRIS: [*Shaking his head emphatically—after a pause*] Ay love your mo'der too much for ever do dat, Anna.

ANNA: [*Impressed—slowly*] I don't remember nothing about her. What was she like? Tell me.

CHRIS: Ay tal you all about everytang—and you tal me all tangs happen to you. But not here now. Dis ain't good place for young gel, anyway. Only no good sailor fallar come here for gat drunk.

[*He gets to his feet quickly and picks up her bag*]

You come with me, Anna. You need lie down, gat rest.

ANNA: [*Half rises to her feet, then sits down again*] Where're you going?

CHRIS: Come. Ve gat on board.

ANNA: [*Disappointedly*] On board your barge, you mean? [*Dryly*] Nix for mine! [*Then seeing his crestfallen look—forcing a smile*] Do you think that's a good place for a young girl like me—a coal barge?

CHRIS: [*Dully*] Yes, Ay tank. [*He hesitates—then continues more and more pleadingly*] You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on' voyage—yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe; see steamer pass; see schooner make sail—see everytang dat's pooty. You need take rest like dat. You work too hard for young gel already. You need vacation, yes!

ANNA: [*Who has listened to him with a growing interest—with an uncertain laugh*] It sounds good to hear you tell it. I'd sure like a trip on the water, all right. It's the barge idea has me stopped. Well, I'll go down with you and have a look—and maybe I'll take a chance. Gee, I'd do anything once.

CHRIS: [*Picks up her bag again*] Ve go, eh?

ANNA: What's the rush? Wait a second. [*Forgetting the situation for a moment, she relapses into the familiar form and flashes one of her winning trade smiles at him*] Gee, I'm thirsty.

CHRIS: [*Sets down her bag immediately—hastily*] Ay'm sorry, Anna. What you tank you like for drink, eh?

ANNA: [*Promptly*] I'll take a— [*Then suddenly reminded—confusedly*] I don't know. What'a they got here?

CHRIS: [*With a grin*] Ay don't tank dey got much fancy drink for young gel in dis place, Anna. Yinger ale—sas'prilla, maybe.

ANNA: [*Forcing a laugh herself*] Make it sas, then.

CHRIS: [*Coming up to her—with a wink*] Ay tal you, Anna, ve calabrate, yes—dis one time because ve meet after many year. [*In a half whisper, embarrassedly*] Dey gat good port vine, Anna. It's good for you, Ay tank—little bit—for give you appetite. It ain't strong, neider. One glass don't go to your head, Ay promise.

ANNA: [*With a half hysterical laugh*] All right. I'll take port.

CHRIS: Ay go gat him.

[*He goes out to the bar. As soon as the door closes, Anna starts to her feet*]

ANNA: [*Picking up her bag—half-aloud—stammeringly*] Gawd, I can't stand this! I better beat it.

[*Then she lets her bag drop, stumbles over to her chair again, and covering her face with her hands, begins to sob*]

LARRY: [*Putting down his paper as Chris comes up—with a grin*] Well, who's the blond?

CHRIS: [*Proudly*] Dat vas Anna, Larry.

LARRY: [*In amazement*] Your daughter, Anna?

[*Chris nods. Larry lets a long, low whistle escape him and turns away embarrassedly*]

CHRIS: Don't you tank she vas pooty gel, Larry?

LARRY: [*Rising to the occasion*] Sure! A peach!

CHRIS: You bet you! Give me drink for take back—one port vine for Anna—she calabrate dis one time with me—and small beer for me.

LARRY: [*As he gets the drinks*] Small beer for you, eh? She's reformin' you already.

CHRIS: [*Pleased*] You bet!

[*He takes the drinks. As she hears him coming, Anna hastily dries her eyes, tries to smile. Chris comes in and sets the drinks down on the table—stares at her for a second anxiously—patting her hand*]

You look tired, Anna. Vell, Ay make you take good long rest now. [*Picking up his beer*] Come, you drink vine. It put new life in you.

[*She lifts her glass—he grins*]

Skoal, Anna! You know dat Svedish word?

ANNA: Skoal! [*Downing her port at a gulp like a drink of whisky—her lips trembling*] Skoal? Guess I know that word, all right, all right!

[*THE CURTAIN FALLS*]

ACT II.

SCENE: *Ten days later. The stern of the deeply-laden barge, Simeon Winthrop, at anchor in the outer harbor of Provincetown, Mass. It is ten o'clock at night. Dense fog shrouds the barge on all sides, and she floats motionless on a calm. A lantern set up on an immense coil of thick hawser sheds a dull, filtering light on objects near it—the heavy steel bits for making fast the tow lines, etc. In the rear is the cabin, its misty windows glowing wanly with the light of a lamp inside. The chimney of the cabin stove rises a few feet above the roof. The doleful tolling of bells, on Long Point, on ships at anchor, breaks the silence at regular intervals.*

As the curtain rises, Anna is discovered standing near the coil of rope on which the lantern is placed. She looks healthy, transformed, the natural color has come back to her face. She has on a black oil-skin coat, but wears no hat. She is staring out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder. The cabin door is pushed open and Chris appears. He is dressed in yellow oilskins—coat, pants, sou'wester—and wears high sea-boots.

CHRIS: [*The glare from the cabin still in his eyes, peers blinkingly astern*] Anna! [*Receiving no reply, he calls again, this time with apparent apprehension*] Anna!

ANNA: [*With a start—making a gesture with her hand as if to impose silence—in a hushed whisper*] Yes, here I am. What d'you want?

CHRIS: [*Walks over to her—solicitously*] Don't you come turn in, Anna? It's late—after four bells. It ain't good for you stay out here in fog, Ay tank.

ANNA: Why not? [*With a trace of strange exultation*] I love this fog! Honest! It's so— [*She hesitates, groping for a word*] Funny and still. I feel as if I was—out of things altogether.

CHRIS: [*Spitting disgustedly*] Fog's worst one of her dirty tricks, py yingol!

ANNA: [*With a short laugh*] Beefing about the sea again? I'm getting so's I love it, the little I've seen.

CHRIS: [*Glancing at her moodily*] Dat's foolish talk, Anna. You see her more, you don't talk dat vay. [*Then seeing her irritation, he hastily adopts a more cheerful tone*] But Ay'm glad you like it on barge. Ay'm glad it makes you feel good again. [*With a placating grin*] You like live like dis alone with ole fa'der, eh?

ANNA: Sure I do. Everything's been so different from anything I ever come across before. And now—this fog— Gee, I wouldn't have missed it for nothing. I never thought living on ships was so different from land. Gee, I'd yust love to work on it, honest I would, if I was a man. I don't wonder you always been a sailor.

CHRIS: [*Vehemently*] Ay ain't sailor. Anna. And dis ain't real sea. You only see nice part. [*Then as she doesn't answer, he continues hopefully*] Vell, fog lift in morning, Ay tank.

ANNA: [*The exultation again in her voice*] I love it! I don't give a rap if it never lifts!

[*Chris fidgets from one foot to the other worriedly. Anna continues slowly, after a pause*]

It makes me feel clean—out here—'s if I'd taken a bath.

CHRIS: [*After a pause*] You better go in cabin read book. Dat put you to sleep.

ANNA: I don't want to sleep. I want to stay out here—and think about things.

CHRIS: [*Walks away from her toward the cabin—then comes back*] You act funny tonight, Anna.

ANNA: [*Her voice rising angrily*] Say, what're you trying to do—make things rotten? You been kind as kind can be to me and I certainly appreciate it—only don't spoil it all now. [*Then, seeing the hurt expression on her father's face, she forces a smile*] Let's talk of something else. Come. Sit down here. [*She points to the coil of rope*]

CHRIS: [*Sits down beside her with a sigh*] It's gattin pooty late in night, Anna. Must be near five bells.

ANNA: [*Interestedly*] Five bells? What time is that?

CHRIS: Half past ten.

ANNA: Funny I don't know nothing about sea talk—but those cousins was always talking crops and that stuff. Gee, wasn't I sick of it—and of them!

CHRIS: You don't like live on farm, Anna?

ANNA: I've told you a hundred times I hated it. [*Decidedly*] I'd rather have one drop of ocean than all the farms in the world! Honest! And you wouldn't like a farm, neither. Here's where you belong. [*She makes a sweeping gesture seaward*] But not on a coal barge. You belong on a real ship, sailing all over the world.

CHRIS: [*Moodily*] Ay've done dat many year, Anna, when Ay vas damn fool.

ANNA: [*Disgustedly*] Oh, rats! [*After a pause she speaks musingly*] Was the men in our family always sailors—as far back as you know about?

CHRIS: [*Shortly*] Yes. Damn fools! All men in our village on coast, Sveden, go to sea. Ain't nutting else for dem to do. My fa'der die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He's buried at sea. Ay don't never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro'der, older'n me, dey go on ships. Den Ay go, toc Den my mo'der she's left all 'lone. She die ooty quick after dat—all 'lone. Ve vas all away on voyage when she die. [*He pauses sadly*] Two my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. My oder bro'der, he save money, give up sea, den he die home in bed. He's only one dat ole davil don't kill. [*Defiantly*] But me, Ay bet you Ay die ashore in bed, tool

ANNA: Were all of 'em yust plain sailors?

CHRIS: Able body seaman, most of dem. [*With a certain pride*] Dey vas all smart seaman, too—A one. [*Then after hesitating a moment—shyly*] Ay vas bo'sun.

ANNA: Bo'sun?

CHRIS: Dat's kind of officer.

ANNA: Gee, that was fine. What does he do?

CHRIS: [*After a second's hesitation, plunged into gloom again by his fear of her enthusiasm*] Hard vork all time. It's rotten, Ay tal you, for go to sea. [*Determined to disgust her with sea life—volubly*] Dey're all fool fallar, dem fallar in our family. Dey all vork rotten yob on sea for nutting, don't care nutting but yust gat big pay day in pocket, eat drunk. eat robbed. ship avay again

on oder voyage. Dey don't come home. Dey don't do anytang like good man do. And dat ole davil, sea, sooner, later she swallow dem up.

ANNA: [*With an excited laugh*] Good sports, I'd call 'em. [*Then hastily*] But say—listen—did all the women of the family marry sailors?

CHRIS: [*Eagerly—seeing a chance to drive home his point*] Yes—and it's bad on dem like hell vorst of all. Dey don't see deir men only once in long while. Dey set and vait all 'lone. And when deir boys grows up, go to sea, dey sit and vait some more. [*Vehemently*] Any gel marry sailor, she's crazy fool! You're mo'der she tal you same tang if she vas alive. [*He relapses into an attitude of somber brooding*]

ANNA: [*After a pause—dreamily*] Funny! I do feel sort of—nutty, tonight. I feel old.

CHRIS: [*Mystified*] Ole?

ANNA: Sure—like I'd been living a long, long time—out here in the fog. [*Frowning perplexedly*] I don't know how to tell you yust what I mean. It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times—on boats—in this same fog. [*With a short laugh*] You must think I'm off my base.

CHRIS: [*Gruffly*] Anybody feel funny dat vay in fog.

ANNA: [*Persistently*] But why d'you s'pose I feel so—so—like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for—'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot—everything that's happened—like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow—like you feel yust after you've took a bath. And I feel happy for once—yes, honest!

—happier than I ever been anywhere before! [*As Chris makes no comment but a heavy sigh, she continues wonderingly*] It's nutty for me to feel that way, don't you think?

CHRIS: [*A grim foreboding in his voice*] Ay tank Ay'm damn fool for bring you on voyage, Anna.

ANNA: [*Impressed by his tone*] You talk —nutty tonight yourself. You act 's if you was scared something was going to happen.

CHRIS: Only God know dat, Anna.

ANNA: [*Half-mockingly*] Then it'll be Gawd's will, like the preachers say—what does happen.

CHRIS: [*Starts to his feet with fierce protest*] No! Dat ole devil, sea, she ain't God!

[*In the pause of silence that comes after his defiance a hail in a man's husky, exhausted voice comes faintly out of the fog to port*]

"Aho!"

[*Chris gives a startled exclamation*]

ANNA: [*Jumping to her feet*] What's that?

CHRIS [*Who has regained his composure—sheepishly*] Py golly, dat scare me for minute. It's only some fallar hail, Anna—loose his course in fog. Must be fisherman's power boat. His engine break down, Ay guess. [*The "ahoy" comes again through the wall of fog, sounding much nearer this time. Chris goes over to the port bulwark*] Sound from dis side. She come in from open sea. [*He holds his hands to his mouth, megaphone-fashion, and shouts back*] Aho, dere! What's trouble?

THE VOICE: [*This time sounding nearer but up forward toward the bow*] Heave a rope when we come alongside [*Then irritably*] Where are ye, ye scut?

CHRIS: Ay hear dem rowing. Dey come up by bow, Ay tank. [*Then shouting out again*] Dis vay!

THE VOICE: Right ye are!

[*There is a muffled sound of oars in oar-locks*]

ANNA: [*Half to herself—resentfully*] Why don't that guy stay where he belongs?

CHRIS: [*Hurriedly*] Ay go up bow. All hands asleep 'cepting fallar on vatch. Ay gat heave line to dat fallar.

[*He picks up a coil of rope and hurries off toward the bow. Anna walks back toward the extreme stern as if she wanted to remain as much isolated as possible. She turns her back on the proceedings and stares out into the fog. The Voice is heard again shouting "Aho!" and Chris answering "Dis vay." Then there is a pause—the murmur of excited voices—then the scuffling of feet. Chris appears from around the cabin to port. He is supporting the limp form of a man dressed in dungarees, holding one of the man's arms around his neck. The deckhand, Johnson, a young blond Swede, follows him, helping along another exhausted man similar fashion. Anna turns to look at them. Chris stops for a second—volubly*]

Anna! You come help, vill you? You find whisky in cabin. Dese fallars need drink for fix them. Dey vas near dead.

ANNA: [*Hurrying to him*] Sure—but who are they? What's the trouble?

CHRIS: Sailor fallars. Deir steamer gat wrecked. Dey been five days in open boat—four fallars—only one left able stand up. Come, Anna.

[*She precedes him into the cabin, holding the door open while he and Johnson carry in their burdens. The door is shut, then opened again as Johnson comes out. Chris' voice shouts after him*]

Go gat oder fallar, Yohnson.

JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

[*He goes. The door is closed again. Mat Burke stumbles in around the port side of the cabin. He moves slowly, feeling his way uncutainly, keeping hold of the port bulwark with his right hand to steady himself. He is stripped to the waist, has on nothing but a pair of dirty dungaree pants. He is a powerful, broad-chested six-footer, his face handsome in a hard, rough, bold, defiant way. He is about thirty, in the full power of his heavy-muscled, immense strength. His dark eyes are bloodshot and wild from sleeplessness. The muscles of his arms and shoulders are lumped in knots and bunches, the veins of his fore-arms stand out like blue cords. He finds his way to the coil of hawser and sits down on it facing the cabin, his back bowed, head in his hands, in an attitude of spent weariness*]

BURKE: [*Talking aloud to himself*] Row, ye devil! Row! [*Then lifting his head and looking about him*] What's this tub? Well, we're safe anyway—with the help of God.

[*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically. Johnson comes along the deck to port, supporting the fourth man, who is babbling to himself in-*

coherently. Burke glances at him disdainfully]

Is it losing the small wits ye iver had, ye are? Deck-scrubbing scut!

[*They pass him and go into the cabin, leaving the door open. Burke sags forward wearily*]

I'm bate out—bate out entirely.

ANNA: [*Comes out of the cabin with a tumbler quarter-full of whisky in her hand. She gives a start when she sees Burke so near her, the light from the open door falling full on him. Then, overcoming what is evidently a feeling of repulsion, she comes up beside him*] Here you are. Here's a drink for you. You need it, I guess.

BURKE: [*Lifting his head slowly—confusedly*] Is it dreaming I am?

ANNA: [*Half smiling*] Drink it and you'll find it ain't no dream.

BURKE: To hell with the drink—but I'll take it just the same. [*He tosses it down*] Ahah! I'm needin' that—and 'tis fine stuff. [*Looking up at her with frank, ginning admiration*] But 'twasn't the booze I meant when I said, was I dreaming. I thought you was some mermaid out of the sea come to torment me. [*He reaches out to feel of her arm*] Aye, tale flesh and blood, devil a less.

ANNA: [*Coldly. Stepping back from him*] Cut that.

BURKE: But tell me, isn't this a barge I'm on—or isn't it?

ANNA: Sure.

BURKE: And what is a fine handsome woman the like of you doing on this scow?

ANNA: [*Coldly*] Never you mind. [*Then half amused in spite of herself*] Say,

you're a great one, honest—starting right in kidding after what you been through.

BURKE: [*Delighted—proudly*] Ah, it was nothing—aisy for a rale man with guts to him, the like of me. [*He laughs*] All in the day's work, darlin'. [*Then, more seriously but still in a boastful tone, confidentially*] But I won't be denying 'twas a damn narrow squeak. We'd all ought to be with Davy Jones at the bottom of the sea, be rights. And only for me, I'm telling you, and the great strength and guts is in me, we'd be being scoffed by the fishes this minute!

ANNA: [*Contemptuously*] Gee, you hate yourself, don't you? [*Then turning away from him indifferently*] Well, you'd better come in and lie down. You must want to sleep.

BURKE: [*Stung—rising unsteadily to his feet with chest out and head thrown back—resentfully*] Lie down and sleep, is it? Divil a wink I'm after having for two days and nights and divil a bit I'm needing now. Let you not be thinking I'm the like of them three weak scuts come in the boat with me. I could lick the three of them sitting down with one hand tied behind me. They may be bate out, but I'm not—and I've been rowing the boat with them lying in the bottom not able to raise a hand for the last two days we was in it. [*Furiously, as he sees this is making no impression on her*] And I can lick all hands on this tub, wan by wan, tired as I am!

ANNA: [*Sarcastically*] Gee, ain't you a hard guy! [*Then, with a trace of sympathy, as she notices him swaying from weakness*] But never mind that fight talk. I'll take your word for all you've said. Go on and sit down out here, any-

way, if I can't get you to come inside. [*He sits down weakly*] You're all in, you might as well own up to it.

BURKE: [*Fiercely*] The hell I am!

ANNA: [*Coldly*] Well, be stubborn then for all I care. And I must say I don't care for your language. The men I know don't pull that rough stuff when ladies are around.

BURKE: [*Getting unsteadily to his feet again—in a rage*] Ladies! Ho-ho! Divil mend you! Let you not be making game of me. What would ladies be doing on this bloody hulk?

[*As Anna attempts to go to the cabin, he lurches into her path*]

Aisy, now! You're not the old Square-head's woman, I suppose you'll be telling me next—living in his cabin with him, no less! [*Seeing the cold, hostile expression on Anna's face, he suddenly changes his tone to one of boisterous joviality*] But I do be thinking, iver since the first look my eyes took at you, that it's a fool you are to be wasting yourself—a fine, handsome girl—on a stumpy runt of a man like that old Swede. There's too many strapping great lads on the sea would give their heart's blood for one kiss of you!

ANNA: [*Scornfully*] Lads like you, eh?

BURKE: [*Grinning*] Ye take the words out o' my mouth. I'm the proper lad for you, if it's meself do be saying it.

[*With a quick movement he puts his arms about her waist*]

Whist, now, me daisy! Himself's in the cabin. It's wan of your kisses I'm needing to take the tiredness from me bones. Wan kiss, now!

[*He presses her to him and attempts to kiss her*]

ANNA: [*Struggling fiercely*] Leggo of me, you big mutt!

[*She pushes him away with all her might. Burke, weak and tottering, is caught off his guard. He is thrown down backward and, in falling, hits his head a hard thump against the bulwark. He lies there still, knocked out for the moment. Anna stands for a second, looking down at him frightenedly. Then she kneels down beside him and raises his head to her knee, staring into his face anxiously for some sign of life*]

BURKE: [*Stirring a bit—mutteringly*] God stiffen it!

[*He opens his eyes and blinks up at her with vague wonder*]

ANNA: [*Letting his head sink back on the deck, rising to her feet with a sigh of relief*] You're coming to all right, eh? Gee, I was scared for a moment I'd killed you.

BURKE: [*With difficulty rising to a sitting position—scornfully*] Killed, is it? It'd take more than a bit of a blow to crack my thick skull.

[*Then looking at her with the most intense admiration*]

But, glory be, it's a power of strength is in them two fine arms of yours. There's not a man in the world can say the same as you, that he seen Mat Burke lying at his feet and him dead to the world.

ANNA: [*Rather remorsefully*] Forget it. I'm sorry it happened, see?

[*Burke rises and sits on bench. Then severely*]

Only you had no right to be getting fresh with me. Listen, now, and don't go getting any more wrong notions. I'm on this barge because I'm making a trip with my father. The captain's my father. Now you know.

BURKE: The old square—the old Swede, I mean?

ANNA: Yes.

BURKE: [*Rising—peering at her face*] Sure I might have known it, if I wasn't a bloody fool from birth. Where else'd you get that fine yellow hair is like a golden crown on your head.

ANNA: [*With an amused laugh*] Say, nothing stops you, does it?

[*Then attempting a severe tone again*]

But don't you think you ought to be apologizing for what you said and done just a minute ago, instead of trying to kid me with that mush?

BURKE: [*Indignantly*] Mush!

[*Then bending forward toward her with very intense earnestness*]

Indade and I will ask your pardon a thousand times—and on my knees, if ye like. I didn't mean a word of what I said or did. [*Resentful again for a second*] But divil a woman in all the ports of the world has iver made a great fool of me that way before!

ANNA: [*With amused sarcasm*] I see You mean you're a lady-killer and they all fall for you.

BURKE: [*Offended. Passionately*] Leave off your fooling! 'Tis that is after getting my back up at you. [*Earnestly*] 'Tis no lie I'm telling you about the women. [*Ruefully*] Though it's a great jackass I am to be mistaking you, even in anger, for the like of them cows on the water-front is the only women I've met up with since I was growed to a man.

[*As Anna shrinks away from him at this, he hurries on pleadingly*]

I'm a hard, rough man and I'm not fit, I'm thinking, to be kissing the shoe-soles of a fine, dacent girl the like of yourself. 'Tis only the ignorance of your kind made me see you wrong. So you'll

forgive me, for the love of God, and let us be friends from this out. [*Passionately*] I'm thinking I'd rather be friends with you than have my wish for anything else in the world.

[*He holds out his hand to her shyly*]

ANNA: [*Looking qucerly at him, perplexed and wounded, but moved and pleased in spite of herself—takes his hand uncertainly*] Sure.

BURKE: [*With boyish delight*] God bless you!

[*In his excitement he squeezes her hand tight*]

ANNA: Ouch!

BURKE: [*Hastily dropping her hand—ruefully*] Your pardon, Miss. 'Tis a clumsy ape I am.

[*Then simply—glancing down his arm proudly*]

It's great power I have in my hand and arm, and I do be forgetting it at times.

ANNA: [*Nursing her crushed hand and glancing at his arm, not without a trace of his own admiration*] Gee, you're some strong, all right.

BURKE: [*Delighted*] It's no lie, and why shouldn't I be, with me shoveling a million tons of coal in the stokeholes of ships since I was a lad only.

[*He pats the coil of hawser invitingly*]

Let you sit down, now, Miss, and I'll be telling you a bit of myself, and you'll be telling me a bit of yourself, and in an hour we'll be as old friends as if we was born in the same house.

[*He pulls at her sleeve shyly*]

Sit down now, if you please.

ANNA: [*With a half laugh*] Well—

[*She sits down*]

But we won't talk about me, see? You tell me about yourself and about the wreck.

BURKE: [*Flattered*] I'll tell you, surely. But can I be asking you one question, Miss, has my head in a puzzle?

ANNA: [*Guardedly*] Well—I dunno—what is it?

BURKE. What is it you do when you're not taking a trip with the Old Man? For I'm thinking a fine girl the like of you ain't living always on this tub.

ANNA: [*Uneasily*] No—of course I ain't. [*She searches his face suspiciously, afraid there may be some hidden insinuation in his words. Seeing his simple frankness, she goes on confidently*]

Well, I'll tell you I'm a governess, see? I take care of kids for people and learn them things.

BURKE: [*Impressed*] A governess, is it? You must be smart, surely.

ANNA: But let's not talk about me. Tell me about the wreck, like you promised me you would.

BURKE [*Importantly*] 'Twas this way, Miss. Two weeks out we ran into the devil's own storm, and she sprang wan hell of a leak up for'ard. The skipper was hoping to make Boston before another blow would finish her, but ten days back we met up with another storm the like of the first, only worse. Four days we was in it with green seas raking over her from bow to stern. That was a terrible time, God help us. [*Proudly*] And if 'twasn't for me and my great strength, I'm telling you—and it's God's truth—there'd been mutiny itself in the stokehole. 'Twas me held them to it, with a kick to wan and a clout to another, and they not caring a damn for the engineers any more, but fearing a clout of my right arm more than they'd fear the sea itself.

[*He glances at her anxiously, eager for her approval*]

ANNA: [*Concealing a smile—amused by this boyish boasting of his*] You did some hard work, didn't you?

BURKE: [*Promptly*] I did that! I'm a divil for sticking it out when them that's weak give up. But much good it did anyone! 'Twas a mad, fightin' scramble in the last seconds with each man for himself. I disremember how it come about, but there was the four of us in wan boat and when we was raised high on a great wave I took a look about and divil a sight there was of ship or men on top of the sea.

ANNA: [*In a subdued voice*] Then all the others was drowned?

BURKE: They was, surely.

ANNA: [*With a shudder*] What a terrible end!

BURKE: [*Turns to her*] A terrible end for the like of them swabs does live on land, maybe. But for the like of us does be roaming the seas, a good end, I'm telling you—quick and clanc.

ANNA: [*Struck by the word*] Yes, clean. That's jüst the word for—all of it the way it makes me feel.

BURKE: The sea, you mean? [*Interestedly*] I'm thinking you have a bit of it in your blood, too. Your Old Man wasn't only a barge rat—begging your pardon—all his life, by the cut of him.

ANNA: No, he was bo'sun on sailing ships for years. And all the men on both sides of the family have gone to sea as far back as he remembers, he says. All the women have married sailors, too.

BURKE: [*With intense satisfaction*] Did they, now? They had spirit in them. It's only on the sea you'd find rale men with guts is fit to wed with fine, high-tem-

pered girls [*Then he adds half-boldly*] the like of yourself.

ANNA: [*With a laugh*] There you go kiddin' again. [*Then seeing his hurt expression—quickly*] But you was going to tell me about yourself. You're Irish, of course I can tell that.

BURKE: [*Stoutly*] Yes, thank God, though I've not seen a sight of it in fifteen years or more.

ANNA: [*Thoughtfully*] Sailors never do go home hardly, do they? That's what my father was saying.

BURKE: He wasn't telling no lie. [*With sudden melancholy*] It's a hard and lonesome life, the sea is. The only women you'd meet in the ports of the world who'd be willing to speak you a kind word isn't woman at all. You know the kind I mane, and they're a poor, wicked lot, God forgive them. They're looking to steal the money from you only.

ANNA: [*Her face averted—rising to her feet—agitatedly*] I think—I guess I'd better see what's doing inside.

BURKE: [*Afraid he has offended her—beseechingly*] Don't go, I'm saying! Is it I've given you offense with my talk of the like of them? Don't heed it at all! I'm clumsy in my wits when it comes to talking proper with a girl the like of you. And why wouldn't I be? Since the day I left home for to go to sea punching coal, this is the first time I've had a word with a rale, dacent woman. So don't turn your back on me now, and we beginning to be friends.

ANNA: [*Turning to him again—forcing a smile*] I'm not sore at you, honest.

BURKE: [*Gratefully*] God bless you!

ANNA: [*Changing the subject abruptly*] But if you honestly think the sea's such a rotten life, why don't you get out of it?

BURKE: [*Surprised*] Work on land, is it?
[*She nods. He spits scornfully*]

Digging spuds in the muck from dawn to dark, I suppose? [*Vehemently*] I wasn't made for it, Miss.

ANNA: [*With a laugh*] I thought you'd say that.

BURKE: [*Argumentatively*] But there's good jobs and bad jobs at sea, like there'd be on land. I'm thinking if it's in the stokehole of a proper liner I was, I'd be able to have a little house and be home to it wan week out of four. And I'm thinking that maybe then I'd have the luck to find a fine dacent girl—the like of yourself, now—would be willing to wed with me.

ANNA: [*Turning away from him with a short laugh—uneasily*] Why sure. Why not?

BURKE: [*Edging up close to her—exultantly*] Then you think a girl the like of yourself might maybe not mind the past at all but only be seeing the good herself put in me?

ANNA: [*In the same tone*] Why, sure.

BURKE: [*Passionately*] She'd not be sorry for it, I'd take my oath! 'Tis no more drinking and roving about I'd be doing then, but giving my pay day into her hand and staying at home with her as meek as a lamb each night of the week I'd be in port.

ANNA: [*Moved in spite of herself and troubled by this half-concealed proposal—with a forced laugh*] All you got to do is find the girl.

BURKE: I have found her!

ANNA: [*Half-frightenedly — trying to laugh it off*] You have? When? I thought you was saying—

BURKE: [*Boldly and forcefully*] This night. [*Hanging his head—humbly*] If she'll be having me. [*Then raising his eyes to hers—simply*] 'Tis you I mean.

ANNA: [*Is held by his eyes for a moment—then shrinks back from him with a strange, broken laugh*] Say—are you—going crazy? Are you trying to kid me? Proposing—to me!—for Gawd's sake!—on such short acquaintance?

[*Chris comes out of the cabin and stands staring blankly astern. When he makes out Anna in such intimate proximity to this strange sailor, an angry expression comes over his face*]

BURKE: [*Following her—with fierce, pleading insistence*] I'm telling you there's the will of God in it that brought me safe through the storm and fog to the wan spot in the world where you was! Think of that now, and isn't it queer—

CHRIS: Anna!

[*He comes toward them, raging, his fists clenched*]

Anna, you gat in cabin, you hear!

ANNA: [*All her emotions immediately transformed into resentment at his bullying tone*] Who d'you think you're talking to—a slave?

CHRIS: [*Hurt—his voice breaking—pleadingly*] You need gat rest, Anna. You gat sleep.

[*She does not move. He turns on Burke furiously*]

What you doing here, you sailor fallar? You ain't sick like oders. You gat in fo'c's'tle. Dey give you bunk. [*Threateningly*] You hurry, Ay tal you!

ANNA: [*Impulsively*] But he is sick. Look at him. He can hardly stand up.

 ACT III.

BURKE: [*Straightening and throwing out his chest—with a bold laugh*] Is it giving me orders ye are, me bucko? Let you look out, then! With wan hand, weak as I am, I can break ye in two and fling the pieces over the side—and your crew after you. [*Stopping abruptly*] I was forgetting. You're her Old Man and I'd not raise a fist to you for the world.

[*His knees sag, he wavers and seems about to fall. Anna utters an exclamation of alarm and hurries to his side*]

ANNA: [*Taking one of his arms over her shoulder*] Come on in the cabin You can have my bed if there ain't no other place.

BURKE: [*With jubilant happiness—as they proceed toward the cabin*] Glory be to God, is it holding my arm about your neck you are! Anna! Anna! Sure it's a sweet name is suited to you.

ANNA: [*Guiding him carefully*] Sssh! Sssh!

BURKE: Whisht, is it? Indade, and I'll not. I'll be roaring it out like a fog horn over the sea! You're the girl of the world and we'll be marrying soon and I don't care who knows it!

ANNA: [*As she guides him through the cabin door*] Ssssh! Never mind that talk. You go to sleep.

[*They go out of sight in the cabin. Chris, who has been listening to Burke's last words with open-mouthed amazement, stands looking after them desperately*]

CHRIS: [*Turns suddenly and shakes his fist out at the sea—with bitter hatred*] Dat's your dirty trick, damn ole daval, you! [*Then in a frenzy of rage*] But, py God, you don't do dat! Not while Ay'm living! No, py God, you don't!

[THE CURTAIN FALLS]

SCENE: *The interior of the cabin on the barge, Simcon Winthrop [at dock in Boston]—a narrow, low-ceilinged compartment the walls of which are painted a light brown with white trimmings. In the rear on the left, a door leading to the sleeping quarters. In the far left corner, a large locker-closet, painted white, on the door of which a mirror hangs on a nail. In the rear wall, two small square windows and a door opening out on the deck toward the stern. In the right wall, two more windows looking out on the port deck. White curtains, clean and stiff, are at the windows. A table with two cane-bottomed chairs stands in the center of the cabin. A dilapidated, wicker rocker, painted brown, is also by the table.*

It is afternoon of a sunny day about a week later. From the harbor and docks outside, muffled by the closed door and windows, comes the sound of steamers' whistles and the puffing snort of the donkey engines of some ship unloading nearby.

As the curtain rises, Chris and Anna are discovered. Anna is seated in the rocking-chair by the table, with a newspaper in her hands. She is not reading but staring straight in front of her. She looks unhappy, troubled, frowningly concentrated on her thoughts. Chris wanders about the room, casting quick, uneasy side glances at her face, then stopping to peer absent-mindedly out of the window. His attitude betrays an overwhelming, gloomy anxiety which has him on tenter-hooks. He pretends to be engaged in setting things ship-shape, but this occupation is confined to picking up some object, staring at it stupidly for a second.

then aimlessly putting it down again. He clears his throat and starts to sing to himself in a low, doleful voice: "My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay vait for you."

ANNA: [*Turning on him, sarcastically*] I'm glad someone's feeling good. [*Wearily*] Gee, I sure wish we was out of this dump and back in New York.

CHRIS: [*With a sigh*] Ay'm glad vhen ve sail again, too. [*Then, as she makes no comment, he goes on with a ponderous attempt at sarcasm*] Ay don't see vhy you don't like Boston, dough. You have good time here, Ay tank. You go ashore all time, every day and night vcek ve've been here. You go to movies, see show, gat all kinds fun— [*His eyes hard with hatred*] All with that damn Irish fallar!

ANNA: [*With weary scorn*] Oh, for heaven's sake, are you off on that again? Where's the harm in his taking me around? D'you want me to sit all day and nigh in this cabin with you—and knit? Ain't I got a right to have as good a time as I can?

CHRIS: It ain't right kind of fun—not with that fallar, no.

ANNA: I been back on board every night by eleven, ain't I?

[*Then struck by some thought—looks at him with keen suspicion—with rising anger*]

Say, look here, what d'you mean by what you yust said?

CHRIS: [*Hastily*] Nutting but what Ay say, Anna.

ANNA: You said "ain't right" and you said it funny. Say, listen here, you ain't trying to insinuate that there's something wrong between us, are you?

CHRIS: [*Horrified*] No, Anna! No, Ay swear to God, Ay never tank dat!

ANNA: [*Mollified by his very evident sincerity—sitting down again*] Well, don't you never think it neither if you want me ever to speak to you again. [*Angrily again*] If I ever dreamt you thought that, I'd get the hell out of this barge so quick you couldn't see me for dust.

CHRIS: [*Soothingly*] Ay wouldn't never dream— [*Then after a second's pause, reprovingly*] You vas gatting learn to swear. Dat ain't nice for young gel, you tank?

ANNA: [*With a faint trace of a smile*] Excuse me. You ain't used to such language, I know. [*Mockingly*] That's what your taking me to sea has done for me.

CHRIS: [*Indignantly*] No, it ain't me. It's dat damn sailor fallar learn you bad tangs.

ANNA: He ain't a sailor. He's a stoker.

CHRIS: [*Forcibly*] Dat vas million times vorse, Ay tal you! Dem fallars dat vork below shoveling coal vas de dirtiest, rough gang of no-good fallars in vorld!

ANNA: I'd hate to hear you say that to Mat.

CHRIS: Oh, Ay tal him same tang. You don't gat it in head Ay'm scared of him yust 'cause he vas stronger'n Ay vas. [*Menacingly*] You don't gat for fight with fists with dem fallars. Dere's oder vay for fix him.

ANNA: [*Glancing at him with sudden alarm*] What d'you mean?

CHRIS: [*Sullenly*] Nutting.

ANNA: You'd better not. I wouldn't start no trouble with him if I was you. He might forget some time that you was old and my father—and then you'd be out of luck.

CHRIS: [*With smoldering hatred*] Vell, yust let him! Ay'm ole bird maybe, but Ay bet Ay show him trick or two.

ANNA: [*Suddenly changing her tone—persuasively*] Aw come on, be good. What's eating you, anyway? Don't you want no one to be nice to me except yourself?

CHRIS: [*Placated—coming to her—eagerly*] Yes, Ay do, Anna—only not fallar on sea. But Ay like for you marry steady fallar got good yob on land. You have little home in country all your own—

ANNA: [*Rising to her feet—brusquely*] Oh, cut it out! [*Scofnfully*] Little home in the country! I wish you could have seen the little home in the country where you had me in jail till I was sixteen! [*With rising intonation*] Some day you're going to get me so mad with that talk. I'm going to turn loose on you and tell you—a lot of things that'll open your eyes.

CHRIS: [*Alarmed*] Ay don't vant—

ANNA: I know you don't; but you keep on talking just the same.

CHRIS: Ay don't talk no more den, Anna.

ANNA: Then promise me you'll cut out saying nasty things about Mat Burke every chance you get.

CHRIS: [*Evasive and suspicious*] Why? You like dat fallar—very much, Anna?

ANNA: Yes, I certainly do! He's a regular man, no matter what faults he's got. One of his fingers is worth all the hundreds of men I met out there—inland.

CHRIS: [*His face darkening*] Maybe you tank you love him, den?

ANNA: [*Defiantly*] What of it if I do?

CHRIS: [*Scowling and forcing out the words*] Maybe—you tank you—marry him?

ANNA: [*Shaking her head*] No!

[*Chris' face lights up with relief. Anna continues slowly, a trace of sadness in her voice*]

I'd met him four years ago—or even two years ago—I'd have jumped at the chance, I tell you that straight. And I would now—only he's such a simple guy—a big kid—and I ain't got the heart to fool him [*She breaks off suddenly*] But don't never say again he ain't good enough for me. It's me ain't good enough for him.

CHRIS: [*Snoits scornfully*] Py yiminy, you go crazy, Ay tank!

ANNA: [*With a mournful laugh*] Well, I been thinking I was myself the last few days.

[*She goes and takes a shawl from a hook near the door and throws it over her shoulders*]

Guess I'll take a walk down to the end of the dock for a minute and see what's doing. I love to watch the ships passing. Mat'll be along before long, I guess. Tell him where I am, will you?

CHRIS: [*Despondently*] All right, Ay tal him.

[*Anna goes out the doorway on rear. Chris follows her out and stands on the deck outside for a moment looking after her. Then he comes back inside and shuts the door. He stands looking out of the window—muttering—"Dnty ole devil, you." Then he goes to the table, sets the cloth straight mechanically, picks up the newspaper Anna has let fall to the floor and sits down in the rocking-chair. He staves at the paper for a while, then puts it on table, holds his head in his hands and sighs drearily. The noise of a man's heavy footsteps comes from the deck outside and there is a loud knock on the door. Chris starts, makes a move as if to get up and go to the door, then thinks better of it and sits still. The knock is re-*

peated—then as no answer comes, the door is flung open and Mat Burke appears. Chris scowls at the intruder and his hand instinctively goes back to the sheath knife on his hip. Burke is dressed up—wears a cheap blue suit, a striped cotton shirt with a black tie, and black shoes newly shined. His face is beaming with good humor]

BURKE: [*As he sees Chris—in a jovial tone of mockery*] Well, God bless who's here!

[He bends down and squeezes his huge form through the narrow doorway]

And how is the world treating you this afternoon, Anna's father?

CHRIS: [*Sullenly*] Pooty goot—if it ain't for some fallars.

BURKE: [*With a grin*] Meaning me, do you? [*He laughs*] Well, if you ain't the funny old crank of a man! [*Then soberly*] Where's herself?

[Chris sits dumb, scowling, his eyes averted. Burke is irritated by this silence]

Where's Anna, I'm after asking you?

CHRIS: [*Hesitating—then grouchy*] She go down end of dock.

BURKE: I'll be going down to her, then. But first I'm thinking I'll take this chance when we're alone to have a word with you.

[He sits down opposite Chris at the table and leans over toward him]

And that word is soon said. I'm marrying your Anna before this day is out, and you might as well make up your mind to it whether you like it or no.

CHRIS: [*Glaring at him with hatred and forcing a scornful laugh*] Ho-ho! Dat's easy for say!

BURKE: You mean I won't? [*Scornfully*] Is it the like of yourself will stop me, are you thinking?

CHRIS: Yes, Ay stop it, if it come to vorst.

BURKE: [*With scornful pity*] God help you!

CHRIS: But ain't no need for me do dat. Anna—

BURKE: [*Smiling confidently*] Is it Anna you think will prevent me?

CHRIS: Yes.

BURKE: And I'm telling you she'll not. She knows I'm loving her, and she loves me the same, and I know it.

CHRIS: Ho-ho! She only have fun. She make big fool of you, dat's all!

BURKE: [*Unshaken—pleasantly*] That's a lie in your throat, divil mend you!

CHRIS: No, it ain't lie. She tal me yust before she go out she never marry fallar like you.

BURKE: I'll not believe it. 'Tis a great old liar you are, and a divil to be making a power of trouble if you had your way. But 'tis not trouble I'm looking for, and me sitting down here. [*Earnestly*] Let us be talking it out now as man to man. You're her father, and wouldn't it be a shame for us to be at each other's throats like a pair of dogs, and I married with Anna. So out with the truth, man alive. What is it you're holding against me at all?

CHRIS: [*A bit placated, in spite of himself, by Burke's evident sincerity—but puzzled and suspicious*] Vel!—Ay don't vant for Anna gat married. Listen, you fallar. Ay'm a ole man. Ay don't see Anna for fifteen year. She vas all Ay gat in world. And now ven she come on first trip—you tank Ay vant her leave me 'lone again?

BURKE: [*Heartily*] Let you not be thinking I have no heart at all for the way you'd be feeling.

CHRIS: [*Astonished and encouraged—trying to plead persuasively*] Den you do right tang, eh? You ship away again, leave Anna alone. [*Cajolingly*] Big fallar like you dat's on sea, he don't need wife. He gat new gel in every port, you know dat.

BURKE: [*Angrily for a second*] God stiffen you! [*Then controlling himself—calmly*] I'll not be giving you the lie on that. But devil take you, there's a time comes to every man, on sea or land, that isn't a born fool, when he's sick of the lot of them cows, and wearing his heart out to meet up with a fine dacent girl, and have a home to call his own and be rearing up children in it. 'Tis small use you're asking me to leave Anna. She's the wan woman of the world for me, and I can't live without her now, I'm thinking.

CHRIS: You forgat all about her in one veck out of port, Ay bet you!

BURKE: You don't know the like I am. Death itself wouldn't make me forget her. So let you not be making talk to me about leaving her. I'll not, and be damned to you! It won't be so bad for you as you'd make out at all. She'll be living here in the States, and her married to me. And you'd be seeing her often so—a sight more often than ever you saw her the fifteen years she was growing up in the West. It's quare you'd be the one to be making great trouble about her leaving you when you never laid eyes on her once in all them years.

CHRIS: [*Guiltily*] Ay taught it vas better Anna stay away, grow up inland where she don't ever know ole davil, sea.

BURKE: [*Scornfully*] Is it blaming the sea for your troubles ye are again, God help you? Well, Anna knows it now. 'Twas in her blood, anyway.

CHRIS: And Ay don't vant she ever know no-good fallar on sea—

BURKE: She knows one now.

CHRIS: [*Banging the table with his fist—furiously*] Dat's yust it! Dat's yust what you are—no-good, sailor fallar! You tank Ay lat her life be made sorry by you like her mo'der's vas by me! No, Ay svcar! She don't marry you if Ay gat kill you first!

BURKE: [*Looks at him a moment, in astonishment—then laughing uproariously*] Ho-ho! Glory be to God, it's bold talk you have for a stumpy runt of a man!

CHRIS: [*Threateningly*] Vell—you see!

BURKE: [*With grinning defiance*] I'll see, surely! I'll see myself and Anna married this day, I'm telling you. [*Then with contemptuous exasperation*] It's quare fool's blather you have about the sea done this and the sea done that. You'd ought to be 'shamed to be saying the like, and you an old sailor yourself. I'm after hearing a lot of it from you and a lot more that Anna's told me you do be saying to her, and I'm thinking it's a poor weak thing you are, and not a man at all!

CHRIS: [*Darkly*] You see if Ay'm man—maybe quicker'n you tank.

BURKE: [*Contemptuously*] Yerra, don't be boasting. I'm thinking 'tis out of your wits you've got with fright of the sea. You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung? Or would you have her

tied for life to the like of them skinny, shriveled swabs does be working in cities?

CHRIS: Dat's lie, you fool!

BURKE: 'Tis not. 'Tis your own mad notions I'm after telling. But you know the truth in your heart, if great fear of the sea has made you a liar and coward itself. [*Pounding the table*] The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, and him roving the face of the world, seeing all things, and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a landlubber'd waste his life on. 'Twas yourself knew it once, and you a bo'sun for years.

CHRIS: [*Sputtering with rage*] You vas crazy fool, Ay tal you!

BURKE: You've swallowed the anchor. The sea give you a clout once, knocked you down, and you're not man enough to get up for another, but lie there for the rest of your life howling bloody murder. [*Proudly*] Isn't it myself the sea has nearly drowned, and me battered and bate till I was that close to hell I could hear the flames roaring, and never a groan out of me till the sea gave up and it seeing the great strength and guts of a man was in me?

CHRIS: [*Scornfully*] Yes, you vas hell of fallar, hear you tal it!

BURKE: [*Angrily*] You'll be calling me a liar once too often, me old bucko! Wasn't the whole story of it and my picture itself in the newspapers of Boston a week back? [*Looking Chris up and down belittlingly*] Sure I'd like to see you in the best of your youth do the like of what I done in the storm and after. 'Tis a mad lunatic, screeching with fear, you'd be this minute!

CHRIS: Ho-ho! You vas young fool! In ole years when Ay vas on windyammer, Ay vas through hundred storms vorse'n dat! Ships vas ships den—and men dat sail on dem vas real men. And now what you gat on steamers? You gat fallars on deck don't know ship from mudscow. [*With a meaning glance at Burke*] And below deck you gat fallars yust know how for shovel coal—might yust as vell vork on coal vagon ashore!

BURKE: [*Stung—angrily*] Is it casting insults at the men in the stokehole ye are, ye old ape? God stuffen you! Wan of them is worth any ten stock-fish-swilling Square-heads ever shipped on a wind-bag!

CHRIS: [*His face working with rage, his hand going back to the sheath-knife on his hip*] Irish svine, you!

BURKE: [*Tauntingly*] Don't ye like the Irish, ye old baboon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you—an Irishman and a man of the stokehole—to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grandchildren would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself!

CHRIS: [*Half rising from his chair—in a voice choked with rage*] You look out!

BURKE: [*Watching him intently—a mocking smile on his lips*] And it's that you'll be having, no matter what you'll do to prevent; for Anna and me'll be married this day, and no old fool the like of you will stop us when I've made up my mind.

CHRIS: [*With a hoarse cry*] You don't! [*He throws himself at Burke, knife in hand, knocking his chair over backwards. Burke springs to his feet quickly in time to meet the attack. He laughs with the pure love of*

battle. The old Swede is like a child in his hands. Burke does not strike or mistreat him in any way, but simply twists his right hand behind his back and forces the knife from his fingers. He throws the knife into a far corner of the room—tauntingly

BURKE: Old men is getting childish shouldn't play with knives.

[Holding the struggling Chris at arm's length—with a sudden rush of anger, drawing back his fist]

I've half a mind to hit you a great clout will put sense in your square head. Kape off me now, I'm warning you!

[He gives Chris a push with the flat of his hand which sends the old Swede staggering back against the cabin wall, where he remains standing, panting heavily, his eyes fixed on Burke with hatred, as if he were only collecting his strength to rush at him again]

BURKE: *[Warningly]* Now don't be coming at me again, I'm saying, or I'll flatten you on the floor with a blow, if 'tis Anna's father you are itself! I've no patience left for you. *[Then with an amused laugh]* Well, 'tis a bold old man you are just the same, and I'd never think it was in you to come tackling me alone.

[A shadow crosses the cabin windows. Both men start. Anna appears in the doorway]

ANNA: *[With pleased surprise as she sees Burke]* Hello, Mat. Are you here already? I was down—

[She stops, looking from one to the other, sensing immediately that something has happened]

What's up?

[Then noticing the overturned chair—in alarm]

How'd that chair get knocked over?

[Turning on Burke reproachfully]
You ain't been fighting with him, Mat— after you promised?

BURKE: *[His old self again]* I've not laid a hand on him, Anna.

[He goes and picks up the chair, then turning on the still questioning Anna—with a reassuring smile]

Let you not be worried at all. 'Twas only a bit of an argument we was having to pass the time till you'd come.

ANNA: It must have been some argument when you got to throwing chairs. *[She turns on Chris]* Why don't you say something? What was it about?

CHRIS: *[Relaxing at last—avoiding her eyes—sheepishly]* Ve vas talking about ships and fallars on sea.

ANNA: *[With a relieved smile]* Oh—the old stuff, eh?

BURKE: *[Suddenly seeming to come to a bold decision—with a defiant grin at Chris]* He's not after telling you the whole of it. We was arguing about you mostly.

ANNA: *[With a frown]* About me?

BURKE: And we'll be finishing it out right here and now in your presence if you're willing.

[He sits down at the left of table]

ANNA: *[Uncertainly—looking from him to her father]* Sure. Tell me what it's all about.

CHRIS: *[Advancing toward the table—protesting to Burke]* No! You don't do dat, you! You tal him you don't vant for hear him talk, Anna.

ANNA: But I do. I want this cleared up.

CHRIS: *[Miserably afraid now]* Vell, not now, anyway. You vas going ashore, yes? You ain't got time—

ANNA: [*Firmly*] Yes, right here and now.
[*She turns to Burke*] You tell me, Mat,
since he don't want to.

BURKE: [*Draws a deep breath—then plunges in boldly*] The whole of it's in a few words only. So's he'd make no mistake, and him hating the sight of me, I told him in his teeth I loved you. [*Passionately*] And that's God truth, Anna, and well you know it!

CHRIS: [*Scornfully — forcing a laugh*]
Ho-ho! He tal same tang to gel every port he go!

ANNA: [*Shrinking from her father with repulsion—resentfully*] Shut up, can't you? [*Then to Burke—feelingly*] I know it's true, Mat. I don't mind what he says.

BURKE: [*Humbly grateful*] God bless you!

ANNA: And then what?

BURKE: And then— [*Hesitatingly*] And then I said— [*He looks at her pleadingly*] I said I was sure—I told him I thought you have a bit of love for me, too. [*Passionately*] Say you do, Anna! Let you not destroy me entirely, for the love of God!

[*He grasps both her hands in his two*]

ANNA: [*Deeply moved and troubled—forcing a trembling laugh*] So you told him that, Mat? No wonder he was mad. [*Forcing out the words*] Well, maybe it's true, Mat. Maybe I do. I been thinking and thinking—I didn't want to, Mat, I'll own up to that—I tried to cut it out—but— [*She laughs helplessly*] I guess I can't help it anyhow. So I guess I do, Mat. [*Then with a sudden joyous defiance*] Sure I do! What's the use of kidding myself different? Sure I love you, Mat!

CHRIS: [*With a cry of pain*] Anna!
[*He sits crushed*]

BURKE: [*With a great depth of sincerity in his humble gratitude*] God be praised!

ANNA: [*Assertively*] And I ain't never loved a man in my life before, you can always believe that—no matter what happens.

BURKE: [*Goes over to her and puts his arms around her*] Sure I do be believing ivery word you iver said or iver will say. And 'tis you and me will be having a grand, beautiful life together to the end of our days!

[*He tries to kiss her. At first she turns away her head—then, overcome by a fierce impulse of passionate love, she takes his head in both her hands and holds his face close to hers, staring into his eyes. Then she kisses him full on the lips*]

ANNA: [*Pushing him away from her—forcing a broken laugh*] Good-by.

[*She walks to the doorway in rear—stands with her back toward them, looking out. Her shoulders quiver once or twice as if she were fighting back her sobs*]

BURKE: [*Too in the seventh heaven of bliss to get any correct interpretation of her word—with a laugh*] Good-by, is it? The devil you say! I'll be coming back at you in a second for more of the same! [*To Chris, who has quickened to instant attention at his daughter's good-by, and has looked back at her with a stirring of foolish hope in his eyes*] Now, me old bucko, what'll you be saying? You heard the words from her own lips. Confess I've bate you. Own up like a man when you're bate fair and square. And here's my hand to you— [*Holds out his hand*] And let you take it and we'll shake and forget what's ovr and done, and be friends from this out.

CHRIS: [*Wish implacable hatred*] Ay don't shake hands with you fallar—not while Ay live!

BURKE: [*Offended*] The back of my hand to you then, if that suits you better. [*Growling*] 'Tis a rotten bad loser you are, divil mend you!

CHRIS: Ay don't lose. [*Trying to be scornful and self-convincing*] Anna say she like you little bit but you don't hear her say she marry you, Ay bet

[*At the sound of her name Anna has turned round to them Her face is composed and calm again, but it is the dead calm of despair*]

BURKE: [*Scornfully*] No, and I wasn't hearing her say the sun is shining either.

CHRIS: [*Doggedly*] Dat's all right. She don't say it, jüst same

ANNA: [*Quietly—coming forward to them*] No, I didn't say it. Mat.

CHRIS: [*Eagerly*] Dere! You hear!

BURKE: [*Misunderstanding her—with a grin*] You're waiting till you do be asked, you mane? Well, I'm asking you now. And we'll be married this day, with the help of God!

ANNA: [*Gently*] You heard what I said, Mat—after I kissed you?

BURKE: [*Alarmed by something in her manner*] No—I disremember.

ANNA: I said good-by. [*Her voice trembling*] That kiss was for good-by, Mat.

BURKE: [*Terrified*] What d'you mane?

ANNA: I can't marry you, Mat—and we've said good-by. That's all.

CHRIS: [*Unable to hold back his exultation*] Ay know it! Ay know dat vas so!

BURKE: [*Jumping to his feet—unable to believe his ears*] Anna! Is it making game of me you'd be? 'Tis a quare time to joke with me, and don't be doing it, for the love of God.

ANNA: [*Looking him in the eyes—steadily*] D'you think I'd kid you? No, I'm not joking, Mat. I mean what I said.

BURKE: Ye don't! Ye can't! 'Tis mad you are, I'm telling you!

ANNA: [*Fixedly*] No, I'm not.

BURKE: [*Desperately*] But what's come over you so sudden? You was saying you loved me—

ANNA: I'll say that as often as you want me to. It's true.

BURKE: [*Bewilderedly*] Then why—what, in the divil's name— Oh, God help me, I can't make head or tail to it at all!

ANNA: Because it's the best way out I can figure, Mat. [*Her voice catching*] I been thinking it over and thinking it over day and night all week. Don't think it ain't hard on me, too, Mat.

BURKE: For the love of God, tell me then, what is it that's preventing you wedding me when the two of us has love? [*Suddenly getting an idea and pointing at Chris—exasperatedly*] Is it giving heed to the like of that old fool ye are, and him hating me and filling your ears full of bloody lies against me?

CHRIS: [*Getting to his feet—raging triumphantly before Anna has a chance to get in a word*] Yes, Anna believe me, not you! She know her old fa'der don't lie like you.

ANNA: [*Tuning on her father angrily*] You sit down, d'you hear? Where do you come in butting in and making things worse? You're like a devil, you are! [*Harshly*] Good Lord, and I was beginning to like you, beginning to forgive all I've got held up against you!

CHRIS: [*Crushed feebly*] You ain't got nutting for hold against me, Anna.

ANNA: Ain't I yust! Well, lemme tell you— [*She glances at Burke and stops abruptly*] Say, Mat, I'm s'prised at you. You didn't think anything he'd said—

BURKE: [*Glumly*] Sure, what else would it be?

ANNA: Think I've ever paid any attention to all his crazy bull? Gee, you must take me for a five-year-old kid.

BURKE: [*Puzzled and beginning to be irritated at her too*] I don't know how to take you, with your saying this one minute and that the next.

ANNA: Well, he has nothing to do with it.

BURKE: Then what is it has? Tell me, and don't keep me waiting and sweating blood.

ANNA: [*Resolutely*] I can't tell you—and I won't. I got a good reason—and that's all you need to know. I can't marry you, that's all there is to it. [*Distraughtly*] So, for Gawd's sake, let's talk of something else.

BURKE: I'll not! [*Then fearfully*] Is it married to someone else you are—in the West maybe?

ANNA: [*Vehemently*] I should say not.

BURKE: [*Regaining his courage*] To the divil with all other reasons then. They don't matter with me at all. [*He gets to his feet confidently, assuming a masterful tone*] I'm thinking you're the like of them women can't make up their mind till they're drove to it. Well, then, I'll make up your mind for you bloody quick. [*He takes her by the arms, grinning to soften his serious bullying*] We've had enough of talk! Let you be going into your room now and be dressing in your best and we'll be going ashore.

CHRIS: [*Aroused—angrily*] No, py God, she don't do that!
[*Takes hold of her arm*]

ANNA: [*Who has listened to Burke in astonishment. She draws away from him, instinctively repelled by his tone, but not exactly sure if he is serious or not—a trace of resentment in her voice*] Say, where do you get that stuff?

BURKE: [*Imperiously*] Never mind, now! Let you go get dressed, I'm saying. [*Then turning to Chris*] We'll be seeing who'll win in the end—me or you.

CHRIS: [*To Anna—also in an authoritative tone*] You stay right here, Anna, you hear!

[*Anna stands looking from one to the other of them as if she thought they had both gone crazy. Then the expression of her face freezes into the hardened sneer of her experience*]

BURKE: [*Violently*] She'll not! She'll do what I say! You've had your hold on her long enough. It's my turn now.

ANNA: [*With a hard laugh*] Your turn? Say, what am I, anyway?

BURKE: 'Tis not what you are, 'tis what you're going to be this day—and that's wedded to me before night comes. Hurry up now with your dressing.

CHRIS: [*Commandingly*] You don't do one tang he say, Anna!
[*Anna laughs mockingly*]

BURKE: She will, so!

CHRIS: Ay tal you she don't! Ay'm her fa'der.

BURKE: She will in spite of you. She's taking my orders from this out, not yours.

ANNA: [*Laughing again*] Orders is good!

BURKE: [*Turning to her impatiently*] Hurry up now, and shake a leg. We've no time to be wasting. [*Irritated as she doesn't move*] Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHRIS: You stay dere, Anna!

ANNA: [*At the end of her patience—blazing out at them passionately*] You can go to hell, both of you! [*There is something in her tone that makes them forget their quarrel and turn to her in a stunned amazement. Anna laughs wildly*] You're just like all the rest of them—you two! Gawd, you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you! Sit down now! [*As they hesitate—furiously*] Sit down and let me talk for a minute. You're all wrong, see? Listen to me! I'm going to tell you something—and then I'm going to beat it. [*To Burke—with a harsh laugh*] I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention. [*Pointing to Chris*] I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe inland. I wasn't going to tell

you, but you've forced me into it. What's the dif? It's all wrong anyway, and you might as well get cured that way as any other. [*With hard mocking*] Only don't forget what you said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got so long as I wasn't married to no one else.

BURKE: [*Manfully*] That's my word, and I'll stick to it!

ANNA: [*Laughing bitterly*] What a chance! You make me laugh, honest! Want to bet you will? Wait 'n see! [*She stands at the table rear, looking from one to the other of the two men with her hand, mocking smile. Then she begins, fighting to control her emotion and speak calmly*] First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on 's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me see?—'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is. can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself—one way or other. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders!

BURKE: [*Protestingly*] I wasn't meaning it that way at all and well you know it. You've no call to be raising this rumpus with me. [*Pointing to Chris*] 'Tis him you've a right—

ANNA: I'm coming to him. But you—you did mean it that way, too. You sounded—just like all the rest. [*Hysterically*] But, damn it, shut up! Let me talk for a change!

BURKE: 'Tis square, rough talk, that—for a decent girl the like of you!

ANNA: [*With a hard laugh*] Decent? Who told you I was? [*Chris is sitting with*

howed shoulders, his head in his hands. She leans over in exasperation and shakes him violently by the shoulder | Don't go to sleep, Old Man! Listen here, I'm talking to you now!

CHRIS: [*Straightening up and looking about as if he were seeking a way to escape—with frightened foreboding in his voice*] Ay don't vant for hear it. You vas going out of head, Ay tank, Anna.

ANNA: [*Violently*] Well, living with you is enough to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bill about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You yust didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em!

CHRIS: [*Fecbly*] Anna! It ain't so—

ANNA: [*Not heeding his interruption—revengefully*] But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people—the youngest son—Paul—that started me wrong. [*Loudly*] It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse'n hell and he knew it. But he was big and strong— [*Pointing to Burke*]—like you!

BURKE: [*Half springing to his feet—his fists clenched*] God blarst it!

[*He sinks slowly back in his chair again, the knuckles showing white on his clenched hands, his face tense with the effort to suppress his grief and rage*]

CHRIS: [*In a cry of horrified pain*] Anna!

ANNA: [*To him—seeming not to have heard their interruptions*] That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a job as nurse girl in St. Paul. [*With a hard, mocking laugh*] And you think that was a nice job for a girl, too, don't you? [*Sarcastically*] With all them nice inland fellers yust looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me? What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying. [*As Burke lets a groan of fury escape him—desperately*] I'm owning up to everything fair and square. I was caged in, I tell you—yust like in jail—taking care of other people's kids—listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night—when I wanted to be out—and I was lonesome—lonesome as hell! [*With a sudden weariness in her voice*] So I give up finally. What was the use? [*She stops and looks at the two men. Both are motionless and silent. Chris seems in a stupor of despair, his house of cards fallen about him. Burke's face is livid with the rage that is eating him up, but he is too stunned and bewildered yet to find a vent for it. The condemnation she feels in their silence goads Anna into a harsh, strident defiance*] You don't say nothing—either of you—but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest! [*To Chris—furiously*] And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man—if you'd even had been a regular father and had me with you—maybe things would be different!

CHRIS: [*In agony*] Don't talk dat vay, Anna! Ay go crazy! Ay von't listen! [*Puts his hands over his ears*]

ANNA: [*Injured by his action—stridently*] You will too listen! [*She leans over and pulls his hands from his ears*]

—*with hysterical rage*] You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house, that's what!—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you and Mat goes to in port—and your nice inland men, too—and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em!

[*She breaks into hysterical sobbing, throwing herself into the chair and hiding her face in her hands on the table. The two men have sprung to their feet*]

CHRIS: [*Whimpering like a child*] Anna! Anna! It's lie! It's lie!

[*He stands wringing his hands together and begins to weep*]

BURKE: [*His whole great body tense like a spring—dully and gropingly*] So that's what's in it!

ANNA: [*Raising her head at the sound of his voice—with extreme mocking bitterness*] I s'pose you remember your promise, Mat? No other reason was to count with you so long as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed and go ashore, don't you? [*She laughs*] Yes, you do!

BURKE: [*On the verge of his outbreak—stammeringly*] God stiffen you!

ANNA: [*Trying to keep up her hard, bitter tone, but gradually letting a note of pitiful pleading creep in*] I s'pose if I tried to tell you I wasn't—that—no more you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that just getting out in this barge, and being on the sea had changed me and made me feel different about things, 's if all I'd been through wasn't me and didn't

count and was just like it never happened—you'd laugh, wouldn't you? And you'd die laughing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, and afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me to thinking for the first time, and I sized you up as a different kind of man—a sea man as different from the ones on land as water is from mud—and that was why I got stuck on you, too. I wanted to marry you and fool you, but I couldn't. Don't you see how I've changed? I couldn't marry you with you believing a lie—and I was shamed to tell you the truth—till the both of you forced my hand, and I seen you was the same as all the rest. And now, give me a bawling out and beat it, like I can tell you're going to. [*She stops, looking at Burke. He is silent, his face averted, his features beginning to work with fury. She pleads passionately*] Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me—clean? It's the straight goods, honest! [*Then as he doesn't reply—bitterly*] Like hell you will! You're like all the rest!

BURKE: [*Blazing out—turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage—his voice trembling with passion*] The rest, is it? God's curse on you! Clanc, is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now!

[*He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her. Chris rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter. Anna looks up into Burke's eyes with the fearlessness of despair. Burke checks himself, the chair held in the air*]

CHRIS: [*Wudly*] Stop, you crazy fool! You vant for murder her!

ANNA: [*Pushing her father away brusquely, her eyes still holding Burke's*] Keep out of this, you! [*To Burke—dully*] Well, ain't you got the nerve to do it? Go ahead! I'll be thankful to you, honest. I'm sick of the whole game.

BURKE: [*Throwing the chair away into a corner of the room—helplessly*] I can't do it, God help me, and your two eyes looking at me. [*Furiously*] Though I do be thinking I'd have a good right to smash your skull like a rotten egg. Was there iver a woman in the world had the rottenness in her that you have, and was there iver a man the like of me was made the fool of the world, and me thinking thoughts about you, and having great love for you, and dreaming dreams of the fine life we'd have when we'd be wedded! [*His voice high pitched in a lamentation that is like a keen*] Yerra, God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hooker-shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two!

ANNA: [*In a scream*] Don't, Mat! For Gawd's sake! [*Then raging and pounding on the table with her hands*] Get out of here! Leave me alone! Get out of here!

BURKE: [*His anger rushing back on him*] I'll be going, surely! And I'll be drinking sloos of whisky will wash that black kiss of yours off my lips; and I'll be getting dead rotten drunk so I'll not re-

member if 'twas iver born you was at all; and I'll be shipping away on some boat will take me to the other end of the world where I'll never see your face again!

[*He turns toward the door*]

CHRIS: [*Who has been standing in a stupor—suddenly grasping Burke by the arm—stupidly*] No, you don't go. Ay tank maybe it's better Anna marry you now.

BURKE: [*Shaking Chris off—furiously*] Lave go of me, ye old ape! Marry her, is it? I'd see her roasting in hell first! I'm shipping away out of this, I'm telling you! [*Pointing to Anna—passionately*] And my curse on you and the curse of Almighty God and all the Saints! You've destroyed me this day and may you lie awake in the long nights, tormented with thoughts of Mat Burke and the great wrong you've done him!

ANNA: [*In anguish*] Mat!

[*But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway. Anna looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then hides her face in her outstretched arms, sobbing. Chris stands in a stupor, staring at the floor*]

CHRIS: [*After a pause, dully*] Ay tank Ay go ashore, too.

ANNA: [*Looking up, wildly*] Not after him! Let him go! Don't you dare—

CHRIS: [*Somberly*] Ay go for gat drink.

ANNA: [*With a harsh laugh*] So I'm driving you to drink, too, eh? I s'pose you

want to get drunk so's you can forget—like him?

CHRIS: [*Bursting out angrily*] Yes, Ay vant! You tank Ay like to hear dem tangs. [*Breaking down—weeping*] Ay tank you vasn't dat kind of gel, Anna.

ANNA: [*Mockingly*] And I s'pose you want me to beat it, don't you? You don't want me here disgracing you, I s'pose?

CHRIS: No, you stay here! [*Goes over and pats her on the shoulder, the tears running down his face*] Ain't your fault, Anna, Ay know dat. [*She looks up at him, softened. He bursts into rage*] It's dat ole daval, sea, do this to me! [*He shakes his fist at the door*] It's her dirty tricks! It vas all right on barge with jüst you and me. Den she bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tangs, Ay don't never know, and everytang's all right. [*He shakes his fist again*] Dirty ole daval!

ANNA: [*With spent weariness*] Oh, what's the use? Go on ashore and get drunk.

CHRIS: [*Goes into room on left and gets his cap. He goes to the door, silent and stupid—then turns*] You wait here, Anna?

ANNA: [*Dully*] Maybe—and maybe not. Maybe I'll get drunk, too. Maybe I'll— But what the hell do you care what I do? Go on and beat it.

[*Chris turns stupidly and goes out. Anna sits at the table, staring straight in front of her*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

 ACT IV.

SCENE. *Same as Act Three, about nine o'clock of a foggy night two days later. The whistles of steamers in the harbor can be heard. The cabin is lighted by a small lamp on the table. A suitcase stands in the middle of the floor. Anna is sitting in the rocking-chair. She wears a hat, is all dressed up as in Act One. Her face is pale, looks terribly tired and worn, as if the two days just past had been ones of suffering and sleepless nights. She stares before her despondently, her chin in her hands. There is a timid knock on the door in rear. Anna jumps to her feet with a startled exclamation and looks toward the door with an expression of mingled fear and hope.*

ANNA: [*Faintly*] Come in. [*Then summoning her courage—more resolutely*] Come in. [*The door is opened and Chris appears in the doorway. He is in a very bleary, bedraggled condition, suffering from the after effects of his drunk. A tin paul full of foaming beer is in his hand. He comes forward, his eyes avoiding Anna's. He mutters stupidly*] It's foggy.

ANNA: [*Looking him over with contempt*] So you come back at last, did you? You're a fine looking sight! [*Then jeeringly*] I thought you'd beaten it for good on account of the disgrace I'd brought on you.

CHRIS: [*Wincing—faintly*] Don't say dat, Anna, please!

[*He sits in a chair by the table, setting down the can of beer, holding his head in his hands*]

ANNA: [*Looks at him with a certain sympathy*] What's the trouble? Feeling sick?

CHRIS: [*Dully*] Inside my head feel sick.

CHRIS: [*Not seeming to have heard her question—sadly*] You vas waiting, you say? You vasn't waiting for me, Ay bet.

ANNA: Well, what d'you expect after being soused for two days? [*Resentfully*] It serves you right. A fine thing—you leaving me alone on this barge all that time!

ANNA: [*Callously*] You'd win.

CHRIS: For dat Irish fallar?

CHRIS: [*Humbly*] Ay'm sorry, Anna.

ANNA: [*Defiantly*] Yes—if you want to know! [*Then with a forlorn laugh*] If he did come back it'd only be 'cause he wanted to beat me up or kill me, I suppose. But even if he did, I'd rather have him come than not show up at all. I wouldn't care what he did.

ANNA: [*Scornfully*] Sorry!

CHRIS: But Ay'm not sick inside head vay you mean. Ay'm sick from tank too much about you, about me.

CHRIS: Ay guess it's true you vas in love with him all right.

ANNA: And how about me? D'you suppose I ain't been thinking, too?

ANNA: You guess!

CHRIS: Ay'm sorry, Anna. [*He sees her bag and gives a start*] You pack your bag, Anna? You vas going—?

CHRIS: [*Turning to her earnestly*] And Ay'm sorry for you like hell he don't come, Anna!

ANNA: [*Forcibly*] Yes, I was going right back to what you think.

ANNA: [*Softened*] Seems to me you've changed your tune a lot.

CHRIS: Anna!

ANNA: I went ashore to get a train for New York. I'd been waiting and waiting till I was sick of it. Then I changed my mind and decided not to go today. But I'm going first thing tomorrow, so it'll all be the same in the end.

CHRIS: Ay've been tanking, and Ay guess it vas all my fault—all bad tangs dat happen to you. [*Pleadingly*] You try for not hate me, Anna. Ay'm crazy ole fool, dat's all.

CHRIS: [*Raising his head—pleadingly*] No, you never do dat, Anna!

ANNA: Who said I hated you?

ANNA: [*With a sneer*] Why not, I'd like to know?

CHRIS: Ay'm sorry for everytank Ay do wrong for you, Anna. Ay vant for you be happy all rest of your life for make up! It make you happy marry dat Irish fallar, Ay vant it, too.

CHRIS: You don't never gat to do—dat vay—no more, Ay tal you. Ay fix dat up all right.

ANNA: [*Dully*] Well, there ain't no chance. But I'm glad you think different about it, anyway.

ANNA: [*Suspiciously*] Fix what up?

CHRIS: [*Supplicatingly*] And you tank—maybe—you forgive me sometime?

ANNA: [*With a wan smile*] I'll forgive you right now.

CHRIS: [*Seizing her hand and kissing it—brokenly*] Anna lilla! Anna lilla!

ANNA: [*Touched but a bit embarrassed*] Don't bawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all.

CHRIS: [*Eagerly*] You say right tang, Anna, py golly! It ain't nobody's fault! [*Shaking his fist*] It's dat ole davil, sea!

ANNA: [*With an exasperated laugh*] Gee, won't you ever can that stuff? [*Chris relapses into injured silence. After a pause Anna continues curiously*] You said a minute ago you'd fixed something up—about me. What was it?

CHRIS: [*After a hesitating pause*] Ay'm shipping away on sea again, Anna.

ANNA: [*Astounded*] You're—what?

CHRIS: Ay sign on steamer sail tomorrow. Ay gat my ole yob—bo'sun. [*Anna stares at him. As he goes on, a bitter smile comes over her face*] Ay tank dat's best tang for you. Ay only bring you bad luck, Ay tank. Ay make your mo'der's life sorry. Ay don't vant make yours dat vay, but Ay do yust same. Dat ole davil, sea, she make me Yonah man ain't no good for nobody. And Ay tank now it ain't no use fight with sea. No man dat live going to beat her, py yingo!

ANNA: [*With a laugh of helpless bitterness*] So that's how you've fixed me, is it?

CHRIS: Yes, Ay tank if dat ole davil gat me back she leave you alone den.

ANNA: [*Bitterly*] But, for Gawd's sake, don't you see you're doing the same thing you've always done? Don't you see—? [*But she sees the look of obsessed stubbornness on her father's face and gives it up helplessly*] But what's the use of talking? You ain't right, that's what. I'll never blame you for nothing no more. But how could you figure out that was fixing me—!

CHRIS: Dat ain't all. Ay gat dem fallars in steamship office to pay you all money coming to me every month vhile Ay'm away.

ANNA: [*With a hard laugh*] Thanks. But I guess I won't be hard up for no small change.

CHRIS: [*Hurt—humbly*] It ain't much, Ay know, but it's plenty for keep you so you never gat go back—

ANNA: [*Shortly*] Shut up, will you? We'll talk about it later, see?

CHRIS: [*After a pause—ingratiatingly*] You like Ay go ashore look for dat Irish fallar, Anna?

ANNA: [*Angrily*] Not much! Think I want to drag him back?

CHRIS: [*After a pause—uncomfortably*] Py golly, dat booze don't go vell. Give me fever, Ay tank. Ay feel hot like hell. [*He takes off his coat and lets it drop on the floor. There is a loud thud*]

ANNA: [*With a start*] What you got in your pocket, for Pete's sake—a ton of lead? [*She reaches down, takes the coat and pulls out a revolver—looks from it to him in amazement*] A gun? What were you doing with this?

CHRIS: [*Sheepishly*] Ay forget. Ain't nothing. Ain't loaded, anyway.

ANNA: [*Breaking it open to make sure—then closing it again—looking at him suspiciously*] That ain't telling me why you got it?

CHRIS: Ay'm ole fool. Ay got it when Ay go ashore first. Ay tank den it's all fault of dat Irish fallar.

ANNA: [*With a shudder*] Say, you're crazier than I thought. I never dreamt you'd go that far.

CHRIS: [*Quickly*] Ay don't. Ay gat better sense right away. Ay don't never buy bullets even. It ain't his fault, Ay know.

ANNA: [*Still suspicious of him*] Well, I'll take care of this for a while, loaded or not.

[*She puts it in the drawer of table and closes the drawer*]

CHRIS: [*Placatingly*] Throw it overboard if you vant. Ay don't care. [*Then after a pause*] Py golly, Ay tank Ay go lic down. Ay feel sick. [*Anna takes a magazine from the table. Chris hesitates by her chair*] Ve talk again before Ay go, yes?

ANNA: [*Dully*] Where's this ship going to?

CHRIS: Cape Town. Dat's in South Africa. She's British steamer called London-derry. [*He stands hesitatingly—finally blurts out*] Anna—you forgive me sure?

ANNA: [*Wearily*] Sure I do. You ain't to blame. You're yust—what you are—like me.

CHRIS: [*Pleadingly*] Den—you lat me kiss you again once?

ANNA: [*Raising her face—forcing a wan smile*] Sure. No hard feelings.

CHRIS: [*Kisses her brokenly*] Anna lilla! Ay— [*He fights for words to express himself, but finds none—miserably—with a sob*] Ay can't say it. Good-night, Anna.

ANNA: Good-night.

[*He picks up the can of beer and goes slowly into the room on left, his shoulders bowed, his head sunk forward dejectedly. He closes the door after him. Anna turns over the pages of the magazine, trying desperately to banish her thoughts by looking at the pictures. This fails to distract her, and flings the magazine back on the table, she springs to her feet and walks about the cabin distractedly, clenching and unclenching her hands. She speaks aloud to herself in a tense, trembling voice*]

Gawd, I can't stand this much longer! What am I waiting for anyway?—like a damn fool!

[*She laughs helplessly, then checks herself abruptly, as she hears the sound of heavy footsteps on the deck outside. She appears to recognize these and her face lights up with joy. She gasps*]

Mat!

[*A strange terror seems suddenly to seize her. She rushes to the table, takes the revolver out of drawer and crouches down in the corner, left, behind the cupboard. A moment later the door is flung open and Mat Burke appears in the doorway. He is in bad shape—his clothes torn and dirty, covered with sawdust as if he had been groveling or sleeping on bar-room floors. There is a red bruise on his forehead over one of his eyes,*

another over one cheekbone, his knuckles are skinned and raw—plain evidence of the fighting he has been through on his "bat." His eyes are bloodshot and heavy-lidded, his face has a bloated look. But beyond these appearances—the results of heavy drinking—there is an expression in his eyes of wild mental turmoil, of impotent animal rage baffled by its own abject misery]

BURKE: [*Peers blinkingly about the cabin—hoarsely*] Let you not be hiding from me, whoever's here—though 'tis well you know I'd have a right to come back and murder you. [*He stops to listen. Hearing no sound, he closes the door behind him and comes forward to the table. He throws himself into the rocking-chair—despondently*] There's no one here, I'm thinking, and 'tis a great fool I am to be coming. [*With a sort of dumb, uncomprehending anguish*] Yerra, Mat Burke, 'tis a great jackass you've become and what's got into you at all, at all? She's gone out of this long ago, I'm telling you, and you'll never see her face again. [*Anna stands up, hesitating, struggling between joy and fear. Burke's eyes fall on Anna's bag. He leans over to examine it*] What's this? [*Joyfully*] It's hers. She's not gone! But where is she? Ashore? [*Darkly*] What would she be doing ashore on this rotten night? [*His face suddenly convulsed with grief and rage*] 'Tis that, is it? Oh, God's curse on her! [*Raging*] I'll wait 'till she comes and choke her dirty life out.

[*Anna starts, her face grows hard. She steps into the room, the revolver in her right hand by her side*]

ANNA: [*In a cold, hard tone*] What are you doing here?

BURKE: [*Wheeling about with a terrified gasp*] Glory be to God!

[*They remain motionless and silent for a moment, holding each other's eyes*]

ANNA: [*In the same hard voice*] Well, can't you talk?

BURKE: [*Trying to fall into an easy, careless tone*] You've a year's growth scared out of me, coming at me so sudden and me thinking I was alone.

ANNA: You've got your nerve butting in here without knocking or nothing. What d'you want?

BURKE: [*Airily*] Oh, nothing much. I was wanting to have a last word with you, that's all.

[*He moves a step toward her*]

ANNA: [*Sharply—raising the revolver in her hand*] Careful now! Don't try getting too close. I heard what you said you'd do to me.

BURKE: [*Noticing the revolver for the first time*] Is it murdering me you'd be now, God forgive you? [*Then with a contemptuous laugh*] Or is it thinking I'd be frightened by that old tin whistle? [*He walks straight for her*]

ANNA: [*Wildly*] Look out, I tell you!

BURKE: [*Who has come so close that the revolver is almost touching his chest*] Let you shoot, then! [*Then with sudden wild grief*] Let you shoot, I'm saying, and be done with it! Let you end me with a shot and I'll be thanking you, for it's a rotten dog's life I've lived the past two days since I've known what you are, 'til I'm after wishing I was never born at all!

ANNA: [*Overcome—letting the revolver drop to the floor, as if her fingers had no strength to hold it—hysterically*] What d'you want coming here? Why don't you beat it? Go on!

[*She passes him and sinks down in the rocking-chair*]

BURKE: [*Following her—mournfully*] 'Tis right you'd be asking why did I come. [*Then angrily*] 'Tis because 'tis a great weak fool of the world I am, and me tormented with the wickedness you'd told of yourself, and drinking oceans of booze that'd make me forget. Forget? Divil a word I'd forget, and your face grinning always in front of my eyes, awake or asleep, 'til I do be thinking a madhouse is the proper place for me.

ANNA: [*Glancing at his hands and face—scornfully*] You look like you ought to be put away some place. Wonder you wasn't pulled in. You been scrapping, too, ain't you?

BURKE: I have—with every scut would take off his coat to me! [*Fiercely*] And each time I'd be hitting one a clout in the mug, it wasn't his face I'd be seeing at all, but yours, and me wanting to drive you a blow would knock you out of this world where I wouldn't be seeing or thinking more of you.

ANNA: [*Her lips trembling pitifully*] Thanks!

BURKE: [*Walking up and down—distractedly*] That's right, make game of me! Oh, I'm a great coward surely, to be coming back to speak with you at all. You've a right to laugh at me.

ANNA: I ain't laughing at you, Mat.

BURKE: [*Unheeding*] You to be what you are, and me to be Mat Burke, and me to be drove back to look at you again! 'Tis black shame is on me!

ANNA: [*Resentfully*] Then get out. No one's holding you!

BURKE: [*Bewilderedly*] And me to listen to that talk from a woman like you and be frightened to close her mouth with a slap! Oh, God help me, I'm a yellow coward for all men to spit at! [*Then furiously*] But I'll not be getting out of this 'till I've had me word. [*Raising his fist threateningly*] And let you look out how you'd drive me! [*Letting his fist fall helplessly*] Don't be angry now! I'm raving like a real lunatic, I'm thinking, and the sorrow you put on me has my brains drowned in grief. [*Suddenly bending down to her and gasping her arm intensely*] Tell me it's a lie, I'm saying! That's what I'm after coming to hear you say.

ANNA: [*Dully*] A lie? What?

BURKE: [*With passionate entreaty*] All the badness you told me two days back. Sure it must be a lie! You was only making game of me, wasn't you? Tell me 'twas a lie, Anna, and I'll be saying prayers of thanks on my two knees to the Almighty God!

ANNA: [*Terribly shaken—faintly*] I can't, Mat. [*As he turns away—imploringly*] Oh, Mat, won't you see that no matter what I was I ain't that any more? Why, listen! I packed up my bag this afternoon and went ashore. I'd been waiting here all alone for two days, thinking maybe you'd come back—thinking maybe you'd think over all I'd said—and maybe—oh, I don't know what I was hoping! But I was afraid to even go out of the cabin for a second, honest—afraid you might come and not find me here. Then I gave up hope when you didn't show up and I went to the railroad station. I was going to New York. I was going back—.

BURKE: [*Hoarsely*] God's curse on you!

ANNA: Listen, Mat! You hadn't come, and I'd gave up hope. But—in the station—I couldn't go. I'd bought my ticket and everything. [*She takes the ticket from her dress and tries to hold it before his eyes*] But I got to thinking about you—and I couldn't take the train—I couldn't! So I come back here—to wait some more. Oh, Mat, don't you see I've changed? Can't you forgive what's dead and gone—and forget it?

BURKE: [*Turning on her—overcome by rage again*] Forget, is it? I'll not forget 'til my dying day, I'm telling you, and me tormented with thoughts. [*In a frenzy*] Oh, I'm wishing I had wan of them fornenst me this minute and I'd beat him with my fists 'til he'd be a bloody corpse! I'm wishing the whole lot of them will roast in hell 'til the Judgment Day—and yourself along with them, for you're as bad as they are.

ANNA: [*Shuddering*] Mat! [*Then after a pause—in a voice of dead, stony calm*] Well, you've had your say. Now you better beat it.

BURKE: [*Starts slowly for the door—hesitates—then after a pause*] And what'll you be doing?

ANNA: What difference does it make to you?

BURKE: I'm asking you!

ANNA: [*In the same tone*] My bag's packed and I got my ticket. I'll go to New York tomorrow.

BURKE: [*Helplessly*] You mean—you'll be doing the same again?

ANNA: [*Stonily*] Yes.

BURKE: [*In anguish*] You'll not! Don't torment me with that talk! 'Tis a she-devil you are sent to drive me mad entirely!

ANNA: [*Her voice breaking*] Oh, for Gawd's sake, Mat, leave me alone! Go away! Don't you see I'm licked? Why d'you want to keep on kicking me?

BURKE: [*Indignantly*] And don't you deserve the worst I'd say, God forgive you?

ANNA: All right. Maybe I do. But don't rub it in. Why ain't you done what you said you was going to? Why ain't you got that ship was going to take you to the other side of the earth where you'd never see me again?

BURKE: I have.

ANNA: [*Startled*] What—then you're going—honest?

BURKE: I signed on today at noon, drunk as I was—and she's sailing tomorrow.

ANNA: And where's she going to?

BURKE: Cape Town.

ANNA: [*The memory of having heard that name a little while before coming to her—with a start, confusedly*] Cape Town? Where's that? Far away?

BURKE: 'Tis at the end of Africa. That's far for you.

ANNA: [*Forcing a laugh*] You're keeping your word all right, ain't you? [*After a slight pause—curiously*] What's the boat's name?

BURKE: The Londonderry.

ANNA: [*It suddenly comes to her that this is the same ship her father is sailing on*] The Londonderry! It's the same—Oh, this is too much! [*With wild, ironical laughter*] Ha-ha-ha!

BURKE: What's up with you now?

ANNA: Ha-ha-ha! It's funny, funny! I'll die laughing!

BURKE: [*Irritated*] Laughing at what?

ANNA: It's a secret. You'll know soon enough. It's funny. [*Controlling herself—after a pause—cynically*] What kind of a place is this Cape Town? Plenty of dames there, I suppose?

BURKE: To hell with them! That I may never see another woman to my dying hour!

ANNA: That's what you say now, but I'll bet by the time you get there you'll have forgot all about me and start in talking the same old bull you talked to me to the first one you meet.

BURKE: [*Offended*] I'll not, then! God mend you, is it making me out to be the like of yourself you are, and you taking up with this one and that all the years of your life?

ANNA: [*Angrily assertive*] Yes, that's just what I do mean! You been doing the same thing all your life, picking up a new girl in every port. How're you any better than I was?

BURKE: [*Thoroughly exasperated*] Is it no shame you have at all? I'm a fool to be wasting talk on you and you hardened in badness. I'll go out of this and lave you alone forever.

[*He starts for the door—then stops to turn on her furiously*]

And I suppose 'tis the same lies you told them all before that you told to me?

ANNA: [*Indignantly*] That's a lie! I never did!

BURKE: [*Miserably*] You'd be saying that, anyway.

ANNA: [*Forcibly, with growing intensity*] Are you trying to accuse me—of being in love—really in love—with them?

BURKE: I'm thinking you were, surely.

ANNA: [*Furiously, as if this were the last insult—advancing on him threateningly*] You mutt, you! I've stood enough from you. Don't you dare. [*With scornful bitterness*] Love 'em! Oh, my Gawd! You damn thick-head! Love 'em? [*Savagely*] I hated 'em, I tell you! Hated 'em, hated 'em, hated 'em! And may Gawd strike me dead this minute and my mother, too, if she was alive, if I ain't telling you the honest truth!

BURKE: [*Immensely pleased by her vehemence—a light beginning to break over his face—but still uncertain, torn between doubt and the desire to believe—helplessly*] If I could only be believing you now!

ANNA: [*Distractedly*] Oh, what's the use? What's the use of me talking? What's the use of anything? [*Pleadingly*] Oh, Mat, you mustn't think that for a second! You mustn't! Think all the other bad about me you want to, and I won't kick, 'cause you've a right to. But don't think that! [*On the point of tears*] I couldn't bear it! It'd be just too much to know you was going away where I'd never see you again—thinking that about me!

BURKE: [*After an inward struggle—tensely—forcing out the words with difficulty*] If I was believing—that you'd never had love for any other man in the world but me—I could be forgetting the rest, maybe.

ANNA: [*With a cry of joy*] Mat!

BURKE: [*Slowly*] If 'tis truth you're after telling, I'd have a right, maybe, to believe you'd changed—and that I'd changed you myself 'til the thing you'd been all your life wouldn't be you any more at all.

ANNA: [*Hanging on his words—breathlessly*] Oh, Mat! That's what I been trying to tell you all along!

BURKE: [*Simply*] For I've a power of strength in me to lead men the way I want, and women, too, maybe, and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all.

ANNA: Yes, you could, Mat! I know you could!

BURKE: And I'm thinking 'twasn't your fault, maybe, but having that old ape for a father that left you to grow up alone, made you what you was. And if I could be believing 'tis only me you—

ANNA: [*Distractedly*] You got to believe it, Mat! What can I do? I'll do anything, anything you want to prove I'm not lying!

BURKE: [*Suddenly seems to have a solution. He feels in the pocket of his coat and grasps something—solemnly*] Would you be willing to swear an oath, now—a terrible, fearful oath would send your soul to the devils in hell if you was lying?

ANNA: [*Eagerly*] Sure, I'll swear, Mat—on anything!

BURKE: [*Takes a small, cheap old crucifix from his pocket and holds it up for her to see*] Will you swear on this?

ANNA: [*Reaching out for it*] Yes. Sure I will. Give it to me.

BURKE: [*Holding it away*] 'Tis a cross was given me by my mother, God rest her soul. [*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically*] I was a lad only, and she told me to keep it by me if I'd be waking or sleeping and never lose it, and it'd bring me luck. She died soon after. But I'm after keeping it with me from that day to this, and I'm telling you there's great power in it, and 'tis great bad luck it's saved me from and me roaming the seas, and I having it tied round my neck when my last ship sunk, and it bringing me safe to land when the others went to their death. [*Very earnestly*] And I'm warning you now, if you'd swear an oath on this, 'tis my old woman herself will be looking down from Hivin above, and praying Almighty God and the Saints to put a great curse on you if she'd hear you swearing a lie!

ANNA: [*Awed by his manner—superstitiously*] I wouldn't have the nerve—honest—if it was a lie. But it's the truth and I ain't scared to swear. Give it to me.

BURKE: [*Handing it to her—almost frightenedly, as if he feared for her safety*] Be careful what you'd swear, I'm saying.

ANNA: [*Holding the cross gingerly*] Well—what do you want me to swear? You say it.

BURKE: Swear I'm the only man in the world ivir you felt love for.

ANNA: [*Looking into his eyes steadily*] I swear it.

BURKE: And that you'll be forgetting from this day all the badness you've done and never do the like of it again.

ANNA: [*Forcibly*] I swear it! I swear it by God!

BURKE: And may the blackest curse of God strike you if you're lying. Say it now!

ANNA: And may the blackest curse of God strike me if I'm lying!

BURKE: [*With a stupendous sigh*] Oh, glory be to God, I'm after believing you now!

[He takes the cross from her hand, his face beaming with joy, and puts it back in his pocket. He puts his arm about her waist and is about to kiss her when he stops, appalled by some terrible doubt]

ANNA: [*Alarmed*] What's the matter with you?

BURKE: [*With sudden fierce questioning*] Is it Catholic ye are?

ANNA: [*Confused*] No. Why?

BURKE: [*Filled with a sort of bewildered foreboding*] Oh, God, help me! [*With a dark glance of suspicion at her*] There's some devil's trickery in it, to be swearing an oath on a Catholic cross and you wan of the others.

ANNA: [*Distractedly*] Oh, Mat, don't you believe me?

BURKE: [*Miserably*] If it isn't a Catholic you are—

ANNA: I ain't nothing. What's the difference? Didn't you hear me swear?

BURKE: [*Passionately*] Oh, I'd a right to stay away from you—but I couldn't! I was loving you in spite of it all and

wanting to be with you, God forgive me, no matter what you are. I'd go mad if I'd not have you! I'd be killing the world—

[He seizes her in his arms and kisses her fiercely]

ANNA: [*With a gasp of joy*] Mat!

BURKE: [*Suddenly holding her away from him and staring into her eyes as if to probe into her soul—slowly*] If your oath is no proper oath at all, I'll have to be taking your naked word for it and have you anyway, I'm thinking—I'm needing you that bad!

ANNA: [*Hurt—reproachfully*] Mat! I swore, didn't I?

BURKE: [*Defiantly, as if challenging fate*] Oath or no oath, 'tis no matter. We'll be wedded in the morning, with the help of God. [*Still more defiantly*] We'll be happy now, the two of us, in spite of the devil!

[He crushes her to him and kisses her again. The door on the left is pushed open and Chris appears in the doorway. He stands blinking at them. At first the old expression of hatred of Burke comes into his eyes instinctively. Then a look of resignation and relief takes its place. His face lights up with a sudden happy thought. He turns back into the bedroom—reappears immediately with the tin can of beer in his hand—grinning]

CHRIS: Ve have drink on this, py golly! [*They break away from each other with startled exclamations*]

BURKE: [*Explosively*] God stiffen it! [*He takes a step toward Chris threateningly*]

ANNA: [*Happily—to her father*] That's the way to talk! [*With a laugh*] And say, it's about time for you and Mat to kiss and make up. You're going to be shipmates on the Londonderry, did you know it?

BURKE: [*Astounded*] Shipmates— Has himself—

CHRIS: [*Equally astounded*] Ay vas bo'sun on her.

BURKE: The divil! [*Then angrily*] You'd be going back to sea and leaving her alone, would you?

ANNA: [*Quickly*] It's all right, Mat. That's where he belongs, and I want him to go. You got to go, too; we'll need the money. [*With a laugh, as she gets the glasses*] And as for me being alone, that runs in the family, and I'll get used to it. [*Pouring out their glasses*] I'll get a little house somewhere and I'll make a regular place for you two to come back to—wait and see. And now you drink up and be friends.

BURKE: [*Happily—but still a bit resentful against the old man*] Sure! [*Clinking his glass against Chris'*] Here's luck to you! [*He drinks*]

CHRIS: [*Subdued—his face melancholy*] Skoal. [*He drinks*]

BURKE: [*To Anna, with a wink*] You'll not be lonesome long. I'll see to that, with the help of God. 'Tis himself here will be having a grandchild to ride on his foot, I'm telling you!

ANNA: [*turning away in embarrassment*] Quit the kidding now. [*She picks up her bag and goes int-*

gone Burke relapses into an attitude of gloomy thought. Chris stares at her beer absent-mindedly. Finally Burke turns on him]

BURKE: Is it any religion at all you have, you and your Anna?

CHRIS: [*Surprised*] Why yes. Ve vas Lutheran in ole country.

BURKE: [*Horrified*] Luthers, is it? [*Then with a grim resignation, slowly, aloud to himself*] Well, I'm damned then surely. Yerra, what's the difference? 'Tis the will of God, anyway.

CHRIS:

[*Moodily preoccupied with his own thoughts—speaks with somber premonition as Anna re-enters from the left*]

It's funny. It's queer, yes—you and me shipping on same boat dat vay. It ain't right. Ay don't know—it's dat funny vay ole davil sea do her vorst dirty tricks, yes. It's so.

[*He gets up and goes back and, opening the door, stares out into the darkness*]

BURKE: [*Nodding his head in gloomy acquiescence—with a great sigh*] I'm fearing maybe you have the right of it for once, divil take you.

ANNA: [*Forcing a laugh*] Gee, Mat, you ain't agreeing with him, are you?

[*She comes forward and puts her arm about his shoulder—with a determined gayety*]

Aw say, what's the matter? Cut out the gloom. We're all fixed now, ain't we, me and you?

[*Pours out more beer into his glass and fills one for herself—slaps him*

Come on! Here's to the sea, no matter what! Be a game sport and drink to that! Come on!

[She gulps down her glass. Burke banishes his superstitious premonitions with a defiant jerk of his head, grins up at her, and drinks to her toast]

CHRIS: *[Looking out into the night—lost in his somber preoccupation—shakes his*

head and mutters] Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see where you vas going, no. Only dat ole devil, sea—she knows!

[The two stare at him. From the harbor comes the muffled, mournful wail of steamers' whistles]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

John Millington Synge

(1871-1909)

ONE of the most remarkable developments of the modern theatre was the meteoric rise of the Irish drama. Ireland made no contribution until the last decade of the nineteenth century when it roused itself in response to nationalistic promptings and gave the world a notable repertory company, the Abbey Theatre, in 1904, and a number of masterpieces. Its contribution, moreover, was as timely as it was meritorious. Realism had achieved a well-deserved supremacy in Europe; but it was beginning to favor literal and uninspired dramaturgy. The playwrights of a still untamed, unstandardized country like Ireland were in a position to revivify the drama by combining the best elements of romanticism and realism.

At first the pendulum swung toward distinctly romantic art, toward the neo-romanticism that was winning a temporary triumph on the continent. When the excellent poet William Butler Yeats began to promote a national movement, he dedicated it to poetry, fantasy, and dreamful evocations of the past. His own plays, *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, and *Kathleen ni Houlihan*, to mention only a few, fulfilled his dream of a stage on which poetry would be supreme. However, it became evident that a country composed largely of peasants and small-town people could not develop a national drama without considerable reference to their ways and interests. Early in the development of the new theatre, *Lady Gregory*, one of the founders and always the mainstay of the Abbey Theatre, produced a number of notable realistic peasant plays like *The Gaol Gate* and *The Workhouse Ward*. These efforts were quickly supported by a number of younger playwrights who were also keenly conscious of the actual world. One of them, moreover, was the superb artist John Millington Synge. He may have been theoretically in favor of romanticism, and his last tragedy, *Deirdre*, is the greatest Irish romantic drama, but he acquired such a singular sensitivity to the nuances of common life that he created a perfect fusion of reality and imagination in his most famous work.

Born in the vicinity of Dublin in 1871, of parents who possessed social position, Synge received the customary education in arts and letters. Wanderlust and a talent for music took him after his graduation from Trinity College to the continent. Leading a somewhat bohemian life in Paris and augmenting his slender means with book reviewing, he seemed headed for the futile career of an Irish émigré and esthete. But at this critical moment his neighbor at the Grand Hotel Corneille, William Butler Yeats, sagely pointed out the meagre-

ness of his prospects, and persuaded him to return to his country to steep himself in its spirit and to write plays. Synge, who had the wisdom to heed good advice when it was given, went to the Aran Islands thirty miles off the western coast of Ireland and quickly surrendered to the spell of the primitive life of the islanders.

The experience proved a greater boon to Irish literature than anything that had happened before; it was the making of a major playwright. On the Aran Islands alone could Synge have found such a happy compromise between the demands of realism and romanticism. Here, as well as on the west coast of Ireland, he found people who were close to the plain realities of labor and struggle with the soil and sea. At the same time, however, the environment and the manners were romantically primitive, and the speech was poetic.

He admitted his good fortune himself when he wrote his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*. All art, he declared, was a collaboration, and he had found the best collaborators in his simple neighbors. The modern literature of the towns was unsatisfactory; on the one hand, it produced exotic work like that of Mallarmé and Huysmans, and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with reality in "joyless and pallid words." "On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy"; only "what is superb and wild in reality" was capable of providing esthetic gratification; and a good play must contain speech that is "as fully flavored as a nut or apple." In Ireland he felt the presence of a popular imagination that was still "fiery and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks."

A shy, pacific, and intellectual man who surprised John Masefield and others who met him by the contrast between his appearance and his work, Synge nevertheless had the right dramatic temperament. Yeats described it well when he wrote of his friend that he favored "all that has edge, all that is salt in the mouth, all that is rough to the hand, all that heightens the emotions by contest, all that stings into life the sense of tragedy," adding sagely, "The food of the spiritual-minded is sweet, an Indian scripture says, but passionate minds love bitter food."

Everything that has "edge" prevails in this dramatist's plays, particularly in his comedies. Moreover, "bitter food" also appears in them. He may not have been as cynical as was charged by his enemies and, in fact, much compassion will be found in his writings, but a trace of disillusionment and acerbity runs through most of it. Despite its comic afflatus, his first one-acter, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, drew a sobering picture of an unhappily married peasant woman who is driven out of her home by her crabbed husband; *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre* are unmitigated tragedies; *The Well of Saints* is an ironic fantasy on the theme of mankind's capacity and need for self-delusion; and *The Playboy*

of the Western World is tinged with disillusionment despite its abundant humor.

Synge was by no means a naive worshipper of the primitive. He recognized the unhappy aspects of his environment—the struggle with relentless nature (*Riders to the Sea*), the misery of the poor (which he set down in his thoughtful travel notes), the shiftlessness and drunkenness of the people (*The Tinker's Wedding*), and their instability (*The Playboy of the Western World*). He was merely endowed with a talent for transforming common ore into gold, for sublimating life by means of poetry and humor. Made oversensitive by a bitter struggle for national independence, Irish patriots felt the sting of his irony so keenly that they unjustly accused him of malicious intent to defame them and their cause. They resented *In the Shadow of the Glen* as an insult to Irish womanhood, and they staged riots during the early performances of *The Playboy of the Western World*, alleging that it defamed the Irish people, in addition to being ribald or, as Arthur Griffith put it, "cloacine." A shadow rested upon Synge's genius, which flowered only during the brief span of seven years between 1903 and 1909; he died of cancer at the age of thirty-eight.

All of this dramatist's plays, six in number, are memorable. *Riders to the Sea*, however, is generally considered his most perfect work. This little tragedy gains intensity from its extreme simplicity and condensation, as well as from its vividly conveyed, fate-charged atmosphere. The play does not, of course, suggest its author's comic genius, but it is thoroughly representative of his mastery of impassioned utterance and of his feeling for common things.

His death proved a severe loss to the Abbey Theatre. Happily it was repaired somewhat by St. John Ervine, who wrote two powerful plays, *John Ferguson* and *Jane Clegg*, and later by the genius of Sean O'Casey, who started where Synge left off—namely, with the treatment of the urban proletariat. O'Casey revealed in *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars* many of his great predecessor's gifts; he too knew how to mint poetry out of common speech and to convey both the comic and tragic traits of ordinary people with uncanny penetration and intensity. More recently the Irish succession was ensured by Denis Johnston in *The Moon in the Yellow River* and by Paul Vincent Carroll in *Shadow and Substance* and *The White Steed*. The drama remains one of Ireland's chief exports.

J. G.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

A Play in One Act

BY JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

PERSONS

MAURYA, *an old woman*
BARTLEY, *her son*
CATHLEEN, *her daughter*

NORA, *a younger daughter*
MEN AND WOMEN

SCENE: *An Island off the west of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning-wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc. Cathleen, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. Nora, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.*

CATHLEEN: How would they be Michael's. Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA: The young priest says he's knowin' the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[*The door which Nora half closed is blown open by a gust of wind*]

ACT I.

NORA: [*In a low voice*] Where is she?

CATHLEEN: She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[*Nora comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl*]

CATHLEEN: [*Spinning the wheel rapidly*] What is it you have?

NORA: The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[*Cathleen stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen*]

NORA: We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN: [*Looking out anxiously*] Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA: "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

CATHLEEN: Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA: Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. [*She goes over to the table with the bundle*] Shall I open it now?

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NORA: Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. *[She goes over to the table with the bundle]* Shall I open it now?

CATHLEEN: Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. [*Coming to the table*] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA: [*Goes to the inner door and listens*] She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN: Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; Cathleen goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. Maurya comes from the inner room*]

MAURYA: [*Looking up at Cathleen and speaking querulously*] Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN: There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [*Throwing down the turf*] and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[*Nora picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven*]

MAURYA: [*Sitting down on a stool at the fire*] He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA: He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA: Where is he itself?

NORA: He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN: I hear some one passing the big stones.

NORA: [*Looking out*] He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY: [*Comes in and looks round the room; speaking sadly and quietly*] Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN: [*Coming down*] Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA: [*Giving him a rope*] Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA: You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [*Bartley takes the rope*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

BARTLEY: [*Beginning to work with the rope*] I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

MAURYA: It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

[*She looks round at the boards*]

BARTLEY: How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA: If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself,

what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

BARTLEY: [*Working at the halter, to Cathleen*] Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA: How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY: [*To Cathleen*] If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

MAURYA: It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drownd'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[*Bartley lays down the halter, takes off his coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel*]

BARTLEY: [*To Nora*] Is she coming to the pier?

NORA: [*Looking out*] She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY: [*Getting his purse and tobacco*] I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

MAURYA: [*Turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head*] Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN: It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY: [*Taking the halter*] I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red

mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you.

[*He goes out*]

MAURYA: [*Crying out as he is in the door*] He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN: Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without you sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[*Maurya takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round*]

NORA: [*Turning toward her*] You're taking away the turt from the cake.

CATHLEEN: [*Crying out*] The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread. [*She comes over to the fire*]

NORA: And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN: [*Turning the cake out of the oven*] It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking forever. [*Maurya sways herself on her stool*]

CATHLEEN: [*Cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to Maurya*] Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA: [*Taking the bread*] Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN: If you go now quickly.

MAURYA: [*Standing up unsteadily*] It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN: [*Looking at her anxiously*] Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA: What stick?

CATHLEEN: The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

MAURYA: [*Taking a stick Nora gives her*] In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[*She goes out slowly. Nora goes over to the ladder*]

CATHLEEN: Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

NORA: Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN: [*Looking out*] She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

NORA: [*Getting the bundle from the loft*] The young priest said he'd be passing to-morrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

CATHLEEN: [*Taking the bundle*] Did he say what way they were found?

NORA: [*Coming down*] "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with potcen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN: [*Trying to open the bundle*] Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA: [*Giving her a knife*] I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN: [*Cutting the string*] It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA: And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[*Cathleen opens the bundle and takes out a bit of stocking. They look at them eagerly*]

CATHLEEN: [*In a low voice*] The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA: I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner*] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN: I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. [*Pointing to the corner*] There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

[*Nora brings it to her and they compare the flannel*]

CATHLEEN: It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA: [*Who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*] It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN: [*Taking the stocking*] It's a plain stocking.

NORA: It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up threescore stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN: [*Counts the stitches*] It's that number is in it. [*Crying out*] Ah, Nora,

isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keep him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA: [*Swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*] And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN: [*After an instant*] Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA: [*Looking out*] She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN: Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA: [*Helping Cathleen to close the bundle*] We'll put them here in the corner.

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. Cathleen goes back to the spinning-wheel*]

NORA: Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN: Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

[*Nora sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. Maurya comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and Nora points to the bundle of bread*]

CATHLEEN: [*After spinning for a moment*] You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[*Maurya begins to keen softly, without turning round*]

CATHLEEN: Did you see him riding down? [*Maurya goes on keening*]

CATHLEEN: [*A little impatiently*] God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you.

MAURYA: [*With a weak voice*] My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN: [*As before*] Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA: I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN: [*Leaves her wheel and looks out*] God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

MAURYA: [*Starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice*] The gray pony behind him.

CATHLEEN: [*Coming to the fire*] What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA: [*Speaking very slowly*] I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with a child in his arms.

CATHLEEN AND NORA: Uah.

[*They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire*]

NORA: Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA: I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him. [*She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes*]

The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN: What is it you seen.

MAURYA: I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN: [*Speaking softly*] You did not, mother; it wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the Far North, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

MAURYA: [*A little defiantly*] I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say, "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN: [*Begins to keen*] It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA: Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA: [*In a low voice, but clearly*] It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[*She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them*]

NORA: [*In a whisper*] Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the northeast?

CATHLEEN: [*In a whisper*] There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA: [*Continues without hearing anything*] There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[*She pauses again with her hand stretched out toward the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads*]

MAURYA: [*Half in a dream, to Cathleen*] Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN: Michael is after being found in the Far North, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA: There docs be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN: It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the Far North.

[*She reaches out and hands Maurya the clothes that belonged to Michael. Maurya stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. Nora looks out.*]

NORA: They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN: [*In a whisper to the women who have come in*] Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN: It is surely, God rest his soul.

[*Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of sail over it, and lay it on the table.*]

CATHLEEN: [*To the women, as they are doing so*] What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN: The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[*Maurya has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. Cathleen and Nora kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.*]

MAURYA: [*Raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*] They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening [*To Nora*] Give me the Holy Water, Nora.

there's a small sup still on the dresser. Nora gives it to her.]

MAURYA: [*Drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him*] It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.*]

CATHLEEN: [*To an old man*] Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN: [*Looking at the boards*] Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN: There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN: It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN: It's getting old she is, and broken.

[*Maurya stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of Michael's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*]

NORA: [*In a whisper to Cathleen*] She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's

fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

CATHLEEN: [*Slowly and clearly*] An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA: [*Puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet*] They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may

He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keening rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away*]

MAURYA: [*Continuing*] Michael has a clean burial in the Far North, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave sureiy. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly*]

Oscar Wilde

(1856-1900)

*THE sad truth is that between Restoration and late nineteenth century English drama there was a tremendous gap. The chasm was only partially bridged in the second half of the eighteenth century when a reaction against sentimental comedy brought John Gay's amusing ballad-drama *The Beggar's Opera*, Oliver Goldsmith's mild comedies, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's long-cherished masterpieces *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* (1779). In tragedy, the hiatus might have been reduced somewhat by the romantic poets Byron and Shelley. But despite the fact that the former's *Cain* and the latter's *The Cenci* possessed literary distinction, these and other poetic works were virtually non-existent for the stage. The theatre gave its allegiance chiefly to flagrant melodramas and sentimental confectious.*

Fortunately, by 1865, the year of the actor T. W. Robertson's Society, signs of an awakening began to appear. Despite some sentimentality, Robertson's plays heralded a movement toward realism and marked the return of social satire to the stage. W. S. Gilbert soon added other satiric appraisals of society, and finally Oscar Wilde descended upon London.

Born in Dublin on October 16, 1854, of brilliant and socially prominent parents, Oscar Wilde began to reveal his talents at an early age. The precocious lad, whose later abnormality may have been started by his mother's fondness for dressing him up as a girl, made an enviable record at Magdalen College, Oxford; he became a distinguished student of the classics, and also won the Newdigate Prize for poetry, acquiring among his admiring teachers and friends such leaders of the artistic world as John Ruskin, then Slade Professor of Art, and Walter Pater.

After traveling in Italy and Greece, Wilde came to London, where he published a book of poetry, in 1881, as well as a melodrama, *Vera*, or the Nihilists. Thereafter, supported in English society by his wife's fortune, he became the most lionized wit in England. Regarding himself as an "apostle of the beautiful," he raised the slogan of estheticism and put his preachment into practice with such extravagance that he shocked his inferiors and amused his equals. George Du Maurier caricatured him in *Punch*, and Gilbert and Sullivan evoked merriment at his expense in the operetta *Patience*, although they do not seem to have had him in mind for *Bunthorne*, the "ultra-poetical, super-aesthetical, out-of-the-way young man." Wilde, however, remained undisturbed, and continued to wear his motley—the knee-breeches, black silk stockings, velvet jacket, flowing tie, and sunflower to which he owed the innocent part of his notoriety.

*Unhappily, he overreached himself by dubious practices. Then he committed the indiscretion of bringing a suit for slander against the Marquess of Queensberry, who resented the sybarite's alleged relationship with his son, Lord Alfred Douglas, the poet. The trial, which scandalized public opinion, resulted in Wilde's imprisonment for two years in 1895. Although prison life evoked two of his best writings, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *De Profundis*, it left him a broken man. He spent his last years in Paris in a state of progressive deterioration, and died in comparative obscurity on November 30, 1900.*

*Far more important than any exhibitionistic promotion of Ruskin's gospel of bringing art into daily life were the comedies in which Wilde exhibited his critical faculty and his barbed conversation. After a febrile melodrama *The Duchess of Padua* and the powerful, if decadent, *Salomé*, he brought back much of the scintillation of the Restoration in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Epigrams flowed from his pen, and most of them were not only polished gems but devastating comments on social foibles. It would be difficult, for example, to improve upon his poisonous description of the fox-hunting English gentry—"the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uncatchable." If his plots were contrived and sometimes descended to downright sentimentality, and if his characters were mere outlines, the play of repartee and aphorism in his work was supplemented by neat excoriations of shallow society. In *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the only admirable character is a woman who stands beyond the pale of "good" society; in *A Woman of No Importance*, the social set is sharply castigated; in *An Ideal Husband*, a prominent politician's career is seen to be founded on dishonesty.*

*Still, Wilde's slipshod plots were distinctly detrimental to his most ambitious comedies; for "problem plays," which these works suggested, they were too contrived and perfunctory. General opinion, therefore, holds that he was most successful in the pure farce of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Here he could give free rein to sprightly fantasmagoria, and his characterization did not have to meet the requirements of credibility. Contrivance being a virtue rather than a vice in farce, Wilde succeeded in turning slippancy into a fine art.*

J. G.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST



BY OSCAR WILDE

CHARACTERS

JOHN WORTHING, J.P.
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D.D.
MERRIMAN (*Butler*)
LANE (*Manservant*)

LADY BRACKNELL
HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX
CECILY CARDEW
MISS PRISM (*Governess*)

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY.

ACT I.

Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.

ACT II.

The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.

ACT III.

Drawing-Room of the Manor House, Woolton.

Time — The Present.

Place — London.

ALGERNON: I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE: Yes, sir.

ALGERNON: And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE: Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver*]

ALGERNON: [*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa*] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE: Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON: Why is it that in a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE: I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ACT I.

SCENE: *Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

[*Lane is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, Algernon enters*]

ALGERNON: Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE: I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON: Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE: I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young woman.

ALGERNON: [*Languidly*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE: No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON: Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE: Thank you, sir. [*Lane goes out*]

ALGERNON: Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[*Enter Lane*]

LANE: Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[*Enter Jack. Lane goes out*]

ALGERNON: How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK: Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGERNON: [*Stiffly*] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK: [*Sitting down on the sofa*] In the country.

ALGERNON: What on earth do you do there?

JACK: [*Pulling off his gloves*] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON: And who are the people you amuse?

JACK: [*Airily*] Oh, neighbors, neighbors.

ALGERNON: Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

JACK: Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON: How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK: Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON: Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK: How perfectly delightful!

ALGERNON: Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK: May I ask why?

ALGERNON: My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK: I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON: I thought you had come for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK: How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON: I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK: I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGERNON: Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are

made in Heaven—[*Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich. Algernon at once interferes*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it*]

JACK: Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGERNON: That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK: [*Advancing to table and helping himself*] And very good bread and butter it is, too.

ALGERNON: Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you will ever be.

JACK: Why on earth do you say that?

ALGERNON: Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK: Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON: It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK: Your consent!

ALGERNON: My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell*]

JACK: Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[*Enter Lane*]

ALGERNON: Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE: Yes, sir. [*Lane goes out*]

JACK: Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGERNON: Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

JACK: There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[*Enter Lane with the cigarette case on a salver. Algernon takes it at once. Lane goes out*]

ALGERNON: I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK: Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON: Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK: I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGERNON: Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK: Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON: Your aunt!

JACK: Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON: [*Retreating to back of sofa*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK: [*Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows Algernon round the room*]

ALGERNON: Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it's Ernest.

JACK: It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON: You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if

ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket*]

JACK: Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON: Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK: My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON: Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing, I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK: Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGERNON: I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK: Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGERNON: Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa*]

JACK: My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appre-

ciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON: Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK: That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON: I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburied all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK: My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON: The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK: That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGERNON: Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK: What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON: You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis' to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK: I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

ALGERNON: I know. You are absolutely careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK: You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGERNON: I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relatives. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally

want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules. ✓

JACK: I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGERNON: Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK: That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGERNON: Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK: [*Sententiously*] That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

ALGERNON: Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK: For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGERNON: My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis'?

JACK: I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGERNON: Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter Lane*]

LANE: Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[*Algernon goes forward to meet them.*]

[*Enter Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON: I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees Jack and bows to him with icy coldness*]

ALGERNON: [*To Gwendolen*] Dear me, you are smart!

GWENDOLEN: I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr Worthing?

JACK: You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN: Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in *many directions*.

[*Gwendolen and Jack sit down together in the corner*]

LADY BRACKNELL: I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGERNON: Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN: Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGERNON: [*Picking up empty plate in horror*] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially

LANE: [*Gravely*] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGERNON: No cucumbers!

LANE: No, sir. Not even for ready money.

ALGERNON: That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE: Thank you, sir. [*Goes out*]

ALGERNON: I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY BRACKNELL: It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGERNON: I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY BRACKNELL: It certainly has changed its color. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [*Algernon crosses and hands tea*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGERNON: I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Frowning*] I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGERNON: It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with Jack*] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY BRACKNELL: It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGERNON: Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY BRACKNELL: Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGERNON: I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk. But I'll run over the program I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY BRACKNELL: Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following Algernon*] I'm sure the program will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either

look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWENDOLEN: Certainly, mamma.

[Lady Bracknell *and* Algernon go into the music-room, Gwendolen remains behind]

JACK: Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN: Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK: I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN: I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK: And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

GWENDOLEN: I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK: [*Nervously*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWENDOLEN: Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [Jack looks at her in amazement] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits I am told: and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There

is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK: You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN: Passionately!

JACK: Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN: My own Ernest!

JACK: But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWENDOLEN: But your name is Ernest.

JACK: Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

GWENDOLEN: [*Glibly*] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK: Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think that name suits me at all.

GWENDOLEN: It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK: Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think, Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWENDOLEN: Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a

single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK: Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN: Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK: [*Astounded*] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN: I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK: Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN: I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK: Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN: Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK: You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN: Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK: Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees*]

GWENDOLEN: Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK: My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN: Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter Lady Bracknell*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWENDOLEN: Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY BRACKNELL: Finished what, may I ask?

GWENDOLEN: I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWENDOLEN: [*Reproachfully*] Mamma!

LADY BRACKNELL: In the carriage, Gwendolen!

[*Gwendolen goes to the door. She and Jack blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back. Lady Bracknell looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round*]

Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWENDOLEN: Yes, mamma. [*Goes out, looking back at Jack*]

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Sitting down*] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil*]

JACK: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Pencil and note-book in hand*] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK: Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL: A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK: [*After some hesitation*] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK: Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Makes a note in her book*] In land, or in investments?

JACK: In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL: That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land

has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK: I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL: A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK: Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL: Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK: Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL: Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK: 149.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Shaking her head*] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK: Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Sternly*] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK: Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY BRACKNELL: Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK: I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL: Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL: Found!

JACK: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK: [*Gravely*] In a hand-bag.

LADY BRACKNELL: A hand-bag?

JACK: [*Very seriously*] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK: In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY BRACKNELL: The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK: Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL: The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just

told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK: May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL: I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK: Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to re-arrange into a cloakroom, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[*Lady Bracknell sweeps out in majestic indignation*]

JACK: Good morning!

[*Algernon, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March. Jack*

looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door]

For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[The music stops, and Algernon enters cheerily]

ALGERNON: Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK: Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGERNON: My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK: Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON: It isn't!

JACK: Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGERNON: That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK: Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself. . . . *[A pause]* You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON: All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK: Is that clever?

ALGERNON: It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK: I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON: We have.

JACK: I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON: The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK: What fools!

ALGERNON: By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK: *[In a very patronizing manner]* My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON: The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK: Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON: What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK: Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON: Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK: You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON: Of course it isn't!

JACK: Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGERNON: But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK: Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON: I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK: I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGERNON: Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK: Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGERNON: Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis', we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK: [*Irritably*] Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGERNON: Well, I'm hungry.

JACK: I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGERNON: What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theater?

JACK: Oh, no! I loathe listening.

ALGERNON: Well, let us go to the Club?

JACK: Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGERNON: Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

JACK: Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGERNON: Well, what shall we do?

JACK: Nothing!

ALGERNON: It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[*Enter Lane*]

LANE: Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter Gwendolen. Lane goes out*]

ALGERNON: Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWENDOLEN: Algy, kindly turn your back.

I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGERNON: Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWENDOLEN: Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [*Algernon retires to the fireplace*]

JACK: My own darling!

GWENDOLEN: Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK: Dear Gwendolen.

GWENDOLEN: The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibers of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town ad-

dress at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK: The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[Algernon, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide*]

GWENDOLEN: There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK: My own one!

GWENDOLEN: How long do you remain in town?

JACK: Till Monday.

GWENDOLEN: Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGERNON: Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWENDOLEN: You may also ring the bell.

JACK: You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWENDOLEN: Certainly.

JACK: [*To Lane, who now enters*] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE: Yes, sir.

[*Jack and Gwendolen go off. Lane presents several letters on a salver to Algernon. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as Algernon, after looking at the envelopes, tears them up*]

ALGERNON: A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE: Yes, sir.

ALGERNON: To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE: Yes, sir.

ALGERNON: I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . . .

LANE: Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry*]

ALGERNON: I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE: It never is, sir.

ALGERNON: Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE: I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[*Enter Jack. Lane goes off*]

JACK: There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life.

[*Algernon is laughing immoderately*]
What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON: Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all.

JACK: If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGERNON: I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK: Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGERNON: Nobody ever does. [*Jack looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room. Algernon lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles*]

ACT II.

SCENE: *Garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

[*Miss Prism discovered seated at the table. Cecily is at the back watering flowers*]

MISS PRISM: [*Calling*] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECILY: [*Coming over very slowly*] But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

MISS PRISM: Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECILY: Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

MISS PRISM: [*Drawing herself up*] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanor is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECILY: I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

MISS PRISM: Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

CECILY: I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [*Cecily begins to write in her diary*]

MISS PRISM: [*Shaking her head*] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that, according to his own brother's admission, is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am

not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECILY: I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

MISS PRISM: Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECILY: Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

MISS PRISM: Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECILY: Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

MISS PRISM: The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECILY: I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM: Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY: [*Smiling*] But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM: [*Rising and advancing*] Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter Canon Chasuble*]

CHASUBLE: And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY: Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr. Chasuble.

MISS PRISM: Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY: No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson when the Rector came in.

CHASUBLE: I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY: Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHASUBLE: That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [Miss Prism *glances*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM: We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHASUBLE: Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man, his brother, seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM: Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

CHASUBLE: [*Bowing*] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Even-song.

MISS PRISM: I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHASUBLE: With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM: That would be delightful.

Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[*Goes down the garden with Dr. Chasuble*]

CECILY: [*Picks up books and throws them back on table*] Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter Merriman with a card on a salver*]

MERRIMAN: Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECILY: [*Takes the card and reads it*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4 The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRIMAN: Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECILY: Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRIMAN: Yes, Miss.

[*Merriman goes off*]

CECILY: I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else.

[*Enter Algernon, very gay and debonair*]

He does!

ALGERNON: [*Raising his hat*] You are my little Cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECILY: You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I am more than usually tall for my age. [*Algernon is rather taken aback*] But I am your

Cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my Cousin Ernest, my wicked Cousin Ernest.

ALGERNON: Oh! I am not really wicked at all, Cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY: If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGERNON: [*Looks at her in amazement*]

Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

CECILY: I am glad to hear it.

ALGERNON: In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECILY: I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGERNON: It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECILY: I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGERNON: That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECILY: Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGERNON: No; the appointment is in London.

CECILY: Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGERNON: About my what?

CECILY: Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGERNON: I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECILY: I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

ALGERNON: Australia! I'd sooner die.

CECILY: Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGERNON: Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world, are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, Cousin Cecily.

CECILY: Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGERNON: I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, Cousin Cecily.

CECILY: I'm afraid I've not time, this afternoon.

ALGERNON: Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECILY: That is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGERNON: I will. I feel better already.

CECILY: You are looking a little worse.

ALGERNON: That is because I am hungry.

CECILY: How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGERNON: Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

CECILY: A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors*]

ALGERNON: No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY: Why? [*Cuts a flower*]

ALGERNON: Because you are like a pink rose. Cousin Cecily.

CECILY: I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGERNON: Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [*Cecily puts the rose in his button-hole*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY: Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGERNON: They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY: Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[*They pass into the house. Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble return*]

MISS PRISM: You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHASUBLE: [*With a scholar's shudder*] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM: [*Sententiously*] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHASUBLE: But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM: No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHASUBLE: And often, I've been told, not even to her.

MISS PRISM: That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [*Dr. Chasuble starts*] I spoke horticulturally.

My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHASUBLE: Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*Enter Jack slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hat-band and black gloves*]

MISS PRISM: Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE: Mr. Worthing?

MISS PRISM: This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK: [*Shakes Miss Prism's hand in a tragic manner*] I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE: Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK: My brother.

MISS PRISM: More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHASUBLE: Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK: [*Shaking his head*] Dead.

CHASUBLE: Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK: Quite dead.

MISS PRISM: What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE: Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK: Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHASUBLE: Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK: No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHASUBLE: Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK: A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM: As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE: [*Raising his hand*] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

JACK: No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE: In Paris! [*Shakes his head*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [*Jack presses his hand convulsively*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontentment among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK: Ah, that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [*Dr. Chasuble looks astounded*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

MISS PRISM: It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHASUBLE: But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK: Oh, yes.

MISS PRISM: [*Bitterly*] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK: But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE: But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK: I don't remember anything about it.

CHASUBLE: But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK: I certainly intend to have. Of course. I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE: Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK: Immersion!

CHASUBLE: You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK: Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you.

CHASUBLE: Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

JACK: Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past-five do?

CHASUBLE: Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials at

the moment are often blessings in disguise.

MISS PRISM: This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter Cecily from the house*]

CECILY: Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them.

MISS PRISM: Cecily!

CHASUBLE: My child! my child! [*Cecily goes towards Jack; he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner*]

CECILY: What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache and I have such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK: Who?

CECILY: Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK: What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECILY: Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*Runs back into the house*]

CHASUBLE: These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM: After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden returns seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK: My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*Enter Algernon and Cecily hand in hand. They come slowly up to Jack*]

JACK: Good heavens! [*Motions Algernon away*]

ALGERNON: Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you. and that I intend to lead a

better life in the future. [*Jack glares at him and does not take his hand*]

CECILY: Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK: Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY: Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK: Oh, he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECILY: Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK: Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGERNON: Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECILY: Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest I will never forgive you.

JACK: Never forgive me?

CECILY: Never, never, never!

JACK: Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with Algernon and glares*]

CHASUBLE: It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM: Cecily, you will come with us.

CECILY: Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHASUBLE: You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

MISS PRISM: We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECILY: I feel very happy. [*They all go off*]

JACK: You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter Merriman*]

MERRIMAN: I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK: What?

MERRIMAN: Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK: His luggage?

MERRIMAN: Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

ALGERNON: I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK: Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN: Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house*]

ALGERNON: What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK: Yes, you have.

ALGERNON: I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK: Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGERNON: My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK: I can quite understand that.

ALGERNON: Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK: You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON: Well, I don't like your clothes.

You look perfectly ridiculous in them.

Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK: You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGERNON: I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK: Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON: Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK: Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

ALGERNON: If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

JACK: Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house*]

ALGERNON: I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[*Enter Cecily at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers*]

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECILY: Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGERNON: He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECILY: Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGERNON: He's going to send me away.

CECILY: Then have we got to part?

ALGERNON: I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECILY: It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGERNON: Thank you.

[Enter Merriman]

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is at the door, sir. [Algernon looks appealingly at Cecily]

CECILY: It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRIMAN: Yes, miss.

[Exit Merriman]

ALGERNON: I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY: I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary. [Goes over to table and begins writing in diary]

ALGERNON: Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY: Oh, no. [Puts her hand over it] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray,

Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGERNON: [Somewhat taken aback] Ahem! Ahem!

CECILY: Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [Writes as Alger non speaks]

ALGERNON: [Speaking very rapidly] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECILY: I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGERNON: Cecily!

[Enter Merriman]

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON: Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN: [Looks at Cecily, who makes no sign] Yes, sir.

[Merriman retires]

CECILY: Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGERNON: Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY: You silly you! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGERNON: For the last three months?

CECILY: Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGERNON: But how did we become engaged?

CECILY: Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger

brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGERNON: Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY: On the 4th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGERNON: Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY: Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon*]

ALGERNON: My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECILY: You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGERNON: Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

CECILY: Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGERNON: But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECILY: Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary*] "To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGERNON: But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECILY: It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGERNON: [*Crossing to her, and kneeling*] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECILY: You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGERNON: Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY: I am so glad.

ALGERNON: You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY: I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGERNON: Yes, of course. [*Nervously*]

CECILY: You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [*Algernon rises, Cecily also*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGERNON: But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY: But what name?

ALGERNON: Oh, any name you like—Alger-
non, for instance. . . .

CECILY: But I don't like the name of Al-
gernon.

ALGERNON: Well, my own dear, sweet, lov-
ing little darling, I really can't see why
you should object to the name of Alger-
non. It is not at all a bad name. In fact,
it is rather an aristocratic name. Half
of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy
Court are called Algernon. But seriously,
Cecily . . . [*moving to her*] . . . if my
name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY: [*Rising*] I might respect you,
Ernest, I might admire your character,
but I fear that I should not be able to
give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON: Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up
hat*] Your Rector here is, I suppose,
thoroughly experienced in the practice
of all the rites and ceremonials of the
church?

CECILY: Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most
learned man. He has never written a
single book, so you can imagine how
much he knows.

ALGERNON: I must see him at once on a
most important christening—I mean on
most important business.

CECILY: Oh!

ALGERNON: I sha'n't be away more than
half an hour.

CECILY: Considering that we have been en-
gaged since February the 14th, and that
I only met you to-day for the first time,
I think it is rather hard that you should
leave me for so long a period as half an
hour. Couldn't you make it twenty
minutes?

ALGERNON: I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses
her and rushes down the garden*]

CECILY: What an impetuous boy he is. I
like his hair so much. I must enter his

proposal in my diary.

[*Enter Merriman*]

MERRIMAN: A Miss Fairfax has just called
to see Mr. Worthing. On very important
business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY: Isn't Mr. Worthy in his library?

MERRIMAN: Mr. Worthing went over in the
direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY: Pray ask the lady to come out here;
Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon.
And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN: Yes, miss. [*Goes out*]

CECILY: Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the
many good elderly women who are asso-
ciated with Uncle Jack in some of his
philanthropic work in London. I don't
quite like women who are interested in
philanthropic work. I think it is so for-
ward of them.

[*Enter Merriman*]

MERRIMAN: Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter Gwendolen*]

[*Exit Merriman*]

CECILY: [*Advancing to meet her*] Pray let
me introduce myself to you. My name is
Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLEN: Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to
her and shaking hands*] What a very
sweet name! Something tells me that we
are going to be great friends. I like you
already more than I can say. My first
impressions of people are never wrong.

CECILY: How nice of you to like me so
much after we have known each other
such a comparatively short time. Pray
sit down.

GWENDOLEN: [*Still standing up*] I may call
you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY: With pleasure!

GWENDOLEN: And you will always call me
Gwendolen, won't you?

CECILY: If you wish.

GWENDOLEN: Then that is all quite settled,
is it not?

CECILY: I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together*]

GWENDOLEN: Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECILY: I don't think so.

GWENDOLEN: Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY: Oh, not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWENDOLEN: [*After examining Cecily carefully through a lorgnette*] You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY: Oh, no, I live here.

GWENDOLEN: [*Severely*] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECILY: Oh, no. I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

GWENDOLEN: Indeed?

CECILY: My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWENDOLEN: Your guardian?

CECILY: Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLEN: Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her*] I am very fond of you,

Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you. But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

CECILY: Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWENDOLEN: Well, to speak with perfect candor, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honor. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECILY: I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLEN: Yes.

CECILY: Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWENDOLEN: [*Sitting down again*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECILY: I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWENDOLEN: Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours,

would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY: Quite sure. [*A pause*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN: [*Enquiringly*] I beg your pardon?

CECILY: [*Rather shy and confidingly*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN: [*Quite politely, rising*] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY: [*Very politely, rising*] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary*]

GWENDOLEN: [*Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully*] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

CECILY: It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN: [*Meditatively*] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to

rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY: [*Thoughtfully and sadly*] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN: Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY: Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN: [*Satirically*] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter Merriman, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table-cloth, and plate-stand. Cecily is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both guls chafe.*]

MERRIMAN: Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

CECILY: [*Sternly, in a calm voice*] Yes, as usual. [*Merriman begins to clear and lay cloth. A long pause. Cecily and Gwendolen glare at each other*]

GWENDOLEN: Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECILY: Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWENDOLEN: Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECILY: [*Sweetly*] I suppose that is why you live in town? [*Gwendolen bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol*]

GWENDOLEN: [*Looking round*] Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECILY: So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN: I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECILY: Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWENDOLEN: Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECILY: Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN: [*With elaborate politeness*] Thank you. [*Aside*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY. [*Sweetly*] Sugar?

GWENDOLEN: [*Superciliously*] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [*Cecily looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup*]

CECILY: [*Severely*] Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLEN: [*In a bored manner*] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

CECILY: [*Cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray*] Hand that to Miss Fairfax. [*Merriman does so, and goes out with footman. Gwendolen drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation*]

GWENDOLEN: You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the

gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECILY. [*Rising*] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWENDOLEN. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impression of people are invariably right.

CECILY: It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

[*Enter Jack*]

GWENDOLEN: [*Catching sight of him*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK: Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her*]

GWENDOLEN [*Drawing back*] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to Cecily*]

JACK: [*Laughing*] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWENDOLEN: Thank you. You may. [*Offers her cheek*]

CECILY: [*Very sweetly*] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWENDOLEN: I beg your pardon?

CECILY: This is Uncle Jack.

GWENDOLEN: [*Receding*] Jack! Oh!

[*Enter Algernon*]

CECILY: Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON: [*Goes straight over to Cecily without noticing anyone else*] My own love! [*Offers to kiss her*]

CECILY: [*Drawing back*] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON: [*Looking round*] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECILY: Yes, to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGERNON: [*Laughing*] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECILY: Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed*] You may. [*Algernon kisses her*]

GWENDOLEN: I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY: [*Breaking away from Algernon*] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection*]

CECILY: Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON: I cannot deny it.

CECILY: Oh!

GWENDOLEN: Is your name really John?

JACK: [*Standing rather proudly*] I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY: [*To Gwendolen*] A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

GWENDOLEN: My poor wounded Cecily!

CECILY: My sweet, wronged Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN: [*Slowly and seriously*] You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down*]

CECILY: [*Rather brightly*] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWENDOLEN: An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are

both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK: [*Slowly and hesitatingly*] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY: [*Surprised*] No brother at all?

JACK: [*Cheerily*] None!

GWENDOLEN: [*Severely*] Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK: [*Pleasantly*] Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLEN: I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECILY: It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWENDOLEN: Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECILY: No, men are so cowardly, aren't they? [*They retire into the house with scornful looks*]

JACK: This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGERNON: Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK: Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGERNON: That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK: Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGERNON: Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK: Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing, too.

ALGERNON: Your brother is a little off color, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing, either.

JACK: As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGERNON: I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK: I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGERNON: Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK: There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGERNON: I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK: Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGERNON: If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-

brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK: How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON: Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK: I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON: When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising*]

JACK: [*Rising*] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from Algy*]

ALGERNON: [*Offering tea-cake*] I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK: Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON: But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK: I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON: That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from Jack*]

JACK: Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGERNON: You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and

people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK: My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON: Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK: Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON: Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK: Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGERNON: It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK: [*Picking up the muffin-dish*] Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON: Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are

only two left. [*Takes them*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK: But I hate tea-cake.

ALGERNON: Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK: Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGERNON: I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left. [*Jack groans, and sinks into a chair. Algernon still continues eating*]

CURTAIN

ACT III.

SCENE: *Morning-room at the Manor House.*

Gwendolen and Cecily are at the window, looking out into the garden.

GWENDOLEN: The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY: They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWENDOLEN: [*After a pause*] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

GWENDOLEN: They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECILY: They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWENDOLEN: Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECILY: Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter Jack, followed by Algernon. They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera*]

GWENDOLEN: This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECILY: A most distasteful one.

GWENDOLEN: But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY: Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN: Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY: Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGERNON: In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECILY: [*To Gwendolen*] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWENDOLEN: Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECILY: I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWENDOLEN: True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK: Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN: I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [*Moving to Cecily*] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECILY: I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWENDOLEN: Then you think we should forgive them?

CECILY: Yes. I mean no.

GWENDOLEN: True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECILY: Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWENDOLEN: An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECILY: Certainly. [*Gwendolen beats time with upraised finger*]

GWENDOLEN AND CECILY: [*Speaking together*] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK AND ALGERNON: [*Speaking together*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWENDOLEN: [*To Jack*] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK: I am.

CECILY: [*To Algeron*] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGERNON: I am!

GWENDOLEN: How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK: We are. [*Clasps hands with Algeron*]

CECILY: They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWENDOLEN: [*To Jack*] Darling!

ALGERNON: [*To Cecily*] Darling! [*They fall into each other's arms*]

[*Enter Merriman. When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation*]

MERRIMAN: Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK: Good heavens!

[*Enter Lady Bracknell. The couples separate in alarm. Exit Merriman*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWENDOLEN: Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, Mamma.

LADY BRACKNELL: Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to Jack*] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to deceive him. Indeed I have never deceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK: I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY BRACKNELL: You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGERNON: Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGERNON: [*Stammering*] Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY BRACKNELL: Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGERNON: [*Airily*] Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL: What did he die of?

ALGERNON: Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY BRACKNELL: Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGERNON: My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

LADY BRACKNELL: He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK: That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [*Lady Bracknell bows coldly to Cecily*]

ALGERNON: I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: I beg your pardon?

CECILY: Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down*] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air in this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until

yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus. [*Jack looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself*]

JACK: [*In a clear, cold voice*] Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporrán, Fifeshire, N.B.

LADY BRACKNELL: That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK: I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Grimly*] I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK: Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY BRACKNELL: Markby, Markby and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK: [*Very irritably*] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favor of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK: Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Sitting down again*] A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To Cecily*] Come over here, dear. [*Cecily goes across*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvelous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

JACK: [*Aside*] And after six months nobody knew her.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Glares at Jack for a few moments. Then bends, with a practised smile, to Cecily*] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [*Cecily turns completely round*] No, the side view is what I want. [*Cecily presents her profile*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGERNON: Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY BRACKNELL: There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGERNON: Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I

don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY BRACKNELL: Never speak disrespectfully of society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To Cecily*] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGERNON: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECILY: [*Kisses her*] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECILY: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGERNON: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECILY: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: To speak frankly, I am not in favor of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK: I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY BRACKNELL: Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK: It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell,

about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful [*Algernon and Cecily look at him in indignant amazement*]

LADY BRACKNELL: Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

JACK: I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretense of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL: Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK: That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*To Cecily*] Come here, sweet child. [*Cecily goes over*] How old are you, dear?

CECILY: Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY BRACKNELL: You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In meditative manner*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK: Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY BRACKNELL: That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECILY: Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGERNON: Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECILY: Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGERNON: Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECILY: I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY BRACKNELL: My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK: But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Rising and drawing herself up*] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK: Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY BRACKNELL: That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself [*Pulls out her watch*] Come, dear, [*Gwendolen rises*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter Dr. Chasuble*]

CHASUBLE: Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY BRACKNELL: The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

CHASUBLE: [*Looking rather puzzled, and pointing to Jack and Algernon*] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY BRACKNELL: At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHASUBLE: Am I to understand then that

there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK: I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHASUBLE: I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savor of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Starting*] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHASUBLE: Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

LADY BRACKNELL: Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHASUBLE: [*Somewhat indignantly*] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY BRACKNELL: It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE: [*Severely*] I am a celibate, madam.

JACK: [*Interposing*] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY BRACKNELL: In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHASUBLE: [*Looking off*] She approaches; she is nigh.

[*Enter Miss Prism hurriedly*]

MISS PRISM: I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters. [*Catches sight of Lady Bracknell, who has fixed her with a stony glare. Miss Prism grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape*]

LADY BRACKNELL: [*In a severe, judicial voice*] Prism! [*Miss Prism bows her head in shame*] Come here, Prism! [*Miss Prism approaches in a humble manner*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror. Algernon and Jack pretend to be anxious to shield Cecily and Gwendolen from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [*Miss Prism starts in involuntary indignation*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at Miss Prism*] Prism, where is that baby? [*A pause*]

MISS PRISM: Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old but capacious handbag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during

my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the handbag.

JACK: [*Who has been listening attentively*] But where did you deposit the handbag?

MISS PRISM: Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK: Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the handbag that contained that infant.

MISS PRISM: I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK: What railway station?

MISS PRISM: [*Quite crushed*] Victoria The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair*]

JACK: I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWENDOLEN: If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit Jack in great excitement*]

CHASUBLE: What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY BRACKNELL: I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing. [*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everybody looks up*]

CECILY: Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHASUBLE: Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY BRACKNELL: This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHASUBLE: [*Looking up*] It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled*]

LADY BRACKNELL: I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWENDOLEN: This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*Enter Jack with a handbag of black leather in his hand*]

JACK: [*Rushing over to Miss Prism*] Is this the handbag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

MISS PRISM: [*Calmly*] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK: [*In a pathetic voice*] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this handbag. I was the baby you placed in it.

MISS PRISM: [*Amazed*] You?

JACK: [*Embracing her*] Yes . . . mother!

MISS PRISM: [*Recoiling in indignant astonishment*] Mr Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK: Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again*]

MISS PRISM: [*Still more indignant*] Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing*

to Lady Bracknell] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK: [*After a pause*] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY BRACKNELL: I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK: Algyn's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of Algernon*] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGERNON: Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands*]

GWENDOLEN: [*To Jack*] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK: Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWENDOLEN: I never change, except in my affections.

CECILY: What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK: Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the handbag, had I been christened already?

LADY BRACKNELL: Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had

been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK: Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY BRACKNELL: Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK: [*Irritably*] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY BRACKNELL: [*Meditatively*] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK: Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGERNON: My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK: His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY BRACKNELL: The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK: The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well,

it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY BRACKNELL: Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWENDOLEN: Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK: Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN: I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK: My own one!

CHASUBLE: [*To Miss Prism*] Lætitia! [*Embraces her*]

MISS PRISM: [*Enthusiastically*] Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON: Cecily! [*Embraces her*] At last!

JACK: Gwendolen! [*Embraces her*] At last!

LADY BRACKNELL: My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK: On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

TABLEAU

CURTAIN

Anton Chekhov

(1860-1904)

NO COUNTRY responded to the challenge of realism with such positive achievements as Russia. Today the novels and shorter narratives of Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Gorki cannot be omitted from the roll-call of major fiction. Though handicapped by a severe censorship, the progress of Russian drama paralleled that of the novel. As a matter of record, if we except the work of Alexander Ostrovsky (1823-1886), whose sharply etched pictures of middle-class life made him his country's outstanding professional playwright, the most notable plays of the Russian stage were provided by the novelists.

The so-called father of the Russian novel, Nicolai Gogol, turned to the theatre and composed, in addition to sharp minor comedies such as *Marriage* and *The Gamblers*, *The Inspector General*, a brilliant satire on official corruption. Turgenev added to many novels and stories conversational dramas of such distinction as *A Month in the Country*, while Tolstoy increased his already gigantic stature as a writer with several rugged realistic plays of high distinction. *The Power of Darkness*, a sombre picture of peasant corruption, ranks with the most powerful tragedies of the modern drama, and his satire on the degeneracy of the ruling class, *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, was saluted by Bernard Shaw as "the first of the Heartbreak Houses and the most blighting." Hampered by censorship, Tolstoy published no plays after 1889, but left to posterity a strong protest against the prevailing marriage laws, *The Living Corpse*, known in America as *Redemption*, and an unfinished autobiographical tragedy, *The Light Shines in the Darkness*, which is perhaps his masterpiece.

When Chekhov, following the example of his predecessors in fiction, began to compose plays in earnest, he was already a mature writer whose genius for the short story was definitely established and more or less recognized. Nevertheless, his fortunes in the theatre were singularly uneven. His first play to be produced, *Ivanov*, had a mixed reception and precipitated a small riot in the theatre. *The Wood Demon* was a fiasco before it was rewritten and produced by the Moscow Art Theatre as *Uncle Vanya*. Discouraged, Chekhov refrained for six years from serious playwriting, and the failure of his next drama, *The Seagull*, owing to a faulty production and a hostile audience, only strengthened his resolve to abandon the theatre. It is doubtful whether he would have written his last masterpieces, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, if he had not received encouragement from the ever-helpful Moscow Art Theatre, which alone understood how to stage his plays with the finesse they require. Its aims,

as expressed by its leaders, Constantin Stanislavsky and D. Nemirovitch-Danchenko, coincided with his own: "To give back to the stage a living psychology and simple speech . . . To examine life, not only through rising heights and falling abysses, but through the every-day life surrounding us . . . To seek 'theatricality' . . . in the hidden inner psychological life."

Chekhov died of tuberculosis in 1904 in his forty-fourth year. Though suffused with pity for mankind, devoted to friends, and self-sacrificing as a practicing physician among the peasantry, he appraised himself correctly when he wrote in his note-book, "As I shall lie alone in the grave, so, indeed, do I live alone." He propounded no doctrine, was not given to self-revelation, and regarded mankind with wistful amusement. "You scold me for my objectivity," he wrote in one of his letters, "calling it indifference to good and evil, lack of ideas, and so on. When I describe horse-thieves you would have me say: 'Stealing horses is evil.' But that was known long ago without me."

Tragedy is nowhere so far removed from melodrama as in his plays. Perhaps the least theatrical of the great dramatists, he refused to truckle to the demands of the commercial theatre, complaining that "the narrative form is a lawful wife, but the dramatic is a showy, noisy, impertinent and tiresome mistress." To a friend he wrote, "Don't write a single line for the theatre unless it is a thousand miles away from you." Such artistry is singularly appropriate for the study of frustration, which was his special province, and for the creation of modern "static" drama, in which little happens but much is felt; in which characters are tragic not because of what they have done but because of what they have left undone. Chekhov showed how tragedy can be located in the slow wasting away of lives; how rust can be as murderous as cold steel, and as effective as more obvious dramatic devices.

The production of *The Cherry Orchard* by the Moscow Art Theatre in 1904 was turned into a celebration for its author, who was then in a dying condition and could barely stand up to receive the applause. Chekhov's chef d'œuvre has been one of the most popular productions of the Moscow Art Theatre and has been frequently performed in Western Europe and America. A wistful tragedy of personal defeat, symbolic of the decay of a class and a social order, it is assuredly the most poignant of the Heartbreak Houses.

J. G.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY CONSTANCE GARNETT

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

MADAME RANEVSKY (LYUBOV ANDREYEVNA),
the owner of the Cherry Orchard

ANYA, *her daughter, aged 17*

VARYA, *her adopted daughter, aged 24*

GAEV (LEONID ANDREYEVITCH), *brother of
Madame Ranevsky*

LOPAHIN (YERMOLAY ALEXEYEVITCH), *a mer-
chant*

TROFIMOV (PYOTR SERGEYEVITCH), *a stu-
dent*

SEMYONOV-PISHCHIK, *a landowner*

CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *a governess*

EPIHODOV (SEMYON PANTALEYEVITCH), *a
clerk*

DUNYASHA, *a maid*

FIRS, *an old valet, aged 87*

YASIIA, *a young valet*

A WAYFARER

THE STATION MASTER

A POST-OFFICE CLERK

VISITORS, SERVANTS

*The action takes place on the estate of
Madame Ranevsky.*

ACT I.

A room, which has always been called the nursery. One of the doors leads into Anya's room. Dawn, sun rises during the scene. May, the cherry trees in flower, but it is cold in the garden with the frost of early morning. Windows closed.

Enter Dunyasha with a candle and Lopahin with a book in his hand.

LOPAHIN: The train's in, thank God. What time is it?

DUNYASHA: Nearly two o'clock. [*Puts out the candle*] It's daylight already.

LOPAHIN: The train's late! Two hours, at least. [*Yawns and stretches*] I'm a pretty one; what a fool I've been. Came here on purpose to meet them at the station and dropped asleep. . . . Dozed off as I sat in the chair. It's annoying. . . . You might have waked me.

DUNYASHA: I thought you had gone. [*Listens*] There, I do believe they're coming!

LOPAHIN: [*Listens*] No, what with the luggage and one thing and another. [*A pause*] Lyubov Andreyevna has been abroad five years; I don't know what she is like now. . . . She's a splendid woman. A good-natured, kind-hearted woman. I remember when I was a lad of fifteen, my poor father—he used to keep a little shop here in the village in those days—gave me a punch in the face with his fist and made my nose bleed. We were in the yard here, I forget what we'd come about—he had had a drop. Lyubov Andreyevna—I can see her now—she was a slim young girl then—took me to wash my face, and then brought me into this very room, into the nursery. "Don't cry, little peasant," says she, "it

will be well in time for your wedding day." . . . [*A pause*] Little peasant. . . My father was a peasant, it's true, but here am I in a white waistcoat and brown shoes, like a pig in a bun shop. Yes, I'm a rich man, but for all my money, come to think, a peasant I was, and a peasant I am. [*Turns over the pages of the book*] I've been reading this book and I can't make head or tail of it. I fell asleep over it. [*A pause*]

DUNYASHA: The dogs have been awake all night, they feel that the mistress is coming.

LOPAHIN: Why, what's the matter with you, Dunyasha?

DUNYASHA: My hands are all of a tremble. I feel as though I should faint.

LOPAHIN: You're a spoilt soft creature, Dunyasha. And dressed like a lady too, and your hair done up. That's not the thing. One must know one's place.

[*Enter Epikhodov with a nosegay; he wears a pea-jacket and highly polished creaking topboots; he drops the nosegay as he comes in*]

EPIKHOV: [*Picking up the nosegay*] Here! the gardener's sent this, says you're to put it in the dining-room. [*Gives Dunyasha the nosegay*]

LOPAHIN: And bring me some kvass.

DUNYASHA: I will. [*Goes out*]

EPIKHOV: It's chilly this morning, three degrees of frost, though the cherries are all in flower. I can't say much for our climate. [*Sighs*] I can't. Our climate is not often propitious to the occasion. Yermolay Alexeyevitch, permit me to call your attention to the fact that I purchased myself a pair of boots the day before yesterday, and they creak, I venture to assure you, so that there's no tolerating them. What ought I to grease them with?

LOPAHIN: Oh, shut up! Don't bother me.

EPIKHOV: Every day some misfortune befalls me. I don't complain, I'm used to it, and I wear a smiling face.

[*Dunyasha comes in, hands Lopahin the kvass*]

EPIKHOV: I am going. [*Stumbles against a chair, which falls over*] There! [*As though triumphant*] There you see now, excuse the expression, an accident like that among others. . . . It's positively remarkable. [*Goes out*]

DUNYASHA: Do you know, Yermolay Alexeyevitch, I must confess, Epikhodov has made me a proposal.

LOPAHIN: Ah!

DUNYASHA: I'm sure I don't know. . . . He's a harmless fellow, but sometimes when he begins talking, there's no making anything of it. It's all very fine and expressive, only there's no understanding it. I've a sort of liking for him too. He loves me to distraction. He's an unfortunate man; every day there's something. They tease him about it—two and twenty misfortunes they call him.

LOPAHIN: [*Listening*] There! I do believe they're coming.

DUNYASHA: They are coming! What's the matter with me? . . . I'm cold all over.

LOPAHIN: They really are coming. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me? It's five years since I saw her.

DUNYASHA: [*In a flutter*] I shall drop this very minute. . . . Ah, I shall drop.

[*There is a sound of two carriages driving up to the house. Lopahin and Dunyasha go out quickly. The stage is left empty. A noise is heard in the adjoining rooms. Firs, who has driven to meet Madame Ranevsky, crosses the stage hurriedly leaning on a stick. He is wearing old-fashioned livery and a high hat. He says something to himself, but not a word can be distinguished. The noise behind the*]

scenes goes on increasing. A voice: "Come, let's go in here." Enter Lyubov Andreyevna, Anya, and Charlotta Ivanovna with a pet dog on a chain, all in traveling dresses. Varya in an out-door coat with a kerchief over her head, Gaev, Semyonov-Pishtchik, Lopahin, Dunyasha with bag and parasol, servants with other articles. All walk across the room]

ANYA: Let's come in here. Do you remember what room this is, mamma?

LYUBOV: [*Joyfully, through her tears*] The nursery!

VARYA: How cold it is, my hands are numb. [*To Lyubov Andreyevna*] Your rooms, the white room and the lavender one, are just the same as ever, mamma.

LYUBOV: My nursery, dear delightful room. . . . I used to sleep here when I was little. . . . [*Cries*] And here I am, like a little child. . . . [*Kisses her brother and Varya, and then her brother again*] Varya's just the same as ever, like a nun. And I knew Dunyasha. [*Kisses Dunyasha*]

GAEV: The train was two hours late. What do you think of that? Is that the way to do things?

CHARLOTTA: [*To Pishtchik*] My dog eats nuts, too.

PISHTCHIK: [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that! [*They all go out except Anya and Dunyasha*]

DUNYASHA: We've been expecting you so long. [*Takes Anya's hat and coat*]

ANYA: I haven't slept for four nights on the journey. I feel dreadfully cold.

DUNYASHA: You set out in Lent, there was snow and frost, and now? My darling! [*Laughs and kisses her*] I have missed you, my precious, my joy. I must tell you . . . I can't put it off a minute. . . .

ANYA: [*Wearily*] What now?

DUNYASHA: Ephodov, the clerk, made me a proposal just after Easter.

ANYA: It's always the same thing with you. . . . [*Staightening her hair*] I've lost all my hairpins. . . . [*She is staggering from exhaustion*]

DUNYASHA: I don't know what to think, really. He does love me, he does love me so!

ANYA: [*Looking towards her door, tenderly*] My own room, my windows just as though I had never gone away. I'm home! To-morrow morning I shall get up and run into the garden. . . . Oh, if I could get to sleep! I haven't slept all the journey, I was so anxious and worried.

DUNYASHA: Pyotr Sergeyevitch came the day before yesterday.

ANYA: [*Joyfully*] Petya!

DUNYASHA: He's asleep in the bath house, he has settled in there. I'm afraid of being in their way, says he. [*Glancing at her watch*] I was to have waked him, but Varvara Mihalovna told me not to. Don't you wake him, says she.

[*Enter Varya with a bunch of keys at her waist*]

VARYA: Dunyasha, coffee and make haste. . . . Mamma's asking for coffee.

DUNYASHA: This very minute. [*Goes out*]

VARYA: Well, thank God, you've come. You're home again. [*Petting her*] My little darling has come back! My precious beauty has come back again!

ANYA: I have had a time of it!

VARYA: I can fancy.

ANYA: We set off in Holy Week—it was so cold then, and all the way Charlotta would talk and show off her tricks. What did you want to burden me with Charlotta for?

VARYA: You couldn't have traveled all alone, darling. At seventeen!

ANYA: We got to Paris at last, it was cold there—snow. I speak French shockingly. Mamma lives on the fifth floor, I went up to her and there were a lot of French people, ladies, an old priest with a book. The place smelt of tobacco and so comfortable. I felt sorry, oh! so sorry for mamma all at once, I put my arms round her neck, and hugged her and wouldn't let her go. Mamma was as kind as she could be, and she cried. . . .

VARYA: [*Through her tears*] Don't speak of it, don't speak of it!

ANYA: She had sold her villa at Mentone, she had nothing left, nothing. I hadn't a farthing left either, we only just had enough to get here. And mamma doesn't understand! When we had dinner at the stations, she always ordered the most expensive things and gave the waiters a whole rouble. Charlotte's just the same. Yasha too must have the same as we do; it's simply awful. You know Yasha is mamma's valet now, we brought him here with us.

VARYA: Yes, I've seen the young rascal.

ANYA: Well, tell me—have you paid the arrears on the mortgage?

VARYA: How could we get the money?

ANYA: Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

VARYA: In August the place will be sold.

ANYA: My goodness!

LOPAHIN: [*Peeps in at the door and moos like a cow*] Moo! [*Disappears*]

VARYA: [*Weeping*] There, that's what I could do to him. [*Shakes her fist*]

ANYA: [*Embracing Varya, softly*] Varya, has he made you an offer? [*Varya shakes her head*] Why, but he loves you. Why is it you don't come to an understanding? What are you waiting for?

VARYA: I believe that there never will be anything between us. He has a lot to do, he has no time for me . . . and takes no notice of me. Bless the man, it makes

me miserable to see him. . . . Everyone's talking of our being married, everyone's congratulating me, and all the while there's really nothing in it; it's all like a dream. [*In another tone*] You have a new brooch like a bee.

ANYA: [*Mournfully*] Mamma bought it. [*Goes into her own room and in a light-hearted childish tone*] And you know, in Paris I went up in a balloon!

VARYA: My darling's home again! My pretty is home again!

[*Dunyasha returns with the coffee-pot and is making the coffee*]

VARYA: [*Standing at the door*] All day long, darling, as I go about looking after the house, I keep dreaming all the time. If only we could marry you to a rich man, then I should feel more at rest. Then I would go off by myself on a pilgrimage to Kiev, to Moscow . . . and so I would spend my life going from one holy place to another. . . . I would go on and on. . . . What bliss!

ANYA: The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it?

VARYA: It must be nearly three. It's time you were asleep, darling. [*Going into Anya's room*] What bliss!

[*Yasha enters with a rug and a travelling bag*]

YASHA: [*Crosses the stage, mincingly*] May one come in here, pray?

DUNYASHA: I shouldn't have known you, Yasha. How you have changed abroad.

YASHA: H'm! . . . And who are you?

DUNYASHA: When you went away, I was that high. [*Shows distance from floor*] Dunyasha, Fyodor's daughter. . . . You don't remember me!

YASHA: H'm! . . . You're a peach! [*Looks round and embraces her: she shrieks and drops a saucer. Yasha goes out hastily*]

VARYA: [*In the doorway, in a tone of vexation*] What now?

DUNYASHA: [*Through her tears*] I have broken a saucer.

VARYA: Well, that brings good luck.

ANYA: [*Coming out of her room*] We ought to prepare mamma: Petya is here.

VARYA: I told them not to wake him.

ANYA: [*Dreamily*] It's six years since father died. Then only a month later little brother Grisha was drowned in the river, such a pretty boy he was, only seven. It was more than mamma could bear, so she went away, went away without looking back. [*Shuddering*] . . .

How well I understand her, if only she knew! [*A pause*] And Petya Trofimov was Grisha's tutor, he may remind her.

[*Enter FIRS: he is wearing a pea-jacket and a white waistcoat*]

FIRS: [*Goes up to the coffee-pot, anxiously*] The mistress will be served here. [*Puts on white gloves*] Is the coffee ready? [*Sternly to Dunyasha*] Girl! Where's the cream?

DUNYASHA: Ah, mercy on us! [*Goes out quickly*]

FIRS: [*Fussing round the coffee-pot*] Ech! you good-for-nothing! [*Muttering to himself*] Come back from Paris. And the old master used to go to Paris too . . . horses all the way. [*Laughs*]

VARYA: What is it, FIRS?

FIRS: What is your pleasure? [*Gleefully*] My lady has come home! I have lived to see her again! Now I can die. [*Weeps with joy*]

[*Enter Lyubov Andreyevna, Gaev and Semyonov-Pishtchik; the latter is in a short-waisted full coat of fine cloth, and full trousers. Gaev, as he comes in, makes a gesture with his arms and his whole body, as though he were playing billiards*]

LYUBOV: How does it go? Let me remember. Cannon off the red!

GAEV: That's it—in off the white! Why, once, sister, we used to sleep together in this very room, and now I'm fifty-one, strange as it seems.

LOPAHIN: Yes, time flies.

GAEV: What do you say?

LOPAHIN: Time, I say, flies.

GAEV: What a smell of patchouli!

ANYA: I'm going to bed. Good-night, mamma. [*Kisses her mother*]

LYUBOV: My precious darling. [*Kisses her hands*] Are you glad to be home? I can't believe it.

ANYA: Good-night, uncle.

GAEV: [*Kissing her face and hands*] God bless you! How like you are to your mother! [*To his sister*] At her age you were just the same, Lyuba.

[*Anya shakes hands with Lopahin and Pistchik, then goes out, shutting the door after her*]

LYUBOV: She's quite worn out.

PISTCHIK: Aye, it's a long journey, to be sure.

VARYA: [*To Lopahin and Pistchik*] Well, gentlemen? It's three o'clock and time to say good-bye.

LYUBOV: [*Laughs*] You're just the same as ever, Varya. [*Draws her to her and kisses her*] I'll just drink my coffee and then we will all go and rest. [*Firs puts a cushion under her feet*] Thanks, friend. I am so fond of coffee, I drink it day and night. Thanks, dear old man. [*Kisses Firs*]

VARYA: I'll just see whether all the things have been brought in. [*Goes out*]

LYUBOV: Can it really be me sitting here? [*Laughs*] I want to dance about and clap my hands. [*Covers her face with her hands*] And I could drop asleep in a moment! God knows I love my country, I love it tenderly; I couldn't look out of the window in the train, I kept crying so. [*Through her tears*] But I must

drink my coffee, though. Thank you, Firs, thanks, dear old man. I'm so glad to find you still alive.

FIRS: The day before yesterday.

GAEV: He's rather deaf.

LOPAHIN: I have to set off for Harkov directly, at five o'clock. . . . It is annoying! I wanted to have a look at you, and a little talk. . . . You are just as splendid as ever.

PISHTCHIK: [*Breathing heavily*] Handsomer, indeed. . . . Dressed in Parisian style . . . completely bowled me over.

LOPAHIN: Your brother, Leonid Andreyevitch here, is always saying that I'm a low-born knave, that I'm a money-grubber, but I don't care one straw for that. Let him talk. Only I do want you to believe in me as you used to. I do want your wonderful tender eyes to look at me as they used to in the old days. Merciful God! My father was a serf of your father and of your grandfather, but you—you—did so much for me once, that I've forgotten all that; I love you as though you were my kin . . . more than my kin.

LYUBOV: I can't sit still, I simply can't. . . . [*Jumps up and walks about in violent agitation*] This happiness is too much for me. . . . You may laugh at me, I know I'm silly. . . . My own bookcase. [*Kisses the bookcase*] My little table.

GAEV: Nurse died while you were away.

LYUBOV: [*Sits down and drinks coffee*] Yes, the Kingdom of Heaven be hers! You wrote me of her death.

GAEV: And Anastasy is dead. Squinting Petruchka has left me and is in service now with the police captain in the town. [*Takes a box of caramels out of his pocket and sucks one*]

PISHTCHIK: My daughter, Dashenka, wishes to be remembered to you.

LOPAHIN: I want to tell you something very pleasant and cheering. [*Glancing at his watch*] I'm going directly . . . there's no time to say much . . . well, I can say it in a couple of words. I needn't tell you your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts; the 22nd of August is the date fixed for the sale; but don't you worry, dearest lady, you may sleep in peace, there is a way of saving it. . . . This is what I propose. I beg your attention! Your estate is not twenty miles from the town, the railway runs close by it, and if the cherry orchard and the land along the river bank were cut up into building plots and then let on lease for summer villas, you would make an income of at least 25,000 roubles a year out of it.

GAEV: That's all rot, if you'll excuse me.

LYUBOV: I don't quite understand you, Yermolay Alexeyevitch.

LOPAHIN: You will get a rent of at least 25 roubles a year for a three-acre plot from summer visitors, and if you say the word now, I'll bet you what you like there won't be one square foot of ground vacant by the autumn, all the plots will be taken up. I congratulate you; in fact, you are saved. It's a perfect situation with that deep river. Only, of course, it must be cleared—all the old buildings, for example, must be removed, this house too, which is really good for nothing and the old cherry orchard must be cut down.

LYUBOV: Cut down? My dear fellow, forgive me, but you don't know what you are talking about. If there is one thing interesting—remarkable indeed—in the whole province, it's just our cherry orchard.

LOPAHIN: The only thing remarkable about the orchard is that it's a very large one. There's a crop of cherries

every alternate year, and then there's nothing to be done with them, no one buys them.

GÆV: This orchard is mentioned in the *Encyclopædia*.

LOPAHIN: [*Glancing at his watch*] If we don't decide on something and don't take some steps, on the 22nd of August the cherry orchard and the whole estate too will be sold by auction. Make up your minds! There is no other way of saving it, I'll take my oath on that. No, No!

FIRS: In old days, forty or fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries, soak them, pickle them, make jam too, and they used—

GÆV: Be quiet, FIRS.

FIRS: And they used to send the preserved cherries to Moscow and to Harkov by the wagon-load. That brought the money in! And the preserved cherries in those days were soft and juicy, sweet and fragrant. . . . They knew the way to do them then. . . .

LYUBOV: And where is the recipe now?

FIRS: It's forgotten. Nobody remembers it.

PISHTCHIK: [*To Lyubov Andreyevna*] What's it like in Paris? Did you eat frogs there?

LYUBOV: Oh, I ate crocodiles.

PISHTCHIK: Fancy that now!

LOPAHIN: There used to be 'only the gentlefolks and the peasants in the country, but now there are these summer visitors. All the towns, even the small ones, are surrounded nowadays by these summer villas. And one may say for sure, that in another twenty years there'll be many more of these people and that they'll be everywhere. At present the summer visitor only drinks tea in his verandah, but maybe he'll take to working his bit of land too, and then your

cherry orchard would become happy, rich and prosperous. . . .

GÆV: [*Indignant*] What rot!

[*Enter Varya and Yasha*]

VARYA: There are two telegrams for you, mamma [*Takes out keys and opens an old-fashioned bookcase with a loud crack*] Here they are.

LYUBOV: From Paris [*Tears the telegrams, without reading them*] I have done with Paris.

GÆV: Do you know, Lyuba, how old that bookcase is? Last week I pulled out the bottom drawer and there I found the date branded on it. The bookcase was made just a hundred years ago. What do you say to that? We might have celebrated its jubilee. Though it's an inanimate object, still it is a *book* case.

PISHTCHIK: [*Amazed*] A hundred years! Fancy that now.

GÆV: Yes . . . It is a thing. . . . [*Feeling the bookcase*] Dear, honored, bookcase! Hail to thee who for more than a hundred years hast served the pure ideals of good and justice; thy silent call to fruitful labor has never flagged in those hundred years, maintaining [*in tears*] in the generations of man, courage and faith in a brighter future and fostering in us ideals of good and social consciousness [*A pause*]

LOPAHIN: Yes. . . .

LYUBOV: You are just the same as ever, Leonid.

GÆV: [*A little embarrassed*] Cannon off the right into the pocket!

LOPAHIN: [*Looking at his watch*] Well, it's time I was off.

YASHA: [*Handing Lyubov Andreyevna medicine*] Perhaps you will take your pills now.

PISHTCHIK: You shouldn't take medicines, my dear madam . . . they do no harm

and no good. Give them here . . . honored lady [*Takes the pill-box, pours the pills into the hollow of his hand, blows on them, puts them in his mouth and drinks off some kvass*] There!

LYUBOV: [*In alarm*] Why, you must be out of your mind!

PISHCHIK: I have taken all the pills.

LOPAHIN: What a glutton! [*All laugh*]

FIRS: His honor stayed with us in Easter week, ate a gallon and a half of cucumbers. . . [*Mutters*]

LYUBOV: What is he saying?

VARYA: He has taken to muttering like that for the last three years. We are used to it.

YASHA: His declining years!

[*Charlotta Ivanovna, a very thin, lanky figure in a white dress with a lorgnette in her belt, walks across the stage*]

LOPAHIN: I beg your pardon, Charlotta Ivanovna, I have not had time to greet you. [*Tries to kiss her hand*]

CHARLOTTA: [*Pulling away her hand*] If I let you kiss my hand, you'll be wanting to kiss my elbow, and then my shoulder.

LOPAHIN: I've no luck to-day! [*All laugh*] Charlotta Ivanovna, show us some tricks!

LYUBOV: Charlotta, do show us some tricks!

CHARLOTTA: I don't want to. I'm sleepy. [*Goes out*]

LOPAHIN: In three weeks' time we shall meet again. [*Kisses Lyubov Andreyevna's hand*] Good-bye till then—I must go. [*To Gaev*] Good-bye. [*Kisses Pishchik*] Good-bye. [*Gives his hand to Varya, then to Firs and Yasha*] I don't want to go. [*To Lyubov Andreyevna*] If you think over my plan for the villas and make up your mind, then let me know; I will lend you 50,000 roubles. Think of it seriously.

VARYA: [*Angrily*] Well, do go, for goodness sake.

LOPAHIN: I'm going, I'm going. [*Goes out*]

GAEV: Low-born knave! I beg pardon, though . . . Varya is going to marry him, he's Varya's fiancé.

VARYA: Don't talk nonsense, uncle.

LYUBOV: Well, Varya, I shall be delighted. He's a good man.

PISHCHIK: He is, one must acknowledge, a most worthy man. And my Dashenka . . . says too that . . . she says . . . various things. [*Snores, but at once wakes up*] But all the same, honored lady, could you oblige me . . . with a loan of 240 roubles . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow?

VARYA: [*Dismayed*] No, no.

LYUBOV: I really haven't any money.

PISHCHIK: It will turn up. [*Laughs*] I never lose hope. I thought everything was over, I was a ruined man, and lo and behold—the railway passed through my land and . . . they paid me for it. And something else will turn up again, if not to-day, then to-morrow . . . Dashenka'll win two hundred thousand . . . she's got a lottery ticket.

LYUBOV: Well, we've finished our coffee, we can go to bed.

FIRS: [*Brushes Gaev, reprovingly*] You have got on the wrong trousers again! What am I to do with you?

VARYA: [*Softly*] Anya's asleep. [*Softly opens the window*] Now the sun's risen, it's not a bit cold. Look, mamma, what exquisite trees! My goodness! And the air! The starlings are singing!

GAEV: [*Opens another window*] The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it, Lyuba? That long avenue that runs straight, straight as an arrow, how it shines on a moonlight night. You remember? You've not forgotten?

LYUBOV: [*Looking out of the window into the garden*] Oh, my childhood, my innocence! It was in this nursery I used to sleep, from here I looked out into the orchard, happiness waked with me every morning and in those days the orchard was just the same, nothing has changed. [*Laughs with delight*] All, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dark gloomy autumn, and the cold winter; you are young again, and full of happiness, the heavenly angels have never left you. . . . If I could cast off the burden that weighs on my heart, if I could forget the past!

GAEV: H'm! and the orchard will be sold to pay our debts; it seems strange. . . .

LYUBOV: See, our mother walking . . . all in white, down the avenue! [*Laughs with delight*] It is she!

GAEV: Where?

VARYA: Oh, don't, mamma!

LYUBOV: There is no one. It was my fancy. On the right there, by the path to the arbor, there is a white tree bending like a woman. . . .

[*Enter Trofimov wearing a shabby student's uniform and spectacles*]

LYUBOV: What a ravishing orchard! White masses of blossom, blue sky. . . .

TROFIMOV: Lyubov Andreyevna! [*She looks round at him*] I will just pay my respects to you and then leave you at once. [*Kisses her hand warmly*] I was told to wait until morning, but I hadn't the patience to wait any longer. . . .

[*Lyubov Andreyevna looks at him in perplexity*]

VARYA: [*Through her tears*] This is Petya Trofimov.

TROFIMOV: Petya Trofimov, who was your Grisha's tutor. . . . Can I have changed so much?

[*Lyubov Andreyevna embraces him and weeps quietly*]

GAEV: [*In confusion*] There, there, Lyuba.

VARYA: [*Crying*] I told you, Petya, to wait till to-morrow.

LYUBOV: My Grisha . . . my boy . . . Grisha . . . my son!

VARYA: We can't help it, mamma, it is God's will.

TROFIMOV: [*Softly through his tears*] There . . . there.

LYUBOV: [*Weeping quietly*] My boy was lost . . . drowned. Why? Oh, why, dear Petya? [*More quietly*] Anya is asleep in there, and I'm talking loudly . . . making this noise. . . . But, Petya? Why have you grown so ugly? Why do you look so old?

TROFIMOV: A peasant-woman in the train called me a mangy-looking gentleman.

LYUBOV: You were quite a boy then, a pretty little student, and now your hair's thin—and spectacles. Are you really a student still? [*Goes towards the door*]

TROFIMOV: I seem likely to be a perpetual student.

LYUBOV: [*Kisses her brother, then Varya*] Well, go to bed. . . . You are older too, Leonid.

PISHTCHIK: [*Follows her*] I suppose it's time we were asleep. . . . Ugh! my gout. I'm staying the night! Lyubov Andreyevna, my dear soul, if you could . . . to-morrow morning . . . 240 roubles.

GAEV: That's always his story.

PISHTCHIK: 240 roubles . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage.

LYUBOV: My dear man, I have no money.

PISHTCHIK: I'll pay it back, my dear . . . a trifling sum.

LYUBOV: Oh, well, Leonid will give it you. . . . You give him the money, Leonid.

GAEV: Me give it him! Let him wait till he gets it!

LYUBOV: It can't be helped, give it him. He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[Lyubov Andreyevna, Trofimov, Pishchik and Firs go out. Gaev, Varya and Yasha remain]

GAEV: Sister hasn't got out of the habit of flinging away her money. [To Yasha] Get away, my good fellow, you smell of the hen-house.

YASHA: [With a grin] And you, Leonid Andreyevitch, are just the same as ever.

GAEV: What's that? [To Varya] What did he say?

VARYA: [To Yasha] Your mother has come from the village; she has been sitting in the servants' room since yesterday, waiting to see you.

YASHA: Oh, bother her!

VARYA: For shame!

YASHA: What's the hurry? She might just as well have come to-morrow. [Goes out]

VARYA: Mamma's just the same as ever, she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her own way, she'd give away everything.

GAEV: Yes. [A pause] If a great many remedies are suggested for some disease, it means that the disease is incurable. I keep thinking and racking my brains; I have many schemes, a great many, and that really means none. If we could only come in for a legacy from somebody, or marry our Anya to a very rich man, or we might go to Yaroslavl and try our luck with our old aunt, the Countess. She's very, very rich, you know.

VARYA: [Weeps] If God would help us.

GAEV: Don't blubber. Aunt's very rich, but she doesn't like us. First, sister married a lawyer instead of a nobleman. . . .

[Anya appears in the doorway]

GAEV: And then her conduct, one can't call it virtuous. She is good, and kind, and nice, and I love her, but, however

one allows for extenuating circumstances, there's no denying that she's an immoral woman. One feels it in her slightest gesture.

VARYA: [In a whisper] Anya's in the doorway.

GAEV: What do you say? [A pause] It's queer, there seems to be something wrong with my right eye. I don't see as well as I did. And on Thursday when I was in the district Court . . .

[Enter Anya]

VARYA: Why aren't you asleep, Anya?

ANYA: I can't get to sleep.

GAEV: My pet. [Kisses Anya's face and hands] My child. [Weeps] You are not my niece, you are my angel, you are everything to me. Believe me, believe. . . .

ANYA: I believe you, uncle. Everyone loves you and respects you . . . but, uncle dear, you must be silent . . . simply be silent. What were you saying just now about my mother, about your own sister? What made you say that?

GAEV: Yes, yes. . . . [Puts his hand over his face] Really, that was awful! My God, save me! And to-day I made a speech to the bookcase . . . so stupid! And only when I had finished, I saw how stupid it was.

VARYA: It's true, uncle, you ought to keep quiet. Don't talk, that's all.

ANYA: If you could keep from talking, it would make things easier for you, too.

GAEV: I won't speak. [Kisses Anya's and Varya's hands] I'll be silent. Only this is about business. On Thursday I was in the district Court; well, there was a large party of us there and we began talking of one thing and another, and this and that, and do you know, I believe that it will be possible to raise a loan on an I.O.U. to pay the arrears on the mortgage.

VARYA: If the Lord would help us!

GAEV: I'm going on Tuesday; I'll talk of it again. [*To Varya*] Don't blubber. [*To Anya*] Your mamma will talk to Lopahin; of course, he won't refuse her. And as soon as you're rested you shall go to Yaroslavl to the Countess, your great-aunt. So we shall all set to work in three directions at once, and the business is done. We shall pay off arrears, I'm convinced of it. [*Puts a caramel in his mouth*] I swear on my honor, I swear by anything you like, the estate shan't be sold. [*Excitedly*] By my own happiness, I swear it! Here's my hand on it, call me the basest, vilest of men, if I let it come to an auction! Upon my soul I swear it!

ANYA: [*Her equanimity has returned, she is quite happy*] How good you are, uncle, and how clever! [*Embraces her uncle*] I'm at peace now! Quite at peace! I'm happy!
[*Enter Firs*]

FIRS: [*Reproachfully*] Leonid Andreyevitch, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

GAEV: Directly, directly. You can go, Firs. I'll . . . yes, I will undress myself. Come, children, bye-bye. We'll go into details to-morrow, but now go to bed. [*Kisses Anya and Varya*] I'm a man of the eighties. They run down that period, but still I can say I have had to suffer not a little for my convictions in my life, it's not for nothing that the peasant loves me. One must know the peasant! One must know how. . . .

ANYA: At it again, uncle!

VARYA: Uncle dear, you'd better be quiet!

FIRS: [*Angrily*] Leonid Andreyevitch!

GAEV: I'm coming. I'm coming. Go to bed. Potted the shot—there's a shot for you! A beauty! [*Goes out, Firs hobbling after him*]

ANYA: My mind's at rest now. I don't want to go to Yaroslavl, I don't like my great-aunt, but still my mind's at rest. Thanks to uncle. [*Sits down*]

VARYA: We must go to bed. I'm going. Something unpleasant happened while you were away. In the old servants' quarters there are only the old servants, as you know—Efimushka, Polya and Yevstigney—and Karp too. They began letting stray people in to spend the night—I said nothing. But all at once I heard they had been spreading a report that I gave them nothing but pease pudding to eat. Out of stinginess, you know. . . . And it was all Yevstigney's doing. . . . Very well, I said to myself. . . . If that's how it is, I thought, wait a bit. I sent for Yevstigney. . . . [*Yawns*] He comes. . . . "How's this, Yevstigney," I said, "you could be such a fool as to? . . ." [*Looking at Anya*] Anitchka! [*A pause*] She's asleep. [*Puts her arm around Anya*] Come to bed . . . come along! [*Leads her*] My darling has fallen asleep! Come. . . . [*They go*]

[*Far away beyond the orchard a shepherd plays on a pipe. Trofimov crosses the stage and, seeing Varya and Anya, stands still*]

VARYA: 'Sh! asleep, asleep. Come, my own.

ANYA: [*Softly, half asleep*] I'm so tired. Still those bells. Uncle . . . dear . . . mamma and uncle. . . .

VARYA: Come, my own, come along.

[*They go into Anya's room*]

TROFIMOV: [*Tenderly*] My sunshine! My spring.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

The open country. An old shrine, long abandoned and fallen out of the perpendicular, near it a well, large stones that

have apparently once been tombstones, and an old garden seat. The road to Gaev's house is seen. On one side rise dark poplars, and there the cherry orchard begins. In the distance a row of telegraph poles and far, far away on the horizon there is faintly outlined a great town, only visible in very fine clear weather. It is near sunset. Charlotta, Yasha and Dunyasha are sitting on the seat. Epihodov is standing near, playing something mournful on a guitar. All sit plunged in thought. Charlotta wears an old forage cap; she has taken a gun from her shoulder and is tightening the buckle on the strap.

CHARLOTTA: [*Musingly*] I haven't a real passport of my own, and I don't know how old I am, and I always feel that I'm a young thing. When I was a little girl, my father and mother used to travel about to fairs and give performances—very good ones. And I used to dance *salto-mortale* and all sorts of things. And when papa and mamma died, a German lady took me and had me educated. And so I grew up and become a governess. But where I came from, and who I am, I don't know. . . . Who my parents were, very likely they weren't married. . . . I don't know. [*Takes a cucumber out of her pocket and eats*] I know nothing at all. [*A pause*] One wants to talk and has no one to talk to. . . . I have nobody.

EPIHODOV: [*Plays on the guitar and sings*] "What care I for the noisy world! What care I for friends or foes!" How agreeable it is to play on the mandoline!

DUNYASHA: That's a guitar, not a mandoline. [*Looks in a hand-mirror and powders herself*]

EPIHODOV: To a man mad with love, it's a mandoline. [*Sings*] "Were her heart

but aglow with love's mutual flame."
[*Yasha joins in*]

CHARLOTTA: How shockingly these people sing! Foo! Like jackals!

DUNYASHA: [*To Yasha*] What happiness, though, to visit foreign lands.

YASHA: Ah, yes! I rather agree with you there. [*Yawns, then lights a cigar*]

EPIHODOV: That's comprehensible. In foreign lands everything has long since reached full complexion.

YASHA: That's so, of course.

EPIHODOV: I'm a cultivated man, I read remarkable books of all sorts, but I can never make out the tendency I am myself precisely inclined for, whether to live or to shoot myself, speaking precisely, but nevertheless I always carry a revolver. Here it is. . . . [*Shows revolver*]

CHARLOTTA: I've had enough, and now I'm going. [*Puts on the gun*] Epihodov, you're a very clever fellow, and a very terrible one too, all the women must be wild about you. Br-r-r! [*Goes*] These clever fellows are all so stupid; there's not a creature for me to speak to. . . . Always alone, alone, nobody belonging to me . . . and who I am, and why I'm on earth, I don't know. [*Walks away slowly*]

EPIHODOV: Speaking precisely, not touching upon other subjects, I'm bound to admit about myself, that destiny behaves mercilessly to me, as a storm to a little boat. If, let us suppose, I am mistaken, then why did I wake up this morning, to quote an example, and look round, and there on my chest was a spider of fearful magnitude . . . like this. [*Shows with both hands*] And then I take up a jug of kvass, to quench my thirst, and in it there is something in the highest degree unseemly of the nature of a

cockroach. [*A pause*] Have you read Buckle? [*A pause*] I am desirous of troubling you, Dunyasha, with a couple of words.

DUNYASHA: Well, speak.

EPIHODOV: I should be desirous to speak with you alone. [*Sighs*]

DUNYASHA: [*Embarrassed*] Well—only bring me my mantle first. It's by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

EPIHODOV: Certainly. I will fetch it. Now I know what I must do with my revolver. [*Takes guttur and goes off playing on it*]

YASHA: Two and twenty misfortunes! Between ourselves, he's a fool. [*Yawns*]

DUNYASHA: God grant he doesn't shoot himself! [*A pause*] I am so nervous, I'm always in a flutter. I was a little girl when I was taken into our lady's house, and now I have quite grown out of peasant ways, and my hands are white, as white as a lady's. I'm such a delicate, sensitive creature, I'm afraid of everything. I'm so frightened. And if you deceive me, Yasha, I don't know what will become of my nerves.

YASHA: [*Kisses her*] You're a peach! Of course a girl must never forget herself; what I dislike more than anything is a girl being flighty in her behavior.

DUNYASHA: I'm passionately in love with you, Yasha; you are a man of culture—you can give your opinion about anything. [*A pause*]

YASHA: [*Yawns*] Yes, that's so. My opinion is this: if a girl loves anyone, that means that she has no principles. [*A pause*] It's pleasant smoking a cigar in the open air. [*Listens*] Someone's coming this way . . . it's the gentfolk. [*Dunyasha embraces him impulsively*] Go home, as though you had been to the river to bathe; go by that path, or else they'll meet you and suppose I

have made an appointment with you here. That I can't endure.

DUNYASHA: [*Coughing softly*] The cigar has made my head ache. . . . [*Goes off*] [*Yasha remains sitting near the shrine. Enter Lyubov Andreyevna, Gaev and Lopahin*]

LOPAHIN: You must make up your mind once for all—there's no time to lose. It's quite a simple question, you know. Will you consent to letting the land for building or not? One word in answer: Yes or no? Only one word!

LYUBOV: Who is smoking such horrible cigars here? [*Sits down*]

GAEV: Now the railway line has been brought near, it's made things very convenient. [*Sits down*] Here we have been over and lunched in town. Cannon off the white! I should like to go home and have a game.

LYUBOV: You have plenty of time.

LOPAHIN: Only one word! [*Beseechingly*] Give me an answer!

GAEV: [*Yawning*] What do you say?

LYUBOV: [*Looks in her purse*] I had quite a lot of money here yesterday, and there's scarcely any left to-day. My poor Varya feeds us all on milk soup for the sake of economy; the old folks in the kitchen get nothing but pease pudding, while I waste my money in a senseless way. [*Drops purse, scattering gold pieces*] There, they have all fallen out! [*Annoyed*]

YASHA: Allow me, I'll soon pick them up. [*Collects the coins*]

LYUBOV: Pray do, Yasha. And what did I go off to the town to lunch for? Your restaurant's a wretched place with its music and the tablecloth smelling of soap. . . . Why drink so much, Leonid? And eat so much? And talk so much? To-day you talked a great deal again in the restaurant, and all so inappropri-

ately. About the era of the seventies, about the decadents. And to whom? Talking to waiters about decadents!

LOPAHIN: Yes.

GAEV. [*Waving his hand*] I'm incorrigible; that's evident. [*Irritably to Yasha*] Why is it you keep fidgeting about in front of us!

YASHA: [*Laughs*] I can't help laughing when I hear your voice.

GAEV. [*To his sister*] Either I or he. . . .

LYUBOV: Get along! Go away, Yasha.

YASHA: [*Gives Lyubov Andreyevna her purse*] Directly. [*Hardly able to suppress his laughter*] This minute. . . . [*Goes off*]

LOPAHIN: Deriganov, the millionaire, means to buy your estate. They say he is coming to the sale himself.

LYUBOV: Where did you hear that?

LOPAHIN: That's what they say in town.

GAEV: Our aunt in Yaroslavl has promised to send help; but when, and how much she will send, we don't know.

LOPAHIN: How much will she send? A hundred thousand? Two hundred?

LYUBOV: Oh, well! . . . Ten or fifteen thousand, and we must be thankful to get that.

LOPAHIN: Forgive me, but such reckless people as you are—such queer, unbusiness-like people—I never met in my life. One tells you in plain Russian your estate is going to be sold, and you seem not to understand it.

LYUBOV: What are we to do? Tell us what to do.

LOPAHIN: I do tell you every day. Every day I say the same thing. You absolutely must let the cherry orchard and the land on building leases; and do it at once, as quick as may be—the auction's close upon us! Do understand! Once make up your mind to build villas,

and you can raise as much money as you like, and then you are saved.

LYUBOV: Villas and summer visitors—forgive me saying so—it's so vulgar.

GAEV: There I perfectly agree with you.

LOPAHIN: I shall sob, or scream, or fall into a fit. I can't stand it! You drive me mad! [*To Gaev*] You're an old woman!

GAEV: What do you say?

LOPAHIN: An old woman! [*Gets up to go*]

LYUBOV [*In dismay*] No, don't go! Do stay, my dear friend! Perhaps we shall think of something.

LOPAHIN: What is there to think of?

LYUBOV: Don't go, I entreat you! With you here it's more cheerful, anyway. [*A pause*] I keep expecting something, as though the house were going to fall about our ears.

GAEV: [*In profound dejection*] Potted the white! It fails—a kiss.

LYUBOV: We have been great sinners. . . .

LOPAHIN: You have no sins to repent of

GAEV: [*Puts a caramel in his mouth*] They say I've eaten up my property in caramels [*Laughs*]

LYUBOV: Oh, my sins! I've always thrown my money away recklessly like a lunatic. I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband died of champagne—he drank dreadfully. To my misery I loved another man, and immediately—it was my first punishment—the blow fell upon me, here, in the river . . . my boy was drowned and I went abroad—went away for ever, never to return, not to see that river again . . . I shut my eyes, and fled, distracted, and *he* after me . . . pitilessly, brutally. I bought a villa at Mentone, for *he* fell ill there, and for three years I had no rest day or night. His illness wore me out, my soul was dried up. And last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went to Paris and

there he robbed me of everything and abandoned me for another woman; and I tried to poison myself . . . So stupid, so shameful! . . . And suddenly I felt a yearning for Russia, for my country, for my little girl. . . . [*Dries her tears*] Lord, Lord, be merciful! Forgive my sins! Do not chastise me more! [*Takes a telegram out of her pocket*] I got this to-day from Paris. He implores forgiveness, entreats me to return. [*Tears up the telegram*] I fancy there is music somewhere. [*Listens*]

GAEV: That's our famous Jewish orchestra. You remember, four violins, a flute and a double bass

LYUBOV: That still in existence? We ought to send for them one evening, and give a dance.

LOPAHIN: [*Listens*] I can't hear . . . [*Hums softly*] "For money the Germans will turn a Russian into a Frenchman." [*Laughs*] I did see such a piece at the theater yesterday! It was funny!

LYUBOV: And most likely there was nothing funny in it. You shouldn't look at plays, you should look at yourselves a little oftener. How gray your lives are! How much nonsense you talk.

LOPAHIN: That's true. One may say honestly, we live a fool's life. [*Pause*] My father was a peasant, an idiot; he knew nothing and taught me nothing, only beat me when he was drunk, and always with his stick. In reality I am just such another blockhead and idiot. I've learnt nothing properly. I write a wretched hand. I write so that I feel ashamed before folks, like a pig.

LYUBOV: You ought to get married, my dear fellow.

LOPAHIN: Yes . . . that's true.

LYUBOV: You should marry our Varya, she's a good girl.

LOPAHIN: Yes

LYUBOV: She's a good-natured girl, she's busy all day long, and what's more, she loves you. And you have liked her for ever so long.

LOPAHIN: Well? I'm not against it. . . . She's a good girl. [*Pause*]

GAEV: I've been offered a place in the bank: 6,000 roubles a year. Did you know?

LYUBOV: You would never do for that! You must stay as you are.
[*Enter Firs with overcoat*]

FIRS: Put it on, sir, it's damp.

GAEV: [*Putting it on*] You bother me, old fellow.

FIRS: You can't go on like this. You went away in the morning without leaving word [*Looks him over*]

LYUBOV: You look older, Firs!

FIRS: What is your pleasure?

LOPAHIN: You look older, she said.

FIRS: I've had a long life. They were arranging my wedding before your papa was born. . . . [*Laughs*] I was the head footman before the emancipation came. I wouldn't consent to be set free then; I stayed on with the old master. . . . [*1/2 pause*] I remember what rejoicings they made and didn't know themselves what they were rejoicing over.

LOPAHIN: Those were fine old times. There was flogging anyway.

FIRS: [*Not hearing*] To be sure! The peasants knew their place, and the masters knew theirs; but now they're all at sixes and sevens, there's no making it out.

GAEV: Hold your tongue, Firs. I must go to town to-morrow. I have been promised an introduction to a general, who might let us have a loan.

LOPAHIN: You won't bring that off. And you won't pay your arrears. you may rest assured of that.

LYUBOV: That's all his nonsense. There is no such general.

[*Enter Trofimov, Anya and Varya*]

GAEV: Here come our girls.

ANYA: There's mamma on the seat.

LYUBOV. [*Tenderly*] Come here, come along. My darlings! [*Embraces Anya and Varya*] If you only knew how I love you both. Sit beside me, there, like that. [*All sit down*]

LOPAHIN: Our perpetual student is always with the young ladies.

TROFIMOV: That's not your business.

LOPAHIN: He'll soon be fifty, and he's still a student.

TROFIMOV: Drop your idiotic jokes.

LOPAHIN: Why are you so cross, you queer fish?

TROFIMOV: Oh, don't persist!

LOPAHIN: [*Laughs*] Allow me to ask you what's your idea of me?

TROFIMOV: I'll tell you my idea of you, Yermolay Alexeyevitch. you are a rich man, you'll soon be a millionaire. Well, just as in the economy of nature a wild beast is of use, who devours everything that comes in his way, so you too have your use.

[*All laugh*]

VARYA: Better tell us something about the planets, Petya.

LYUBOV: No, let us go on with the conversation we had yesterday.

TROFIMOV: What was it about?

GAEV: About pride.

TROFIMOV: We had a long conversation yesterday, but we came to no conclusion. In pride, in your sense of it, there is something mystical. Perhaps you are right from your point of view; but if one looks at it simply, without subtlety, what sort of pride can there be, what sense is there in it, if man in his physiological formation is very imperfect, if in the immense majority of cases he is

coarse, dull-witted, profoundly unhappy? One must give up glorification of self. One should work, and nothing else.

GAEV: One must die in any case.

TROFIMOV: Who knows? And what does it mean—dying? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and only the five we know are lost at death, while the other ninety-five remain alive.

LYUBOV: How clever you are, Petya!

LOPAHIN: [*Ironically*] Fearfully clever!

TROFIMOV. Humanity progresses, perfecting its powers. Everything that is beyond its ken now will one day become familiar and comprehensible; only we must work, we must with all our powers aid the seeker after truth. Here among us in Russia the workers are few in number as yet. The vast majority of the intellectual people I know, seek nothing, do nothing, are not fit as yet for work of any kind. They call themselves intellectual, but they treat their servants as inferiors, behave to the peasants as though they were animals, learn little, read nothing seriously, do practically nothing, only talk about science and know very little about art. They are all serious people, they all have severe faces, they all talk of weighty matters and air their theories, and yet the vast majority of us—ninety-nine per cent.—live like savages, at the least thing fly to blows and abuse, eat piggishly, sleep in filth and stuffiness, bugs everywhere, stench and damp and moral impurity. And it's clear all our fine talk is only to divert our attention and other people's. Show me where to find the *crêches* there's so much talk about, and the reading-rooms? They only exist in novels: in real life there are none of them. There is nothing but filth and vulgarity and Asiatic apathy. I fear and dislike very serious faces. I'm afraid of

serious conversations. We should do better to be silent.

LOPAHIN: You know, I get up at five o'clock in the morning, and I work from morning to night; and I've money, my own and other people's, always passing through my hands, and I see what people are made of all round me. One has only to begin to do anything to see how few honest, decent people there are. Sometimes when I lie awake at night, I think: "Oh! Lord, thou hast given us immense forests, boundless plains, the widest horizons, and living here we ourselves ought really to be giants."

LYUBOV: You ask for giants! They are no good except in story-books; in real life they frighten us.

[Ephodov advances in the background, playing on the guitar]

LYUBOV: [*Dreamily*] There goes Ephodov.

ANYA: [*Dreamily*] There goes Ephodov.

GAEV: The sun has set, my friends.

TROFIMOV: Yes.

GAEV: [*Not loudly, but, as it were, declaiming*] O nature, divine nature, thou art bright with eternal luster, beautiful and indifferent! Thou, whom we call mother, thou dost unite within thee life and death! Thou dost give life and dost destroy!

VARYA: [*In a tone of supplication*] Uncle!

ANYA: Uncle, you are at it again!

TROFIMOV: You'd much better be cannoning off the red!

GAEV: I'll hold my tongue, I will.

[*All sit plunged in thought. Perfect stillness. The only thing audible is the muttering of Firs. Suddenly there is a sound in the distance, as it were from the sky—the sound of a breaking harp-string, mournfully dying away*]

LYUBOV: What is that?

LOPAHIN: I don't know. Somewhere far away a bucket fallen and broken in the pits. But somewhere very far away.

GAEV: It might be a bird of some sort—such as a heron.

TROFIMOV: Or an owl.

LYUBOV: [*Shudders*] I don't know why, but it's horrid. [*A pause*]

FIRS: It was the same before the calamity—the owl hooted and the samovar hissed all the time.

GAEV: Before what calamity?

FIRS: Before the emancipation. [*A pause*]

LYUBOV: Come, my friends, let us be going; evening is falling. [*To Anya*] There are tears in your eyes. What is it, darling? [*Embraces her*]

ANYA: Nothing, mamma; it's nothing.

TROFIMOV: There is somebody coming.

[*The Wayfarer appears in a shabby white forage cap and an overcoat; he is slightly drunk*]

WAYFARER: Allow me to inquire, can I get to the station this way?

GAEV: Yes. Go along that road.

WAYFARER: I thank you most feelingly. [*Coughing*] The weather is superb. [*Declaims*] My brother, my suffering brother! . . . Come out to the Volga! Whose groan do you hear? . . . [*To Varya*] Mademoiselle, vouchsafe a hungry Russian thirty kopecks.

[*Varya utters a shriek of alarm*]

LOPAHIN: [*Angrily*] There's a right and a wrong way of doing everything!

LYUBOV: [*Hurriedly*] Here, take this. [*Looks in her purse*] I've no silver. No matter—here's gold for you.

WAYFARER: I thank you most feelingly! [*Goes off*]

[*Laughter*]

VARYA: [*Frightened*] I'm going home—I'm going. . . . Oh, mamma, the serv-

ants have nothing to eat, and you gave him gold!

LYUBOV: There's no doing anything with me. I'm so silly! When we get home, I'll give you all I possess. Yermolay Alexeyevitch, you will lend me some more! . . .

LOPAHIN. I will.

LYUBOV. Come, friends, it's time to be going. And Varya, we have made a match of it for you. I congratulate you.

VARYA. [*Through her tears*] Mamma, that's not a joking matter.

LOPAHIN. "Ophelia, get thee to a nunnery!"

GAEV: My hands are trembling; it's a long while since I had a game of billiards.

LOPAHIN. "Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remember'd."

LYUBOV: Come, it will soon be supper-time.

VARYA: How he frightened me! My heart's simply throbbing.

LOPAHIN: Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen: on the 22nd of August the cherry orchard will be sold. Think about that! Think about it!

[*All go off, except Trofimov and Anya*]

ANYA: [*Laughing*] I'm grateful to the wayfarer! He frightened Varya and we are left alone.

TROFIMOV: Varya's afraid we shall fall in love with each other, and for days together she won't leave us. With her narrow brain she can't grasp that we are above love. To eliminate the petty and transitory which hinder us from being free and happy—that is the aim and meaning of our life. Forward! We go forward irresistibly towards the bright star that shines yonder in the distance. Forward! Do not lag behind, friends.

ANYA: [*Claps her hands*] How well you speak! [*A pause*] It is divine here today.

TROFIMOV. Yes, it's glorious weather.

ANYA: Somehow, Petya, you've made me so that I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to. I used to love it so dearly. I used to think that there was no spot on earth like our garden.

TROFIMOV. All Russia is our garden. The earth is great and beautiful—there are many beautiful places in it. [*A pause*] Think only, Anya, your grandfather, and great-grandfather, and all your ancestors were slave-owners—the owners of living souls—and from every cherry in the orchard, from every leaf, from every trunk there are human creatures looking at you. Cannot you hear their voices? Oh, it is awful! Your orchard is a fearful thing, and when in the evening or at night one walks about the orchard, the old bark on the trees glimmers dimly in the dusk, and the old cherry trees seem to be dreaming of centuries gone by and tortured by fearful visions. Yes! We are at least two hundred years behind, we have really gained nothing yet, we have no definite attitude to the past, we do nothing but theorize or complain of depression or drink vodka. It is clear that to begin to live in the present we must first expiate our past, we must break with it; and we can expiate it only by suffering, by extraordinary unceasing labor. Understand that, Anya.

ANYA: The house we live in has long ceased to be our own, and I shall leave it, I give you my word.

TROFIMOV: If you have the house keys, fling them into the well and go away. Be free as the wind.

ANYA: [*In ecstasy*] How beautifully you said that!

TROFIMOV: Believe me, Anya, believe me! I am not thirty yet, I am young, I am still a student, but I have gone through so much already! As soon as winter comes I am hungry, sick, careworn, poor as a beggar, and what ups and downs of fortune have I not known! And my soul was always, every minute, day and night, full of inexplicable forebodings. I have a foreboding of happiness, Anya. I see glimpses of it already.

ANYA: [*Pensively*] The moon is rising.

[*Epikhodov is heard playing still the same mournful song on the guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere near the poplars Varya is looking for Anya and calling "Anya! where are you?"*]

TROFIMOV: Yes, the moon is rising [*A pause*] Here is happiness—here it comes! It is coming nearer and nearer; already I can hear its footsteps. And if we never see it—if we may never know it—what does it matter? Others will see it after us.

VARYA'S VOICE: Anya! Where are you?

TROFIMOV: That Varya again! [*Angrily*] It's revolting!

ANYA: Well, let's go down to the river. It's lovely there.

TROFIMOV: Yes, let's go. [*They go*]

VARYA'S VOICE: Anya! Anya!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

A drawing-room divided by an arch from a larger drawing-room. A chandelier burning. The Jewish orchestra, the same that was mentioned in Act II, is heard playing in the ante-room. It is evening. In the larger drawing-room they are dancing the grand chain. The voice of Semyonov-Pishtchik: "Promenade à une

paire!" Then enter the drawing-room in couples first Pishtchik and Charlotta Ivanova, then Trofimov and Lyubov Andreyevna, thirdly Anya with the Post-Office Clerk, fourthly Varya with the Station Master, and other guests. Varya is quietly weeping and wiping away her tears as she dances. In the last couple is Dunyasha. They move across the drawing-room. Pishtchik shouts "Grand rond, balancez!" and "Les Cavaliers à genou et remerciez vos dames"

Firs in a swallow-tail coat brings in seltzer water on a tray. Pishtchik and Trofimov enter the drawing-room

PISHTCHIK: I am a full-blooded man; I have already had two strokes. Dancing's hard work for me, but as they say, if you're in the pick, you must bark with the rest. I'm as strong, I may say, as a horse. My parent, who would have his joke—may the Kingdom of Heaven be his!—used to say about our origin that the ancient stock of the Semyonov-Pishtchiks was derived from the very horse that Caligula made a member of the senate. [*Sits down*] But I've no money, that's where the mischief is. A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat [*Snives, but at once wakes up*] That's like me . . . I can think of nothing but money.

TROFIMOV: There really is something horsey about your appearance.

PISHTCHIK: Well . . . a horse is a fine beast . . . a horse can be sold.

[*There is the sound of billiards being played in an adjoining room. Varya appears in the arch leading to the larger drawing-room*]

TROFIMOV: [*Teasing*] Madame Lopahin! Madame Lopahin!

VARYA: [*Angrily*] Mangy-looking gentleman!

TROFIMOV: Yes, I am a mangy-looking gentleman, and I'm proud of it!

VARYA: [*Pondering bitterly*] Here we have hired musicians and nothing to pay them! [*Goes out*]

TROFIMOV: [*To Pishchik*] If the energy you have wasted during your lifetime in trying to find the money to pay your interest had gone to something else, you might in the end have turned the world upside down.

PISHCHIK: Nietzsche, the philosopher, a very great and celebrated man . . . of enormous intellect . . . says in his works, that one can make forged bank-notes.

TROFIMOV: Why, have you read Nietzsche?

PISHCHIK: What next . . . Dashenka told me. . . . And now I am in such a position, I might just as well forge bank-notes. The day after to-morrow I must pay 310 roubles—130 I have procured. [*Feels in his pockets, in alarm*] The money's gone! I have lost my money! [*Through his tears*] Where's the money? [*Gleefully*] Why, here it is behind the lining. . . . It has made me hot all over. [*Enter Lyubov Andreyevna and Charlotta Ivanovna*]

LYUBOV: [*Hums the Lxginka*] Why is Leonid so long? What can he be doing in town? [*To Dunyasha*] Offer the musicians some tea.

TROFIMOV: The sale hasn't taken place, most likely.

LYUBOV: It's the wrong time to have the orchestra, and the wrong time to give a dance. Well, never mind. [*Sits down and hums softly*]

CHARLOTTA: [*Gives Pishchik a pack of cards*] Here's a pack of cards. Think of any card you like.

PISHCHIK: I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA: Shuffle the pack now. That's right. Give it here, my dear Mr. Pish-

chik. *Ein, zwei, drei*—now look, it's in your breast pocket.

PISHCHIK: [*Taking a card out of his breast pocket*] The eight of spades! Perfectly right! [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that now!

CHARLOTTA: [*Holding pack of cards in her hands, to Trofimov*] Tell me quickly which is the top card.

TROFIMOV: Well, the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA: It is! [*To Pishchik*] Well, which card is uppermost?

PISHCHIK: The ace of hearts.

CHARLOTTA: It is! [*Claps her hands, pack of cards disappears*] Ah! what lovely weather it is to-day!

[*A mysterious feminine voice which seems coming out of the floor answers her. "Oh, yes, it's magnificent weather, madam"*]

CHARLOTTA: You are my perfect ideal.

VOICE: And I greatly admire you too, madam.

STATION MASTER: [*Applauding*] The lady ventriloquist—bravo!

PISHCHIK: [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that now! Most enchanting Charlotta Ivanovna. I'm simply in love with you.

CHARLOTTA: In love? [*Shrugging shoulders*] What do you know of love, *guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant*.

TROFIMOV: [*Pats Pishchik on the shoulder*] You dear old horse. . . .

CHARLOTTA: Attention, please! Another trick! [*Takes a traveling rug from a chair*] Here's a very good rug; I want to sell it. [*Shaking it out*] Doesn't anyone want to buy it?

PISHCHIK: [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA: *Ein, zwei, drei!* [*Quickly picks up rug she has dropped; behind the rug stands Anya; she makes a curtsey, runs to her mother, embraces her and runs back into the larger drawing-room amidst general enthusiasm*]

LYUBOV: [*Applauds*] Bravo! Bravo!

CHARLOTTA: Now again! *Ein, zwei, drei!*
[*Lifts up the rug; behind the rug stands*
Varya, *bowing*]

PISHTCHIK: [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that
now!

CHARLOTTA: That's the end. [*Throws the*
rug at Pishtchik, makes a curtsey, runs
into the larger drawing-room]

PISHTCHIK: [*Hurries after her*] Mischie-
vous creature! Fancy! [*Goes out*]

LYUBOV: And still Leonid doesn't come.
I can't understand what he's doing in
the town so long! Why, everything must
be over by now. The estate is sold, or
the sale has not taken place. Why keep
us so long in suspense?

VARYA: [*Trying to console her*] Uncle's
bought it. I feel sure of that.

TROFIMOV: [*Ironically*] Oh, yes!

VARYA: Great-aunt sent him an authori-
zation to buy it in her name, and trans-
fer the debt. She's doing it for Anya's
sake, and I'm sure God will be merci-
ful. Uncle will buy it.

LYUBOV: My aunt in Yaroslavl sent fifteen
thousand to buy the estate in her name,
she doesn't trust us—but that's not enough
even to pay the arrears. [*Hides her face*
in her hands] My fate is being sealed
to-day, my fate. . . .

TROFIMOV: [*Teasing Varya*] Madame Lo-
pahin.

VARYA: [*Angrily*] Perpetual student!
Twice already you've been sent down
from the University.

LYUBOV: Why are you angry, Varya? He's
teasing you about Lopahin. Well, what
of that? Marry Lopahin if you like, he's
a good man, and interesting; if you
don't want to, don't! Nobody compels
you, darling.

VARYA: I must tell you plainly, mamma,
I look at the matter seriously; he's a
good man, I like him.

LYUBOV: Well, marry him. I can't see
what you're waiting for.

VARYA: Mamma. I can't make him an of-
fer myself. For the last two years, every-
one's been talking to me about him.
Everyone talks; but he says nothing or
else makes a joke. I see what it means.
He's growing rich, he's absorbed in busi-
ness, he has no thoughts for me. If I
had money, were it ever so little, if I
had only a hundred roubles, I'd throw
everything up and go far away. I would
go into a nunnery.

TROFIMOV. What bliss!

VARYA: [*To Trofimov*] A student ought
to have sense! [*In a soft tone with tears*]
How ugly you've grown, Petya! How
old you look! [*To Lyubov Andreyevna,*
no longer crying] But I can't do with-
out work, mamma; I must have some-
thing to do every minute.

[*Enter Yasha*]

YASHA: [*Hardly restraining his laughter*]
Ephiodov has broken a billiard cue!
[*Goes out*]

VARYA: What is Ephiodov doing here?
Who gave him leave to play billiards?
I can't make these people out. [*Goes*
out]

LYUBOV: Don't tease her, Petya. You see
she has grief enough without that.

TROFIMOV: She is so very officious, med-
dling in what's not her business. All
the summer she's given Anya and me
no peace. She's afraid of a love affair
between us. What's it to do with her?
Besides, I have given no grounds for it.
Such trivialty is not in my line. We
are above love!

LYUBOV: And I suppose I am beneath
love. [*Very uneasily*] Why is it Leonid's
not here? If only I could know whether
the estate is sold or not! It seems such
an incredible calamity that I really don't
know what to think. I am distracted . . .

I shall scream in a minute . . . I shall do something stupid. Save me, Petya, tell me something, talk to me!

TROFIMOV. What does it matter whether the estate is sold to-day or not? That's all done with long ago. There's no turning back, the path is overgrown. Don't worry yourself, dear Lyubov Andreyevna. You mustn't deceive yourself; for once in your life you must face the truth!

LYUBOV. What truth? You see where the truth lies, but I seem to have lost my sight, I see nothing. You settle every great problem so boldly, but tell me, my dear boy, isn't it because you're young—because you haven't yet understood one of your problems through suffering? You look forward boldly, and isn't it that you don't see and don't expect anything dreadful because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You're bolder, more honest, deeper than we are, but think, be just a little magnanimous, have pity on me. I was born here, you know, my father and mother lived here, my grandfather lived here, I love this house. I can't conceive of life without the cherry orchard, and if it really must be sold, then sell me with the orchard. [*Embraces Trofimov, kisses him on the forehead*] My boy was drowned here. [*Weeps*] Pity me, my dear kind fellow.

TROFIMOV: You know I feel for you with all my heart.

LYUBOV: But that should have been said differently, so differently. [*Takes out her handkerchief, telegram falls on the floor*] My heart is so heavy to-day. It's so noisy here, my soul is quivering at every sound, I'm shuddering all over, but I can't go away; I'm afraid to be quiet and alone. Don't be hard on me, Petya . . . I love you as though you

were one of ourselves. I would gladly let you marry Anya—I swear I would—only, my dear boy, you must take your degree, you do nothing—you're simply tossed by fate from place to place. That's so strange. It is, isn't it? And you must do something with your beard to make it grow somehow. [*Laughs*] You look so funny!

TROFIMOV: [*Picks up the telegram*] I've no wish to be a beauty.

LYUBOV: That's a telegram from Paris. I get one every day. One yesterday and one to-day. That savage creature is ill again, he's in trouble again. He begs forgiveness, beseeches me to go, and really I ought to go to Paris to see him. You look shocked, Petya. What am I to do, my dear boy, what am I to do? He is ill, he is alone and unhappy, and who'll look after him, who'll keep him from doing the wrong thing, who'll give him his medicine at the right time? And why hide it or be silent? I love him, that's clear I love him! I love him! He's a millstone about my neck. I'm going to the bottom with him, but I love that stone and can't live without it. [*Presses Trofimov's hand*] Don't think ill of me, Petya, don't tell me anything, don't tell me. . . .

TROFIMOV: [*Through his tears*] For God's sake forgive my frankness: why, he robbed you!

LYUBOV: No! No! No! You mustn't speak like that. [*Covers her ears*]

TROFIMOV: He is a wretch! You're the only person that doesn't know it! He's a worthless creature! A despicable wretch!

LYUBOV: [*Getting angry, but speaking with restraint*] You're twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, but you're still a schoolboy.

TROFIMOV: Possibly.

LYUBOV: You should be a man at your age! You should understand what love means! And you ought to be in love yourself. You ought to fall in love! [*Angrily*] Yes, yes, and it's not purity in you, you're simply a prude, a comic fool, a freak.

TROFIMOV: [*In horror*] The things she's saying!

LYUBOV: I am above love! You're not above love, but simply as our Firs here says, "You are a good-for-nothing." At your age not to have a mistress!

TROFIMOV: [*In horror*] This is awful! The things she is saying! [*Goes rapidly into the larger drawing-room clutching his head*] This is awful! I can't stand it! I'm going. [*Goes off, but at once returns*] All is over between us! [*Goes off into the ante-room*]

LYUBOV: [*Shouts after him*] Petya! Wait a minute! You lunny creature! I was joking! Petya! [*There is a sound of somebody running quickly downstairs and suddenly falling with a crash. Anya and Varya scream, but there is a sound of laughter at once*]

LYUBOV: What has happened?
[*Anya runs in*]

ANYA: [*Laughing*] Petya's fallen downstairs! [*Runs out*]

LYUBOV: What a queer fellow that Petya is!

[*The Station Master stands in the middle of the larger room and reads The Magdalene, by Alexey Tolstoy. They listen to him, but before he has recited many lines strains of a waltz are heard from the ante-room and the reading is broken off. All dance* Trofimov, Anya, Varya and Lyubov Andreyevna come in from the ante-room]

LYUBOV: Come, Petya—come, pure heart! I beg your pardon. Let's have a dance!
[*Dances with Petya*]

[*Anya and Varya dance. Firs comes in, puts his stick down near the side door. Yasha also comes into the drawing-room and looks on at the dancing*]

YASHA. What is it, old man?

FIRS: I don't feel well. In old days we used to have generals, barons and admirals dancing at our balls, and now we send for the post-office clerk and the station master and even they're not overanxious to come. I am getting feeble. The old master, the grandfather, used to give sealing-wax for all complaints. I have been taking sealing-wax for twenty years or more. Perhaps that's what's kept me alive.

YASHA: You bore me, old man! [*Yawns*] It's time you were done with.

FIRS: *Ach*, you're a good-for-nothing! [*Mutters*]

[*Trofimov and Lyubov Andreyevna dance in larger room and then on to the stage*]

LYUBOV: *Merçi*. I'll sit down a little. [*Sits down*] I'm tired.
[*Enter Anya*]

ANYA: [*Excitedly*] There's a man in the kitchen has been saying that the cherry orchard's been sold to-day.

LYUBOV: Sold to whom?

ANYA: He didn't say to whom. He's gone away.

[*She dances with Trofimov, and they go off into the larger room*]

YASHA: There was an old man gossiping there, a stranger.

FIRS: Leonid Andreyevitch isn't here yet, he hasn't come back. He has his light overcoat on, *demi saison*, he'll catch cold for sure. *Ach!* Foolish young things!

LYUBOV: I feel as though I should die. Go, Yasha, find out to whom it has been sold.

YASHA: But he went away long ago, the old chap. [*Laughs*]

LYUBOV: [*With slight vexation*] What are you laughing at? What are you pleased at?

YASHA: Epikhodov is so funny. He's a silly fellow, two and twenty misfortunes.

LYUBOV: Firs, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FIRS: Where you bid me, there I'll go.

LYUBOV: Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to be in bed.

FIRS: Yes. [*Ironically*] Me go to bed and who's to wait here? Who's to see to things without me? I'm the only one in all the house.

YASHA: [*To Lyubov Andreyevna*] Lyubov Andreyevna, permit me to make a request of you; if you go back to Paris again, be so kind as to take me with you. It's positively impossible for me to stay here. [*Looking about him; in an undertone*] There's no need to say it, you see for yourself—an uncivilized country, the people have no morals, and then the dullness! The food in the kitchen's abominable, and then Firs runs after one muttering all sorts of unsuitable words. Take me with you, please do!

[*Enter Pishtchik*]

PISHTCHIK: Allow me to ask you for a waltz, my dear lady. [*Lyubov Andreyevna goes with him*] Enchanting lady, I really must borrow of you just 180 roubles, [*dances*] only 180 roubles. [*They pass into the larger room*]

[*In the larger drawing-room, a figure in a gray top hat and in check trousers is gesticulating and jumping about. Shouts of "Bravo, Charlotta Ivanovna"*]

DUNYASHA: [*She has stopped to powder herself*] My young lady tells me to dance. There are plenty of gentlemen, and too few ladies, but dancing makes me giddy and makes my heart beat. Firs, the post-office clerk said something to me just now that quite took my breath away.

[*Music becomes more subdued*]

FIRS: What did he say to you?

DUNYASHA: He said I was like a flower.

YASHA: [*Yawns*] What ignorance! [*Goes out*]

DUNYASHA: Like a flower. I am a girl of such delicate feelings, I am awfully fond of soft speeches.

FIRS: Your head's being turned.

[*Enter Epikhodov*]

EPIKHODOV: You have no desire to see me, Dunyasha. I might be an insect. [*Sighs*] Ah! life!

DUNYASHA: What is it you want?

EPIKHODOV: Undoubtedly you may be right. [*Sighs*] But, of course, if one looks at it from that point of view, if I may so express myself, you have, excuse my plain speaking, reduced me to a complete state of mind. I know my destiny. Every day some misfortune befalls me and I have long ago grown accustomed to it, so that I look upon my fate with a smile. You gave me your word, and though I—

DUNYASHA: Let us have a talk later, I entreat you, but now leave me in peace, for I am lost in reverie. [*Plays with her fan*]

EPIKHODOV: I have a misfortune every day, and if I may venture to express myself, I merely smile at it, I even laugh.

[*Varya enters from the larger drawing-room*]

VARYA: You still have not gone, Epikhodov. What a disrespectful creature you are, really! [*To Dunyasha*] Go along, Dun-

yasha! [*To Epihodov*] First you play billiards and break the cue, then you go wandering about the drawing-room like a visitor!

EPIHODOV: You really cannot, if I may so express myself, call me to account like this.

VARYA: I'm not calling you to account, I'm speaking to you. You do nothing but wander from place to place and don't do your work. We keep you as a counting-house clerk, but what use you are I can't say.

EPIHODOV: [*Offended*] Whether I work or whether I walk, whether I eat or whether I play billiards, is a matter to be judged by persons of understanding and my elders.

VARYA: You dare to tell me that! [*Frowning up*] You dare! You mean to say I've no understanding. Begone from here! This minute!

EPIHODOV: [*Intimidated*] I beg you to express yourself with delicacy.

VARYA: [*Beside herself with anger*] This moment! get out! away! [*He goes towards the door, she following him*] 'Two and twenty misfortunes! Take yourself off! Don't let me set eyes on you! [*Epihodov has gone out, behind the door his voice, "I shall lodge a complaint against you"*] What! You're coming back? [*Snatches up the stick* Firs has put down near the door] Come! Come! Come! I'll show you! What! you're coming? Then take that! [*She swings the stick, at the very moment that Lopahin comes in*]

LOPAHIN: Very much obliged to you!

VARYA: [*Angrily and ironically*] I beg your pardon!

LOPAHIN: Not at all! I humbly thank you for your kind reception!

VARYA: No need of thanks for it. [*Moves away, then looks round and asks softly*] I haven't hurt you?

LOPAHIN: Oh, no! Not at all! There's an immense bump coming up, though!

VOICES FROM LARGER ROOM: Lopahin has come! Yermolay Alexeyevitch!

PISHCHIK: What do I see and hear? [*Kisses Lopahin*] There's a whiff of cognac about you, my dear soul, and we're making merry here too!
[*Enter Lyubov Andreyevna*]

LYUBOV: Is it you, Yermolay Alexeyevitch? Why have you been so long? Where's Leonid?

LOPAHIN: Leonid Andreyevitch arrived with me. He is coming.

LYUBOV: [*In agitation*] Well! Well! Was there a sale? Speak!

LOPAHIN: [*Embarrassed, afraid of betraying his joy*] The sale was over at four o'clock. We missed our train—had to wait till half-past nine. [*Sighing heavily*] Ugh! I feel a little giddy.

[*Enter Gaev. In his right hand he has purchases, with his left hand he is wiping away his tears*]

LYUBOV: Well, Leonid? What news? [*Impatiently, with tears*] Make haste, for God's sake!

GAEV: [*Makes her no answer, simply waves his hand. To Firs, weeping*] Here, take them; there's anchovies, Kertch herrings. I have eaten nothing all day. What I have been through! [*Door into the billiard room is open. There is heard a knocking of balls and the voice of Yasha saying "Eighty-seven." Gaev's expression changes, he leaves off weeping*] I am fearfully tired. Firs, come and help me change my things. [*Goes to his own room across the larger drawing-room*]

PISHCHIK: How about the sale? Tell us, do!

LYUBOV: Is the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAHIN: It is sold.

LYUBOV. Who has bought it?

LOPAHIN. I have bought it [*A pause. Lyubov is crushed, she would fall down if she were not standing near a chair and table*]

[*Varya takes keys from her waistband, flings them on the floor in middle of drawing-room and goes out*]

LOPAHIN. I have bought it! Wait a bit, ladies and gentlemen, pray. My head's a bit muddled, I can't speak [*Laughs*] We came to the auction. Deriganov was there already Leonid Andreyevitch only had 15,000 and Deriganov bid 30,000, besides the arrears, straight off. I saw how the land lay. I bid against him. I bid 40,000, he bid 45,000, I said 55, and so he went on, adding 5 thousands and I adding 10. Well . . . So it ended I bid 90, and it was knocked down to me. Now the cherry orchard's mine! Mine! [*Chuckle*] My God, the cherry orchard's mine! Tell me that I'm drunk, that I'm out of my mind, that it's all a dream. [*Stamps with his feet*] Don't laugh at me! If my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see all that has happen! How then Yermolay, ignorant, beaten Yermolay, who used to run about barefoot in winter, how that very Yermolay has bought the finest estate in the world! I have bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even admitted into the kitchen. I am asleep, I am dreaming! It is all fancy, it is the work of your imagination plunged in the darkness of ignorance. [*Picks up keys, smiling fondly*] She threw away the keys; she means to show she's not the housewife now [*Jingles the keys*] Well, no matter [*The orchestra is heard tuning up*] Hey, musicians! Play! I want to hear you. Come, all of you, and look how Yer-

molay Lopahin will take the ax to the cherry orchard, how the trees will fall to the ground! We will build houses on it and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life springing up there. Music! Play up!

[*Music begins to play. Lyubov Andreyevna has sunk into a chair and is weeping bitterly*]

LOPAHIN: [*Reproachfully*] Why, why didn't you listen to me? My poor friend! Dear lady, there's no turning back now. [*With tears*] Oh, if all this could be over, oh, if our miserable disjointed life could somehow soon be changed!

ПИСЬЧИК. [*Takes him by the arm, in an undertone*] She's weeping, let us go and leave her alone. Come. [*Takes him by the arm and leads him into the larger drawing-room*]

LOPAHIN. What's that? Musicians, play up! All must be as I wish it. [*With irony*] Here comes the new master, the owner of the cherry orchard! [*Accidentally tips over a little table, almost upsetting the candelabra*] I can pay for everything! [*Goes out with Pischchik*] No one remains on the stage or in the larger drawing-room except Lyubov, who sits huddled up, except bitterly. The music plays softly. Anya and Trofimov come in quickly. Anya goes up to her mother and falls on her knees before her. Trofimov stands at the entrance to the larger drawing-room]

ANYA: Mamma! Mamma, you're crying, dear, kind, good mamma! My precious! I love you! I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold, it is gone, that's true, that's true! But don't weep, mamma! Life is still before you, you have still your good, pure heart! Let us go, let us go, darling, away from here! We will make a new garden, more splendid than this one; you will see it, you will understand.

And joy, quiet, deep joy, will sink into your soul like the sun at evening! And you will smile, mamma! Come, darling, let us go!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE: *Same as in First Act. There are neither curtains on the windows nor pictures on the walls: only a little furniture remains piled up in a corner as if for sale. There is a sense of desolation; near the outer door and in the background of the scene are packed trunks, traveling bags, etc. On the left the door is open, and from here the voices of Varya and Anya are audible. Lopahin is standing waiting. Yasha is holding a tray with glasses full of champagne. In front of the stage Epihodov is tying up a box. In the background behind the scene a hum of talk from the peasants who have come to say good-bye. The voice of Gaev: "Thanks, brothers, thanks!"*

YASHA: The peasants have come to say good-bye. In my opinion, Yermolay Alexeyevitch, the peasants are good-natured, but they don't know much about things.

[The hum of talk dies away. Enter across front of stage Lyubov Andreyevna and Gaev. She is not weeping, but is pale, her face is quivering—she cannot speak.]

GAEV: You gave them your purse, Lyuba. That won't do—that won't do!

LYUBOV: I couldn't help it! I couldn't help it!

[Both go out.]

LOPAHIN: *[In the doorway, calls after them]* You will take a glass at parting? Please do. I didn't think to bring any from the town, and at the station I could

only get one bottle. Please take a glass *[A pause]* What? You don't care for any? *[Comes away from the door]* If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it. Well, and I'm not going to drink it. *[Yasha carefully sets the tray down on a chair]* You have a glass, Yasha, anyway.

YASHA: Good luck to the travelers, and luck to those that stay behind! *[Drinks]* This champagne isn't the real thing, I can assure you.

LOPAHIN: It cost eight roubles the bottle. *[A pause]* It's devilish cold here.

YASHA: They haven't heated the stove today—it's all the same since we're going. *[Laughs]*

LOPAHIN: What are you laughing for?

YASHA: For pleasure.

LOPAHIN: Though it's October, it's as still and sunny as though it were summer. It's just right for building! *[Looks at his watch, says in doorway]* Take note, ladies and gentlemen, the train goes in forty-seven minutes; so you ought to start for the station in twenty minutes. You must hurry up!

[Trofimov comes in from out of doors wearing a great-coat]

TROFIMOV: I think it must be time to start, the horses are ready. The devil only knows what's become of my goloshes; they're lost. *[In the doorway]* Anya! My goloshes aren't here. I can't find them.

LOPAHIN: And I'm getting off to Harkov. I am going in the same train with you. I'm spending all the winter at Harkov. I've been wasting all my time gossiping with you and fretting with no work to do. I can't get on without work. I don't know what to do with my hands, they flap about so queerly, as if they didn't belong to me.

TROFIMOV: Well, we're just going away, and you will take up your profitable labors again.

LOPAHIN: Do take a glass.

TROFIMOV: No, thanks.

LOPAHIN: Then you're going to Moscow now?

TROFIMOV: Yes. I shall see them as far as the town, and to-morrow I shall go on to Moscow.

LOPAHIN: Yes, I daresay, the professors aren't giving any lectures, they're waiting for your arrival.

TROFIMOV: That's not your business.

LOPAHIN: How many years have you been at the University?

TROFIMOV: Do think of something newer than that—that's stale and flat. [*Hunts for goloshes*] You know we shall most likely never see each other again, so let me give you one piece of advice at parting: don't wave your arms about—get out of the habit. And another thing, building villas, reckoning up that the summer visitors will in time become independent farmers—reckoning like that, that's not the thing to do either. After all, I am fond of you: you have fine delicate fingers like an artist, you've a fine delicate soul.

LOPAHIN: [*Embraces him*] Good-bye, my dear fellow. Thanks for everything. Let me give you money for the journey, if you need it.

TROFIMOV: What for? I don't need it.

LOPAHIN: Why, you haven't got a half-penny.

TROFIMOV: Yes, I have, thank you. I got some money for a translation. Here it is in my pocket, [*anxiously*] but where can my goloshes be!

VARYA: [*From the next room*] Take the nasty things! [*Flings a pair of goloshes on to the stage*]

TROFIMOV: Why are you so cross, Varya? h'm! . . . but those aren't my goloshes.

LOPAHIN: I sowed three thousand acres with poppies in the spring, and now I have cleared forty thousand profit. And when my poppies were in flower, wasn't it a picture! So here, as a I say, I made forty thousand, and I'm offering you a loan because I can afford to. Why turn up your nose? I am a peasant—I speak bluntly.

TROFIMOV: Your father was a peasant, mine was a chemist—and that proves absolutely nothing whatever. [*Lopahin takes out his pocket-book*] Stop that—stop that. If you were to offer me two hundred thousand I wouldn't take it. I am an independent man, and everything that all of you, rich and poor alike, prize so highly and hold so dear, hasn't the slightest power over me—it's like so much fluff fluttering in the air. I can get on without you. I can pass by you. I am strong and proud. Humanity is advancing towards the highest truth, the highest happiness, which is possible on earth, and I am in the front ranks.

LOPAHIN: Will you get there?

TROFIMOV: I shall get there. [*A pause*] I shall get there, or I shall show others the way to get there.

[*In the distance is heard the stroke of an ax on a tree*]

LOPAHIN: Good-bye, my dear fellow; it's time to be off. We turn up our noses at one another, but life is passing all the while. When I am working hard without resting, then my mind is more at ease, and it seems to me as though I too know what I exist for; but how many people there are in Russia, my dear boy, who exist, one doesn't know what for. Well, it doesn't matter. That's not what keeps things spinning. They tell me Leonid Andreyevitch has taken a situa-

tion. He is going to be a clerk at the bank—6,000 roubles a year. Only, of course, he won't stick to it—he's too lazy.

ANYA: [*In the doorway*] Mamma begs you not to let them chop down the orchard until she's gone.

TROFIMOV: Yes, really, you might have the tact. [*Walks out across the front of the stage*]

LOPAHIN: I'll see to it! I'll see to it! Stupid fellows! [*Goes out after him*]

ANYA: Has Firs been taken to the hospital?

YASHA: I told them this morning. No doubt they have taken him.

ANYA: [*To Epikhodov, who passes across the drawing-room*] Semyon Pantaleyevitch, inquire, please, if Firs has been taken to the hospital.

YASHA: [*In a tone of offence*] I told Yegor this morning—why ask a dozen times?

EPIHODOV: Firs is advanced in years. It's my conclusive opinion no treatment would do him good; it's time he was gathered to his fathers. And I can only envy him. [*Puts a trunk down on a cardboard hat-box and crushes it*] There, now, of course—I knew it would be so.

YASHA: [*Jeeringly*] Two and twenty misfortunes!

VARYA: [*Through the door*] Has Firs been taken to the hospital?

ANYA: Yes.

VARYA: Why wasn't the note for the doctor taken too?

ANYA: Oh, then, we must send it after them. [*Goes out*]

VARYA: [*From the adjoining room*] Where's Yasha? Tell him his mother's come to say good-bye to him.

YASHA: [*Waves his hand*] They put me out of all patience! [*Dunyasha has all this time been busy about the luggage. Now, when Yasha is left alone, she goes up to him*]

DUNYASHA: You might just give me one look, Yasha. You're going away. You're leaving me. [*Weeps and throws herself on his neck*]

YASHA: What are you crying for? [*Drinks the champagne*] In six days I shall be in Paris again. To-morrow we shall get into the express train and roll away in a flash. I can scarcely believe it! *Vive la France!* It doesn't suit me here—it's not the life for me; there's no doing anything. I have seen enough of the ignorance here. I have had enough of it. [*Drinks champagne*] What are you crying for? Behave yourself properly, and then you won't cry.

DUNYASHA: [*Powders her face, looking in a pocket-mirror*] Do send me a letter from Paris. You know how I loved you, Yasha—how I loved you! I am a tender creature, Yasha.

YASHA: Here they are coming! [*Buses himself about the trunks, humming softly. Enter Lyubov Andrejevna, Gaev, Anya and Charlotta Ivanovna*]

GAEV: We ought to be off. There's not much time now. [*Looking at Yasha*] What a smell of herrings!

LYUBOV: In ten minutes we must get into the carriage. [*Casts a look about the room*] Farewell, dear house, dear old home of our fathers! Winter will pass and spring will come, and then you will be no more; they will tear you down! How much those walls have seen! [*Kisses her daughter passionately*] My treasure, how bright you look! Your eyes are sparkling like diamonds! Are you glad? Very glad?

ANYA: Very glad! A new life is beginning, mamma.

GAEV: Yes, really, everything is all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold, we were all worried and wretched, but

afterwards, when once the question was settled conclusively, irrevocably, we all felt calm and even cheerful. I am a bank clerk now—I am a financier—cannon off the red. And you, Lyuba, after all, you are looking better; there's no question of that.

LYUBOV: Yes. My nerves are better, that's true. [*Her hat and coat are handed to her*] I'm sleeping well. Carry out my things, Yasha. It's time. [*To Anya*] My darling, we shall soon see each other again. I am going to Paris. I can live there on the money your Yaroslavl auntie sent us to buy the estate with—hurrah for auntie!—but that money won't last long.

ANYA: You'll come back soon, mamma, won't you? I'll be working up for my examination in the high school, and when I have passed that, I shall set to work and be a help to you. We will read all sorts of things together, mamma, won't we? [*Kisses her mother's hands*] We will read in the autumn evenings. We'll read lots of books, and a new wonderful world will open out before us. [*Dreamily*] Mamma, come soon.

LYUBOV: I shall come, my precious treasure. [*Embraces her*]

[*Enter Lopahin. Charlotta softly hums a song*]

GÆV: Charlotta's happy; she's singing!

CHARLOTTA: [*Picks up a bundle like a swaddled baby*] Bye, bye, my baby. [*A baby is heard crying: "Ooah! ooah!"*] Hush, hush, my pretty boy! [*Ooah! ooah!*] Poor little thing! [*Throws the bundle back*] You must please find me a situation. I can't go on like this.

LOPAHIN: We'll find you one, Charlotta Ivanovna. Don't you worry yourself.

GÆV: Everyone's leaving us. Varya's going away. We have become of no use all at once.

CHARLOTTA: There's nowhere for me to be in the town. I must go away. [*Hums*] What care I . . .

[*Enter Pishtchik*]

LOPAHIN: The freak of nature!

PISHTCHIK: [*Gasp*] Oh! . . . let me get my breath. . . I'm worn out . . . my most honored . . . Give me some water.

GÆV: Want some money, I suppose? Your humble servant! I'll go out of the way of temptation. [*Goes out*]

PISHTCHIK: It's a long while since I have been to see you . . . dearest lady. [*To Lopahin*] You are here . . . glad to see you . . . a man of immense intellect . . . take . . . here [*gives Lopahin*] 400 roubles. That leaves me owing 840.

LOPAHIN: [*Shrugging his shoulders in amazement*] It's like a dream. Where did you get it?

PISHTCHIK: Wait a bit . . . I'm hot . . . a most extraordinary occurrence! Some Englishmen came along and found in my land some sort of white clay. [*To Lyubov Andreyevna*] And 400 for you . . . most lovely . . . wonderful. [*Gives money*] The rest later. [*Sips water*] A young man in the train was telling me just now that a great philosopher advises jumping off a house-top. "Jump!" says he; "the whole gist of the problem lies in that." [*Wonderingly*] Fancy that, now! Water, please!

LOPAHIN: What Englishmen?

PISHTCHIK: I have made over to them the rights to dig the clay for twenty-four years . . . and now, excuse me . . . I can't stay . . . I must be trotting on. I'm going to Znoikovo . . . to Kardamanovo. . . I'm in debt all round. [*Sips*] . . . To your very good health! . . . I'll come in on Thursday.

LYUBOV: We are just off to the town, and to-morrow I start for abroad.

PISTCHIK: What! [*In agitation*] Why to the town? Oh, I see the furniture . . . the boxes. No matter . . . [*Through his tears*] . . . no matter . . . men of enormous intellect . . . these Englishmen. . . . Never mind . . . be happy. God will succor you . . . no matter . . . everything in this world must have an end. [*Kisses Lyubov Andreyevna's hand*] If the rumor reaches you that my end has come, think of this . . . old horse, and say: "There once was such a man in the world . . . Semyonov-Pishtchik . . . the Kingdom of Heaven be his!" . . . most extraordinary weather . . . yes. [*Goes out in violent agitation, but at once returns and says in the doorway*] Dashenka wishes to be remembered to you. [*Goes out*]

LYUBOV: Now we can start. I leave with two cares in my heart. The first is leaving Firs ill. [*Looking at her watch*] We have still five minutes.

ANYA: Mamma, Firs has been taken to the hospital. Yasha sent him off this morning.

LYUBOV: My other anxiety is Varya. She is used to getting up early and working; and now, without work, she's like a fish out of water. She is thin and pale, and she's crying, poor dear! [*A pause*] You are well aware, Yermolay Alexeyevitch, I dreamed of marrying her to you, and everything seemed to show that you would get married. [*Whispers to Anya and motions to Charlotta and both go out*] She loves you—she suits you. And I don't know—I don't know why it is you seem, as it were, to avoid each other. I can't understand it!

LOPAHIN: I don't understand it myself, I confess. It's queer somehow, altogether. If there's still time, I'm ready now at once. Let's settle it straight off, and go ahead; but without you, I feel I shan't make her an offer.

LYUBOV: That's excellent. Why, a single moment's all that's necessary. I'll call her at once.

LOPAHIN: And there's champagne all ready too. [*Looking into the glasses*] Empty! Someone's emptied them already. [*Yasha coughs*] I call that greedy.

LYUBOV: [*Eagerly*] Capital! We will go out. Yasha, *allez!* I'll call her in. [*At the door*] Varya, leave all that; come here. Come along! [*Goes out with Yasha*]

LOPAHIN: [*Looking at his watch*] Yes. [*A pause. Behind the door, smothered laughter and whispering, and, at last, enter Varya*]

VARYA: [*Looking a long while over the things*] It is strange, I can't find it anywhere.

LOPAHIN: What are you looking for?

VARYA: I packed it myself, and I can't remember. [*A pause*]

LOPAHIN: Where are you going now, Varyara Mihailova?

VARYA: I? To the Ragulins. I have arranged to go to them to look after the house—as a housekeeper.

LOPAHIN: That's in Yashnovo? It'll be seventy miles away. [*A pause*] So this is the end of life in this house!

VARYA: [*Looking among the things*] Where is it? Perhaps I put it in the trunk. Yes, life in this house is over—there will be no more of it.

LOPAHIN: And I'm just off to Harkov—by this next train. I've a lot of business there. I'm leaving Epihodov here, and I've taken him on.

VARYA: Really!

LOPAHIN: This time last year we had snow already, if you remember; but now it's so fine and sunny. Though it's cold, to be sure—three degrees of frost.

VARYA: I haven't looked. [*A pause*] And besides, our thermometer's broken. [*A pause*]

[Voice at the door from the yard: "Yermolay Alexeyevitch!"]

LOPAHIN: [*As though he had long been expecting this summons*] This minute!

[Lopahin goes out quickly. Varya sitting on the floor and laying her head on a bag full of clothes, sobs quietly. The door opens. Lyubov Andreyevna comes in cautiously]

LYUBOV: Well? [*A pause*] We must be going.

VARYA: [*Has wiped her eyes and is no longer crying*] Yes, mamma, it's time to start. I shall have time to get to the Ragulins to-day, if only you're not late for the train.

LYUBOV: [*In the doorway*] Anya, put your things on.

[Enter Anya, then Gaev and Charlotta Ivanovna. Gaev has on a warm coat with a hood. Servants and cabmen come in. Ephodov bustles about the luggage]

LYUBOV: Now we can start on our travels.

ANYA: [*Joyfully*] On our travels!

GAEV: My friends—my dear, my precious friends! Leaving this house for ever, can I be silent? Can I refrain from giving utterance at leave-taking to those emotions which now flood all my being?

ANYA: [*Supplicatingly*] Uncle!

VARYA: Uncle, you mustn't!

GAEV: [*Dejectedly*] Cannon and into the pocket . . . I'll be quiet. . . .

[Enter Trofimov and afterwards Lopahin]

TROFIMOV: Well, ladies and gentlemen, we must start.

LOPAHIN: Ephodov, my coat!

LYUBOV: I'll stay just one minute. It seems as though I have never seen before what the walls, what the ceilings in this house were like, and now I look at them with greediness, with such tender love.

GAEV: I remember when I was six years old sitting in that window on Trinity Day watching my father going to church.

LYUBOV: Have all the things been taken?

LOPAHIN: I think all. [*Putting on overcoat, to Ephodov*] You, Ephodov, mind you see everything is right.

EPIHODOV: [*In a husky voice*] Don't you trouble, Yermolay Alexeyevitch.

LOPAHIN: Why, what's wrong with your voice?

EPIHODOV: I've just had a drink of water, and I choked over something.

YASHA: [*Contemptuously*] The ignorance!

LYUBOV: We are going—and not a soul will be left here.

LOPAHIN: Not till the spring.

VARYA: [*Pulls a parasol out of a bundle, as though about to hit someone with it. Lopahin makes a gesture as though alarmed*] What is it? I didn't mean anything.

TROFIMOV: Ladies and gentlemen, let us get into the carriage. It's time. The train will be in directly.

VARYA: Petya, here they are, your goloshes, by that box. [*With tears*] And what dirty old things they are!

TROFIMOV: [*Putting on his goloshes*] Let us go, friends!

GAEV: [*Greatly agitated, afraid of weeping*] The train—the station! Double baulk, ah!

LYUBOV: Let us go!

LOPAHIN: Are we all here? [*Locks the side-door on left*] The things are all here. We must lock up. Let us go!

ANYA: Good-bye, home! Good-bye to the old life!

TROFIMOV: Welcome to the new life!

[Trofimov goes out with Anya. Varya looks round the room and goes out slowly. Yasha and Charlotta Ivanovna, with her dog, go out]

LOPAHIN: Till the spring, then! Come, friends, till we meet! [*Goes out*]

Lyubov Andreyevna and Gaev remain alone. As though they had been waiting for this, they throw themselves on each other's necks, and break into subdued smothered sobbing, afraid of being overheard]

GAEV: [*In despair*] Sister, my sister!

LYUBOV: Oh, my orchard!—my sweet, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye! good-bye!

VOICE OF ANYA: [*Calling gaily*] Mamma!

VOICE OF TROFIMOV: [*Gaily, excitedly*] Aa—oo!

LYUBOV: One last look at the walls, at the windows. My dear mother loved to walk about this room.

GAEV: Sister, sister!

VOICE OF ANYA: Mamma!

VOICE OF TROFIMOV: Aa—oo!

LYUBOV: We are coming. [*They go out*]

[*The stage is empty. There is the sound of the doors being locked up, then of the carriages driving away. There is silence. In the stillness there*

is the dull stroke of an ax in a tree, clanging with a mournful lonely sound. Footsteps are heard. Firs appears in the doorway on the right. He is dressed as always—in a pea-jacket and white waistcoat, with slippers on his feet. He is ill]

FIRS: [*Goes up to the doors, and tries the handles*] Locked! They have gone . . .

[*Sits down on sofa*] They have forgotten me. . . . Never mind . . . I'll sit here a bit. . . . I'll be bound Leonid Andreyevitch

hasn't put his fur coat on and has gone off in his thin overcoat. [*Sighs anxiously*]

I didn't see after him. . . . These young people . . . [*Mutters something that can't*

be distinguished] Life has slipped by as though I hadn't lived. [*Lies down*] I'll lie

down a bit. . . . There's no strength in you, nothing left you—all gone! Ech!

I'm good for nothing. [*Lies motionless*]

[*A sound is heard that seems to come from the sky, like a breaking harp-*

string, dying away mournfully. All is still again, and there is heard nothing but the strokes of the ax far

away in the orchard]

CURTAIN.

Henrik Ibsen

(1828-1906)

NO SINGLE playwright's influence in the modern theatre is commensurate with Ibsen's. The drama that deals with ideas and issues is largely the creation of the author of *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*.

Born in 1828 in a small Norwegian town, of a conservative merchant family which became insolvent and experienced extreme poverty, Henrik Ibsen had sufficient provocation to chafe under the restraints and prejudices he subsequently fought in his plays. A brief schooling was succeeded by seven years of drudgery as an apothecary's assistant and by a protracted struggle for recognition as a playwright. Failing to receive a poet's pension from the same government that granted one to his rival, the social dramatist Bjornson, and embittered by the failure of such early plays as *The Vikings* and *The Pretenders*, Ibsen left Norway in 1863.

His self-imposed exile for more than a quarter of a century was mostly spent in Rome and in Germany, and it was there that he composed the majority of his masterpieces. The first of these, *Brand*, was published with enviable success in 1865, the coveted poet's pension followed a year later, and in time sturdy champions like William Archer and Bernard Shaw arose to argue his cause with the world. But his plays, which became increasingly incisive, continued to be received with hostility. Recognition came to him at last on his seventieth birthday, which was publicly celebrated in Norway. Before he died in 1906 his work was already the most potent force in the modern theatre.

Ibsen began his literary career as a romanticist, whose earnestness and probing into character could only strike the theatre of his time and place as strange and incongruous. His later plays faced the world squarely on a platform of realism that shook the stage to its foundations. The transition to realism was a natural development: There were modern characters in his medieval saga dramas *The Vikings* and *The Pretenders*; as early as 1862 his rhymed play, *Love's Comedy*, discussed conventionality in the relation of the sexes; his powerful poetic dramas, *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, crossed swords with philistinism; and his satirical prose work, *The League of Youth*, was a political comedy. Eight years later, in 1877, Ibsen definitely inaugurated his realistic period with the composition of *The Pillars of Society*, an exposé of hypocritical and venal respectability.

A Doll's House, two years later, challenged the conventions of marriage which deprived woman of access to experience and limited her individuality. The conclusion, in which Nora leaves her husband, became a topic for debate

throughout Europe. But Ibsen stood even more severely pilloried in the opinion of the world when *Ghosts* demonstrated the criminal nature of Mrs. Alving's conformity to a social tradition that sanctioned loveless marriages and endangered the children of the union. As late as 1913 Ibsen was still being accused by our own William Winter of "mental astigmatism," "purblind censoriousness, gross falsehood, and ignominious censure." Both the thesis of *Ghosts* and its discussion of the tabooed subject of venereal disease were revolutionary in their day and resulted in pitched battles between conservatives and radicals, the author himself participating with a stinging indictment of society in his next drama, *An Enemy of the People*.

Ibsen, however, seems to have been shaken in his reformer's faith. After voicing his doubts concerning the "call of the ideal" in *The Wild Duck*, he became more an observer and recorder of realities than a champion of nascent causes. In realistic plays, such as *Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *John Gabriel Borkman*, as well as in symbolical dramas, such as *The Lady from the Sea* and *The Master Builder*, he continued his analysis of modern characters and problems without obvious preachment or virulence, on the whole.

Ibsen had already fought his battle for the emancipation of the modern woman when he composed *Hedda Gabler* in 1890. Unlike his great, if unstable, contemporary, *Strindberg*, he had always favored woman. He had justified her revolt in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, and had recognized her capacity for moral courage and social vision in *Rosmersholm*. It was time to complete his inventory and admit that there is also an egocentric brand of modernity which is patently destructive. *Hedda* is perhaps the most telling study of a type of woman for whom the doctrine of self-realization has proved a bane rather than a blessing.

Hedda Gabler, first produced in Munich in 1891, has been one of the most frequently revived plays of the twentieth century. As one of the most forceful of modern character dramas, it has attracted many of the leading actresses of our times, including *Eleonora Duse*, *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, *Alla Nazimova*, *Clare Eames*, *Emily Stevens* and *Eva Le Gallienne*.

J. G.

HEDDA GABLER

Play in Four Acts

BY HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY EDMUND GOSSE AND WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

GEORGE TESMAN

HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife*

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt*

MRS. ELVSTED

JUDGE BRACK

EILFRT LOVBORG

BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans*

The scene of the action is Tesman's villa, in the west end of Christiania.

ACT I.

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colors. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hull. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a what-not with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments.—Against the back wall of the in-

ner room a sofa, with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

Miss Juliana Tesman, with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by Berta, who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper. Miss Tesman is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a gray walking-costume. Berta is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.

MISS TESMAN: [*Stops close to the door, listens, and says softly*] Upon my word, I don't believe they are stirring yet!

BERTA: [*Also softly*] I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got

in last night. And then, when they got home!—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN: Well, well—let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath of the fresh morning air when they do appear.

[*She goes to the glass door and throws it open*]

BERTA: [*Beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand*] I declare there isn't a bit of room left. I think I'll put it down here, Miss.

[*She places it on the piano*]

MISS TESMAN: So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part with you.

BERTA: [*On the point of weeping*] And do you think it wasn't hard for me, too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.

MISS TESMAN: We must make the best of it, Berta. There was nothing else to be done. George can't do without you, you see—he absolutely can't. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA: Ah, but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl, too! She'll never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

MISS TESMAN: Oh, I shall manage to train her. And, of course, you know I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, my dear Berta.

BERTA: Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I shan't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN: Oh, well—just at first there may be one or two things—

BERTA: Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN: Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA: Yes, indeed—I remember well enough!—But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN: Nor I.—But by-the-by, Berta—while I think of it: in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA: Yes, the young mistress spoke of that, too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself upon the pier.

BERTA: Well, well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people, too.

MISS TESMAN: No, no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Nods significantly*] But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

BERTA: You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN: [*Smiling*] H'm—wouldn't you like to know! [*With emotion*] Ah, dear, dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Looks around*] But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture?

BERTA: The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

MISS TESMAN: Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

BERTA: Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George—the doctor—he said nothing.

[George Tesman comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes]

MISS TESMAN: Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN: [In the doorway between the rooms] Aunt Julia! Dear Aunt Julia! [Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly] Come all this way—so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN: In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN: Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN: We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had to bring with her.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, she had certainly plenty of boxes.

BERTA: [To Tesman] Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN: No thank you, Berta—you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA: [Going towards the right] Very well.

TESMAN: But look here—take this portmanteau with you.

BERTA: [Taking it] I'll put it in the attic. [She goes out by the hall door]

TESMAN: Fancy, Auntie—I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of—

MISS TESMAN: Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, George.

TESMAN: No, that I haven't. But do take off your bonnet, Auntie. Look here! Let me untie the strings—eh?

MISS TESMAN: [While he does so] Well well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN: [With the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides] Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

MISS TESMAN: I bought it on Hedda's account.

TESMAN: On Hedda's account? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

TESMAN: [Patting her cheek] You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. [Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table] And now, look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

[They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa]

MISS TESMAN: [Takes both his hands and looks at him] What a delight it is to

have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, George! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN: And it's a delight for me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

MISS TESMAN: Oh yes, I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN: And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

MISS TESMAN: Oh no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet awhile. For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN: [*Putting her back*] There there there—I

MISS TESMAN: [*Suddenly changing her tone*] And to think that here are you a married man, George!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN: [*Hums a little and smiles complacently*] Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—ch?

MISS TESMAN: And then this fine long wedding-tour you have had! More than five—nearly six months—

TESMAN: Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I have had to do so much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Auntie.

MISS TESMAN: Oh yes, I suppose so. [*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little*] But listen now, George,—have you nothing—nothing special to tell me?

TESMAN: As to our journey?

MISS TESMAN: Yes.

TESMAN: No, I don't know of anything except what I have told you in my letters. I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you yesterday.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, yes, you did. But what I mean is—haven't you any—any—expectations—?

TESMAN: Expectations?

MISS TESMAN: Why you know, George—I'm your old auntie!

TESMAN: Why, of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN: Ah!

TESMAN: I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN: Oh yes, a professor—

TESMAN: Indeed, I may say I am certain of it. But my dear Auntie—you know all about that already!

MISS TESMAN: [*Laughing to herself*] Yes, of course I do. You are quite right there. [*Changing the subject*] But we were talking about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN: Well, you see—my handsome traveling-scholarship went a good way.

MISS TESMAN: But I can't understand how you can have made it go far enough for two.

TESMAN: No, that's not so easy to understand—ch?

MISS TESMAN: And especially travelling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN: Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie! She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN: No no, I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays.—But tell me now—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN: Yes, you may be sure I have. I have been afoot ever since daylight.

MISS TESMAN: And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN: I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlor and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN: [*Laughing*] Oh my dear George, I daresay you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN: Why of course you are quite right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN: I am specially pleased on Hedda's account. Often and often, before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, it was lucky that this very house should come into the market, just after you had started.

TESMAN: Yes, Aunt Julia, the luck was on our side, wasn't it—eh?

MISS TESMAN: But the expense, my dear George! You will find it very expensive, all this.

TESMAN: [*Looks at her, a little cast down*] Yes, I suppose I shall, Aunt!

MISS TESMAN: Oh, frightfully!

TESMAN: How much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

TESMAN: Well, fortunately, Judge Brack has secured the most favorable terms for me,—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN: Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia—what sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN: I have given a mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN: [*Jumps up*] What! On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

MISS TESMAN: Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

TESMAN: [*Placing himself before her*] Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie! Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN: Well well—don't get so excited about it. It's only a matter of form you know—Judge Brack assured me of that. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

TESMAN: Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless—

MISS TESMAN: You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little—! To eke things out a bit at the start—! Why, it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

TESMAN: Oh Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

MISS TESMAN: [*Rises and lays her hand on his shoulders*] Have I any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George! Things have looked black enough for us, sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you have nothing to fear.

TESMAN: Yes, it is really marvelous how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN: And the people who opposed you—who wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, George. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—And now he has to lie on the bed he

has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN: Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away, I mean.

MISS TESMAN: Only that he is said to have published a new book.

TESMAN: What! Eilert Lövborg! Recently—eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story, George! What is it to be about?

TESMAN: It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN: Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

TESMAN: However, it may be some time before the book is ready. I have all these collections to arrange first, you see.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. There you are my poor brother's own son.

TESMAN: I am looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

MISS TESMAN: And, most of all, now that you have got the wife of your heart, my dear George.

TESMAN: [*Embracing her*] Oh yes, yes, Aunt Julia. Hedda—she is the best part of it all! [*Looks towards the doorway*] I believe I hear her coming—eh?

[*Hedda enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in*

a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown]

MISS TESMAN: [*Going to meet Hedda*] Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome!

HEDDA: [*Holds out her hand*] Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

MISS TESMAN: [*With some embarrassment*] Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA: Oh yes, thanks. Passably.

TESMAN: [*Laughing*] Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

HEDDA: Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. [*Looking towards the left*] Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the veranda door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

MISS TESMAN: [*Going towards the door*] Well, then we will shut it.

HEDDA: No no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN: [*At the door*] All right—all right.—There now, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA: Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers—. But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN: No, thank you. Now that I have seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

TESMAN: Give her my very best love, Auntie; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by the by, George—[*Feeling in her dress pocket*]—I had almost forgotten—I have something for you here

TESMAN: What is it, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: [*Produces a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him*] Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN: [*Opening the parcel*] Well, I declare!—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

HEDDA: [*Beside the whatnot on the right*] Well, what is it?

TESMAN: My old morning-shoes! My slippers.

HEDDA: Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN: Yes, I missed them terribly. [*Goes up to her*] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA: [*Going towards the stove*] Thanks, I really don't care about it.

TESMAN: [*Following her*] Only think—ill as she was, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh you can't think how many associations cling to them.

HEDDA: [*At the table*] Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN: Of course not for Hedda, George.

TESMAN: Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought—

HEDDA: [*Interrupting*] We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman.

MISS TESMAN: Not get on with Berta?

TESMAN: Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

HEDDA: [*Pointing*] Look there! She has left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

TESMAN: [*In consternation, drops the slippers on the floor*] Why, Hedda—

HEDDA: Just fancy, if any one should come in and see it!

TESMAN: But Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

HEDDA: Is it!

MISS TESMAN: [*Taking up the bonnet*] Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA: I really did not look closely at it Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN: [*Trying on the bonnet*] Let me tell you it's the first time I have worn it—the very first time.

TESMAN: And a very nice bonnet it is too—quite a beauty!

MISS TESMAN: Oh, it's no such great things, George. [*Looks around her*] My parasol—? Ah, here. [*Takes it*] For this is mine too—[*mutters*—not Berta's.

TESMAN: A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA: Very handsome indeed.

TESMAN: Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Auntie, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome she is!

MISS TESMAN: Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely.

[*She nods and goes towards the right*]

TESMAN: [*Following*] Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

HEDDA: [*Crossing the room*] Oh, do be quiet—!

MISS TESMAN: [*Who has stopped and turned*] Filled out?

TESMAN: Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see—

HEDDA: [*At the glass door, impatiently*] Oh, you can't see anything.

TESMAN: It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol—

HEDDA: [*Curtly, interrupting*] I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN: So you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

MISS TESMAN: [*Who has been gazing at her with folled hands*] Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair*] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

HEDDA: [*Gently freeing herself*] Oh—! Let me go.

MISS TESMAN: [*In quiet emotion*] I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN: No you won't, will you, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Good-bye—good-bye!

[*She goes out by the hall door. Tesman accompanies her. The door remains half open. Tesman can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers*]

[*In the meantime, Hedda walks about the room, raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out*]

[*Presently Tesman returns and closes the door behind him*]

TESMAN: [*Picks up the slippers from the floor*] What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA: [*Once more calm and mistress of herself*] I am only looking at the leaves. They are so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN: [*Wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table*] Well you see, we are well into September now.

HEDDA: [*Again restless*] Yes, to think of it!—Already in—in September.

TESMAN: Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA: I scarcely know her, you see. Is she not often like that?

TESMAN: No, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA: [*Leaving the glass door*] Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

TESMAN: Oh, scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment—

HEDDA: But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! No one does that sort of thing.

TESMAN: Well you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA: In any case, I shall manage to make my peace with her.

TESMAN: Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would.

HEDDA: When you call this afternoon, you might invite her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN: Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

HEDDA: What is it?

TESMAN: If you could only prevail on yourself to say *du* to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: No no, Tesman—you really mustn't ask that of me. I have told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

TESMAN: Well well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you—

HEDDA: H'm—I can't in the least see why—

[*She goes up towards the middle doorway*]

TESMAN: [*After a pause*] Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with all the other things.

TESMAN: The first time I draw my salary, we'll see about exchanging it.

HEDDA: No, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room, and then get

another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

TESMAN: [*A little taken aback*] Yes—of course we could do that.

HEDDA: [*Takes up the bouquet from the piano*] These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN: Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

HEDDA: [*Examining the bouquet*] A visiting-card. [*Takes it out and reads*] "Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

TESMAN: No. Whose? Eh?

HEDDA: The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN: Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA: Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours I've been told.

TESMAN: [*Laughing*] Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA: It's odd that she should call upon us. I have scarcely seen her since we left school.

TESMAN: I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

HEDDA: [*After a moment's thought, says suddenly*] Tell me, Tesman—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lövborg is living?

TESMAN: Yes, he is somewhere in that part of the country.

[*Berta enters by the hall door*]

BERTA: That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. [*Pointing*] The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA: Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

[*Berta opens the door for Mrs. Elvsted, and goes out herself.*—Mrs. Elvsted

is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion.

HEDDA: [*Receives her warmly*] How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted? It's delightful to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Nervously, struggling for self-control*] Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

TESMAN: [*Gives her his hand*] And we too—eh?

HEDDA: Thanks for your lovely flowers—

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, not at all—I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away—

TESMAN: Have you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: I arrived yesterday, about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you were not at home.

HEDDA: In despair! How so?

TESMAN: Why, my dear Mrs. Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted—

HEDDA: I hope that you are not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

HEDDA: [*Laying the bouquet on the table*] Come—let us sit here on the sofa—

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I am too restless to sit down.

HEDDA: Oh no, you're not. Come here.

[*She draws Mrs. Elvsted down upon the sofa and sits at her side*]

TESMAN: Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted—?

HEDDA: Has anything particular happened to you at home?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes—and no. Oh—I am so anxious you should not misunderstand me—

HEDDA: Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN: I suppose that's what you have come for—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes—of course it is. Well then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that Eilert Lövborg is in town, too.

HEDDA: Lövborg—!

TESMAN: What! Has Eilert Lövborg come back? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA: Well well—I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED: He has been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

HEDDA: But, my dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does he concern you so much?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly*] He was the children's tutor.

HEDDA: Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED: My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA: Your step-children's, then?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes.

TESMAN: [*Somewhat hesitatingly*] Then was he—I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: For the last two years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN: Has it indeed? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA: I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED: Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands—I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

TESMAN: Why did he not remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN: Yes, by the by, Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilization—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well, and been so much read—and made such a sensation—

TESMAN: Has it indeed? It must be something he has had lying by since his better days.

MRS. ELVSTED: Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN: Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN: Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that.

MRS. ELVSTED: Ah yes, if only it would last!

HEDDA: Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED: No, not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But this morning I discovered it at last.

HEDDA: [*Looks searchingly at her*] Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband—h'm—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Starting nervously*] Of my husband! What?

HEDDA: That he should send you to town on such an errand—that he does not come himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I—I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA: [*With a slight smile*] Ah, that is a different matter.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Rising quickly and un-easily*] And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lövborg

kindly if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do. You see you were such great friends in the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

TESMAN: We used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED: That is why I beg so earnestly that you—you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. Oh, you will promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

TESMAN: With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing—

HEDDA: Elvsted.

TESMAN: I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, how very, very kind of you! [*Presses his hands*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened*] You see, my husband is so very fond of him!

HEDDA: [*Rising*] You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he may not care to come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN: Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Imploringly*] Oh, if you only would!

TESMAN: I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, and hands it to him*] Here it is.

TESMAN: Good, good. Then I'll go in— [*Looks about him*] By the by—my slippers? Oh, here.

[*Takes the packet, and is about to go*]

HEDDA: Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one too.

TESMAN: Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED: But please, please don't say a word to show that I have suggested it.

TESMAN: No, how could you think I would? Eh?

[*He goes out to the right, through the inner room*]

HEDDA: [*Goes up to Mrs. Elvsted, smiles, and says in a low voice*] There! We have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED: What do you mean?

HEDDA: Could you not see that I wanted him to go?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, to write the letter—

HEDDA: And that I might speak to you alone.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Confused*] About the same thing?

HEDDA: Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Apprehensively*] But there is nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

HEDDA: Oh yes, but there is. There is a great deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cosy, confidential chat.

[*She forces Mrs. Elvsted to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Anxiously, looking at her watch*] But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really on the point of going.

HEDDA: Oh, you can't be in such a hurry. —Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, that is just what I care least to speak about.

HEDDA: But to me, dear—? Why, weren't we schoolfellows?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, but you were in the class above me. Oh, how dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA: Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

HEDDA: Did I, really?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, and once you said you would burn it off my head.

HEDDA: Oh, that was all nonsense, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, but I was so silly in those days.—And since then, too—we have drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

HEDDA: Well then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we said *du* to each other; and we called each other by our Christian names—

MRS. ELVSTED: No, I am sure you must be mistaken.

HEDDA: No, not at all! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we are going to renew our old friendship. [*Draws the footstool closer to Mrs. Elvsted.*] There now! [*Kisses her cheek*] You must say *du* to me and call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Presses and pats her hands*] Oh, how good and kind you are! I am not used to such kindness.

HEDDA: There, there, there! And I shall say *du* to you, as in the old days, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED: My name is Thea.

HEDDA: Why, of course! I meant Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately*] So you are not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, if I only had a home! But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

HEDDA: [*Looks at her for a moment*] I almost suspected as much.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Gazing helplessly before her*] Yes—yes—yes.

HEDDA: I don't quite remember—was it not as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED: I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was an invalid,—and rarely left her room. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

HEDDA: And then—at last—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Sadly*] Yes, I did.

HEDDA: Let me see—about how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED: My marriage?

HEDDA: Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED: Five years ago.

HEDDA: To be sure; it must be that.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh those five years—! Or at all events the last two or three of them! Oh, if you¹ could only imagine—

HEDDA: [*Giving her a little slap on the hand*] *De?* Fie, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes, I will try— Well, if—you could only imagine and understand—

HEDDA: [*Lighly*] Eilert Lövborg has been in your neighborhood about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Looks at her doubtfully*] Eilert Lövborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA: Had you known him before, in town here?

MRS. ELVSTED: Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name of course.

HEDDA: But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA: No, that's clear.—And your husband—? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

HEDDA: [*Leaning against the arm of the chair*] Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

¹ Mrs. Elvsted here uses the formal pronoun *De*, whereupon Hedda rebukes her. In her next speech Mrs. Elvsted says *du*.

MRS. ELVSTED: Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA: What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—you know—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Evasively*] I am sure he means well in everything.

HEDDA: I should think he must be altogether too old for you. There is at least twenty years' difference between you, is there not?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Irritably*] Yes, that is true, too. Everything about him is repellent to me! We have not a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

HEDDA: But is he not fond of you all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh I really don't know. I think he regards me simply as a useful property. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I am not expensive.

HEDDA: That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Shakes her head*] It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for any one but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA: And for Eilert Lovborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Looking at her*] For Eilert Lövborg? What puts that into your head?

HEDDA: Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town— [*Smiling almost imperceptibly*] And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*With a little nervous twitch*] Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly*] No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

HEDDA: Why, my dear Thea—?

MRS. ELVSTED: Well, to make a long story short: My husband did not know that I was coming.

HEDDA: What! Your husband didn't know it!

MRS. ELVSTED: No, of course not. For that matter, he was away from home himself—he was traveling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in future.

HEDDA: Well? And then?

MRS. ELVSTED: So I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And then I left the house.

HEDDA: Without a word?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes—and took the train straight to town.

HEDDA: Why, my dear, good Thea—to think of you daring to do it!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Rises and moves about the room*] What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA: But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*At the table, looks at her*] Back to him?

HEDDA: Of course.

MRS. ELVSTED: I shall never go back to him again.

HEDDA: [*Rising and going towards her*] Then you have left your home—for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

HEDDA: But then—to take flight so openly.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA: But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED: They may say what they like, for aught I care. [*Seats herself wearily and sadly on the sofa*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

HEDDA: [*After a short silence*] And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

MRS. ELVSTED: I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA: [*Takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands*] My dear Thea—how did this—this friendship—between you and Eilert Lövborg come about?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh it grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA: Indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED: He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and so he dropped them.

HEDDA: [*Concealing an involuntary smile of scorn*] Then you have reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: So he says himself, at any rate. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

HEDDA: Did he give you lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED: No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA: Oh he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

HEDDA: You were two good comrades, in fact?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Eagerly*] Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that is the very word he used!—Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for I don't know how long it will last.

HEDDA: Are you no surer of him than that?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Gloomily*] A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA: [*Looks at her anxiously*] Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED: I don't know. Some one he knew in his—in his past. Some one he has never been able wholly to forget.

HEDDA: What has he told you—about this?

MRS. ELVSTED: He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

HEDDA: Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED: He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA: [*With cold composure*] Oh, nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED: No. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired singing-woman whom he once—

HEDDA: Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED: For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

HEDDA: Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Wringing her hands*] And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do—

HEDDA: [*Glancing towards the inner room*] Hush! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers*] Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Springing up*] Oh yes—yes! For heaven's sake—!

[*George Tesman, with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room*]

TESMAN: There now—the epistle is finished.

HEDDA: That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a moment—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN: Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA: [*Takes it*] I will tell her to.
[*Berta enters from the hall*]

BERTA: Judge Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

HEDDA: Yes, ask Judge Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

BERTA: [*Taking the letter*] Yes, ma'am.
[*She opens the door for Judge Brack and goes out herself. Brack is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop*]

JUDGE BRACK: [*With his hat in his hand, bowing*] May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA: Of course one may.

TESMAN: [*Presses his hand*] You are welcome at any time. [*Introducing him*]
Judge Brack—Miss Rysing—

HEDDA: Oh—!

BRACK: [*Bowing*] Ah—delighted—

HEDDA: [*Looks at him and laughs*] It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Judge!

BRACK: Do you find me—altered?

HEDDA: A little younger, I think.

BRACK: Thank you so much.

TESMAN: But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She has actually—

HEDDA: Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken—

BRACK: Oh, nonsense—it was a pleasure to me—

HEDDA: Yes, you are a friend indeed. But here stands Thea all impatience to be off—so *au revoir* Judge. I shall be back again presently.

[*Mutual salutations. Mrs. Elvsted and Hedda go out by the hall door*]

BRACK: Well,—is your wife tolerably satisfied—

TESMAN: Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course she talks of a little rearrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

BRACK: Indeed!

TESMAN: But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will look after what is wanting.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK: Thanks, for a moment. [*Seats himself beside the table*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN: Indeed? Ah, I understand! [*Seating himself*] I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that is coming now. Eh?

BRACK: Oh, the money question is not so very pressing; though, for that matter, I wish we had gone a little more economically to work.

TESMAN: But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You, who know her so well—. I couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

BRACK: No, no—that is just the difficulty.

TESMAN: And then—fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK: Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

TESMAN: Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK: Nothing exactly definite— [*Interrupting himself*] But by the by—I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN: Well?

BRACK: Your old friend, Eilert Lovborg, has returned to town.

TESMAN: I know that already.

BRACK: Indeed! How did you learn it?

TESMAN: From that lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK: Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN: Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK: Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of course—he has been living up in their regions.

TESMAN: And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he is quite a reformed character!

BRACK: So they say.

TESMAN: And then he has published a new book—eh?

BRACK: Yes, indeed he has.

TESMAN: And I hear it has made some sensation!

BRACK: Quite an unusual sensation.

TESMAN: Fancy—isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents—. I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretreivably to ruin.

BRACK: That was what everybody thought.

TESMAN: But I cannot imagine what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh?

[*During the last words, Hedda has entered by the hall door*]

HEDDA: [*To Brack, laughing with a touch of scorn*] Tesman is for ever worrying about how people are to make their living.

TESMAN: Well you see, dear—we were talking about poor Eilert Lóvborg.

HEDDA: [*Glancing at him rapidly*] Oh, indeed? [*Sits herself in the arm-chair beside the stove and asks indifferently*] What is the matter with him?

TESMAN: Well—no doubt he has run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what is to become of him.

BRACK: Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

TESMAN: Indeed!

BRACK: You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN: Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK: At one time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN: At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

HEDDA: Who knows? [*With a slight smile*] I hear they have reclaimed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's—

BRACK: And then this book that he has published—

TESMAN: Well well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK: But my dear fellow, you are booked for my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA: Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN: Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

BRACK: But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

TESMAN: What makes you think that? Eh?

BRACK: [*With a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair*] My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that—

TESMAN: That concerns Eilert—?

BRACK: Both you and him.

TESMAN: Well, my dear Judge, out with it.

BRACK: You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN: [*Jumping up uneasily*] Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

BRACK: The nomination may perhaps be made conditional on the result of a competition—

TESMAN: Competition! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA: [*Leans further back in the chair*] Aha—aha!

TESMAN: But who can my competitor be? Surely not—?

BRACK: Yes, precisely—Eilert Lovborg.

TESMAN: [*Clasping his hands*] No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

BRACK: H'm—that is what it may come to, all the same.

TESMAN: Well but, Judge Brack—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms*] For—just think—I'm a married man! We have married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt Julia too. Good heavens, they had as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK: Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

HEDDA: [*Immovable in her arm-chair*] Fancy, Tesman, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that.

TESMAN: Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it?

HEDDA: [*As before*] I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

BRACK: In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

HEDDA: This can make no difference.

BRACK: Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-bye! [*To Tesman*] I shall look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

TESMAN: Oh yes, yes—your news has quite upset me.

HEDDA: [*Reclining, holds out her hand*] Good-bye, Judge; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

BRACK: Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN: [*Accompanying him to the door*] Good-bye, my dear Judge! You must really excuse me—

[*Judge Brack goes out by the hall door*]

TESMAN: [*Crosses the room*] Oh Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

HEDDA: [*Looks at him, smiling*] Do you do that?

TESMAN: Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

HEDDA: Perhaps you are right there.

TESMAN: Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA: [*Rising slowly and wearily*] It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

TESMAN: Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to invite Aunt Julia now and then. —Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear—!

HEDDA: Of course I cannot have my man in livery just yet.

TESMAN: Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.

HEDDA: And the saddle-horse I was to have had—

TESMAN: [*Aghast*] The saddle-horse!

HEDDA: —I suppose I must not think of that now.

TESMAN: Good heavens, no!—that's as clear as daylight.

HEDDA: [*Goes up the room*] Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

TESMAN: [*Beaming*] Oh thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: [*In the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn*] My pistols, George.

TESMAN: [*In alarm*] Your pistols!

HEDDA: [*With cold eyes*] General Gabler's pistols.

[*She goes out through the inner room, to the left*]

TESMAN: [*Rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her*] No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

ACT II.

The room at the Tesman's as in the first act, except that the piano has been removed, and an elegant little writing-table with book-shelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away. Mrs. Elvsted's bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.

Hedda, dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.

HEDDA: [*Looks down the garden, and calls*] So you are here again, Judge!

BRACK: [*Is heard calling from a distance*] As you see, Mrs. Tesman!

HEDDA: [*Raises the pistol and points*] Now I'll shoot you, Judge Brack!

BRACK: [*Calling unseen*] No, no, no! Don't stand aiming at me!

HEDDA: This is what comes of sneaking in by the back way.¹ [*She fires*]

BRACK: [*Nearer*] Are you out of your senses!—

HEDDA: Dear me—did I happen to hit you?

BRACK: [*Still outside*] I wish you would let these pranks alone!

HEDDA: Come in then, Judge.

[*Judge Brack, dressed as though for a men's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm*]

BRACK: What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport, yet? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA: Oh, I am only firing in the air.

BRACK: [*Gently takes the pistol out of her hand*] Allow me, Madam! [*Looks at it*] Ah—I know this pistol well! [*Looks around*] Where is the case? Ah, here it is. [*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it*] Now we won't play at that game any more to-day.

HEDDA: Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK: Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA: [*Closing the glass door*] Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

BRACK: And is Tesman not at home either?

HEDDA: [*At the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts*] No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK: H'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

¹ *Bagueje* means both "back ways" and "under-hand courses."

HEDDA: [*Turning her head to look at him*] Why stupid?

BRACK: Because if I had thought of it I should have come a little—earlier.

HEDDA: [*Crossing the room*] Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

BRACK: And is there no sort of little chink that we could hold a parley through?

HEDDA: You have forgotten to arrange one.

BRACK: That was another piece of stupidity.

HEDDA: Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman is not likely to be back for some time yet.

BRACK: Never mind; I shall not be impatient.

[*Hedda seats herself in the corner of the sofa. Brack lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short silence. They look at each other.*]

HEDDA: Well?

BRACK: [*In the same tone*] Well?

HEDDA: I spoke first.

BRACK: [*Bending a little forward*] Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: [*Leaning further back in the sofa*] Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this morning.

BRACK: You mean since our last confidential talk? Our last *tête-à-tête*?

HEDDA: Well, yes—since you put it so.

BRACK: Not a day has passed but I have wished that you were home again.

HEDDA: And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK: You? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much!

HEDDA: Oh, yes, you may be sure of that!

BRACK: But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA: Oh, Tesman! You see, he thinks nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you call them.

BRACK: [*With a spice of malice*] Well, that is his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

HEDDA: Yes, of course; and no doubt when it's your vocation—. But *!* Oh, my dear Mr. Brack, how mortally bored I have been.

BRACK: [*Sympathetically*] Do you really say so? In downright earnest?

HEDDA: Yes, you can surely understand it—! To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything of our circle, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

BRACK: Yes, yes—I, too, should feel that a deprivation.

HEDDA: And then, what I found most intolerable of all—

BRACK: Well?

HEDDA: —was being everlastingly in the company of—one and the same person—

BRACK: [*With a nod of assent*] Morning, noon, and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

HEDDA: I said "everlastingly."

BRACK: Just so. But I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could—

HEDDA: Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Judge.

BRACK: Undeniably.

HEDDA: And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run at any rate.

BRACK: Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

HEDDA: Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

BRACK: [*Taken aback*] What do you say, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: [*Half laughing, half irritated*] You should just try it! To hear of nothing but the history of civilization morning, noon and night—

BRACK: Everlastingly.

HEDDA: Yes, yes, yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages—! That's the most disgusting part of it!

BRACK: [*Looks searchingly at her*] But tell me—in that case, how am I to understand you—? H'm—

HEDDA: My accepting George Tesman, you mean?

BRACK: Well, let us put it so.

HEDDA: Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK: Yes and no—Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done— [*With a slight shudder*] Oh, no—I won't say that; nor think it, either!

BRACK: You have assuredly no reason to.

HEDDA: Oh, reasons— [*Watching him closely*] And George Tesman—after all, you must admit that he is correctness itself.

BRACK: His correctness and respectability are beyond all question.

HEDDA: And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you?

BRACK: Ridiculous? N—no—I shouldn't exactly say so—

HEDDA: Well—and his powers of research, at all events, are untiring.—I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all.

BRACK: [*Looks at her hesitatingly*] I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

HEDDA: [*With an expression of fatigue*] Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?

BRACK: No—if you look at it in that light—

HEDDA: It was more than my other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Judge.

BRACK: [*Laughing*] Well, I can't answer for all the rest; but as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: [*Jestingly*] Oh, I assure you I have never cherished any hopes with respect to you.

BRACK: All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend—

HEDDA: Of the master of the house, do you mean?

BRACK: [*Bowing*] Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but, of course, of the master, too, in the second place. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

HEDDA: Yes, I have many a time longed for some one to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage *tête-à-têtes*—!

BRACK: Fortunately your wedding journey is over now.

HEDDA: [*Shaking her head*] Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK: Well, then the passengers jump out and move about a little, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: I never jump out.

BRACK: Really?

HEDDA: No—because there is always some one standing by to—

BRACK: [*Laughing*] To look at your ankles, do you mean?

HEDDA: Precisely.

BRACK: Well, but, dear me—

HEDDA: [*With a gesture of repulsion*] I won't have it. I would rather keep my seat where I happen to be—and continue the *tête-à-tête*.

BRACK: But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA: Ah—that is quite another matter!

BRACK: A trusted, sympathetic friend—

HEDDA: —with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics—

BRACK: —and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA: [*With an audible sigh*] Yes, that would be a relief, indeed.

BRACK: [*Hears the front door open, and glances in that direction*] The triangle is completed.

HEDDA: [*Half aloud*] And on goes the train.

[*George Tesman, in a gray walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets*]

TESMAN: [*Goes up to the table beside the corner settee*] Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. [*Lays them on the table*] I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Judge? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK: [*Rising*] I came in through the garden.

HEDDA: What books have you got there?

TESMAN: [*Stands looking them through*] Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable to me.

HEDDA: Your special subjects?

BRACK: Yes, books on his special subjects, Mrs. Tesman.

[*Brack and Hedda exchange a confidential smile*]

HEDDA: Do you need still more books on your special subjects?

TESMAN: Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. Of course, one must keep up with all that is written and published.

HEDDA: Yes, I suppose one must.

TESMAN: [*Searching among his books*] And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lövborg's new book, too. [*Offering it to her*] Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: No, thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

TESMAN: I looked into it a little on the way home.

BRACK: Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

TESMAN: I think it shows quite remarkable soundness of judgment. He never wrote like that before. [*Putting the books together*] Now I shall take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves—! And then I must change my clothes. [*To Brack*] I suppose we needn't start just yet? Eh?

BRACK: Oh, dear, no—there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN: Well, then, I will take my time. [*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns*] By the by, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

HEDDA: Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away?

TESMAN: Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia? Just

fancy—I The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA: She always is.

TESMAN: Yes, but to-day she is much worse than usual, poor dear.

HEDDA: Oh, then it's only natural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

TESMAN: And you can't imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

HEDDA: [*Half aloud, rising*] Oh, those everlasting Aunts!

TESMAN: What?

HEDDA: [*Going to the glass door*] Nothing.

TESMAN: Oh, all right.

[*He goes through the inner room, out to the right*]

BRACK: What bonnet were you talking about?

HEDDA: Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there—[*looks at him and smiles*—and I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK: [*Shaking his head*] Now, my dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

HEDDA: [*Nervously crossing the room*] Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I cannot resist them. [*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK: [*Behind the easy-chair*] You are not really happy—that is at the bottom of it.

HEDDA: [*Looking straight before her*] I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

BRACK: Well—amongst other things, because you have got exactly the home you had set your heart on.

HEDDA: [*Looks up at him and laughs*] Do you, too, believe in that legend?

BRACK: Is there nothing in it, then?

HEDDA: Oh, yes, there is something in it.

BRACK: Well?

HEDDA: There is this in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer—

BRACK: I, unfortunately, had to go quite a different way.

HEDDA: That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

BRACK: [*Laughing*] Oh fie, Mrs. Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman—?

HEDDA: Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man—

BRACK: [*Smiles doubtfully*] You took pity? H'm—

HEDDA: Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure thoughtlessness, that I should like to live in this villa.

BRACK: No more than that?

HEDDA: Not that evening.

BRACK: But afterwards?

HEDDA: Yes, my thoughtlessness had consequences, my dear Judge.

BRACK: Unfortunately that too often happens, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between George Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well, well, my dear Judge—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

BRACK: This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time?

HEDDA: No, heaven knows I didn't.

BRACK: But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

HEDDA: Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and dried rose-leaves.—But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

BRACK: [*Laughing*] No, I think it must be a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

HEDDA: Yes, there is an odor of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him*] Oh, my dear Judge—you cannot imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK: Why should not you, too, find some sort of vocation in life, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: A vocation—that should attract me?

BRACK: If possible, of course.

HEDDA: Heaven knows what sort of a vocation that could be. I often wonder whether—- [*Breaking off*] But that would never do, either.

BRACK: Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA: Whether I might not get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

BRACK: [*Laughing*] Tesman? No, really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

HEDDA: No, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

BRACK: Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of thing, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA: Because I am bored, I tell you! [*After a pause*] So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

BRACK: H'm—you see, my dear Mrs. Hedda—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA: [*Rising impatiently*] Yes, there we have it! It is this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into—! [*Crosses the room*] That is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous!—For that's what it is.

BRACK: Now I should say the fault lay elsewhere.

HEDDA: Where, then?

BRACK: You have never gone through any really stimulating experience.

HEDDA: Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK: Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

HEDDA: [*Tossing her head*] Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought upon it.

BRACK: No, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [*Smiling*] A new responsibility, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: [*Angrily*] Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen!

BRACK: [*Warily*] We will speak of this again a year hence—at the very outside.

HEDDA: [*Curtly*] I have no turn for anything of the sort, Judge Brack. No responsibilities for me!

BRACK: Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for duties which—?

HEDDA: [*Beside the glass door*] Oh, be quiet, I tell you!—I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

BRACK: [*Drawing near to her*] And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA: [*Stands looking out*] Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs*] Yes, as I thought! Here comes the Professor.

BRACK: [*Softly, in a tone of warning*] Come, come, come, Mrs. Hedda!

[*George Tesman, dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room*]

TESMAN: Hedda, has no message come from Eilert Lövborg? Eh?

HEDDA: No.

TESMAN: Then you'll see he'll be here presently.

BRACK: Do you really think he will come?

TESMAN: Yes, I am almost sure of it. For what you were telling us this morning must have been a mere floating rumor.

BRACK: You think so?

TESMAN: At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK: Well, then, that's all right.

TESMAN: [*Placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right*] Yes, but you must really let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK: We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN: Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what happens. Eh?

HEDDA: [*Placing Brack's hat and overcoat upon the corner settee*] And at the worst Mr. Lövborg can remain here with me.

BRACK: [*Offering to take his things*] Oh, allow me, Mrs. Tesman!—What do you mean by "at the worst"?

HEDDA: If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN: [*Looks dubiously at her*] But, Hedda, dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

HEDDA: No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN: Oh, yes, that will be all right.

BRACK: [*Smiling*] And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

HEDDA: Why so?

BRACK: Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gird at my little bachelor parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA: But no doubt Mr. Lövborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner—

[*Berta appears at the hall door*]

BERTA: There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am—

HEDDA: Well, show him in.

TESMAN: [*Softly*] I'm sure it is he! Fancy that!

[*Eilert Lövborg enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as Tesman, but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of color on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.*]

TESMAN: [*Goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand*] Well, my dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

EILERT LÖVBORG: [*Speaks in a subdued voice*] Thanks for your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching Hedda*] Will you, too, shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA: [*Taking his hand*] I am glad to see you, Mr. Lövborg. [*With a motion*

of her hand] I don't know whether you two gentlemen—?

LOVBORG: [*Bowing slightly*] Judge Brack, I think.

BRACK: [*Doing likewise*] Oh, yes,—in the old days—

TESMAN: [*To Lövborg, with his hands on his shoulders*] And now you must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you are going to settle in town again? Eh?

LÖVBORG: Yes, I am.

TESMAN: Quite right, quite right. Let me tell you, I have got hold of your new book; but I haven't had time to read it yet.

LOVBORG: You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN: Why so?

LOVBORG: Because there is very little in it.

TESMAN: Just fancy—how can you say so?

BRACK: But it has been very much praised, I hear.

LOVBORG: That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what every one would agree with.

BRACK: Very wise of you.

TESMAN: Well, but, my dear Eilert—!

LOVBORG: For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

TESMAN: [*A little embarrassed*] Ah, that is what you wish to do? Eh?

LOVBORG: [*Smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket*] But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For this is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

TESMAN: Indeed? And what is it?

LÖVBORG: It is the continuation.

TESMAN: The continuation? Of what?

LOVBORG: Of the book.

TESMAN: Of the new book?

LÖVBORG: Of course.

TESMAN: Why, my dear Eilert—does it not come down to our own days?

LOVBORG: Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.

TESMAN: With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

LOVBORG: No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet*] Look here—

TESMAN: Why, that's not your handwriting.

LOVBORG: I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilizing forces of the future. And here is the second—[*running through the pages towards the end*]—forecasting the probable line of development.

TESMAN: How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA: [*At the glass door, drumming on the pane*] H'm—I daresay not.

LOVBORG: [*Replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table*] I brought it, thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN: That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening—? [*Looking at Brack*] I don't quite see how we can manage it—

LOVBORG: Well, then, some other time. There is no hurry.

BRACK: I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg—there is a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honor of Tesman, you know—

LOVBORG: [*Looking for his hat*] Oh—then I won't detain you—

BRACK: No, but listen—will you not do me the favor of joining us?

LOVBORG: [*Curtly and decidedly*] No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK: Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure

you we shall have a "lively time," as Mrs. Hed—as Mrs. Tesman says.

LOVBORG: I have no doubt of it. But nevertheless—

BRACK: And then you might 'bring your manuscript with you, and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

TESMAN: Yes, think of that, Eilert,—why shouldn't you? Eh?

HEDDA: [*Interposing*] But, Tesman, if Mr. Lovborg would really rather not! I am sure Mr. Lovborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

LOVBORG: [*Looking at her*] With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA: And with Mrs. Elvsted

LOVBORG: Ah—- [*Lightly*] I saw her for a moment this morning

HEDDA: Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you see you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lovborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

LOVBORG: That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I will remain.

HEDDA: Then I have one or two orders to give the servant—

[*She goes to the hall door and rings. Berta enters. Hedda talks to her in a whisper, and points towards the inner room. Berta nods and goes out again*]

TESMAN: [*At the same time, to Lovborg*] Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

LOVBORG: Yes.

TESMAN: They told me at the bookseller's that you are going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

LOVBORG: That is my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

TESMAN: Oh no, not in the least! But—?

LOVBORG: I can quite understand that it must be disagreeable to you.

TESMAN: [*Cast down*] Oh, I can't expect you, out of consideration for me, to—

LOVBORG: But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

TESMAN: Will you wait? Yes, but—yes, but—are you not going to compete with me? Eh?

LOVBORG: No; it is only the moral victory I care for.

TESMAN: Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh, yes—I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lovborg is not going to stand in our way!

HEDDA: [*Curtly*] Our way? Pray leave me out of the question.

[*She goes up towards the inner room, where Berta is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table. Hedda nods approval, and comes forward again. Berta goes out.*]

TESMAN: [*At the same time*] And you, Judge Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK: Well, I say that a moral victory—h'm—may be all very fine—

TESMAN: Yes, certainly. But all the same—

HEDDA: [*Looking at Tesman with a cold smile*] You stand there looking as if you were thunderstruck—

TESMAN: Yes—so I am—I almost think—

BRACK: Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunderstorm has just passed over?

HEDDA: [*Pointing towards the inner room*] Will you not take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

BRACK: [*Looking at his watch*] A stirrup-cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

TESMAN: A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that the weight has been taken off my mind—

HEDDA: Will you not join them, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG: [*With a gesture of refusal*] No, thank you. Nothing for me.

BRACK: Why bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

LOVBORG: Perhaps not for every one.

HEDDA: I will keep Mr. Lovborg company in the meantime.

TESMAN: Yes, yes, Hedda dear, do.

[He and Brack go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows. Eilert Lövborg remains standing beside the stove. Hedda goes to the writing-table.]

HEDDA: *[Raising her voice a little]* Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lövborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home?

[She takes up an album, and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself. Eilert Lovborg approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left, with his back towards the inner room.]

HEDDA: *[Opening the album]* Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lövborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: "The Ortler group near Meran."

LOVBORG: *[Who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly:]* Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA: *[Glancing hastily at him]* Ah! Hush!

LOVBORG: *[Repeats softly]* Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA: *[Looking at the album]* That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

LOVBORG: And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA: *[Still turning over the pages]* Yes, you must. And I think you ought to

practise in time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LOVBORG: *[In a tone of indignation]* Hedda Gabler married? And married to—George Tesman!

HEDDA: Yes—so the world goes.

LOVBORG: Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you! throw yourself away!

HEDDA: *[Looks sharply at him]* What? I can't allow this!

LOVBORG: What do you mean?

[Tesman comes into the room and goes towards the sofa]

HEDDA: *[Hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone]* And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lövborg. Just look at these peaks! *[Looks affectionately up at Tesman]* What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN: Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA: Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lovborg.

TESMAN: Hedda, dear,—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all? For yourself, at any rate—eh?

HEDDA: Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN: No cigarettes?

HEDDA: No.

TESMAN: Very well.

[He goes into the inner room and out to the right. Brack sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on Hedda and Lovborg.]

LOVBORG: *[Softly, as before]* Answer me, Hedda—how could you go and do this?

HEDDA: *[Apparently absorbed in the album]* If you continue to say *du* to me I won't talk to you.

LOVBORG: May I not say *du* even when we are alone?

¹He uses the familiar *du*

HEDDA: No You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

LOVBORG: Ah, I understand. It is an offence against George Tesman, whom you¹—love.

HEDDA: [*Glances at him and smiles*] Love? What an idea!

LOVBORG: You don't love him then!

HEDDA: But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness! Remember that.

LOVBORG: Hedda—answer me one thing—

HEDDA: Hush!

[*Tesman enters with a small tray from the inner room*]

TESMAN: Here you are! Isn't this tempting?

[*He puts the tray on the table*]

HEDDA: Why do you bring it yourself?

TESMAN: [*Filling the glasses*] Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA: But you have poured out two glasses. Mr. Lövborg said he wouldn't have any—

TESMAN: No, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

HEDDA: Yes, by the by—Mrs. Elvsted—

TESMAN: Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA: We were so absorbed in these photographs. [*Shows him a picture*] Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN: Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we passed the night—

HEDDA: —and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN: Yes, that was the place. Fancy —if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh?

[*He returns to the inner room and sits beside Brack*]

LOVBORG: Answer me this one thing, Hedda—

¹ From this point onward Lovborg uses the formal *De*

HEDDA: Well?

LÖVBORG: Was there no love in your friendship for me, either? Not a spark —not a tinge of love in it?

HEDDA: I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smilingly*] You especially were frankness itself.

LÖVBORG: It was you that made me so.

HEDDA: As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LÖVBORG: Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not? —When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers —with his back towards us—

HEDDA: And we two on the corner sofa—

LOVBORG: Always with the same illustrated paper before us—

HEDDA: For want of an album, yes.

LOVBORG: Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

HEDDA: Do you think it was any power in me?

LOVBORG: How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me—

HEDDA: Which you understood so particularly well—

LOVBORG: How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly—

HEDDA: In roundabout terms, please observe.

LOVBORG: Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing?

HEDDA: And how could you answer, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG: Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

HEDDA: No, not quite.

LOVBORG: What was your motive, then?

HEDDA: Do you think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without any one knowing—

LOVBORG: Well?

HEDDA: —should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which—

LÖVBORG: Which—?

HEDDA: —which she is forbidden to know anything about?

LOVBORG: So that was it?

HEDDA: Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LOVBORG: Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not that, at any rate, have continued?

HEDDA: The fault was yours.

LÖVBORG: It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA: Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lövborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

LÖVBORG: [*Clenching his hands*] Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

HEDDA: Because I have such a dread of scandal.

LOVBORG: Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA: A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone*] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds'.

LOVBORG: I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA: And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

LOVBORG: Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA: Stupid?

LOVBORG: She is stupid about matters of that sort.

HEDDA: And I am cowardly. [*Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly.*] But now I will confide something to you.

LOVBORG: [*Eagerly*] Well?

HEDDA: The fact that I dared not shoot you down—

LOVBORG: Yes!

HEDDA: —that was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

LOVBORG: [*Looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You and I—! After all, then, it was your craving for life—

HEDDA: [*Softly, with a sharp glance*] Take care! Believe nothing of the sort!

[*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by Berta*]

HEDDA: [*Closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly:*] Ah, at last! My darling Thea,—come along!

[*Mrs. Elvsted enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her*]

HEDDA: [*On the sofa, stretches out her arms towards her*] My sweet Thea—you can't think how I have been longing for you!

[Mrs. Elvsted, *in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives Hedda her hand* Eilert Lovborg has risen. He and Mrs. Elvsted greet each other with a silent nod.]

MRS. ELVSTED: Ought I to go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

HEDDA: Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED: Are they going out?

HEDDA: Yes, to a supper-party.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Quickly, to Lovborg*] Not you?

LOVBORG: No.

HEDDA: Mr. Lovborg remains with us.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side*] Oh, how nice it is here!

HEDDA: No, thank you, my little Thea! Not there! You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I will sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, just as you please.

[*She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on Hedda's right. Lovborg re-seats himself on his chair*]

LOVBORG: [*After a short pause, to Hedda*] Is not she lovely to look at?

HEDDA: [*Lightly stroking her hair*] Only to look at?

LOVBORG: Yes. For we two—she and I—we are two real comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness—

HEDDA: Not round about, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG: Well—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly clinging close to Hedda*] Oh, how happy I am, Hedda! For, only think, he says I have inspired him, too.

HEDDA: [*Looks at her with a smile*] Ah! Does he say that, dear?

LOVBORG: And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED: Good heavens—am I brave?

LOVBORG: Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

HEDDA: Ah, yes—courage! If one only had that!

LOVBORG: What then? What do you mean?

HEDDA: Then life would perhaps be livable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone*] But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA: Well, then, you, Mr. Lovborg.

LOVBORG: Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, he doesn't, either.

HEDDA: [*Looks fixedly at him*] But if I say you shall?

LOVBORG: It would be no use.

HEDDA: [*Laughing*] Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

LOVBORG: Not in that respect.

HEDDA: But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED: Why, Hedda—!

LOVBORG: How so?

HEDDA: Or rather on account of other people.

LOVBORG: Indeed?

HEDDA: Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident in yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly*] Oh, please, Hedda—!

LOVBORG: People may suspect what they like—for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Joyfully*] Yes, let them!

HEDDA: I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

LOVBORG: What did you see?

HEDDA: His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go with them into the inner room.

LOVBORG: Dared not? Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED: What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA: But the Judge could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his

LOVBORG: Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

HEDDA: I don't say so. But that was how Judge Brack understood it.

LOVBORG: Well, let him.

HEDDA: Then you are not going with them?

LOVBORG: I will stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, Hedda—how can you doubt that?

HEDDA: [*Smiles and nods approvingly to Lovborg*] Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and forever! Ah, that is how a man should be! [*Turns to Mrs. Elvsted and caresses her*] Well, now, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction—

LOVBORG: [*Surprised*] Distraction!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Terrified*] Hedda—oh, Hedda—!

HEDDA: You can see for yourself! You haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror— [*Interrupting her self*] There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves!

LOVBORG: [*Who has given a start*] Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA: Don't get excited! That horrid Judge Brack is sitting watching you.

LOVBORG: So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly and piteously*] Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

LOVBORG: [*Looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is distorted*] So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Imploringly*] Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you—

LOVBORG: [*Takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice*] Your health, Thea! [*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly*] Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you do this?

HEDDA: I do it? I? Are you crazy?

LOVBORG: Here's to your health, too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth!

[*He empties the glass and is about to refill it.*]

HEDDA: [*Lays her hand on his arm*] Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going out to supper.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, no, no!

HEDDA: Hush! They are sitting watching you.

LOVBORG: [*Putting down the glass*] Now, Thea—tell me the truth—

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes.

LOVBORG: Did your husband know that you had come after me?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Winging her hands*] Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking?

LOVBORG: Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly, in agony*] Oh, Lövborg, Lovborg—!

LÖVBORG: [*Seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it*] Here's a glass for the old Sheriff, too!

HEDDA: [*Preventing him*] No more just now. Remember, you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LOVBORG: [*Calmly, putting down the glass*] It was stupid of me all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once—now I have risen again! Thanks to you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Radiant with joy*] Oh, heaven be praised—!

[*Brack has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and Tesman rise and come into the drawing room*]

BRACK: [*Takes his hat and overcoat*] Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

HEDDA: I suppose it has.

LOVBORG: [*Rising*] Mine too, Judge Brack.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Softly and imploringly*]

Oh, Lövborg, don't do it!

HEDDA: [*Pinching her arm*] They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*With a suppressed shriek*]
Ow!

LOVBORG: [*To Brack*] You were good enough to invite me.

BRACK: Well, are you coming after all?

LOVBORG: Yes, many thanks.

BRACK: I'm delighted—

LOVBORG: [*To Tesman, putting the parcel of MS. in his pocket*] I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the printers.

TESMAN: Fancy—that will be delightful. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home? Eh?

HEDDA: Oh, that can be managed somehow.

LÖVBORG: [*Looking towards the ladies*] Mrs. Elvsted? Of course, I'll come again and fetch her. [*Approaching*] At ten or

thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman? Will that do?

HEDDA: Certainly. That will do capitally.

TESMAN: Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

HEDDA: Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Trying to conceal her anxiety*] Well, then, Mr. Lovborg—I shall remain here until you come.

LOVBORG: [*With his hat in his hand*] Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK: And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA: Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen—!

BRACK: Why unseen?

HEDDA: In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Judge Brack.

BRACK: [*Laughing*] I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN: [*Also laughing*] Come, you're a nice one, Hedda! Fancy that!

BRACK: Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LOVBORG: [*Bowing*] About ten o'clock, then.

[*Brack, Lovborg, and Tesman go out by the hall door. At the same time, Berta enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table; she goes out by the way she came*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Who has risen and is wandering restlessly about the room*] Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

HEDDA: At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless—

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I hope he may.

HEDDA: And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, God!—if he would only come as you see him now!

HEDDA: He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise! [*Rises and approaches Thea*] You may doubt him as long as you please; I believe in him. And now we will try—

MRS. ELVSTED: You have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

HEDDA: Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED: Have you not the power?

HEDDA: I have not—and have never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED: Not your husband's?

HEDDA: Do you think that is worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [*Clasps her passionately in her arms*] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED: Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

BERTA: [*In the middle doorway*] Tea is laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA: Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

HEDDA: Nonsense! First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lövborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair.

[*She drags Mrs. Elvsted almost by force towards the middle doorway*]

ACT III.

The room at the Tesmans'. The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has

been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out.

Mrs. Elvsted, wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair. Hedda, fully dressed, lies sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*After a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to herself*] Not yet!—Oh, God—oh, God—not yet!

[*Berta slips cautiously in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Turns and whispers eagerly*] Well—has any one come?

BERTA: [*Softly*] Yes, a girl has just brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Quickly, holding out her hand*] A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA: No, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, indeed.

BERTA: It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, do.

BERTA: [*Laying down the letter*] I think I had better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

BERTA: [*Putting out the lamp*] It is daylight already, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, broad day! And no one come back yet—!

BERTA: Lord bless you, ma'am—I guessed how it would be.

MRS. ELVSTED: You guessed?

BERTA: Yes, when I saw that a certain person had come back to town—and that he went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED: Don't speak so loud. You will waken Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA: [*Looks towards the sofa and sighs*]

No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't

I put some wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED: Thanks, not for me.

BERTA: Oh, very well

[*She goes softly out by the hall door*]

HEDDA: [*Is awakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up*] What's that—?

MRS. ELVSTED: It was only the servant—

HEDDA: [*Looking about her*] Oh, we're here—! Yes, now I remember. [*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes*] What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Looks at her watch*] It's past seven

HEDDA: When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED: He has not come.

HEDDA: Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Rising*] No one has come.

HEDDA: Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Wringing her hands*] And how I watched and waited for him!

HEDDA: [*Yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth*] Well, well—we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED: Did you get a little sleep?

HEDDA: Oh, yes; I believe I have slept pretty well. Have you not?

MRS. ELVSTED: Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA: [*Rises and goes towards her*] There, there, there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED: Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

HEDDA: Why, of course, it has been a very late affair at Judge Brack's—

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes—that is clear enough. But all the same—

HEDDA: And then, you see, Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing*] Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show him-

self either—immediately after a jollification.

MRS. ELVSTED: But in that case—where can he have gone?

HEDDA: Of course, he has gone to his aunts' and slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies

HEDDA: Indeed? [*Looks at the address*] Why, yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own hand. Well, then, he has remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lovborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, Hedda, you are just saying things you don't believe a bit.

HEDDA: You really are a little blockhead, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, yes, I suppose I am.

HEDDA: And how mortally tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, I am mortally tired.

HEDDA: Well, then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA: I am sure you would.

MRS. ELVSTED: Well, but your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once—

HEDDA: I shall take care to let you know when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED: Do you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA: Yes, rely upon me. Just you go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

MRS. ELVSTED: Thanks; then I'll try to.

[*She goes off through the inner room*]

[*Hedda goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains. The broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it and arranges her hair. Next she goes*

to the hall door and presses the bell-button.

[Berta presently appears at the hall door]

BERTA: Did you want anything ma'am?

HEDDA: Yes; you must put some more wood in the stove. I am shivering.

BERTA: Bless me—I'll make up the fire at once. [*She takes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them, then stops and listens*] That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA: Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

BERTA: It'll soon burn up.

[*She goes out by the hall door*]

[*Hedda kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove*]

[*After a short pause, George Tesman enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tip-toe towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains*]

HEDDA: [*At the stove, without looking up*] Good morning.

TESMAN: [*Turns*] Hedda! [*Approaching her*] Good heavens—are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA: Yes, I am up very early this morning.

TESMAN: And I never doubted you were still sound asleep! Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA: Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

TESMAN: Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA: Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN: Ah, to be sure.

HEDDA: [*Closes the door of the stove and rises*] Well, did you enjoy yourselves at Judge Brack's?

TESMAN: Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA: No, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

TESMAN: Oh, yes,—for once in a way. Especially the beginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA: [*Seating herself by the table on the right*] Well? Tell me, then—

TESMAN: [*Sitting on a footstool near the stove*] Oh, Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that is going to be! I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Fancy that!

HEDDA: Yes, yes; I don't care about that—

TESMAN: I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA: A horrid feeling?

TESMAN: I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA: Yes, yes, I am thinking!

TESMAN: And then how pitiful to think that he—with all his gifts—should be irreclaimable, after all!

HEDDA: I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

TESMAN: No, not at all—I mean that he is incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

HEDDA: And what came of it all—in the end?

TESMAN: Well, to tell the truth, I think it might best be described as an orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA: Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN: Vine-leaves? No, I saw nothing of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honor of the woman

who had inspired him in his work—that was the phrase he used.

HEDDA: Did he name her?

TESMAN: No, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You may be sure he did.

HEDDA: Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN: On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you see, we agreed to take Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA: I daresay.

TESMAN: But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or, I should rather say, the melancholy part of it. I declare I am almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you—

HEDDA: Oh, go on—!

TESMAN: Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two—fancy that!

HEDDA: Yes, yes, yes, but—?

TESMAN: And then, as I hurried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA: Oh, how should I know!

TESMAN: You mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear! Promise me, for Eilert's sake. [*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket*] Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA: Is not that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN: Yes, it is the whole of his precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he had gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably—

HEDDA: But why did you not give him back the parcel at once?

TESMAN: I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in—

HEDDA: Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN: Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA: So no one knows that Eilert Lövborg's manuscript is in your possession?

TESMAN: No. And no one must know it.

HEDDA: Then what did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN: I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

HEDDA: Indeed! They must have taken him home then.

TESMAN: Yes, so it would appear. And Brack, too, left us.

HEDDA: And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN: Well, I and some of the others went home with one of the party, a jolly fellow, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—ch? But now, when I have rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA: [*Holds out her hand for the packet*] No—don't give it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN: No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, I really mustn't.

HEDDA: You must not?

TESMAN: No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he wakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

HEDDA: [*Looking searchingly at him*] Can such a thing not be reproduced? Written over again?

TESMAN: No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see—

HEDDA: Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that— [*Lightly*] But, by the by—here is a letter for you.

TESMAN: Fancy—!

HEDDA: [*Handing it to him*] It came early this morning.

TESMAN: It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the packet on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA: Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN: And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

HEDDA: [*Suppressing a smile*] Will you run?

TESMAN: Oh, my dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Just think!

HEDDA: [*Rises and says wearily, repelling the idea*] No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

TESMAN: Well, well, then—! [*Bustling around*] My hat—? My overcoat—? Oh, in the hall—. I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda! Eh?

HEDDA: Oh, if you run—

[*Berta appears at the hall door*]

BERTA: Judge Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

TESMAN: At this time! No, I can't possibly see him.

HEDDA: But I can. [*To Berta*] Ask Judge Brack to come in.

[*Berta goes out*]

HEDDA: [*Quickly, whispering*] The parcel, Tesman!

[*She snatches it up from the stool*]

TESMAN: Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA: No, no, I will keep it till you come back.

[*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the bookcase. Tesman stands in a flurry of haste, and cannot get his gloves on*]

[*Judge Brack enters from the hall*]

HEDDA: [*Nodding to him*] You are an early bird, I must say.

BRACK: Yes, don't you think so? [*To Tesman*] Are you on the move, too?

TESMAN: Yes, I must rush off to my aunts'. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

BRACK: Dear me, is she indeed? Then on no account let me detain you. At such a critical moment—

TESMAN: Yes, I must really rush— Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*He hastens out by the hall door*]

HEDDA: [*Approaching*] You seem to have made a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Judge Brack.

BRACK: I assure you I have not had my clothes off, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: Not you, either?

BRACK: No, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

HEDDA: Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

BRACK: I have heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lövborg was not with them, I fancy?

HEDDA: No, they had taken him home before that.

BRACK: Tesman too?

HEDDA: No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK: [*Smiling*] George Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: Yes, heaven knows he is. Then is there something behind all this?

BRACK: Yes, perhaps there may be.

HEDDA: Well then, sit down, my dear Judge, and tell your story in comfort

[*She seats herself to the left of the*

table. Brack sits near her, at the long side of the table]

HEDDA: Now then?

BRACK: I had special reasons for keeping track of my guests—or rather of some of my guests—last night.

HEDDA: Of Eilert Lovborg among the rest, perhaps?

BRACK: Frankly—yes.

HEDDA: Now you make me really curious—

BRACK: Do you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: If it is not quite unmentionable, tell me.

BRACK: Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated *soirée*.

HEDDA: Of the lively kind?

BRACK: Of the very liveliest—

HEDDA: Tell me more of this, Judge Brack—

BRACK: Lövborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation; for now, as you know, he has become a new man.

HEDDA: Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

BRACK: Well, you see, Mrs. Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening—

HEDDA: Yes, I hear he found inspiration.

BRACK: Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his purpose; for we menfolk are unfortunately not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA: Oh, I am sure you are an exception, Judge Brack. But as to Lövborg—?

BRACK: To make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA: Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK: It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the *soirée*, to a select circle of her admirers and her lady friends.

HEDDA: Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK: Precisely.

HEDDA: A sort of a—singer?

BRACK: Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress—of men—Mrs. Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lovborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

HEDDA: And how did all this end?

BRACK: Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows—

HEDDA: Lövborg and she?

BRACK: Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

HEDDA: And what came of it all?

BRACK: It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA: The police too?

BRACK: Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lövborg, crazy being that he is.

HEDDA: How so?

BRACK: He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA: How have you learnt all this?

BRACK: From the police themselves.

HEDDA: [*Gazing straight before her*] So that is what happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK: Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: [*Changing her tone*] But tell me now, Judge—what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lövborg's movements so carefully?

BRACK: In the first place, it could not be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police-court that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA: Will the matter come into court then?

BRACK: Of course. However, I should scarcely have troubled so much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA: Why so, Judge Brack?

BRACK: Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA: Oh, how can you think such a thing!

BRACK: Good heavens, Mrs. Hedda—we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town again.

HEDDA: Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK: Not a single home. Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA: And so ought mine to be, you mean?

BRACK: Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into—

HEDDA: —into the triangle?

BRACK: Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless

HEDDA: [*Looks at him with a smile*] So

you want to be the one cock in the basket¹--that is your aim.

BRACK: [*Nods slowly and lowers his voice*] Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA: [*Her smile vanishing*] I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

BRACK: Do you think so?

HEDDA: I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK: [*Laughing equivocally*] Well well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA: Come, come now, Judge Brack! That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK: [*Rising*] Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

HEDDA: There I agree with you.

BRACK: Well, now I have said all I had to say; and I had better be getting back to town. Good-bye, Mrs. Hedda. [*He goes towards the glass door*]

HEDDA: [*Rising*] Are you going through the garden?

BRACK: Yes, it's a short cut for me.

HEDDA: And then it is a back way, too.

BRACK: Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

HEDDA: When there is ball practice going on, you mean?

BRACK: [*In the doorway, laughing to her*] Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA: [*Also laughing*] Oh, no, when there is only one cock in the basket—

[*They exchange laughing nods of fare well. He goes. She closes the door behind him*]

¹ *Eneste hane i kurræn*—a proverbial saying.

[Hedda, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes Lovborg's packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents. Berta is heard speaking loudly in the hall. Hedda turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the ink-stand]

[Eilert Lovborg, with his greatcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated]

LOVBORG: [Looking towards the hall] And I tell you I must and will come in! There!

[He closes the door, turns, sees Hedda, at once regains his self-control, and bows]

HEDDA: [At the writing-table] Well, Mr. Lövborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

LOVBORG: You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

HEDDA: How do you know that she is still here?

LOVBORG: They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA: [Going to the oval table] Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that?

LOVBORG: [Looks inquiringly at her] Notice anything about them?

HEDDA: I mean, did they seem to think it odd?

LOVBORG: [Suddenly understanding] Oh yes, of course! I am dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice anything.—I suppose Tesman is not up yet?

HEDDA: No—I think not—

LOVBORG: When did he come home?

HEDDA: Very late.

LOVBORG: Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA: Yes, I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

LOVBORG: Nothing more?

HEDDA: I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy—

[Mrs. Elvsted enters through the curtains of the middle doorway]

MRS. ELVSTED: [Going towards him] Ah, Lövborg! At last—!

LOVBORG: Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED: [Looks anxiously at him] What is too late?

LOVBORG: Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh no, no—don't say that!

LOVBORG: You will say the same when you hear—

MRS. ELVSTED: I won't hear anything!

HEDDA: Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone? If so, I will leave you.

LOVBORG: No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LOVBORG: It is not last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED: What is it then—?

LOVBORG: I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED: Part!

HEDDA: [Involuntarily] I knew it!

LOVBORG: You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before?

Are we not to go on working together?

LOVBORG: Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED: [Despairingly] Then what am I to do with my life?

LÖVBORG: You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED: But you know I cannot do that!

LÖVBORG: Try if you cannot, Thea. You must go home again—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*In vehement protest*] Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be also! I will not let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA: [*Half aloud, in suspense*] Ah yes—the book!

LÖVBORG: [*Looks at her*] My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honor pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

LÖVBORG: Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA: Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED: Never appear!

LÖVBORG: Can never appear.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*In agonized foreboding*] Lövborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA: [*Looks anxiously at him*] Yes, the manuscript—?

MRS. ELVSTED: Where is it?

LÖVBORG: Oh Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

LÖVBORG: The manuscript—. Well then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Shrieks*] Oh no, no—!

HEDDA: [*Involuntarily*] But that's not—

LÖVBORG: [*Looks at her*] Not true, you think?

HEDDA: [*Collecting herself*] Oh well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable—

LÖVBORG: It is true, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Wringing her hands*] Oh God—oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

LÖVBORG: I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too—?

MRS. ELVSTED: And you did this last night?

LÖVBORG: Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces—and scattered them on the fjord—far out. There there is cool sea-water at any rate—let them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they will sink—deeper and deeper—as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: Do you know, Lövborg, that what you have done with the book—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG: Yes, you are right. It is a sort of child-murder.

MRS. ELVSTED: How could you, then—! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA: [*Almost inaudibly*] Ah, the child—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Breathing heavily*] It is all over then. Well well, now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA: But you are not going away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me. [*She goes out by the hall door*]

HEDDA: [*Stands waiting for a moment*] So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG: I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA: Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

LOVBORG: It will not end with last night—I know that perfectly well. And the thing is that now I have no taste for that sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA: [*Looking straight before her*] So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly?

LOVBORG: Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

HEDDA: To go and destroy what has filled her whole soul for months and years! You do not call that heartless!

LOVBORG: To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA: The truth?

LOVBORG: First promise me—give me your word—that what I now confide to you Thea shall never know.

HEDDA: I give you my word.

LOVBORG: Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

HEDDA: About the manuscript?

LOVBORG: Yes. I have not torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fjord.

HEDDA: No, no—. But—where is it then?

LOVBORG: I have destroyed it none the less—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA: I don't understand.

LOVBORG: Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

HEDDA: Yes, so she said.

LOVBORG: But to kill his child—that is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA: Not the worst?

LÖVBORG: No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

HEDDA: Then what is the worst?

LOVBORG: Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said:

"Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows into what hands it may have fallen—who may have had their clutches on it."

HEDDA: Well—but when all is said and done, you know—this was only a book—

LOVBORG: Thea's pure soul was in that book.

HEDDA: Yes, so I understand.

LOVBORG: And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

HEDDA: What path do you mean to take then?

LOVBORG: None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

HEDDA: [*A step nearer him*] Eilert Lövborg—listen to me.—Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

LOVBORG: Beautifully? [*Smiling*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days—?

HEDDA: No, no. I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-bye! You must go now—and do not come here any more.

LOVBORG: Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. And give George Tesman my love. [*He is on the point of going*]

HEDDA: No, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you.

[*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case; then returns to Lövborg with one of the pistols*]

LOVBORG: [*Looks at her*] This? Is this the memento?

HEDDA: [*Nodding slowly*] Do you recognize it? It was aimed at you once.

LOVBORG: You should have used it then.

HEDDA: Take it—and do you use it now.

LOVBORG: [*Puts the pistol in his breast pocket*] Thanks!

HEDDA: And beautifully, Eilert Lovborg. Promise me that!

LOVBORG: Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

[*He goes out by the hall door*]

[*Hedda listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out, and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove, with the packet in her lap. Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet*]

HEDDA: [*Throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself*] Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning it, curly-locks! [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove*] Your child and Eilert Lovborg's. [*Throws the rest in*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

ACT IV.

The same rooms at the Tesmans'. It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close. Hedda, dressed in black, walks to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.

Berta enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has

black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right. Hedda goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.

Shortly afterwards, Miss Tesman, in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall. Hedda goes towards her and holds out her hand.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, Hedda, here I am, in mourning and forlorn; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

HEDDA: I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, he promised me he would. But nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought myself to bring the tidings of death.

HEDDA: That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN: Ah, Rina ought not to have left us just now. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA. [*Changing the subject*] She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing George once more—and bidding him good-bye.—Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA: No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN. No thank you, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA: Can I not help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, you must not think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

HEDDA: One is not always mistress of one's thoughts—

MISS TESMAN: [*Continuing*] Ah yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

[*George Tesman enters by the hall door*]

HEDDA: Ah, you have come at last!

TESMAN: You here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN: I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

TESMAN: No; I'm really afraid I have forgotten half of it. I must come to you again to-morrow. To-day my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN: Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN: Mustn't—? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN. Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do—rejoice that she is at rest.

TESMAN: Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

HEDDA: You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN: Just at first, yes. But that will not last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

TESMAN: Indeed? Who do you think will take it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

HEDDA: Would you really take such a burden upon you again?

MISS TESMAN: A burden! Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA: But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands—

MISS TESMAN: Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have some one to live for. Well, heaven be praised, there may soon be something in *this* house, too, to keep an old aunt busy.

HEDDA: Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

TESMAN: Yes, just fancy what a nice time we three might have together, if—?

HEDDA: If—?

TESMAN: [*Uneasily*] Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh?

MISS TESMAN: Well well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. [*Smiling*] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you too, George. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door*] How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

TESMAN: Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh?
[*Miss Tesman goes out by the hall door*]

HEDDA: [*Follows Tesman coldly and searchingly with her eyes*] I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does your Aunt Julia.

TESMAN: Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I am so terribly uneasy about.

HEDDA: [*Quickly*] Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN: I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was in safe keeping.

HEDDA: Well, did you not find him?

TESMAN: No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA: Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN: And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces—eh?

HEDDA: Yes, so he declared.

TESMAN: Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA: No, he did not get it.

TESMAN: But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA: No. [*Quickly*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN: No; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

HEDDA: [*Cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair*] I have not got it.

TESMAN: Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA: I have burnt it—every line of it.

TESMAN: [*With a violent movement of terror*] Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA: Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN: Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

HEDDA: It is so, nevertheless.

TESMAN: Do you know what you have done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

HEDDA: I advise you not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack, or to any one else.

TESMAN: But how could you do anything so unheard-of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

HEDDA: [*Suppressing an almost imperceptible smile*] I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN: For my sake!

HEDDA: This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you——

TESMAN: Yes yes—what then?

HEDDA: You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

TESMAN: Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA: No matter—I could not bear the idea that any one should throw you into the shade.

TESMAN: [*In an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*] Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you show your love like that before. Fancy that!

HEDDA: Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—— [*Impatiently, breaking off*] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

TESMAN: Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together*] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

HEDDA: Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN: [*Laughing in irrepressible glee*] The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

HEDDA: [*Clenching her hands together in desperation*] Oh, it is killing me,—it is killing me, all this!

TESMAN: What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA: [*Coldly, controlling herself*] All this—absurdity—George.

TESMAN: Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

HEDDA: Oh—why not that too?

TESMAN: No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA: When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN: No, by the by—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much, Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA: I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

TESMAN: I will indeed, some time or other [*Looks uneasy and downcast again*] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

[*Mrs. Elvsted, dressed as in the first act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation*] Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

HEDDA: What is the matter with you, Thea?

TESMAN: Something about Eilert Lovborg again—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him

HEDDA: [*Seizes her arm*] Ah,—do you think so?

TESMAN: Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED: I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumors are afloat about him to-day.

TESMAN: Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

HEDDA: Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else—. They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN: [*Moving about uneasily*] We must hope—we must hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, no; I am sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or—

TESMAN: The hospital?

HEDDA: No—surely that cannot be!

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA: You could make up your mind to that, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED: What else could I do? I really could bear the suspense no longer.

TESMAN: But you didn't find him either—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN: Yesterday! Fancy, how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN: Hedda dear—how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries—?

HEDDA: No, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

[*Judge Brack, with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which Berta opens, and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence*]

TESMAN: Oh, is that you, my dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK: Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

TESMAN: I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina?

BRACK: Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN: Isn't it sad—eh?

BRACK: Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN: [*Looks doubtfully at him*] Has anything else happened?

BRACK: Yes.

HEDDA: [*In suspense*] Anything sad, Judge Brack?

BRACK: That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Unable to restrain her anxiety*] Oh! it is something about Eilert Løvborg!

BRACK: [*With a glance at her*] What makes you think that, Madam? Perhaps you have already heard something—?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*In confusion*] No, nothing at all, but—

TESMAN: Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK: [*Shrugging his shoulders*] Well, I regret to say Eilert Lovborg has been taken to the hospital. He is lying at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Shrieks*] Oh God! oh God—!

TESMAN: To the hospital! And at the point of death!

HEDDA: [*Involuntarily*] So soon then—

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Wailing*] And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA: [*Whispers*] Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Not heeding her*] I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK: It is useless, Madam. No one will be admitted.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, at least tell me what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN: You don't mean to say that he has himself— Eh?

HEDDA: Yes, I am sure he has.

TESMAN: Hedda, how can you—?

BRACK: [*Keeping his eyes fixed upon her*] Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN: Himself, then! Fancy that!

HEDDA: Shot himself!

BRACK: Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED: [*With an effort at self-control*] When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK: This afternoon—between three and four.

TESMAN: But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

BRACK: [*With some hesitation*] Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, that cannot be; for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK: Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found— He had shot himself—in the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA: [*To Brack*] Was it in the breast?

BRACK: Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA: Not in the temple?

BRACK: In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA: Well, well—the breast is a good place, too.

BRACK: How do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA: [*Evasively*] Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN: And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

BRACK: Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes, I feel it. The end! The end! Oh, Hedda—!

TESMAN: But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

BRACK: [*Cautly*] Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

HEDDA: [*In a clear voice*] At last a deed worth doing!

TESMAN: [*Terrified*] Good heavens, Hedda! what are you saying?

HEDDA: I say there is beauty in this.

BRACK: I'm, Mrs. Tesman—

TESMAN: Beauty! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

HEDDA: Eilert Lövborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED: No, you must never think that was how it happened! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

TESMAN: In despair!

HEDDA: That he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK: [*Starting*] The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, last night.

TESMAN: [*Whispers softly*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK: H'm, very extraordinary.

TESMAN: [*Moving about the room*] To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalized his name—

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN: Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give—

MRS. ELVSTED: Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN: What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Searches in the pocket of her dress*] Look here. I have kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA: [*A step forward*] Ah—!

TESMAN: You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, I have them here. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are—

TESMAN: Oh, do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Hands him a bundle of papers*] But they are in such disorder—all mixed up.

TESMAN: Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together—

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh yes, at least let us try—

TESMAN: We will manage it! We must! I will dedicate my life to this task.

HEDDA: You, George? Your life?

TESMAN: Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA: Perhaps.

TESMAN: And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we will give our whole minds to it. There is no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and—

MRS. ELVSTED: Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN: Well then, come here. I can't rest until we have looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED: Oh, if only it were possible!

[*Tesman and Mrs. Elvsted go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers. Hedda crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently Brack goes up to her*]

HEDDA: [*In a low voice*] Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

BRACK: Freedom, Mrs. Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him—

HEDDA: I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world,—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

BRACK: [*Smiling*] H'm—my dear Mrs. Hedda—

HEDDA: Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist, too, like—you know!

BRACK: [*Looking hard at her*] Eilert Lövborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA: I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lovborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the strength to turn away from the banquet of life—so early.

BRACK: I am sorry, Mrs. Hedda,—but I fear I must dispel an amiable illusion.

HEDDA: Illusion?

BRACK: Which could not have lasted long in any case.

HEDDA: What do you mean?

BRACK: Eilert Lövborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA: Not voluntarily?

BRACK: No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA: [*In suspense*] Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK: For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealized the facts a little.

HEDDA: What are the facts?

BRACK: First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA: At the hospital?

BRACK: Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA: What more have you concealed?

BRACK: This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA: Oh, that can make no difference.

BRACK: Perhaps it may. For I must tell you—Eilert Lövborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA: [*Makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again*] That is impossible, Judge Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

BRACK: He was there this afternoon. He went there, he said, to demand the re-

turn of something which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child—

HEDDA: Ah—so that was why—

BRACK: I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but now I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

HEDDA: Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found?

BRACK: Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast-pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

HEDDA: In the breast—yes.

BRACK: No—in the bowels.

HEDDA. [*Looks up at him with an expression of loathing*] That, too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean?

BRACK: There is one point more, Mrs. Hedda—another disagreeable feature in the affair.

HEDDA: And what is that?

BRACK: The pistol he carried—

HEDDA. [*Breathless*] Well? What of it?

BRACK: He must have stolen it.

HEDDA. [*Leaps up*] Stolen it! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK: No other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it—Hush!

[*Tesman and Mrs. Elvsted have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing-room*]

TESMAN: [*With the papers in both his hands*] Hedda, dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

HEDDA: Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN: Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

HEDDA: If you like. [*Quickly*] No, wait! Let me clear it first!

TESMAN: Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

HEDDA: No, no, let me clear it, I say! I will take these things in and put them on the piano. There!

[She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the bookcase, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left. Tesman lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and Mrs. Elvsted sit down and proceed with their work. Hedda returns.]

HEDDA: *[Behind Mrs. Elvsted's chair, gently ruffling her hair]* Well, my sweet Thea,—how goes it with Eiler Lovborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED: *[Looks dispiritedly up at her]* Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

TESMAN: We must manage it. I am determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me.

[Hedda goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools. Brack stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair]

HEDDA: *[Whispers]* What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK: *[Softly]* That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA: Why stolen it?

BRACK: Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA: Indeed?

BRACK: *[Glances at her]* Of course, Eiler Lovborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA: Yes.

BRACK: Were you alone with him?

HEDDA: Part of the time.

BRACK: Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

HEDDA: No.

BRACK: Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA: Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK: And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA: I had it locked up in—

BRACK: Well, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA: The case stood there on the writing-table.

BRACK: Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA: No.

BRACK: Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lovborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA: Have you it with you?

BRACK: No; the police have it.

HEDDA: What will the police do with it?

BRACK: Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA: Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK: *[Bends over her and whispers]* No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA: *[Looks frightened at him]* And if you do not say nothing,—what then?

BRACK: *[Shrugs his shoulders]* There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA: *[Firmly]* Death rather than that.

BRACK: *[Smiling]* People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA: *[Without replying]* And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK: Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal.

HEDDA: The scandal!

BRACK: Yes, the scandal—of which you are so mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you

and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA: But *I* have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK: No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lovborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA: [*Lets her head sink*] That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK: Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA: [*Looks up at him*] So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK: [*Whispers softly*] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA: I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [*Rises impetuously*] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK: [*Looks half-mockingly at her*] People generally get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA: [*Returns his look*] Yes, perhaps. [*She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates Tesman's intonations*] Well? Are you getting on, George? Eh?

TESMAN: Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

HEDDA: [*As before*] Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through Mrs. Elvsted's hair*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lovborg?

MRS. ELVSTED: Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way!

HEDDA: Oh, that will come, too—in time.

TESMAN: Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

HEDDA: Is there nothing I can do to help you two?

TESMAN: No, nothing in the world! [*Turning his head*] I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack.

BRACK: [*With a glance at Hedda*] With the very greatest of pleasure.

HEDDA: Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

TESMAN: Yes, do dear—eh?

[*Hedda goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano*]

MRS. ELVSTED: [*Starts from her chair*] Oh—what is that?

TESMAN: [*Runs to the doorway*] Why, my dearest Hedda—don't play dance-music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert, too!

HEDDA: [*Puts her head out between the curtains*] And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.—After this, I will be quiet. [*Closes the curtains again*]

TESMAN: [*At the writing-table*] It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted,—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work there—eh?

HEDDA: [*In the inner room*] I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am I to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN: [*Turning over the papers*] Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

BRACK: [*In the arm-chair, calls out gaily*] Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

HEDDA: [*Speaking loud and clear*] Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket—

[*A shot is heard within. Tesman, Mrs. Elvsted, and Brack leap to their feet*]

TESMAN: Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again.

[*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by Mrs. Elvsted. Hedda lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries. Berta enters in alarm from the right*]

TESMAN: [*Shrieks to Brack*] Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK: [*Half-fainting in the arm-chair*] Good God!—people don't do such things.

William Congreve

(1670-1729)

THE PURITANS, who beheaded Charles I in 1640, padlocked the theatres two years later, and for eighteen years, until the restoration of the monarchy, Britain possessed practically no drama. In the reign of the "Merry Monarch" Charles II, the theatre was inundated with a series of high-flown heroic plays, many of them by John Dryden, who should have known better, and a host of salacious comedies, composed for and about fashionable people. The theatre settled accounts with its Roundhead enemies, for the antics of Restoration comedy were an uninterrupted affront to the Puritans. "Profligacy," writes Macaulay, "was . . . the badge of a cavalier and a high churchman. Decency was associated with conventicles and calves' heads." Peace was not declared before the beginning of the next century when George Farquhar, Colley Cibber, and Richard Steele made the stage once again endurable for the average citizen.

Many of the comedies, especially those of Sir George Etherege and of the first professional woman-dramatist Aphra Behn, are notable only for their indelicacy. But William Wycherley, renowned for his slashing wit, Vanbrugh, a lively caricaturist, and Congreve attained various degrees of excellence. William Congreve's early efforts are barely distinguishable from the work of his contemporaries, but *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World* place him apart as one of the master spirits of comedy.

Born in 1670 of a family of cavaliers who fought for King Charles in the Puritan revolution, highly cultivated, impeccable in manners and conversation, Congreve was all that a Restoration gentleman could hope to be. Though sent to London to study the intricacies of law, he devoted himself inevitably to the social graces and the theatre, soon excelling in both of these arts and surpassing his contemporaries in one of them.

Spurred on by the success of his first comedy *The Old Bachelor*, produced when he was only twenty-one years old, Congreve wrote in succession within the next nine years *The Double-Dealer*, *Love for Love*, a negligible tragedy—*The Mourning Bride*, and *The Way of the World* until, aggrieved by the cold reception of the latter, he retired from the theatre to lead the life of a gentleman. He wore his laurels modestly, cherishing the company of his choice circle of friends and retaining the esteem of the younger generation which regarded him as a classic. After a period of poverty he even enjoyed a comfortable income from a sinecure when the state made him secretary to the island of Jamaica at £1,222 a year.

Voltaire, visiting England, made a point of paying his respects to the elderly playwright, who tried to dismiss his writings as youthful indiscretions and insisted that he was just a gentleman. Voltaire retorted: "If you had been only a gentleman I should not have come to see you."

With the change of taste ushered in by Jeremy Collier's devastating attack on Restoration comedy at the end of the century, Congreve would have had no place in the theatre, which now welcomed the sentimental confections of Cibber and Steele. As a matter of fact, after Congreve's death in 1729 English comedy displayed only one more brief spurt of life, with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, before becoming dismally dormant.

The Way of the World, produced in 1700, with the famous Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle in the leading rôles, is the lust and most distinguished of Congreve's comedies. Though less consistently sprightly than Love for Love, it excels in the scintillating, audacious conversation that Hazlitt pronounced "the highest model of comic dialogue" and contains Congreve's most brilliant characterizations. Mirabell and Mistress Millamant stand in the front rank of sophisticated lovers. The play is not devoid of social satire, but a carefree urbanity dominates the spirit of the work. Charles Lamb's description of Restoration comedy is most applicable to Congreve's artistry: "I could never connect these sports of a witty fancy in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life. They are a world in themselves, almost as much as fairy-land."

The nature of the comedy precluded its acceptance by the nineteenth century, which generally shared William Archer's regretful observation that "Congreve regards life from a standpoint of complete ethical indifference." But the twentieth century has been more hospitable. Following revivals in London the comedy was seen in New York in 1924 at the Cherry Lane Theatre. J. G.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

BY WILLIAM CONGREVE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

FAINALL, *in love with Mrs. Marwood*
MIRABELL, *in love with Mrs. Millamant*
WITWOUND } *Followers of Mrs. Millamant*
PETULANT }
SIR WILFULL WITWOUND, *Half-brother to Witwound, and Nephew to Lady Wishfort*
WALIWELL, *Servant to Mirabell*
Coachmen, Dancers, Footmen, and Attendants.
LADY WISHFORT, *Enemy to Mirabell, for having falsely pretended love to her*
MRS. MILLAMANT, *a fine Lady, Niece to Lady Wishfort, and loves Mirabell*

MRS. MARWOOD, *Friend to Mr. Fainall, and likes Mirabell*
MRS. FAINALL, *Daughter to Lady Wishfort, and Wife to Fainall, formerly Friend to Mirabell*
FOIBLE, *Woman to Lady Wishfort*
MINCING, *Woman to Mrs. Millamant*
BETTY, *Waiting-maid at a Chocolate-house*
PEG, *Maid to Lady Wishfort*

Scene—London

The time equal to that of the representation

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Chocolate-house

[*Mirabell and Fainall rising from cards. Betty waiting*]

MIRABELL: You are a fortunate man, Mr. Fainall!

FAINALL: Have we done?

MIRABELL: What you please: I'll play on to entertain you.

FAINALL: No, I'll give you your revenge another time, when you are not so indifferent; you are thinking of something else now, and play too negligently; the coldness of a losing gamester lessens the pleasure of the winner. I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune than I'd make love to a woman who undervalued the loss of her reputation.

MIRABELL: You have a taste extremely delicate, and are for refining on your pleasures.

FAINALL: Prithee, why so reserved? Something has put you out of humor.

MIRABELL: Not at all: I happen to be grave to-day, and you are gay; that's all.

FAINALL: Confess, Millamant and you quarreled last night after I left you; my fair cousin has some humors that would tempt the patience of a Stoic. What, some coxcomb came in, and was well received by her, while you were by?

MIRABELL: Witwound and Petulant; and what was worse, her aunt, your wife's mother, my evil genius; or to sum up all in her own name, my old Lady Wishfort came in.

FAINALL: Oh, there it is then! She has a lasting passion for you, and with reason.—What, then my wife was there?

MIRABELL: Yes, and Mrs. Marwood, and three or four more, whom I never saw before. Seeing me, they all put on their grave faces, whispered one another; then complained aloud of the vapors, and after fell into a profound silence.

FAINALL: They had a mind to be rid of you.

MIRABELL: For which reason I resolved not to stir. At last the good old lady broke through her painful taciturnity with an invective against long visits. I would not have understood her, but Millamant joining in the argument, I rose, and, with a constrained smile, told her I thought nothing was so easy as to know when a visit began to be troublesome. She reddened, and I withdrew, without expecting her reply.

FAINALL: You were to blame to resent what she spoke only in compliance with her aunt.

MIRABELL: She is more mistress of herself than to be under the necessity of such a resignation.

FAINALL: What! though half her fortune depends upon her marrying with my lady's approbation?

MIRABELL: I was then in such a humor, that I should have been better pleased if she had been less discreet.

FAINALL: Now, I remember, I wonder not they were weary of you; last night was one of their cabal nights; they have 'em three times a-week, and meet by turns at one another's apartments, where they come together like the coroner's inquest, to sit upon the murdered reputations of the week. You and I are excluded; and it was once proposed that all the male sex should be excepted; but somebody moved that, to avoid scandal, there

might be one man of the community; upon which motion Witwoud and Petulant were enrolled members.

MIRABELL: And who may have been the foundress of this sect? My Lady Wishfort, I warrant, who publishes her detestation of mankind; and full of the vigor of fifty-five, declares for a friend and ratafia; and let posterity shift for itself, she'll breed no more.

FAINALL: The discovery of your sham addresses to her, to conceal your love to her niece, has provoked this separation; had you dissembled better, things might have continued in the state of nature.

MIRABELL: I did as much as man could, with any reasonable conscience; I proceeded to the very last act of flattery with her, and was guilty of a song in her commendation. Nay, I got a friend to put her into a lampoon and compliment her with the imputation of an affair with a young fellow, which I carried so far, that I told her the malicious town took notice that she was grown fat of a sudden; and when she lay in of a dropsy, persuaded her she was reported to be in labor. The devil's in't, if an old woman is to be flattered further, unless a man should endeavor downright personally to debauch her; and that my virtue forbade me. But for the discovery of this amour I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood.

FAINALL: What should provoke her to be your enemy, unless she has made you advances which you have slighted? Women do not easily forgive omissions of that nature.

MIRABELL: She was always civil to me till of late.—I confess I am not one of those coxcombs who are apt to interpret a woman's good manners to her prejudice, and think that she who does not refuse 'em everything, can refuse 'em nothing.

FAINALL: You are a gallant man, Mirabell; and though you may have cruelty enough not to satisfy a lady's longing, you have too much generosity not to be tender of her honor. Yet you speak with an indifference which seems to be affected, and confesses you are conscious of a negligence.

MIRABELL: You pursue the argument with a distrust that seems to be unaffected, and confesses you are conscious of a concern for which the lady is more indebted to you than is your wife.

FAINALL: Fie, fie, friend! if you grow censorious I must leave you.—I'll look upon the gamesters in the next room.

MIRABELL: Who are they?

FAINALL: Petulant and Witwoud.—[*To Betty*] Bring me some chocolate. [*Exit*]

MIRABELL: Betty, what says your clock?

BETTY: Turned of the last canonical hour, sir. [*Exit*]

MIRABELL: How pertinently the jade answers me!—[*Looking on his watch*]—Ha! almost one o'clock!—Oh, y'are come!

[*Enter Footman*]

Well, is the grand affair over? You have been something tedious.

FOOTMAN: Sir, there's such coupling at Pancras that they stand behind one another, as 'twere in a country dance. Ours was the last couple to lead up; and no hopes appearing of dispatch; besides, the parson growing hoarse, we were afraid his lungs would have failed before it came to our turn; so we drove round to Duke's-place, and there they were rivetted in a trice.

MIRABELL: So, so, you are sure they are married.

FOOTMAN: Married and bedded, sir; I am witness.

MIRABELL: Have you the certificate?

FOOTMAN: Here it is, sir.

MIRABELL: Has the tailor brought Waitwell's clothes home, and the new liveries?

FOOTMAN: Yes, sir.

MIRABELL: That's well. Do you go home again, d'ye hear, and adjourn the consummation till further orders. Bid Waitwell shake his ears, and Dame Partlet rustle up her feathers, and meet me at one o'clock by Rosamond's Pond, that I may see her before she returns to her lady; and as you tender your ears be secret. [*Exit*]

ACT I. SCENE II.

The same.

[*Mirabell, Fainall, and Betty*]

FAINALL: Joy of your success, Mirabell; you look pleased.

MIRABELL: Aye; I have been engaged in a matter of some sort of mirth, which is not yet ripe for discovery. I am glad this is not a cabal night. I wonder, Fainall, that you who are married, and of consequence should be discreet, will suffer your wife to be of such a party.

FAINALL: Faith, I am not jealous. Besides, most who are engaged are women and relations; and for the men, they are of a kind too contemptible to give scandal.

MIRABELL: I am of another opinion. The greater the coxcomb, always the more the scandal: for a woman who is not a fool can have but one reason for associating with a man who is one.

FAINALL: Are you jealous as often as you see Witwoud entertained by Millamant?

MIRABELL: Of her understanding I am, if not of her person.

FAINALL: You do her wrong; for, to give her her due, she has wit.

MIRABELL: She has beauty enough to make any man think so; and complaisance

enough not to contradict him who shall tell her so.

FAINALL: For a passionate lover, methinks you are a man somewhat too discerning in the failings of your mistress.

MIRABELL: And for a discerning man, somewhat too passionate a lover; for I like her with all her faults; nay, like her for her faults. Her follies are so natural, or so artful, that they become her; and those affectations which in another woman would be odious, serve but to make her more agreeable. I'll tell thee, Fainall, she once used me with that insolence, that in revenge I took her to pieces; sifted her, and separated her failings; I studied 'em, and got 'em by rote. The catalogue was so large, that I was not without hopes one day or other to hate her heartily to which end I so used myself to think of 'em, that at length, contrary to my design and expectation, they gave me every hour less and less disturbance; till in a few days it became habitual to me to remember 'em without being displeas'd. They are now grown as familiar to me as my own frailties; and in all probability, in a little time longer, I shall like 'em as well.

FAINALL: Marry her, marry her! Be half as well acquainted with her charms, as you are with her defects, and my life on't, you are your own man again.

MIRABELL: Say you so?

FAINALL: Aye, aye, I have experience: I have a wife, and so forth.

[Enter Messenger]

MESSENGER: Is one squire Witwoud here?

BETTY: Yes, what's your business?

MESSENGER: I have a letter for him, from his brother Sir Wilfull, which I am charg'd to deliver into his own hands.

BETTY: He's in the next room, friend—that way.

[Exit Messenger]

MIRABELL: What, is the chief of that noble family in town, Sir Wilfull Witwoud?

FAINALL: He is expected to-day. Do you know him?

MIRABELL: I have seen him. He promises to be an extraordinary person; I think you have the honor to be related to him.

FAINALL: Yes; he is half-brother to this Witwoud by a former wife, who was sister to my Lady Wishfort, my wife's mother. If you marry Millamant, you must call cousins too.

MIRABELL: I had rather be his relation than his acquaintance.

FAINALL: He comes to town in order to equip himself for travel.

MIRABELL: For travel! Why, the man that I mean is above forty.

FAINALL: No matter for that; 'tis for the honor of England, that all Europe should know we have blockheads of all ages.

MIRABELL: I wonder there is not an act of parliament to save the credit of the nation, and prohibit the exportation of fools.

FAINALL: By no means; 'tis better as 'tis. 'Tis better to trade with a little loss, than to be quite eaten up with being overstocked.

MIRABELL: Pray, are the follies of this knight-errant, and those of the squire his brother, anything related?

FAINALL: Not at all; Witwoud grows by the knight, like a medlar grafted on a crab. One will melt in your mouth, and t'other set your teeth on edge; one is all pulp, and the other all core.

MIRABELL: So one will be rotten before he be ripe, and the other will be rotten without ever being ripe at all.

FAINALL: Sir Wilfull is an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy.—But when he's drunk he's as loving as the monster in *The Tempest*, and much after the

same manner. To give 'other his due, he has something of good nature, and does not always want wit.

MIRABELL: Not always: but as often as his memory fails him, and his commonplace of comparisons. He is a fool with a good memory, and some few scraps of other folks' wit. He is one whose conversation can never be approved, yet it is now and then to be endured. He has indeed one good quality, he is not exceptious; for he so passionately affects the reputation of understanding raillery, that he will construe an affront into a jest; and call downright rudeness and ill language satire and fire.

FAINALL: If you have a mind to finish his picture, you have an opportunity to do it at full length. Behold the original!

[Enter Witwoud]

WITWOUND: Afford me your compassion, my dears! Pity me, Fainall! Mirabell, pity me!

MIRABELL: I do, from my soul.

FAINALL: Why, what's the matter?

WITWOUND: No letters for me, Betty?

BEFFY: Did not a messenger bring you one but now, sir?

WITWOUND: Aye, but no other?

BETTY: No, sir.

WITWOUND: That's hard, that's very hard.—

A messenger! a mule, a beast of burden! he has brought me a letter from the fool my brother, as heavy as a panegyric in a funeral sermon, or a copy of commendatory verses from one poet to another: and what's worse, 'tis as sure a forerunner of the author, as an epistle dedicatory.

MIRABELL: A fool, and your brother, Witwoud!

WITWOUND: Aye, aye, my half-brother. My half-brother he is; no nearer, upon honor.

MIRABELL: Then 'tis possible he may be but half a fool.

WITWOUND: Good, good, Mirabell, *le drôle!*

Good, good; hang him, don't let's talk of him.—Fainall, how does your lady?

Gad, I say anything in the world to get this fellow out of my head. I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure, and the town, a question at once so foreign and domestic. But I talk like an old maid at a marriage; I don't know what I say: but she's the best woman in the world.

FAINALL: 'Tis well you don't know what you say, or else your commendation would go near to make me either vain or jealous.

WITWOUND: No man in town lives well with a wife but Fainall.—Your judgment, Mirabell.

MIRABELL: You had better step and ask his wife, if you would be credibly informed.

WITWOUND: Mirabell?

MIRABELL: Aye.

WITWOUND: My dear, I ask ten thousand pardons—gad, I have forgot what I was going to say to you!

MIRABELL: I thank you heartily, heartily.

WITWOUND: No, but prithee excuse me: my memory is such a memory.

MIRABELL: Have a care of such apologies.

Witwoud; for I never knew a fool but he affected to complain, either of the spleen or his memory.

FAINALL: What have you done with Petulant?

WITWOUND: He's reckoning his money—my money it was.—I have no luck to-day.

FAINALL: You may allow him to win of you at play: for you are sure to be too hard for him at repartee; since you monopolize the wit that is between you, the fortune must be his of course.

MIRABELL: I don't find that Petulant confesses the superiority of wit to be your talent, Witwoud.

WITWOLD: Come, come, you are malicious now, and would breed debates.—Petulant's my friend, and a very honest fellow, and a very pretty fellow, and has a smattering—faith and troth, a pretty deal of an odd sort of a small wit: nay, I'll do him justice. I'm his friend, I won't wrong him neither—And if he had any judgment in the world, he would not be altogether contemptible. Come, come, don't detract from the merits of my friend.

FAINALL: You don't take your friend to be over-nicely bred?

WITWOLD: No, no, hang him, the rogue has no manners at all, that I must own: no more breeding than a bum-bailiff, that I grant you—'tis pity, faith; the fellow has fire and life.

MIRABELL: What, courage?

WITWOLD: Hum, faith I don't know as to that, I can't say as to that. Yes, faith, in a controversy, he'll contradict anybody.

MIRABELL: Though 'twere a man whom he feared, or a woman whom he loved.

WITWOLD: Well, well, he does not always think before he speaks—we have all our failings: you are too hard upon him, you are, faith. Let me excuse him—I can defend most of his faults, except one or two: one he has, that's the truth on't; if he were my brother, I could not acquit him—that, indeed, I could wish were otherwise.

MIRABELL: Aye, ma'ry, what's that, Witwoud?

WITWOLD: O pardon me!—Expose the infirmities of my friend!—No, my dear, excuse me there.

FAINALL: What, I warrant he's unsincere, or 'tis some such trifle.

WITWOLD: No, no; what if he be? 'tis no matter for that, his wit will excuse that: a wit should no more be sincere, than

a woman constant; one argues a decay of parts, as t'other of beauty.

MIRABELL: Maybe you think him too positive?

WITWOLD: No, no, his being positive is an incentive to argument, and keeps up conversation.

FAINALL: Too illiterate?

WITWOLD: That! that's his happiness: his want of learning gives him the more opportunities to show his natural parts.

MIRABELL: He wants words?

WITWOLD: Aye: but I like him for that now; for his want of words gives me the pleasure very often to explain his meaning.

FAINALL: He's impudent?

WITWOLD: No, that's not it.

MIRABELL: Vain?

WITWOLD: No.

MIRABELL: What! He speaks unseasonable truths sometimes, because he has not wit enough to invent an evasion?

WITWOLD: Truths! ha! ha! ha! No, no; since you will have it—I mean, he never speaks truth at all—that's all. He will lie like a chambermaid, or a woman of quality's porter. Now that is a fault.

[Enter Coachman]

COACHMAN: Is Master Petulant here, mistress?

BETTY: Yes.

COACHMAN: Three gentlewomen in a coach would speak with him.

FAINALL: O brave Petulant! three!

BETTY: I'll tell him.

COACHMAN: You must bring two dishes of chocolate and a glass of cinnamon-water.

[Exeunt Betty and Coachman]

WITWOLD: That should be for two fasting strumpets, and a bawd troubled with the wind. Now you may know what the three are.

MIRABELL: You are very free with your friend's acquaintance.

WITWOUND: Aye, aye, friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment, or wine without toasting. But to tell you a secret, these are trulls whom he allows coach-hire, and something more, by the week, to call on him once a day at public places.

MIRABELL: How!

WITWOUND: You shall see he won't go to 'em, because there's no more company here to take notice of him.—Why, this is nothing to what he used to do: before he found out this way, I have known him call for himself.

FAINALL: Call for himself! What dost thou mean?

WITWOUND: Mean! Why, he would slip you out of this chocolate-house, just when you had been talking to him—as soon as your back was turned—whip he was gone!—then trip to his lodging, clap on a hood and scarf, and a mask, slap into a hackney-coach, and drive hither to the door again in a trice, where he would send in for himself; that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself; nay, and what's more, not finding himself, sometimes leave a letter for himself.

MIRABELL: I confess this is something extraordinary.—I believe he waits for himself now, he is so long a-coming: Oh! I ask his pardon.

[Enter Petulant and Betty]

BETTY: Sir, the coach stays.

PETULANT: Well, well; I come.—'Shud, a man had as good be a professed midwife as a professed whoremaster, at this rate! To be knocked up and raised at all hours, and in all places! Pox on 'em, I won't come!—D'ye hear, tell 'em I won't come—let 'em snivel and cry their hearts out.

FAINALL: You are very cruel, Petulant.

PETULANT: All's one, let it pass: I have a humor to be cruel.

MIRABELL: I hope they are not persons of condition that you use at this rate.

PETULANT: Condition! condition's a dried fig, if I am not in humor!—By this hand, if they were your—a—a—your what d'ye-call-'ems themselves, they must wait or rub off, if I want appetite.

MIRABELL: What d'ye-call-'ems! What are they, Witwound?

WITWOUND: Empreses, my dear: by your what-d'ye-call-'ems he means sultana queens.

PETULANT: Aye, Roxolanas.

MIRABELL: Cry you mercy!

FAINALL: Witwound says they are—

PETULANT: What does he say th' are?

WITWOUND: I? Fine ladies, I say.

PETULANT: Pass on, Witwound.—Hark'ee, by this light, his relations: two coheinesses his cousins, and an old aunt, who loves caterwauling better than a conventicle.

WITWOUND: Ha! ha! ha! I had a mind to see how the rogue would come off.—Ha! ha! ha! Gad, I can't be angry with him, if he had said they were my mother and my sisters.

MIRABELL: No!

WITWOUND: No; the rogue's wit and readiness of invention charm me. Dear Petulant!

BETTY: They are gone, sir, in great anger.

PETULANT: Enough, let 'em trundle. Anger helps complexion, saves paint.

FAINALL: This continence is all dissembled; this is in order to have something to brag of the next time he makes court to Millamant, and swear he has abandoned the whole sex for her sake.

MIRABELL: Have you not left off your impudent pretensions there yet? I shall cut your throat some time or other, Petulant, about that business.

PETULANT: Aye, aye, let that pass—there are other throats to be cut.

MIRABELL: Meaning mine, sir?

PETULANT: Not I—I mean nobody—I know nothing; but there are uncles and nephews in the world—and they may be rivals. What, then! All's one for that.

MIRABELL: How! hark'ee, Petulant, come hither—explain, or I shall call your interpreter.

PETULANT: Explain! I know nothing. Why, you have an uncle, have you not, lately come to town, and lodges by my Lady Wishfort's?

MIRABELL: True.

PETULANT: Why, that's enough—you and he are not friends; and if he should marry and have a child you may be disinherited, ha?

MIRABELL: Where hast thou stumbled upon all this truth?

PETULANT: All's one for that; why, then, say I know something.

MIRABELL: Come, thou art an honest fellow, Petulant, and shalt make love to my mistress, thou sha't, faith. What hast thou heard of my uncle?

PETULANT: I? Nothing, I. If throats are to be cut, let swords clash! snug's the word, I shrug and am silent.

MIRABELL: Oh, raillery, raillery! Come, I know thou art in the women's secrets.—What, you're a cabalist; I know you stayed at Millamant's last night, after I went. Was there any mention made of my uncle or me? Tell me. If thou hadst but good nature equal to thy wit, Petulant, Tony Witwoud, who is now thy competitor in fame, would show as dim by thee as a dead whiting's eye by a pearl of orient; he would no more be seen by thee, than Mercury is by the sun. Come, I'm sure thou wo't tell me.

PETULANT: If I do, will you grant me common sense then for the future?

MIRABELL: Faith, I'll do what I can for thee, and I'll pray that Heaven may grant it thee in the meantime.

PETULANT: Well, hark'ee.

[Mirabell and Petulant talk apart]

FAINALL: Petulant and you both will find Mirabell as warm a rival as a lover.

WITWOD: Pshaw! pshaw! that she laughs at Petulant is plain. And for my part, but that it is almost a fashion to admire her, I should—hark'ee—to tell you a secret, but let it go no further—between friends, I shall never break my heart for her.

FAINALL: How!

WITWOD: She's handsome; but she's a sort of an uncertain woman.

FAINALL: I thought you had died for her.

WITWOD: Umh--no—

FAINALL: She has wit.

WITWOD: 'Tis what she will hardly allow anybody else: now, demme, I should hate that, if she were as handsome as Cleopatra. Mirabell is not so sure of her as he thinks for.

FAINALL: Why do you think so?

WITWOD: We stayed pretty late there last night, and heard something of an uncle to Mirabell, who is lately come to town—and is between him and the best part of his estate. Mirabell and he are at some distance, as my Lady Wishfort has been told; and you know she hates Mirabell worse than a quaker hates a parrot, or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost. Whether this uncle has seen Mrs. Millamant or not, I cannot say, but there were items of such a treaty being in embryo; and if it should come to life, poor Mirabell would be in some sort unfortunately fobbed, i'faith.

FAINALL: 'Tis impossible Millamant should hearken to it.

WITWOD: Faith, my dear, I can't tell; she's a woman, and a kind of humorist.

MIRABELL: And this is the sum of what you could collect last night?

PETULANT: The quintessence. Maybe Witwoud knows more, he staid longer. Besides, they never mind him; they say anything before him.

MIRABELL: I thought you had been the greatest favorite.

PETULANT: Aye, *tête-à-tête*, but not in public, because I make remarks.

MIRABELL: You do?

PETULANT: Aye, aye; pox, I'm malicious, man! Now he's soft you know; they are not in awe of him—the fellow's well-bred; he's what you call a what-d'ye-call-'em, a fine gentleman; but he's silly withal.

MIRABELL: I thank you, I know as much as my curiosity requires.—Fainall, are you for the Mall?

FAINALL: Aye, I'll take a turn before dinner.

WITWLOUD: Aye, we'll all walk in the Park; the ladies talked of being there.

MIRABELL: I thought you were obliged to watch for your brother Sir Wilfull's arrival.

WITWLOUD: No, no; he comes to his aunt's, my Lady Wishfort. Pox on him! I shall be troubled with him, too; what shall I do with the fool?

PETULANT: Beg him for his estate, that I may beg you afterwards: and so have but one trouble with you both.

WITWLOUD: Oh, rare Petulant! Thou art as quick as fire in a frosty morning: thou shalt to the Mall with us, and we'll be very severe.

PETULANT: Enough, I'm in a humor to be severe.

MIRABELL: Are you? Pray, then, walk by yourselves: let not us be accessory to your putting the ladies out of countenance with your senseless ribaldry, which you roar out aloud as often as

they pass by you; and when you have made a handsome woman blush, then you think you have been severe.

PETULANT: What, what! Then let 'em either show their innocence by not understanding what they hear, or else show their discretion by not hearing what they would not be thought to understand.

MIRABELL: But hast not thou then sense enough to know that thou oughtest to be most ashamed thyself, when thou hast put another out of countenance?

PETULANT: Not I, by this hand!—I always take blushing either for a sign of guilt, or ill breeding.

MIRABELL: I confess you ought to think so. You are in the right, that you may plead the error of your judgment in defence of your practice.

*Where modesty's ill manners, 'tis but fit
That impudence and malice pass for wit.*

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

St. James's Park.

[Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood.]

MRS. FAINALL: Aye, aye, dear Marwood, if we will be happy, we must find the means in ourselves, and among ourselves. Men are ever in extremes; either doting or averse. While they are lovers, if they have fire and sense, their jealousies are insupportable; and when they cease to love (we ought to think at least) they loathe; they look upon us with horror and distaste; they meet us like the ghosts of what we were, and as such, fly from us.

MRS. MARWOOD: True, 'tis an unhappy circumstance of life, that love should ever die before us; and that the man so often should outlive the lover. But say what

you will, 'tis better to be left than never to have been loved. To pass our youth in dull indifference, to refuse the sweets of life because they once must leave us, is as preposterous as to wish to have been born old, because we one day must be old. For my part, my youth may wear and waste, but it shall never rust in my possession.

MRS. FAINALL: Then it seems you dissemble an aversion to mankind, only in compliance to my mother's humor?

MRS. MARWOOD: Certainly. To be free; I have no taste of those insipid dry discourses, with which our sex of force must entertain themselves, apart from men. We may affect endearments to each other, profess eternal friendships, and seem to dote like lovers; but 'tis not in our natures long to persevere. Love will resume his empire in our breasts; and every heart, or soon or late, receive and readmit him as its lawful tyrant.

MRS. FAINALL: Bless me, how have I been deceived! Why, you profess a libertine.

MRS. MARWOOD: You see my friendship by my freedom. Come, be as sincere, acknowledge that your sentiments agree with mine.

MRS. FAINALL: Never!

MRS. MARWOOD: You hate mankind?

MRS. FAINALL: Heartily, inveterately.

MRS. MARWOOD: Your husband?

MRS. FAINALL: Most transcendently; ay, though I say it, meritoriously.

MRS. MARWOOD: Give me your hand upon it.

MRS. FAINALL: There.

MRS. MARWOOD: I join with you; what I have said has been to try you.

MRS. FAINALL: Is it possible? Dost thou hate those vipers, men?

MRS. MARWOOD: I have done hating 'em, and am now come to despise 'em; the

next thing I have to do, is eternally to forget 'em.

MRS. FAINALL: There spoke the spirit of an Amazon, a Penthesilea!

MRS. MARWOOD: And yet I am thinking sometimes to carry my aversion further.

MRS. FAINALL: How?

MRS. MARWOOD: Faith, by marrying; if I could but find one that loved me very well, and would be thoroughly sensible of ill usage, I think I should do myself the violence of undergoing the ceremony.

MRS. FAINALL: You would not make him a cuckold?

MRS. MARWOOD: No; but I'd make him believe I did, and that's as bad.

MRS. FAINALL: Why, had not you as good do it?

MRS. MARWOOD: Oh! if he should ever discover it, he would then know the worst, and be out of his pain; but I would have him ever to continue upon the rack of fear and jealousy.

MRS. FAINALL: Ingenious mischief! would thou wert married to Mirabell.

MRS. MARWOOD: Would I were!

MRS. FAINALL: You change color.

MRS. MARWOOD: Because I hate him.

MRS. FAINALL: So do I; but I can hear him named. But what reason have you to hate him in particular?

MRS. MARWOOD: I never loved him; he is, and always was, insufferably proud.

MRS. FAINALL: By the reason you give for your aversion, one would think it dissembled; for you have laid a fault to his charge, of which his enemies must acquit him.

MRS. MARWOOD: Oh, then it seems you are one of his favorable enemies! Methinks you look a little pale, and now you flush again.

MRS. FAINALL: Do I? I think I am a little sick o' the sudden.

Mrs. MARWOOD: What ails you?

Mrs. FAINALL: My husband. Don't you see him? He turned short upon me un-awares, and has almost overcome me.

[Enter Fainall and Mirabell]

Mrs. MARWOOD. Ha! ha! ha! He comes opportunely for you.

Mrs. FAINALL: For you, for he has brought Mirabell with him.

FAINALL: My dear!

Mrs. FAINALL: My soul!

FAINALL: You don't look well to-day, child.

Mrs. FAINALL: D'yc think so?

MIRABELL: He is the only man that does, madam.

Mrs. FAINALL: The only man that would tell me so at least; and the only man from whom I could hear it without mortification.

FAINALL: Oh, my dear, I am satisfied of your tenderness; I know you cannot resent anything from me; especially what is an effect of my concern.

Mrs. FAINALL: Mr. Mirabell, my mother interrupted you in a pleasant relation last night; I would fain hear it out.

MIRABELL: The persons concerned in that affair have yet a tolerable reputation.—I am afraid Mr. Fainall will be censorious.

Mrs. FAINALL: He has a humor more prevailing than his curiosity, and will willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story, to avoid giving an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife. This way, Mr. Mirabell, and I dare promise you will oblige us both.

[Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell]

FAINALL: Excellent creature! Well, sure if I should live to be rid of my wife, I should be a miserable man.

Mrs. MARWOOD: Aye!

FAINALL: For having only that one hope, the accomplishment of it, of consequence,

must put an end to all my hopes; and what a wretch is he who must survive his hopes! Nothing remains when that day comes, but to sit down and weep like Alexander, when he wanted other worlds to conquer.

Mrs. MARWOOD: Will you not follow 'em?

FAINALL: Faith, I think not.

Mrs. MARWOOD: Pray let us; I have a reason.

FAINALL: You are not jealous?

Mrs. MARWOOD: Of whom?

FAINALL: Of Mirabell.

Mrs. MARWOOD: If I am, is it inconsistent with my love to you that I am tender of your honor?

FAINALL: You would intimate, then, as if there were a fellow-feeling between my wife and him.

Mrs. MARWOOD: I think she does not hate him to that degree she would be thought

FAINALL: But he, I fear, is too insensible

Mrs. MARWOOD: It may be you are deceived.

FAINALL: It may be so. I do now begin to apprehend it.

Mrs. MARWOOD: What?

FAINALL: That I have been deceived, madam, and you are false.

Mrs. MARWOOD: That I am false! What mean you?

FAINALL: To let you know I see through all your little arts.—Come, you both love him; and both have equally dissembled your aversion. Your mutual jealousies of one another have made you clash till you have both struck fire. I have seen the warm confession reddening on your cheeks, and sparkling from your eyes.

Mrs. MARWOOD: You do me wrong.

FAINALL: I do not. 'Twas for my ease to oversee and wilfully neglect the gross advances made him by my wife; that by permitting her to be engaged, I might

continue unsuspected in my pleasures; and take you oftener to my arms in full security. But could you think, because the nodding husband would not wake, that e'er the watchful lover slept?

MRS. MARWOOD: And wherewithal can you reproach me?

FAINALL: With infidelity, with loving another, with love of Mirabell.

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Tis false! I challenge you to show an instance than can confirm your groundless accusation. I hate him.

FAINALL: And wherefore do you hate him? He is insensible, and your resentment follows his neglect. An instance! the injuries you have done him are a proof: your interposing in his love. What cause had you to make discoveries of his pretended passion? To undeceive the credulous aunt, and be the officious obstacle of his match with Millamant?

MRS. MARWOOD: My obligations to my lady urged me; I had professed a friendship to her; and could not see her easy nature so abused by that dissembler.

FAINALL: What, was it conscience, then? Professed a friendship! Oh, the pious friendships of the female sex!

MRS. MARWOOD: More tender, more sincere, and more enduring than all the vain and empty vows of men, whether professing love to us or mutual faith to one another.

FAINALL: Ha! ha! ha! You are my wife's friend, too.

MRS. MARWOOD: Shame and ingratitude! Do you reproach me? You, you upbraid me? Have I been false to her, through strict fidelity to you, and sacrificed my friendship to keep my love inviolate? And have you the baseness to charge me with the guilt, unmindful of the merit? To you it should be meritorious, that I have been vicious: and

do you reflect that guilt upon me, which should lie buried in your bosom?

FAINALL: You misinterpret my reproof. I meant but to remind you of the slight account you once could make of strictest ties, when set in competition with your love to me.

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Tis false, you urged it with deliberate malice! 'twas spoken in scorn, and I never will forgive it.

FAINALL: Your guilt, not your resentment, begets your rage. If yet you loved, you could forgive a jealousy: but you are stung to find you are discovered.

MRS. MARWOOD: It shall be all discovered. You too shall be discovered; be sure you shall. I can but be exposed.—If I do it myself I shall prevent your baseness.

FAINALL: Why, what will you do?

MRS. MARWOOD: Disclose it to your wife; own what has passed between us.

FAINALL: Frenzy!

MRS. MARWOOD: By all my wrongs I'll do't! —I'll publish to the world the injuries you have done me, both in my fame and fortune! With both I trusted you, you bankrupt in honor, as indigent of wealth.

FAINALL: Your fame I have preserved: your fortune has been bestowed: as the prodigality of your love would have it, in pleasures which we both have shared. Yet, had not you been false, I had ere this repaid it—'tis true—had you permitted Mirabell with Millamant to have stolen their marriage, my lady had been incensed beyond all means of reconciliation: Millamant had forfeited the moiety of her fortune; which then would have descended to my wife; and wherefore did I marry, but to make lawful prize of a rich widow's wealth, and squander it on love and you?

MRS. MARWOOD: Deceit and frivolous pretence!

FAINALL: Death, am I not married? What's pretence? Am I not imprisoned, fettered? Have I not a wife? nay a wife that was a widow, a young widow, a handsome widow; and would be again a widow, but that I have a heart of proof, and something of a constitution to bustle through the ways of wedlock and this world! Will you yet be reconciled to truth and me?

MRS. MARWOOD: Impossible. Truth and you are inconsistent: I hate you, and shall for ever.

FAINALL: For loving you?

MRS. MARWOOD: I loathe the name of love after such usage; and next to the guilt with which you would asperse me, I scorn you most. Farewell!

FAINALL: Nay, we must not part thus.

MRS. MARWOOD: Let me go.

FAINALL: Come, I'm sorry.

MRS. MARWOOD: I care not—let me go—break my hands, do—I'd leave 'em to get loose.

FAINALL: I would not hurt you for the world. Have I no other hold to keep you here?

MRS. MARWOOD: Well, I have deserved it all.

FAINALL: You know I love you.

MRS. MARWOOD: Poor dissembling!—Oh, that—well, it is not yet—

FAINALL: What? What is it not? What is it not yet? It is not yet too late—

MRS. MARWOOD: No, it is not yet too late—I have that comfort.

FAINALL: It is, to love another.

MRS. MARWOOD: But not to loathe, detest, abhor mankind, myself, and the whole treacherous world.

FAINALL: Nay, this is extravagance.—Come, I ask your pardon—no tears—I was to blame, I could not love you and be easy in my doubts. Pray forbear—I believe you; I'm convinced I've done you

wrong; and anyway, every way will make amends. I'll hate my wife yet more, damn her! I'll part with her, rob her of all she's worth, and we'll retire somewhere, anywhere, to another world. I'll marry thee—be pacified.—'Sdeath they come, hide your face, your tears—you have a mask, wear it a moment. This way, this way—be persuaded.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE II.

The same.

[*Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall*]

MRS. FAINALL: They are here yet.

MIRABELL: They are turning into the other walk.

MRS. FAINALL: While I only hated my husband, I could bear to see him; but since I have despised him, he's too offensive.

MIRABELL: Oh, you should hate with prudence

MRS. FAINALL: Yes, for I have loved with indiscretion.

MIRABELL: You should have just so much disgust for your husband, as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover.

MRS. FAINALL: You have been the cause that I have loved without bounds, and would you set limits to that aversion of which you have been the occasion? Why did you make me marry this man?

MIRABELL: Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? To save that idol, reputation. If the familiarities of our loves had produced that consequence of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father's name with credit, but on a husband? I knew Fainall to be a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and a designing lover; yet one whose wit and outward

fair behavior have gained a reputation with the town enough to make that woman stand excused who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses. A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose. When you are weary of him, you know your remedy.

Mrs. FAINALL: I ought to stand in some degree of credit with you, Mirabell.

MIRABELL: In justice to you, I have made you privy to my whole design, and put it in your power to ruin or advance my fortune

Mrs. FAINALL: Whom have you instructed to represent your pretended uncle?

MIRABELL: Waitwell, my servant.

Mrs. FAINALL: He is an humble servant to Foible, my mother's woman, and may win her to your interest.

MIRABELL: Care is taken for that—she is won and worn by this time. They were married this morning.

Mrs. FAINALL: Who?

MIRABELL: Waitwell and Foible. I would not tempt any servant to betray me by trusting him too far. If your mother, in hopes to ruin me, should consent to marry my pretended uncle, he might, like *Mosca* in *The Fox*, stand upon terms; so I made him sure beforehand.

Mrs. FAINALL: So if my poor mother is caught in a contact, you will discover the imposture betimes, and release her by producing a certificate of her gallant's former marriage?

MIRABELL: Yes, upon condition that she consent to my marriage with her niece, and surrender the moiety of her fortune in her possession.

Mrs. FAINALL: She talked last night of endeavoring at a match between Millamant and your uncle.

MIRABELL: That was by Foible's direction, and my instruction, that she might seem to carry it more privately.

Mrs. FAINALL: Well, I have an opinion of your success; for I believe my lady will do anything to get a husband; and when she has this, which you have provided for her, I suppose she will submit to anything to get rid of him.

MIRABELL: Yes, I think the good lady would marry anything that resembled a man, though 'twere no more than what a butler could pinch out of a napkin.

Mrs. FAINALL: Female frailty! We must all come to it, if we live to be old, and feel the craving of a false appetite when the true is decayed.

MIRABELL: An old woman's appetite is depraved like that of a girl—'tis the green sickness of a second childhood; and, like the faint offer of a latter spring, serves but to usher in the fall, and withers in an affected bloom.

Mrs. FAINALL: Here's your mistress.

[Enter Mrs. Millamant, Witwoud and Mincing]

MIRABELL: Here she comes, i'faith, full sail, with her fan spread and her streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders; ha, no, I cry her mercy!

Mrs. FAINALL: I see but one poor empty sculler; and he tows her woman after him.

MIRABELL: [To Mrs. Millamant] You seem to be unattended, madam—you used to have the *beau monde* throng after you; and a flock of gay fine perukes hovering around you.

WITWOLD: Like moths about a candle.—I had like to have lost my comparison for want of breath.

Mrs. MILLAMANT: Oh, I have denied myself airs to-day, I have walked as fast through the crowd.

WITWOUND: As a favorite just disgraced;
and with as few followers.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Dear Mr. Witwound,
truce with your similitudes; for I'm as
sick of 'em—

WITWOUND: As a physician of a good air.
—I cannot help it, madam, though 'tis
against myself.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Yet, again! Mincing,
stand between me and his wit

WITWOUND: Do, Mrs. Mincing, like a screen
before a great fire.—I confess I do blaze
to-day; I am too bright.

MRS. FAINALL: But, dear Millamant, why
were you so long?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Long! Lord, have I not
made violent haste; I have asked every
living thing I met for you; I have in-
quired after you, as after a new fashion.

WITWOUND: Madam, truce with your simili-
tudes.—No, you met her husband, and
did not ask him for her.

MRS. MILLAMANT: By your leave, Witwound,
that were like inquiring after an old
fashion, to ask a husband for his wife.

WITWOUND: Hum, a hit! a hit! a palpable
hit! I confess it.

MRS. FAINALL: You were dressed before I
came abroad.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, that's true.—Oh,
but then I had—Mincing, what had I?
Why was I so long?

MINCING: O mem, your la'ship stayed to
peruse a packet of letters.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, aye, letters—I had
letters—I am persecuted with letters—
I hate letters.—Nobody knows how to
write letters, and yet one has 'em, one
does not know why. They serve one to
pin up one's hair.

WITWOUND: Is that the way? Pray, madam,
do you pin up your hair with all your
letters? I find I must keep copies.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Only with those in
verse, Mr. Witwound; I never pin up my

hair with prose.—I think I tried once,
Mincing.

MINCING: O mem, I shall never forget it.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, poor Mincing tift
and tift all the morning.

MINCING: Till I had the cramp in my
fingers, I'll vow, mem: and all to no
purpose. But when your la'ship pins it
up with poetry, it sits so pleasant the
next day as anything, and is so pure
and so crips.

WITWOUND: Indeed, so crips?

MINCING: You're such a critic, Mr. Wit-
wound.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Mirabell, did you take
exceptions last night? Oh, aye, and went
away.—Now I think on't I'm angry—
no, now I think on't I'm pleased—for I
believe I gave you some pain.

MIRABELL: Does that please you?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Infinitely; I love to give
pain.

MIRABELL: You would affect a cruelty
which is not in your nature; your true
vanity is in the power of pleasing.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, I ask you pardon
for that—one's cruelty is one's power;
and when one parts with one's cruelty,
one parts with one's power; and when
one has parted with that, I fancy one's
old and ugly.

MIRABELL: Aye, aye, suffer your cruelty to
ruin the object of your power, to de-
stroy your lover—and then how vain,
how lost a thing you'll be! Nay, 'tis
true: you are no longer handsome when
you've lost your lover; your beauty dies
upon the instant; for beauty is the lover's
gift; 'tis he bestows your charms—your
glass is all a cheat. The ugly and the
old, whom the looking-glass mortifies,
yet after commendation can be flattered
by it, and discover beauties in it; for
that reflects our praises, rather than your
face.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, the vanity of these men!—Fainall, d'ye hear him? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome! Now you must know they could not commend one, if one was not handsome. Beauty the lover's gift!—Lord, what is a lover, that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases: and then, if one pleases, one makes more.

WITWOUND: Very pretty. Why, you make no more of making of lovers, madam, than of making so many card-matches.

MRS. MILLAMANT. One no more owes one's beauty to a lover, than one's wit to an echo. They can but reflect what we look and say; vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

MIRABELL: Yet to those two vain empty things you owe the two greatest pleasures of your life.

MRS. MILLAMANT. How so?

MIRABELL. To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised; and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk

WITWOUND: But I know a lady that loves talking so incessantly, she won't give an echo fair play; she has that everlasting rotation of tongue, that an echo must wait till she dies, before it can catch her last words.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, fiction!—Fainall, let us leave these men.

MIRABELL. [*Aside to Mrs. Fainall*] Draw off Witwound.

MRS. FAINALL: Immediately.—I have a word or two for Mr. Witwound.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Witwound*]

MIRABELL: I would beg a little private audience, too.—You had the tyranny to deny me last night; though you knew I came to impart a secret to you that concerned my love.

MRS. MILLAMANT: You saw I was engaged.

MIRABELL: Unkind! You had the leisure to entertain a herd of fools; things who visit you from their excessive idleness; bestowing on your easiness that time which is the encumbrance of their lives. How can you find delight in such society? It is impossible they should admire you, they are not capable or if they were, it should be to you as a mortification; for sure to please a fool is some degree of folly.

MRS. MILLAMANT: I please myself: besides, sometimes to converse with fools is for my health.

MIRABELL: Your health! Is there a worse disease than the conversation of fools?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Yes, the vapors; fools are physic for it, next to *asafoetida*.

MIRABELL: You are not in a course of fools?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Mirabell, if you persist in this offensive freedom, you'll displease me.—I think I must resolve, after all, not to have you; we shan't agree.

MIRABELL. Not in our physic, it may be.

MRS. MILLAMANT: And yet our distemper, in all likelihood, will be the same; for we shall be sick of one another. I shan't endure to be reprimanded nor instructed 'tis so dull to act always by advice, and so tedious to be told of one's faults—I can't bear it. Well, I won't have you, Mirabell,—I'm resolved—I think—you may go.—Ha! ha! ha! What would you give, that you could help loving me?

MIRABELL: I would give something that you did not know I could not help it.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Come, don't look grave, then. Well, what do you say to me?

MIRABELL: I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman by plain dealing and sincerity.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Sententious Mirabell! —Prithee, don't look with that violent and inflexible wise face, like Solomon at the dividing of the child in an old tapestry hanging.

MIRABELL: You are merry, madam, but I would persuade you for a moment to be serious.

MRS. MILLAMANT: What, with that face? No, if you keep your countenance, 'tis impossible I should hold mine. Well, after all, there is something very moving in a lovesick face. Ha! ha! ha! — Well, I won't laugh, don't be peevish— Heigho! now I'll be melancholy, as melancholy as a watch-light. Well, Mirabell, if ever you will win me woo me now.—Nay, if you are so tedious, fare you well—I see they are walking away.

MIRABELL: Can you not find in the variety of your disposition one moment—

MRS. MILLAMANT: To hear you tell me Foible's married, and your plot like to speed—no.

MIRABELL: But how came you to know it?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Without the help of the devil, you can't imagine; unless she should tell me herself. Which of the two it may have been I will leave you to consider; and when you have done thinking of that, think of me.

[Exit]

MIRABELL: I have something more.—Gone! —Think of you? To think of a whirlwind, though't were in a whirlwind, were a case of more steady contemplation; a very tranquillity of mind and mansion. A fellow that lives in a windmill, has not a more whimsical dwelling than the heart of a man that is lodged in a woman. There is no point of the compass to which they cannot turn, and by which they are not turned; and by one as well as another; for motion, not method, is their occupation. To know

this, and yet continue to be in love, is to be made wise from the dictates of reason, and yet persevere to play the fool by the force of instinct.—Oh, here come my pair of turtles!—What, billing so sweetly! Is not Valentine's Day over with you yet? [*Enter Waitwell and Foible*] Sirrah, Waitwell, why sure you think you were married for your own recreation, and not for my conveniency.

WAITWELL: Your pardon, sir With submission, we have indeed been solacing in lawful delights; but still with an eye to business, sir. I have instructed her as well as I could. If she can take your directions as readily as my instructions, sir, your affairs are in a prosperous way.

MIRABELL: Give you joy, Mrs. Foible.

FOIBLE: Oh, 'las, sir, I'm so ashamed!— I'm afraid my lady has been in a thousand inquietudes for me. But I protest, sir, I made as much haste as I could.

WAITWELL: That she did indeed, sir. It was my fault that she did not make more.

MIRABELL: That I believe.

FOIBLE: But I told my lady as you instructed me, sir, that I had a prospect of seeing Sir Rowland your uncle; and that I would put her ladyship's picture in my pocket to show him; which I'll be sure to say has made him so enamored of her beauty, that he burns with impatience to lie at her ladyship's feet, and worship the original.

MIRABELL: Excellent Foible! Matrimony has made you eloquent in love.

WAITWELL: I think she has profited, sir, I think so.

FOIBLE: You have seen Madam Millamant, sir?

MIRABELL: Yes.

FOIBLE: I told her, sir, because I did not know that you might find an oppor-

tunity; she had so much company last night.

MIRABELL: Your diligence will merit more—in the meantime—

[Gives money]

FOIBLE: O dear sir, your humble servant!

WAITWELL: Spouse.

MIRABELL: Stand off, sir, not a penny!—

Go on and prosper, Foible—the lease shall be made good, and the farm stocked, if we succeed.

FOIBLE: I don't question your generosity, sir; and you need not doubt of success. If you have no more commands, sir, I'll be gone; I'm sure my lady is at her toilet, and can't dress till I come.—Oh, dear, I'm sure that [looking out] was Mrs. Marwood that went by in a mask! If she has seen me with you I'm sure she'll tell my lady. I'll make haste home and prevent her. Your servant, sir.—B'w'y, Waitwell.

[Exit]

WAITWELL: Sir Rowland, if you please.—

The jade's so pert upon her preferment she forgets herself.

MIRABELL: Come, sir, will you endeavor to forget yourself, and transform into Sir Rowland?

WAITWELL: Why, sir, it will be impossible I should remember myself.—Married, knighted, and attended all in one day! 'tis enough to make any man forget himself. The difficulty will be how to recover my acquaintance and familiarity with my former self, and fall from my transformation to a reformation into Waitwell. Nay, I shan't be quite the same Waitwell neither; for now, I remember me, I'm married, and can't be my own man again.

Aye, there's my grief; that's the sad change of life,

To lose my title, and yet keep my wife.

[Exeunt]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[Lady Wishfort at her toilet, Peg waiting]

LADY WISHFORT: Merciful! No news of Foible yet?

PEG: No, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: I have no more patience.

—If I have not fretted myself till I am pale again, there's no veracity in me! Fetch me the red—the red, do you hear, sweetheart?—An arrant ash-color, as I am a person! Look you how this wench stirs!—Why dost thou not fetch me a little red? Didst thou not hear me, Mopus?

PEG: The red ratafia, does your ladyship mean, or the cherry-brandy?

LADY WISHFORT: Ratafia, fool! No, fool. Not the ratafia, fool—grant me patience!—I mean the Spanish paper, idiot—complexion, darling. Paint, paint, paint, dost thou understand that, changeling, dangling thy hands like hobbins before thee? Why dost thou not stir, puppet? Thou wooden thing upon wires!

PEG: Lord, madam, your ladyship is so impatient!—I cannot come at the paint, madam; Mrs. Foible has locked it up, and carried the key with her.

LADY WISHFORT: A pox take you both!—Fetch me the cherry-brandy then. [Exit Peg] I'm as pale and as faint, I look like Mrs. Qualmsick, the curate's wife, that's always breeding.—Wench, come, come, wench, what art thou doing? sipping, tasting?—Save thee, dost thou not know the bottle?

[Re-enter Peg with a bottle and china cup]

PEG: Madam, I was looking for a cup.

LADY WISHFORT: A cup, save thee! and what a cup hast thou brought!—Dost

thou take me for a fairy, to drink out of an acorn? Why didst thou not bring thy thimble? Hast thou ne'er a brass thimble clinking in thy pocket with a bit of nutmeg?—I warrant thee. Come, fill, fill!—So—again.—[*Knocking at the door*—See who that is.—Set down the bottle first—here, here, under the table.—What, wouldst thou go with the bottle in thy hand, like a tapster? As I am a person, this wench has lived in an inn upon the road, before she came to me, like Maritornes the Asturian in *Don Quixote*!—No Foible yet?

PEG: No, madam; Mrs. Marwood.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, Marwood; let her come in.—Come in, good Marwood.

[*Enter Mrs Marwood*]

MRS. MARWOOD: I'm surprised to find your ladyship in dishabille at this time of day.

LADY WISHFORT: Foible's a lost thing; has been abroad since morning, and never heard of since.

MRS. MARWOOD: I saw her but now, as I came masked through the park, in conference with Mirabell.

LADY WISHFORT: With Mirabell!—You call my blood into my face, with mentioning that traitor. She durst not have the confidence! I sent her to negotiate an affair, in which, if I'm detected, I'm undone. If that wheedling villain has wrought upon Foible to detect me, I'm ruined. O my dear friend, I'm a wretch of wretches if I'm detected.

MRS. MARWOOD: O madam, you cannot suspect Mrs. Foible's integrity!

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, he carries poison in his tongue that would corrupt integrity itself! If she has given him an opportunity, she has as good as put her integrity into his hands. Ah, dear Marwood, what's integrity to an opportunity?—Hark! I hear her!—dear friend,

retire into my closet, that I may examine her with more freedom.—You'll pardon me, dear friend; I can make bold with you.—There are books over the chimney—Quarles and Prynne, and *The Short View of the Stage*, with Bunyan's works, to entertain you.—[*To Peg*—Go, you thing, and send her in.

[*Exeunt Mrs Marwood and Peg*]

[*Enter Foible*]

LADY WISHFORT: O Foible, where hast thou been? What hast thou been doing?

FOIBLE: Madam, I have seen the party.

LADY WISHFORT: But what hast thou done?

FOIBLE: Nay, 'tis your ladyship has done, and are to do; I have only promised. But a man so enamored—so transported!—Well, here it is, all that is left; all that is not kissed away.—Well, if worshipping of pictures be a sin—poor Sir Rowland, I say.

LADY WISHFORT: The miniature has been counted like—but hast thou not betrayed me, Foible? Hast thou not detected me to that faithless Mirabell?—What hadst thou to do with him in the Park? Answer me, has he got nothing out of thee?

FOIBLE: [*Aside*] So the devil has been beforehand with me. What shall I say?—[*Aloud*]—Alas, madam, could I help it, if I met that confident thing? Was I in fault? If you had heard how he used me, and all upon your ladyship's account, I'm sure you would not suspect my fidelity. Nay, if that had been the worst, I could have borne; but he had a fling at your ladyship, too; and then I could not hold; but 'faith I gave him his own.

LADY WISHFORT: Me? What did the filthy fellow say?

FOIBLE: O madam! 'tis a shame to say what he said—with his taunts and his fleers,

tossing up his nose. **Humph!** (says he) what, you are a-hatching some plot (says he), you are so early abroad, or catering (says he), ferreting for some disbanded officer, I warrant.—Half-pay is but thin subsistence (says he)—well, what pension does your lady propose? Let me see (says he), what, she must come down pretty deep now, she's superannuated (says he) and—

LADY WISHFORT. Odds my life, I'll have him, I'll have him murdered! I'll have him poisoned! Where does he eat?—I'll marry a drawer to have him poisoned in his wine. I'll send for Robin from Locket's immediately.

FOIBLE: POISON him! poisoning's too good for him Starve him, madam, starve him: marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited Oh, you would bless yourself to hear what he said!

LADY WISHFORT: A villain! Superannuated!

FOIBLE: **Humph** (says he), I hear you are laying designs against me too (says he) and Mrs. Millamant is to marry my uncle (he does not suspect a word of your ladyship); but (says he) I'll fit you for that I warrant you (says he) I'll hamper you for that (says he); you and your old frippery too (says he); I'll handle you—

LADY WISHFORT: Audacious villain! Handle me! would he durst!—Frippery! old frippery! Was there ever such a foul-mouthed fellow? I'll be married to-morrow, I'll be contracted to-night.

FOIBLE: The sooner the better, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: Will Sir Rowland be here, sayest thou? when, Foible?

FOIBLE: Incontinently, madam. No new sheriff's wife expects the return of her husband after knighthood with that impatience in which Sir Rowland burns for

the dear hour of kissing your ladyship's hand after dinner.

LADY WISHFORT: Frippery! superannuated frippery! I'll frippery the villain; I'll reduce him to frippery and rags! a tatterdemalion! I hope to see him hung with tatters, like a Long-lane penthouse or a gibbet thief. A slander-mouthed railer! I warrant the spendthrift prodigal's in debt as much as the million lottery, or the whole court upon a birthday. I'll spoil his credit with his tailor. Yes, he shall have my niece with her fortune, he shall.

FOIBLE: He! I hope to see him lodge in Ludgate first, and angle into Blackfriars for brass farthings with an old mitten.

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, dear Foible; thank thee for that, dear Foible. He has put me out of all patience. I shall never recompose my features to receive Sir Rowland with any economy of face This wretch has fretted me that I am absolutely decayed Look, Foible.

FOIBLE: Your ladyship has frowned a little too rashly, indeed, madam There are some cracks discernible in the white varnish.

LADY WISHFORT: Let me see the glass.—Cracks, sayest thou?—why, I am errantly flayed—I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes, or I shall never keep up to my picture.

FOIBLE: I warrant you, madam, a little art at once made your picture like you; and now a little of the same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come? Or will he not fail when he does come? Will he be importunate, Foible, and push? For if he should not be importunate, I shall never break decorums—I shall die

with confusion, if I am forced to advance.—Oh, no, I can never advance!—I shall swoon if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy, neither.—I won't give him despair—but a little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring.

FOIBLE: A little scorn becomes your ladyship.

LADY WISHFORT: Yes, but tenderness becomes me best—a sort of dyingness—you see that picture has a sort of a—ha, Foible! a swimmingness in the eyes—yes, I'll look so—my niece affects it; but she wants features. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Let my toilet be removed—I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know; I'll be surprised, I'll be taken by surprise.

FOIBLE: By storm, madam, Sir Rowland's a brisk man.

LADY WISHFORT: Is he! Oh, then he'll importune, if he's a brisk man. I shall save decorums if Sir Rowland importunes. I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums. Oh, I'm glad he's a brisk man. Let my things be removed, good Foible.

[Exit]

[Enter Mrs. Fainall]

MRS. FAINALL: Oh, Foible, I have been in a fright, lest I should come too late! That devil Marwood saw you in the Park with Mirabell, and I'm afraid will discover it to my lady.

FOIBLE: Discover what, madam!

MRS. FAINALL: Nay, nay, put not on that strange face, I am privy to the whole design, and know that Waitwell, to whom thou wert this morning married, is to personate Mirabell's uncle, and as

such, winning my lady, to involve her in those difficulties from which Mirabell only must release her, by his making his conditions to have my cousin and her fortune left to her own disposal.

FOIBLE: O dear madam, I beg your pardon. It was not my confidence in your ladyship that was deficient; but I thought the former good correspondence between your ladyship and Mr. Mirabell might have hindered his communicating this secret.

MRS. FAINALL: Dear Foible, forget that.

FOIBLE: O dear madam, Mr. Mirabell is such a sweet, winning gentleman—but your ladyship is the pattern of generosity.—Sweet lady, to be so good! Mr. Mirabell cannot choose but be grateful. I find your ladyship has his heart still. Now, madam, I can safely tell your ladyship our success; Mrs. Marwood had told my lady; but I warrant I managed myself; I turned it all for the better. I told my lady that Mr. Mirabell railed at her; I laid horrid things to his charge, I'll vow; and my lady is so incensed that she'll be contracted to Sir Rowland tonight, she says; I warrant I worked her up, that he may have her for asking for, as they say of a Welsh maidenhead.

MRS. FAINALL: O fare Foible!

FOIBLE: Madam, I beg your ladyship to acquaint Mr. Mirabell of his success. I would be seen as little as possible to speak to him: besides, I believe Madam Marwood watches me.—She has a month's mind; but I know Mr. Mirabell can't abide her.—John!—[calls] remove my lady's toilet.—Madam, your servant: my lady is so impatient, I fear she'll come for me if I stay.

MRS. FAINALL: I'll go with you up the backstairs, lest I should meet her.

[Exeunt]

 ACT III. SCENE II.

Lady Wishfort's Closet.

[Mrs. Marwood *alone*]

MRS. MARWOOD: Indeed, Mrs. Engine, is it thus with you? Are you become a go-between of this importance? Yes, I shall watch you. Why this wench is the *pusse-partout*, a very master-key to everybody's strong-box. My friend Fainall, have you carried it so swimmingly? I thought there was something in it; but it seems 'tis over with you. Your loathing is not from a want of appetite, then, but from a surfeit. Else you could never be so cool to fall from a principal to be an assistant; to procure for him! A pattern of generosity that, I confess. Well, Mr. Fainall, you have met with your match.—O man, man! woman, woman, the devil's an ass: if I were a painter, I would draw him like an idiot, a driveler with a bib and bells: man should have his head and horns, and woman the rest of him. Poor simple fiend!—"Madam Marwood has a month's mind, but he can't abide her."—"Twere better for him you had not been his confessor in that affair, without you could have kept his counsel closer. I shall not prove another pattern of generosity: he has not obliged me to that with those excesses of himself! and now I'll have none of him. Here comes the good lady, panting ripe; with a heart full of hope, and a head full of care, like any chemist upon the day of projection.

[*Enter* Lady Wishfort]

LADY WISHFORT: Oh dear, Marwood, what shall I say for this rude forgetfulness?—but my dear friend is all goodness.

MRS. MARWOOD: No apologies, dear madam, I have been very well entertained.

LADY WISHFORT: As I'm a person, I am in a very chaos to think I should so forget myself: but I have such an olio of affairs, really I know not what to do.—Foible!—[*Calls*] I expect my nephew, Sir Wilfull, every moment, too.—Why, Foible!—He means to travel for improvement.

MRS. MARWOOD: Methinks Sir Wilfull should rather think of marrying than traveling, at his years. I hear he is turned of forty.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, he's in less danger of being spoiled by his travels—I am against my nephew's marrying too young. It will be time enough when he comes back, and has acquired discretion to choose for himself.

MRS. MARWOOD: Methinks Mrs. Millamant and he would make a very fit match. He may travel afterwards. 'Tis a thing very usual with young gentlemen.

LADY WISHFORT: I promise you I have thought on't—and since 'tis your judgment, I'll think on't again. I assure you I will; I value your judgment extremely. On my word, I'll propose it.

[*Enter* Foible]

LADY WISHFORT: Come, come, Foible—I had forgot my nephew will be here before dinner—I must make haste.

FOIBLE: Mr. Witwoud and Mr. Petulant are come to dine with your ladyship.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, dear, I can't appear till I'm dressed.—Dear Marwood, shall I be free with you again, and beg you to entertain 'em? I'll make all imaginable haste. Dear friend, excuse me.

 ACT III. SCENE III.

A Room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[Mrs. Marwood, Mrs. Millamant and Mincing]

MRS. MILLAMANT: Sure never anything was so unbred as that odious man!—Marwood, your servant.

MRS. MARWOOD: You have a color; what's the matter?

MRS. MILLAMANT: That horrid fellow, Petulant, has provoked me into a flame: I have broken my fan.—Mincing, lend me yours; is not all the powder out of my hair?

MRS. MARWOOD: No. What has he done?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Nay, he has done nothing; he has only talked—nay, he has said nothing neither; but he has contradicted everything that has been said. For my part, I thought Witwoud and he would have quarreled.

MINCING: I vow, mem, I thought once they would have fit.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Well, 'tis a lamentable thing, I swear, that one has not the liberty of choosing one's acquaintance as one does one's clothes.

MRS. MARWOOD: If we had that liberty, we should be as weary of one set of acquaintance, though never so good, as we are of one suit though never so fine. A fool and a doily stuff would now and then find days of grace, and be worn for variety.

MRS. MILLAMANT: I could consent to wear 'em, if they would wear alike; but fools never wear out—they are such *drap de Berri* things without one could give 'em to one's chambermaid after a day or two!

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Twere better so indeed. Or what think you of the playhouse? A fine gay glossy fool should be given

there, like a new masking habit, after the masquerade is over, and we have done with the disguise. For a fool's visit is always a disguise; and never admitted by a woman of wit, but to blind her affair with a lover of sense. If you would but appear barefaced now, and own Mirabell, you might as easily put off Petulant and Witwoud as your hood and scarf. And indeed, 'tis time, for the town has found it; the secret is grown too big for the pretence. 'Tis like Mrs. Primly's great belly; she may lace it down before, but it burnishes on her hips. Indeed, Millamant, you can no more conceal it than my Lady Strammel can her face; that goodly face, which in defiance of her Rhenish wine tea, will not be comprehended in a mask.

MRS. MILLAMANT: I'll take my death, Marwood, you are more censorious than a decayed beauty, or a discarded toast.—Mincing, tell the men they may come up.—My aunt is not dressing here; their folly is less provoking than your malice. [*Exit Mincing*] The town has found it! what has it found? That Mirabell loves me is no more a secret than it is a secret that you discovered it to my aunt, or than the reason why you discovered it is a secret.

MRS. MARWOOD: You are nettled.

MRS. MILLAMANT: You're mistaken. Ridiculous!

MRS. MARWOOD: Indeed, my dear, you'll tear another fan, if you don't mitigate those violent airs.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, silly! ha! ha! ha! I could laugh immoderately. Poor Mirabell! His constancy to me has quite destroyed his complaisance for all the world beside. I swear, I never enjoined it him to be so coy—If I had the vanity to think he would obey me, I would

command him to show more gallantry—'tis hardly well-bred to be so particular on one hand, and so insensible on the other. But I despair to prevail, and so let him follow his own way. Ha! ha! ha! pardon me, dear creature, I must laugh, ha! ha! ha! though I grant you 'tis a little barbarous, ha! ha! ha!

MRS. MARWOOD: What pity 'tis so much fine raillery, and delivered with so significant gesture, should be so unhappily directed to miscarry!

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ha! dear creature, I ask your pardon—I swear I did not mind you.

MRS. MARWOOD: Mr. Mirabell and you both may think it a thing impossible, when I shall tell him by telling you—

MRS. MILLAMANT: O dear, what? for it is the same thing if I hear it—ha! ha! ha!

MRS. MARWOOD: That I detest him, hate him, madam.

MRS. MILLAMANT: O madam, why so do I—and yet the creature loves me, ha! ha! ha! How can one forbear laughing to think of it.—I am a sibyl if I am not amazed to think what he can see in me. I'll take my death, I think you are handsomer—and within a year or two as young—if you could but stay for me, I should overtake you—but that cannot be.—Well, that thought makes me melancholic—Now, I'll be sad.

MRS. MARWOOD: Your merry note may be changed sooner than you think.

MRS. MILLAMANT: D'ye say so? Then I'm resolved I'll have a song to keep up my spirits.

[*Re-enter Mincing*]

MINCING: The gentlemen stay but to comb, madam, and will wait on you.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Desire Mrs. —that is in the next room to sing the song I would have learned yesterday.—You shall hear it, madam—not that there's any great

matter in it—but 'tis agreeable to my humor.

SONG

*"Love's but the frailty of the mind,
When 'tis not with ambition joined;
A sickly flame, which, if not fed, expires,
And feeding, wastes in self-consuming
fires.*

*"'Tis not to wound a wanton boy
Or amorous youth, that gives the joy;
But 'tis the glory to have pierced a swain,
For whom inferior beauties sighed in vain.*

*"Then I alone the conquest prize,
When I insult a rival's eyes!
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart, which others bleed for, bleed
for me."*

[*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*]

MRS. MILLAMANT: Is your animosity composed, gentlemen?

WITWOD: Raillery, raillery, madam; we have no animosity—we hit off a little wit now and then, but no animosity.—The falling out of wits is like the falling out of lovers: we agree in the main, like treble and bass.—Ha, Petulant?

PETULANT: Aye, in the main—but when I have a humor to contradict—

WITWOD: Aye, when he has a humor to contradict, then I contradict, too. What, I know my cue. Then we contradict one another like two battledores; for contradictions beget one another like Jews.

PETULANT: If he says black's black—if I have a humor to say 'tis blue—let that pass—all's one for that. If I have a humor to prove it, it must be granted.

WITWOD: Not positively must—but it may—it may.

PETULANT: Yes, it positively must, upon proof positive.

WITWOD: Aye, upon proof positive it must; but upon proof presumptive it

only may.—That's a logical distinction now, madam.

MRS. MARWOOD: I perceive your debates are of importance, and very learnedly handled.

PETULANT: Importance is one thing, and learning's another; but a debate's a debate, that I assert.

WITWOUND: Petulant's an enemy to learning; he relies altogether on his parts.

PELULANT: No, I'm no enemy to learning; it hurts not me.

MRS. MARWOOD: That's a sign indeed it's no enemy to you.

PETULANT: No, no, it's no enemy to anybody but them that have it.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Well, an illiterate man's my aversion: I wonder at the impudence of any illiterate man to offer to make love.

WITWOUND: That I confess I wonder at too.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah! to marry an ignorant that can hardly read or write.

PELULANT: Why should a man be any further from being married, though he can't read, than he is from being hanged? The ordinary's paid for setting the psalm, and the parish priest for reading the ceremony. And for the rest which is to follow in both cases, a man may do it without book—so all's one for that.

MRS. MILLAMANT: D'ye hear the creature?—Lord, here's company, I'll be gone.

[Exit]

[Enter Sir Wilfull Witwound in a riding dress, followed by Footman]

WITWOUND: In the name of Bartlemew and his fair, what have we here?

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Tis your brother, I fancy. Don't you know him?

WITWOUND: Not I.—Yes, I think it is he—I've almost forgot him; I have not seen him since the Revolution.

FOOTMAN: [To Sir Wilfull] Sir, my lady's dressing. Here's company; if you please to walk in, in the meantime.

SIR WILFULL: Dressing! What, it's but morning here I warrant, with you in London; we should count it towards afternoon in our parts, down in Shropshire.—Why then, belike, my aunt han't dined yet, ha, friend?

FOOTMAN: Your aunt, sir?

SIR WILFULL: My aunt, sir! Yes, my aunt, sir, and your lady, sir; your lady is my aunt, sir.—Why, what dost thou not know me, friend? why then send somebody hither that does. How long hast thou lived with thy lady, fellow, ha?

FOOTMAN: A week, sir; longer than anybody in the house, except my lady's woman.

SIR WILFULL: Why then belike thou dost not know thy lady, if thou seest her, ha, friend?

FOOTMAN: Why, truly, sir, I cannot safely swear to her face in a morning, before she is dressed. 'Tis like I may give a shrewd guess at her by this time.

SIR WILFULL: Well, prithee try what thou canst do; if thou canst not guess, inquire her out, dost hear, fellow? and tell her, her nephew, Sir Wilfull Witwound, is in the house.

FOOTMAN: I shall, sir.

SIR WILFULL: Hold ye, hear me, friend; a word with you in your ear; prithee who are these gallants?

FOOTMAN: Really, sir, I can't tell; here come so many here, 'tis hard to know 'em all.

[Exit]

SIR WILFULL: Oons, this fellow knows less than a starling; I don't think a' knows his own name.

MRS. MARWOOD: Mr. Witwound, your brother is not behindhand in forgetfulness—I fancy he has forgot you too.

WITWOUND: I hope so—the devil take him that remembers first, I say.

SIR WILFULL: Save you, gentlemen and lady!

MRS. MARWOOD: For shame, Mr. Witwound; why don't you speak to him?—And you, sir.

WITWOUND: Petulant, speak.

PETULANT: And you, sir.

SIR WILFULL: No offence, I hope.

[*Salutes Mrs. Marwood*]

MRS. MARWOOD: No sure, sir.

WITWOUND: This is a vile dog, I see that already. No offence! ha! ha! ha! To him; to him, Petulant, smoke him.

PETULANT: It seems as if you had come a journey, sir; hem, hem.

[*Surveying him round*]

SIR WILFULL: Very likely, sir, that it may seem so.

PETULANT: No offence, I hope, sir.

WITWOUND: Smoke the boots, the boots; Petulant, the boots—ha! ha! ha!

SIR WILFULL: May be not, sir; thereafter, as 'tis meant, sir.

PETULANT: Sir, I presume upon the information of your boots.

SIR WILFULL: Why, 'tis like you may, sir: if you are not satisfied with the information of my boots, sir, if you will step to the stable, you may inquire further of my horse, sir.

PETULANT: Your horse, sir! your horse is an ass, sir!

SIR WILFULL: Do you speak by way of offence, sir?

MRS. MARWOOD: The gentleman's merry, that's all, sir.—[*Aside*] S'life, we shall have a quarrel betwixt an horse and an ass before they find one another out.—[*Aloud*] You must not take anything amiss from your friends, sir. You are among your friends here, though it may be you don't know it.—If I am not mistaken, you are Sir Wilfull Witwound.

SIR WILFULL: Right, lady; I am Sir Wilfull Witwound, so I write myself; no offence to anybody, I hope; and nephew to the Lady Wishfort of this mansion.

MRS. MARWOOD: Don't you know this gentleman, sir?

SIR WILFULL: Hum! what, sure 'tis not—yea by'r Lady, but 'tis—s'heart, I know not whether 'tis or no—yea, but 'tis, by the Wrekin. Brother Anthony! what Tony, i'faith! what, dost thou not know me? By'r Lady, nor I thee, thou art so becravated, and so beperiwigged.—S'heart, why dost not speak? art thou overjoyed?

WITWOUND: Odsso, brother, is it you? your servant, brother.

SIR WILFULL: Your servant! why yours, sir. Your servant again—s'heart, and your friend and servant to that—and a—and a—flap-dragon for your service, sir! and a hare's foot and a hare's scut for your service, sir! an you be so cold and so courtly.

WITWOUND: No offence, I hope, brother.

SIR WILFULL: S'heart, sir, but there is, and much offence!—A pox, is this your inns o' court breeding, not to know your friends and your relations, your elders and your betters?

WITWOUND: Why, brother Wilfull of Salop, you may be as short as a Shrewsbury-cake, if you please. But I tell you 'tis not modish to know relations in town: you think you're in the country, where great lubberly brothers slabber and kiss one another when they meet, like a call of serjeants—and 'tis not the fashion here; 'tis not indeed, dear brother.

SIR WILFULL: The fashion's a fool; and you're a fop, dear brother. S'heart, I've suspected this—by'r Lady, I conjectured you were a fop, since you began to change the style of your letters, and write on a scrap of paper gilt round

the edges, no bigger than a *subpœna*. I might expect this when you left off, "Honored brother"; and "hoping you are in good health," and so forth—to begin with a "Rat me, knight, I'm so sick of a last night's debauch"—'ods heart, and then tell a familiar tale of a cock and a bull, and a whore and a bottle, and so conclude.—You could write news before you were out of your time, when you lived with honest Pimple Nose the attorney of Furnival's Inn—you could entreat to be remembered then to your friends round the reckon. We could have gazettes, then, and Dawks' Letter, and the Weekly Bill, till of late days.

PETULANT: S'life, Witwoud, were you ever an attorney's clerk? of the family of the Furnivals? Ha! ha! ha!

WITWOUND: Aye, aye, but that was but for a while: not long, not long. Pshaw! I was not in my own power then; an orphan, and this fellow was my guardian; aye, aye, I was glad to consent to that, man, to come to London: he had the disposal of me then. If I had not agreed to that, I might have been bound 'prentice to a felt-maker in Shrewsbury; this fellow would have bound me to a maker of felts.

SIR WILFULL: S'heart, and better than to be bound to a maker of fops; where, I suppose, you have served your time; and now you may set up for yourself.

MRS. MARWOOD: You intend to travel, sir, as I'm informed.

SIR WILFULL: Belike I may, madam. I may chance to sail upon the salt seas, if my mind hold.

PETULANT: And the wind serve.

SIR WILFULL: Serve or not serve, I shan't ask licence of you, sir; nor the weather-cock your companion: I direct my discourse to the lady, sir—"Tis like my

aunt may have told you, madam—yes, I have settled my concerns, I may say now, and am minded to see foreign parts. If an how that the peace holds, whereby that is, taxes abate.

MRS. MARWOOD: I thought you had designed for France at all adventures.

SIR WILFULL: I can't tell that; 'tis like I may, and 'tis like I may not. I am somewhat dainty in making a resolution—because when I make it I keep it. I don't stand shall I, shall I, then; if I say't, I'll do't; but I have thoughts to tarry a small matter in town, to learn somewhat of your lingo first, before I cross the seas. I'd gladly have a spice of your French as they say, whereby to hold discourse in foreign countries.

MRS. MARWOOD: Here's an academy in town for that use.

SIR WILFULL: There is? 'Tis like there may.

MRS. MARWOOD: No doubt you will return very much improved.

WITWOUND: Yes, refined, like a Dutch skipper from a whale-fishing.

[Enter Lady Wishfort and Fainall]

LADY WISHFORT: Nephew, you are welcome.

SIR WILFULL: Aunt, your servant.

FAINALL: Sir Wilfull, your most faithful servant.

SIR WILFULL: Cousin Fainall, give me your hand.

LADY WISHFORT: Cousin Witwoud, your servant; Mr. Petulant, your servant—nephew, you are welcome again. Will you drink anything after your journey. nephew; before you eat? dinner's almost ready.

SIR WILFULL: I'm very well, I thank you, aunt—however, I thank you for your courteous offer. S'heart I was afraid you would have been in the fashion, too, and have remembered to have forgot

your relations. Here's your cousin Tony, belike, I mayn't call him brother for fear of offence.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, he's a *railleur*, nephew—my cousin's a wit: and your great wits always rally their best friends to chuse. When you have been abroad, nephew, you'll understand raillery better.

[*Fainall and Mrs. Marwood talk apart*]

SIR WILFULL: Why then let him hold his tongue in the meantime; and rail when that day comes.

[*Enter Mincing*]

MINCING: Mem, I am come to acquaint your la'ship that dinner is impatient.

SIR WILFULL: Impatient! why then belike it won't stay till I pull off my boots.—Sweetheart, can you help me to a pair of slippers?—My man's with his horses, I warrant.

LADY WISHFORT: Fie, fie, nephew! you would not pull off your boots here?—Go down into the hall—dinner shall stay for you—My nephew's a little unbred, you'll pardon him, madam.—Gentlemen, will you walk?—Marwood—

MRS MARWOOD: I'll follow you, madam—before Sir Wilfull is ready.

[*Exeunt all but Mrs. Marwood and Fainall*]

FAINALL: Why then, Foible's a bawd, an arrant, rank, match-making bawd: and I, it seems, am a husband, a rank husband; and my wife a very arrant, rank wife—all in the way of the world. 'Sdeath, to be a cuckold by anticipation, a cuckold in embryo! sure I was born with budding antlers, like a young satyr or a citizen's child. 'Sdeath! to be outwitted—to be out-jilted—out-matrimony'd!—If I had kept my speed like a stag, 'twere somewhat—but to crawl after, with my horns, like a snail, and be

outstripped by my wife—'tis scurvy wedlock.

MRS. MARWOOD: Then shake it off; you have often wished for an opportunity to part—and now you have it. But first prevent their plot—the half of Milla-mant's fortune is too considerable to be parted with, to a foe, to Mirabell.

FAINALL: Damn him! that had been mine—had you not made that fond discovery—that had been forfeited, had they been married. My wife had added luster to my horns by that increase of fortune; I could have worn 'em tipped with gold, though my forehead had been furnished like a deputy-lieutenant's hall.

MRS. MARWOOD: They may prove a cap of maintenance to you still, if you can away with your wife. And she's no worse than when you had her.—I dare swear she had given up her game before she was married.

FAINALL: Hum! that may be.

MRS. MARWOOD: You married her to keep you; and if you can contrive to have her keep you better than you expected, why should you not keep her longer than you intended?

FAINALL: The means, the means.

MRS. MARWOOD: Discover to my lady your wife's conduct; threaten to part with her!—my lady loves her, and will come to any composition to save her reputation. Take the opportunity of breaking it, just upon the discovery of this imposture. My lady will be enraged beyond bounds, and sacrifice niece, and fortune, and all, at that conjuncture. And let me alone to keep her warm; if she should flag in her part, I will not fail to prompt her.

FAINALL: Faith, this has an appearance.

MRS. MARWOOD: I'm sorry I hinted to my lady to endeavor a match between Mil-

lamant and Sir Wilfull; that may be an obstacle.

FAINALL: Oh, for that matter, leave me to manage him: I'll disable him for that; he will drink like a Dane; after dinner, I'll set his hand in.

MRS. MARWOOD: Well, how do you stand affected towards your lady?

FAINALL: Why, faith, I'm thinking of it.—Let me see—I am married already, so that's over: my wife has played the jade with me—well, that's over too: I never loved her, or if I had, why that would have been over too by this time—jealous of her I cannot be, for I am certain; so there's an end of jealousy: weary of her I am, and shall be—no, there's no end of that—no, no, that were too much to hope. Thus far concerning my repose; now for my reputation. As to my own, I married not for it, so that's out of the question; and as to my part in my wife's—why, she had parted with hers before; so bringing none to me, she can take none from me; 'tis against all rule of play, that I should lose to one who has not wherewithal to stake.

MRS. MARWOOD: Besides, you forgot, marriage is honorable.

FAINALL: Hum, faith, and that's well thought on; marriage is honorable as you say; and if so, wherefore should cuckoldom be a discredit, being derived from so honorable a root?

MRS. MARWOOD: Nay, I know not; if the root be honorable, why not the branches?

FAINALL: So, so, why this point's clear—well, how do we proceed?

MRS. MARWOOD: I will contrive a letter which shall be delivered to my lady at the time when that rascal who is to act Sir Rowland is with her. It shall come as from an unknown hand—for the

less I appear to know of the truth, the better I can play the incendiary. Besides, I would not have Foible provoked if I could help it—because you know she knows some passages—nay, I expect all will come out—but let the mine be sprung first, and then I care not if I am discovered.

FAINALL: If the worst comes to the worst—I'll turn my wife to grass—I have already a deed of settlement of the best part of her estate; which I wheedled out of her; and that you shall partake at least.

MRS. MARWOOD: I hope you are convinced that I hate Mirabell now; you'll be no more jealous?

FAINALL: Jealous! no—by this kiss—let husbands be jealous; but let the lover still believe; or if he doubt, let it be only to endear his pleasure, and prepare the joy that follows, when he proves his mistress true. But let husbands' doubts convert to endless jealousy; or if they have belief, let it corrupt to superstition and blind credulity. I am single, and will herd no more with 'em True, I wear the badge, but I'll disown the order. And since I take my leave of 'em, I care not if I leave 'em a common motto to their common crest:

All husbands must or pain or shame endure;

The wise too jealous are, fools too secure.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[*Lady Wishfort and Foible*]

LADY WISHFORT: Is Sir Rowland coming, sayest thou, Foible? And are things in order?

FOIBLE: Yes, madam, I have put wax lights in the sconces, and placed the footmen in a row in the hall, in their best liveries, with the coachman and postilion to fill up the equipage.

LADY WISHFORT: Have you pulvilled the coachman and postilion, that they may not stink of the stable when Sir Rowland comes by?

FOIBLE: Yes, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: And are the dancers and the music ready, that he may be entertained in all points with correspondence to his passion?

FOIBLE: All is ready, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: And—well—how do I look, Foible?

FOIBLE: Most killing well, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, and how shall I receive him? in what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? there is a great deal in the first impression. Shall I sit?—no, I won't sit—I'll walk—aye, I'll walk from the door upon his entrance; and then turn full upon him—no, that will be too sudden. I'll lie,—aye, I'll lie down—I'll receive him in my little dressing-room, there's a couch—yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch.—I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow: with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way—yes—and then as soon as he appears, start, aye, start and be surprised, and rise to meet him in a pretty disorder—yes—oh, nothing is more alluring than a levee from a couch, in some confusion: it shows the foot to advantage, and furnishes with blushes, and recomposing airs beyond comparison. Hark! there's a coach.

FOIBLE: 'Tis he, madam.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, dear!—Has my nephew made his addresses to Millamant? I ordered him.

FOIBLE: Sir Wilfull is set in to drinking, madam, in the parlor.

LADY WISHFORT: Odds my life, I'll send him to her. Call her down, Foible; bring her hither. I'll send him as I go—when they are together, then come to me, Foible, that I may not be too long alone with Sir Rowland.

[Exit]

[Enter Mrs. Millamant and Mrs. Fainall]

FOIBLE: Madam, I stayed here, to tell your ladyship that Mr. Mirabell has waited this half-hour for an opportunity to talk with you: though my lady's orders were to leave you and Sir Wilfull together. Shall I tell Mr. Mirabell that you are at leisure?

MRS. MILLAMANT: No—what would the dear man have? I am thoughtful, and would amuse myself—bid him come another time.

*"There never yet was woman made
Nor shall, but to be cursed."*

[Repeating, and walking about]

That's hard!

MRS. FAINALL: You are very fond of Sir John Suckling to-day, Millamant, and the poets.

MRS. MILLAMANT: He? Aye, and filthy verses—so I am.

FOIBLE: Sir Wilfull is coming, madam. Shall I send Mr. Mirabell away?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, if you please, Foible, send him away—or send him hither—just as you will, dear Foible.—I think I'll see him—shall I? Aye, let the wretch come.

[Exit Foible]

"Thyrsis, a youth of the inspir'd train."

[Repeating]

Dear Fainall, entertain Sir Wilfull—thou hast philosophy to undergo a fool,

thou art married and hast patience—I would confer with my own thoughts.

MRS. FAINALL: I am obliged to you, that you would make me your proxy in this affair; but I have business of my own.

[*Enter* Sir Wilfull]

MRS. FAINALL: O Sir Wilfull, you are come at the critical instant. There's your mistress up to the ears in love and contemplation; pursue your point now or never.

SIR WILFULL: Yes; my aunt will have it so—I would gladly have been encouraged with a bottle or two, because I'm somewhat wary at first before I am acquainted.—[*This while* Millamant *walks about repeating to herself*] But I hope, after a time, I shall break my mind—that is, upon further acquaintance—so for the present, cousin, I'll take my leave—if so be you'll be so kind to make my excuse, I'll return to my company—

MRS. FAINALL: Oh, fie, Sir Wilfull! What, you must not be daunted.

SIR WILFULL: Daunted! no, that's not it, it is not so much for that—for if so be that I set on't, I'll do't. But only for the present, 'tis sufficient till further acquaintance, that's all—your servant.

MRS. FAINALL: Nay, I'll swear you shall never lose so favorable an opportunity, if I can help it. I'll leave you together, and lock the door.

[*Exit*]

SIR WILFULL: Nay, nay, cousin—I have forgot my gloves—what d'ye do?—S'heart, a'has locked the door indeed, I think—nay, Cousin Fainall, open the door—pshaw, what a vixen trick is this?—Nay, now a'has seen me too.—Cousin, I made bold to pass through as it were—I think this door's enchanted!

MRS. MILLAMANT: [*Repeating*]

*"I prithee spare me, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy."*

SIR WILFULL: Anan? Cousin, your servant.

MRS. MILLAMANT: [*Repeating*]

"That foolish trifle of a heart."

Sir Wilfull!

SIR WILFULL: Yes—your servant. No offence, I hope, cousin.

MRS. MILLAMANT: [*Repeating*]

*"I swear it will not do its part,
Though thou dost thine, employest thy
power and art."*

Natural, easy Suckling!

SIR WILFULL: Anan? Suckling! no such suckling neither, cousin, nor stripling—I thank Heaven, I'm no minor.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah, rustic, ruder than Gothic!

SIR WILFULL: Well, well, I shall understand your lingo one of these days, cousin; in the meanwhile I must answer in plain English.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Have you any business with me, Sir Wilfull?

SIR WILFULL: Not at present, cousin—yes, I make bold to see, to come and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening, if so be that I might not be troublesome, I would have sought a walk with you.

MRS. MILLAMANT: A walk! what then?

SIR WILFULL: Nay, nothing—only for the walk's sake, that's all.

MRS. MILLAMANT: I nauseate walking; 'tis a country diversion; I loathe the country, and everything that relates to it.

SIR WILFULL: Indeed! ha! Look ye, look ye, you do? Nay, 'tis like you may—here are choice of pastimes here in town, as plays and the like; that must be confessed indeed.

MRS. MILLAMANT: *Ah, l'êtourdi!* I hate the town too.

SIR WILFULL: Dear heart, that's much—
ha! that you should hate 'em both! Ha!
'tis like you may; there are some can't
relish the town, and others can't away
with the country—'tis like you may be
one of those, cousin.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ha! ha! ha! yes, 'tis
like I may—You have nothing further
to say to me?

SIR WILFULL: Not at present, cousin.—
'Tis like when I have an opportunity
to be more private—I may break my
mind in some measure—I conjecture
you partly guess—however, that's as
time shall try—but spare to speak and
spare to speed, as they say.

MRS. MILLAMANT: If it is of no great im-
portance, Sir Wilfull, you will oblige
me to leave me; I have just now a lit-
tle business—

SIR WILFULL: Enough, enough, cousin:
yes, yes, all a case—when you're dis-
posed: now's as well as another time;
and another time as well as now. All's
one for that—yes, yes, if your concerns
call you, there's no haste; it will keep
cold, as they say.—Cousin, your servant
—I think this door's locked.

MRS. MILLAMANT: You may go this way,
sir.

SIR WILFULL: Your servant; then with
your leave I'll return to my company.

[Exit]

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, aye; ha! ha! ha!

*"Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous
boy."*

[Enter Mirabell]

MIRABELL: *"Like Daphne she, as lovely and
as coy."* Do you lock yourself up from
me, to make my search more curious?
or is this pretty artifice contrived to sig-
nify that here the chase must end, and
my pursuits be crowned? For you can
fly no further.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Vanity! no—I'll fly, and
be followed to the last moment. Though
I am upon the very verge of matri-
mony, I expect you should solicit me
as much as if I were wavering at the
grate of a monastery, with one foot over
the threshold. I'll be solicited to the very
last, nay, and afterwards.

MIRABELL: What, after the last?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Oh, I should think I
was poor and had nothing to bestow, if
I were reduced to an inglorious case,
and freed from the agreeable fatigues of
solicitation.

MIRABELL: But do not you know, that
when favors are conferred upon instant
and tedious solicitation, that they dimin-
ish in their value, and that both the
giver loses the grace, and the receiver
lessens his pleasure?

MRS. MILLAMANT: It may be in things of
common application; but never sure in
love. Oh, I hate a lover that can dare
to think he draws a moment's air, in-
dependent of the bounty of his mistress.
There is not so impudent a thing in
nature, as the saucy look of an assured
man, confident of success. The pedan-
tic arrogance of a very husband has not
so pragmatical an air. Ah! I'll never
marry, unless I am first made sure of
my will and pleasure.

MIRABELL: Would you have 'em both be-
fore marriage? or will you be contented
with the first now, and stay for the
other till after grace?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah! don't be impertin-
ent.—My dear liberty, shall I leave thee?
my faithful solitude, my darling con-
templation, must I bid you then adieu?
Ay-h adieu—my morning thoughts,
agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers,
all ye *douceurs*, ye *sommeils du matin*,
adieu?—I can't do't, 'tis more than im-

possible—positively, Mirabell, I'll lie abed in a morning as long as I please.

MIRABELL: Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah! idle creature, get up when you will—and d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.

MIRABELL: Names!

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so familiarly familiar—I shall never bear that—good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fidler and Sir Francis: nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never to be seen there together again; as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together; but let us be very strange and well-bred let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while; and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.

MIRABELL: Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Trifles!—As liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please; and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance: or to be intimate with fools, because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please; dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of

humor, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

MIRABELL: Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account.—Well, have I liberty to offer conditions—that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

MRS. MILLAMANT: You have free leave; propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

MIRABELL: I thank you—*Imprimis* then, I covenant, that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidant, or intimate of your own sex; no she-friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop-scrambling to the play in a mask—then bring you home in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out—and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up, and prove my constancy.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Detestable *imprimis*! I go to the play in a mask!

MIRABELL: *Item*, I article, that you continue to like your own face, as long as I shall: and while it passes current with me, that you endeavor not to new-coin it. To which end, together with all vizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled-skins, and I know not what—hogs' bones, hares' gall, pig-water, and the marrow of a

roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in what d'ye call it court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin, china, fans, atlases, etc.—*Item*, when you shall be breeding—

MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah! name it not.

MIRABELL: Which may be presumed with a blessing on our endeavors—

MRS. MILLAMANT: Odious endeavors!

MIRABELL. I denounce against all strait lacing, squeezing for a shape, till you mould my boy's head like a sugar-loaf, and instead of a man-child, make me father to a crooked billet. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit—but with proviso, that you exceed not in your province; but restrain yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee: as likewise to genuine and authorized tea-table talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth—but that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange-brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron, and Barbadoes waters, together with ratafia, and the most noble spirit of clary—but for cowslip wine, poppy water, and all dormitives, those I allow.—These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

MRS. MILLAMANT: O horrid provisos! filthy strong-waters! I toast fellows! odious men! I hate your odious provisos.

MIRABELL: Then we are agreed! Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract? And here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

[*Enter Mrs. Fainall*]

MRS. MILLAMANT: Fainall, what shall I do? shall I have him? I think I must have him.

MRS. FAINALL: Aye, aye, take him, take him, what should you do?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Well then—I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright—Fainall, I shall never say it—well—I think—I'll endure you.

MRS. FAINALL: Fic! fie! have him, have him, and tell him so in plain terms: for I am sure you have a mind to him.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Are you? I think I have—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too—well, you ridiculous thing you, I'll have you—I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked—here kiss my hand though.—So, hold your tongue now, don't say a word.

MRS. FAINALL: Mirabell, there's a necessity for your obedience; you have neither time to talk nor stay. My mother is coming; and in my conscience if she should see you, would fall into fits, and maybe not recover time enough to return to Sir Rowland, who, as Foible tells me, is in a fair way to succeed. Therefore spare your ecstasies for another occasion, and slip down the back-stairs, where Foible waits to consult you.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Aye, go, go. In the meantime I suppose you have said something to please me.

MIRABELL: I am all obedience.

[*Exit*]

MRS. FAINALL: Yonder Sir Wilfull's drunk, and so noisy that my mother has been forced to leave Sir Rowland to appease him; but he answers her only with singing and drinking—what they may have done by this time I know not; but Petulant and he were upon quarreling as I came by.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing, for I find I love him violently.

MRS. FAINALL: So it seems; for you mind not what's said to you.—If you doubt him, you had best take up with Sir Wilfull.

MRS. MILLAMANT: How can you name that superannuated lubber? foh!

[Enter Witwoud]

MRS. FAINALL: So, is the fray made up, that you have left 'em?

WITWOUND: Left 'em? I could stay no longer—I have laughed like ten christenings—I am tipsy with laughing—if I had stayed any longer I should have burst—I must have been let out and pieced in the sides like an unsized camel.—Yes, yes, the fray is composed; my lady came in like a *noli prosequi*, and stopped the proceedings.

MRS. MILLAMANT: What was the dispute?

WITWOUND: That's the jest; there was no dispute. They could neither of 'em speak for rage, and so fell a-sputtering at one another like two roasting apples.

[Enter Petulant, drunk]

WITWOUND: Now, Petulant, all's over, all's well. Gad, my head begins to whim it about—why dost thou not speak? thou art both as drunk and as mute as a fish.

PETULANT: Look you, Mrs. Millamant—if you can love me, dear nymph—say it—and that's the conclusion—pass on, or pass off—that's all.

WITWOUND: Thou hast uttered volumes, folios, in less than *decimo sexto*, my dear Lacedemonian. Sirrah, Petulant, thou art an epitomizer of words.

PETULANT: Witwoud—you are an annihilator of sense.

WITWOUND: Thou art a retailer of phrases; and dost deal in remnants of remnants, like a maker of pincushions—thou art

in truth (metaphorically speaking) a speaker of shorthand.

PETULANT: Thou art (without a figure) just one-half of an ass, and Baldwin yonder, thy half-brother, is the rest.—A Gemini of asses split would make just four of you.

WITWOUND: Thou dost bite, my dear mustard seed; kiss me for that.

PETULANT: Stand off!—I'll kiss no more males—I have kissed your twin yonder in a humor of reconciliation, till he [*hiccups*] rises upon my stomach like a radish.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Eh! filthy creature! what was the quarrel?

PETULANT: There was no quarrel—there might have been a quarrel.

WITWOUND: If there had been words enow between 'em to have expressed provocation, they had gone together by the ears like a pair of castanets.

PETULANT: You were the quarrel.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Me!

PETULANT: If I have a humor to quarrel, I can make less matters conclude premises.—If you are not handsome, what then, if I have a humor to prove it? If I shall have my reward, say so; if not, fight for your face the next time yourself—I'll go sleep.

WITWOUND: Do, wrap thyself up like a wood-louse, and dream revenge—and hear me, if thou canst learn to write by to-morrow morning, pen me a challenge.—I'll carry it for thee.

PETULANT: Carry your mistress' monkey a spider!—Go flea dogs, and read romances!—I'll go to bed to my maid.

[Exit]

MRS. FAINALL: He's horribly drunk.—How came you all in this pickle?

WITWOUND: A plot! a plot! to get rid of the night—your husband's advice; but he sneaked off.

ACT IV. SCENE II.

The Dining-room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[Sir Wilfull *drunk*, Lady Wishfort, Witwoud, Mrs. Millamant, and Mrs. Fainall]

LADY WISHFORT: Out upon't out upon't! At years of discretion, and comport yourself at this rantipole rate!

SIR WILFULL: No offence, aunt.

LADY WISHFORT: Offence! as I'm a person, I'm ashamed of you—foh! how you stink of wine! D'ye think my niece will ever endure such a Borachio! you're an absolute Borachio.

SIR WILFULL: Borachio?

LADY WISHFORT: At a time when you should commence an amour, and put your best foot foremost—

SIR WILFULL: Sheat, an you grutch me your liquor, make a bill—give me more drink, and take my purse—[*Sings*]

*"Pr'ithe fill me the glass,
Till it laugh in my face,
With ale that is potent and mellow;
He that whines for a lass,
Is an ignorant ass,
For a bumper has not its fellow."*

But if you would have me marry my cousin—say the word, and I'll do't—Wilfull will do't, that's the word—Wilfull will do't, that's my crest—my motto I have forgot.

LADY WISHFORT: My nephew's a little overtaken, cousin—but 'tis with drinking your health.—O' my word you are obliged to him.

SIR WILFULL: *In vino veritas*, aunt.—If I drunk your health to-day, cousin—I am a Borachio. But if you have a mind to be married, say the word, and send for the piper; Wilfull will do't. If not, dust

it away, and let's have t'other round.—Tony!—Odds heart, where's Tony!—Tony's an honest fellow; but he spits after a bumper, and that's a fault—
[*Sings*]

*"We'll drink, and we'll never ha' done,
boys,*

*Put the glass then around with the sun,
boys,*

Let Apollo's example invite us;

For he's drunk every night,

And that makes him so bright,

That he's able next morning to light us."

The sun's a good pimple, an honest soaker; he has a cellar at your Antipodes. If I travel, aunt, I touch at your Antipodes.—Your Antipodes are a good, rascally sort of topsy-turvy fellows: if I had a bumper, I'd stand upon my head and drink a health to 'em.—A match or no match, cousin with the hard name?—Aunt, Wilfull will do't. If she has her maidenhead, let her look to't; if she has not, let her keep her own counsel in the meantime, and cry out at the nine months' end.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Your pardon, madam, I can stay no longer—Sir Wilfull grows very powerful. Eh! how he smells! I shall be overcome, if I stay.—Come, cousin.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Millamant and Mrs. Fainall*]

LADY WISHFORT: Smells! He would poison a tallow-chandler and his family! Beastly creature, I know not what to do with him!—Travel, quotha! aye, travel, travel, get thee gone, get thee gone, get thee but far enough, to the Saracens, or the Tartars, or the Turks!—for thou art not fit to live in a Christian commonwealth, thou beastly pagan!

SIR WILFULL: Turks, no; no Turks, aunt: your Turks are infidels, and believe not

in the grape. Your Mahometan, your Mussulman, is a dry stinkard—no offence, aunt. My map says that your Turk is not so honest a man as your Christian. I cannot find by the map that your Mufti is orthodox—whereby it is a plain case, that orthodox is a hard word, aunt, and [*hiccup*] Greek for claret.—

[*Sings*]

*“To drink is a Christian diversion,
Unknown to the Turk or the Persian:
Let Mahometan fools
Live by heathenish rules,
And be damned over tea-cups and coffee.
But let British lads sing,
Crown a health to the king,
And a fig for your sultan and sophy!”*

Ah, Tony!

[*Enter Foible, who whispers to Lady Wishfort*]

LADY WISHFORT: [*Aside to Foible*] Sir Rowland impatient? Good lack! what shall I do with this beastly tumbrel?— [*Aloud*] Go he down and sleep, you sot!—or, as I'm a person, I'll have you bastinadoed with broomsticks.—Call up the wenches.

SIR WILFULL: Ahey! wenches, where are the wenches?

LADY WISHFORT: Dear Cousin Witwoud, get him away, and you will bind me to you inviolably. I have an affair of moment that invades me with some precipitation—you will oblige me to all futurity.

WITWOD: Come, knight.—Pox on him, I don't know what to say to him.—Will you go to a cock-match?

SIR WILFULL: With a wench, Tony! Is she a shakebag, sirrah? Let me bite your cheek for that.

WITWOD: Horrible! he has a breath like a bagpipe!—Ave, aye; come, will you march, my Salopian?

SIR WILFULL: Lead on, little Tony—I'll follow thee, my Anthony, my Tantony, sirrah, thou shalt be my Tantony, and I'll be thy pig.

[*Sings*]

“And a fig for your sultan and sophy.”

[*Exeunt Sir Wilfull and Witwoud*]

LADY WISHFORT: This will never do. It will never make a match—at least before he has been abroad.

[*Enter Waitwell, disguised as Sir Rowland*]

LADY WISHFORT: Dear Sir Rowland, I am confounded with confusion at the retrospection of my own rudeness!—I have more pardons to ask than the pope distributes in the year of jubilee. But I hope, where there is likely to be so near an alliance, we may unbend the severity of decorums, and dispense with a little ceremony.

WAITWELL: My impatience, madam, is the effect of my transport; and till I have the possession of your adorable person, I am tantalized on the rack; and do but hang, madam, on the tenter of expectation.

LADY WISHFORT: You have excess of gallantry, Sir Rowland, and press things to a conclusion with a most prevailing vehemence.—But a day or two for decency of marriage—

WAITWELL: For decency of funeral, madam! The delay will break my heart—or, if that should fail, I shall be poisoned. My nephew will get an inkling of my designs, and poison me—and I would willingly starve him before I die—I would gladly go out of the world with that satisfaction.—That would be

some comfort to me, if I could but live so long as to be revenged on that unnatural viper!

LADY WISHFORT: Is he so unnatural, say you? Truly I would contribute much both to the saving of your life, and the accomplishment of your revenge.—Not that I respect myself, though he has been a perfidious wretch to me.

WAITWELL: Perfidious to you!

LADY WISHFORT: O Sir Rowland, the hours that he has died away at my feet, the tears that he has shed, the oaths that he has sworn, the palpitations that he has felt, the trances and the tremblings, the ardors and the ecstasies, the kneelings and the risings, the heart-heavings and the handgrippings, the pangs and the pathetic regards of his protesting eyes!—Oh, no memory can register!

WAITWELL: What, my rival! is the rebel my rival?—a' dies.

LADY WISHFORT: No, don't kill him at once, Sir Rowland, starve him gradually, inch by inch.

WAITWELL: I'll do't. In three weeks he shall be barefoot; in a month out at knees with begging an alms.—He shall starve upward and upward, till he has nothing living but his head, and then go out in a stink like a candle's end upon a save-all.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, Sir Rowland, you have the way—you are no novice in the labyrinth of love—you have the clue.—But as I am a person, Sir Rowland, you must not attribute my yielding to any sinister appetite, or indigestion of widowhood; nor impute my complacency to any lethargy of continence.—I hope you do not think me prone to any iteration of nuptials—

WAITWELL: Far be it from me—

LADY WISHFORT: If you do, I protest I must recede—or think that I have made

a prostitution of decorums; but in the vehemence of compassion, and to save the life of a person of so much importance—

WAITWELL: I esteem it so.

LADY WISHFORT: Or else you wrong my condescension.

WAITWELL: I do not, I do not!

LADY WISHFORT: Indeed you do.

WAITWELL: I do not, fair shrine of virtue!

LADY WISHFORT: If you think the least scruple of carnality was an ingredient,—

WAITWELL: Dear madam, no. You are all camphor and frankincense, all chastity and odor.

LADY WISHFORT: Or that—

[Enter Foible]

FOIBLE: Madam, the dancers are ready; and there's one with a letter, who must deliver it into your own hands.

LADY WISHFORT: Sir Rowland, will you give me leave? Think favorably, judge candidly, and conclude you have found a person who would suffer racks in honor's cause, dear Sir Rowland, and will wait on you incessantly.

[Exit]

WAITWELL: Fie, fie!—What a slavery have I undergone! Spouse, hast thou any cordial? I want spirits.

FOIBLE: What a washy rogue art thou, to pant thus for a quarter of an hour's lying and swearing to a fine lady!

WAITWELL: Oh, she is an antidote to desire! Spouse, thou wilt fare the worse for't—I shall have no appetite to iteration of nuptials this eight-and-forty hours.—By this hand I'd rather be a chairman in the dog-days—than act Sir Rowland till this time to-morrow!

[Re-enter Lady Wishfort, with a letter]

LADY WISHFORT: Call in the dancers.—Sir Rowland, we'll sit, if you please, and see the entertainment. [A dance]

Now, with your permission, Sir Rowland, I will peruse my letter.—I would open it in your presence, because I would not make you uneasy. If it should make you uneasy, I would burn it.—Speak, if it does—but you may see the superscription is like a woman's hand.

FOIBLE: [*Aside to Waitwell*] By Heaven! Mrs. Marwood's, I know it.—My heart aches—get it from her.

WAITWELL: A woman's hand! no, madam, that's no woman's hand, I see that already. That's somebody whose throat must be cut.

LADY WISHFORT: Nay, Sir Rowland, since you give me a proof of your passion by your jealousy, I promise you I'll make a return, by a frank communication.—You shall see it—we'll open it together—look you here.—[*Reads*]—"Madam, though unknown to you"—Look you there, 'tis from nobody that I know—"I have that honor for your character, that I think myself obliged to let you know you are abused. He who pretends to be Sir Rowland, is a cheat and a rascal."—Oh, Heavens! what's this?

FOIBLE: [*Aside*] Unfortunate! all's ruined!

WAITWELL: How, how, let me see, let me see!—[*Reads*] "A rascal, and disguised and suborned for that imposture,"—O villainy! O villainy!—"by the contrivance of—"

LADY WISHFORT: I shall faint, I shall die, oh!

FOIBLE: [*Aside to Waitwell*] Say 'tis your nephew's hand—quickly, his plot, swear it, swear it!

WAITWELL: Here's a villain! Madam, don't you perceive it, don't you see it?

LADY WISHFORT: Too well, too well! I have seen too much.

WAITWELL: I told you at first I knew the hand.—A woman's hand! The rascal writes a sort of a large hand; your

Roman hand—I saw there was a throat to be cut presently. If he were my son, as he is my nephew, I'd pistol him!

FOIBLE: O treachery!—But are you sure, Sir Rowland, it is his writing?

WAITWELL: Sure! am I here? Do I live? Do I love this pearl of India? I have twenty letters in my pocket from him in the same character.

LADY WISHFORT: How!

FOIBLE: Oh, what luck it is, Sir Rowland, that you were present at this juncture!—This was the business that brought Mr. Mirabell disguised to Madam Milamant this afternoon. I thought something was contriving, when he stole by me and would have hid his face.

LADY WISHFORT: How, how!—I heard the villain was in the house indeed; and now I remember, my niece went away abruptly, when Sir Wilfull was to have made his addresses.

FOIBLE: Then, then, madam, Mr. Mirabell waited for her in her chamber! but I would not tell your ladyship to discompose you when you were to receive Sir Rowland.

WAITWELL: Enough, his date is short.

FOIBLE: No, good Sir Rowland, don't incur the law.

WAITWELL: Law! I care not for law. I can but die, and 'tis in a good cause.—My lady shall be satisfied of my truth and innocence, though it cost me my life.

LADY WISHFORT: No, dear Sir Rowland, don't fight; if you should be killed I must never show my face; or hanged—oh, consider my reputation, Sir Rowland!—No, you shan't fight—I'll go in and examine my niece; I'll make her confess. I conjure you, Sir Rowland, by all your love, not to fight.

WAITWELL: I am charmed, madam, I obey. But some proof you must let me give you; I'll go for a black box, which

contains the writings of my whole estate, and deliver that into your hands.

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, dear Sir Rowland, that will be some comfort, bring the black box.

WAITWELL: And may I presume to bring a contract to be signed this night? may I hope so far?

LADY WISHFORT: Bring what you will; but come alive, pray come alive. Oh, this is a happy discovery!

WAITWELL: Dead or alive I'll come—and married we will be in spite of treachery; aye, and get an heir that shall defeat the last remaining glimpse of hope in my abandoned nephew. Come, my buxom widow:

Ere long you shall substantial proofs receive,

That I'm an errant knight—

FOIBLE: [*Aside*] *Or errant knave.*
[*Exeunt*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

A room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[*Lady Wishfort and Foible*]

LADY WISHFORT: Out of my house, out of my house, thou viper! thou serpent, that I have fostered! thou bosom traitress, that I raised from nothing!—Begone! begone! begone!—go! go!—That I took from washing of old gauze and weaving of dead hair, with a bleak blue nose over a chafing-dish of starved embers, and dining behind a traverse rag, in a shop no bigger than a bird-cage!—Go, go! starve again, do, do!

FOIBLE: Dear Madam, I'll beg pardon on my knees.

LADY WISHFORT: Away! out! out!—Go, set up for yourself again!—Do, drive a trade, do, with your three-pennyworth

of small ware, flaunting upon a pack-thread, under a brandy-seller's bulk, or against a dead wall by a ballad-monger! Go, hang out an old Frisoneer gorget, with a yard of yellow colbertine again! Do; an old gnawed mask, two rows of pins, and a child's fiddle; a glass necklace with the beads broken, and a quilted night-cap with one ear! Go, go, drive a trade!—These were your commodities, you treacherous trull! this was the merchandise you dealt in when I took you into my house, placed you next myself, and made you governante of my whole family! You have forgot this, have you, now you have feathered your nest?

FOIBLE: No, no, dear madam. Do but hear me, have but a moment's patience, I'll confess all. Mr. Mirabell seduced me; I am not the first that he has wheedled with his dissembling tongue; your ladyship's own wisdom has been deluded by him; then how should I, a poor ignorant, defend myself? O madam, if you knew but what he promised me, and how he assured me your ladyship should come to no damage!—Or else the wealth of the Indies should not have bribed me to conspire against so good, so sweet, so kind a lady as you have been to me.

LADY WISHFORT: No damage! What, to betray me, and marry me to a cast servingman! to make me a receptacle, an hospital for a decayed pimp! No damage! O thou frontless impudence, more than a big-bellied actress!

FOIBLE: Pray, do but hear me, madam; he could not marry your ladyship, madam.—No, indeed, his marriage was to have been void in law, for he was married to me first, to secure your ladyship. He could not have bedded your ladyship; for if he had consummated with your ladyship, he must have run

the risk of the law, and been put upon his clergy.—Yes, indeed, I inquired of the law in that case before I would meddle or make.

LADY WISHFORT: What, then, I have been your property, have I? I have been convenient to you, it seems!—While you were catering for Mirabell, I have been broker for you! What, have you made a passive bawd of me?—This exceeds all precedent; I am brought to fine uses, to become a botcher of second-hand marriages between Abigail and Andrews!—I'll couple you!—Yes, I'll baste you together, you and your Philander! I'll Duke's-place you, as I am a person! Your turtle is in custody already: you shall coo in the same cage, if there be a constable or warrant in the parish.

[*Exit*]

FOIBLE: Oh, that ever I was born! Oh, that I was ever married!—A bride!—aye, I shall be a Bridewell-bride.—Oh!

[*Enter Mrs. Fainall*]

MRS. FAINALL: Poor Foible, what's the matter?

FOIBLE: O madam, my lady's gone for a constable. I shall be had to a justice, and put to Bridewell to beat hemp. Poor Waitwell's gone to prison already.

MRS. FAINALL: Have a good heart, Foible; Mirabell's gone to give security for him. This is all Marwood's and my husband's doing.

FOIBLE: Yes, yes; I know it, madam: she was in my lady's closet, and overheard all that you said to me before dinner. She sent the letter to my lady; and that missing effect, Mr. Fainall laid this plot to arrest Waitwell, when he pretended to go for the papers; and in the meantime Mrs. Marwood declared all to my lady.

MRS. FAINALL: Was there no mention made of me in the letter? My mother does

not suspect my being in the confederacy? I fancy Marwood has not told her, though she has told my husband.

FOIBLE: Yes, madam; but my lady did not see that part; we stuffed the letter before she read so far—Has that mischievous devil told Mr. Fainall of your ladyship, then?

MRS. FAINALL: Aye, all's out—my affair with Mirabell—everything discovered. This is the last day of our living together, that's my comfort.

FOIBLE: Indeed, madam; and so 'tis a comfort if you knew all—he has been even with your ladyship, which I could have told you long enough since, but I loved to keep peace and quietness by my goodwill. I had rather bring friends together, than set 'em at distance: but Mrs. Marwood and he are nearer related than ever their parents thought for.

MRS. FAINALL: Sayest thou so, Foible? Canst thou prove this?

FOIBLE: I can take my oath of it, madam; so can Mrs. Mincing. We have had many a fair word from Madam Marwood, to conceal something that passed in our chamber one evening when you were at Hyde Park; and we were thought to have gone a-walking, but we went up unawares; though we were sworn to secrecy, too. Madam Marwood took a book and swore us upon it, but it was but a book of poems. So long as it was not a bible-oath, we may break it with a safe conscience.

MRS. FAINALL: This discovery is the most opportune thing I could wish.—Now, Mincing!

[*Enter Mincing*]

MINCING: My lady would speak with Mrs. Foible, mem. Mr. Mirabell is with her; he has set your spouse at liberty, Mrs. Foible, and would have you hide your-

self in my lady's closet till my old lady's anger is abated. Oh, my old lady is in a perilous passion at something Mr. Fainall has said; he swears, and my old lady cries. There's a fearful hurricane, I vow. He says, mem, how that he'll have my lady's fortune made over to him, or he'll be divorced.

MRS. FAINALL: Does your lady or Mirabell know that?

MINCING: Yes, mem; they have sent me to see if Sir Wilfull be sober, and to bring him to them. My lady is resolved to have him, I think, rather than lose such a vast sum as six thousand pounds.— Oh, come, Mrs. Foible, I hear my old lady.

MRS. FAINALL: Foible, you must tell Mincing that she must prepare to vouch when I call her.

FOIBLE: Yes, yes, madam.

MINCING: Oh, yes, mem, I'll vouch anything for your ladyship's service, be what it will.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT V. SCENE II.

Another Room in Lady Wishfort's House.

[Mrs. Fainall, Lady Wishfort, and Mrs. Marwood]

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, my dear friend, how can I enumerate the benefits that I have received from your goodness! To you I owe the timely discovery of the false vows of Mirabell; to you I owe the detection of the impostor Sir Rowland. And now you are become an intercessor with my son-in-law, to save the honor of my house, and compound for the frailties of my daughter. Well, friend, you are enough to reconcile me to the bad world, or else I would retire to deserts and solitudes, and feed harm-

less sheep by groves and purling streams. Dear Marwood, let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be shepherdesses.

MRS. MARWOOD: Let us first dispatch the affair in hand, madam. We shall have leisure to think of retirement afterwards. Here is one who is concerned in the treaty.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, daughter, daughter! is it possible thou shouldst be my child, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and, as I may say, another me, and yet transgress the most minute particle of severe virtue? Is it possible you should lean aside to iniquity, who have been cast in the direct mould of virtue? I have not only been a mould but a pattern for you, and a model for you, after you were brought into the world.

MRS. FAINALL: I don't understand your ladyship.

LADY WISHFORT: Not understand! Why, have you not been naught? have you not been sophisticated? Not understand! here I am ruined to compound for your caprices and your cuckoldoms. I must pawn my plate and my jewels, and ruin my niece, and all little enough—

MRS. FAINALL: I am wronged and abused, and so are you. 'Tis a false accusation, as false as hell, as false as your friend there, aye, or your friend's friend, my false husband.

MRS. MARWOOD: My friend, Mrs. Fainall! your husband my friend! what do you mean?

MRS. FAINALL: I know what I mean, madam, and so do you; and so shall the world at a time convenient.

MRS. MARWOOD: I am sorry to see you so passionate, madam. More temper would look more like innocence. But I have done. I am sorry my zeal to serve your

ladyship and family should admit of misconstruction, or make me liable to affronts. You will pardon me, madam, if I meddle no more with an affair in which I am not personally concerned.

LADY WISHFORT: O dear friend, I am so ashamed that you should meet with such returns!—[To Mrs. Fainall] You ought to ask pardon on your knees, ungrateful creature! she deserves more from you than all your life can accomplish.—[To Mrs. Marwood] Oh, don't leave me destitute in this perplexity!—no, stick to me, my good genius.

MRS. FAINALL: I tell you, madam, you are abused.—Stick to you! aye, like a leech, to suck your best blood—she'll drop off when she's full. Madam, you shan't pawn a bodkin, nor part with a brass counter, in composition for me. I defy 'em all. Let 'em prove their aspersions; I know my own innocence, and dare stand a trial.

[Exit]

LADY WISHFORT: Why, if she should be innocent, if she should be wronged after all, ha?—I don't know what to think—and I promise you her education has been unexceptionable—I may say it; for I chiefly made it my own care to initiate her very infancy in the rudiments of virtue, and to impress upon her tender years a young odium and aversion to the very sight of men: aye, friend, she would ha' shrieked if she had but seen a man, till she was in her teens. As I am a person 'tis true—she was never suffered to play with a male child, though but in coats; nay, her very babies were of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked a man in the face but her own father, or the chaplain, and him we made a shift to put upon her for a woman, by the help of his long gar-

ments, and his sleek face, till she was going in her fifteen.

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Twas much she should be deceived so long.

LADY WISHFORT: I warrant you, or she would never have borne to have been catechized by him; and have heard his long lectures against singing and dancing, and such debaucheries; and going to filthy plays, and profane music-meetings, where the lewd trebles squeak nothing but bawdy, and the basses roar blasphemy. Oh, she would have swooned at the sight or name of an obscene play-book!—and can I think, after all this, that my daughter can be naught? What, a whore? and thought it excommunication to set her foot within the door of a playhouse! O dear friend, I can't believe it, no, no! As she says, let him prove it, let him prove it.

MRS. MARWOOD: Prove it, madam! What, and have your name prostituted in a public court! Yours and your daughter's reputation worried at the bar by a pack of bawling lawyers! To be ushered in with an O yes of scandal; and have your case opened by an old fumbling lecher in a quof like a man-midwife; to bring your daughter's infamy to light; to be a theme for legal punsters and quibblers by the statute; and become a jest against a rule of court, where there is no precedent for a jest in any record—not even in doomsday-book; to discompose the gravity of the bench, and provoke naughty interrogatories in more naughty law Latin; while the good judge, tickled with the proceeding, simpers under a gray beard, and fidgets off and on his cushion as if he had swallowed cantharides, or sat upon cowage!—

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, 'tis very hard!

MRS. MARWOOD: And then to have my young revelers of the Temple take notes, like 'prentices at a conventicle; and after talk it over again in commons, or before drawers in an eating-house.

LADY WISHFORT: Worse and worse!

MRS. MARWOOD: Nay, this is nothing; if it would end here 'twere well. But it must, after this, be consigned by the shorthand writers to the public press; and from thence be transferred to the hands, nay into the throats and lungs of hawkers, with voices more licentious than the loud flounder-man's: and this you must hear till you are stunned; nay, you must hear nothing else for some days.

LADY WISHFORT: Oh, 'tis insupportable! No, no, dear friend, make it up, make it up; aye, aye, I'll compound. I'll give up all, myself and my all, my niece and her all—anything, everything for composition.

MRS. MARWOOD: Nay, madam, I advise nothing, I only lay before you, as a friend, the inconveniences which perhaps you have overseen. Here comes Mr. Fainall; if he will be satisfied to huddle up all in silence, I shall be glad. You must think I would rather congratulate than condole with you.

[Enter Fainall]

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, aye, I do not doubt it, dear Marwood; no, no, I do not doubt it.

FAINALL: Well, madam, I have suffered myself to be overcome by the impurity of this lady your friend; and am content you shall enjoy your own proper estate during life, on condition you oblige yourself never to marry, under such penalty as I think convenient.

LADY WISHFORT: Never to marry!

FAINALL: No more Sir Rowlands; the next imposture may not be so timely detected.

MRS. MARWOOD: That condition, I dare answer, my lady will consent to without difficulty; she has already but too much experienced the perfidiousness of men.—Besides, madam, when we retire to our pastoral solitude we shall bid adieu to all other thoughts.

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, that's true; but in case of necessity, as of health, or some such emergency—

FAINALL: Oh, if you are prescribed marriage, you shall be considered; I only will reserve to myself the power to choose for you. If your physic be wholesome, it matters not who is your apothecary. Next, my wife shall settle on me the remainder of her fortune, not made over already; and for her maintenance depend entirely on my discretion.

LADY WISHFORT: This is most inhumanly savage; exceeding the barbarity of a Muscovite husband.

FAINALL: I learned it from his Czarish majesty's retinue, in a winter evening's conference over brandy and pepper, amongst other secrets of matrimony and policy, as they are at present practiced in the northern hemisphere. But this must be agreed unto, and that positively. Lastly, I will be endowed, in right of my wife, with that six thousand pounds, which is the moiety of Mrs. Millamant's fortune in your possession; and which she has forfeited (as will appear by the last will and testament of your deceased husband, Sir Jonathan Wishfort) by her disobedience in contracting herself against your consent or knowledge; and by refusing the offered match with Sir Wilfull Witwoud, which you, like a careful aunt, had provided for her.

LADY WISHFORT: My nephew was *non compos*, and could not make his addresses.

FAINALL: I come to make demands—I'll hear no objections.

LADY WISHFORT: You will grant me time to consider?

FAINALL: Yes, while the instrument is drawing, to which you must set your hand till more sufficient deeds can be perfected: which I will take care shall be done with all possible speed. In the meanwhile I'll go for the said instrument, and till my return you may balance this matter in your own discretion.

[Exit]

LADY WISHFORT: This insolence is beyond all precedent, all parallel: must I be subject to this merciless villain?

MRS. MARWOOD: 'Tis severe indeed, madam, that you should smart for your daughter's wantonness.

LADY WISHFORT: 'Twas against my consent that she married this barbarian, but she would have him, though her year was not out.—Ah! her first husband, my son Languish, would not have carried it thus. Well, that was my choice, this is hers: she is matched now with a witness.—I shall be mad!—Dear friend, is there no comfort for me? must I live to be confiscated at this rebel rate?—Here come two more of my Egyptian plagues too.

[Enter Mrs. Millamant and Sir Wilfull Witwoud]

SIR WILFULL: Aunt, your servant.

LADY WISHFORT: Out, caterpillar, call not me aunt! I know thee not!

SIR WILFULL: I confess I have been a little in disguise, as they say.—S'heart! and I'm sorry for't. What would you have? I hope I have committed no offence, aunt—and if I did I am willing to make satisfaction; and what can a man say

fairer? If I have broke anything I'll pay for't, an it cost a pound. And so let that content for what's past, and make no more words. For what's to come, to pleasure you I'm willing to marry my cousin. So pray let's all be friends, she and I are agreed upon the matter before a witness.

LADY WISHFORT: How's this, dear niece? Have I any comfort? Can this be true?

MRS. MILLAMANT: I am content to be a sacrifice to your repose, madam; and to convince you that I had no hand in the plot, as you were misinformed, I have laid my commands on Mirabell to come in person, and be a witness that I give my hand to this flower of knighthood—and for the contract that passed between Mirabell and me, I have obliged him to make resignation of it in your ladyship's presence; he is without, and awaits your leave for admittance.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, I'll swear I am something revived at this testimony of your obedience: but I cannot admit that traitor.—I fear I cannot fortify myself to support his appearance. He is as terrible to me as a gorgon; if I see him I fear I shall turn to stone, and petrify incessantly.

MRS. MILLAMANT: If you disoblige him, he may resent your refusal, and insist upon the contract still. Then 'tis the last time he will be offensive to you.

LADY WISHFORT: Are you sure it will be the last time?—If I were sure of that—shall I never see him again?

MRS. MILLAMANT: Sir Wilfull, you and he are to travel together, are you not?

SIR WILFULL: S'heart, the gentleman's a civil gentleman, aunt, let him come in; why, we are sworn brothers and fellow-travelers.—We are to be Pylades and Orestes, he and I—He is to be my interpreter in foreign parts. He has been

over-seas once already; and with proviso that I marry my cousin, will cross 'em once again, only to bear me company.—S'heart, I'll call him in, an I set on't once, he shall come in; and see who'll hinder him.

[*Goes to the door and hems*]

MRS. MARWOOD: This is precious fooling, if it would pass; but I'll know the bottom of it.

LADY WISHFORT: O dear Marwood, you are not going?

MRS. MARWOOD: Not far, madam; I'll return immediately.

[*Exit*]

[*Enter Mirabell*]

SIR WILFULL: Look up, man, I'll stand by you; 'sbud an she do frown, she can't kill you; besides—harkee, she dare not frown desperately, because her face is none of her own. S'heart, an she should, her forehead would wrinkle like the coat of a cream-cheese; but mum for that, fellow-traveler.

MIRABELL: If a deep sense of the many injuries I have offered to so good a lady, with a sincere remorse, and a hearty contrition, can but obtain the least glance of compassion, I am too happy.—Ah, madam, there was a time!—but let it be forgotten—I confess I have deservedly forfeited the high place I once held of sighing at your feet. Nay, kill me not, by turning from me in disdain.—I come not to plead for favor; nay, not for pardon; I am a suppliant only for pity—I am going where I never shall behold you more—

SIR WILFULL: How, fellow-traveler! you shall go by yourself then.

MIRABELL: Let me be pitied first, and afterwards forgotten.—I ask no more.

SIR WILFULL: By'r Lady, a very reasonable request, and will cost you nothing, aunt! Come, come, forgive and forget,

aunt. Why, you must, an you are a Christian.

MIRABELL: Consider, madam, in reality, you could not receive much prejudice; it was an innocent device; though I confess it had a face of guiltiness—it was at most an artifice which love contrived; and errors which love produces have ever been accounted venial. At least think it is punishment enough, that I have lost what in my heart I hold most dear, that to your cruel indignation I have offered up this beauty, and with her my peace and quiet; nay, all my hopes of future comfort.

SIR WILFULL: An he does not move me, would I may never be o' the quorum!—an it were not as good a deed as to drink, to give her to him again, I would I might never take shipping!—Aunt, if you don't forgive quickly, I shall melt, I can tell you that. My contract went no farther than a little mouth glue, and and that's hardly dry—one doleful sigh more from my fellow-traveler, and 'tis dissolved.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, nephew, upon your account—Ah, he has a false insinuating tongue!—Well sir, I will stifle my just resentment at my nephew's request.—I will endeavor what I can to forget, but on proviso that you resign the contract with my niece immediately.

MIRABELL: It is in writing, and with papers of concern; but I have sent my servant for it, and will deliver it to you, with all acknowledgments for your transcendent goodness.

LADY WISHFORT: [*Aside*] Oh, he has witchcraft in his eyes and tongue!—When I did not see him, I could have bribed a villain to his assassination; but his appearance rakes the embers which have so long lain smothered in my breast.

 ACT V. SCENE III.

The Same.

LADY WISFORT, MRS. MILLAMANT, SIR
WILFULL, MIRABELL, FAINALL,
and MRS. MARWOOD.

FAINALL: Your date of deliberation, madam, is expired. Here is the instrument; are you prepared to sign?

LADY WISFORT: If I were prepared, I am not impowered. My niece exerts a lawful claim, having matched herself by my direction to Sir Wilfull.

FAINALL: That sham is too gross to pass on me—though 'tis imposed on you, madam.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Sir, I have given my consent.

MIRABELL: And, sir, I have resigned my pretensions.

SIR WILFULL: And, sir, I assert my right: and will maintain it in defiance of you, sir, and of your instrument. S'heart, an you talk of an instrument, sir, I have an old fox by my thigh that shall hack your instrument of ram vellum to shreds, sir! It shall not be sufficient for a *mittimus* or a tailor's measure. Therefore withdraw your instrument, sir, or by'r Lady, I shall draw mine.

LADY WISFORT: Hold, nephew, hold!

MRS. MILLAMANT: Good Sir Wilfull, despite your valor.

FAINALL: Indeed! Are you provided of your guard, with your single beef-eater there? but I'm prepared for you, and insist upon my first proposal. You shall submit your own estate to my management, and absolutely make over my wife's to my sole use, as pursuant to the purport and tenor of this other covenant.—I suppose, madam, your consent is not requisite in this case; nor,

Mr. Mirabell, your resignation; nor, Sir Wilfull, your right.—You may draw your fox if you please, sir, and make a bear-garden flourish somewhere else: for here it will not avail. This, my Lady Wishfort, must be subscribed, or your darling daughter's turned adrift, like a leaky hulk, to sink or swim, as she and the current of this lewd town can agree.

LADY WISFORT: Is there no means, no remedy to stop my ruin? Ungrateful wretch! dost thou not owe thy being, thy subsistence, to my daughter's fortune?

FAINALL: I'll answer you when I have the rest of it in my possession.

MIRABELL: But that you would not accept of a remedy from my hands—I own I have not deserved you should owe any obligation to me; or else perhaps I could advise—

LADY WISFORT: Oh, what? what? To save me and my child from ruin, from want, I'll forgive all that's past; nay, I'll consent to anything to come, to be delivered from this tyranny.

MIRABELL: Aye, madam; but that is too late, my reward is intercepted. You have disposed of her who only could have made me a compensation for all my services; but be it as it may, I am resolved I'll serve you! you shall not be wronged in this savage manner.

LADY WISFORT: How! dear Mr. Mirabell, can you be so generous at last! But it is not possible. Harkce, I'll break my nephew's match; you shall have my niece yet, and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger.

MIRABELL: Will you? I'll take you at your word. I ask no more. I must have leave for two criminals to appear.

LADY WISFORT: Aye, aye, anybody, anybody!

MIRABELL: Foible is one, and a penitent.

[*Enter Mrs. Fainall, Foible, and Mincing*]

MRS. MARWOOD: Oh, my shame! [Mirabell and Lady Wishfort go to Mrs. Fainall and Foible] These corrupt things are brought hither to expose me.

[*To Fainall*]

FAINALL: If it must all come out, why let 'em know it; 'tis but the way of the world. That shall not urge me to relinquish or abate one tittle of my terms; no, I will insist the more.

FOIBLE: Yes, indeed, madam, I'll take my bible-oath of it.

MINCING: And so will I, mem.

LADY WISHFORT: O Marwood, Marwood, art thou false? my friend deceive me! hast thou been a wicked accomplice with that profligate man?

MRS. MARWOOD: Have you so much ingratitude and injustice to give credit against your friend, to the aspersions of two such mercenary trulls?

MINCING: Mercenary, mem? I scorn your words. 'Tis true we found you and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret; by the same token, you swore us to secrecy upon Messalina's poems. Mercenary! No, if we would have been mercenary, we should have held our tongues; you would have bribed us sufficiently.

FAINALL: Go, you are an insignificant thing!—Well, what are you the better for this; is this Mr. Mirabell's expedient? I'll be put off no longer. — You thing, that was a wife, shall smart for this! I will not leave thee wherewithal to hide thy shame; your body shall be naked as your reputation.

MRS. FAINALL: I despise you, and defy your malice!—you have aspersed me wrongfully—I have proved your falsehood—go you and your treacherous—I

will not name it, but starve together—perish!

FAINALL: Not while you are worth a groat, indeed, my dear.—Madam, I'll be fooled no longer.

LADY WISHFORT: Ah, Mr. Mirabell, this is small comfort, the detection of this affair.

MIRABELL: Oh, in good time—your leave for the other offender and penitent to appear, madam.

[*Enter Waitwell with a box of writings*]

LADY WISHFORT: O Sir Rowland!—Well, rascal!

WAITWELL: What your ladyship pleases. I have brought the black box at last, madam.

MIRABELL: Give it me.—Madam, you remember your promise.

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, dear sir.

MIRABELL: Where are the gentlemen?

WAITWELL: At hand, sir, rubbing their eyes—just risen from sleep.

FAINALL: 'Sdeath, what's this to me? I'll not wait your private concerns.

[*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*]

PETULANT: How now? What's the matter? Whose hand's out?

WITWOUND: Heyday! what, are you all got together, like players at the end of the last act?

MIRABELL: You may remember, gentlemen, I once requested your hands as witnesses to a certain parchment.

WITWOUND: Aye, I do, my hand I remember—Petulant set his mark.

MIRABELL: You wrong him, his name is fairly written, as shall appear.—You do not remember, gentlemen, anything of what that parchment contains?—

[*Undoing the box*]

WITWOUND: No.

PETULANT: Not I; I writ, I read nothing.

MIRABELL: Very well, now you shall know.

—Madam, your promise.

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, aye, sir, upon my honor.

MIRABELL: Mr. Fainall, it is now time that you should know that your lady, while she was at her own disposal, and before you had by your insinuations wheedled her out of a pretended settlement of the greatest part of her fortune—

FAINALL: Sir! pretended!

MIRABELL: Yes, sir. I say that this lady while a widow, having it seems received some cautions respecting your inconstancy and tyranny of temper, which from her own partial opinion and fondness of you she could never have suspected—she did, I say, by the wholesome advice of friends, and of sages learned in the laws of this land, deliver this same as her act and deed to me in trust, and to the uses within mentioned. You may read if you please—[*holding out the parchment*] though perhaps what is written on the back may serve your occasions.

FAINALL: Very likely, sir. What's here? —Damnation! [*Reads*] "A deed of conveyance of the whole estate real of Arabella Languish, widow, in trust to Edward Mirabell."—Confusion!

MIRABELL: Even so, sir; 'tis the way of the world, sir, of the widows of the world. I suppose this deed may bear an elder date than what you have obtained from your lady.

FAINALL: Perfidious fiend! then thus I'll be revenged.

[*Offers to run at Mrs. Fainall*]

SIR WILFULL: Hold, sir! Now you may make your bean-garden flourish somewhere else, sir.

FAINALL: Mirabell, you shall hear of this, sir, be sure you shall.—Let me pass, oaf!

[*Exit*]

MRS. FAINALL: Madam, you seem to stifle your resentment; you had better give it vent.

MRS. MARWOOD: Yes, it shall have vent—and to your confusion; or I'll perish in the attempt.

[*Exit*]

LADY WISHFORT: O daughter, daughter! 'Tis plain thou hast inherited thy mother's prudence.

MRS. FAINALL: Thank Mr. Mirabell, a cautious friend, to whose advice all is owing.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, Mr. Mirabell, you have kept your promise—and I must perform mine.—First, I pardon, for your sake, Sir Rowland there, and Foible; the next thing is to break the matter to my nephew—and how to do that—

MIRABELL: For that, madam, give yourself no trouble; let me have your consent. Sir Wilfull is my friend; he has had compassion upon lovers, and generously engaged a volunteer in this action, for our service; and now designs to prosecute his travels.

SIR WILFULL: S'heart, aunt, I have no mind to marry. My cousin's a fine lady, and the gentleman loves her, and she loves him, and they deserve one another; my resolution is to see foreign parts—I have set on't—and when I'm set on't I must do't. And if these two gentlemen would travel too, I think they may be spared.

PETULANT: For my part, I say little—I think things are best off or on.

WITWOLD: I'gad, I understand nothing of the matter; I'm in a maze yet, like a dog in a dancing-school.

LADY WISHFORT: Well, sir, take her, and with her all the joy I can give you.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Why does not the man take me? Would you have me give myself to you over again?

MIRABELL: Aye, and over and over again; [kisses her hand] I would have you as often as possibly I can. Well, Heaven grant I love you not too well, that's all my fear.

SIR WILFULL: S'heart, you'll have time enough to toy after you're married; or if you will toy now, let us have a dance in the meantime, that we who are not lovers may have some other employment besides looking on.

MIRABELL: With all my heart, dear Sir Wilfull. What shall we do for music?

FOIBLE: Oh, sir, some that were provided for Sir Rowland's entertainment are yet within call.

[A dance]

LADY WISHFORT: As I am a person, I can hold out no longer; I have wasted my spirits so to-day already, that I am ready to sink under the fatigue; and I cannot

but have some fears upon me yet, that my son Fainall will pursue some desperate course.

MIRABELL: Madam, disquiet not yourself on that account; to my knowledge his circumstances are such he must of force comply. For my part, I will contribute all that in me lies to a reunion; in the meantime, madam—[to Mrs. Fainall] let me before these witnesses restore to you this deed of trust: it may be a means, well-managed, to make you live easily together.

From hence let those be warned, who mean to wed;

Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal bed;

For each deceiver to his cost may find

That marriage-frauds too oft are paid in kind.

[*Exeunt omnes*]

Ben Jonson

(1573-1637)

AFTER three centuries Ben Jonson, who loved a good fight and a good book almost equally well, still strides through the history of comedy as the most straightforward and indignant champion of common sense and basic decency. Like most Elizabethans he could write pleasant lyrics and grind out ingenious and polished court entertainment. He could also provide workmanlike tragedies like *Catiline* and *Sejanus*, which are steeped in the classic period of Rome that he loved so well. But his true gift was for a type of comedy which whirled like a rugged wind into the garden of Elizabethan romantic comedy.

In Jonson's opinion art had a mission, and it was comedy's particular province to castigate and correct erring humanity. The comic poet, as Jonson never tired of declaring, must "scourge those apes," must reveal "the time's deformity," "seize on vice," and dethrone "prodigious ignorance." Jonson was anything but faithful to his professed desire to remain "high and aloof, safe from the wolf's black jaw, and the dull ass's hoof." At the same time, he was no starched, and unbending moralist. More than most of his contemporaries he cherished good fellowship and savored the intoxicating life of London with unconcealed relish. If we except that delightful walrus Dr. Samuel Johnson, no man of letters gave so good an impersonation of the traditional idea of John Bull.

Jonson had more than the usual share of just grievances against fate and circumstance. Born in Westminster a month after his father died and left his mother penniless, saddled early with an unsympathetic step-father, compelled to labor in the latter's brickyard, and impelled to enlist as a soldier in the Netherlands, he approached playwriting with a definite chip on his shoulder. Fortune favored him only in one particular: the antiquarian William Camden enabled him to receive a classical education, and Jonson became one of the most erudite men of his time.

After five years of submergence following his return to London in 1592, Jonson emerged as a professional collaborator on plays. Fortune smiled on him a year later, in 1598, when his career was punctuated by the production of his first complete play, *Everyman in His Humour*, which was received with great favor. But before the year was out Jonson experienced one of his typical reverses. He was convicted of manslaughter, branded on the left thumb, and imprisoned for killing the actor Gabriel Spenser in a duel fought in self-defense.

Fortunately his encounter with the law was of brief duration, and he was free to resume his profession in the fall of 1599 with his second comedy, *Every-*

man Out of His Humour. *This play was followed by a series of comedies and tragedies which established their author as one of the luminaries of the English stage, collected about him a convivial circle of writers proud to be known as the "sons of Ben," and earned him burial in Westminster Abbey. (In a vertical position—not as a special distinction, but in order to save space.) His life, however, continued to be notoriously troubled up to the time of his death in 1637. He became involved in a virulent feud with the playwrights Dekker and Marston, whom he satirized in The Poetaster. He was thrown into prison for his part in an allegedly treasonable comedy, and narrowly escaped having his ears and nose clipped in accordance with a merciful penal custom of Elizabethan England. His old age was troubled with poverty and disease.*

Drawing upon Roman comedy of manners and upon realistic observation, Jonson created in his first plays, Everyman in His Humour and Everyman Out of His Humour, a new type of drama which differed from the general comedies of Greene and Shakespeare as winter differs from summer. The object of his plays is social criticism; the method is that of caricature, each man's foible being brought to the foreground as the essence of his character. It is noteworthy, however, that Jonson's genius went a long way beyond mere inventory of current idiosyncrasies or "humours." Without ever entirely abandoning his motley crew of eccentrics, he crowned his work with a series of slashing satires—Volpone, The Alchemist, and Bartholomew Fair—which present a fairly unified comic situation or intrigue.

Nowhere in his work is evil so sinister, and nowhere is it stayed so mercilessly as in Volpone, or the Fox. The poet's scorn has alternately the qualities of ice and fire. Europe has indeed wittier and more graceful comedies than this reductio ad absurdum of avarice but few so sustained and perhaps none so drastic. (For later treatments of the same theme the student is referred to Molière's The Miser, Henri Becque's The Vultures, and Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes.)

Jonson's genius, which is at its zenith in this satire, is, in fact, "sullen and saturnine," and one cannot quarrel with Dryden's opinion that one admires Jonson but loves Shakespeare. Nevertheless, no writer of comedy after Aristophanes ever raised indignation to such a fine art, and the author of Volpone stands as England's major satirist in the theatre until the advent of Bernard Shaw.

J. G.

VOLPONE; OR, THE FOX

BY BEN JONSON

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

VOLPONE, *a magnifico*
MOSCA, *his parasite*
VOLTORE, *an advocate*
CORBACCIO, *an old gentleman*
CORVINO, *a merchant*
BONARIO, *son to Corbuccio*
SIR POLITICK WOULD-BE, *a knight*
PEREGRINE, *a gentleman traveler*
NANO, *a dwarf*
CASTRONE, *an eunuch*
ANDROGYNO, *an hermaphrodite*

GREGE (*or Mob*)
COMMANDADORI, *officers of justice*
MERCATORI, *three merchants*
AVOCATORI, *four magistrates*
NOTARIO, *the register*
LADY WOULD-BE, *Sir Politick's wife*
CELIA, *Corvino's wife*
Servitori, Servants, two Waiting-women,
&c.

The SCENE—*Venice*

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Room in Volpone's House

[*Enter Volpone and Mosca*]

VOLPONE: Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!

Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.

[*Mosca withdraws the curtain, and discovers piles of gold, plate, jewels, etc.*]

Hail the world's soul, and mine! more glad than is

The teeming earth to see the longed-for sun

Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram,

Am I, to view thy splendor darkening his; That lying here, amongst my other hoards, Show'st like a flame by night, or like the day

Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol, But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,

With adoration, thee, and every relic Of sacred treasure in this blessed room.

Well d.d wise poets, by thy glorious name, Title that age which they would have the best;

Thou being the best of things, and far transcending

All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,

Or any other walking dream on earth:

Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe, They should have given her twenty thousand Cupids;

Such are thy beauties and our loves! Dear saint,

Riches, the dumb god, that giv'st all men tongues,

That canst do nought, and yet mak'st men do all things;

The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,

Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtuc,
fame,

Honor, and all things else. Who can get
thee,

He shall be nobl, valiant, honest, wise—

MOSCA: And what he will, sir. Riches are
in fortune

A greater good than wisdom is in nature.

VOLPONE. True, my beloved Mosca. Yet I
glory

More in the cunning purchase of my
wealth,

Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way; I use no trade, no ven-
ture;

I wound no earth with ploughshares, fat
no beasts

To feed the shambles; have no mills for
iron,

Oil, corn, or men, to grind them into pow-
der:

I blow no subtle glass, expose no ships

To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea;

I turn no monies in the public bank,

No usurer private.

MOSCA: No sir, nor devour

Soft prodigals. You shall have some will
swallow

A melting heir as glibly as your Dutch

Will pills of butter, and ne'er purge for it;

Tear forth the fathers of poor families

Out of their beds, and coffin them alive

In some kind clasping prison, where their
bones

May be forthcoming, when the flesh is
rotten:

But your sweet nature doth abhor these
courses;

You loathe the widow's or the orphan's
tears

Should wash your pavements, or their
piteous cries

Ring in your roofs, and beat the air for
vengeance.

VOLPONE: Right, Mosca; I do loathe it.

MOSCA: And, besides, sir,

You are not like the thresher that doth
stand

With a huge flail, watching a heap of corn,

And, hungry, dares not taste the smallest
grain,

But feeds on mallows, and such bitter
herbs;

Nor like the merchant, who hath filled
his vaults

With Romagnia, and rich Candian wines,
Yet drinks the lees of Lombard's vinegar:

You will not lie in straw, whilst moths
and worms

Feed on your sumptuous hangings and
soft beds;

You know the use of riches, and dare give
now

From that bright heap, to me, your poor
observer,

Or to your dwarf, or your hermaphrodite,
Your eunuch, or what other household

trifle

Your pleasure allows maintenance—

VOLPONE: Hold thee, Mosca,

[Gives him money]

Take of my hand; thou strik'st on truth
in all,

And they are envious term thee parasite.

Call forth my dwarf, my eunuch, and my
fool,

And let them make me sport. [Exit Mosca]

What should I do,

But cocker up my genius, and live free

To all delights my fortune calls me to?

I have no wife, no parent, child, ally,

To give my substance to; but whom I
make

Must be my heir; and this makes men
observe me:

This draws new clients daily to my house,
Women and men of every sex and age,

That bring me presents, send me plate,
coin, jewels

With hope that when I die (which they expect

Each greedy minute) it shall then return
Tenfold upon them; whilst some, covetous
Above the rest, seek to engross me whole,
And counter-work the one unto the other,
Contend in gifts, as they would seem in love:

All which I suffer, playing with their hopes,

And am content to coin them into profit,
And look upon their kindness, and take more,

And look on that; still bearing them in hand,

Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again.—

How now!

[*Re-enter Mosca with Nano, Androgyno, and Castrone*]

NANO: "Now, room for fresh gamesters,
who do will you to know,

They do bring you neither play nor university show;

And therefore do intreat you that whatsoever they rehearse,

May not fare a whit the worse, for the false pace of the verse.

If you wonder at this, you will wonder more ere we pass,

For know, here is enclosed the soul of Pythagoras,

That juggler divine, as hereafter shall follow;

Which soul, fast and loose, sir, came first from Apollo,

And was breathed into Æthalides, Mercurius his son,

Where it had the gift to remember all that ever was done.

From whence it fled forth, and made quick transmigration

To goldy-locked Euphorbus, who was killed in good fashion,

At the siege of old Troy, by the cuckold of Sparta.

Hermotimus was next (I find it in my charta),

To whom it did pass, where no sooner it was missing,

But with one Pyrrhus of Delos it learned to go a-fishing;

And thence did it enter the sophist of Greece.

From Pythagore, she went into a beautiful piece,

Hight Aspasio, the meretrix; and the next toss of her

Was again of a whore, she became a philosopher,

Crates the cynick, as itself doth relate it.

Since kings, knights, and beggars, knaves, lords, and fools gat it,

Besides ox and ass, camel, mule, goat, and brock,

In all which it hath spoke, as in the cobbler's cock.

But I come not here to discourse of that matter,

Or his one, two, or three, or his great oath,
By Quarter!

His musics, his trigon, his golden thigh,
Or his telling how elements shift; but I

Would ask, how of late thou hast suffered translation,

And shifted thy coat in these days of reformation.

ANDROGYNO: Like one of the reformed, a fool, as you see,

Counting all old doctrine heresy.

NANO: But not on thine own forbid meats hast thou ventured?

ANDROGYNO: On fish, when first a Carthusian I entered.

NANO: Why, then thy dogmatical silence hath left thee?

ANDROGYNO: Of that an obstreperous lawyer bereft me.

NANO: O wonderful change, when sir lawyer forsook thee!

For Pythagore's sake, what body then took thee?

ANDROGYNO: A good dull mule.

NANO: And how! by that means

Thou wert brought to allow of the eating of beans?

ANDROGYNO: Yes.

NANO: But from the mule into whom didst thou pass?

ANDROGYNO: Into a very strange beast, by some writers called an ass;

By others a precise, pure, illuminate brother Of those devour flesh, and sometimes one another.

And will drop you forth a libel, or a sanctified lie,

Betwixt every spoonful of a nativity-pie.

NANO: Now quit thee, for heaven, of that profane nation,

And gently report thy next transmigration.

ANDROGYNO: To the same that I am.

NANO: A creature of delight,

And, what is more than a fool, an hermaphrodite!

Now, prithee, sweet soul, in all thy variation,

Which body wouldst thou choose to keep up thy station?

ANDROGYNO: Troth, this I am in: even here would I tarry.

NANO: 'Cause here the delight of each sex thou canst vary!

ANDROGYNO: Alas, those pleasures be stale and forsaken;

No, 'tis your fool wherewith I am so taken, The only one creature that I can call blessed;

For all other forms I have proved most distressed.

NANO: Spoke true, as thou wert in Pythagoras still,

This learned opinion we celebrate will,

Fellow eunuch, as behoves us, with all our wit and art,

To dignify that whereof ourselves are so great and special a part."

VOLPONE: Now, very, very pretty; Mosca, this

Was thy invention?

MOSCA: If it please my patron, Not else.

VOLPONE: It doth, good Mosca.

MOSCA: Then it was, sir.

[Nano and Castrone sing]

"Fools, they are the only nation Worth men's envy or admiration;

Free from care or sorrow-taking, Selves and others merry making:

All they speak or do is sterling.

Your fool he is your great man's darling,

And your ladies' sport and pleasure;

Tongue and bauble are his treasure.

E'en his face begetteth laughter,

And he speaks truth free from slaughter;

He's the grace of every feast,

And sometimes the chiefest guest;

Hath his trencher and his stool,

When wit waits upon the fool.

O, who would not be

He, he, he?"

[Knocking without]

VOLPONE: Who's that? Away! [Exeunt Nano and Castrone] Look, Mosca. Fool, begone!

[Exit Androgyno]

MOSCA: 'Tis Signior Voltore, the advocate; I know him by his knock.

VOLPONE: Fetch me my gown,

My furs, and night-caps; say my couch is changing.

And let him entertain himself awhile

Without i' the gallery. [Exit Mosca] Now, now my clients

Begin their visitation! Vulture, kite,

Raven, and gorcrow, all my birds of prey,

That think me turning carcase, now they come:

I am not for them yet.

[*Re-enter Mosca, with the gown, &c.*]

How now! the news?

MOSCA: A piece of plate, sir.

VOLPONE: Of what bigness?

MOSCA: Huge,

Massy, and antique, with your name inscribed,

And arms engraven.

VOLPONE: Good! and not a fox

Stretched on the earth, with fine delusive sleights,

Mocking a gaping crow? ha, Mosca!

MOSCA: Sharp, sir.

VOLPONE: Give me my furs.

[*Puts on his sick dress*]

Why dost thou laugh so, man?

MOSCA: I cannot choose, sir, when I apprehend

What thoughts he has without now, as he walks:

That this might be the last gift he should give;

That this would fetch you; if you died to-day,

And gave him all, what he should be to-morrow;

What large return would come of all his ventures

How he should worshipped be, and reverenced;

Ride with his furs, and foot-cloths; waited on

By herds of fools and clients; have clear way

Made for his mule, as lettered as himself;

Be called the great and learned advocate:

And then concludes, there's nought impossible.

VOLPONE: Yes, to be learned, Mosca.

MOSCA: O, no: rich

Implies it. Hood an ass with reverend purple,

So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.

VOLPONE: My caps, my caps, good Mosca.
Fetch him in.

MOSCA: Stay, sir; your ointment for your eyes.

VOLPONE: That's true;

Dispatch, dispatch: I long to have possession

Of my new present.

MOSCA: That, and thousands more,

I hope to see you lord of.

VOLPONE: Thanks, kind Mosca.

MOSCA: And that, when I am lost in blended dust,

And hundreds such as I am, in succession—

VOLPONE: Nay, that were too much, Mosca.

MOSCA: You shall live

Still to delude these harpies.

VOLPONE: Loving Mosca!

'Tis well: my pillow now, and let him enter.

[*Exit Mosca*]

Now, my feigned cough, my phtisic, and my gout,

My apoplexy, palsy, and catarrhs,

Help, with your forced functions, this my posture,

Wherein, this three year, I have milked their hopes.

He comes; I hear him—Uh! [*coughing*]
uh! uh! uh! O—

[*Re-enter Mosca, introducing Voltore with a piece of plate*]

MOSCA: You still are what you were, sir.

Only you,

Of all the rest, are he commands his love,

And you do wisely to preserve it thus,

With early visitation, and kind notes

Of your good meaning to him, which, I know,

Cannot but come most grateful. Patron! sir!

Here's Signior Voltore is come—

VOLPONE [*Faintly*]: What say you?

MOSCA: Sir, Signior Voltore is come this morning

To visit you.

VOLPONE: I thank him.

MOSCA: And hath brought

A piece of antique plate, bought of St. Mark,

With which he here presents you.

VOLPONE: He is welcome

Pray him to come more often.

MOSCA: Yes.

VOLTORE: What says he?

MOSCA: He thanks you, and desires you to see him often.

VOLPONE: Mosca.

MOSCA: My patron!

VOLPONE: Bring him near, where is he?

I long to feel his hand.

MOSCA: The plate is here, sir.

VOLTORE: How fare you, sir?

VOLPONE: I thank you, Signior Voltore;

Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad.

VOLTORE [*Putting it into his hands*]: I'm sorry

To see you still thus weak.

MOSCA [*Aside*]: That he's not weaker.

VOLPONE: You are too munificent

VOLTORE: No, sir; would to heaven,

I could as well give health to you, as that plate!

VOLPONE: You give, sir, what you can; I thank you.

Your love

Hath taste in this, and shall not be unanswered:

I pray you see me often.

VOLTORE: Yes, I shall, sir?

VOLPONE: Be not far from me.

MOSCA: Do you observe that, sir?

VOLPONE: Hearken unto me still; it will concern you.

MOSCA: You are a happy man, sir; know your good.

VOLPONE: I cannot now last long—

MOSCA: You are his heir, sir.

VOLTORE: Am I?

VOLPONE: I feel me going: Uh! uh! uh! uh!

I'm sailing to my port, Uh! uh! uh! uh!

And I am glad I am so near my haven.

MOSCA: Alas, kind gentleman! Well, we must all go—

VOLTORE: But, Mosca—

MOSCA: Age will conquer.

VOLTORE: Pray thee, hear me;

Am I inscribed his heir for certain?

MOSCA: Are you!

I do beseech you, sir, you will vouchsafe

To write me in your family. All my hopes

Depend upon your worship: I am lost

Except the rising sun do shine on me.

VOLTORE: It shall both shine, and warm thee, Mosca.

MOSCA: Sir,

I am a man that hath not done your love

All the worst offices: here I wear your keys,

See all your coffers and your caskets locked.

Keep the poor inventory of your jewels,

Your plate, and monies; am your steward, sir,

Husband your goods here.

VOLTORE: But am I sole heir?

MOSCA: Without a partner, sir: confirmed this morning:

The wax is warm yet, and the ink scarce dry

Upon the parchment.

VOLTORE: Happy, happy me!

By what good chance, sweet Mosca?

MOSCA: You! desert, sir;

I know no second cause.

VOLTORE: Thy modesty

Is not to know it; well, we shall requite it.

MOSCA: He ever liked your course, sir; that first took him.

I oft have heard him say how he admired

Men of your large profession, that could speak

To every cause, and things mere contraries,

Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law;
That, with most quick agility, could turn,
And return; make knots, and undo them;
Give forked counsel; take provoking gold
On either hand, and put it up; these men,
He knew, would thrive with their humility.
And, for his part, he thought he should
be blest

To have his heir of such a suffering spirit,
So wise, so grave, of so perplexed a tongue,
And loud withal, that would not wag, nor
scarce

Lie still, without a fee; when every word
Your worship but lets fall, is a chequon!—
[*Knocking without*]

Who's that? one knocks; I would not have
you seen, sir.

And yet—pretend you came, and went in
haste;

I'll fashion an excuse—and, gentle sir,
When you do come to swim in golden lard,
Up to the arms in honey, that your chin
Is borne up stiff with fatness of the flood,
Think on your vassal; but remember me:
I have not been your worst of clients.

VOLTORE· MOSCA!—

MOSCA· When will you have your inven-
tory brought, sir?

Or see a copy of the Will?—Anon!

I'll bring them to you, sir. Away, begone,
Put business in your face.

[*Exit Voltore*]

VOLPONE [*Springing up*]: Excellent Mosca!
Come hither, let me kiss thee.

MOSCA· Keep you still, sir.

Here is Corbaccio.

VOLPONE: Set the plate away:

The vulture's gone, and the old raven's
come.

MOSCA· Betake you to your silence, and
your sleep.

Stand there and multiply. [*Putting the
plate to the rest*] Now we shall see

A wretch who is indeed more impotent
Than this can feign to be; yet hopes to hop

Over his grave.

[*Enter Corbaccio*]

Signior Corbaccio!

You're very welcome, sir.

CORBACCIO: How does your patron?

MOSCA: Troth, as he did, sir; no amends.

CORBACCIO: What! mends he?

MOSCA· No, sir; he's rather worse.

CORBACCIO: That's well. Where is he?

MOSCA· Upon his couch, sir, newly fall'n
asleep.

CORBACCIO: Does he sleep well?

MOSCA: No wink, sir, all this night,
Nor yesterday; but slumbers.

CORBACCIO: Good! he should take
Some counsel of physicians: I have
brought him

An opiate here, from mine own doctor.

MOSCA: He will not hear of drugs.

CORBACCIO: Why? I myself

Stood by while it was made, saw all the
ingredients;

And know it cannot but most gently
work:

My life for his, 'tis but to make him sleep.

VOLPONE [*Aside*]: Ay, his last sleep, if he
would take it.

MOSCA: Sir,

He has no faith in physic.

CORBACCIO: Say you, say you?

MOSCA: He has no faith in physic: he does
think

Most of your doctors are the greater
danger,

And worse disease, to escape. I often have
Heard him protest that your physician
Should never be his heir.

CORBACCIO: Not I his heir?

MOSCA: Not your physician, sir.

CORBACCIO: O, no, no, no.

I do not mean it.

MOSCA: No, sir, nor their fees

He cannot brook: he says they flay a man
Before they kill him.

CORBACCIO: Right, I do conceive you.

MOSCA: And then they do it by experiment;

For which the law not only doth absolve them,

But gives them great reward and he is loth

To hire his death so.

CORBACCIO: It is true, they kill

With as much license as a judge.

MOSCA: Nay, more;

For he but kills, sir, where the law condemns,

And these can kill him too.

CORBACCIO: Ay, or me;

Or any man. How does his apoplex?

Is that strong on him still?

MOSCA: Most violent.

His speech is broken, and his eyes are set,

His face drawn longer than 'twas wont—

CORBACCIO: How! how!

Stronger than he was wont?

MOSCA: No, sir; his face

Drawn longer than 'twas wont.

CORBACCIO: O, good!

MOSCA: His mouth

Is ever gaping, and his eyelids hang.

CORBACCIO: Good.

MOSCA: A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,

And makes the color of his flesh like lead.

CORBACCIO: 'Tis good.

MOSCA: His pulse beats slow, and dull.

CORBACCIO: Good symptoms still.

MOSCA: And from his brain—

CORBACCIO: I conceive you; good.

MOSCA: Flows a cold sweat, with a continual rheum.

Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.

CORBACCIO: Is't possible? Yet I am better, ha!

How does he with the swimming of his head?

MOSCA: O, sir, 'tis past the scotomy;¹ he now

Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:

You hardly can perceive him, that he breathes.

CORBACCIO: Excellent, excellent! sure I shall outlast him:

This makes me young again, a score of years.

MOSCA: I was a-coming for you, sir.

CORBACCIO: Has he not made his Will?

What has he given me?

MOSCA: No, sir.

CORBACCIO: Nothing! ha?

MOSCA: He has not made his Will, sir.

CORBACCIO: Oh, oh, oh!

What then did Voltore, the lawyer, here?

MOSCA: He smelt a carcass, sir, when he but heard

My master was about his testament;

As I did urge him to it for your good—

CORBACCIO: He came unto him, did he?

I thought so.

MOSCA: Yes, and presented him this piece of plate.

CORBACCIO: To be his heir?

MOSCA: I do not know, sir.

CORBACCIO: True:

I know it too.

MOSCA: [*Aside*] By your own scale, sir.

CORBACCIO: Well,

I shall prevent him yet. See, Mosca, look

Here I have brought a bag of bright chéquines,

Will quite weigh down his plate.

MOSCA: [*Taking the bag*] Yea, marry, sir.

This is true physic, this your sacred medicine;

No talk of opiates to this great elixir!

CORBACCIO: 'Tis aurum palpabile, if not potable.

MOSCA: It shall be ministered to him in his bowl.

CORBACCIO: Ay, do, do, do.

MOSCA: Most blessed cordial!

This will recover him.

CORBACCIO: Yes, do, do, do.

MOSCA: I think it were not best, sir.

CORBACCIO: What?

MOSCA: To recover him.

CORBACCIO: O, no, no, no; by no means.

MOSCA: Why, sir, this

Will work some strange effect, if he but feel it.

CORBACCIO: 'Tis true, therefore forbear; I'll take my venture:

Give me it again.

MOSCA: At no hand: pardon me:

You shall not do yourself that wrong, sir. I

Will so advise you, you shall have it all.

CORBACCIO: How?

MOSCA: All, sir; 'tis your right, your own; no man

Can claim a part: 'tis yours without a rival,

Decreed by destiny.

CORBACCIO: How, how, good Mosca?

MOSCA: I'll tell you, sir. This fit he shall recover.

CORBACCIO: I do conceive you.

MOSCA: And on first advantage

Of his gained sense, will I re-impertune him

Unto the making of his testament:

And show him this.

[*Pointing to the money*]

CORBACCIO: Good, good.

MOSCA: 'Tis better yet,

If you will hear, sir.

CORBACCIO: Yes, with all my heart.

MOSCA: Now would I counsel you, make home with speed;

There, frame a Will; whereto you shall inscribe

My master your sole heir.

CORBACCIO: And disinherit

My son!

MOSCA: O, sir, the better for that color

Shall make it much more taking.

CORBACCIO: O, but color?

MOSCA: This Will, sir, you shall send it unto me.

Now, when I come to inforce, as I will do, Your cares, your watchings, and your many prayers,

Your more than many gifts, your this day's present,

And last, produce your Will; where, without thought,

Or least regard, unto your proper issue,

A son so brave, and highly meriting,

The stream of your diverted love hath thrown you

Upon my master, and made him your heir:

He cannot be so stupid, or stone-dead,

But out of conscience and mere gratitude—

CORBACCIO: He must pronounce me his?

MOSCA: 'Tis true.

CORBACCIO: This plot

Did I think on before.

MOSCA: I do believe it.

CORBACCIO: Do you not believe it?

MOSCA: Yes, sir.

CORBACCIO: Mine own project.

MOSCA: Which, when he hath done, sir—

CORBACCIO: Published me his heir?

MOSCA: And you so certain to survive him—

CORBACCIO: Ay.

MOSCA: Being so lusty a man—

CORBACCIO: 'Tis true.

MOSCA: Yes, sir—

CORBACCIO: I thought on that too. Sec, how he should be

The very organ to express my thoughts!

MOSCA: You have not only done yourself a good—

CORBACCIO: But multiplied it on my son.

MOSCA: 'Tis right, sir.

CORBACCIO: Still, my invention.

MOSCA: 'Lais, sir! heaven knows,

It hath been all my study, all my care,

(I e'en grow gray withal,) how to work things—

CORBACCIO: I do conceive, sweet Mosca.

MOSCA: You are he
For whom I labor here.

CORBACCIO: Ay, do, do, do:
I'll straight about it.

[*Going*]

MOSCA: [*Aside*] Rook go with you, raven!

CORBACCIO: I know thee honest.

MOSCA: You do lie, sir!

CORBACCIO: And—

MOSCA: Your knowledge is no better than
your ears, sir.

CORBACCIO: I do not doubt to be a father
to thee.

MOSCA: Nor I to gull my brother of his
blessing.

CORBACCIO: I may have my youth restored
to me, why not?

MOSCA: Your worship is a precious ass!

CORBACCIO: What sayest thou?

MOSCA: I do desire your worship to make
haste, sir.

CORBACCIO: 'Tis done, 'tis done; I go.

[*Exit*]

VOLPONE: [*Leaping from his couch*] O, I
shall burst!

Let out my sides, let out my sides—

MOSCA: Contain

Your flux of laughter, sir: you know this
hope

Is such a bait, it covers any hook.

VOLPONE: O, but thy working, and thy
placing it!

I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kiss
thee:

I never knew thee in so rare a humor.

MOSCA: Alas, sir, I but do as I am taught;
Follow your grave instructions; give them
words;

Pour oil into their ears, and send them
hence.

VOLPONE: 'Tis true, 'tis true. What a rare
punishment.

Is avarice to itself!

MOSCA: Ay, with our help, sir.

VOLPONE: So many cares, so many mala-
dies,

So many fears attending on old age.

Yea, death so often called on, as no wish
Can be more frequent with them, their
limbs faint,

Their senses dull, their seeing, hearing,
going,

All dead before them; yea, their very
teeth,

Their instruments of eating, failing them:
Yet this is reckoned life! nay, here was
one,

Is now gone home, that wishes to live
longer!

Feels not his gout, nor palsy; feigns him-
self

Younger by scores of years, flatters his age
With confident belying it, hopes he may
With charms like Æson, have his youth
restored;

And with these thoughts so battens, as if
fate

Would be as easily cheated on as he,

And all turns air! [*Knocking within*]
Who's that there, now? a third!

MOSCA: Close, to your couch again; I hear
his voice.

It is Corvino, our spruce merchant.

VOLPONE: [*Lies down as before*] Dead.

MOSCA: Another bout, sir, with your eyes.
[*Annoying them*] Who's there?

[*Enter Corvino*]

Signior Corvino! come most wished for!
O,

How happy were you, if you knew it,
now!

CORVINO: Why? what? wherein?

MOSCA: The tardy hour is come, sir.

CORVINO: He is not dead?

MOSCA: Not dead, sir, but as good;
He knows no man.

CORVINO: How shall I do then?

MOSCA: Why, sir?

CORVINO: I have brought him here a pearl

MOSCA: Perhaps he has
So much remembrance left as to know you,
sir:

He still calls on you; nothing but your
name

Is in his mouth. Is your pearl orient, sir?

CORVINO: Venice was never owner of the
like.

VOLPONE: [*Family*] Signior Corvino!

MOSCA: Hark.

VOLPONE: Signior Corvino.

MOSCA: He calls you; step and give it him.

—He's here, sir.

And he has brought you a rich pearl.

CORVINO: How do you, sir?

Tell him it doubles the twelve caract.

MOSCA: Sir,

He cannot understand, his hearing's gone;

And yet it comforts him to see you—

CORVINO: Say

I have a diamond for him, too.

MOSCA: Best show it, sir;

Put it into his hand: 'tis only there

He apprehends: he has his feeling yet.

See how he grasps it!

CORVINO: 'Las, good gentleman!

How pitiful the sight is!

MOSCA: Tut, forget, sir.

The weeping of an heir should still be
laughter

Under a visor.

CORVINO: Why, am I his heir?

MOSCA: Sir, I am sworn, I may not show
the Will

Till he be dead; but here has been Cor-
baccio,

Here has been Voltore, here were others
too,

I cannot number 'em, they were so many;

All gaping here for legacies: but I,

Taking the vantage of his naming you,

Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino, took

Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I asked
him

Whom he would have his heir! *Corvino*.

Who

Should be executor? *Corvino*. And

To any question he was silent to,

I still interpreted the nods he made,

Through weakness, for consent: and sent
home th' others,

Nothing bequeathed them, but to cry and
curse.

CORVINO: O, my dear Mosca. [*They em-
brace*] Does he not perceive us?

MOSCA: No more than a blind harper. He
knows no man,

No face of friend, nor name of any serv-
ant,

Who 'twas that fed him last, or gave him
drink:

Not those he had begotten, or brought up,
Can he remember.

CORVINO: Has he children?

MOSCA: Bastards,

Some dozen, or more, that he begot on
beggars,

Gypsies, and Jews, and black-moors, when
he was drunk.

Knew you not that, sir? 'tis the common
fable.

The dwarf, the fool, the eunuch, are all
his;

He's the true father of his family,

In all save me:—but he has given them
nothing.

CORVINO: That's well, that's well! Art sure
he does not hear us?

MOSCA: Sure, sir! why, look you, credit
your own sense.

[*Shouts in Volpone's ear*]

The pox approach, and add to your dis-
eases,

If it would send you hence the sooner, sir,

For your incontinence, it hath deserved it

Thoroughly and thoroughly, and the

plague to boot!—

You may come near, sir.—Would you
would once close

Those filthy eyes of yours, that flow with
slime,

Like two frog-pits; and those same hang-
ing cheeks,

Covered with hide instead of skin—Nay,
help, sir—

That look like frozen dish-clouts set on
end!

CORVINO: [*Aloud*] Or like an old smoked
wall, on which the rain
Ran down in streaks!

MOSCA: Excellent, sir! speak out:

You may be louder yet; a culverin

Discharged in his ear would hardly bore
it.

CORVINO: His nose is like a common sewer,
still running.

MOSCA: 'Tis good! And what his mouth!

CORVINO: A very draught.

MOSCA: O, stop it up—

CORVINO: By no means.

MOSCA: Pray you, let me:

Faith I could stuff him rarely with a pil-
low

As well as any woman that should keep
him.

CORVINO: Do as you will; but I'll begone.

MOSCA: Be so;

It is your presence makes him last so
long

CORVINO: I pray you use no violence.

MOSCA: No, sir! why?

Why should you be thus scrupulous, pray
you, sir?

CORVINO: Nay, at your discretion.

MOSCA: Well, good sir, be gone.

CORVINO: I will not trouble you now to
take my pearl.

MOSCA: Puh! nor your diamond. What a
needless care.

Is this afflicts you? Is not all here yours?
Am not I here, whom you have made your
creature?

That owe my being to you?

CORVINO: Grateful Mosca!

Thou art my friend, my fellow, my com-
panion,

My partner, and shalt share in all my for-
tunes.

MOSCA: Excepting one.

CORVINO: What's that?

MOSCA: Your gallant wife, sir.

[*Exit Corvino*]

Now he is gone: we had no other means
To shoot him hence but this.

VOLPONE: My divine Mosca!

Thou hast to-day outgone thyself.

[*Knocking within*]

Who's there?

I will be troubled with no more. Prepare
Me music, dances, banquets, all delights;
The Turk is not more sensual in his pleas-
ures

Than will Volpone. [*Exit Mosca*] Let me
see; a pearl!

A diamond! plate! chequines! Good morn-
ing's purchase.

Why, this is better than rob churches, yet;
Or fat, by eating, once a month, a man—

[*Re-enter Mosca*]

Who is't?

MOSCA: The beautiful Lady Would-be,
sir,

Wife to the English knight, Sir Politick
Would-be

(This is the style, sir, is directed me),

Hath sent to know how you have slept
to-night,

And if you would be visited?

VOLPONE: Not now:

Some three hours hence.

MOSCA: I told the squire so much.

VOLPONE: When I am high with mirth
and wine; then, then.

'Fore heaven, I wonder at the desperate
valor

Of the bold English, that they dare let
loose

Their wives to all encounters!

MOSCA: Sir, this knight

Had not his name for nothing, he is *politic*,
 And knows, howe'er his wife affect strange
 airs,
 She hath not yet the face to be dishonest.
 But had she Signior Corvino's wife's
 face——

VOLPONE: Hath she so rare a face?

MOSCA: O, sir, the wonder,
 The blazing star of Italy! a wench
 Of the first year, a beauty ripe as harvest!
 Whose skin is whiter than a swan all
 over,
 Than silver, snow, or lilies; a soft lip,
 Would tempt you to eternity of kissing!
 And flesh that melteth in the touch to
 blood!

Bright as your gold, and lovely as your
 gold!

VOLPONE: Why had not I known this be-
 fore?

MOSCA: Alas, sir,
 Myself but yesterday discovered it.

VOLPONE: How might I see her?

MOSCA: O, not possible;
 She's kept as warily as is your gold;
 Never docs come abroad, never takes air
 But at a window. All her looks are sweet,
 As the first grapes or cherries, and are
 watched

As near as they are.

VOLPONE: I must see her.

MOSCA: Sir,
 There is a guard of spies ten thick upon
 her,
 All his whole household; each of which is
 set
 Upon his fellow, and have all their charge,
 When he goes out, when he comes in,
 examined.

VOLPONE: I will go see her, though but at
 her window.

MOSCA: In some disguise then.

VOLPONE: That is true; I must

Maintain mine own shape still the same:
 we'll think.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

*St. Mark's Place; a retired corner before
 Corvino's House*

[*Enter* Sir Politick Would-be, and
 Peregrine]

SIR POLITICK: Sir, to a wise man, all the
 world's his soil:

It is not Italy, nor France, nor Europe,
 That must bound me, if my fates call me
 forth.

Yet I protest, it is no salt desire
 Of seeing countries, shifting a religion,
 Nor any disaffection to the state
 Where I was bred, and unto which I owe
 My dearest plots, hath brought me out;
 much less

That idle, antique, stale, grey-headed project

Of knowing men's minds and manners,
 with Ulysses!

But a peculiar humor of my wife's
 Laid for this height of Venice, to observe,
 To quote, to learn the language, and so
 forth——

I hope you travel, sir, with license?

PEREGRINE: Ycs.

SIR POLITICK: I dare the safelier converse
 ——How long, sir,

Since you left England?

PEREGRINE: Seven weeks.

SIR POLITICK: So lately!

You have not been with my lord ambas-
 sador?

PEREGRINE: Not yet, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Pray you, what news, sir,
 vents our climate?

I heard last night a most strange thing
 reported

By some of my lord's followers, and I
long

To hear how 'twill be seconded.

PEREGRINE: What was't, sir?

SIR POLITICK: Marry, sir, of a raven that
should build

In a ship royal of the king's.

PEREGRINE: This fellow,

Docs he gull me, trow? or is gulled?

[*Aside*] Your name, sir?

SIR POLITICK: My name is Politick Would-be.

PEREGRINE: O, that speaks him. [*Aside*]

A knight, sir?

SIR POLITICK: A poor knight, sir.

PEREGRINE: Your lady

Lies here in Venice, for intelligence

Of tires and fashions, and behavior,

Among the courtezans? the fine Lady
Would-be?

SIR POLITICK: Yes, sir; the spider and the
bee oftimes

Suck from one flower.

PEREGRINE: Good Sir Politick,

I cry you mercy; I have heard much of
you:

'Tis true, sir, of your raven.

SIR POLITICK: On your knowledge?

PEREGRINE: Yes, and your lion's whelping
in the Tower.

SIR POLITICK: Another whelp?

PEREGRINE: Another, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Now heaven!

What prodigies be these? The fires at Ber-
wick!

And the new star! these things concur-
ring, strange,

And full of omen! Saw you those me-
teors?

PEREGRINE: I did, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Fearful! Pray you, sir, con-
firm me,

Were there three porpoises seen above the
bridge,

As they give out?

PEREGRINE: Six, and a sturgeon, sir.

SIR POLITICK: I am astonished.

PEREGRINE: Nay, sir, be not so;
I'll tell you a greater prodigy than these.

SIR POLITICK: What should these things
portend?

PEREGRINE: The very day

(Let me be sure) that I put forth from
London.

There was a whale discovered in the river,
As high as Woolwich, that had waited
there,

Few know how many months, for the
subversion

Of the Stode fleet.

SIR POLITICK: Is't possible? believe it,

'Twas either sent from Spain, or the arch-
duke's:

Spinola's whale, upon my life, my credit!

Will they not leave these projects? Worthy
sir,

Some other news.

PEREGRINE: Faith, Stone the fool is dead,

And they do lack a tavern fool extremely.

SIR POLITICK: Is Mass Stone dead?

PEREGRINE: He's dead, sir; why, I hope

You thought him not immortal?—O, this
knight,

Were he well known, would be a precious
thing

To fit our English stage: he that should
write

But such a fellow, should be thought to
feign

Extremely, if not maliciously.

[*Aside*]

SIR POLITICK: Stone dead!

PEREGRINE: Dead—Lord! how deeply, sir,
you apprehend it!

He was no kinsman to you?

SIR POLITICK: That I know of.

Well! that same fellow was an unknown
fool.

PEREGRINE: And yet you knew him, it
seems?

SIR POLITICK: I did so. Sir,
I knew him one of the most dangerous
heads

Living within the state, and so I held him.

PEREGRINE: Indeed, sir?

SIR POLITICK: While he lived, in action,
He has received weekly intelligence,
Upon my knowledge, out of the Low
Countries,

For all parts of the world, in cabbages;
And those dispensed again to ambassa-
dors,

In oranges, musk-melons, apricots,
Lemons, pome-citrons, and such-like;
sometimes

In Colchester oysters, and your Selsey
cockles.

PEREGRINE: You make me wonder.

SIR POLITICK: Sir, upon my knowledge.
Nay, I've observed him, at your public
ordinary,

Take his advertisement from a traveler,
A concealed statesman, in a trencher of
meat;

And instantly, before the meal was done,
Convey an answer in a tooth-pick.

PEREGRINE: Strange!
How could this be, sir?

SIR POLITICK: Why, the meat was cut
So like his character, and so laid as he
Must easily read the cypher.

PEREGRINE: I have heard,
He could not read, sir.

SIR POLITICK: So 'twas given out,
In policy, by those that did employ him:
But he could read, and had your lan-
guages.

And to't, as sound a noddle——

PEREGRINE: I have heard, sir,
That your baboons were spies, and that
they were

A kind of subtle nation near to China.

SIR POLITICK: Ay, ay, your Mamaluchi.
Faith, they had

Their hand in a French plot or two; but
they

Were so extremely given to women, as
They made discovery of all: yet I
Had my advices here, on Wednesday last,
From one of their own coat, they were
returned,

Made their relations, as the fashion is,
And now stand fair for fresh employment.

PEREGRINE: Heart!

[*Aside*]

This Sir Pol will be ignorant of nothing.
It seems, sir, you know all.

SIR POLITICK: Not all, sir; but
I have some general notions. I do love
To note and to observe: though I live
out,

Free from the active torrent, yet I'd mark
The currents and the passages of things.

For mine own private use; and know the
ebb
And flows of state.

PEREGRINE: Believe it, sir, I hold
Myself in no small tie unto my fortunes,
For casting me thus luckily upon you,
Whose knowledge, if your bounty equal it,
May do me great assistance, in instruc-
tion

For my behavior, and my bearing, which
Is yet so rude and raw

SIR POLITICK: Why? came you forth
Empty of rules for travel?

PEREGRINE: Faith, I had
Some common ones, from out that vulgar
grammar,
Which he that cried Italian to me, taught
me.

SIR POLITICK: Why, this it is that spoils
all our brave bloods,

Trusting our hopeful gentry unto pedants,
Fellows of outside, and mere bark. You
seem

To be a gentleman of ingenuous race ——
I not profess it, but my fate hath been

To be, where I have been consulted with,
in this high kind, touching some great
men's sons,

Persons of blood and honor.—

[*Enter Mosca and Nano disguised,
followed by persons with materials
for erecting a Stage*]

PEREGRINE: Who be these, sir?

MOSCA: Under that window, there 't must
be. The same.

SIR POLITICK: Fellows. to mount a bank.
Did your instructor

In the dear tongues, never discourse to you
Of the Italian mountebanks?

PEREGRINE: Yes, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Why,
Here you shall see one.

PEREGRINE: They are quacksalvers,
Fellows that live by venting oils and drugs.

SIR POLITICK: Was that the character he
gave you of them?

PEREGRINE: As I remember.

SIR POLITICK: Pity his ignorance.

They are the only knowing men of Eu-
rope!

Great general scholars, excellent physi-
cians,

Most admired statesmen, profest favorites,
And cabinet counselors to the greatest
princes;

The only languaged men of all the world!

PEREGRINE: And, I have heard, they are
most lewd impostors;

Made all of terms and shreds; no less be-
liers

Of great men's favors, than their own vile
med'cines;

Which they will utter upon monstrous
oaths;

Selling that drug for twopence, ere they
part,

Which they have valued at twelve crowns
before.

SIR POLITICK: Sir, calumnies are answered
best with silence.

Yourself shall judge.—Who is it mounts,
my friends?

MOSCA: Scoto of Mantua, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Is't he? Nay, then

I'll proudly promise, sir, you shall behold
Another man than has been phant'sied
to you.

I wonder yet, that he should mount his
bank,

Here in this nook, that has been wont t'
appear

In face of the Piazza!—Here he comes.

[*Enter Volpone, disguised as a moun-
tebank Doctor, and followed by a
crowd of people*]

VOLPONE: Mount, zany. [*To Nano*]

MOB: Follow, follow, follow, follow!

SIR POLITICK: See how the people follow
him! he's a man

May write ten thousand crowns in bank
here. Note,

[*Volpone mounts the stage*]

Mark but his gesture:—I do use to ob-
serve

The state he keeps in getting up.

PEREGRINE: 'Tis worth it, sir.

VOLPONE: "Most noble gentlemen, and my
worthy patrons! It may seem strange
that I, your Scoto Mantuano, who was
ever wont to fix my bank in the face
of the public Piazza, near the shelter of
the Portico to the Procuratia, should
now, after eight months' absence from
this illustrious city of Venice, humbly
retire myself into an obscure nook of
the Piazza."

SIR POLITICK: Did not I now object the
same?

PEREGRINE: Peace, sir.

VOLPONE: "Let me tell you: I am not, as
your Lombard proverb saith, cold on
my feet; or content to part with my
commodities at a cheaper rate than I am
accustomed: look not for it. Nor that
the calumnious reports of that impu-

dent detractor, and shame to our profession (Alessandro Buttone, I mean), who gave out, in public, I was condemned a sforzato to the galleys, for poisoning the Cardinal Bembo's—cook, hath at all attached, much less dejected me. No, no, worthy gentlemen; to tell you true, I cannot endure to see the rabble of these ground claritani, that spread their cloaks on the pavement, as if they meant to do feats of activity, and then come in lamely, with their mouldy tales out of Boccaccio, like stale Tabarine, the fabulist: some of them discoursing their travels, and of their tedious captivity in the Turk's galleys, when, indeed, were the truth known, they were the Christian's galleys, where very temperately they eat bread, and drunk water, as a wholesome penance, enjoined them by their confessors, for base pilferies."

SIR POLITICK: Note but his bearing, and contempt of these.

VOLPONE: "These turdy-facy-nasty-patylously-fartical rogues, with one poor groat's-worth of unprepared antimony, finely wrapt up in several scartoccios,² are able, very well, to kill their twenty a week, and play; yet these meagre, starved spirits, who have half stopt the organs of their minds with earthy opilations, want not their favorers among your shriveled salad-eating artisans, who are overjoyed that they may have their half-per'th of physic; though it purge them into another world, it makes no matter."

SIR POLITICK: Excellent! have you heard better language, sir?

VOLPONE: "Well, let them go. And, gentlemen, honorable gentlemen, know, that for this time, our bank, being thus removed from the clamors of the canaglia, shall be the scene of pleasure and

delight; for I have nothing to sell, little or nothing to sell."

SIR POLITICK: I told you, sir, his end.

PEREGRINE: You did so, sir.

VOLPONE: "I protest, I, and my six servants, are not able to make of this precious liquor, so fast as it is fetched away from my lodging by gentlemen of your city; strangers of the Terra-firma; worshipful merchants; ay, and senators too: who, ever since my arrival, have detained me to their uses, by their splendidous liberalities. And worthily; for, what avails your rich man to have his magazines stuff with moscadelli, or of the purest grape, when his physicians prescribe him, on pain of death, to drink nothing but water cocted with aniseeds? O, health! health! the blessing of the rich! the riches of the poor! who can buy thee at too dear a rate, since there is no enjoying this world without thee? Be not then so sparing of your purses, honorable gentlemen, as to abridge the natural course of life——"

PEREGRINE: You see his end.

SIR POLITICK: Ay, is't not good?

VOLPONE: "For when a humid flux, or catarrh, by the mutability of air, falls from your head into an arm or shoulder, or any other part; take you a ducket, or your chequin of gold, and apply to the place affected: see what good effect it can work. No, no, 'tis this blessed unguento, this rare extraction, that hath only power to disperse all malignant humors, that proceed either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes——"

PEREGRINE: I would he had put in dry too.

SIR POLITICK: Pray you observe.

VOLPONE: "To fortify the most indigest and crude stomach, ay, were it of one that, through extreme weakness, vomited blood, applying only a warm nap-

kin to the place, after the unction and fricace;—for the vertigine in the head, putting but a drop into your nostrils, likewise behind the ears; a most sovereign and approved remedy; the mal caduco, cramps, convulsions, paralyties, epilepsies, tremor-cordia, retired nerves, ill vapors of the spleen, stopping of the liver, the stone, the strangury, hernia ventosa, iliaca passio; stops a dysenteria immediately; easeth the torsion of the small guts; and cures melancholia hypochondriaca, being taken and applied, according to my printed receipt. [*Pointing to his bill and his vial*] For this is the physician, this the medicine; this counsels, this cures; this gives the direction, this works the effect; and, in sum, both together may be termed an abstract of the theorick and practick in the Æsculapian art. 'Twill cost you eight crowns. And,—Zan Fritada, prithee sing a verse extempore in honor of it."

SIR POLITICK · How do you like him, sir?

PIREGRINE · Most strangely, I!

SIR POLITICK · Is not his language rare?

PIREGRINE · But alchemy,

I never heard the like; or Broughton's books.

[*Nano sings*]

Had old Hippocrates, or Galen,
That to their books put medicines all in,
But known this secret, they had never
(Of which they will be guilty ever)
Been murderers of so much paper,
Or wasted many a hurtless taper;
No Indian drug had e'er been famed,
Tobacco, sassafra not named;
Ne yet of guacum one small stick, sir,
Nor Raymund Lully's great elixir.
Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus, with his long sword.

PIREGRINE · All this, yet, will not do; eight crowns is high.

VOLPONE: "No more.—Gentlemen, if I had but time to discourse to you the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed Ogllo del Scoto; with the countless catalogue of those I have cured of the aforesaid, and many more diseases; the patents and privileges of all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom; or but the depositions of those that appeared on my part, before the signiory of the Sanita and most learned College of Physicians; where I was authorized, upon notice taken of the admirable virtues of my medicaments, and mine own excellency in matter of rare and unknown secrets, not only to disperse them publicly in this famous city, but in all the territories, that happily joy under the government of the most pious and magnificent states of Italy. But may some other gallant fellow say, O, there be divers that make profession to have as good, and as experimented receipts as yours: indeed, very many have assayed, like apes, in imitation of that, which is really and essentially in me, to make of this oil; bestowed great cost in furnaces, stills, alembicks, continual fires, and preparation of the ingredients (as indeed there goes to it six hundred several simples, besides some quantity of human fat, for the conglutination, which we buy of the anatomists), but when these practitioners come to the last decoction, blow, blow, puff, puff, and all flies in fumo: ha, ha, ha! Poor wretches! I rather pity their folly and indiscretion, than their loss of time and money; for these may be recovered by industry: but to be a fool born, is a disease incurable.

"For myself, I always from my youth have endeavored to get the rarest secrets, and book them, either in exchange, or for money: I spared nor cost nor labor, where anything was worthy to be

learned. And, gentlemen, honorable gentlemen, I will undertake, by virtue of chemical art, out of the honorable hat that covers your head, to extract the four elements; that is to say, the fire, air, water, and earth, and return you your felt without burn or stain. For, whilst others have been at the Balloo,³ have been at my book; and am now past the craggy paths of study, and come to the flowery plains of honor and reputation."

SIR POLITICK: I do assure you, sir, that is his aim.

VOLPONE: "But to our price——"

PEREGRINE: And that withal, Sir Pol.

VOLPONE: "You all know, honorable gentlemen, I never valued this ampulla, or vial, at less than eight crowns; but for this time, I am content to be deprived of it for six; six crowns is the price, and less in courtesy I know you cannot offer me; take it or leave it, howsoever, both it and I am at your service. I ask you not as the value of the thing, for then I should demand of you a thousand crowns, so the Cardinals Montalto, Ferenese, the great Duke of Tuscany, my gossip, with divers other princes, have given me; but I despise money. Only to show my affection to you, honorable gentlemen, and your illustrious State here, I have neglected the messages of these princes, mine own offices, framed my journey hither, only to present you with the fruits of my travels.—Tune your voices once more to the touch of your instruments, and give the honorable assembly some delightful recreation."

PEREGRINE: What monstrous and most painful circumstance

Is here, to get some three or four gazettes, Some threepence in the whole! for that 'twill come to.

[Nano sings]

"You that would last long, list to my song,
Make no more coil, but buy of this oil.
Would you be ever fair and young?
Stout of teeth, and strong of tongue?
Tart of palate? quick of ear?
Sharp of sight? of nostril clear?
Moist of hand? and light of foot?
Or, I will come nearer to't,
Would you live free from all diseases?
Do the act your mistress pleases,
Yet fright all aches from your bones?
Here's a med'cine for the nones."

VOLPONE: "Well, I am in a humor at this time to make a present of the small quantity my coffer contains; to the rich in courtesy, and to the poor for God's sake. Wherefore now mark: I asked you six crowns; and six crowns, at other times, you have paid me; you shall not give me six crowns, nor five, nor four, nor three, nor two, nor one; nor half a ducat; no, nor a moccinigo.⁴ Sixpence it will cost you, or six hundred pound—expect no lower price, for, by the banner of my front, I will not bate a bagatine,—that I will have, only, a pledge of your loves, to carry something from amongst you, to show I am not contemned by you. Therefore, now, toss your handkerchiefs, cheerfully, cheerfully; and be advertised, that the first heroic spirit that deigns to grace me with a handkerchief, I will give it a little remembrance of something, beside, shall please it better than if I had presented it with a double pistol."

PEREGRINE: Will you be that *heroic spark*, Sir Pol?

[Celia, at a window above, throws down her handkerchief]

O, see! the window has prevented you.

VOLPONE: "Lady, I kiss your bounty; and for this timely grace you have done your

poor Scoto of Mantua, I will return you, over and above my oil, a secret of that high and inestimable nature, shall make you for ever enamored on that minute, wherein your eye first descended on so mean, yet not altogether to be despised, an object. Here is a powder concealed in this paper, of which, if I should speak to the worth, nine thousand volumes were but as one page, that page as a line, that line as a word; so short is this pilgrimage of man (which some call life) to the expressing of it. Would I reflect on the price? why, the whole world is but as an empire, that empire as a province, that province as a bank, that bank as a private purse to the purchase of it. I will only tell you; it is the powder that made Venus a goddess (given her by Apollo), that kept her perpetually young, cleared her wrinkles, firmed her gums, filled her skin, colored her hair; from her derived to Helen, and at the sack of Troy unfortunately lost: till now, in this our age, it was as happily recovered, by a studious antiquary, out of some ruins of Asia, who sent a moiety of it to the court of France (but much sophisticated), wherewith the ladies there now color their hair. The rest, at this present, remains with me; extracted to a quintessence: so that, wherever it but touches, in youth it perpetually preserves, in age restores the complexion; seats your teeth, did they dance like virginal jacks, firm as a wall: makes them white as ivory, that were black as—”

[*Enter Corvino*]

CORVINO: Spite o' the devil, and my shame! come down, here;
Come down;—No house but mine to make your scene?
Signior Flaminio, will you down, sir? down?

What, is my wife your Franciscina, sir?
No windows on the whole Piazza, here,
To make your properties, but mine? but mine?

[*Beats away Volpone, Nano, &c.*]

Heart! ere to-morrow I shall be new christened,

And called the Pantalone di Besogniosi,
About the town.

PEREGRINE: What should this mean, Sir Pol?

SIR POLITICK: Some trick of state, believe it; I will home.

PEREGRINE: It may be some design on you.

SIR POLITICK: I know not.

I'll stand upon my guard.

PEREGRINE: It is your best, sir.

SIR POLITICK: This three weeks, all my advices, all my letters,

They have been intercepted.

PEREGRINE: Indeed, sir!

Best have a care.

SIR POLITICK: Nay, so I will.

PEREGRINE: This knight,

I may not lose him, for my mirth, till night.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE II.

A Room in Volpone's House

[*Enter Volpone and Mosca*]

VOLPONE: O, I am wounded!

MOSCA: Where, sir?

VOLPONE: Not without;

Those blows were nothing: I could bear them ever.

But angry Cupid, bolting from her eyes,
Hath shot himself into me like a flame;
Where now he flings about his burning heat,

As in a furnace an ambitious fire,

Whose vent is stopt. The fight is all within me.

I cannot live, except thou help me, Mosca;
My liver melts, and I, without the hope
Of some soft air, from her refreshing
breath,

Am but a heap of cinders.

MOSCA: 'Las, good sir,
Would you had never seen her!

VOLPONE: Nay, would thou
Hadst never told me of her!

MOSCA: Sir, 'tis true;
I do confess I was unfortunate,
And you unhappy; but I'm bound in con-
science,

No less than duty, to effect my best
To your release of torment, and I will,
sir.

VOLPONE: Dear Mosca, shall I hope?

MOSCA: Sir, more than dear,
I will not bid you to despair of aught
Within a human compass

VOLPONE: O, there spoke
My better angel. Mosca, take my keys,
Gold, plate, and jewels, all's at thy devo-
tion;

Employ them how thou wilt: nay, com me
too:

So thou in this but crown my longings,
Mosca.

MOSCA: Use but your patience.

VOLPONE: So I have.

MOSCA: I doubt not
To bring success to your desires.

VOLPONE: Nay, then,
I not repent me of my late disguise

MOSCA: If you can horn him, sir, you
need not.

VOLPONE: 'True:
Besides, I never meant him for my heir.
Is not the color of my beard and eyebrows
To make me known?

MOSCA: No jot.

VOLPONE: I did it well.

MOSCA: So well, would I could follow you
in mine,
With half the happiness! and yet I would

Escape your epilogue.

[*Aside*]

VOLPONE: But were they gulled
With a belief that I was Scoto?

MOSCA: Sir,
Scoto himself could hardly have distin-
guished!

I have not time to flatter you now, we'll
part:

And as I prosper, so applaud my art.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE III.

A Room in Corvino's House

[*Enter Corvino, with his sword in his
hand, dragging in Celia*]

CORVINO: Death of mine honor, with the
city's fool!

A juggling, tooth-drawing, prating moun-
tebank!

And at a public window! where, whilst
he,

With his strained action, and his dole of
faces,

To his drug-lecture draws your itching
ears,

A crew of old, unmarried, noted lechers,
Stood leering up like satyrs: and you smile
Most graciously, and fan your favors forth,
To give your hot spectators satisfaction!

What, was your mountebank their call?
their whistle?

Or were you enamored on his copper rings,
His saffron jewel, with the toad-stone in't,
Or his embroidered suit, with the cope-
stitch,

Made of a herse cloth? or his old tilt-
feather?

Or his starched beard! Well you shall have
him, yes!

He shall come home, and minister unto
you

The fricace for the mother. Or, let me see,

I think you'd rather mount; would you not mount?

Why, if you'll mount, you may; yes, truly, you may!

And so you may be seen, down to the foot.

Get you a cittern, Lady Vanity,
And be a dealer with the virtuous man;
Make one: I'll but protest myself a cuckold,

And save your dowry. I'm a Dutchman, I!

For if you thought me an Italian,
You would be damned ere you did this,
you whore!

'Thou'dst tremble, to imagine, that the murder

Of father, mother, brother, all thy race,
Should follow, as the subject of my justice.

CELIA: Good sir, have patience.

CORVINO: What couldst thou propose
Less to thyself, than in this heat of wrath,
And stung with my dishonor, I should strike

This steel into thee, with as many stabs
As thou wert gazed upon with goatish eyes?

CELIA: Alas, sir, be appeased! I could not think

My being at the window should more now
Move your impatience than at other times.

CORVINO: No! not to seek and entertain a parley

With a known knave, before a multitude!
You were an actor with your handkerchief,
Which he most sweetly kist in the receipt,
And might, no doubt, return it with a letter,

And point the place where you might meet; your sister's,

Your mother's, or your aunt's might serve the turn.

CELIA: Why, dear sir, when do I make these excuses

Or ever stir abroad, but to the church?

And that so seldom—

CORVINO: Well, it shall be less;
And thy restraint before was liberty,
To what I now decree: and therefore mark me.

First, I will have this bawdy light dammed up;

And till't be done, some two or three yards off,

I'll chalk a line; o'er which if thou but chance

To set thy desperate foot, more hell, more horror,

More wild remorseless rage shall seize on thee,

Than on a conjuror that had heedless left
His circle's safety ere his devil was laid.

Then here's a lock which I will hang upon thee,

And, now I think on't, I will keep thee backwards;

Thy lodging shall be backwards; thy walks backwards;

Thy prospect, all be backwards; and no pleasure,

That thou shalt know but backwards: nay, since you force

My honest nature, know, it is your own,
Being too open, makes me use you thus:

Since you will not contain your subtle nostrils

In a sweet room, but they must snuff the air

Of rank and sweaty passengers.

[*Knocking within*]

One knocks.

Away, and be not seen, pain of thy life;
Nor look toward the window; if thou dost--

Nay, stay, hear this—let me not prosper, whore,

But I will make thee an anatomy,

Dissect thee mine own self, and read a lecture

Upon thee to the city, and in public.
Away!—

[*Exit Celia*]

[*Enter Servant*]

Who's there?

SERVANT: 'Tis Signior Mosca, sir.

CORVINO: Let him come in. [*Exit Servant*] His master's dead; there's yet
Some good to help the bad.

[*Enter Mosca*]

My Mosca, welcome!

I guess your news.

MOSCA: I fear you cannot, sir.

CORVINO: Is't not his death?

MOSCA: Rather the contrary.

CORVINO: Not his recovery.

MOSCA: Yes, sir.

CORVINO: I am cursed,

I am bewitched, my crosses meet to vex
me.

How? how? how? how?

MOSCA: Why, sir, with Scoto's oil;
Corbaccio and Voltore brought of it,
Whilst I was busy in an inner room—

CORVINO: Death! that damned moun-
tebank! but for the law

Now, I could kill the rascal: it cannot be
His oil should have that virtue. Have not I
Known him a common rogue, come fid-
dling in

To the osteria,^s with a tumbling whore,
And, when he has done all his forced
tricks, been glad

Of a poor spoonful of dead wine, with
flies in't?

It cannot be. All his ingredients

Are a sheep's gall, a roasted bitch's mar-
row,

Some few sod earwigs, pounded caterpil-
lars,

A little capon's grease, and fasting spittle:
I know them to a dram.

MOSCA: I know not, sir;

But some on't, there, they poured into his
ears,

Some in his nostrils, and recovered him:
Applying but the fricace.

CORVINO: Pox o' that fricace!

MOSCA: And since, to seem the more of-
ficious

And flatt'ring of his health, there, they
have had,

At extreme fees, the college of physicians
Consulting on him, how they might re-
store him;

Where one would have a cataplasm of
spices,

Another a flayed ape clapped to his breast,
A third would have it a dog, a fourth an
oil,

With wild cats' skins: at last, they all re-
solved

That to preserve him, was no other means
But some young woman must be straight
sought out,

Lusty, and full of juice, to sleep by him;
And to this service most unhappily,

And most unwillingly, am I now em-
ployed,

Which here I thought to pre-acquaint you
with,

For your advice, since it concerns you
most;

Because I would not do that thing might
cross

Your ends, on whom I have my sole de-
pendence, sir;

Yet, if I do it not, they may delate

My slackness to my patron, work me out
Of his opinion; and there all your hopes,

Ventures, or whatsoever, are all frustrate!
I do but tell you, sir. Besides, they are all

Now striving who shall first present him;
therefore—

I could entreat you, briefly conclude some-
what;

Prevent them if you can.

CORVINO: Death to my hopes,

This is my villainous fortune! Best to hire
Some common courtezan.

MOSCA: Ay, I thought on that, sir;
But they are all so subtle, full of art—
And age again doting and flexible,
So as—I cannot tell—we may, perchance,
Light on a quean may cheat us all.

CORVINO: 'Tis true.

MOSCA: No, no: it must be one that has
no tricks, sir,

Some simple thing, a creature made unto
it;

Some wench you may command. Have
you no kinswoman?

Odso—Think, think, think, think, think,
think, think, sir.

One o' the doctors offered there his daugh-
ter.

CORVINO: How!

MOSCA: Yes, Signior Lupo, the physician.

CORVINO: His daughter!

MOSCA: And a virgin, sir. Why, alas,
He knows the state o' s body, what it is;
That nought can warm his blood, sir, but
a fever;

Nor any incantation raise his spirit:
A long forgetfulness hath seized that part.
Besides, sir, who shall know it? some one
or two—

CORVINO: I pray thee give me leave.

[*Walks aside*]

If any man

But I had had this luck—The thing in't
self,

I know, is nothing—Wherefore should not
I

As well command my blood and my af-
fections

As this dull doctor? In the point of honor,
The cases are all one of wife and daugh-
ter.

[*Aside*]

MOSCA: I hear him coming.

CORVINO: She shall do't: 'tis done.

Slight! if this doctor, who is not engaged,
Unless 't be for his counsel, which is noth-
ing,

Offer his daughter, what should I, that
am

So deeply in? I will prevent him: Wretch!
Covetous wretch!—Mosca, I have deter-
mined.

MOSCA: How, sir?

CORVINO: We'll make all sure. The party
you wot of

Shall be mine own wife, Mosca.

MOSCA: Sir, the thing,
But that I would not seem to counsel you,
I should have motioned to you, at the
first:

And make your count, you have cut all
their throats.

Why, 'tis directly taking a possession!

And in his next fit, we may let him go.

'Tis but to pull the pillow from his head,
And he is throttled: it had been done be-
fore

But for your scrupulous doubts.

CORVINO: Ay, a plague on't,
My conscience fools my wit! Well, I'll be
brief,

And so be thou, lest they should be before
us:

Go home, prepare him, tell him with what
zeal

And willingness I do it: swear it was
On the first hearing, as thou mayst do,
truly,

Mine own free motion.

MOSCA: Sir, I warrant you,
I'll so possess him with it, that the rest
Of his starved clients shall be banished
all;

And only you received. But come not,
sir,

Until I send, for I have something else
To ripen for your good, you must not
know't.

CORVINO: But do not you forget to send
now.

MOSCA: Fear not.

[*Exit*]

CORVINO: Where are you, wife? my Celia!
wife!

[*Re-enter Celia*]

—What, blubbing?

Come, dry those tears. I think thou
thought'st me in earnest;

Ha! by this light I talked so but to try
thee:

Methinks, the lightness of the occasion
Should have confirmed thee. Come, I am
not jealous.

CELIA: No!

CORVINO: Faith I am not, I, nor never
was;

It is a poor unprofitable humor.

Do not I know, if women have a will,
They'll do 'gainst all the watches of the
world,

And that the fiercest spies are tamed with
gold?

Tut, I am confident in thee, thou shalt
see't;

And see I'll give thee cause too, to believe
it.

Come kiss me. Go, and make thee ready
straight,

In all thy best attire, thy choicest jewels,
Put them all on, and, with them, thy best
looks:

We are invited to a solemn feast,
At old Volpone's, where it shall appear
How far I am free from jealousy or fear.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Street

[*Enter Mosca*]

MOSCA: I fear I shall begin to grow in love
With my dear self, and my most prosper-
ous parts,

They do so spring and burgeon; I can feel
A whimsy in my blood: I know not how,

Success hath made me wanton. I could
skip

Out of my skin now, like a subtle snake.
I am so limber. O! your parasite
Is a most precious thing, dropt from above,
Not bred 'mongst clods and clodpoles, here
on earth.

I muse, the mystery was not made a sci-
ence,

It is so liberally profest! Almost
All the wise world is little else, in nature,
But parasites or sub-parasites. And yet
I mean not those that have your bare town-
art,

To know who's fit to feed them; have no
house,

No family, no care, and therefore mould
Tales for men's ears, to bait that sense;
or get

Kitchen-invention, and some stale receipts
To please the belly, and the groin; nor
those,

With their court dog-tricks, that can fawn
and fleer,

Make their revenue out of legs and faces,
Echo my lord, and lick away a moth:

But your fine elegant rascal, that can rise
And stoop, almost together, like an ar-
row;

Shoot through the air as nimbly as a star;
Turn short as doth a swallow; and be here,
And there, and here, and yonder, all at
once;

Present to any humor, all occasion;
And change a visor swifter than a thought!
This is the creature had the art born with
him;

Toils not to learn it, but doth practice it
Out of most excellent nature: and such
sparks

Are the true parasites, others but their
zanis.

[*Enter Bonario*]

Who's this? Bonario, old Corbaccio's son?
The person I was bound to seek. Fair sir,

You are happily met.

BONARIO: That cannot be by thee.

MOSCA: Why, sir?

BONARIO: Nay, pray thee know thy way,
and leave me:

I would be loth to interchange discourse
With such a mate as thou art.

MOSCA: Courteous sir,

Scorn not my poverty.

BONARIO: Not I, by heaven;

But thou shalt give me leave to hate thy
baseness.

MOSCA: Baseness!

BONARIO: Ay; answer me, is not thy sloth
Sufficient argument? thy flattery?

Thy means of feeding?

MOSCA: Heaven be good to me!

These imputations are too common, sir,
And easily stuck on virtue when she's
poor.

You are unequal to me, and however
Your sentence may be righteous, yet you
are not,

That, ere you know me, thus proceed in
censure:

St. Mark bear witness 'gainst you, 'tis in-
human.

[Weeps]

BONARIO: What! does he weep? The sign
is soft and good:

I do repent me that I was so harsh.

[Aside]

MOSCA: 'Tis true, that, swayed by strong
necessity,

I am enforced to eat my careful bread
With too much obsequy; 'tis true, beside,
That I am fain to spin mine own poor
raiment

Out of my mere observance, being not
born

To a free fortune: but that I have done
Base offices, in rending friends asunder,
Dividing families, betraying counsels,
Whispering false lies, or mining men with
praises,

Trained their credulity with perjuries,
Corrupted chastity, or am in love
With mine own tender ease, but would
not rather

Prove the most rugged and laborious
course,

That might redeem my present estima-
tion,

Let me here perish, in all hope of good-
ness.

BONARIO: This cannot be a personated pas-
sion. [Aside]

I was to blame, so to mistake thy nature;
Prithee forgive me: and speak out thy
business.

MOSCA: Sir, it concerns you; and thou I
may seem

At first to make a main offence in man-
ners,

And in my gratitude unto my master;
Yet for the pure love which I bear all
right,

And hatred of the wrong, I must reveal it.
This very hour your father is in purpose
To disinherit you——

BONARIO: How!

MOSCA: And thrust you forth,
As a mere stranger to his blood: 'tis true,
sir.

The work no way engageth me, but, as
I claim an interest in the general state
Of goodness and true virtue, which I hear
To abound in you; and for which mere
respect,

Without a second aim, sir, I have done it.
BONARIO: This tale hath lost thee much
of the late trust

Thou hadst with me; it is impossible:
I know not how to lend it any thought,
My father should be so unnatural.

MOSCA: It is a confidence that well be-
comes

Your piety; and formed, no doubt, it is
From your own simple innocence: which
makes

Your wrong more monstrous and abhorred. But, sir,
I now will tell you more. This very minute,

It is, or will be doing; and if you shall be but pleased to go with me, I'll bring you,
I dare not say where you shall see, but where

Your ear shall be a witness of the deed;
Hear yourself written bastard, and profess
The common issue of the earth

BONARIO: I am mazed!

MOSCA: Sir, if I do it not, draw your just sword,
And score your vengeance on my front and face;

Mark me your villain: you have too much wrong,
And I do suffer for you, sir. My heart
Weeps blood in anguish—

BONARIO: Lead; I follow thee.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT III. SCENE II.

A Room in Volpone's House

[*Enter Volpone*]

VOLPONE: Mosca stays long, methinks.—
Bring forth your sports,
And help to make the wretched time more sweet.

[*Enter Nano, Androgynno, and Castrone*]

NANO: "Dwarf, fool, and eunuch, well met here we be.

A question it were now, whether of us three,
Being all the known delicates of a rich man,

In pleasing him, claim the precedency can?"

CASTRONE: "I claim for myself."

ANDROGYNO: "And so doth the fool "

NANO: "'Tis foolish indeed. let me set you both to school.

First for your dwarf, he's little and witty,
And everything, as it is little, is pretty;
Else why do men say to a creature of my shape,

So soon as they see him, It's a pretty little ape?

And why a pretty ape, but for pleasing imitation

Of greater men's actions, in a ridiculous fashion?

Beside, this feat body of mine doth not crave

Half the meat, drink, and cloth, one of your bulks will have.

Admit your fool's face be the mother of laughter,

Yet, for his brain, it must always come after;

And though that do feed him, it's a pitiful case,

His body is beholding to such a bad face."

[*Knocking within*]

VOLPONE: Who's there? my couch; away! look! Nano, see:

[*Exeunt Androgynno and Castrone*]

Give me my caps first—go, inquire.

[*Exit Nano*]

Now, Cupid

Send it be Mosca, and with fair return!

NANO: [*Within*] It is the beauteous madam—

VOLPONE: Would-be—is it?

NANO: The same.

VOLPONE: Now torment on me! Squire her in;

For she will enter, or dwell here for ever:
Nay, quickly. [*Retires to his couch*] That my fit were past! I fear

A second hell too, that my loathing this
Will quite expel my appetite to the other:
Would she were taking now her tedious leave.

Lord, how it threatens me what I am to suffer!

[*Re-enter Nano with Lady Politick Would-be*]

LADY POLITICK: I thank you, good sir. Pray you signify

Unto your patron I am here—This band Shows not my neck enough.—I trouble you, sir;

Let me request you bid one of my women Come hither to me. In good faith, I am drest

Most favorably to-day! It is no matter 'Tis well enough.

[*Enter 1st Waiting-woman*]

Look, see these petulant things, How they have done this!

VOLPONE: I do feel the fever Entering in at mine ears; O, for a charm, To fright it hence!

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Come nearer: is this curl In his right place, or this? Why is this higher

Than all the rest? You have not washed your eyes yet!

Or do they not stand even in your head? Where is your fellow? call her.

[*Exit 1st Woman*]

NANO: Now, St. Mark Deliver us! anon she'll beat her women, Because her nose is red

[*Re-enter 1st with 2nd Woman*]

LADY POLITICK: I pray you view. This tire, forsooth: are all things apt, or no?

1ST WOMAN: One hair a little here sticks out, forsooth.

LADY POLITICK: Does't so, forsooth, and where was your dear sight, When it did so, forsooth! What now! bird-eyed?

And you, too? Pray you, both approach and mend it.

Now, by that light I muse you are not ashamed!

I, that have preached these things so oft unto you.

Read you the principles, argued all the grounds,

Disputed every fitness, every grace, Called you to counsel of so frequent dressings.

NANO: More carefully than of your fame or honor.

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Made you acquainted what an ample dowry

The knowledge of these things would be unto you,

Able alone to get you noble husbands At your return: and you thus to neglect it!

Besides, you seeing what a curious nation The Italians are, what will they say of me?

The English lady cannot dress herself.

Here's a fine imputation to our country! Well, go your ways, and stay in the next room.

This focus was too coarse, too; it's no matter.--

Good sir, you'll give them entertainment?

[*Exeunt Nano and Waiting-women*]

VOLPONE: The storm comes toward me.

LADY POLITICK: [*Goes to the couch*] How does my Volpone?

VOLPONE: Troubled with noise, I cannot sleep; I dreamt

That a strange fury entered now my house, And, with the dreadful tempest of her breath,

Did cleave my roof asunder.

LADY POLITICK: Believe me, and I

Had the most fearful dream, could I remember't—

VOLPONE: Out on my fate! I have given her the occasion

How to torment me: she will tell me hers.

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Methought the golden
mediocrity,
Polite, and delicate—

VOLPONE: O, if you do love me,
No more: I sweat, and suffer, at the men-
tion

Of any dream; feel how I tremble yet.

LADY POLITICK: Alas, good soul! the pas-
sion of the heart.

Seed-pearl were good now, boiled with
syrup of apples,

Tincture of gold, and coral, citron-pills,
Your cicampane root, myrobalanes—

VOLPONE: Ah me, I have ta'en a grass-
hopper by the wing!

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Burnt silk and amber. You
have muscadel

Good in the house—

VOLPONE: You will not drink, and part?

LADY POLITICK: No, fear not that. I doubt
we shall not get

Some English saffron, half a dram would
serve;

Your sixteen cloves, a little musk, dried
mints;

Bugloss, and barley-meal—

VOLPONE: She's in again!

Before I feigned diseases, now I have one.
[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: And these applied with a
right scarlet cloth.

VOLPONE: Another flood of words! a very
torrent!

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Shall I, sir, make you a
poultice?

VOLPONE: No, no, no.

I'm very well, you need prescribe no more.

LADY POLITICK: I have a little studied phys-
ic; but now

I'm all for music, save, in the forenoons,

An hour or two for painting. I would
have

A lady, indeed, to have all letters and arts,
Be able to discourse, to write, to paint,
But principal, as Plato holds, your music,
And so does wise Pythagoras, I take it,
Is your true rapture: when there is con-
cent^s

In face, in voice, and clothes: and is, in-
deed,

Our sex's chiefest ornament.

VOLPONE: The poet

As old in time as Plato, and as knowing,
Say that your highest female grace is si-
lence.

LADY POLITICK: Which of your poets?
Petrarch, or Tasso, or Dante?

GUARINI, ARIOSTO? ARETINE?

CIECO DI HADRIA? I have read them all.

VOLPONE: Is everything a cause to my de-
struction?

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: I think I have two or
three of them about me.

VOLPONE: The sun, the sea, will sooner
both stand still

Than her eternal tongue! nothing can
escape it.

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Here's Pastor Fido—

VOLPONE: Profess obstinate silence;
That now my safest.

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: All our English writers,
I mean such as are happy in the Italian,
Will deign to steal out of this author.
mainly;

Almost as much as from Montagnié:

He has so modern and facile a vein,
Fitting the time, and catching the court-
ear!

Your Petrarch is more passionate, yet he,
In days of sonnetting, trusted them with
much

Dante is hard, and few can understand
him

But for a desperate wit, there's Aretine;
Only his pictures are a little obscene—
You mark me not.

VOLPONE: Alas, my mind's perturbed.

LADY POLITICK: Why, in such cases, we
must cure ourselves.

Make use of our philosophy—

VOLPONE: Oh me!

LADY POLITICK: And as we find our pas-
sions do rebel,

Encounter them with treason, or divert
them,

By giving scope unto some other humor
Of lesser danger: as, in politic bodies,
There's nothing more doth overwhelm the
judgment,

And cloud the understanding, than too
much

Settling and fixing, and, as 'twere, subsid-
ing

Upon one object. For the incorporating
Of these same outward things, into that
part,

Which we call mental, leaves some certain
faces

That stop the organs, and, as Plato says,
Assassinate our knowledge.

VOLPONE: Now, the spirit
Of patience help me!

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: Come, in faith, I must
Visit you more a days; and make you
well:

Laugh and be lusty.

VOLPONE: My good angel save me!

[*Aside*]

LADY POLITICK: There was but one sole
man in all the world

With whom I e'er could sympathize; and
he

Would lie you, often, three, four hours
together

To hear me speak; and be sometimes so
rapt,

As he would answer me quite from the
purpose,

Like you, and you are like him, just. I'll
discourse,

An't be but only, sir, to bring you a sleep,
How we did spend our time and loves
together,

For some six years.

VOLPONE: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!

LADY POLITICK: For we were courtanei, and
brought up—

VOLPONE: Some power, some fate, some
fortune rescue me!

[*Enter Mosca*]

MOSCA: God save you, madam!

LADY POLITICK: Good sir.

VOLPONE: Mosca! welcome,
Welcome to my redemption.

MOSCA: Why, sir?

VOLPONE: Oh,

Rid me of this my torture, quickly, there;
My madam with the everlasting voice:

The bells, in time of pestilence, ne'er made
Like noise, or were in that perpetual mo-
tion!

The Cock-pit comes not near it. All my
house,

But now, steamed like a bath with her
thick breath,

A lawyer could not have been heard; nor
scarce

Another woman, such a hail of words
She has let fall. For hell's sake, rid her
hence.

MOSCA: Has she presented?

VOLPONE: Oh, I do not care!

I'll take her absence upon any price,
With any loss

MOSCA: Madam—

LADY POLITICK: I have brought your patron
A toy, a cap here, of mine own work.

MOSCA: 'Tis well.

I had forgot to tell you I saw your knight,
Where you would little think it.—

LADY POLITICK: Where?

MOSCA: Marry,

Where yet, if you make haste, you may
apprehend him,

Rowing upon the water in a gondole,
With the most cunning courtezan of
Venice.

LADY POLITICK: Is't true?

MOSCA: Pursue them, and believe your
eyes:

Leave me to make your gift.

[*Exit* Lady Politick *hastily*]

I knew 'twould take:

For, lightly, they that use themselves most
licence,

Are still most jealous.

VOLPONE: Mosca, hearty thanks,
For thy quick fiction, and delivery of me.
Now to my hopes, what sayst thou?

[*Re-enter* Lady Politick *Would-be*]

LADY POLITICK: But do you hear, sir?—

VOLPONE: Again! I fear a paroxysm.

LADY POLITICK: Which way

Rowed they together?

MOSCA: Toward the Rialto.

LADY POLITICK: I pray you lend me your
dwarf.

MOSCA: I pray you take him.

[*Exit* Lady Politick]

Your hopes, sir, are like happy blossoms,
fair,

And promise timely fruit, if you will stay
But the maturing; keep you at your couch,
Corbaccio will arrive straight, with the
Will;

When he is gone, I'll tell you more.

[*Exit*]

VOLPONE: My blood,

My spirits are returned; I am alive

And, like your wanton gamester at pri-
mero,

Whose thought had whispered to him, not
go less,

Methinks I lie, and draw—for an en-
counter.

[*The scene closes upon* Volpone]

ACT III. SCENE III.

The Passage leading to Volpone's
Chamber

[*Enter* Mosca and Bonario]

MOSCA: Sir, here concealed [*shows him a
closet*] you may hear all. But, pray you,
Have patience, sir [*knocking within*]
—the same's your father knocks:
I am compelled to leave you.

[*Exit*]

BONARIO: Do so.—Yet.

Cannot my thought imagine this a truth
[*Goes into the closet*]

ACT III. SCENE IV.

Another part of the Same

[*Enter* Mosca and Corvino, Celia fol-
lowing]

MOSCA: Death on me! you are come too
soon, what meant you?

Did not I say I would send?

CORVINO: Yes, but I feared

You might forget it, and then they pre-
vent us.

MOSCA: Prevent! Did e'er man haste so
for his horns?

A courtier would not ply it so for a place.

[*Aside*]

Well, now there is no helping it, stay
here;

I'll presently return.

[*Exit*]

CORVINO: Where are you, Celia?

You know not wherefore I have brought
you hither?

CELIA: Not well, except you told me.

CORVINO: Now I will:

Hark hither.

[*Exeunt*]

 ACT III. SCENE V.

A Closet opening into a Gallery

[Enter Mosca and Bonario]

MOSCA: Sir, your father hath sent word,
It will be half an hour ere he come;
And therefore, if you please to walk the
while

Into that gallery—at the upper end,
There are some books to entertain the
time:

And I'll take care no man shall come unto
you, sir.

BONARIO: Yes, I will stay there—I do doubt
this fellow.

[*Aside, and exit*]

MOSCA: [*Looking after him*] There; he is
far enough; he can hear nothing:
And for his father, I can keep him off.

[*Exit*]

 ACT III. SCENE VI.

Volpone's Chamber. Volpone on his couch.

Mosca sitting by him

[Enter Corvino, forcing in Celia]

CORVINO: Nay, now, there is no starting
back, and therefore,

Resolve upon it: I have so decreed
It must be done. Nor would I move't
afore,

Because I would avoid all shifts and tricks,
That might deny me.

CELIA: Sir, let me beseech you,
Affect not these strange trials; if you doubt
My chastity, why, lock me up for ever;
Make me the heir of darkness. Let me live
Where I may please your fears, if not
your trust.

CORVINO: Believe it, I have no such humor,
I.

All that I speak I mean; yet I'm not mad;
Not horn-mad, you see? Go to, show your-
self

Obedient, and a wife.

CELIA: O heaven!

CORVINO: I say it,

Do so.

CELIA: Was this the train?

CORVINO: I've told you reasons;

What the physicians have set down; how
much

It may concern me; what my engagements
are;

My means, and the necessity of those
means

For my recovery: wherefore, if you be
Loyal, and mine, be won, respect my ven-
ture.

CELIA: Before your honor?

CORVINO: Honor! tut, a breath:

There's no such thing in nature; a mere
term

Invented to awe fools. What is my gold
The worse for touching, clothes for being
looked on?

Why, this 's no more. An old decrepit
wretch,

That has no sense, no sinew; takes his
meat

With others' fingers: only knows to gape
When you do scald his gums; a voice, a
shadow;

And what can this man hurt you?

CELIA: Lord! what spirit
Is this hath entered him?

[*Aside*]

CORVINO: And for your fame,
That's such a jig; as if I would go tell it,
Cry it on the Piazza¹ who shall know it
But he that cannot speak it, and this fel-
low,

Whose lips are in my pocket? Save your-
self

(If you'll proclaim't, you may), I know no
other

Should come to know it.

CELIA: Are heaven and saints then noth-
ing?

Will they be blind or stupid?

CORVINO: How!

CELIA: Good sir,

Be jealous still, emulate them; and think
What hate they burn with toward every
sin.

CORVINO: I grant you: if I thought it were
a sin

I would not urge you. Should I offer this
To some young Frenchman, or hot Tus-
can blood

That had read Aretine, conned all his
prints,

Knew every quirk within lust's labyrinth,
And were profest critic in lechery;

And I would look upon him, and applaud
him,

This were a sin: but here, 'tis contrary,
A pious work, mere charity for physic,
And honest polity, to assure mine own.

CELIA: O heaven! canst thou suffer such a
change?

VOLPONE: Thou art mine honor, Mosca,
and my pride

My joy, my tickling, my delight! Go bring
them.

MOSCA: [*Advancing*] Please you draw near,
sir.

CORVINO: Come on, what—

You will not be rebellious? by that
light—

MOSCA: Sir,

Signior Corvino, here, is come to see you.

VOLPONE: Oh!

MOSCA: And hearing of the consultation
had,

So lately, for your health, is come to offer,
Or rather, sir, to prostitute—

CORVINO: Thanks, sweet Mosca.

MOSCA: Freely, unasked, or untreated—

CORVINO: Well.

MOSCA: As the true fervent instance of his
love

His own most fair and proper wife; the
beauty

Only of price in Venice—

CORVINO: 'Tis well urged.

MOSCA: To be your comfortress, and to
preserve you.

VOLPONE: Alas, I am past, already! Pray
you, thank him

For his good care and promptness; but
for that,

'Tis a vain labor e'en to fight 'gainst
heaven;

Applying fire to stone—uh, uh, uh, uh!

[*Coughing*]

Making a dead leaf grow again. I take
His wishes gently, though; and you may
tell him

What I have done for him: marry, my
state is hopeless.

Will him to pray for me; and to use his
fortune

With reverence when he comes to't.

MOSCA: Do you hear, sir?

Go to him with your wife

CORVINO: Heart of my father!

Wilt thou persist thus? come, I pray thee
come.

Thou seest 'tis nothing, Celia. By this
hand

I shall grow violent. Come, do't, I say.

CELIA: Sir, kill me, rather: I will take
down poison,

Eat burning coals, do anything—

CORVINO: Be damned!

Heart, I will drag thee hence home by the
hair;

Cry thee a strumpet through the streets;
rip up

Thy mouth unto thine ears; and slit thy
nose,

Like a raw rochet!—Do not tempt me:
come,

Yield, I am loth—Death! I will buy some
slave

Whom I will kill, and bind thee to him
alive!

And at my window hang you forth, de-
vising

Some monstrous crime, which I, in cap-
ital letters,

Will eat into thy flesh with aquafortis,
And burning corsives, on this stubborn
breast.

Now, by the blood thou hast incensed, I'll
do it!

CELIA: Sir, what you please, you may, I
am your martyr.

CORVINO: Be not thus obstinate, I have not
deserved it:

Think who it is intreats you. Prithee,
sweet;—

Good faith, thou shalt have jewels, gowns,
attires,

What thou wilt think, and ask. Do but go
kiss him.

Or touch him but. For my sake. At my
suit—

This once. No! not! I shall remember this.
Will you disgrace me thus? Do you thirst
my undoing?

MOSCA: Nay, gentle lady, be advised.

CORVINO: No, no.

She has watched her time. Ods precious,
this is scurvy,

'Tis very scurvy; and you are—

MOSCA: Nay, good sir.

CORVINO: An arrant locust—by heaven, a
locust!—

Whore, crocodile, that hast thy tears pre-
pared,

Expecting how thou'lt bid them flow—

MOSCA: Nay, pray you, sir!

She will consider.

CELIA: Would my life would serve
To satisfy—

CORVINO: 'Sdeath! if she would but speak
to him,

And save my reputation, it were some-
what;

But spitefully to affect my utter ruin!

MOSCA: Ay, now you have put your for-
tune in her hands.

Why i'faith, it is her modesty, I must
quit her.

If you were absent, she would be more
coming;

I know it: and dare undertake for her.
What woman can before her husband?
pray you,

Let us depart, and leave her here.

CORVINO: Sweet Celia,

Thou mayst redeem all yet; I'll say no
more:

If not, esteem yourself as lost. Nay, stay
there.

[Shuts the door and exit with Mosca]

CELIA: O God, and his good angels!
whither, whither.

Is shame fled human breasts? that with
such ease,

Men dare put off your honors, and their
own?

Is that, which ever was a cause of life,
Now placed beneath the basest circum-
stance,

And modesty an exile made, for money?

VOLPONE: Ay, in Corvino, and such earth-
fed minds,

[Leaping from his couch]

That never tasted the true heaven of love.
Assure thee, Celia, he that would sell
thee,

Only for hope of gain, and that uncertain,
He would have sold his part of Paradise
For ready money, had he met a cope-man.⁷
Why art thou mazed to see me thus re-
vived?

Rather applaud thy beauty's miracle;

'Tis thy great work: that hath, not now
alone,

But sundry times raised me, in several
shapes,

And, but this morning, like a mounte-
bank,

To see thee at thy window: ay, before

I would have left my practice, for thy love,

In varying figures, I would have contented
With the blue Proteus, or the horned
flood.

Now art thou welcome.

CELIA: Sir!

VOLPONE: Nay, fly me not.

Nor let thy false imagination

That I was bed-rid, make thee think I
am so:

Thou shalt not find it. I am now as fresh,
As hot, as high, and in as jovial plight

As, when, in that so celebrated scene,

At recitation of our comedy,

For entertainment of the great Valois,

I acted young Antinous; and attracted

The eyes and ears of all the ladies present,

To admire each graceful gesture, note,
and footing.

[Sings]

Come, my Celia, let us prove

While we can, the sports of love,

Time will not be ours for ever,

He, at length, our good will sever;

Spend not then his gifts in vain:

Suns that set may rise again;

But if once we lose this light,

'Tis with us perpetual night.

Why should we defer our joys?

Fame and rumor are but toys.

Cannot we delude the eyes

Of a few poor household spies?

Or his easier ears beguile,

Thus removed by our wile?

'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal;

But the sweet thefts to reveal:

To be taken, to be seen,

These have crimes accounted been.

CELIA: Some serene blast me, or dire light-
ning strike

This my offending face!

VOLPONE: Why droops my Celia?

Thou hast, in the place of a base husband
found

A worthy lover: use thy fortune well,
With secrecy and pleasure. See, behold,

What thou art queen of; not in expecta-
tion,

As I feed others: but possessed and
crowned.

See, here, a rope of pearl; and each more
orient

Than the brave Ægyptian queen caroused:
Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle,

May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark;
A diamond would have bought Lollia

Paulina,

When she came in like star-light, hid with
jewels,

That were the spoils of provinces, take
these

And wear, and lose them; yet remains an
earring

To purchase them again, and this whole
state.

A gem but worth a private patrimony,

Is nothing; we will eat such at a meal.

The heads of parrots, tongues of nightin-
gales,

The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
Shall be our food, and, could we get the

phœnix,

Though nature lost her kind, she were
our dish.

CELIA: Good sir, these things might move
a mind affected

With such delights; but I, whose innocence
Is all I can think wealthy, or worth th'

enjoying,

And which, once lost, I have nought to
lose beyond it,

Cannot be taken with these sensual baits:
If you have conscience—

VOLPONE: 'Tis the beggar's virtue;

If thou hast wisdom, hear me, Celia.

Thy baths shall be the juice of July-flowers.
Spirit of roses, and of violets,

The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath

Gathered in bags, and mixed with Cretan
wines.

Our drink shall be prepared gold and
amber;

Which we will take until my roof whirl
round

With the vertigo: and my dwarf shall
dance,

My eunuch sing, my fool make up the
antic,

Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's
tales,

Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine:

So of the rest, till we have quite run
through,

And wearied all the fables of the gods.
Then will I have thee in more modern
forms,

Attired like some sprightly dame of France,
Brave Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish
beauty;

Sometimes unto the Persian sopy's wife;
Or the grand signior's mistress; and for
change,

To one of our most artful courtezans,
Or some quick Negro, or cold Russian;

And I will meet thee in as many shapes:
Where we may so transfuse our wandering
souls

Out at our lips, and score up sums of
pleasures, [*Sings*]

That the curious shall not know
How to tell them as they flow;

And the envious, when they find
What their number is, be pined.

CELIA: If you have ears that will be pierced
— or eyes

That can be opened—a heart that may be
touched—

Or any part that yet sounds man above
you—

If you have touch of holy saints—or
heaven—

Do me the grace to let 'scape—if not,

Be bountiful and kill me. You do know,
I am a creature, hither ill betrayed,

By one whose shame I would forget it
were:

If you will deign me neither of these
graces,

Yet feed your wrath, sir, rather than your
lust

(It is a vice comes nearer manliness),
And punish that unhappy crime of nature,

Which you miscal my beauty: flay my
face,

Or poison it with ointments for seducing
Your blood to this rebellion. Rub these
hands

With what may cause an eating leprosy,
E'en to my bones and marrow: anything
That may disfavor me, save in my honor—

And I will kneel to you, pray for you, pay
down

A thousand hourly vows, sir, for your
health;

Report, and think you virtuous—

VOLPONE: Think me cold,
Frozen, and impotent, and so report me?

That I had Nestor's hernia, thou wouldst
think.

I do degenerate, and abuse my nation,
To play with opportunity thus long;

I should have done the act, and then have
parleyed.

Yield, or I'll force thee. [*Seizes her*]

CELIA: O! just God!

VOLPONE: In vain—

BONARIO: [*Rushing in*] Forbear, foul rav-
isher! libidinous swine!

Free the forced lady, or thou diest, im-
postor.

But that I'm loth to snatch thy punishment
Out of the hand of justice, thou shouldst
yet

Be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance,
Before this altar and this dross, thy
idol.—

Lady, let's quit the place, it is the den

Of villainy; fear nought, you have a guard:
And he ere long shall meet his just reward.

[*Exeunt Bonario and Celia*]

VOLPONE: Fall on me, roof, and bury me
in ruin!

Become my grave, that wert my shelter! O!
I am unmasked, unspirited, undone,
Betrayed to beggary, to infamy—

[*Enter Mosca wounded and bleeding*]

MOSCA: Where shall I run, most wretched
shame of men,

To beat out my unlucky brains?

VOLPONE: Here, here.

What! dost thou bleed?

MOSCA: O, that his well-driven sword
Had been so courteous to have cleft me
down

Unto the navel, ere I lived to see
My life, my hopes, my spirits, my patron,
all

Thus desperately engaged by my error!

VOLPONE: Woe on thy fortune!

MOSCA: And my follies, sir.

VOLPONE: Thou hast made me miserable.

MOSCA: And myself, sir,
Who would have thought he would have
hearkened so?

VOLPONE: What shall we do?

MOSCA: I know not; if my heart
Could expiate the mischance, I'd pluck it
out.

Will you be pleased to hang me, or cut my
throat?

And I'll requite you, sir. Let's die like
Romans,

Since we have lived like Grecians.

[*Knocking within*]

VOLPONE: Hark! who's there?

I hear some footing; officers, the saffi,
Come to apprehend us! I do feel the brand
Hissing already at my forehead; now
Mine ears are boring.

MOSCA: To your couch, sir, you.

Make that place good, however. [*Volpone
lies down as before*] Guilty men

Suspect what they deserve still.

[*Enter Corbaccio*]

Signior Corbaccio!

CORBACCIO: Why, how now, Mosca?

MOSCA: O, undone, amazed, sir.

Your son, I know not by what accident,
Acquainted with your purpose to my
patron,

Touching your Will, and making him
your heir,

Entered our house with violence, his sword
drawn,

Sought for you, called you wretch, un-
natural,

Vowed he would kill you.

CORBACCIO: Me!

MOSCA: Yes, and my patron.

CORBACCIO: This act shall disinherit him
indeed:

Here is the Will.

MOSCA: 'Tis well, sir.

CORBACCIO: Right and well:

Be you as careful now for me.

[*Enter Voltore behind*]

MOSCA: My life, sir,

Is not more tendered; I am only yours.

CORBACCIO: How does he? will he die
shortly, think'st thou?

MOSCA: I fear

He'll outlast May.

CORBACCIO: To-day?

MOSCA: No, last out May, sir.

CORBACCIO: Couldst thou not give him a
dram?

MOSCA: O, by no means, sir.

CORBACCIO: Nay, I'll not bid you.

VOLTORE: [*Coming forward*] This is a
knave, I see.

MOSCA: [*Seeing Voltore*] How! Signior
Voltore! [*Aside*] did he hear me?

VOLTORE: Parasite!

MOSCA: Who's that?—O, sir, most timely
welcome—

VOLTORE: Scarce,

To the discovery of your tricks, I fear.

You are his, *only*? and mine also, are you not?

MOSCA: Who? I, sir!

VOLTORE: You, sir. What device is this About a Will?

MOSCA: A plot for you, sir.

VOLTORE: Come, Put not your foists upon me; I shall scent them.

MOSCA: Did you not hear it?

VOLTORE: Yes, I hear Corbaccio Hath made your patron there his heir.

MOSCA: 'Tis true,

By my device, drawn to it by my plot, With hope—

VOLTORE: Your patron should reciprocate? And you have promised?

MOSCA: For your good I did, sir.

Nay, more, I told his son, brought, hid him here,

Where he might hear his father pass the deed;

Being persuaded to it by this thought, sir, That the unnaturalness, first, of the act, And then his father's oft disclaiming in him

(Which I did mean t' help on), would sure enrage him

To do some violence upon his parent, On which the law should take sufficient hold,

And you be stated in a double hope: Truth be my comfort, and my conscience, My only aim was to dig you a fortune Out of these two old rotten sepulchres—

VOLTORE: I cry thee mercy, Mosca.

MOSCA: Worth your patience, And your great merit, sir. And see the change!

VOLTORE: Why, what success?

MOSCA: Most hapless! you must help, sir. Whilst we expected the old raven, in comes Corvino's wife, sent hither by her husband—

VOLTORE: What, with a present?

MOSCA: No, sir, on visitation (I'll tell you how anon); and staying long, The youth he grows impatient, rushes forth,

Seizeth the lady, wounds me, makes her swear

(Or he would murder her, that was his vow)

To affirm my patron to have done her rape:

Which how unlike it is, you see! and hence, With that pretext he's gone, to accuse his father,

Defame my patron, defeat you—

VOLTORE: Where is her husband?

Let him be sent for straight.

MOSCA: Sir, I'll go fetch him.

VOLTORE: Bring him to the Scrutineo.

MOSCA: Sir, I will.

VOLTORE: This must be stopt.

MOSCA: O you do nobly, sir.

Alas, 'twas labored all, sir, for your good; Nor was there want of counsel in the plot: But fortune can, at any time, o'erthrow The projects of a hundred learned clerks, sir.

CORBACCIO: [*Listening*] What's that?

VOLTORE: Wilt please you, sir, to go along?

[*Exit Corbaccio, followed by Voltore*]

MOSCA: Patron, go in, and pray for our success.

VOLPONE: [*Rising from his couch*] Need makes devotion: heaven your labor bless! [*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Street

[*Enter Sir Politick Would-be and Peregrine*]

SIR POLITICK: I told you, sir, it was a plot you see

What observation is! You mentioned me For some instructions: I will tell you, sir

(Since we are met here in this height of Venice),

Some few particulars I have set down,
Only for this meridian, fit to be known
Of your crude traveler; and they are these.
I will not touch, sir, at your phrase, or
clothes,

For they are old.

PEREGRINE: Sir, I have better.

SIR POLITICK: Pardon,
I meant, as they are themes.

PEREGRINE: O, sir, proceed:

I'll slander you no more of wit, good sir.

SIR POLITICK: First, for your garb, it must
be grave and serious,

Very reserved and locked; not tell a secret
On any terms, not to your father: scarce
A fable, but with caution: make sure choice
Both of your company and discourse; be-
ware

You never speak a truth——

PEREGRINE: How!

SIR POLITICK. Not to strangers,
For those be they you must converse with
most;

Others I would not know, sir, but at dis-
tance.

So as I still might be a saver in them:

You shall have tricks else past upon you
hourly.

And then, for your religion, profess none,
But wonder at the diversity of all;

And, for your part, protest, were there no
other

But simply the laws o' th' land, you could
content you.

Nic. Machiavel and Monsieur Bodin, both
Were of this mind. Then must you learn
the use

And handling of your silver fork at meals,
The metal of your glass (these are main
matters

With your Italian); and to know the hour
When you must eat your melons and your
figs.

PEREGRINE: Is that a point of state too?

SIR POLITICK. Here it is.

For your Venetian, if he see a man
Preposterous in the least, he has him
straight;

He has; he strips him. I'll acquaint you,
sir,

I now have lived here 'tis some fourteen
months:

Within the first week of my landing here,
And took me for a citizen of Venice,

I knew the forms so well——

PEREGRINE: [*Aside*] And nothing else.

SIR POLITICK: I had read Contarene, took
me a house,

Dealt with my Jews to furnish it with
movables——

Well, if I could but find one man, one man
To mine own heart, whom I durst trust, I
would——

PEREGRINE: What, what, sir?

SIR POLITICK: Make him rich; make him
a fortune:

He should not think again. I would com-
mand it.

PEREGRINE: As how?

SIR POLITICK: With certain projects that I
have;

Which I may not discover.

PEREGRINE: If I had

But one to wager with, I would lay odds
now,

[*Aside*] He tells me instantly.

SIR POLITICK: One is, and that

I care not greatly who knows, to serve the
state

Of Venice with red herrings for three
years,

And at a certain rate, from Rotterdam,
Where I have correspondence. There's a
letter,

Sent me from one o' the states, and to that
purpose:

He cannot write his name, but that's his
mark.

PEREGRINE: He is a chandler?

SIR POLITICK: No, a cheese-monger.

There are some others too with whom I treat

About the same negotiation;

And I will undertake it. for 'tis thus.

I'll do't with ease, I have cast it all. Your hoy

Carries but three men in her, and a boy;

And she shall make me three returns a year:

So if there come but one of three, I save;

If two, I can defalk:—but this is now,

If my main project fail.

PEREGRINE: Then you have others?

SIR POLITICK: I should be loth to draw the subtle air

Of such a place, without my thousand aims.

I'll not dissemble, sir: where'er I come,

I love to be considerative; and 'tis true,

I have at my free hours thought upon

Some certain goods unto the state of Venice,

Which I do call *my Cautions*; and, sir, which

I mean, in hope of pension, to propound

To the Great Council, then unto the Forty,

So to the Ten. My means are made already—

PEREGRINE: By whom?

SIR POLITICK: Sir, one that though his place be obscure,

Yet he can sway, and they will hear him. He's

A commandador.

PEREGRINE: What! a common serjeant?

SIR POLITICK: Sir, such as they are, put it in their mouths,

What they should say, sometimes; as well as greater:

I think I have my notes to show you—

[*Searching his pockets*]

PEREGRINE: Good sir.

SIR POLITICK: But you shall swear unto me, on your gentry,

Not to anticipate—

PEREGRINE: I, sir!

SIR POLITICK: Nor reveal

A circumstance—My paper is not with me.

PEREGRINE: O, but you remember, sir.

SIR POLITICK: My first is

Concerning tinder-boxes. You must know, No family is here without its box.

Now, sir, it being so portable a thing,

Put case, that you or I were ill affected

Unto the state, sir; with it in our pockets,

Might not I go into the Arsenal,

Or you come out again, and none the wiser?

PEREGRINE: Except yourself, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Go to, then. I therefore

Advertise to the state, how fit it were

That none but such as were known patriots,

Sound lovers of their country, should be suffered

To enjoy them in their houses; and even those

Scaled at some office, and at such a bigness

As might not lurk in pockets.

PEREGRINE: Admirable!

SIR POLITICK: My next is, how to inquire, and be resolved,

By present demonstration, whether a ship, Newly arrived from Soria, or from

Any suspected part of all the Levant,

Be guilty of the plague: and where they use

To lie out forty, fifty days, sometimes,

About the Lazaretto, for their trial;

I'll save that charge and loss unto the merchant,

And in an hour clear the doubt.

PEREGRINE: Indeed, sir!

SIR POLITICK: Or—I will lose my labor.

PEREGRINE: My faith, that's much.

SIR POLITICK: Nay, sir, conceive me. It will cost me in onions,

Some thirty livres—

PEREGRINE: Which is one pound sterling.

SIR POLITICK: Beside my waterworks: for this I do, sir.

First, I bring in your ship 'twixt two brick walls;

But those the state shall venture. On the one

I strain me a fair tarpauling, and in that I stick my onions, cut in halves; the other is full of loopholes, out of which I thrust the noses of my bellows; and those bellows I keep, with waterworks, in perpetual motion,

Which is the easiest matter of a hundred. Now, sir, your onion, which doth naturally

Attract the infection, and your bellows blowing

The air upon him, will show instantly, By his changed color, if there be contagion; Or else remain as fair as at the first. Now it is known, 'tis nothing.

PEREGRINE: You are right, sir.

SIR POLITICK: I would I had my note.

PEREGRINE: Faith, so would I: But you have done well for once, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Were I false, Or would be made so, I could show you reasons

How I could sell this state now to the Turk,

Spite of their galleys, or their—

[Examining his papers]

PEREGRINE: Pray you, Sir Pol.

SIR POLITICK: I have them not about me.

PEREGRINE: That I feared: They are there, sir.

SIR POLITICK: No, this is my diary, Wherein I note my actions of the day.

PEREGRINE: Pray you let's see, sir. What is here? *Notandum,*

[Reads]

"A rat had gnawn my spur-leathers; notwithstanding,

I put on new, and did go forth; but first I threw three beans over the threshold
Item,

I went and bought two toothpicks, whereof one

I burst immediately, in a discourse With a Dutch merchant, 'bout *ragion del stato.*

From him I went and paid a *moccingo* For piecing my silk stockings; by the way I cheapened sprats; and at St. Mark's I urined."

Faith these are politic notes!

SIR POLITICK: Sir, I do slip

No action of my life, but thus I quote it.

PEREGRINE: Believe me, it is wise!

SIR POLITICK: Nay, sir, read forth

[Enter, at a distance, Lady Politick
Would-be, Nano, and two Waiting-women]

LADY POLITICK: Where should this loose knight be, trow' sure he's housed.

NANO: Why, then he's fast.

LADY POLITICK: Ay, he plays both with me. I play you stay. This heat will do more harm

To my complexion than his heart is worth. (I do not care to hinder, but to take him)
How it comes off!

[Rubbing her cheeks]

1ST WOMAN: My master's yonder.

LADY POLITICK: Where?

2ND WOMAN: With a young gentleman.

LADY POLITICK: That same's the party; In man's apparel! Pray you, sir, jog my knight:

I will be tender to his reputation, However he demerit.

SIR POLITICK: [Seeing her] My lady!

PEREGRINE: Where?

SIR POLITICK: 'Tis she indeed, sir; you shall know her. She is,

Were she not mine, a lady of that merit,
For fashion and behavior; and for beauty
I durst compare—

PEREGRINE: It seems you are not jealous,
That dare commend her.

SIR POLITICK: Nay, and for discourse—

PEREGRINE: Being your wife, she cannot miss that.

SIR POLITICK: [*Introducing Peregine*]
Madam,

Here is a gentleman, pray you, use him fairly;

He seems a youth, but he is—

LADY POLITICK: None.

SIR POLITICK: Yes one

Has put his face as soon into the world—

LADY POLITICK: You mean, as early? but to-day?

SIR POLITICK: How's this?

LADY POLITICK: Why, in this habit, sir; you apprehend me:

Well, Master Would-be, this doth not become you;

I had thought the door, sir, of your good name

Had been more precious to you; that you would not

Have done this dire massacre on your honor;

One of your gravity, and rank besides!
But knights, I see, care little for the oath
They make to ladies; chiefly their own ladies.

SIR POLITICK: Now, by my spurs, the symbol of my knighthood—

PEREGRINE: [*Aside*] Lord, how his brain is humbled for an oath!

SIR POLITICK: I reach you not.

LADY POLITICK: Right, sir, your policy
May bear it through thus. [*To Peregine*]

Sir, a word with you.

I would be loth to contest publicly
With any gentlewoman, or to seem

Froward, or violent, as the courtier says;
It comes too near rusticity in a lady,
Which I would shun by all means: and however

I may deserve from Master Would-be, yet
T' have one fair gentlewoman thus be made

The unkind instrument to wrong another,
And one she knows not, ay, and to persever;

In my poor judgment, is not warranted
From being a solecism in our sex,
If not in manners.

PEREGRINE: How is this!

SIR POLITICK: Sweet madam,
Come nearer to your aim.

LADY POLITICK: Marry, and will, sir.
Since you provoke me with your impudence,

And laughter of your light land-syen here,
Your Sporus, your hermaphrodite—

PEREGRINE: What's here?

Poetic fury and historic storms!

SIR POLITICK: The gentleman, believe it, is of worth

And of our nation.

LADY POLITICK: Ay, your Whitefriars nation.⁸

Come, I blush for you, Master Would-be, I;
And am ashamed you should have no more forehead,

Than thus to be the patron, or St. George,
To a lewd harlot, a base fricatrice,
A female devil, in a male outside.

SIR POLITICK: Nay,

An you be such a one, I must bid adieu
To your delights. The case appears too liquid.

[*Exit*]

LADY POLITICK: Ay, you may carry't clear,
with you state-face!

But for your carnival concupiscence,
Who here is fled for liberty of conscience,
From furious persecution of the marshal,
Her will I dis'ple.

PEREGRINE: This is fine, i' faith!
And do you use this often? Is this part
Of your wit's exercise, 'gainst you have
occasion?

Madam——

LADY POLITICK: Go to, sir.

PEREGRINE: Do you hear me, lady?

Why, if your knight have set you to beg
shirts,

Or to invite me home, you might have
done it

A nearer way by far.

LADY POLITICK: This cannot work you

Out of my snare.

PEREGRINE: Why, am I in it, then?

Indeed your husband told me you were
fair,

And so you are; only your nose inclines,
That side that's next the sun, to the queen-
apple.

LADY POLITICK: This cannot be endured by
any patience.

[Enter Mosca]

MOSCA: What is the matter, madam?

LADY POLITICK: If the senate

Right not my quest in this, I will protest
them

To all the world no aristocracy.

MOSCA: What is the injury, lady?

LADY POLITICK: Why, the callet?

You told me of, here I have ta'en disguised.

MOSCA: Who? this! what means your lady-
ship? the creature

I mentioned to you is apprehended now,
Before the senate; you shall see her——

LADY POLITICK: Where?

MOSCA: I'll bring you to her. This young
gentleman,

I saw him land this morning at the port.

LADY POLITICK: Is't possible! how has my
judgment wandered?

Sir, I must, blushing, say to you, I have
erred;

And plead your pardon.

PEREGRINE: What, more changes yet!

LADY POLITICK: I hope you have not the
malice to remember

A gentlewoman's passion. If you stay
In Venice here, please you to use me,
sir——

MOSCA: Will you go, madam?

LADY POLITICK: Pray you, sir, use me; in
faith,

The more you see me the more I shall
conceive

You have forgot our quarrel

[*Exeunt* Lady Would-be, Mosca,
Nano, and Waiting-women.]

PEREGRINE: This is rare!

Sir Politick Would-be? no, Sir Politick
Bawd,

To bring me thus acquainted with his
wife!

Well, wise Sir Pol, since you have prac-
tised thus

Upon my freshman-ship, I'll try your salt-
head,

What proof it is against a counter-plot.

[*Exit*]

ACT IV. SCENE II.

The Scrutineo, or Senate House

[*Enter* Voltore, Corbaccio, Corvino,
and Mosca]

VOLTORE: Well, now you know the car-
riage of the business,

Your constancy is all that is required
Unto the safety of it.

MOSCA: Is the lie

Safely conveyed amongst us? is that sure?
Knows every man his burden?

CORVINO: Yes.

MOSCA: Then shrink not.

CORVINO: But knows the advocate the
truth?

MOSCA: O, sir,

By no means; I devised a formal tale,

That salved your reputation. But be
valiant, sir.

CORVINO: I fear no one but him that this
his pleading

Should make him stand for a co-heir—

MOSCA: Co-halter!

Hang him; we will but use his tongue, his
noise,

As we do croaker's here.

CORVINO: Ay, what shall he do?

MOSCA: When we have done, you mean?

CORVINO: Yes.

MOSCA: Why, we'll think:

Sell him for mummia: he's half dust al-
ready.

Do you not smile, [*to Voltore*] to see this
buffalo,

How he doth sport it with his head? I
should,

If all were well and past. [*Aside*] Sir, [*to*
Corbaccio] only you

Are he that shall enjoy the crop of all,
And these not know for whom they toil.

CORBACCIO: Ay, peace.

MOSCA: [*Turning to Corvino*] But you
shall eat it. Much! [*Aside*] Worshipful
sit, [*to Voltore*]

Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue,
Or the French Hercules, and make your
language

As conquering as his club, to beat along,
As with a tempest, flat, our adversaries;
But much more yours, sir.

VOLTORE: Here they come, have done.

MOSCA: I have another witness, if you
need, sir, I can produce.

VOLTORE: Who is it?

MOSCA: Sir, I have her.

[*Enter* Avocatori, and take their seats,
Bonario, Celia, Notario, Commanda-
dori, Saffi, and other Officers of Jus-
tice]

1ST AVOCATORE: The like of this the senate
never heard of.

2ND AVOCATORE: 'Twill come most strange
to them when we report it.

4TH AVOCATORE: The gentlewoman has
been ever held
Of unreprieved name.

3RD AVOCATORE: So has the youth.

4TH AVOCATORE: The more unnatural part
that of his father.

2ND AVOCATORE: More of the husband.

1ST AVOCATORE: I not know to give
His act a name, it is so monstrous!

4TH AVOCATORE: But the impostor, he's a
thing created

To exceed example!

1ST AVOCATORE: And all after-times!

2ND AVOCATORE: I never heard a true volup-
tuary

Described but him.

3RD AVOCATORE: Appear yet those were
cited?

NOTARIO: All but the old magnifico, Vol-
pone.

1ST AVOCATORE: Why is not he here?

MOSCA: Please your fatherhoods,
Here is his advocate: himself so weak,
So feeble—

4TH AVOCATORF: Who are you?

BONARIO: His parasite,

His knave, his pander. I beseech the court
He may be forced to come, that your grave
eyes

May bear strong witness of his strange
impostures.

VOLTORE: Upon my faith and credit with
your virtues,

He is not able to endure the air.

2ND AVOCATORE: Bring him, however.

3RD AVOCATORE: We will see him.

4TH AVOCATORE: Fetch him.

VOLTORE: Your fatherhoods' fit pleasures
be obeyed;

[*Exeunt Officers*]

But sure, the sight will rather move your
pities

Than indignation. May it please the court,
In the mean time, he may be heard in me:
I know this place most void of prejudice,

And therefore crave it, since we have no
reason

To fear our truth should hurt our cause.

3RD AVOCATORE: Speak free.

VOLTORE: Then know, most honored
fathers, I must now

Discover to your strangely abused ears,
The most prodigious and most frontless
piece

Of solid impudence, and treachery,
That every vicious nature yet brought forth
To shame the state of Venice. This lewd
woman,

That wants no artificial looks or tears
To help the vizard she has now put on,
Hath long been known a close adulteress
To that lascivious youth there; not sus-
pected,

I say, but known, and taken in the act
With him; and by this man, the easy hus-
band,

Pardoned; whose timeless bounty makes
him now

Stand here, the most unhappy, innocent
person,

That ever man's own goodness made ac-
cused.

For these not knowing how to owe a gift
Of that dear grace, but with their shame;
being placed

So above all powers of their gratitude,
Began to hate the benefit; and in place
Of thanks, devise to exturpe the memory
Of such an act: wherein I pray your fath-
erhoods

To observe the malice, yea, the rage of
creatures

Discovered in their evils: and what heart
Such take, even from their crimes:—but
that anon

Will more appear.—This gentleman, the
father,

Hearing of this foul fact, with many
others,

Which daily struck at his too tender ears,

And grieved in nothing more than that
he could not

Preserve himself a parent (his son's ills
Growing to that strange flood), at last
decreed

To disinherit him

1ST AVOCATORE: These be strange turns!

2ND AVOCATORE: The young man's fame
was ever fair and honest

VOLTORE: So much more full of danger
is his vice,

That can beguile so under shade of virtue.
But, as I said, my honored sires, his father
Having this settled purpose, by what means
To him betrayed, we know not, and this
day

Appointed for the deed; that parricide,
I cannot style him better, by confederacy
Preparing this his paramour to be there,
Entered Volpone's house (who was the
man,

Your fatherhoods must understand, de-
signed

For the inheritance), there sought his
father:—

But with what purpose sought he him, my
lords?

I tremble to pronounce it, that a son
Unto a father, and to such a father,
Should have so foul, felonious intent!

It was to murder him: when being pre-
vented

By his more happy absence, what then did
he?

Not check his wicked thoughts; no, now
new deeds

(Mischief doth never end where it begins);
An act of horror, fathers! he dragged forth
The aged gentleman that had there lain
bed-rid

Three yeats and more, out of his innocent
couch,

Naked upon the floor, there left him;
wounded

His servant in the face; and with this
strumpet,

The stale to his forged practice, who was
glad

To be so active—(I shall here desire
Your fatherhoods to note but my collec-
tions,

As most remarkable—) thought at once
to stop

His father's ends, discredit his free choice
In the old gentleman, redeem themselves,
By laying infamy upon this man,
To whom, with blushing, they should owe
their lives.

1ST AVOCATORE: What proofs have you of
this?

BONARIO: Most honored fathers,
I humbly crave there be no credit given
To this man's mercenary tongue.

2ND AVOCATORE: Forbear.

BONARIO: His soul moves in his fee.

3RD AVOCATORE: O, sir.

BONARIO: This fellow,
For six sols more would plead against his
Maker.

1ST AVOCATORE: You do forget yourself.

VOLTORI: Nay, nay, grave fathers,
Let him have scope: can any man imagine
That he will spare his accuser, that would
not

Have spared his patient?

1ST AVOCATORE: Well, produce your proofs

CELIA: I would I could forget I were a
creature.

VOLIORE: Signior Corbaccio!

[*Corbaccio comes forward*]

4TH AVOCATORE: What is he?

VOLIORE: The father

2ND AVOCATORE: Has he had an oath?

NOTARIO: Yes.

CORBACCIO: What must I do now?

NOTARIO: Your testimony's craved.

CORBACCIO: Speak to the knave?

I'll have my mouth first stopt with earth;
my heart

Abhors his knowledge: I disclaim in him.

1ST AVOCATORE: But for what cause?

CORBACCIO: The mere portent of nature!

He is an utter stranger to my loins.

BONARIO: Have they made you to this?

CORBACCIO: I will not hear thee,
Monster of men, swine, goat, wolf, par-
ricide!

Speak not, thou viper.

BONARIO: Sir, I will sit down,

And rather wish my innocence should
suffer

Than I resist the authority of a father.

VOLIORE: Signior Corvino!

[*Corvino comes forward*]

2ND AVOCATORE: This is strange.

1ST AVOCATORE: Who's this?

NOTARIO: The husband.

4TH AVOCATORE: Is he sworn?

NOTARIO: He is.

3RD AVOCATORE: Speak then.

CORVINO: This woman, please your father-
hoods, is a whore,

Of most hot exercise, more than a partrich,
Upon record—

1ST AVOCATORE: No more.

CORVINO: Neighs like a jennet.

NOTARIO: Preserve the honor of the court.

CORVINO: I shall,

And modesty of your most reverend ears.

And I hope that I may say these eyes

Have seen her glued unto that piece of
cedar,

That fine well timbered gallant: and that
here

The letters may be read, thorough the
horn,

That makes the story perfect.

MOSCA: Excellent! sir.

CORVINO: [*Astute to Mosca*] There is no
shame in this now, is there?

MOSCA: None.

CORVINO: Or if I said, I hoped that she
were onward

To her damnation, if there be a hell

Greater than whore and woman; a good
Catholic

May make the doubt.

3RD AVOCATORE: His grief hath made him
frantic.

1ST AVOCATORE: Remove him hence.

2ND AVOCATORE: Look to the woman.

[Celia swoons]

CORVINO: Rare!

Prettily feigned again!

4TH AVOCATORE: Stand from about her.

1ST AVOCATORE: Give her the air.

3RD AVOCATORE. [To Mosca] What can you
say?

MOSCA: My wound,

May it please your wisdoms, speaks for
me, received

In aid of my good patron, when he mist
His sought-for father, when that well-
taught dame

Had her cue given her to cry out, A rape!

BONARIO: O most laid impudence!

Fathers—

3RD AVOCATORE: Sir, be silent;

You had your hearing free, so must they
theirs.

2ND AVOCATORE: I do begin to doubt the
imposture here.

4TH AVOCATORE: This woman has too many
moods.

VOLTORE: Grave fathers,

She is a creature of a most profest

And prostituted lewdness.

CORVINO: Most impetuous,

Unsatisfied, grave fathers!

VOLTORE: May her feignings

Not take your wisdoms: but this day she
baited

A stranger, a grave knight, with her loose
eyes,

And more lascivious kisses. This man saw
them

Together on the water, in a gondola.

MOSCA: Here is the lady herself, that saw
them too,

Without; who then had in the open streets
Pursued them, but for saving her knight's
honor.

1ST AVOCATORE: Produce that lady.

2ND AVOCATORE: Let her come.

[Exit Mosca]

4TH AVOCATORE: These things,
They strike with wonder.

3RD AVOCATORE: I am turned a stone.

[Re-enter Mosca with Lady Would-
Be]

MOSCA: Be resolute, madam.

LADY POLITICK: Ay, this same is she.

[Pointing to Celia]

Out, thou camelion harlot! now thine eyes
Vie tears with the hyæna. Dar'st thou look
Upon my wronged face? I cry your par-
dons.

I fear I have forgettingly transgress

Against the dignity of the court—

2ND AVOCATORE: No, madam.

LADY POLITICK: And been exorbitant—

2ND AVOCATORE: You have not, lady.

4TH AVOCATORE: These proofs are strong.

LADY POLITICK: Surely, I had no purpose

To scandalize your honors, or my sex's.

3RD AVOCATORE: We do believe it.

LADY POLITICK: Surely you may believe it.

2ND AVOCATORE: Madam, we do.

LADY POLITICK: Indeed you may; my breed-
ing

Is not so coarse—

4TH AVOCATORE: We know it.

LADY POLITICK: To offend

With pertinancy—

3RD AVOCATORE: Lady—

LADY POLITICK: Such a presence!

No surely.

1ST AVOCATORE: We well think it.

LADY POLITICK: You may think it.

1ST AVOCATORE: Let her o'ercome. What
witnesses have you,

To make good your report?

BONARIO: Our consciences.

CÉLIA: And heaven, that never fails the innocent.

4TH AVOCATORE: These are no testimonies.

BONARIO: Not in your courts,
Where multitude and clamor overcomes.

1ST AVOCATORE: Nay, then you do wax insolent.

[*Re-enter Officers, bearing Volpone on a couch*]

VOLTORE: Here, here

The testimony comes that will convince,
And put to utter dumbness their bold tongues!

See here, grave fathers, here's the ravisher,
The rider on men's wives, the great impostor,

The grand voluptuary! Do you not think
These limbs should affect venery? or these eyes

Covet a concubine? pray you mark these hands;

Are they not fit to stroke a lady's breasts?
Perhaps he doth dissemble!

BONARIO: So he does.

VOLTORE: Would you have him tortured?

BONARIO: I would have him proved.

VOLTORE: Best try him then with goads,
or burning irons;

Put him to the strappado; I have heard
The rack hath cured the gout; faith, give it him,

And help him of a malady; be courteous.
I'll undertake, before these honored fathers,
He shall have yet as many left diseases,
As she has known adulterers, or thou stumpets.

O, my most equal hearers, if these deeds,
Acts of this bold and most exorbitant strain,

May pass with sufferance, what one citizen
But owes the forfeit of his life, yea, fame,
To him that dares traduce him? which of you

Are safe, my honored fathers? I would ask,

With leave of your grave fatherhoods, if
their plot

Have any face or color like to truth?

Or if, unto the dullest nostril here,
It smell not rank, and most abhorred slander?

I crave your care of this good gentleman,
Whose life is much endangered by their fable;

And as for them, I will conclude with this,
That vicious persons, when they're hot,
and fleshed

In impious acts, their constancy abounds:
Damned deeds are done with greatest confidence.

1ST AVOCATORE: Take them to custody, and sever them.

2ND AVOCATORE: 'Tis pity two such prodigies should live.

1ST AVOCATORE: Let the old gentleman be returned with care.

[*Exeunt Officers with Volpone*]

I'm sorry our credulity hath wronged him

4TH AVOCATORE: These are two creatures!

3RD AVOCATORE: I've an earthquake in me.

2ND AVOCATORE: Their shame, even in their cradles, fled their faces

4TH AVOCATORE: [*To Voltore*] You have done a worthy service to the state, sir,
In their discovery

1ST AVOCATORE: You shall hear, ere night,
What punishment the court decrees upon them

[*Exeunt Avocatori, Notario, and Officers with Bonario and Celia*]

VOLTORE: We thank your fatherhoods.
How like you it?

MOSCA: Rare.

I'd have your tongue, sir, upt with gold for this;

I'd have you be the heir to the whole city;
The earth I'd have want men ere you want living:

They're bound to erect your statue in St. Mark's

Signior Corvino, I would have you go
And show yourself that you have con-
quered.

CORVINO: Yes.

MOSCA: It was much better that you should
profess

Yourself a cuckold thus, than that the
other

Should have been proved.

CORVINO: Nay, I considered that:

Now it is her fault.

MOSCA: Then it had been yours.

CORVINO: True; I do doubt this advocate
still.

MOSCA: I' faith,

You need not, I dare ease you of that care.

CORVINO: I trust thee, Mosca.

[Exit]

MOSCA: As your own soul, sir.

CORBACCIO: Mosca!

MOSCA: Now for your business, sir.

CORBACCIO: How! have you business?

MOSCA: Yes, yours, sir.

CORBACCIO: O, none else.

MOSCA: None else, not I.

CORBACCIO: Be careful then.

MOSCA: Rest you with both your eyes, sir.

CORBACCIO: Dispatch it.

MOSCA: Instantly.

CORBACCIO: And look that all,
Whatever, be put in, jewels, plate, moneys,
Household stuff, bedding, curtains.

MOSCA: Curtain-rings, sir:

Only the advocate's fee must be deducted.

CORBACCIO: I'll pay him now; you'll be too
prodigal.

MOSCA: Sir, I must tender it.

CORBACCIO: Two chequines is well.

MOSCA: No, sir, sir.

CORBACCIO: 'Tis too much.

MOSCA: He talked a great while;

You must consider that, sir.

CORBACCIO: Well, there's three—

MOSCA: I'll give it him.

CORBACCIO: Do so, and there's for thee.

[Exit]

MOSCA: Bountiful bones! What horrid
strange offence

Did he commit 'gainst nature, in his vouth,
Worthy this age? [Aside] You see, sir, [to
Vulture] how I work

Unto your ends: take you no notice.

VULTURE: No,

I'll leave you.

[Exit]

MOSCA: All is yours, the devil and all.

Good advocate!— Madam, I'll bring you
home.

LADY POLITICK: No, I'll go see your patron.

MOSCA: That you shall not:

I'll tell you why. My purpose is to urge
My patron to reform his will, and for
The zeal you have shown to-day, whereas
before

You were but third or fourth, you shall be
now

Put in the first; which would appear as
begged

If you were present. Therefore—

LADY POLITICK: You shall sway me.

[Exeunt]

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Room in Volpone's House

[Enter Volpone]

VOLPONE: Well, I am here, and all this
brunt is past.

I ne'er was in dislike with my disguise
Till this fled moment: here 'twas good, in
private;

But in your public,—*cave* whilst I breathe
'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the
cramp,

And I apprehended straight some power
had struck me

With a dead palsy. Well! I must be merry.
And shake it off. A many of these fears

Would put me into some villainous disease,
Should they come thick upon me: I'll prevent 'em.

Give me a bowl of lusty wine, to fright
This humor from my heart. [*Drinks*]

Hum, hum, hum!

'Tis almost gone already: I shall conquer.
Any device now of rare ingenious knavery,
That would possess me with a violent
laughter,

Would make me up again. [*Drinks again*]
So, so, so, so!

This heat is life; 'tis blood by this time:—
Mosca!

[*Enter Mosca*]

MOSCA: How now, sir? does the day look
clear again?

Are we recovered, and wrought out of
error,

Into our way, to see our path before us?
Is our trade free once more?

VOLPONE: Exquisite Mosca!

MOSCA: Was it not carried learnedly?

VOLPONE: And stoutly:

Good wits are greatest in extremities.

MOSCA: It were folly beyond thought to
trust

Any grand act unto a cowardly spirit:
You are not taken with it enough, methinks.

VOLPONE: O, more than if I had enjoyed
the wench.

The pleasure of all woman-kind's not like
it.

MOSCA: Why, now you speak, sir. We must
here be fixed;

Here we must rest; this is our masterpiece;
We cannot think to go beyond this

VOLPONE: True,

Thou hast played thy prize, my precious
Mosca.

MOSCA: Nay, sir,
To gull the court—

VOLPONE: And quite divert the torrent
Upon the innocent.

MOSCA: Yes, and to make
So rare a music out of discords—

VOLPONE: Right.

That yet to me's the strangest, how thou
hast borne it!

That these, being so divided amongst themselves,

Should not scent somewhat, or in me or
thee,

Or doubt their own side.

MOSCA. True, they will not see't,
Too much light blinds them, I think. Each
of them

Is so possess'd and stuff'd with his own hopes
That anything unto the contrary,
Never so true, or never so apparent,
Never so palpable, they will resist it—

VOLPONE: Like a temptation of the devil.

MOSCA: Right, sir.

Merchants may talk of trade, and your
great signiors

Of land that yields well; but if Italy

Have any glebe more fruitful than these
fellows,

I am deceived. Did not you advocate rare?

VOLPONE: O.—“My most honored fathers,
my grave fathers,

Under correction of your fatherhoods,

What face of truth is here? If these strange
deeds

May pass, most honored fathers”—I had
much ado

To forbear laughing.

MOSCA: It seem'd to me, you sweat, sir.

VOLPONE: In troth, I did a little.

MOSCA: But confess, sir,

Were you not daunted?

VOLPONE: In good faith, I was

A little in a mist, but not dejected;

Never but still myself.

MOSCA: I think it, sir.

Now, so truth help me, I must needs say
this, sir,

And out of conscience for your advocate.

He has taken pains, in faith, sir, and deserved,

In my poor judgment, I speak it under favor,

Not to contrary you, sir, very richly—
Well—to be cozened.

VOLPONE: Troth, and I think so too,
By that I heard him in the late end.

MOSCA: O, but before, sir: had you heard him first

Draw it to certain heads, then aggravate,
Then use his vehement figures—I looked still

When he would shift a shirt; and doing this

Out of pure love, no hope of gain—

VOLPONE: 'Tis right.

I cannot answer him Mosca, as I would,
Not yet; but for thy sake, at thy entreaty,
I will begin, even now—to vex them all,
This very instant.

MOSCA: Good sir.

VOLPONE Call the dwarf

And eunuch forth.

MOSCA: Castrone. Nano!

[*Enter Castrone and Nano*]

NANO: Here.

VOLPONE: Shall we have a jig now?

MOSCA: What you please, sir.

VOLPONE: Go,

Straight give out about the streets, you two,
That I am dead; do it with constancy,
Sadly, do you hear? impute it to the grief
Of this late slander.

[*Exeunt Castrone and Nano*]

MOSCA: What do you mean, sir?

VOLPONE: O,

I shall have instantly my Vulture, Crow,
Raven, come flying hither, on the news,
To peck for carrion, my she-wolf, and all,
Greedy, and full of expectation—

MOSCA: And then to have it ravished from their mouths!

VOLPONE: 'Tis true. I will have thee put on a gown,

And take upon thee, as thou wert mine heir;

Show them a Will. Open that chest, and reach

Forth one of those that has the blanks;
I'll straight

Put in thy name.

MOSCA: It will be rare, sir.

[*Gives him a paper*]

VOLPONE: Ay,

When they ev'n gape, and find themselves deluded—

MOSCA: Yes.

VOLPONE: And thou use them scurvily!

Dispatch, get on thy gown.

MOSCA: [*Putting on a gown*] But what, sir, if they ask

After the body?

VOLPONE: Say, it was corrupted.

MOSCA: I'll say it stunk, sir; and was fain to have it

Coffined up instantly, and sent away.

VOLPONE: Anything; what thou wilt. Hold, here's my Will.

Get thee a cap, a count-book, pen and ink,
Papers afore thee; sit as thou wert taking

An inventory of parcels: I'll get up

Behind the curtain, on a stool, and hearken:

Sometime peep over, see how they do look,
With what degrees their blood doth leave their faces.

O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter!

MOSCA: [*Putting on a cap, and setting out the table, &c.*] Your advocate will turn stark dull upon it.

VOLPONE: It will take off his oratory's edge.

MOSCA: But your clarissimo, old round-back, he

Will crump you like a hog-louse, with the touch.

VOLPONE: And what Corvino?

MOSCA: O, sir, look for him,

To-morrow morning, with a rope and dagger,

To visit all the streets; he must run mad,
My lady too, that came into the court,
To bear false witness for your worship—

VOLPONE: Yes,
And kissed me 'fore the fathers, when my
face

Flowed all with oils—

MOSCA: And sweat, sir. Why, your gold
Is such another medicine, it dries up
All those offensive savours it transforms
The most deformed, and restores them
lovely,

As 'twere the strange poetical girdle. Jove
Could not invent t' himself a shroud more
subtle

To pass ACISIUS' guards. It is the thing
Makes all the world her grace, her youth,
her beauty.

VOLPONE: I think she loves me.

MOSCA: Who? the lady, sir?
She's jealous of you.

VOLPONE: Dost thou say so?
[*Knocking within*]

MOSCA: Hark,
There's some already.

VOLPONE: Look.

MOSCA: It is the Vulture;
He has the quickest scent.

VOLPONE: I'll to my place,
Thou to thy posture.

[*Goes behind the curtain*]

MOSCA: I am set.

VOLPONE: But, Mosca,
Play the artificer now, torture them rarely.

[*Enter Voltore*]

VOLTORE: How now, my Mosca?

MOSCA: [*Writing*] "Turkey carpets,
nine—"

VOLTORE: Taking an inventory! that is
well.

MOSCA: "Two suits of bedding, tissue—"

VOLTORE: Where's the Will?

Let me read the while.

[*Enter Servants with Corbaccio in a
chair*]

CORBACCIO: So, set me down,
And get you home.

[*Exeunt Servants*]

VOLTORE: Is he come now, to trouble us!

MOSCA: "Of cloth of gold, two more—"

CORBACCIO: Is it done, Mosca?

MOSCA: "Of several velvets, eight—"

VOLTORE: I like his care.

CORBACCIO: Dost thou not hear?

[*Enter Corvino*]

CORVINO: Ha! is the hour come, Mosca?

VOLPONE: [*Peeping over the curtain*] Ay,
now they muster.

CORVINO: What does the advocate here,
Or this Corbaccio?

CORBACCIO: What do these here?

[*Enter Lady Politick Would-be*]

LADY POLITICK: Mosca!

Is his thread spun?

MOSCA: "Eight chests of linen—"

VOLPONE: O,

My fine Dame Would-be, too!

CORVINO: Mosca, the Will,

That I may show it these, and rid them
hence.

MOSCA: "Six chests of diaper, four of dam-
ask."—There

[*Gives them the Will carelessly, over
his shoulder*]

CORBACCIO: Is that the Will?

MOSCA: "Down-beds, and bolsters—"

VOLPONE: Rare!

Be busy still. Now they begin to flutter:

They never think of me. Look, see, see,
see!

How their swift eyes run over the long
deed,

Unto the name, and to the legacies,
What is bequeathed them there—

MOSCA: "Ten suits of hangings—"

VOLPONE: Ay, in their garters, Mosca. Now
their hopes

Are at the gasp.

VOLTORE: Mosca the heir.

CORBACCIO: What's that?

VOLPONE: My advocate is dumb; look to my merchant,
He has heard of some strange storm, a ship is lost,
He faints; my lady will swoon. Old glazen-eyes,

He hath not reached his despair yet.

CORBACCIO: All these
Are out of hope; I am, sure, the man.

[*Takes the Will*]

CORVINO: But, Mosca—

MOSCA: "Two cabinets—"

CORVINO: Is this in earnest?

MOSCA: "One
Of ebony—"

CORVINO: Or do you but delude me?

MOSCA: "The other, mother of pearl"—
I am very busy.

Good faith, it is a fortune thrown upon me—

"Item, one salt of agate"—not my seeking.

LADY POLITICK: Do you hear, sir?

MOSCA: "A perfumed box"—Pray you forbear,

You see I'm troubled—"made of an onyx—"

LADY POLITICK. How!

MOSCA: To-morrow or next day, I shall be at leisure

To talk with you all.

CORVINO: Is this my large hope's issue?

LADY POLITICK: Sir, I must have a fairer answer.

MOSCA: Madam!

Marry, and shall: pray you, fairly quit my house.

Nay, raise no tempest with your looks; but hark you,

Remember what your ladyship offered me To put you in an heir; go to, think on it:

And what you said e'en your best madams did

For maintenance; and why not you? Enough.

Go home, and use the poor Sir Pol, your knight, well,
For fear I tell some riddles; go, be melancholy.

[*Exit Lady Politick Would-be*]

VOLPONE: O, my fine devil!

CORVINO: Mosca, pray you a word.

MOSCA: Lord! will not you take your dispatch hence yet?

Methinks, of all, you should have been the example.

Why should you stay here? with what thought, what promise?

Hear you; do you not know, I know you an ass,

And that you would most fain have been a wittol

If fortune would have let you? that you are

A declared cuckold, on good terms? This pearl,

You'll say, was yours? right: this diamond?

I'll not deny't, but thank you. Much here else?

It may be so. Why, think that these good works

May help to hide your bad. I'll not betray you;

Although you be but extraordinary,

And have it only in title, it sufficeth:

Go home, be melancholy too, or mad.

[*Exit Corvino*]

VOLPONE: Rare Mosca! how his villainy becomes him!

VOLTORF. Certain he doth delude all these for me.

CORBACCIO: Mosca, the heir!

VOLPONE: O, his four eyes have found it.

CORBACCIO: I am cozened, cheated, by a parasite slave;

Harlot, thou hast gulled me.

MOSCA: Yes, sir. Stop your mouth,

Or I shall draw the only tooth is left.

Are not you he, that filthy covetous wretch,

With the three legs, that here, in hope of
prey,

Have, any time this three years, snuffed
about,

With your most groveling nose, and would
have hired

Me to the poisoning of my patron, sir:

Are not you he that have to-day in court

Professed the disinheriting of your son?

Perjured yourself? Go home, and die, and
stunk;

If you but croak a syllable, all comes out:

Away, and call your porters! [*Exit Cor-
baccio*] Go, go, stink.

VOLPONE: Excellent varlet!

VOLTORE: Now, my faithful Mosca,

I find thy constancy—

MOSCA: Sir!

VOLTORE: Sincere.

MOSCA: [*Writing*] "A table

Of porphyry"—I marle you'll be thus
troublesome.

VOLTORE: Nay, leave off now, they are
gone.

MOSCA: Why, who are you?

What! who did send for you? O, cry you
mercy,

Reverend sir! Good faith, I am grieved for
you,

That any chance of mine should thus
defeat

Your (I must needs say) most deserving
travails.

But I protest, sir, it was cast upon me,
And I could almost wish to be without it,
But that the will o' the dead must be
observed.

Marry, my joy is that you need it not;
You have a gift, sir (thank your educa-
tion),

Will never let you want, while there are
men,

And malice, to breed causes. Would I had
But half the like, for all my fortune, sir!
If I have any suits, as I do hope,

Things being so easy and direct, I shall not,
I will make bold with your obstreperous
aid,

Conceive me—for your fee, sir. In mean
time,

You that have so much law, I know have
the conscience

Not to be covetous of what is mine.

Good sir, I thank you for my plate; 'twill
help

To set up a young man. Good faith, you
look

As you were costive; best go home and
purge, sir.

[*Exit Voltore*]

VOLPONE: [*Comes from behind the cur-
tain*] Bid him eat lettuce well. My
witty mischief,

Let me embrace thee. O that I could now
Transform thee to a Venus!—Mosca, go,

Straight take my habit of clarissimo,

And walk the streets; be seen, torment
them more:

We must pursue, as well as plot. Who
would

Have lost this feast?

MOSCA: I doubt it will lose them.

VOLPONE: O, my recovery shall recover all.
That I could now but think on some
disguise

To meet them in, and ask them questions:

How I would vex them still at every turn!

MOSCA: Sir, I can fit you.

VOLPONE: Canst thou?

MOSCA: Yes, I know

One o' the commandadori, sir, so like you;
Him will I straight make drunk, and

bring you his habit.

VOLPONE: A rare disguise, and answering
thy brain!

O, I will be a sharp disease unto them.

MOSCA: Sir, you must look for curses—

VOLPONE: Till they burst;

The Fox fares ever best when he is curst.

[*Exeunt*]

 ACT V. SCENE II.

A Hall in Sir Politick's House

[*Enter Peregrine disguised, and three Merchants*]

PEREGRINE: Am I enough disguised?

1ST MERCHANT: I warrant you.

PEREGRINE: All my ambition is to fright him only.

2ND MERCHANT: If you could ship him away, 'twere excellent.

3RD MERCHANT: To Zant, or to Aleppo!

PEREGRINE: Yes, and have his Adventures put i' the Book of Voyages, And his gulled story registered for truth. Well, gentlemen, when I am in a while, And that you think us warm in our discourse,

Know your approaches.

1ST MERCHANT: Trust it to our care.

[*Exeunt Merchants*]

[*Enter Waiting-woman*]

PEREGRINE: Save you, fair lady! Is Sir Pol within?

WOMAN: I do not know, sir.

PEREGRINE: Pray you say unto him

Here is a merchant, upon urgent business, Desires to speak with him.

WOMAN: I will see, sir.

[*Exit*]

PEREGRINE: Pray you.

I see the family is all female here.

[*Re-enter Waiting-woman*]

WOMAN: He says, sir, he has weighty affairs of state,

That now require him whole; some other time

You may possess him.

PEREGRINE: Pray you say again,

If those require him whole, these will exact him,

Whereof I bring him tidings. [*Exit Woman*] What might be

His grave affair of state now! how to make

Bolognian sausages here in Venice, sparing One o' the ingredients?

[*Re-enter Waiting-woman*]

WOMAN: Sir, he says, he knows

By your word *tidings*, that you are no statesman,

And therefore wills you stay

PEREGRINE: Sweet, pray you return him; I have not read so many proclamations, And studied them for words, as he has done—

But—here he deigns to come.

[*Exit Woman*]

[*Enter Sir Politick Would-be*]

SIR POLITICK: Sir, I must crave

Your courteous pardon. There hath chanced to-day

Unkind disaster 'twixt my lady and me; And I was penning my apology,

To give her satisfaction, as you came now.

PEREGRINE: Sir, I am griev'd I bring you worse disaster:

The gentleman you met at the post to-day. That told you he was newly arrived—

SIR POLITICK: Ay, was

A fugitive punk?

PEREGRINE: No, sir, a spy set on you:

And he has made relation to the senate,

That you profest to him to have a plot

To sell the State of Venice to the Turk.

SIR POLITICK: O me!

PEREGRINE: For which warrants are signed by this time,

To apprehend you, and to search your study

For papers—

SIR POLITICK: Alas, sir, I have none, but notes

Drawn out of play-books—

PEREGRINE: All the better, sir.

SIR POLITICK: And some essays. What shall I do?

PEREGRINE: Sir, best

Convey yourself into a sugar-chest.

Or, if you could lie round, a frail were rare.

And I could send you aboard.

SIR POLITICK: Sir, I but talked so,
For discourse sake merely.

[*Knocking within*]

PEREGRINE: Hark! they are there.

SIR POLITICK: I am a wretch, a wretch!

PEREGRINE: What will you do, sir?

Have you ne'er a currant-butt to leap into?
They'll put you to the rack; you must be sudden.

SIR POLITICK: Sir, I have an ingine—

3RD MERCHANT: [*Within*] Sir Politick
Would-be!

2ND MERCHANT: [*Within*] Where is he?

SIR POLITICK: That I have thought upon
before time

PEREGRINE: What is it?

SIR POLITICK: I shall ne'er endure the tor-
ture.

Marry, it is, sir, of a tortoise-shell,
Fitted for these extremities: pray you, sir,
help me.

Here I've a place, sir, to put back my legs,
Please you to lay it on, sir, [*lies down*
while Peregrine places the shell upon
him]—with this cap,

And my black gloves. I'll lie, sir, like a
tortoise,

Till they are gone.

PEREGRINE: And call you this an ingine?

SIR POLITICK: Mine own device—Good
sir, bid my wife's women
To burn my papers.

[*Exit Peregrine*]

[*The three Merchants rush in*]

1ST MERCHANT: Where is he hid?

3RD MERCHANT: We must,

And will sure find him

2ND MERCHANT: Which is his study?

[*Re-enter Peregrine*]

1ST MERCHANT: What

Are you, sir?

PEREGRINE: I am a merchant, that came
here

To look upon this tortoise?

3RD MERCHANT: How!

1ST MERCHANT: St. Mark!

What beast is this?

PEREGRINE: It is a fish.

2ND MERCHANT: Come out here!

PEREGRINE: Nay, you may strike him, sir,
and tread upon him:

He'll bear a cart.

1ST MERCHANT: What, to run over him?

PEREGRINE: Yes, sir.

3RD MERCHANT: Let's jump upon him.

2ND MERCHANT: Can he not go?

PEREGRINE: He creeps, sir.

1ST MERCHANT: Let's see him creep.

PEREGRINE: No, good sir, you will hurt
him.

2ND MERCHANT: Heart, I will see him
creep, or prick his guts.

3RD MERCHANT: Come out here!

PEREGRINE: Pray you, sir.—Creep a little.

[*Aside to Sir Politick Would-be*]

1ST MERCHANT: Forth.

2ND MERCHANT: Yet farther.

PEREGRINE: Good sir!—Creep.

2ND MERCHANT: We'll see his legs.

[*They pull off the shell and discover*
him]

3RD MERCHANT: Ods so, he has garters!

1ST MERCHANT: Ay, and gloves!

2ND MERCHANT: Is this

Your fearful toitoise?

PEREGRINE: [*Discovering himself*] Now,
Sir Pol, we are even;

For your next project I shall be prepared—
I am sorry for the funeral of your notes,
sir:

1ST MERCHANT: 'Twere a rare motion to
be seen in Fleetstreet.

2ND MERCHANT: Ay, in the Term.

1ST MERCHANT: Or Smithfield, in the fair.

3RD MERCHANT: Methinks 'tis but a melan-
choly sight.

PEREGRINE: Farewell, most politic tortoise!

[*Exeunt Peregrine and Merchants*]

[*Re-enter Waiting-woman*]

SIR POLITICK: Where's my lady?

Knows she of this?

WOMAN: I know not, sir.

SIR POLITICK: Enquire.—

O, I shall be the fable of all feasts,

The freight of the gazetti,¹⁰ ship-boys' tale;
And, which is worst, even talk for ordi-
naries.

WOMAN: My lady's come most melan-
choly home,

And says, sir, she will straight to sea, for
physic.

SIR POLITICK: And I, to shun this place
and clime for ever,

Creeping with house on back, and think it
well

To shrink my poor head in my politick
shell.

[*Exeunt*]

Except he come to composition with me.

Androgyno, Castrone, Nano!

[*Enter* Androgyno, Castrone, and
Nano]

ALL: Here.

MOSCA: Go, recreate yourselves abroad; go,
sport.—

[*Exeunt*]

So, now I have the keys, and am possesst.
Since he will needs be dead afore his time,
I'll bury him, or gain by him: I am his
heir,

And so will keep me, till he share at least.
To cozen him of all, were but a cheat

Well plac'd: no man would construe it a
sin:

Let his sport pay for't. This is call'd the
Fox-trap.

[*Exit*]

ACT V. SCENE III.

A Room in Volpone's House

[*Enter* Mosca *in the habit of a clausi-
simo, and* Volpone *in that of a com-
mandadore*]

VOLPONE: Am I then like him?

MOSCA: O, sir, you are he:

No man can sever you.

VOLPONE: Good.

MOSCA: But what am I?

VOLPONE: 'Fore heaven, a brave clarissimo;
thou becom'st it!

Pity thou wert not born one.

MOSCA: If I hold

My made one, 'twill be well.

[*Aside*]

VOLPONE: I'll go and see

What news first at the court.

[*Exit*]

MOSCA: DO SO. My FOX

Is out of his hole, and ere he shall re-enter,
I'll make him languish in his borrowed
case,

ACT V. SCENE IV.

A Street

[*Enter* Corbaccio and Corvino]

CORBACCIO: They say the court is set.

CORVINO: We must maintain
Our first tale good, for both our reputa-
tions.

CORBACCIO: Why, mine's no tale: my son
would there have killed me.

CORVINO: That's true, I had forgot—mine
is, I'm sure

[*Aside*]

But for your Will, sir.

CORBACCIO: Ay, I'll come upon him

For that hereafter, now his patron's dead.

[*Enter* Volpone]

VOLPONE: Signior Corvino! and Corbaccio!
sir,

Much joy unto you.

CORVINO: Of what?

VOLPONE: The sudden good

Dropt down upon you—

CORBACCIO: Where?

VOLPONE: And none knows how,
From old Volpone, sir.

CORBACCIO: Out, arrant knave!

VOLPONE: Let not your too much wealth,
sir, make you furious.

CORBACCIO: Away, thou varlet.

VOLPONE: Why, sir?

CORBACCIO: Dost thou mock me?

VOLPONE: You mock the world, sir; did
you not change Wills?

CORBACCIO: Out, harlot!

VOLPONE: O! belike you are the man,
Signior Corvino? faith, you carry it well;
You grow not mad withal; I love your
spirit;

You are not over-leavened with your for-
tune.

You should have some would swell now,
like a wine-fat,

With such an autumn—Did he give you
all, sir?

CORVINO: Avoid, you rascal!

VOLPONE: Troth, your wife has shown
Herself a very woman; but you are well,
You need not care, you have a good estate,
To bear it out, sir, better by this chance:
Except Corbaccio have a share.

CORBACCIO: Hence, varlet.

VOLPONE: You will not be acknownd, sir;
why, 'tis wise.

Thus do all gamesters, at all games, dis-
semble:

No man will seem to win. [*Exeunt Cor-
vino and Corbaccio*] Here comes my
vulture,

Heaving his beak up in the air, and snuf-
fing.

[*Enter Voltore*]

VOLTORE: Outstript thus, by a parasite! a
slave,

Would run on errands, and make legs for
clumbs.

Well, what I'll do—

VOLPONE: The court stays for your wor-
ship.

I e'en rejoice, sir, at your worship's happi-
ness,

And that it fell into so learned hands,
That understand the fingering—

VOLTORE: What do you mean?

VOLPONE: I mean to be a suitor to your
worship,

For the small tenement, out of reparations,
That, at the end of your long row of
houses,

By the PISCARIA: it was, in Volpone's time,
Your predecessor, ere he grew diseased,
A handsome, pretty, custom'd hawdy-
house

As any was in Venice, none dispraised;
But fell with him: his body and that
house

Decayed together.

VOLTORE: Come, sir, leave your prating.

VOLPONE: Why, if your worship give me
but your hand,

That I may have the refusal, I have done.
'Tis a mere toy to you, sir; candle-rents;
As your learned worship knows—

VOLTORE: What do I know?

VOLPONE: Marry, no end of your wealth,
sir; God decrease it!

VOLTORE: Mistaking knave! what, mock'st
thou my misfortune?

[*Exit*]

VOLPONE: His blessing on your heart, sir;
would 'twere more!—

Now to my first again, at the next corner.
[*Exit*]

ACT V. SCENE V.

Another part of the Street

[*Enter Corbaccio and Corvino;—
Mosca passes over the Stage, before
them*]

CORBACCIO: See, in our habit! see the im-
pudent varlet!

CORVINO: That I could shoot mine eyes at
him, like gun-stones!

[*Enter Volpone*]

VOLPONE: But is this true, sir, of the parasite?

CORBACCIO: Again, to afflict us! monster!

VOLPONE: In good faith, sir,

I'm heartily grieved, a beard of your grave
length

Should be so over-reached. I never brooked
That parasite's hair; methought his nose
should cozen:

There still was somewhat in his look, did
promise

The bane of a clarissimo.

CORBACCIO: Knave—

VOLPONE: Methinks

Yet you, that are so traded in the world,
A witty merchant, the fine bird, Corvino,
That have such moral emblems on your
name,

Should not have sung your shame, and
dropt your cheese,
To let the Fox laugh at your emptiness.

CORVINO: Sirrah, you think the privilege of
the place,

And your red saucy cap, that seems to me
Nailed to your jolt-head with those two
chequines,

Can warrant your abuses; come you
hither:

You shall perceive, sir, I dare beat you;
approach.

VOLPONE: No haste, sir, I do know your
valor well,

Since you durst publish what you are, sir.

CORVINO: Tarry,

I'd speak with you.

VOLPONE: Sir, sir, another time—

CORVINO: Nay, now.

VOLPONE: O lord, sir! I were a wise man,
Would stand the fury of a distracted
cuckold.

[*As he is running off, re-enter Mosca*]

CORBACCIO: What, come again!

VOLPONE: Upon 'em, Mosca; save me.

CORBACCIO: The air's infected where he
breathes.

CORVINO: Let's fly him.

[*Exeunt Corvino and Corbaccio*]

VOLPONE: Excellent basilisk! turn upon the
vulture.

[*Enter Voltore*]

VOLTORE: Well, flesh-fly, it is summer with
you now;

Your winter will come on.

MOSCA: Good advocate,

Prithee not rail, nor threaten out of place
thus;

Thou'lt make a solecism, as madam says.
Get you a biggin¹¹ more; your bram breaks
loose.

[*Exit*]

VOLTORE: Well, sir.

VOLPONE: Would you have me beat the
insolent slave,

Throw dirt upon his first good clothes?

VOLTORE: This same

Is doubtless some familiar.

VOLPONE: Sir, the court,

In troth, stays for you. I am mad, a mule
That never read Justinian, should get up,

And ride an advocate. Had you no quirk
To avoid gullage, sir, by such a creature?

I hope you do but jest; he has not done it:
'Tis but confederacy to blind the rest.

You are the heir.

VOLTORE: A strange, officious,

Troublesome knave! thou dost torment me.

VOLPONE: I know—

It cannot be, sir, that you should be coz-
ened;

'Tis not within the wit of man to do it;

You are so wise, so prudent; and 'tis fit

That wealth and wisdom still should go
together.

[*Exeunt*]

 ACT V. SCENE VI.

The Scrutineo or Senate House

[Enter Avocatori, Notario, Bonario, Celia, Corbaccio, Corvino, Commandadori, Saffi, &c.]

1ST AVOCATORE: Are all the parties here?

NOTARIO: All but the advocate.

2ND AVOCATORE: And here he comes.

[Enter Voltore and Volpone]

1ST AVOCATORE: Then bring them forth to sentence.

VOLTORE: O, my most honored fathers, let your mercy

Once win upon your justice, to forgive—
I am distracted—

VOLPONE: What will he do now?

[Aside]

VOLTORE. O,

I know not which to address myself to first;

Whether your fatherhoods, or these innocents—

CORVINO: Will he betray himself?

[Aside]

VOLTORE: Whom equally

I have abused, out of most covetous ends—

CORVINO: The man is mad!

CORBACCIO: What's that?

CORVINO: He is possess.

VOLTORE: For which, now struck in conscience, here I prostrate

Myself at your offended feet, for pardon.

1ST, 2ND AVOCATORI: Arise.

CELIA: O heaven, how just thou art!

VOLTORE: I am caught

In mine own noose—

[Aside]

CORVINO: [To Corbaccio] Be constant, sir; nought now

Can help but impudence.

1ST AVOCATORE: Speak forward.

COMMANDIDORI: Silence!

VOLTORE: It is not passion in me, reverend fathers,

But only conscience, conscience, my good sires,

That makes me now tell truth. That parasite,

That knave, hath been the instrument of all.

1ST AVOCATORE: Where is that knave? fetch him

VOLPONE: I go.

[Exit]

CORVINO: Grave fathers,

This man's distracted; he confest it now: For, hoping to be old Volpone's heir,

Who now is dead—

3RD AVOCATORE: How!

2ND AVOCATORE: Is Volpone dead?

CORVINO: Dead since, grave fathers.

BONARIO: O sure vengeance!

1ST AVOCATORE: Stay,

Then he was no deceiver.

VOLTORE: O no, none:

This parasite, grave fathers.

CORVINO: He does speak

Out of mere envy, 'cause the servant's made

The thing he gaped for: please your fatherhoods,

This is the truth, though I'll not justify

The other, but he may be some-deal faulty.

VOLTORE: Ay, to your hopes, as well as mine, Corvino:

But I'll use modesty. Pleaseth your wisdoms,

To view these certain notes, and but confer them;

And as I hope favor, they shall speak clear truth.

CORVINO: The devil has entered him!

BONARIO: Or bides in you.

4TH AVOCATORE: We have done ill, by a public officer

To send for him, if he be heir.

2ND AVOCATORE: For whom?

4TH AVOCATORE: Him that they call the parasite

3RD AVOCATORF: 'Tis true,
He is a man of great estate, now left.

4TH AVOCATORE: Go you, and learn his name, and say the court

Entreats his presence here, but to the clearing

Of some few doubts.

[*Exit Notary*]

2ND AVOCATORE. This same's a labyrinth!

1ST AVOCATORE. Stand you unto your first report?

CORVINO: My state,
My life, my fame—

BONARIO: Where is it?

CORVINO: Are at the stake.

1ST AVOCATORF: Is yours so too?

CORBACCIO: The advocate's a knave,
And has a forked tongue— - -

2ND AVOCATORE: Speak to the point.

CORBACCIO: So is the parasite too.

1ST AVOCATORE: This is confusion.

VOLTORF: I do beseech your fatherhoods,
read but those—

[*Giving them papers*]

CORVINO: And credit nothing the false
spirit hath writ:

It cannot be but he's possesser, grave fathers.

[*The scene closes*]

And Mosca gave it second; he must now
Help to sear up this vein, or we bleed
dead.

[*Enter Nano, Androgyno, and Cas-
trone*]

How now! who let you loose? whither go
you now?

What, to buy gingerbread, or to drown
kitlings?

NANO: Sir, Master Mosca called us out of
doors,

And bid us all go play, and took the keys.

ANDROGYNO: Yes.

VOLPONE: Did Master Mosca take the
keys? why, so!

I'm farther in. These are my fine conceits!
I must be merry, with a mischief to me!

What a vile wretch was I, that could not
bear

My fortune soberly? I must have my cro-
chets,

And my conundrums! Well, go you, and
seek him:

His meaning may be truer than my fear.

Bid him, he straight come to me to the
court;

Thither will I, and, if't be possible,

Unscrew my advocate, upon new hopes.

When I provoked him, then I lost my-
self

[*Exeunt*]

ACT V. SCENE VIII.

The Scutineo, or Senate House

[*Avocatori, Bonario, Celia, Corbaccio,
Corvino, Commandadori, Saffi, &c,
as before*]

1ST AVOCATORF: These things can ne'er be
reconciled. He here

[*showing the papers*]

Professeth that the gentleman was
wronged,

And that the gentlewoman was brought
thither,

Forced by her husband, and there left.

VOLTORE: Most true.

CELIA. How ready is heaven to those that pray!

1ST AVOCATORE: But that

Volpone would have ravished her, he holds Utterly false, knowing his impotence.

CORVINO: Grave fathers, he's possess; again, I say,

Possess: nay, if there be possession, and Obsession, he has both.

3RD AVOCATORE: Here comes our officer
[Enter Volpone]

VOLPONE: The parasite will straight be here, grave fathers.

4TH AVOCATORE: You might invent some other name, sir varlet.

3RD AVOCATORE: Did not the notary meet him?

VOLPONE: Not that I know.

4TH AVOCATORE: His coming will clear all.

2ND AVOCATORE: Yet it is misty.

VOLTORE: May't please your fatherhoods—

VOLPONE: [*Whispers* Voltore] Sir, the parasite

Willed me to tell you that his master lives; That you are still the man; your hopes the same;

And this was only a jest—

VOLTORE: How?

VOLPONE: Sir, to try

If you were firm, and how you stood affected.

VOLTORE: Art still he lives?

VOLPONE: Do I live, sir?

VOLTORE: O me!

I was too violent.

VOLPONE: Sir, you may redeem it

They said you were possess: fall down, and seem so:

I'll help to make it good. [*Voltore falls*]
God bless the man!—

Stop your wind hard, and swell—See, see, see, see!

He vomits crooked pins! his eyes are set,
Like a dead hare's hung in a poulterer's shop!

His mouth's running away! Do you see, signior?

Now it is in his belly.

CORVINO: Ay, the devil!

VOLPONE: Now in his throat.

CORVINO: Ay, I perceive it plain.

VOLTORE: 'Twill out, 'twill out! stand clear.
See where it flies,

In shape of a blue toad, with a bat's wings!
Do you not see it, sir?

CORBACCIO: What? I think I do.

CORVINO: 'Tis too manifest.

VOLPONE: Look! he comes to himself!

VOLTORE: Where am I?

VOLPONE: Take good heart, the worst is past, sir.

You are dispossess.

1ST AVOCATORE: What accident is this!

2ND AVOCATORE: Sudden, and full of wonder!

3RD AVOCATORE: If he were

Possess, as it appears, all this is nothing.

CORVINO: He has been often subject to these fits.

1ST AVOCATORE: Show him that writing:—
do you know it, sir?

VOLPONE: [*Whispers* Voltore] Deny it, sir,
forswear it; know it not.

VOLTORE: Yes, I do know it well, it is my hand;

But all that it contains is false.

BONARIO: O practice!

2ND AVOCATORE: What maze is this!

1ST AVOCATORE: Is he not guilty then,
Whom you there name the parasite?

VOLTORE: Grave fathers,

No more than his good patron, old Volpone.

4TH AVOCATORE: Why, he is dead.

VOLTORE: O no, my honored fathers,
He lives—

1ST AVOCATORE: How! lives?

VOLTORE: Lives.

2ND AVOCATORE: This is subtler yet!

3RD AVOCATORE: You said he was dead.

VOLTORE: Never.

3RD AVOCATORE: You said so.

CORVINO: I heard so.

4TH AVOCATORE: Here comes the gentleman; make him way.

[Enter Mosca]

3RD AVOCATORE: A stool.

4TH AVOCATORE: A proper man; and were Volpone dead,

A fit match for my daughter.

[Aside]

3RD AVOCATORE: Give him way.

VOLPONE: Mosca, I was almost lost; the advocate

Had betrayed all; but now it is recovered; All's on the hinge again—Say I am living.

[Aside to Mosca]

MOSCA: What busy knave is this!—Most reverend fathers, I sooner had attended your grave pleasures,

But that my order for the funeral Of my dear patron did require me—

VOLPONE: Mosca!

[Aside]

MOSCA: Whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.

VOLPONE: Ay, quick, and cozen me of all.

[Aside]

2ND AVOCATORE: Still stranger!

More intricate!

1ST AVOCATORE: And come about again!

4TH AVOCATORE: It is a match, my daughter is bestowed.

[Aside]

MOSCA: Will you give me half?

[Aside to Volpone]

VOLPONE: First I'll be hedged.

MOSCA: I know

Your voice is good, cry not so loud.

1ST AVOCATORE: Demand.

The advocate.—Sir, did you not affirm Volpone was alive?

VOLPONE: Yes, and he is;

This gentleman told me so.—Thou shalt have half.

[Aside to Mosca]

MOSCA: Whose drunkard is this same? speak, some that know him.

I never saw his face.—I cannot now Afford it you so cheap.

[Aside to Volpone]

VOLPONE: No!

1ST AVOCATORE: What say you?

VOLTORE: The officer told me.

VOLPONE: I did, grave fathers, And will maintain he lives, with mine own life,

And that this creature [*points to Mosca*] told me.—I was born

With all good stars my enemies.

[Aside]

MOSCA: Most grave fathers, If such an insolence as this must pass Upon me, I am silent; 'twas not this For which you sent, I hope.

2ND AVOCATORE: Take him away.

VOLPONE: Mosca!

3RD AVOCATORE: Let him be whipt.

VOLPONE: Wilt thou betray me?

Cozen me?

3RD AVOCATORE: And taught to bear him self

Toward a person of his rank.

4TH AVOCATORE: Away.

[The Officers seize Volpone]

MOSCA: I humbly thank your fatherhoods.

VOLPONE: Soft, soft: Whipt!

And lose all that I have! If I confess, It cannot be much more.

[Aside]

4TH AVOCATORE: Sir, are you married?

VOLPONE: They'll be allied anon; I must be resolute;

The Fox shall here uncase.

[Throws off his disguise]

MOSCA: Patron!

VOLPONE: Nay, now

My ruin shall not come alone; your match
I'll hinder sure: my substance shall not
glue you,

Nor screw you into a family.

MOSCA: Why, patron!

VOLPONE: I am Volpone, and this is my
knife;

[pointing to Mosca]

This [to Voltore], his own knife; this
[to Corbaccio], avarice's fool;

This [to Corvino], a chimera of wit,
fool, and knave.

And, reverend fathers, since we all can
hope

Nought but a sentence, let's not now de-
spair it.

You hear me brief.

CORVINO: May it please your father-
hoods—

COMMANADORI: Silence.

1ST AVOCATORE: The knot is now undone
by miracle

2ND AVOCATORE: Nothing can be more
clear.

3RD AVOCATORE: Or can more prove
These innocent.

1ST AVOCATORE: Give them their liberty.

BONARIO: Heaven could not long let such
gross crimes be hid.

2ND AVOCATORE: If this be held the high-
way to get riches,

May I be poor!

3RD AVOCATORE: This is not the gain, but
torment.

1ST AVOCATORE: These possess wealth, as
sick men possess fevers,

Which trulier may be said to possess them.

2ND AVOCATORE: Disrobe that parasite.

CORVINO AND MOSCA: Most honored fath-
ers—

1ST AVOCATORE: Can you plead aught to
stay the course of justice?

If you can, speak.

CORVINO AND VOLTORE: We beg favor.

CELIA: And mercy.

1ST AVOCATORE: You hurt your innocence,
suing for the guilty.

Stand forth; and first the parasite. You
appear

'T have been the chiefest minister, if not
plotter,

In all these lewd impostures, and now,
lastly,

Have with your impudence abused the
court,

And habit of a gentleman of Venice,

Being a fellow of no birth or blood.

For which our sentence is, first, thou be
whipt;

Then live a perpetual prisoner in our gal-
leys.

VOLPONE: I thank you for him.

MOSCA: Bane to thy wolfish nature!

1ST AVOCATORE: Deliver him to the saffi.
[Mosca is carried out] Thou, Volpone,

By blood and rank a gentleman, canst not
fall

Under like censure; but our judgment on
thee

Is, that thy substance all be straight con-
fiscate

To the hospital of the Incurabili.

And since the most was gotten by impos-
ture,

By feigning lame, gout, palsy, and such
diseases,

Thou art to lie in prison, cramp'd with
irons,

Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed. Re-
move him.

[He is taken from the bar]

VOLPONE: This is called mortifying of a
Fox.

1ST AVOCATORE: Thou, Voltore, to take
away the scandal,

Thou hast given all worthy men of thy
profession,

Art banished from their fellowship, and our state.

CORBACCIO!—bring him near. We here possess

Thy son of all thy state, and confine thee To the monastery of San Spirito;

Where, since thou knewest not how to live well here,

Thou shalt be learned to die well.

CORBACCIO: Ha! what said he?

COMMANDADORI: You shall know anon, sir.

1ST AVOCATORE: Thou, Corvino, shalt Be straight embarked from thine own house, and rowed

Round about Venice, through the grand canale,

Wearing a cap, with fair long ass's ears, Instead of horns! and so to mount, a paper Pinned on thy breast, to the Berlina.¹²

CORVINO: Yes,

And have mine eyes beat out with stinking fish,

Bruised fruit, and rotten eggs—'tis well. I am glad

I shall not see my shame yet.

2ND AVOCATORE: And to expiate

Thy wrongs done to thy wife, thou art to send her

Home to her father, with her dowry trebled:

And these are all your judgments.

ALL: Honored fathers—

1ST AVOCATORE: Which may not be revoked. Now you begin,

When crimes are done, and past, and to be punished

To think what your crimes are: away with them.

Let all that see these vices thus rewarded, Take heart, and love to study 'em. Mischiefs feed

Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they bleed.

[*Exeunt*]

[*Volpone comes forward*]

"The seasoning of a play is the applause.

Now, though the Fox be punished by the laws,

He yet doth hope, there is no suffering due,

For any fact which he hath done 'gainst you;

If there be, censure him; here he doubtful stands:

If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands."

[*Exit*]

REFERENCES

- ¹ Dizziness.
- ² Folds of paper.
- ³ A game of ball.
- ⁴ A small coin.
- ⁵ Hostelry.
- ⁶ Harmony.
- ⁷ Chapman or merchant.
- ⁸ Various types of social outcasts resided in Whitefriars.
- ⁹ Common harlot.
- ¹⁰ Gazettes or newspapers.
- ¹¹ Night-cap.
- ¹² A pillory.

William Shakespeare

(1564-1616)

THE FACTS of Shakespeare's life are too well known to be repeated in detail here. It is to be noted only that they throw practically no light on the nature of his genius beyond establishing that he was a practical man of the theatre.

His native Stratford, where he received a grammar school education, shared his father's financial vicissitudes, and married a woman eight years his senior, did not long hold him. Bent upon making his way in the world, Shakespeare left for London in 1586, where he remained except for rare visits at home until 1611. He appears to have found employment in the theatre almost at once, and in several capacities. His success as a playwright and play doctor seems to have been almost phenomenal; by 1592 he was already regarded with envy by the older playwrights who had the vaunted advantage of a university education. Shakespeare, however, forged blithely ahead, acquiring a patron, the Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his popular poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, achieving a reputation both as an actor and a playwright, and becoming a part owner of the *Globe* and *Blackfriars* theatres. Sharing the social and economic aspirations of his class, he hobnobbed with the nobility, got himself a coat of arms, acquired real estate in London, and bought the largest house in Stratford when he settled down to a gentleman's life in 1611.

In brief review it is to be observed, first of all, that Shakespeare's age was one of vast and significant changes. The rise of the middle-class and of a centralized government, and the disappearance of medieval otherworldliness, transformed England into a modern nation. Shakespeare was living in a world which idealized self-realization, self-respect, and boldness of thought and action. His people are intensely individual and dynamic; his dramatic situations are precipitated by powerful egocentric impulses. The multifariousness and intensity of his plays reflect the ferment of the expanding Renaissance.

The plays are, moreover, the climax of significant developments in the theatre, which more than any form of art was capable of expressing this ferment. The age was dramatic and therefore saw itself mirrored best in the drama. Moreover, as Emerson observed, the Elizabethan stage was for its period "ballad, epic, newspaper, caucus, lecture, *Punch*, and library, at the same time." The universities and the court vied with each other in favoring the stage. Strolling players drew appreciative auditors in the courtyards of large inns; the choir boys of the *Chapel* and of *St. Paul's* were conscripted into the service of courtly

comedies; large theatres were hastily constructed to accommodate the avid audiences.

Productions were spectacular. No device was held to be too debased or exalted if it aroused or sustained interest and excitement. Though the scenery was generally of the simplest and had, for the most part, to be imagined, the costuming was elaborate and the performances were enlivened with music, dancing, and acrobatics. Tragic situations alternated with farcical ones; rhetoric and bombast were freely resorted to; prologues and epilogues harangued the audience and pleaded for applause. Audiences, composed chiefly of standees in the pit and gallants seated on the stage for whom playgoing was a social occasion, were restive and excitable. Shakespeare wrote for a stage that could not afford to be static.

Playwriting underwent significant changes. Dissatisfied with rustic entertainments and crude morality plays, playwrights first turned to Latin domestic comedy. Early plays like Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553) and Lyly's *Mother Bombie* are close imitations of the work of Plautus and Terence. Other dramatists turned to Latin tragedy, specifically to the plays of Seneca, who had reduced serious classical drama to the level of rhetorical melodrama. The first Senecan imitation, Sackville's and Norton's *Gorboduc* (1567), started the fashion of tragedies of blood and thunder dear to the heart of Elizabethan audiences.

These crude experiments were followed by a deluge of plays by professional playwrights, most of them young men fresh from the universities who eked out a living by writing for the theatre at starvation wages. Combining classical with Italian and native influences, John Lyly, George Peele, and Robert Greene composed romantic comedies excelling in wit and gracefulness, while others of the fellowship, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, advanced the cause of tragedy.

Marlowe's contribution was especially noteworthy. No one before Shakespeare achieved such exalted passion or created such dynamic personalities as the young author of *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *the Doctor Faustus* which gave tragic utterance to the Renaissance passion for "knowledge infinite." In these plays and in his masterpiece, *Edward II*, a study of weakness and fatal infatuation, Marlowe laid the foundations of Shakespearean tragedy. Especially noteworthy is his "mighty line" of blank verse, which provided his great successor with a powerful instrument for the dramatic expression of passion.

When Marlowe's life was cut short at the age of twenty-nine in a tavern brawl, Shakespeare was still a novice in the theatre. In no respect an innovator, he accepted the instruction of his predecessors, and bettered it. "Great men," wrote Emerson, "are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality. . . . The greatest genius is the most indebted man." Shakespeare's work is the culmination of numerous tendencies in the multifarious fields of comedy,

historical drama, tragedy, and romance, each of which was approached by him in due time, in accordance with the dictates of fashion and of personal inclination.

The plays themselves are too well known to be considered here, and one cannot hope to add to the innumerable comments on Shakespeare's art in a brief foreword. A few of these are properly famous:

"He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest, and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew, not laboriously but luckily, when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation he was naturally learned, he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature, he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike, were he so, I should do him injury to compare him to the greatest of mankind"

JOHN DRYDEN

"I remember the players that often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare that in his writings (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, Would that he had blotted a thousand. . . . I loved the man and do honor his memory this side idolatry, as much as any."

BEN JONSON

"Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

THOMAS FULLER

"He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be."

WILLIAM HAZLIT

J. G.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CLAUDIUS, *King of Denmark*
HAMLET, *son to the former and nephew
to the present King*
POLONIUS, *Lord Chamberlain*
HORATIO, *friend to Hamlet*
LAFRITES, *son to Polonius*
VOLTIMAND
CORNELIUS
ROSENCRANTZ
GUILDENSTERN
OSRIC
A Gentleman
A Priest
MARCELLUS
BERNARDO

} *Courtiers*
} *Officers*

FRANCISCO, *a soldier*
REYNALDO, *servant to Polonius*
Players
Two Clowns, *grave-diggers*
FORTINBRAS, *Prince of Norway*
A Captain
English Ambassadors
Ghost of Hamlet's *father*
GERTRUDE, *Queen of Denmark, and mother
of Hamlet*
OPHELIA, *daughter to Polonius*
Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors,
Messengers *and other Attendants*

ACT I. SCENE I.

Elsinore. *A Platform before the Castle*
[Francisco at his post. Enter to him
Bernardo]

BERNARDO: Who's there?
FRANCISCO: Nay, answer me: stand, and
unfold yourself.
BERNARDO: Long live the king!
FRANCISCO: Bernardo?
BERNARDO: He.
FRANCISCO: You come most carefully upon
your hour.
BERNARDO: 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee
to bed, Francisco.
FRANCISCO: For this relief much thanks:
'tis bitter cold,

And I am sick at heart.
BERNARDO: Have you had quiet guard?
FRANCISCO: Not a mouse stirring.
BERNARDO: Well, good-night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make
haste.
FRANCISCO: I think I hear them.—Stand,
ho! Who is there?
[Enter Horatio and Marcellus]
HORATIO: Friends to this ground.
MARCELLUS: And liegemen to the Dane.
FRANCISCO: Give you good-night.
MARCELLUS: O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath reliev'd you?

FRANCISCO: Bernardo has my place.
Give you good-night.

[Exit]

MARCELLUS: Holla! Bernardo!

BERNARDO: Say.

What, is Horatio there?

HORATIO: A piece of him.

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio!—welcome,
good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: What, has this thing appear'd
again to-night?

BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says 'tis but our fan-
tasy,

And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of
us:

Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this
night;

That, if again this apparition come
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO: Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BERNARDO: Sit down awhile,
And let us once again assual your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.

HORATIO: Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO: Last night of all,
When yon same star that's westward from
the pole
Had made his course to illumine that part of
heaven

Where now it burns, Marcellus and my-
self,

The bell then beating one,—

MARCELLUS: Peace, break thee off; look
where it comes again!

[Enter Ghost, armed]

BERNARDO: In the same figure, like the king
that's dead.

MARCELLUS: Thou art a scholar; speak to
it, Horatio.

BERNARDO: Looks it not like the king?
mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO: Most like;—it harrows me with
fear and wonder.

BERNARDO: It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS: Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO: What art thou, that usurp'st this
time of night,

Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge
thee, speak!

MARCELLUS: It is offended.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away!

HORATIO: Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee,
speak!

[Exit Ghost]

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO: How now, Horatio! you trem-
ble and look pale;

Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?

HORATIO: Before my God, I might not this
believe

Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS: Is it not like the king?

HORATIO: As thou art to thyself

Such was the very armor he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated;
So frown'd he once when, in an angry
parle,

He smote the sledged Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange

MARCELLUS: Thus twice before, and just at
this dead hour,

With martial stalk hath he gone by our
watch.

HORATIO: In what particular thought to
work I know not;

But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our
state.

MARCELLUS: Good now, sit down, and tell
me, he that knows,

That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk
in death,

[*Cock crows*]

Speak of it:—stay, and speak!—Stop it,
Marcellus.

MARCELLUS. Shall I strike at it with my
partisan?

HORATIO Do, if it will not stand

BERNARDO: 'Tis here!

HORATIO: 'Tis here!

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone!

[*Exit Ghost*]

We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.
BERNARDO: It was about to speak when the
cock crew.

HORATIO: And then it started like a guilty
thing

Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding
throat

Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

MARCELLUS: It faded on the crowing of the
cock.

Some say that ever 'gainst that season
comes

Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth 'all night
long:

And then, they say, no spirit can walk
abroad;

The nights are wholesome; then no planets
strike,

No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to
charm;

So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

HORATIO: So have I heard, and do in part
believe

But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern
hill:

Break we our watch up: and, by my ad-
vice,

Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,

This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him:

Do you consent we shall acquaint him
with it,

As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MARCELLUS: Let's do't, I pray; and I this
morning know

Where we shall find him most conve-
niently.

[*Exit*]

ACT I. SCENE II.

Elsinore. *A Room of State in the Castle*

[*Enter the King, Queen, Hamlet,
Polonius, Laertes, Voltmand, Cor-
nelius, Lords and Attendants*]

KING: Though yet of Hamlet our dear
brother's death

The memory be green; and that it us be-
fitted

To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole
kingdom

To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with
nature

That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

Therefore our sometime sister, now our
queen,

The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,—
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth and funeral, and with dirge in
marriage,

In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—
Taken to wife: nor have we herem barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely
gone

With this affair along:—for all, our thanks.
Now follows that you know, young For-
tinbras,

Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's
death

Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagu'd with the dream of his advan-
tage,

He hath not fail'd to pester us with mes-
sage,

Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for
him.—

Now for ourself, and for this time of
meeting:

Thus much the business is:—we have here
writ

To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,—
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,—to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject:—and we here despatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway:
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king more than the
scope of these dilated articles allow.

Farewell; and let your haste commend
your duty.

CORNELIUS and VOLTIMAND: In that and all
things will we show our duty.

KING: We doubt it nothing: heartily fare-
well.

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius*]

And now, Laertes, what's the news with
you?

You told us of some suit; what is't,
Laertes?

You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou
beg, Laertes,

That shall not be my offer, nor thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy
father.

What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES: Dread my lord,
Your leave and favor to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to
Denmark,

To show my duty in your coronation;
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again
toward France,

And bow them to your gracious leave and
pardon.

KING: Have you your father's leave? What
says Polonius?

POLONIUS: He hath, my lord, wrung from
me my slow leave

By laborsome petition; and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING: Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be
thine,

And thy best graces spend it at thy will!—
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my
son, --

HAMLET: [*Aside*] A little more than kin,
and less than kind.

KING: How is it that the clouds still hang
on you?

HAMLET: Not so, my lord; I am too much
i' the sun.

QUEEN: Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted
color off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on
Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 'tis common,—all that live
must die,

Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET: Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN: If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET: Seems, madam! nay, it is; I
know not seems.

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspension of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of
grief,

That can denote me truly: these, indeed,
seem;

For they are actions that a man might
play:

But I have that within which passeth
show;

These but the trappings and the suits of
woc.

KING: 'Tis sweet and commendable in
your nature, Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your
father:

But, you must know, your father lost a
father;

That father lost, lost his; and the survivor
bound,

In filial obligation, for some term
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persevere
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly
grief.

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven;
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient;
An understanding simple and unschool'd:

For what we know must be, and is as
common

As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we, in our peevish opposition,
Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd; whose common
theme

Is death of fathers, and who still hath
cried,

From the first corse till he that died to-day,
This must be so. We pray you, throw to
earth

This unprevailing woe; and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note
You are the most immediate to our throne;
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his
son

Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire.

And we beseech you bend you to remain
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN: Let not thy mother lose her pray-
ers, Hamlet:

I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wit-
tenberg.

HAMLET: I shall in all my best obey you,
madam.

KING: Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks
to-day

But the great cannon to the clouds shall
tell;

And the king's rouse the heavens shall
bruit again,

Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.
[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

HAMLET: O, that this too too solid flesh
would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God!
O God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross
in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to
this!

But two months dead!—nay, not so much,
not two.

So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my
mother,

That he might not beteem the winds of
heaven

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and
earth!

Must I remember? why, she would hang
on him

As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a
month,—

Let me not think on't,—Frailty, thy name
is woman!—

A little month; or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's
body

Like Niobe, all tears;—why she, even
she,—

O God! a beast, that wants discourse of
reason,

Would have mourn'd longer,—married
with mine uncle,

My father's brother; but no more like my
father

Than I to Hercules: within a month;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears,

Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married:—O, most wicked speed, to

post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good;

But break, my heart,—for I must hold my
tongue!

[*Enter* Horatio, Marcellus, and Ber-
nardo]

HORATIO: Hail to your lordship!

HAMLET: I am glad to see you well:

HORATIO,—or I do forget myself

HORATIO: The same, my lord, and your
poor servant ever.

HAMLET: Sir, my good friend; I'll change
that name with you:

And what make you from Wittenberg,
Horatio?—Marcellus?

MARCELLUS: My good lord,—

HAMLET: I am very glad to see you.—Good
even, sir.—

But what, in faith, make you from Wit-
tenberg?

HORATIO: A truant disposition, good my
lord.

HAMLET: I would not hear your enemy say
so;

Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,

To make it truster of your own report

Against yourself: I know you are no
truant.

But what is your affair in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you
depart.

HORATIO: My lord, I came to see your
father's funeral.

HAMLET: I pray thee, do not mock me,
fellow-student;

I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO: Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard
upon.

HAMLET: Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the fu-
neral-bak'd meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage
tables.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Ere I had ever seen that day, Horatio!—

My father,—methinks I see my father.

HORATIO: Where, my lord?

HAMLET: In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO: I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

HAMLET: He was a man, take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO: My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET: Saw who?

HORATIO: My lord, the king your father.

HAMLET: The king my father!

HORATIO: Season your admiration for awhile

With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.

HAMLET. For God's love, let me hear.

HORATIO: Two nights together had these gentlemen,

Marcellus and Bernardo, in their watch,
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,

Arm'd at all points exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and with solemn march

Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd

By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they,
distill'd

Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me

In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch.

Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true
and good,

The apparition comes: I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET. But where was this?

MARCELLUS: My lord, upon the platform
where we watch'd.

HAMLET: Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO: My lord, I did;
But answer made it none: yet once methought

It lifted up its head, and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanish'd from our sight.

HAMLET: 'Tis very strange.

HORATIO: As I do live, my honor'd lord,
'tis true;

And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

HAMLET: Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.

Hold you the watch to-night?

MARCELLUS AND BERNARDO: We do, my lord.

HAMLET: Arm'd, say you?

MARCELLUS AND BERNARDO: Arm'd, my lord.

HAMLET: From top to toe?

MARCELLUS AND BERNARDO: My lord, from head to foot.

HAMLET: Then saw you not his face?

HORATIO: O yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.

HAMLET: What, look'd he frowningly?

HORATIO: A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET: Pale or red?

HORATIO: Nay, very pale.

HAMLET: And fix'd his eyes upon you?

HORATIO: Most constantly.

HAMLET: I would I had been there.

HORATIO: It would have much amaz'd you.

HAMLET: Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

HORATIO: While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

MARCELLUS AND BERNARDO: Longer, longer.

HORATIO: Not when I saw't.

HAMLET: His beard was grizzled,—no?

HORATIO: It was, as I have seen it in his life,

A sable silver'd.

HAMLET: I will watch to-night;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO: I warrant it will.

HAMLET: If it assume my noble father's person

I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape

And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,

If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,

Let it be tenable in your silence still;

And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,

Give it an understanding, but no tongue:

I will requite your loves. So, fare ye well:

Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,

I'll visit you.

ALL: Our duty to your honor.

HAMLET: Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[*Exeunt* Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo]

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night
were come!

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will
rise,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to
men's eyes.

[*Exit*]

ACT I. SCENE III.

A Room in Polonius' House

[*Enter* Laertes and Ophelia]

LAERTES: My necessities are embark'd: farewell:

And, sister, as the winds give benefit,
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA: Do you doubt that?

LAERTES: For Hamlet, and the trifling of
his favor,

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood:

A violet in the youth of primy nature,

Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,

The perfume and supplance of a minute;
No more.

OPHELIA: No more but so?

LAERTES: Think it no more:
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but as this temple
waxes,

The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you
now;

And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will: but you must fear,
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his
own;

For he himself is subject to his birth:

He may not, as unvalu'd persons do,

Carve for himself; for on his choice de-
pends

'The safety and the health of the whole
state;

And therefore must his choice be circum-
scrib'd

Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says
he loves you,

It fits your wisdom so far to believe it

As he in his particular act and place

May give his saying deed; which is no
further

Than the main voice of Denmark goes
withal.

Then weigh what loss your honor may
sustain

If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure
open

To his unmaster'd importunity

Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;

And keep within the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.

The chariest maid is prodigal enough

If she unmask her beauty to the moon:

Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:

The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;

And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else
near.

OPHELIA: I shall the effect of this good les-
son keep
As watchman to my heart. But, good my
brother,

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to
heaven;
Whilst like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance
treads,
And reck's not his own rede.

LAERTES: O, fear me not.
I stay too long - but here my father comes.

[Enter Polonius]

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS: Yet here, Laertes! aboard,
aboard, for shame!

The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There,—my bless-
ing with you!

[Laying his hand on Laertes' head]

And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no
tongue,

Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption
tried,

Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of
steel;

But do not dull thy palm with entertain-
ment

Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade.
Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear't that the opposed may beware of
thee.

Give every man thine ear, but few thy
voice:

Take each man's censure, but reserve thy
judgment.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and
station

Are most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For a loan oft loses both itself and friend;
And borrowing dulls the edge of hus-
bandry.

This above all,—to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAERTES: Most humbly do I take my leave,
my lord.

POLONIUS: The time invites you; go, your
servants tend.

LAERTES: Farewell, Ophelia; and remem-
ber well

What I have said to you.

OPHELIA: 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES: Farewell.

[Exit]

POLONIUS: What is't, Ophelia, he hath said
to you?

OPHELIA: So please you, something touch-
ing the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS: Marry, well bethought.

'Tis told me he hath very oft of late

Given private time to you; and you your-
self

Have of your audience been most free and
bounteous:

If it be so,—as so 'tis put on me,

And that in way of caution,—I must tell
you,

You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honor.

What is between you? give me up the
truth.

OPHELIA: He hath, my lord, of late made
many tenders

Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS: Affection! pooh! you speak like
a green girl,

Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call
them?

OPHELIA: I do not know, my lord, what I
should think.

POLONIUS: Marry, I'll teach you think
yourself a baby;

That you have ta'en these tenders for true
pay,

Which are not sterling. Tender yourself
more dearly;

Or,—not to crack the wind of the poor
phrase,

Wronging it thus,—you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA: My lord, he hath importun'd me
with love

In honorable fashion.

POLONIUS: Ay, fashion you may call it; go
to, go to

OPHELIA: And hath given countenance to
his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS: Ay, springes to catch wood-
cocks. I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the
soul

Lends the tongue vows: these blazes,
daughter,

Giving more light than heat,—extinct in
both,

Even in their promise, as it is a-making,—
You must not take for fire. From this time

Be somewhat scanter of your maiden pres-
ence;

Set your entreatments at a higher rate

Than a command to parley. For Lord
Hamlet,

Believe so much in him, that he is young;

And with a larger tether may he walk

Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are
brokers,—

Not of that die which their investments
show,

But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,
The better to beguile. This is for all,—

I would not, in plain terms, from this time
forth,

Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord
Hamlet.

Look to't, I charge you; come your ways.

OPHELIA: I shall obey, my lord.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT I. SCENE IV.

The Platform

[*Enter Hamlet, Horatio and Mar-
cellus*]

HAMLET: The air bites shrewdly; it is very
cold.

HORATIO: It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET: What hour now?

HORATIO: I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS: No, it is struck.

HORATIO: Indeed? I heard it not: then it
draws near the season

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance
shot off within*]

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET: The king doth wake to-night,
and takes his rouse,

Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-
springing reels;

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish
down,

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray
out

The triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO: Is it a custom?

HAMLET: Ay, marry, is't:
 But to my mind,—though I am native here,
 And to the manner born,—it is a custom
 More honor'd in the breach than the ob-
 servance.
 This heavy-headed revel east and west
 Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other
 nations.
 They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish
 phrase
 Soil our addition; and, indeed, it takes
 From our achievements, though perform'd
 at height,
 The pith and marrow of our attribute.
 So oft it chances in particular men
 That, for some vicious mole of nature in
 them,
 As in their birth,—wherein they are not
 guilty,
 Since nature cannot choose his origin, —
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of
 reason;
 Or by some habit, that too much o'er-
 leavens
 The form of plausible manners;—that these
 men,—
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
 Being nature's livery or fortune's star,—
 Their virtues else,—be they as pure as
 grace,
 As infinite as man may undergo,—
 Shall in the general censure take corruption
 From that particular fault the dram of
 eale
 Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
 To his own scandal.
 HORATIO: Look, my lord, it comes!
 [*Enter Ghost*]
 HAMLET: Angels and ministers of grace
 defend us!—
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts
 from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
 That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee
 Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!
 Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
 Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in
 death,
 Have burst their cerements; why the
 sepulchre,
 Wherem we saw thee quietly in-urn'd,
 Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws
 To cast thee up again! What may this
 mean,
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete
 steel,
 Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
 Making night hideous, and we fools of
 nature
 So horridly to shake our disposition
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our
 souls?
 Say, why is this? wherefore? what should
 we do?

[*Ghost beckons Hamlet*]

HORATIO: It beckons you to go away with
 it,
 As if some impartment did desire
 To you alone.

MARCELLUS: Look, with what courteous
 action

It waves you to a more removed ground:
 But do not go with it.

HORATIO: No, by no means.

HAMLET: It will not speak; then will I
 follow it.

HORATIO: Do not, my lord

HAMLET: Why, what should be the fear?
 I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
 And for my soul, what can it do to that,
 Being a thing immortal as itself?

It waves me forth again;—I'll follow it.

HORATIO: What if it tempt you toward the
 flood, my lord.

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
 That beetles o'er his base into the sea,

And there assume some other horrible form,

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,

And draw you into madness? think of it: The very place puts toys of desperation, Without more motive, into every brain That looks so many fathoms to the sea And hears it roar beneath

HAMLET: It waves me still.—
Go on; I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS: You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET: Hold off your hands.

HORATIO: Be rul'd; you shall not go.

HAMLET: My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.—

[Ghost beckons]

Still am I call'd;—unhand me, gentlemen;—

[Breaking from them]

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

I say, away!—Go on; I'll follow thee.

[Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet]

HORATIO: He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS: Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO: Have after.—To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS: Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO: Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS: Nay, let's follow him.

[Exeunt]

ACT I. SCENE V.

A more remote part of the Platform

[Enter Ghost and Hamlet]

HAMLET: Where wilt thou lead me? speak
I'll go no farther.

GHOST: Mark me.

HAMLET: I will.

GHOST: My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAMLET: Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing

To what I shall unfold.

HAMLET: Speak; I am bound to hear.

GHOST: So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET: What?

GHOST: I am thy father's spirit;

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,

And, for the day, confin'd to waste in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature

Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid

To tell the secrets of my prison-house,

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood;

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;

Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:

But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood—List, list, O, list!

If thou didst ever thy dear father love;

HAMLET: O God!

GHOST: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET: Murder!

GHOST: Murder—most foul, as in the best it is;

But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

HAMLET: Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift

As meditation or the thoughts of love,

May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST: I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat
weed

That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now,
Hamlet,

'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine
orchard,

A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of
Denmark

Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abus'd: but know, thou noble
youth,

The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET: O my prophetic soul! mine
uncle!

GHOST: Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate
beast,

With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous
gifts, -

O wicked wit and gifts that have the power
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous
queen:

O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the
vow

I made to her in marriage: and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were
poor

To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of
heaven;

So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.

But, soft! methinks I scent the morning
air;

Brief let me be.—Sleeping within mine
orchard,

My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,

With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of mine ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That, swift as quicksilver, it courses
through

The natural gates and alleys of the body;
And with a sudden vigor it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it
mine;

And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome
crust,

All my smooth body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once
despatch'd:

Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhous'd, unanointed, unanel'd;

No reckoning made, but sent to my ac-
count

With all my imperfections on my head:
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.

But, howsoever thou pursu'st this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul con-
trive

Against thy mother aught: leave her to
heaven,

And to those thorns that in her bosom
lodge,

To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at
once!

The glowworm shows the matin to be
near,

And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.

[Exit]

HAMLET: O all you host of heaven! O
earth! what else?

And shall I couple hell?—O, fie!—Hold,
my heart;

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up.—Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds
a seat

In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures
past,

That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain.
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by
heaven.—

O most pernicious woman!

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a
villain;

At least, I am sure, it may be so in Den-
mark:

[*Writing*]

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is, *Adieu, adieu! remember me:*
I have sworn't.

HORATIO [*Within*]: My lord, my lord,—

MARCELLUS [*Within*]: Lord Hamlet,—

HORATIO [*Within*]: Heaven secure him!

MARCELLUS [*Within*]: So be it!

HORATIO [*Within*]: Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

HAMLET: Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird,
come.

[*Enter Horatio and Marcellus*]

MARCELLUS: How is't, my noble lord?

HORATIO: What news, my lord?

HAMLET: O, wonderful!

HORATIO: Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET: No; you'll reveal it.

HORATIO: Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord.

HAMLET: How say you, then; would heart
of man once think it?—

But you'll be secret?

HORATIO and MARCELLUS: Ay, by heaven,
my lord.

HAMLET: There's ne'er a villain dwelling
in all Denmark

But he's an arrant knave.

HORATIO: There needs no ghost, my lord,
come from the grave

To tell us this.

HAMLET: Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desire shall point
you,—

For every man has business and desire,
Such as it is;—and for mine own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.

HORATIO: These are but wild and whirling
words my lord.

HAMLET: I'm sorry they offend you,
heartily;

Yes, faith, heartily.

HORATIO: There's no offence, my lord.

HAMLET: Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there
is, Horatio,

And much offence too. Touching this
vision here,—

It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:
For you desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster't as you may And now, good
friends,

As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

HORATIO: What is't, my lord? we will.

HAMLET: Never make known what you
have seen to-night.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS: My lord, we will
not.

HAMLET: Nay, but swear't

HORATIO: In faith,
My lord, not I.

MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET: Upon my sword.

MARCELLUS: We have sworn, my lord,
already.

HAMLET: Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST: [*Beneath*]: Swear.

HAMLET: Ha, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?—

Come on,—you hear this fellow in the cellarage,—

Consent to swear.

HORATIO: Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET: Never to speak of this that you have seen,

Swear by my sword.

GHOST [*Beneath*]: Swear.

HAMLET: *Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground.—

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword:

Never to speak of this that you have heard,

Swear by my sword.

GHOST [*Beneath*]: Swear.

HAMLET: Well said! old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?

A worthy pioneer!—Once more remove, good friends.

HORATIO: O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

But come;—

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,

How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,—

As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet To put an antic disposition on,—

That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,

With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,

Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,

As, *Well, we know*;—or, *We could, an if we would*;—

Or, *If we list to speak*;—or, *There be, an if they might*;—

Or such ambiguous giving out, to note

That you know aught of me:—this not to do,

So grace and mercy at your most need help you,

Swear.

GHOST [*Beneath*]: Swear.

HAMLET: Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!—So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend to you:

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do, to express his love and friending to you,

God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint:—O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!—

Nay, come, let's go together.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Room in Polonius' House

[*Enter Polonius and Reynaldo*]

POLONIUS: Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO: I will, my lord.

POLONIUS: You shall do marvelous wisely, good Reynaldo,

Before you visit him, to make inquiry

On his behavior.

REYNALDO: My lord, I did intend it.

POLONIUS: Marry, well said; very well said.

Look you, sir,

Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;

And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,

What company, at what expense; and finding,

By this encompassment and drift of question,

That they do know my son, come you more nearer

Than your particular demands will touch it:

Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;

As thus, *I know his father and his friends, And in part him;*—do you mark this, Reynaldo?

REYNALDO: Ay, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS: *And in part him;*—but, you may say, *not well:*

But it's he I mean, he's very wild.

Addicted so and so, and there put on him What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank

As may dishonor him; take heed of that; But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips As are companions noted and most known To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO: As gaming, my lord.

POLONIUS: Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarreling,

Drabbing:—you may go so far.

REYNALDO: My lord, that would dishonor him.

POLONIUS: Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.

You must not put another scandal on him, That he is open to incontinency;

That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly

That they may seem the taints of liberty; The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind;

A savageness in unreclaimed blood,

Of general assault.

REYNALDO: But, my good lord,—

POLONIUS: Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO: Ay, my lord, I would know that.

POLONIUS: Marry, sir, here's my drift; And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:

You laying these slight sullies on my son, As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working,

Mark you,

Your party in converse, him you would sound,

Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes

The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd

He closes with you in this consequence;

Good sir, or so; or *friend,* or *gentleman,*—

According to the phrase or the addition Of man and country.

REYNALDO: Very good, my lord.

POLONIUS: And then, sir, does he this,—he does,—

What was I about to say?—By the mass, I was

About to say something—where did I leave?

REYNALDO: At *closes in the consequence,*

At *friend or so,* and *gentleman.*

POLONIUS: At—closes in the consequence, —ay, marry;

He closes with you thus:—*I know the gentleman;*

I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,

Or then, or then; with such, or such, and, as you say,

There was he gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;

There falling out at tennis; or perchance, I saw him enter such a house of sale,—

Videlicet, a brothel,—or so forth.—

See you now;

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:

And thus do we of wisdom and of reach, With windlasses, and with assays of bias,

By indirections find directions out:

So, by my former lecture and advice,

Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REYNALDO: My lord, I have.

POLONIUS: God b' wi' you; fare you well.

REYNALDO: Good my lord!

POLONIUS: Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO: I shall, my lord.

POLONIUS: And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO: Well, my lord.

POLONIUS: Farewell!

[Exit Reynaldo]

[Enter Ophelia]

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

OPHELIA: Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

POLONIUS: With what, i' the name of God?

OPHELIA: My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,

Lord Hamlet,—with his doublet all unbrac'd;

No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd, Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle; Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;

And with a look so piteous in purport As if he had been loosed out of hell

To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.

POLONIUS: Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA: My lord, I do not know; But truly I do fear it.

POLONIUS: What said he?

OPHELIA: He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;

Then goes he to the length of all his arm; And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,

He falls to such perusal of my face

As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;

At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,

And thrice his head thus waving up and down,—

He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound That it did seem to shatter all his bulk And end his being; that done, he lets me go:

And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,

He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;

For out o' doors he went without their help,

And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS: Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.

This is the very ecstasy of love; Whose violent property fordoes itself, And leads the will to desperate undertakings,

As oft as any passion under heaven That does afflict our natures. I am sorry,— What, have you given him any hard words of late?

OPHELIA: No, my good lord; but, as you did command,

I did repel his letters, and denied

His access to me.

POLONIUS: That hath made him mad. I am sorry that with better heed and judgment

I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle,

And meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!

It seems it is as proper to our age To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions

As it is common for the younger sort To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:

This must be known; which, being kept close, might move

More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

[Exeunt]

ACT II. SCENE II.

A Room in the Castle

[Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Attendants]

KING: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!

Moreover that we much did long to see you,

The need we have to use you did provoke Our hasty sending. Something have you heard

Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,

Since nor the exterior nor the inward man
 Resembles that it was. What it should be,
 More than his father's death, that thus hath
 put him

So much from the understanding of him-
 self,

I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
 That being of so young days brought up
 with him,

And since so neighbor'd to his youth and
 humor,

That you vouchsafe your rest here in our
 court

Some little time: so by your companies
 To draw him on to pleasures, and to
 gather,

So much as from occasion you may glean,
 Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts
 him thus,

That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

QUEEN: Good gentlemen, he hath much
 talk'd of you;

And sure I am two men there are not
 living

To whom he more adheres. If it will please
 you

To show us so much gentry and good-will
 As to expend your time with us awhile,
 For the supply and profit of our hope,

Your visitation shall receive such thanks
 As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSCENCRANTZ: Both your majesties
 Might, by the sovereign power you have
 of us,

Put your dread pleasures more into com-
 mand

Than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN: We both obey,
 And here give up ourselves, in the full
 bent,

To lay our service freely at your feet,
 To be commanded.

KING: Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle
 Guildenstern.

QUEEN: Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle
 Rosencrantz:

And I beseech you instantly to visit
 My too-much-changed son.—Go, some of
 you,

And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet
 is.

GUILDENSTERN: Heavens make our pres-
 ence and our practices
 Pleasant and helpful to him!

QUEEN: Ay, amen!

[*Exeunt* Rosencrantz, Guildenstern,
 and some Attendants]

[*Enter* Polonius]

POLONIUS: The ambassadors from Norway,
 my good lord,

Are joyfully return'd.

KING: Thou still hast been the father of
 good news.

POLONIUS: Have I, my lord? Assure you,
 my good liege,

I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,

Both to my God and to my gracious king:
 And I do think,—or else this brain of mine

Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
 As it hath us'd to do,—that I have found

The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING: O, speak of that; that do I long to
 hear.

POLONIUS: Give first admittance to the am-
 bassadors;

My news shall be the fruit to that great
 feast.

KING: Thyself do grace to them, and bring
 them in.

[*Exit* Polonius]

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he hath
 found

The head and source of all your son's dis-
 temper.

QUEEN: I doubt it is no other but the
 main,—

His father's death and our o'erhasty mar-
 riage.

KING: Well, we shall sift him.

[*Re-enter Polonius, with Voltimand and Cornelius*]

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTIMAND: Most fair return of greetings and desires.

Upon our first, he sent out to suppress His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd

To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack; But, better look'd into, he truly found It was against your highness: whereat griev'd,—

That so his sickness, age, and impotence Was falsely borne in hand,—sends out arrests

On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys; Receives rebuke from Norway; and, in fine,

Makes vow before his uncle never more To give the assay of arms against your majesty.

Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy, Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee;

And his commission to employ those soldiers,

So levied as before, against the Polack· With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*gives a paper*]

That it might please you to give quiet pass Through your dominions for this enterprise,

On such regards of safety and allowance As therein are set down.

KING: It likes us well; And at our more consider'd time we'll read,

Answer, and think upon this business. Meantime we thank you for your well-took labor:

Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:

Most welcome home!

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius*]

POLONIUS: This business is well ended.— My liege, and madam,—to expostulate What majesty should be, what duty is, Why day is day, night night, and time is time,

Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.

Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit, And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,

I will be brief:—your noble son is mad: Mad call I it; for to define true madness, What is't but to be nothing else but mad? But let that go.

QUEEN: More matter with less art.

POLONIUS: Madam, I swear I use no art at all.

That he is mad, 'tis true 'tis pity; And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure; But farewell it, for I will use no art.

Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains

That we find out the cause of this effect; Or rather say, the cause of this defect, For this effect defective comes by cause: Thus it remains, and the remainder thus Perpend.

I have a daughter,—have whilst she is mine,—

Who, in her duty and obedience, mark, Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise.

[*Reads*]

To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,—

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase,—*beautified* is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus·

[*Reads*]

In her excellent white bosom, these, &c. QUEEN: Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS: Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[Reads]

Doubt thou the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar.

But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers.

I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, HAMLET.

This, in obedience, hath my daughter show'd me:

And more above, hath his solicitings.

As they fell out by time, by means, and place,

All given to mine ear.

KING: But how hath she Receiv'd his love?

POLONIUS: What do you think of me?

KING: As of a man faithful and honorable.

POLONIUS: I would fain prove so. But what might you think,

When I had seen this hot love on the wing,—

As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that, Before my daughter told me,—what might you,

Or my dear majesty you queen here, think, If I had play'd the desk or table-book;

Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb;

Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;— What might you think? No, I went round to work,

And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:

Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy sphere; This must not be: and then I precepts gave her,

That she should lock herself from his resort,

Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.

Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;

And he, repulsed,—a short tale to make,—

Fell into a sadness; then into a fast;

Thence to a watch; thence into a weakness;

Thence to a lightness; and, by this declension,

Into the madness wherein now he raves

And all we wait for.

KING: Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN: It may be, very likely.

POLONIUS: Hath there been such a time,— I'd fain know that,—

That I have positively said, "*'Tis so,*"

When it prov'd otherwise?

KING: Not that I know

POLONIUS: Take this from this, if this be otherwise:

[Pointing to his head and shoulder]

If circumstances lead me, I will find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed

Within the center.

KING: How may we try it further?

POLONIUS: You know, sometimes he walks for hours together

Here in the lobby.

QUEEN: So he does, indeed.

POLONIUS: At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.

Be you and I behind an arras then;

Mark the encounter: if he love her not,

And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,

Let me be no assistant for a state,

But keep a farm and carters.

KING: We will try it.

QUEEN: But look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

POLONIUS: Away, I do beseech you, both away:

I'll board him presently:—O, give me leave.

[*Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants*]

[*Enter Hamlet, reading*]

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET: Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS: Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET: Excellent, excellent well; you're a fishmonger.

POLONIUS: Not I, my lord.

HAMLET: Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS: Honest, my lord!

HAMLET: Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POLONIUS: That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter?

POLONIUS: I have, my lord.

HAMLET: Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive:—friend, look to't.

POLONIUS: How say you by that?—[*Aside*] Still harping on my daughter:—yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this I'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET: Words, words, words.

POLONIUS: What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET: Between who?

POLONIUS: I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

HAMLET: Slanders, sir: for the satirical slave says here that old men have gray beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most

weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.

POLONIUS [*Aside*]: Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.—Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET. Into my grave?

POLONIUS: Indeed, that is out o' the air.—

[*Aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—More honorable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you

HAMLET: You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal.—except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS: Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET: These tedious old fools!

[*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

POLONIUS: You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROSENCRANTZ [*To Polonius*]: God save you, sir!

[*Exit Polonius*]

GUILDENSTERN: Mine honored lord!

ROSENCRANTZ: My most dear lord!

HAMLET: My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ: As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN: Happy in that we are not overhappy; On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET: Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ: Neither, my lord.

HAMLET: Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?

GUILDENSTERN: Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET: In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet. What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ: None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET: Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN: Prison, my lord!

HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one.

HAMLET: A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROSENCRANTZ: We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET: Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Why, then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET: O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN: Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET: A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ: Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET: Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET: No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am

most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ: To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET: Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN: What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET: Why, anything—but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to color: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ: To what end, my lord?

HAMLET: That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no?

ROSENCRANTZ: What say you? [*To Guildenstern*]

HAMLET [*Aside*]: Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET: I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moutl no feather. I have of late,—but wherefore I know not,—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament,

this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so

ROSENCRANTZ. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET: Why did you laugh, then, when I said, *Man delights not me*?

ROSENCRANTZ: To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET: He that plays the king shall be welcome, —his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sear; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. —What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ: Even those you were wont to take delight in,—the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET: How chanches it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ: I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

HAMLET: Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ: No, indeed, they are not.

HAMLET: How comes it? do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ: Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an acry of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion; and so berattle the common stages,—so they call them,—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET: What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not sav afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players,—as it is most like, if their means are no better, their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?

ROSENCRANTZ: Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy: there was for awhile no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

HAMLET: Is't possible?

GUILDENSTERN: O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET: Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ: Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

HAMLET: It is not strange; for mine uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within*]

GUILDENSTERN: There are the players.

HAMLET: Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come: the appur-

tenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony let me comply with you in this garb; lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN. In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

[Enter Polonius]

POLONIUS. Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET. Hark you, Guildenstern;—and you too;— at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swathing-clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ. Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.—You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so indeed.

POLONIUS. My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET. My lord, I have news to tell you. When ROSCIUS was an actor in Rome,—

POLONIUS. The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET. Buzz, buzz!

POLONIUS. Upon mine honor,—

HAMLET. Then came each actor on his ass,—

POLONIUS. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

HAMLET. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS. What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET. Why—

One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.

POLONIUS. [*Aside*] Still on my daughter

HAMLET. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well

HAMLET. Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS. What follows, then, my lord?

HAMLET. Why—

As by lot, God wot,
and then, you know,

It came to pass, as most like it was,—

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look whicke my abridgement comes.

[Enter fou or five Players]

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all.—I am glad to see thee well,—welcome, good friends.—O, my old friend! Thy face is valanced since I saw thee last, comest thou to heare me in Denmark?

What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.—Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see: we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

1ST PLAYER. What speech, my lord?

HAMLET. I heard thee speak me a speech once,—but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviare to the general: but it was,—as

I received it, and others whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine,—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indite the author of affectation; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line;—let me see, let me see:—

The Rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,

—it is not so:—it begins with Pyrrhus:—

The rugged Pyrrhus,—he whose sable arms,

Black as his purpose, did the night resemble

When he lay couched in the ominous horse,—

Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd

With heraldry more dismal; head to foot Now is he total gules; horribly trick'd With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,

Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,

That lend a tyrannous and damned light To their vile murders: roasted in wrath and fire,

And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore, With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus

Old grandsire Priam seeks.—

So proceed you.

POLONIUS: 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

1ST PLAYER: ANON he finds him Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,

Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls, Repugnant to command: unequal match'd, Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;

But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword

The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,

Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash

Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,

Which was declining on the milky head Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:

So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood; And, like a neutral to his will and matter, Did nothing.

But as we often see, against some storm, A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,

The blood winds speechless, and the orb below

As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder

Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,

A roused vengeance sets him new a-work; And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall On Mars his armor, forg'd for proof eterne, With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword

Now falls on Priam.—

Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,

In general synod, take away her power; Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,

And bowl the round knave down the hill of heaven,

As low as to the fiends!

POLONIUS: This is too long.

HAMLET: It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Pr'ythee, say on.—He's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps:—say on; come to Hecuba.

1ST PLAYFR: But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen,—

HAMLET: *The mobled queen?*

POLONIUS: That's good; *mobled queen* is good.

1ST PLAYER: Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames

With bissom rheum; a clout upon that head

Where late the diadem stood; and, for a robe,

About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;—

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,

'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd:

But if the gods themselves did see her then,

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport

In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,

The instant burst of clamor that she made,—

Unless things mortal move them not at all,—

Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,

And passion in the gods.

POLONIUS: Look, whether he has not turn'd his color, and has tears in's eyes.—Pray you, no more.

HAMLET: 'Tis well; I'll have thee speak out the rest soon.—Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time; after your death you were bet-

ter have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

POLONIUS. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET: Odd's bodikin, man, better: use every man after his desert, and who should scape whipping? Use them after your own honor and dignity: the less they deserve the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

POLONIUS: Come, sirs.

HAMLET: Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First*] Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

1ST PLAYER: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down and insert in't? could you not?

1ST PLAYER. Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: Very well.—Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit First Player*—My good friends, [*To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*] I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSECRANTZ: Good my lord!

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

HAMLET: Ay, so God b' wi' ye!—Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Is it not monstrous that this player here, But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, Could force his soul so to his own conceit

That from her working all his visage wan'd;

Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, A broken voice, and his whole function suiting

With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!

For Hecuba?

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba,
 That he should weep for her? What would
 he do,
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion
 That I have? He would drown the stage
 with tears,
 And cleave the general ear with horrid
 speech;
 Make mad the guilty, and appal the free;
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze, in-
 duced,
 The very faculties of eyes and ears.
 Yet I,
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my
 cause,
 And can say nothing; no, not for a king
 Upon whose property and most dear life
 A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a cow-
 ard?
 Who calls me villain? breaks my pate
 across?
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my
 face?
 Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie
 i' the throat,
 As deep as to the lungs? who does me
 this, ha?
 'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
 But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
 To make oppression bitter; or ere this
 I should have fatted all the region kites
 With this slave's offal:—bloody, bawdy vil-
 lain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kind-
 less villain!
 O, vengeance!
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most
 brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and
 hell,
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with
 words,
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,

A scullion!
 Fie upon't! foh!—About, my brain! I have
 heard
 That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
 Have by the very cunning of the scene
 Been struck so to the soul that presently
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
 For murder, though it have no tongue,
 will speak
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have
 these players
 Play something like the murder of my
 father
 Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
 I'll tent him to the quick: if he but
 blench,
 I know my course. The spirit that I have
 seen
 May be the devil: and the devil hath power
 To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and per-
 haps
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy, - -
 As he is very potent with such spirits,—
 Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
 More relative than this—the play's the
 thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the
 king.
 [Exit]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Room in the Castle

[Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia
Rosenkrantz, and Guildenstern]

KING: And can you, by no drift of circum-
 stance,
 Get from him why he puts on this con-
 fusion,
 Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
 With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
 ROSENKRANTZ: He does confess he feels
 himself distracted;

But from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN: Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;

But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof
When we would bring him on to some confession

Of his true state.

QUEEN: Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ: Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN: But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ: Niggard of question; but, of our demands,

Most free in his reply.

QUEEN: Did you assay him
To any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ: Madam, it so fell out that certain players

We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him;

And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it: they are about the court;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

POLONIUS: 'Tis most true:

And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the matter.

KING: With all my heart; and it doth much content me

To hear him so inclin'd.—

Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ: We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

KING: Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia:

Her father and myself,—lawful espials,—
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, un-
seen,

We may of their encounter frankly judge;
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,
If't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN: I shall obey you:—
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy
cause

Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your
virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honors.

OPHELIA: Madam, I wish it may.
[*Exit Queen*]

POLONIUS: Ophelia, walk you here.—Gra-
cious, so please you,

We will bestow ourselves.—[*To Ophelia*]
Read on this book;

That show of such an exercise may color
Your loneliness.—We are oft to blame in
this,—

'Tis too much prov'd,—that with devo-
tion's visage

And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

KING: [*Aside*] O, 'tis too true!

How smart a lash that speech doth give
my conscience!

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plaster-
ing art,

Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted
word:

O heavy burden!

POLONIUS: I hear him coming: let's with-
draw, my lord.

[*Exeunt King and Polonius*]

[*Enter Hamlet*]

HAMLET: To be, or not to be,—that is the
question:—

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous for-
tune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep,—

No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural
shocks

That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consumma-
tion

Devoutly to be wish'd. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream:—ay, there's
the rub;

For in that sleep of death what dreams
may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal
coil,

Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would bear the whips and scorns
of time,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's
contumely,

The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make

With a bare bodkin? who would fardels
bear,

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

But that the dread of something after
death,—

The undiscover'd country, from whose
bourn

No traveler returns,—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we
have

Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us
all;

And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of
thought;

And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.—Soft you
now!

The fair Ophelia.—Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA: Good my lord,
How does your honor for this many a
day?

HAMLET: I humbly thank you; well, well,
well.

OPHELIA: My lord, I have remembrances
of yours,

That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

HAMLET: No, not I;

I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA: My honor'd lord, you know
right well you did;

And, with them, words of so sweet breath
compos'd

As made the things more rich: their per-
fume lost,

Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove un-
kind.

There, my lord.

HAMLET: Ha, ha! are you honest?

OPHELIA: My lord?

HAMLET: Are you fair?

OPHELIA: What means your lordship?

HAMLET: That if you be honest and fair,
your honesty should admit no discourse
to your beauty.

OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have bet-
ter commerce than with honesty?

HAMLET: Ay, truly; for the power of
beauty will sooner transform honesty
from what it is to a bawd than the force
of honesty can translate beauty into his
likeness: this was sometime a paradox,
but now the time gives it proof. I did
love you once.

OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me
believe so.

HAMLET: You should not have believed
me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our
old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved
you not.

OPHELIA: I was the more deceived.

HAMLET: Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not born me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

OPHELIA: At home, my lord.

HAMLET: Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house. Farewell.

OPHELIA: O, help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET: If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry,—be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

OPHELIA: O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET: I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

[Exit]

OPHELIA: O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword.

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

The observ'd of all observers,—quite, quite down!

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,

Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;

That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth

Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,

To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

[Re-enter King and Polonius]

KING: Love! his affections do not that way tend;

Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,

Was not like madness. There's something in his soul

O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose

Will be some danger: which for to prevent,

I have in quick determination

Thus set it down:—he shall with speed to England

For the demand of our neglected tribute:

Haply, the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel

This something-settled matter in his heart:
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus

From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

OLONIUS: It shall do well: but yet do I believe

The origin and commencement of his grief

Sprung from neglected love.—How now,
Ophelia!

You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet
said;

We heard it all.—My lord, do as you
please;

But if you hold it fit, after the play,

Let his queen mother all alone entreat
him

To show his grief: let her be round with
him;

And I'll be plac'd, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she finds him
not,

To England send him; or confine him
where

Your wisdom best shall think.

KING: It shall be so:

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd
go.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT III. SCENE II.

A Hall in the Castle

[*Enter Hamlet and certain Players*]

HAMLET: Speak the speech, I pray you, as
I pronounced it to you, trippingly on
the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many
of your players do, I had as lief the town-
crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw
the air too much with your hand, thus;
but use all gently: for in the very tor-
rent, tempest, and, as I may say, the
whirlwind of passion, you must acquire
and beget a temperance that may give
it smoothness. O, it offends me to the
soul, to hear a robustious periwig-pated
fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very
rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,
who, for the most part, are capable of
nothing but inexplicable dumb shows
and noise: I could have such a fellow
whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it
out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

1ST PLAYER: I warrant your honor.

HAMLET: Be not too tame neither, but let
your own discretion be your tutor: suit
the action to the word, the word to the
action; with this special observance, that
you o'erstep not the modesty of nature:
for anything so overdone is from the
purpose of playing, whose end, both at
the first and now, was and is, to hold,
as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to
show virtue her own feature, scorn her
own image, and the very age and body
of the time his form and pressure. Now,
this overdone or come tardy off, though
it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but
make the judicious grieve; the censure
of the which one must, in your allow-
ance, o'erweigh a whole theater of others.
O, there be players that I have seen play,
—and heard others praise, and that high-
ly,—not to speak it profanely, that, nei-
ther having the accent of Christians, nor
the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man,
have so strutted and bellowed that I have
thought some of nature's journeymen
had made men, and not made them
well, they imitated humanity so abom-
inably.

1ST PLAYER: I hope we have reformed that
indifferently with us, sir.

HAMLET: O, reform it altogether. And let
those that play your clowns speak no
more than is set down for them: for
there be of them that will themselves
laugh, to set on some quantity of bar-
ren spectators to laugh too; though, in
the meantime, some necessary question
of the play be then to be considered:
that's villainous, and shows a most pit-
iful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go,
make you ready

[*Exeunt Players*]

[*Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz, and
Guildenstern*]

How now, my lord! will the king hear
this piece of work?

POLONIUS: And the queen, too, and that
presently.

HAMLET: Bid the players make haste.

[Exit Polonius]

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: We will,
my lord.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guilden-
stern]

HAMLET: What, ho, Horatio!

[Enter Horatio]

HORATIO: Here, sweet lord, at your serv-
ice.

HAMLET: Horatio, thou art e'en as just a
man

As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

HORATIO: O, my dear lord,—

HAMLET: Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from
thee,

That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the
poor be flatter'd?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd
pomp;

And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost
thou hear?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her
choice,

And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast
been

As one, in suffering all, that suffers noth-
ing;

A man that Fortune's buffets and re-
wards

Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and bless'd
are those

Whose blood and judgment are so well
commingled

That they are not a pipe for Fortune's
finger

To sound what stop she please. Give me
that man

That is not passion's slave, and I will wear
him

In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of
heart,

As I do thee.—Something too much of
this.—

There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circum-
stance

Which I have told thee of my father's
death:

I pr'ythee, when thou see'st that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul

Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,

It is a damned ghost that we have seen;

And my imaginations are as foul

As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note:

For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;

And, after, we will both our judgments
join

In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO: Well, my lord:

If he steal aught the whilst this play is
playing,

And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

HAMLET: They are coming to the play;
I must be idle:

Get you a place.

[Danish march. A flourish. Enter
King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Ros-
encrantz, Guildenstern, and others]

KING: How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET: Excellent, i'faith; of the chame-
leon's dish: I eat the air, promise-
crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

KING: I have nothing with this answer,
Hamlet; these words are not mine.

HAMLET: No, nor mine now.—My lord,
you played once i'the university, you
say? [To Polonius]

POLONIUS: That did I, my lord, and was
accounted a good actor.

HAMLET: And what did you enact?

POLONIUS: I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

HAMLET: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.—Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ: Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN: Come hither, my good Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET: No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

POLONIUS: O, ho! do you mark that?
[To the King]

HAMLET: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
[Lying down at Ophelia's feet]

OPHELIA: No, my lord.

HAMLET: I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA: I think nothing, my lord.

HAMLET: That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

OPHELIA: What is, my lord?

HAMLET: Nothing.

OPHELIA: You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET: Who, I?

OPHELIA: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: O, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours.

OPHELIA: Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAMLET: So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by'r lady, he must build churches, then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-

horse, whose epitaph is, *For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.*

[Trumpets sound. The dumb show enters]

[Enter a King and a Queen, very lovingly; the Queen embracing him and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck, lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts: she seems loth and unwillng awhile, but in the end accepts his love]

[Exeunt]

OPHELIA: What means this, my lord?

HAMLET: Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

OPHELIA: Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

[Enter Prologue]

HAMLET: We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all.

OPHELIA: Will he tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET: Ay, or any show that you'll show him: be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

OPHELIA: You are naught, you are naught: I'll mark the play.

PROLOGUE: *For us, and for our tragedy, Here stooping to your clemency, We beg your hearing patiently.*

HAMLET: Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

OPHELIA: 'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET: As woman's love.

[Enter a King and a Queen]

PROLOGUE KING: Full thirty times hath
Phœbus' cart gone round

Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd
ground,

And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd
sheen

About the world have times twelve thir-
ties been,

Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our
hands

Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PROLOGUE QUEEN: So many journeys may
the sun and moon

Make us again count o'er ere love be done!

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,

So far from cheer and from your former
state

That I distrust you Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quanti-
ty;

In neither aught, or in extremity.

Now, what my love is, proof hath made
you know;

And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so:

Where love is great, the littlest doubts are
fear;

Where little fears grow great, great love
grows there.

PROLOGUE KING: Faith, I must leave thee,
love, and shortly too;

My operant powers their functions leave
to do:

And thou shalt live in this fair world be-
hind,

Honor'd, belov'd; and haply one as kind

For husband shalt thou,—

PROLOGUE QUEEN: O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my
breast:

In second husband let me be accurst!

None wed the second but who kill'd the
first.

HAMLET: [Aside] Wormwood, worm-
wood.

PROLOGUE QUEEN: The instances that sec-
ond marriage move

Are base respects of thrift, but none of
love:

A second time I kill my husband dead

When second husband kisses me in bed.

PROLOGUE KING: I do believe you think
what now you speak;

But what we do determine oft we break

Purpose is but the slave to memory;

Of violent birth, but poor validity

Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on
the tree;

But fall unshaken when they mellow be.

Most necessary 'tis that we forget

To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:

What to ourselves in passion we propose,

The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

The violence of either grief or joy

Their own enactures with themselves de-
stroy:

Where joy most revels grief doth most
lament;

Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

This world is not for aye; nor 'tis not
strange

That even our loves should with our for-
tunes change;

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove

Whether love lead fortune or else fortune
love.

The great man down, you mark his favor-
ite flies;

The poor advanc'd makes friends of ene-
mies.

And hitherto doth love on fortune tend:

For who not needs shall never lack a
friend;

And who in want a hollow friend doth
try,

Directly seasons him his enemy.

But, orderly to end where I begun,—
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of
our own:

So think thou wilt no second husband
wed;

But die thy thoughts when thy first lord
is dead.

PROLOGUE QUEEN. Nor earth to me give
food, nor heaven light!

Sport and repose lock from me day and
night!

To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite, that blanks the face of joy,
Meet what I would have well, and it de-
stroy!

Both here and hence, pursue me lasting
strife,

If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

HAMLET: If she should break it now!

[To Ophelia]

PROLOGUE KING. 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet,
leave me here awhile;

My spirits grow dull, and fain I would
beguile

The tedious day with sleep.

[Sleeps]

PROLOGUE QUEEN. Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance between us
twain!

[Exit]

HAMLET. Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN. The lady doth protest too much,
methinks.

HAMLET. O, but she'll keep her word.

KING. Have you heard the argument? Is
there no offence in't?

HAMLET. No, no, they do but jest, poison
in jest; no offence i' the world.

KING. What do you call the play?

HAMLET. The Mouse-trap. Marry, how?
Tropically. This play is the image of a

murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the
duke's name: his wife, Baptista: you
shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of
work: but what o' that? your majesty,
and we that have free souls, it touches
us not: let the galled jade wince, our
withers are unwrung.

[Enter Lucianus]

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

OPIHELIA: You are a good chorus, my lord.

HAMLET. I could interpret between you
and your love, if I could see the pup-
pets dallying.

OPIHELIA: You are keen, my lord, you are
keen.

HAMLET: It would cost you a groaning
to take off my edge.

OPIHELIA: Still better, and worse.

HAMLET. So you must take your husbands.
—Begin, murderer; pox, leave thy dam-
nable faces and begin. Come:—*The
croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.*

LUCIANUS: Thoughts black, hands apt,
drugs fit, and time agreeing;

Confederate season, else no creature see-
ing;

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds
collected,

With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice
infected,

Thy natural magic and dire property

On wholesome life usurp immediately.

[Pours the poison into the sleeper's
ears]

HAMLET. He poisons him i' the garden
for's estate. His name's Gonzago: the
story is extant, and writ in choice Ital-
ian: you shall see anon how the mur-
derer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPIHELIA: The king rises.

HAMLET: What, frightened with false fire!

QUEEN: How fares my lord?

POISONIUS: Give o'er the play.

KING: Give me some light:—away!

ALL: Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio*]

HAMLET: Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play;

For some must watch, while some must sleep:

So runs the world away.—

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers,

If the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me,

With two Provencial roses on my razed shoes,

Get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

HORATIO: Half a share.

HAMLET: A whole one, I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,

This realm dismantled was

Of Jove himself; and now reigns here

A very, very—pajock.

HORATIO: You might have rhymed.

HAMLET: O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound.

Didst perceive?

HORATIO: Very well, my lord.

HAMLET: Upon the talk of the poisoning,—

HORATIO: I did very well note him.

HAMLET: Ah, ha!—Come, some music! come, the recorders!—

For if the king like not the comedy,

Why, then, belike,—he likes it not, perdy. Come, some music!

[*Re-ente Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

GUILDENSTERN: Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET: Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN: The king, sir,—

HAMLET: Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN: Is, in his retirement, marvelous distempred.

HAMLET: With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN: No, my lord, rather with choler.

HAMLET: Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

GUILDENSTERN: Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

HAMLET: I am tame, sir:—pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN: The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

HAMLET: You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN: Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

HAMLET: Sir, I cannot.

GUILDENSTERN: What, my lord?

HAMLET: Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseas'd: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or, rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say,—

ROSECRANTZ: Then thus she says: your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAMLET: O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother!—But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?

ROSECRANTZ: She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.

HAMLET: We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

ROSECRANTZ: My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET: So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ: Good, my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAMLET: Sir, I lack advancement.

ROSENCRANTZ: How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAMLET: Ay, but *While the grass grows*, - the proverb is something musty.

[*Re-enters the Players, with Recorders*]

O, the recorders!--let me see one To withdraw with you!--why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUILDENSTERN: O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmanly.

HAMLET: I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET: I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN: Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET: I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN: I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET: 'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN: But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

HAMLET: Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet

cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think that I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me you cannot play upon me.

[*Enter Polonius*]

God bless you, sir!

POLONIUS: My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale.

HAMLET: Then will I come to my mother by and by.--They fool me to the top of my bent --I will come by and by

POLONIUS: I will say so.

HAMLET: By and by is easily said [*Exit Polonius*]-Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Horatio, and Players*]

'Tis now the very witching time of night When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out

Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,

And do such bitter business as the day Would quake to look on Soft! now to my mother.--

O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom: Let me be cruel, not unnatural:

I will speak daggers to her, but use none; My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.-- How in my words soever she be shent,

To give them seals never, my soul, consent!

[*Exit*]

ACT III. SCENE III.

A Room in the Castle

[Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern]

KING: I like him not; nor stands it safe
with us

To let his madness range Therefore pre-
pare you;

I your commission will forthwith despatch,
And he to England shall along with you.
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

GUILDENSTERN: We will ourselves provide.
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe

That live and feed upon your majesty

ROSENCRANTZ: The single and peculiar life
is bound,

With all the strength and armor of the
mind,

To keep itself from 'noyance; but much
more

That spirit upon whose weal depend and
rest

The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things

Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which, when
it falls,

Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general
groan.

KING: Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy
voyage;

For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: We will
haste us.

[Exit Rosencrantz and Guilden-
stern]

[Enter Polonius]

POLONIUS. My lord, he's going to his
mother's closet

Behind the arras I'll convey myself

To hear the process: I'll warrant she'll tax
him home:

And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a
mother,

Since nature makes them partial, should
o'erhear

The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my
liege

I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,

And tell you what I know.

KING: Thanks, dear my lord.

[Exit Polonius]

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't.—

A brother's murder! Pray can I not,

Though inclination be as sharp as will

My stronger guilt defeats my strong in-
tent;

And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,

And both neglect. What if this cursed
hand

Were thicker than itself with brother's
blood,—

Is there not ram enough in the sweet
heavens

To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves
mercy

But to confront the visage of offence?

And what's in prayer but this twofold
force,—

To be forestalled ere we come to fall,

Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look
up;

My fault is past. But, O, what form of
prayer

Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!—

That cannot be; since I am still possess'd

Of those effects for which I did the murder,—

My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?

In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;

And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself

Buy out the law but 'tis not so above;

There is no shuffling,—there the action lies

In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,

Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,

To give in evidence. What then? what rests?

Try what repentance can: what can it not?

Yet what can it when one can not repent?

O wretched state! O bosom black as death!

O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,

Art more engag'd! Help, angels! make assay:

Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart, with strings of steel,

Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!

All may be well.

[Retires and kneels]

[Enter Hamlet]

HAMLET: Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;

And now I'll do't—and so he goes to heaven;

And so am I reveng'd:—that would be scann'd:

A villain kills my father; and for that,

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

He took my father grossly, full of bread;

With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?

But in our circumstance and course of thought

'Tis heavy with him: and am I, then, reveng'd,

To take him in the purging of his soul,

When he is fit and season'd for his passage?

No.

Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:

When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage;

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;

At gaming, swearing; or about some act

That has no relish of salvation in't;—

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven;

And that his soul may be as damn'd and black

As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

[Exit]

[The King rises and advances]

KING: My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

[Exit]

ACT III. SCENE IV.

Another Room in the Castle

[Enter Queen and Polonius]

POLONIUS: He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,

And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between

Much heat and him. I'll silence me e'en here.

Pray you, be round with him.

HAMLET: [*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN: I'll warrant you:
Fear me not:—withdraw, I hear him coming.

[*Polonius goes behind the arras*]

[*Enter Hamlet*]

HAMLET: Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET: Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN: Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN: Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET: What's the matter now?

QUEEN: Have you forgot me?

HAMLET: No, by the rood, not so:
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;

And,—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

QUEEN: Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET: Come, come, and sit you down;
you shall not budge;

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN: What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?—

Help, help, ho!

POLONIUS: [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET: How now! a rat? [*Draws*]
Dead, for a ducat, dead!

[*Makes a pass through the arras*]

POLONIUS: [*Behind*] O, I am slain!

[*Falls and dies*]

QUEEN: O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET: Nay, I know not:
Is it the king?

[*Draws forth Polonius*]

QUEEN: O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET: A bloody deed!—almost as bad,
good mother,

As kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN: As kill a king!

HAMLET: Ay, lady, 'twas my word—
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

[*To Polonius*]

I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.—

Leave wringing of your hands: peace; sit you down,

And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff;

If damned custom have not braz'd it so

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN: What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue

In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET: Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows

As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;

Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

QUEEN: Ah me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

HAMLET: Look here upon this picture and
on this,—

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.

See what a grace was seated on this blow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,

A station like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form, indeed,

Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man

This was your husband—Look you now,
what follows:

Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you
eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

And batten on this moor? Ha! have you
eyes?

You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's
humble,

And waits upon the judgment; and what
judgment

Would step from this to this? Sense, sure,
you have,

Else could you not have motion: but sure
that sense

Is apoplex'd for madness would not err;
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrill'd

But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
'To serve in such a difference. What devil

was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-
blind?

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans
all,

Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.

O shame! where is thy blush! Rebellious
hell,

If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,

And melt in her own fire: proclaim no
shame

When the compulsive ardor gives the
charge,

Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will

QUEEN: O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained
spots

As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET: Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and mak-
ing love

Over the nasty sty,—

QUEEN: O, speak to me no more;
These words like daggers enter in mine
ears;

No more, sweet Hamlet.

HAMLET: A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem
stole,

And put it in his pocket!

QUEEN: No more.

HAMLET: A king of shreds and patches,—
[Enter Ghost]

Save me, and hover o'er me with your
wings,

You heavenly guards!—What would your
gracious figure?

QUEEN: Alas, he's mad!

HAMLET: Do you not come your tardy son
to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go
by

The important acting of your dread command?

O, say!

GHOST: Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.

But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul,—

Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works,—

Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET: How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN: Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?

Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Starts up and stands on end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

HAMLET: On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!

His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching
To stones,
Would make them capable.—Do not look upon me;

Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true color; tears perchance for blood.

QUEEN: To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET: Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET: Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN: No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET: Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!

My father, in his habit as he liv'd!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[Exit Ghost]

QUEEN: This is the very coinage of your brain:

This bodiless creation ecstasy

Is very cunning in.

HAMLET: Ecstasy!

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time.

And makes as healthful music: it is not madness

That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness

Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,

Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,

That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:

It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven:
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;

And do not spread the compost on the weeds,

To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;

For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN: O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET: O, throw away the worse part of it,

And live the purer with the other half.

Good-night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,

Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,—

That to the use of actions fair and good

He likewise gives a frock or livery

That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night;

And that shall lend a kind of easiness
 To the next abstinence: the next more
 easy;
 For use almost can change the stamp of
 nature,
 And either curb the devil, or throw him
 out
 With wondrous potency. Once more, good-
 night.
 And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
 I'll blessing beg of you.—For this same
 lord

[*pointing to Polonius*]

I do repent: but Heaven hath pleas'd it so,
 To punish me with this, and thus with me,
 That I must be their scourge and minister.
 I will bestow him, and will answer well
 The death I gave him. So, again, good-
 night.—

I must be cruel only to be kind:
 Thus bad begins and worse remains be-
 hind.—

One word more, good lady.

QUEEN: What shall I do?

HAMLET: Not this, by no means, that I bid
 you do:

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;
 Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his
 mouse;

And let him, for a pair of recchy kisses,
 Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd
 fingers,

Make you to ravel all this matter out,
 That I essentially am not in madness,
 But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let
 him know;

For who that's but a queen, fair, sober,
 wise,

Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
 Such dear concernings hide? who would
 do so?

No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
 Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep,

And break your own neck down.

QUEEN: Be thou assur'd, if words be made
 of breath

And breath of life, I have no life to
 breathe

What thou hast said to me.

HAMLET: I must to England; you know
 that?

QUEEN: Alack,
 I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.

HAMLET: There's letters seal'd: and my
 two schoolfellows,—

Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep
 my way,

And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
 Hoist with his own petard: and't shall go
 hard

But I will delve one yard below their
 mines,

And blow them at the moon: O, 'tis most
 sweet,

When in one line two crafts directly
 meet.—

This man shall set me packing:
 I'll lug the guts into the neighbor room.—
 Mother, good-night.—Indeed, this counsel-
 lor

Is now most still, most secret, and most
 grave,

Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end with
 you:—

Good-night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally; Hamlet dragging
 out Polonius*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Room in the Castle

[*Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, and
 Guildenstern*]

KING: There's matter in these sighs, these
 profound heaves:

You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.

Where is your son?

QUEEN: Bestow this place on us a little while.

[*To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who go out*]

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!

KING: What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN: Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend

Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit, Behind the arras hearing something stir, He whips his rapier out, and cries, *A rat, a rat!*

And, in this brainish apprehension, kills The unseen good old man.

KING: O heavy deed! It had been so with us had we been there: His liberty is full of threats to all; To you yourself, to us, to every one.

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?

It will be laid to us, whose providence Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt

Thus mad young man: but so much was our love,

We would not understand what was most fit;

But, like the owner of a foul disease, To keep it from divulging, let it feed Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

QUEEN: To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:

O'er whom his very madness, like some ore

Among a mineral of metals base, Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

KING: O Gertrude, come away! The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch

But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed

We must, with all our majesty and skill, Both countenance and excuse.—Ho, Guildenstern!

[*Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:

Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain, And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:

Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body

Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this. [*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;

And let them know both what we mean to do

And what's untimely done: so haply slander,—

Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter, As level as the cannon to his blank, Transports his poison'd shot,—may amiss our name,

And hit the woundless air.—O, come away!

My soul is full of discord and dismay.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE II.

Another Room in the Castle

[*Enter Hamlet*]

HAMLET: Safely stowed.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: [*Within*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET: What noise? who calls on Hamlet?

O, here they come.

[*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]

ROSENCRANTZ: What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET: Compounded it with dust, where-
to 'tis kin.

ROSENCRANTZ: Tell us where 'tis, that we
may take it thence,

And bear it to the chapel

HAMLET: Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ: Believe what?

HAMLET: That I can keep your counsel,
and not mine own. Besides, to be de-
manded of a sponge!— what replication
should be made by the son of a king?

ROSENCRANTZ: Take you me for a sponge,
my lord?

HAMLET: Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's
countenance, his rewards, his authori-
ties. But such officers do the king best
service in the end he keeps them, like
an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first
mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he
needs what you have gleaned, it is but
squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be
dry again.

ROSENCRANTZ: I understand you not, my
lord.

HAMLET: I am glad of it: a knavish speech
sleeps in a foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ: My lord, you must tell us
where the body is, and go with us to
the king

HAMLET: The body is with the king, but
the king is not with the body. The king
is a thing,—

GUILDENSTERN: A thing, my lord!

HAMLET: Of nothing bring me to him.
Hide fox, and all after.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE III.

Another Room in the Castle

[*Enter King, attended*]

KING: I have sent to seek him, and to find
the body

How dangerous is it that this man goes
loose!

Yet must not we put the strong law on
him:

He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their
eyes;

And where 'tis so, the offender's scourge
is weigh'd,

But never the offence. To bear all smooth
and even,

This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,
Or not at all.

[*Enter Rosencrantz*]

How now! what hath befallen!

ROSENCRANTZ: Where the dead body is be-
stow'd, my lord,

We cannot get from him.

KING: But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ: Without, my lord; guarded,
to know your pleasure.

KING: Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ: Ho, Guildenstern! bring in
my lord.

[*Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern*]

KING: Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET: At supper.

KING: At supper! where?

HAMLET: Not where he eats, but where he
is eaten: a certain convocation of politic
worms are e'en at him. Your worm is
your only emperor for diet: we fat all
creatures else to fat us, and we fat our-
selves for maggots: your fat king and
your lean beggar is but variable service,
—two dishes, but to one table: that's the
end.

KING: Alas, alas!

HAMLET: A man may fish with the worm
that hath eat of a king, and eat of the
fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING: What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET: Nothing but to show you how
a king may go a progress through the
guts of a beggar.

KING: Where is Polonius?

HAMLET. In heaven; send thither to see:
if your messenger find him not there,
seek him i' the other place yourself.
But, indeed, if you find him not within
this month, you shall nose him as you
go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING: Go seek him there.

[To some Attendants]

HAMLET. He will stay till ye come.

[Exeunt Attendants]

KING. Hamlet, this deed, for thine espe-
cial safety,—

Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,— must send
thee hence

With fiery quickness: therefore prepare
thyself;

The bark is ready, and the wind at help,

The associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET. For England!

KING. Ay, Hamlet

HAMLET: Good.

KING. So is it, if thou knew'st our pur-
poses.

HAMLET. I see a cherub that sees them—
But, come; for England!—Farewell, dear
mother.

KING: Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET. My mother: father and mother
is man and wife; man and wife is one
flesh; and so, my mother.—Come, for
England!

[Exit]

KING: Follow him at foot; tempt him with
speed aboard;

Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for everything is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair, pray you,
make haste.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guilden-
stern]

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at
aught,—

As my great power thereof may give thee
sense,

Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free
awe

Pays homage to us,—thou mayst not coldly
set

Our sovereign process; which imports at
full,

By letters conjuring to that effect.

The present death of Hamlet Do it, Eng-
land;

For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis
done,

Howe'er my haps, my joys will ne'er be-
gin.

[Exit]

ACT IV. SCENE IV.

A Plain in Denmark

[Enter Fortinbras, and Forces march-
ing]

FORTINBRAS. Go, captain, from me greet the
Danish king:

Tell him that, by his license, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendez-
vous,

If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye,
And let him know so

CAPTAIN. I will do't, my lord.

FORTINBRAS. Go softly on.

[Exeunt Fortinbras and Forces]

[Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guilden-
stern, &c.]

HAMLET. Good sir, whose powers are
these?

CAPTAIN. They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET. How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN. Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET. Who commands them, sir?

CAPTAIN: The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET: Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,

Or for some frontier?

CAPTAIN: Truly to speak, and with no addition,

We go to gain a little patch of ground That hath in it no profit but the name.

To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;

Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole A ranker rate should it be sold in fee.

HAMLET: Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN: Yes, it is already garrison'd.

HAMLET: Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats

Will not debate the question of this straw: This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,

That inward breaks, and shows no cause without

Why the man dies.—I humbly thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN: God b' wi' you, sir.

[Exit]

ROSENCRANZ: Will't please you go, my lord?

HAMLET: I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.

[Exit all but Hamlet]

How all occasions do inform against me, And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,

It his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,

Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and godlike reason To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple Of thinking too precisely on the event,—

A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom

And ever three parts coward,—I do not know

Why yet I live to say, *This thing's to do*; Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means

To do't. Examples, gross as earth, exhort me:

Witness this army, of such mass and charge,

Led by a delicate and tender prince; Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,

Makes mouths at the invisible event; Exposing what is mortal and unsure

To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,

Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great Is not to stir without great argument,

But greatly to find quarrel in a straw When honor's at the stake. How stand I, then,

That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, Excitements of my reason and my blood,

And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see

The imminent death of twenty thousand men,

That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds; fight for a

plot Whereon the numbers cannot try the

cause, Which is not tomb enough and continent

To hide the slain?—O, from this time forth,

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

[Exit]

ACT IV. SCENE V.

Elsinore. *A Room in the Castle*

[Enter Queen and Horatio]

QUEEN: I will not speak with her.

HORATIO: She is importunate; indeed, distract:

Her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN: What would she have?

HORATIO: She speaks much of her father; says she hears

There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;

Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,

That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,

Yet the unshaped use of it doth move

The hearers to collection: they aim at it, And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;

Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,

Indeed would make one think there might be thought,

Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew

Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN: Let her come in.

[Exit Horatio]

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is, Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:

So full of artless jealousy is guilt, It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

[Re-enter Horatio and Ophelia]

OPHELIA: Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN: How now, Ophelia!

[Sings]

OPHELIA: How should I your true love know

From another one?

By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.

QUEEN: Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA: Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[Sings]

He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone;

At his head a grass green turf,

At his heels a stone.

QUEEN: Nay, but, Ophelia.—

OPHELIA: Pray you, mark

[Sings]

White his shroud as the mountain snow,

[Enter King]

QUEEN: Alas, look here, my lord.

OPHELIA:

[Sings]

Larded with sweet flowers;

Which bewept to the grave did go

With true-love showers.

KING: How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA: Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord,

we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

KING: Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA: Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[Sings]

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day

All in the morning betime,

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,

And dupp'd the chamber-door;

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

KING: Pretty Ophelia!

OPHELIA: Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't;

[Sings]

By Gis and by Saint Charity,

Alack, and fie for shame!

Young men will do't, if they come to't;
By cock, they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promis'd me to wed.
So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

KING: How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA: I hope all will be well. We must
be patient: but I cannot choose but weep,
to think they should lay him i' the cold
ground. My brother shall know of it,
and so I thank you; for your good coun-
sel. - Come, my coach!—Good-night, la-
dies; good-night, sweet ladies; good-
night, good-night.

[*Exit*]

KING: Follow her close; give her good
watch, I pray you.

[*Exit* Horatio]

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it
springs

All from her father's death. O Gertrude,
Gertrude,

When sorrows come, they come not single
spies,

But in battalions! First, her father slain.

Next, your son gone; and he most violent
author

Of his own just remove: the people mud-
died,

Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts
and whispers

For good Polonius' death; and we have
done but greenly

In hugging-mugging to inter him: poor
Ophelia

Divided from herself and her fair judg-
ment,

Without the which we are pictures, or
mere beasts:

Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;

Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in
clouds,

And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's
death;

Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.

[*A noise within*]

QUEEN: Alack, what noise is this?

KING: Where are my Switzers? let them
guard the door.

[*Enter a Gentleman*]

What is the matter?

GENTLEMAN: Save yourself, my lord—
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous
haste

Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him
lord;

And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,

They cry, *Choose we, Laertes shall be king!*
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to
the clouds,

Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!

QUEEN: How cheerfully on the false trail
they cry!

O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

KING: The doors are broke.

[*Noise within*]

[*Enter* Laertes *armed*; Danes *follow-
ing*]

LAERTES: Where is this king?—Sirs, stand
you all without

DANES: No, let's come in.

LAERTES: I pray you, give me leave.

DANES: We will, we will.

[*They retire without the door*]

LAERTES: I thank you:—keep the door.—
O thou vile king,

Give me my father!

QUEEN: Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES: That drop of blood that's calm
proclaims me bastard,
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the
harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched
brow
Of my true mother.

KING: What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our
person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it
would,
Acts little of his will.—Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incens'd.—Let him go,
Gertrude:—
Speak, man.

LAERTES. Where is my father?

KING: Dead.

QUEEN: But not by him.

KING: Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES: How came he dead? I'll not be
juggled with:

To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest
devil!

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest
pit!

I dare damnation:—to this point I stand,—
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd
Most thoroughly for my father.

KING: Who shall stay you?

LAERTES: My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I'll husband them so
well,

They shall go far with little.

KING: Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in
your revenge

That, sweepstake, you will draw both
friend and foe,

Winner and loser?

LAERTES: None but his enemies.

KING: Will you know them, then?

LAERTES: To his good friends thus wide
I'll ope my arms;

And, like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.

KING: Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensible in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgment pierce
As day does to your eye.

DANES: [*Within*] Let her come in.

LAERTES: How now! what noise is that?
[*Re-enter Ophelia, fantastically dressed
with straws and flowers*]

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven
times salt

Burn out the sense and virtue of mine
eyes!—

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by
weight

Till our scale turn the beam O rose of
May!

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!—
O heavens! is't possible a young maid's
wits

Should be as mortal as an old man's life!
Nature is fine in love; and where 'tis
fine

It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

OPHELIA: [*Sings*]

They bore him barefac'd on the bier;

Hev no nonny, nonny, hey nonny;

And on his grave rain'd many a tear,—

Fare you well, my dove!

LAERTES: Hadst thou thy wits, and didst
persuade revenge,

It could not move thus.

OPHELIA: You must sing. *Down-a-down,
an you call him a-down-a* O, how the
wheel becomes it! It is the false steward,
that stole his master's daughter.

LAERTES: This nothing's more than matter.

OPHELIA: There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies that's for thoughts.

LAERTES: A document in madness,— thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA: There's fennel for you, and columbines:—there's rue for you; and here's some for me:—we may call it herb-grace o' Sundays:—O, you must wear your rue with a difference.— There's a daisy:—I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died:—they say, he made a good end,—

[Sings]

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy,—

LAERTES: Thoughts and affliction, passion, hell itself,

She turns to favor and to prettiness.

OPHELIA: [Sings]

And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead,

Go to thy death-bed,

He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow

All flaxen was his poll:

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan:

God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God.—
God b' wi' ye.

[Exit]

LAERTES: Do you see this, O God?

KING: Laertes, I must commune with your grief,

Or you deny me right. Go but apart,

Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,

And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:

If by direct or by collateral hand

They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,

Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,

To you in satisfaction; but if not,

Be you content to lend your patience to us,

And we shall jointly labor with your soul To give it due content.

LAERTES: Let this be so;

His means of death, his obscure burial,— No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones

No noble rite nor formal ostentation,—

Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,

That I must call't in question.

KING: So you shall;

And where the offence is, let the great axe fall.

I pray you, go with me.

[Exeunt]

ACT IV. SCENE VI.

Another Room in the Castle

[Enter Horatio and a Servant]

HORATIO: What are they that would speak with me?

SERVANT: Sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.

HORATIO: Let them come in.—

[Exit Servant]

I do not know from what part of the world

I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

[Enter Sailors]

1ST SAILOR: God bless you, sir.

HORATIO: Let him bless thee too.

1ST SAILOR: He shall, sir, an't please him.

There's a letter for you, sir; it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

HORATIO: [*Reads*] *Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very wailike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor; and in the grapple I boarded them; on the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine.* Hamlet

Come, I will give you way for these your letters;

And do't the speedier, that you may direct me

To him from whom you brought them.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE VII.

Another Room in the Castle

[*Enter King and Laertes*]

KING: Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,

And you must put me in your heart for friend,

Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,

That he which hath your noble father slain

Pursu'd my life.

LAERTES: It well appears:—but tell me

Why you proceeded not against these feats,

So crimeful and so capital in nature.

As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.

KING: O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,

But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother

Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,—

My virtue or my plague, be it either which,—

She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,

I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;

Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,

Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,

Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,

Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,

And not where I had aim'd them.

LAERTES: And so have I a noble father lost;

A sister driven into desperate terms,—

Whose worth, if praises may go back again,

Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections:—but my revenge will come.

KING: Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think

That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,

And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:

I lov'd your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to im-
agine,—

[Enter a Messenger]

How now! what news?

MESSENGER: Letters, my lord, from Ham-
let:

This to your majesty; this to the queen.

KING: From Hamlet! Who brought them?

MESSENGER: Sailors, my lord, they say; I
saw them not:

They were given me by Claudio,—he re-
ceiv'd them

Of him that brought them.

KING: Laertes, you shall hear them.—
Leave us.

[Exit Messenger]

[Reads] *High and mighty,—You shall
know I am set naked on your kingdom.
To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your
kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking
your pardon thereunto, recount the oc-
casions of my sudden and more strange
return.* Hamlet

What should this mean? Are all the rest
come back?

Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAERTES: Know you the hand?

KING: 'Tis Hamlet's character:—*Naked*,—
And in a postscript here, he says, *alone*.

Can you advise me?

LAERTES: I am lost in it, my lord. But let
him come;

It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live, and tell him to his teeth,
Thus diddest thou.

KING: If it be so, Laertes,—

As how should it be so? how otherwise?—
Will you be rul'd by me?

LAERTES: Ay, my lord:

So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

KING: To thine own peace. If he be now
return'd,—

As checking at his voyage, and that he
means

No more to undertake it,—I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but
fall:

And for his death no wind of blame shall
breathe;

But even his mother shall uncharge the
practice

And call it accident.

LAERTES: My lord, I will be rul'd;

The rather if you could devise it so

That I might be the organ.

KING: It falls right.

You have been talk'd of since your travel
much,

And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein they say you shine: your sum of
parts

Did not together pluck such envy from
him

As did that one; and that, in my regard,

Of the unworthiest siege.

LAERTES: What part is that, my lord?

KING: A very ribaud in the cap of youth,

Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes

The light and careless livery that it wears

Than settled age his sables and his weeds,

Importing health and graveness.—Two
months since,

Here was a gentleman of Normandy,—

I've seen myself, and serv'd against, the
French,

And they can well on horseback: but this
gallant

Had witchcraft in't; he grew unto his seat;

And to such wondrous doing brought his
horse,

As he had been incorp'd and demi-natur'd

With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my
thought,

That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,

Come short of what he did.

LAERTES: A Norman was't?

KING: A Norman.

LAERTES: Upon my life, Lamond.

KING: The very same.

LAERTES: I know him well: he is the brooch, indeed,

And gem of all the nation.

KING: He made confession of you;
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 'twould be a sight indeed

If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,

He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,

If you oppos'd them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy,
That he could nothing do but wish and beg

Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.

Now, out of this,—

LAERTES: What out of this, my lord?

KING: Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

LAERTES: Why ask you this?

KING: Not that I think you did not love your father;

But that I know love is begun by time;
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.

There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still;
For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,
Dies in his own too much: that we would do

We should do when we would; for this *would* changes,

And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, or hands, or accidents;

And then this *should* is like a spendthrift sigh

That hurts by easing. But to the quick o' the ulcer:—

Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake

To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

LAERTES: To cut his throat i' the church.

KING: No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;

Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,

Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.

Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,

And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine, together,

And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,

Most generous, and free from all contriving,

Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and, in a pass of practice,

Requite him for your father.

LAERTES: I will do't:

And, for that purpose, I'll anoint my sword.

I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,

Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death

That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point

With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,

It may be death.

KING: Let's further think of this;

Weigh what convenience both of time and means

May fit us to our shape: if this should fail, And that our drift look through our bad performance,

'Twere better not assay'd: therefore this project

Should have a back or second, that might hold

If this should blast in proof. Soft! let me see:—

We'll make a solemn wager on your cunning,—

I ha't:

When in your motion you are hot and dry,—

As make your bouts more violent to that end,—

And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd him

A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping.

If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck Our purpose may hold there.

[*Enter Queen*]

How now, sweet queen!

QUEEN: One woe doth tread upon another's heel,

So fast they follow:—your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

LAERTES: Drown'd! O, where?

QUEEN: There is a willow grows aslant a brook,

That shows his hoar leaves in thy glassy stream;

There with fantastic garlands did she come Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name, But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.

There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;

When down her weedy trophies and herself

Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;

And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:

Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;

As one incapable of her own distress,

Or like a creature native and indu'd

Unto that element—but long it could not be 'Till that her garments, heavy with their

drink,

Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay

To muddy death.

LAERTES: Alas, then, she is drown'd?

QUEEN: Drown'd, drown'd.

LAERTES: Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,

And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet

It is our trick; nature her custom holds,

Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,

The woman will be out.—Adieu, my lord: I have a speech of fire, that fain would

blaze,

But that this folly douts it.

[*Exit*]

KING: Let's follow, Gertrude;

How much I had to do to calm his rage!

Now fear I this will give it start again;

Therefore let's follow.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Churchyard

[*Enter two Clowns with spades, &c.*]

1ST CLOWN: Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2ND CLOWN: I tell thee she is; and therefore make her grave straight: the crown-

er hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

1ST CLOWN: How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2ND CLOWN: Why, 'tis found so.

1ST CLOWN: It must be *se offendendo*; it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches; it is to act, to do, and to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

2ND CLOWN: Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver,—

1ST CLOWN: Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,—mark you that: but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, 'he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

2ND CLOWN: But is this law?

1ST CLOWN: Ay, marry, is't; crowner's quest law.

2ND CLOWN: Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

1ST CLOWN: Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian.—Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

2ND CLOWN: Was he a gentleman?

1ST CLOWN: He was the first that ever bore arms.

2ND CLOWN: Why, he had none,

1ST CLOWN: What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says, Adam digged: could he dig without arms? I'll put another ques-

tion to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself,—

2ND CLOWN: Go to.

1ST CLOWN: What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

2ND CLOWN: The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1ST CLOWN: I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

2ND CLOWN: Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

1ST CLOWN: Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

2ND CLOWN: Marry, now I can tell.

1ST CLOWN: To't.

2ND CLOWN: Mass, I cannot tell.

[Enter Hamlet and Horatio, at a distance]

1ST CLOWN: Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are asked this question next, say a grave-maker; the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor.

[Exit Second Clown]

[Digs and sings]

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for, ah, my
behave,

O, methought there was nothing meet.

HAMLET: Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

HORATIO: Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAMLET: 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

1ST CLOWN: [*Sings*]

But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipp'd me into the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull*]

HAMLET: That skull had a tongue in it,
and could sing once. how the knave jocos
it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-
bone, that did the first murder! This
might be the pate of a politician, which
this ass now o'erreaches; one that would
circumvent God, might it not?

HORATIO: It might, my lord.

HAMLET: O! of a courtier; which could
say, *Good-morrow, sweet lord! How dost
thou, good lord?* This might be my lord
such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-
one's horse, when he meant to beg it,—
might it not?

HORATIO: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: Why, e'en so: and now my Lady
Worm's; chapless, and knocked about
the mazard with a sexton's spade: here's
fine revolution, an we had the trick to
see't. If these bones cost no more the
breeding but to play at loggats with 'em?
mine ache to think on't.

1ST CLOWN: [*Sings*]

A pick-axe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another*]

HAMLET: There's another: why may not
that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be
his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases,
his tenures, and his tricks? why does he
suffer this rude knave now to knock him
about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and
will not tell him of his action of battery?
Hum! This fellow might be in's time a
great buyer of land, with his statutes, his
recognizances, his fines, his double
vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine

of his fines, and the recovery of his re-
coveries, to have his fine pate full of fine
dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no
more of his purchases, and double ones
too, than the length and breadth of a pair
of indentures? The very conveyances of
his lands will hardly lie in this box; and
must the inheritor himself have no
more, ha?

HORATIO: Not a jot more, my lord.

HAMLET: Is not parchment made of sheep-
skins?

HORATIO: Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins
too.

HAMLET: They are sheep and calves which
seek out assurance in that I will speak
to this fellow—Whose grave's this, sir?

1ST CLOWN: Mine, sir.— [*Sings*]

O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

HAMLET: I think it be thine indeed; for
thou liest in't.

1ST CLOWN: You lie out on't, sir, and there-
fore it is not yours: for my part, I do
not lie in't, and yet it is mine.

HAMLET: Thou dost lie in't, to be in't, and
say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for
the quick; therefore thou liest.

1ST CLOWN: 'Tis a quick lie, sir: 'twill
away again from me to you.

HAMLET: What man dost thou dig it for?

1ST CLOWN: For no man, sir.

HAMLET: What woman, then?

1ST CLOWN: For none, neither.

HAMLET: Who is to be buried in't?

1ST CLOWN: One that was a woman, sir;
but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET: How absolute the knave is! we
must speak by the card, or equivocation
will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these
three years I have taken note of it; the
age is grown so picked that the toe of
the peasant comes so near the heel of the
courtier, he galls his kibe.—How long
hast thou been a grave-maker?

1ST CLOWN: Of all the days i' the year, I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet o'er came Fortinbras.

HAMLET: How long is that since?

1ST CLOWN: Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was the very day that young Hamlet was born,—he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAMLET: Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

1ST CLOWN: Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, it's no great matter there.

HAMLET: Why?

1ST CLOWN: 'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

HAMLET: How came he mad?

1ST CLOWN: Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET: How strangely?

1ST CLOWN: Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAMLET: Upon what ground?

1ST CLOWN: Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAMLET: How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

1ST CLOWN: Faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—as we have many pocky corsers now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in,—he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

HAMLET: Why he more than another?

1ST CLOWN: Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

HAMLET: Whose was it?

1ST CLOWN: A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

HAMLET: Nay, I know not.

1ST CLOWN: A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'a poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

HAMLET: This?

1ST CLOWN: E'en that.

HAMLET: Let me see. [*Takes the skull*]—Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come; make her laugh at that.—Pi'thee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO: What's that, my lord?

HAMLET: Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

HORATIO: E'en so.

HAMLET: And smelt so? pah!

[*Throws down the skull*]

HORATIO: E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET: To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

HORATIO: 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

HAMLET: No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus; Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to
clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind
away:

O, that that earth which kept the
world in awe

Should patch a wall to expel the win-
ter's flaw!—

But soft! but soft! aside.—Here comes the
king.

[*Enter Priests, &c., in procession; the
corpse of Ophelia, Laertes and
Mourners following; King, Queen,
their Trains, &c.*]

The queen, the courtiers: who is that they
follow?

And with such maimed rites? This doth
betoken

The corse they follow did with desperate
hand

Fordo its own life: 'twas of some estate.
Couch we awhile and mark.

[*Retiring with Horatio*]

LAFRIES: What ceremony else?

HAMLET: That is Laertes,

A very noble youth: mark.

LAFRIES: What ceremony else?

1ST PRIEST: Her obsequies have been as
far enlarg'd

As we have warrantise: her death was
doubtful;

And, but that great command o'ersways
the order,

She should in ground unsanctified have
lodg'd

Till the last trumpet; for charitable
prayers,

Shards, flints, and pebbles, should be
thrown on her,

Yet here she is allowed her virgin rites,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing
home

Of bell and burial.

LAFRIES: Must there no more be done?

1ST PRIEST: No more be done:

We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a *requem*, and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES: Lay her i' the earth;—
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!—I tell thee, churlish
priest,

A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET: What, the fair Ophelia!

QUEEN: Sweets to the sweet: farewell!

[*Scattering flowers*]

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Ham-
let's wife;

I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd,
sweet maid,

And not have strew'd thy grave.

LAFRIES: O, treble woe

Fall ten times treble on that cursed head

Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious
sense

Depriv'd thee of!—Hold off the earth
awhile,

Till I have caught her once more in mine
arms:

[*Leaps into the grave*]

Now pile your dust upon the quick and
dead,

Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'er-top old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAMLET [*Advancing*]: What is he whose
grief

Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of
sorrow

Conjures the wandering stars, and makes
them stand

Like wonder-wounded hearers? this is I,
Hamlet the Dane.

[*Leaps into the grave*]

LAERTES: The devil take thy soul!

[*Grappling with him*]

HAMLET: Thou pray'st not well.

I pr'ythee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenetic and rash,

Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear: away thy
hand.

KING: Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN: Hamlet! Hamlet!

ALL: Gentlemen,—

HORATIO: Good my lord, be quiet.
[*The Attendants part them, and they
come out of the grave*]

HAMLET: Why, I will fight with him upon
this theme

Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

QUEEN: O my son, what theme?

HAMLET: I lov'd Ophelia; forty thousand
brothers

Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.—What wilt thou do for
her?

KING: O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN: For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET: 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt
do.

Woul't weep? woul't fight? woul't fast?
woul't tear thyself?

Woul't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?

I'll do't.—Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I:

And, if thou prate of mountains, let them
throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a war! Nay, an thou'lt
mouth,

I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN: This is mere madness:

And thus awhile the fit will work on him;

Anon, as patient as the female dove,

When that her golden couplets are dis-
clos'd,

His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET: Hear you, sir;

What is the reason that you use me thus?

I lov'd you ever: but it is no matter;

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew, and dog will have his
day.

[*Exit*]

KING: I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon
him.—

[*Exit Horatio*]

Strengthen your patience in our last night's
speech;

[*To Laertes*]

We'll put the matter to the present push.—

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your
son.—

This grave shall have a living monument:

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT V. SCENE II.

A Hall in the Castle

[*Enter Hamlet and Horatio*]

HAMLET: So much for this, sir: now let
me see the other;

You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO: Remember it, my lord!

HAMLET: Sir, in my heart there was a kind
of fighting

That would not let me sleep: methought
I lay

Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.
Rashly,

And prais'd be rashness for it,—let us
know,

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail: and that
should teach us

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

HORATIO: This is most certain.

HAMLET: Up from my cabin,

My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Grop'd I to find out them: had my desire;
Finger'd their packet; and, in fine, with-
drew

To mine own room again: making so bold,

My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found,
Horatio,

O royal knavery! an exact command,—
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health and Eng-
land's too,

With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my
life,—

That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

HORATIO: Is't possible?

HAMLET: Here's the commission: read it at
more leisure.

But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO: I beseech you.

HAMLET: Being thus benetted round with
villanies,—

Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down;
Devis'd a new commission; wrote it fair:
I once did hold it, as our statists do,

A baseness to write fair, and labor'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou
know

The effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO: Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET: An earnest conjuration from the
king,—

As England was his faithful tributary;
As love between them like the palm might
flourish;

As peace should still her wheaten garland
wear

And stand a comma 'tween their amities;
And many such like as's of great charge,—

That, on the view and know of these con-
tents,

Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

HORATIO: How was this seal'd?

HAMLET: Why, even in that was heaven
ordinant.

I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in form of the other;
Subscrib'd it; gav't the impression; plac'd
it safely,

The changeling never known. Now, the
next day

Was our sea-fight; and what to this was
sequent

Thou know'st already.

HORATIO: So Guildenstern and Rosen-
crantz go to't.

HAMLET: Why, man, they did make love
to this employment;

They are not near my conscience; their
defeat

Does by their own insinuation grow:

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature
comes

Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO: Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET: Does it not, think'st thee, stand
me now upon,—

He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd
my mother;

Popp'd in between the election and my
hopes;

Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage,—is't not perfect
conscience

To quit him with this arm? and is't not to
be damn'd,

To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HORATIO: It must be shortly known to him
from England

What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET: It will be short: the interim is
mine;

And a man's life's no more than to say
One.

But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his: I'll court his favors:
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put
me

Into a towering passion.

HORATIO: Peace; who comes here?
[Enter Osric]

OSRIC: Your lordship is right welcome
back to Denmark.

HAMLET: I humbly thank you, sir.—Dost
know this water-fly?

HORATIO: No, my good lord.

HAMLET: Thy state is the more gracious;
for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath
much land, and fertile: let a beast be
lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand
at the king's mess: 'tis a chough; but, as
I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

OSRIC: Sweet lord, if your lordship were
at leisure,

I should impart a thing to you from his
majesty.

HAMLET: I will receive it with all diligence
of spirit.

Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for
the head.

OSRIC: I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

HAMLET: No, believe me, 'tis very cold;
the wind is northerly.

OSRIC: It is indifferent cold, my lord, in-
deed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is very sultry and hot
for my complexion.

OSRIC: Exceedingly, my lord; it is very
sultry,—as't were,—I cannot tell how.—
But, my lord, his majesty bade me sig-
nify to you that he has laid a great wager
on your head. Sir, this is the matter,—

HAMLET: I beseech you, remember,—
[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat]

OSRIC: Nay, in good faith; for mine ease,
in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to
court Laertes; believe me, an absolute

gentleman, full of most excellent differ-
ences, of very soft society and great
showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of
him, he is the card or calendar of gentry,
for you shall find in him the continent
of what part a gentleman would see.

HAMLET: Sir, his desinement suffers no
perdition in you;—though, I know, to
divide him inventorially would dizzy the
arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw
neither, in respect of his quick sail. But,
in the verity of extolment, I take him to
be a soul of great article; and his infusion
of such dearth and rareness as, to make
true diction of him, his semblable is his
mirror; and who else would trace him,
his umbrage, nothing more.

OSRIC: Your lordship speaks most infallibly
of him.

HAMLET: The concernancy, sir? why do
we wrap the gentleman in our more
rawer breath?

OSRIC: Sir?

HORATIO: Is't not possible to understand
in another tongue? You will do't sir,
really.

HAMLET: What imports the nomination
of this gentleman?

OSRIC: Of Laertes?

HORATIO: His purse is empty already; all's
golden words are spent.

HAMLET: Of him, sir.

OSRIC: I know, you are not ignorant.—

HAMLET: I would you did, sir; yet, in
faith, if you did, it would not much ap-
prove me.—Well, sir.

OSRIC: You are not ignorant of what ex-
cellence Laertes is,—

HAMLET: I dare not confess that, lest I
should compare with him in excellence;
but to know a man well were to know
himself.

OSRIC: I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in
the imputation laid on him by them, in
his meed he's unfellowed.

HAMLET: What's his weapon?

OSRIC: Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET: That's two of his weapons: but, well.

OSRIC: The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET: What call you the carriages?

HORATIO: I know you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

OSRIC: The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAMLET: The phrase would be more german to the matter if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal conceited carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish: why is this imponed, as you call it?

OSRIC: The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between you and him he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET: How if I answer no?

OSRIC: I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET: Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me: let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC: Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

HAMLET: To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC: I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET: Yours, yours.

[Exit Osric]

He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for's turn.

HORATIO: This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

HAMLET: He did comply with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he,—and many more of the same bevy, that I know the drossy age dotes on,—only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

[Enter a Lord]

LORD: My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall: he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

HAMLET: I am constant to my purposes; they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD: The king and queen and all are coming down.

HAMLET: In happy time.

LORD: The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

HAMLET: She well instructs me.

[Exit Lord]

HORATIO: You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET: I do not think so; since he went into France I have been in continual practice: I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HORATIO: Nay, good my lord,—

HAMLET: It is but foolery; but it is such
a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps
trouble a woman.

HORATIO: If your mind dislike anything,
obey it: I will forestall their repair
hither, and say you are not fit.

HAMLET: Not a whit, we defy augury:
there's a special providence in the fall
of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to
come; if it be not to come, it will be
now; if it be not now, yet it will come:
the readiness is all. Since no man has
aught of what he leaves, what is't to
leave betimes?

[Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Lords,
Osric, and Attendants with foils, &c.]

KING: Come, Hamlet, come, and take this
hand from me.

[The King puts Laertes's hand into
Hamlet's]

HAMLET: Give me your pardon, sir: I have
done you wrong:

But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows, and you must needs
have heard,

How I am punish'd with sore distraction.
What I have done,

That might your nature, honor, and ex-
ception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was mad-
ness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never
Hamlet:

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong
Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it, then? His madness: if't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil
Free me so far in your most generous
thoughts

That I have shot mine arrow o'er the
house

And hurt my brother.

LAERTIS: I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me
most

To my revenge: but in my terms of honor
I stand aloof; and will no reconcilment
Till by some elder masters of known
honor

I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that
time

I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

HAMLET: I embrace it freely;
And will this brother's wager frankly
play.—

Give us the foils; come on.

LAERTIS: Come, one for me.
HAMLET: I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine
ignorance

Your skill shall, like a star in the darkest
night,

Stick fiery off indeed.

LAERTIS: You mock me, sir.

HAMLET: No, by this hand.

KING: Give them the foils, young Osric.
Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

HAMLET: Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the
weaker side.

KING: I do not fear it; I have seen you
both;

But since he's better'd, we have therefore
odds.

LAERTIS: This is too heavy, let me see
another.

HAMLET: This likes me well. These foils
have all a length?

[They prepare to play]

OSRIC: Ay, my good lord.

KING: Set me the stoups of wine upon that
table,—

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better
breath;

And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive
kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me
the cups;

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens
to earth,

Now the king drinks to Hamlet.—Come,
begin;—

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAMLET: Come on, sir.

LAERTES: Come, my lord.

[*They play*]

HAMLET: One.

LAERTES: No.

HAMLET: Judgment.

OSRIC: A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES: Well;—again.

KING: Stay, give me a drink.—Hamlet,
this pearl is thine;

Here's to thy health.—

[*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off
within*]

Give him the cup.

HAMLET: I'll play this bout first; set it by
awhile.—

Come.—Another hit; what say you?

[*They play*]

LAERTES: A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING: Our son shall win.

QUEEN: He's fat, and scant of breath.—
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy
brows:

The queen carouses to thy fortune, Ham-
let.

HAMLET: Good madam!

KING: Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN: I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon
me.

KING [*Aside*]: It is the poison'd cup; it is
too late.

HAMLET: I dare not drink yet, madam; by
and by.

QUEEN: Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES: My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING: I do not think't.

LAERTES [*Aside*]: And yet 'tis almost
'gainst my conscience.

HAMLET: Come, for the third, Laertes:
you but dally;

I pray you, pass with your best violence:
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES: Say you so? come on.

[*They play*]

OSRIC: Nothing, neither way.

LAERTES: Have at you now!

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in
scuffling, they change rapiers, and
Hamlet wounds Laertes*]

KING: Part them; they are incens'd.

HAMLET: Nay, come, again.

[*The Queen falls*]

OSRIC: Look to the queen there, ho!

HORATIO: They bleed on both sides.—How
is it, my lord?

OSRIC: How is't, Laertes?

LAERTES: Why, as a woodcock to my own
springe, Osric;

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

HAMLET: How does the queen?

KING: She swoons to see them bleed.

QUEEN: No, no, the drink, the drink,—O
my dear Hamlet,—

The drink, the drink!—I am poison'd.

[*Dies*]

HAMLET: O villainy!—Ho! let the door
be lock'd:

Treachery! seek it out.

[*Laertes falls*]

LAERTES: It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou
art slain;

No medicine in the world can do thee good;

In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd:
I can no more:—the king, the king's to
blame.

HAMLET: The point envenom'd too!—
Then venom to thy work.

[*Stabs the King*]

OSRIC AND LORDS: Treason! treason!

KING: O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.

HAMLET: Here, thou incestuous, murder-
ous, damned Dane,

Drink off this potion.—Is thy union here?
Follow my mother.

[*King dies*]

LAERTES: He is justly serv'd;

It is a poison temper'd by himself.—

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble
Hamlet:

Mine and my father's death come not upon
thee,

Nor thine on me!

[*Dies*]

HAMLET: Heaven make thee free of it! I
follow thee.—

I am dead, Horatio.—Wretched queen,
adieu!—

You that look pale and tremble at this
chance,

That art but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant,
death,

Is strict in his arrest,—O, I could tell you,—
But let it be.—Horatio, I am dead;

Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO: Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a
Dane,—

Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET: As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup; let go; by heaven, I'll
have't.—

O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live
behind me!

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath
in pain,

To tell my story.—

[*March afar off, and shot within*]

What warlike noise is this?

OSRIC: Young Fortinbras, with conquest
come from Poland,

To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

HAMLET: O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my
spirit:

I cannot live to hear the news from Eng-
land;

But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and
less,

Which have solicited.—The rest is silence.

[*Dies*]

HORATIO: Now cracks a noble heart.—

Good-night, sweet prince,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
Why does the drum come hither?

[*March within. Enter Fortinbras, the
English Ambassadors, and others*]

FORTINBRAS: Where is this sight?

HORATIO: What is it you would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your
search.

FORTINBRAS: This quarry cries on havoc.—
O proud death,

What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?

1ST AMBASSADOR: The sight is dismal;

And our affairs from England come too late:

The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,

To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead:

Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO: Not from his mouth,
Had it the ability of life to thank you:

He never gave commandment for their death.

But since, so jump upon this bloody question,

You from the Polack wars, and you from England,

Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies

High on a stage be placed to the view;

And let me speak to the yet unknowing world

How these things came about: so shall you hear

Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;

Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;

Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause;

And, in this upshot, purposes mistook

Fall'n on the inventors' heads: all this can I Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS: Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.

For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:

I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,

Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO: Of that I shall have also cause to speak,

And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:

But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild: lest more mischance

On plots and errors happen.

FORTINBRAS: Let four captains

Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage;

For he was likely, had he been put on,

To have prov'd most royally: and, for his passage,

The soldier's music and the rites of war

Speak loudly for him.—

Take up the bodies.—Such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much

amiss.

Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march*]

[*Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies: after which a peal of ordnance is shot off*]

Euripides

(480-406 B.C.)

EURIPIDES, *the last and most modern of the great Greek tragic dramatists, was the least popular of them all in Athens during his life. He had a surplus of enemies in the city, and became the unfortunate butt of the comic poets. According to Aristophanes, the most devastating of them, Euripides was a low-born panderer to popular taste, insincere, and a cantankerous misogynist who insulted womanhood in his plays.*

Actually Euripides was born of aristocratic parents and in his youth held offices which were reserved for the children of prominent citizens; he was so uncompromisingly sincere as to court displeasure; and he treated women with more sympathy and understanding than did any of his fellow dramatists. Euripides was, however, a melancholy and reserved poet who was anything but congenial company, and he shocked his audiences with his unconventional approach to sexual and moral problems. He was, moreover, a member of the unpopular peace party during the Peloponnesian War, and an opponent of Athenian imperialism.

In fifty years of writing he won only five prizes in the annual dramatic contests, and he found it necessary to spend the last year and a half of his life in virtual exile at the court of Macedonia, where he died in 406 B.C. According to various legends, which reflected the animosity of his detractors, he was torn to pieces by the king's hounds or killed by frenzied women in revenge. But he was more honored in death than in life: Sophocles clothed his chorus in black as a mark of respect, and the Athenian state raised a cenotaph in his honor. The entire Hellenic world paid tribute to the playwright; he became the most popular of the Greek dramatists, so that his plays were in time performed regularly on three continents.

Euripides, who approached ethical and political problems as a rationalist and a humanitarian, was aptly called by Nietzsche "the poet of esthetic Socratism." There were, in fact, stories current in Athens that he was aided in the composition of his plays by Socrates. Certainly Euripides, like the great philosopher, paid scant respect to the polytheistic beliefs of his day. In the Ion the god Phoebus is guilty of immorality and deception; in the Electra he is openly blamed for having ordered Orestes to kill his mother. In The Trojan Women, perhaps the most moving of all pacifist dramas, and in the Hecuba, which condemns the malevolence of both victors and victims, Euripides made passionate attacks on the savagery of war. His Hecuba and Iphigenia in Aulis

went far toward deflating conventional heroism and demonstrating how closely it can approach cowardice and rank egotism.

It is also part of Euripides' modernity (which brings him close to Ibsen, Strindberg, and O'Neill) that he entertained a keen interest in psychological problems. His findings, as a matter of fact, often harmonize with the subtlest observations of modern psychologists. Without employing any of our current labels he treated the dangers of sexual repression in his *Hippolytus*, and acknowledged the creative and demonic power of instinct in his last tragedy, *The Bacchae*.

Heroes like *Admetus*, *Jason*, *Agamemnon*, and *Achilles*, held in popular esteem as paragons of manly virtue, appeared on the stage of Euripides as shoddy specimens of humanity. Women, hitherto either idealized or ignored, filled his tragedies with their passions and problems. Approaching these characters sympathetically and with uncanny psychological penetration, Euripides succeeded in drawing many of the most poignantly real women in literature. *The Alcestis*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, and *Electra* may present a variety of complex situations, but they are character studies which perplexed or outraged the Athenian playgoer with their slashing honesty.

Nevertheless, Euripides is not to be classed unreservedly with modern realistic writers and purveyors of problem plays. Some of his dramas, notably *The Alcestis* and *The Cyclops*, have a *Midsummer Night's Dream* quality. And all his works, irrespective of the problems they pose and the psychological depths they explore, are generally written in poetry of the highest order. A Euripidean tragedy pours finite into infinite: the finite, realistic matter of the personal conflict into the infinite of universal meaning and wonder. The primitive structure of many of the plays accentuates their poetic quality; their prologues and epilogues, in which deities introduce the action and resolve it at the end, produce the impression of a reality beyond the actual human struggle.

Electra, one of Euripides' last masterpieces, composed in 413 B.C., exemplifies many of his strongest qualities as a dramatist and a social thinker. It is in the main a profoundly realistic drama. It transforms a traditional heroine into a pathetically frustrated woman, condemns primitive morality, and replaces it with the ideals of reason and humane enlightenment.

J. G.

ELECTRA

BY EURIPIDES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE BY GILBERT MURRAY

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

CLYTEMNESTRA, *Queen of Argos and Mycenae, widow of Agamemnon*

ELECTRA, *daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra*

ORESTES, *son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, now in banishment*

A PEASANT, *husband of Electra*

AN OLD MAN, *formerly servant to Agamemnon*

PYLADES, *son of Strophios, King of Phocis; friend to Orestes*

ÆGISTHUS, *usurping King of Argos and Mycenae, now husband of Clytemnestra*

The Heroes CASTOR and POLYDEUCES

CHORUS of Argive Women, with their LEADER

FOLLOWERS OF ORESTES; HANDMAIDS OF CLYTEMNESTRA

The scene is laid in the mountains of Argos

The scene represents a hut on a desolate mountain side; the river Inachus is visible in the distance. The time is the dusk of early dawn, before sunrise. The Peasant is discovered in front of the hut.

PEASANT:

Old gleam on the face of the world, I give thee hail,

River of Argos land, where sail on sail

The long ships met, a thousand, near and far,

When Agamemnon walked the seas in war;

Who smote King Priam in the dust, and burned

The storied streets of Ilion, and returned
Above all conquerors, heaping tower and fane

Of Argos high with spoils of Eastern slain.
So in far lands he prospered; and at home

His own wife trapped and slew him. 'Twas the doom

Ægisthus wrought, son of his father's foe.

Gone is that King, and the old spear laid low

That Tantalus wielded when the world was young.

Ægisthus hath his queen, and reigns among

His people. And the children here alone,
Orestes and Electra, buds unblown

Of man and womanhood, when forth to Troy

He shook his sail and left them—lo, the boy
Orestes, ere Ægisthus' hand could fall,

Was stolen from Argos—borne by one old thrall,

Who served his father's boyhood, over seas
Far off, and laid upon King Strophios' knees

In Phocis, for the old king's sake. But here
The maid Electra waited, year by year,

Alone, till the warm days of womanhood
Drew nigh and suitors came of gentle blood

In Hellas. Then Ægisthus was in fear
Lest she be wed in some great house, and bear

A son to avenge her father. Close he wrought

Her prison in his house, and gave her not
To any wooer. Then, since even this
Was full of peril, and the secret kiss
Of some bold prince might find her yet,
and rend

Her prison walls, Aegisthus at the end
Would slay her. Then her mother, she so wild

Aforetime, pled with him and saved her child.

Her heart had still an answer for her lord
Murdered, but if the child's blood spoke,
what word

Could meet the hate thereof? After that day

Aegisthus thus decreed: whoso should slay
The old king's wandering son, should win
rich meed

Of gold; and for Electra, she must wed
With me, not base of blood—in that I stand

True Mycenacan—but in gold and land
Most poor, which maketh highest birth
as naught.

So from a powerless husband shall be wrought

A powerless peril. Had some man of might
Possessed her, he had called perchance to light

Her father's blood, and unknown vengeances

Risen on Aegisthus yet.

Aye, mine she is:

But never yet these arms—the Cyprian knows

My truth!—have clasped her body, and she goes

A virgin still. Myself would hold it shame
To abase this daughter of a royal name.

I am too lowly to love violence. Yea,
Orestes too doth move me, far away,
Mine unknown brother! Will he ever now

Come back and see his sister bowed so low?

Doth any deem me fool, to hold a fair
Maid in my room and seek no joy, but spare

Her maidenhood? If any such there be,
Let him but look within. The fool is he
In gentle things, weighing the more and less

Of love by his own heart's untenderness.

[*As he ceases Electra comes out of the hut. She is in mourning garb, and carries a large pitcher on her head. She speaks without observing the Peasant's presence*]

ELECTRA:

Dark shepherdess of many a golden star,
Dost see me, Mother Night? And how this jar

Hath worn my earth-bowed head, as forth and fro

For water to the hillward springs I go?
Not for mere stress of need, but purpose set,

That never day nor night God may forget
Aegisthus' sin: aye, and perchance a cry
Cast forth to the waste shining of the sky
May find my father's ear. . . . The woman bred

Of Tyndareus, my mother—on her head
Be curses!—from my house hath outcast me;

She hath borne children to our enemy;
She hath made me naught, she hath made
Orestes naught. . . .

[*As the bitterness of her tone increases, the Peasant comes forward*]

PEASANT:

What wouldst thou now, my sad one, ever
fraught

With toil to lighten my toil? And so soft
Thy nurture was! Have I not chid thee oft,
And thou wilt cease not, serving without
end?

ELECTRA: [*Turning to him with impulsive affection*]

O friend, my friend, as God might be my friend,

Thou only hast not trampled on my tears. Life scarce can be so hard, 'mid many fears

And many shames, when mortal heart can find

Somewhere one healing touch, as my sick mind

Finds thee. . . . And should I wait thy word, to endure

A little for thine easing, yea, or pour My strength out in thy toiling fellowship? Thou hast enough with fields and kine to keep;

'Tis mine to make all bright within the door.

'Tis joy to him that toils, when toil is o'er, To find home waiting, full of happy things.

PEASANI:

If so it please thee, go thy way. The springs Are not far off. And I before the morn Must drive my team afield, and sow the corn

In the hollows.—Not a thousand prayers can gain

A man's bare bread, save an he work amain.

[*Electra and the Peasant depart on their several ways. After a few moments there enter stealthily two armed men, Orestes and Pylades*]

ORESTES:

Thou art the first that I have known in deed

True and my friend, and shelterer of my need.

Thou only, Pylades, of all that knew, Hast held Orestes of some worth, all through

These years of helplessness, wherein I lie Downtrodden by the murderer—yea, and by

The murderess, my mother! . . . I am come,

Fresh from the cleansing of Apollo, home To Argos—and my coming no man yet Knoweth—to pay the bloody twain their debt

Of blood. This very night I crept alone To my dead father's grave, and poured thereon

My heart's first tears and tresses of my head

New-shorn, and o'er the barrow of the dead

Slew a black lamb, unknown of them that reign

In this unhappy land. . . . I am not fain To pass the city gates, but hold me here Hard on the borders. So my road is clear To fly if men look close and watch my way;

If not, to seek my sister. For men say She dwelleth in these hills, no more a maid

But wedded. I must find her house, for aid

To guide our work, and learn what hath betid

Of late in Argos.—Ha, the radiant lid Of Dawn's eye lifteth! Come, friend; leave we now

This trodden path. Some worker of the plough,

Or serving damsel at her early task Will presently come by, whom we may ask

If here my sister dwells. But soft! Even now

I see some bondmaid there, her death-shorn brow

Bending beneath its freight of well-water. Lie close until she pass; then question her.

A slave might help us well, or speak some
sign

Of import to this work of mine and thine.

[*The two men retire into ambush.*

Electra enters, returning from the well]

ELECTRA:

Onward, O laboring tread,

As on move the years;

Onward amid thy tears,

O happier dead!

[*Strophe 1.*

Let me remember. I am she,
Agamemnon's child, and the mother of
me

Clytemnestra, the evil Queen,

Helen's sister. And folk, I ween,

That pass in the streets call yet my name
Electra. . . . God protect my shame!

For toil, toil is a weary thing,

And life is heavy about my head;

And thou far off, O Father and King,

In the lost lands of the dead.

A bloody twain made these things be;

One was thy bitterest enemy,

And one the wife that lay by thee.

[*Antistrophe 1.*

Brother, brother, on some far shore

Hast thou a city, is there a door

That knows thy footfall, Wondering One?

Who left me, left me, when all our pain

Was bitter about us, a father slain,

And a girl that wept in her room alone.

Thou couldst break me this bondage
sore,

Only thou, who art far away,

Loose our father, and wake once more

Zeus, Zeus, dost hear me pray? . . .

The sleeping blood and the shame and the
doom!

O feet that rest not, over the foam

Of distant seas, come home, come home!

[*Strophe 2.*

What boots this cruse that I carry?

O, set free my brow!

For the gathered tears that tarry

Through the day and the dark till now,

Now in the dawn are free,

Father, and flow beneath

The floor of the world, to be

As a song in the house of Death:

From the rising up of the day

They guide my heart alway,

The silent tears unshed,

And my body mourns for the dead;

My cheeks bleed silently,

And these bruised temples keep

Their pain, remembering thee

And thy bloody sleep.

Be rent, O hair of mine head!

As a swan crying alone

Where the river windeth cold,

For a loved, for a silent one,

Whom the toils of the fowler hold,

I cry, Father, to thee,

O slain in misery!

[*Antistrophe 2.*

The water, the wan water,

Lapped him, and his head

Drooped in the bed of slaughter

Low, as one wearied;

Woe for the edgèd axe,

And woe for the heart of hate,

Houndlike about thy tracks,

O conqueror desolate,

From Troy over land and sea,

Till a wife stood waiting thee;

Not with crowns did she stand,

Nor flowers of peace in her hand;

With Aegisthus' dagger drawn

For her hire she strove,

Through shame and through blood alone;

And won her a traitor's love.

[*As she ceases there enter from right
and left the Chorus, consisting of
women of Argos, young and old, in
festal dress*]

CHORUS: [*Some Women*]

[*Strophe.*]

Child of the mighty dead,
Electra, lo, my way
To thee in the dawn hath sped,
And the cot on the mountain gray,
For the Watcher hath cried this day:
He of the ancient folk,
The walker of waste and hill,
Who drinketh the milk of the flock;
And he told of Hera's will;
For the morrow's morrow now
They cry her festival,
And before her throne shall bow
Our damsels all.

ELECTRA:

Not unto joy, nor sweet
Music, nor shining of gold,
The wings of my spirit beat.
Let the brides of Argos hold
Their dance in the night, as of old;
I lead no dance; I mark
No beat as the dancers sway;
With tears I dwell in the dark,
And my thought is of tears away,
To the going down of the day.
Look on my wasted hair
And raiment. . . . This that I bear,
Is it meet for the King my sire,
And her whom the King begot?
For Troy, that was burned with fire
And forgetteth not?

CHORUS: [*Other Women*]

[*Antistrophe.*]

Hera is great!—Ah, come,
Be kind; and my hand shall bring
Fair raiment, work of the loom,
And many a golden thing,
For joyous robe-wearing.
Deemest thou this thy woe
Shall rise unto God as prayer,
Or bend thine haters low?
Doth God for thy pain have care?

Not tears for the dead nor sighs,
But worship and joy divine
Shall win thee peace in thy skies,
O daughter mine!

ELECTRA:

No care cometh to God
For the voice of the helpless; none
For the crying of ancient blood.
Alas for him that is gone,
And for thee, O wandering one:
That now, methinks, in a land
Of the stranger must toil for hire,
And stand where the poor men stand,
A-cold by another's fire,
O son of the mighty sire.
While I in a beggar's cot
On the wrecked hills, changing not,
Starve in my soul for food;
But our mother lieth wed
In another's arms, and blood
Is about her bed.

LEADER.

On all of Greece she wrought great jeopardy,
Thy mother's sister, Helen,—and on thee.
[*Orestes and Pylades move out from their concealment, Orestes comes forward: Pylades beckons to two armed servants and stays with them in the background.*]

ELECTRA:

Woe's me! No more of wailing! Women,
flee!
Stranged armed men beside the dwelling
there
Lie ambushed! They are rising from their
lair.
Back by the road, all you. I will essay
The house; and may our good feet save
us!

ORESTES: [*Between Electra and the hut*]
Stay,
Unhappy woman! Never fear my steel.

ELECTRA: [*In utter panic*]
O bright Apollo! Mercy! See, I kneel;
Slay me not.

ORESTES:
Others I have yet to slay
Less dear than thou.

ELECTRA:
Go from me! Wouldst thou lay
Hand on a body that is not for thee?

ORESTES:
None is there I would touch more right-
cously.

ELECTRA:
Why lurk'st thou by my house? And why
a sword?

ORESTES:
Stay. Listen! Thou wilt not gainsay my
word.

ELECTRA:
There—I am still. Do what thou wilt with
me.

Thou art too strong.

ORESTES:
A word I bear to thee . . .
Word of thy brother.

ELECTRA:
Oh, friend! More than friend!
Living or dead?

ORESTES:
He lives; so let me send
My comfort foremost, ere the rest be heard.

ELECTRA:
God love thee for the sweetness of thy
word!

ORESTES:
God love the twain of us, both thee and
me.

ELECTRA:
He lives! Poor brother! In what land
wearth he
His exile?

ORESTES:
Not one region nor one lot
His wasted life hath trod.

ELECTRA:
He lacketh not
For bread?

ORESTES:
Bread hath he; but a man is weak
In exile.

ELECTRA:
What charge laid he on thee? Speak.

ORESTES:
To learn if thou still live, and how the
storm,
Living, hath struck thee.

ELECTRA:
That thou seest; this form
Wasted . . .

ORESTES:
Yea, riven with the fire of woe.
I sigh to look on thee.

ELECTRA:
My face; and, lo,
My temples of their ancient glory shorn.

ORESTES:
Methinks thy brother haunts thee, being
forlorn;
Aye, and perchance thy father, whom they
slew . . .

ELECTRA:
What should be nearer to me than those
two? . . .

ORESTES:
And what to him, thy brother, half so dear
As thou?

ELECTRA:
His is a distant love, not near
At need.

ORESTES:
But why this dwelling place, this life
Of loneliness?

ELECTRA: [*With sudden bitterness*]
Stranger, I am a wife. . . .
O better dead!

ORESTES:
That seals thy brother's doom!
What Prince of Argos? . . .

ELECTRA:

Not the man to whom
My father thought to give me.

ORFESTES:

Speak; that I
May tell thy brother all.

ELECTRA:

'Tis there, hard by,
His dwelling, where I live, far from men's
eyes.

ORFESTES:

Some ditcher's cot, or cowherd's, by its
guise!

ELECTRA: [*Struck with shame for her in-
gratitude*]

A poor man; but true-hearted, and to me
God-fearing.

ORFESTES:

How? What fear of God hath he?

ELECTRA:

He hath never held my body to his own.

ORFESTES:

Hath he some vow to keep? Or is it done
To scorn thee?

ELECTRA:

Nay; he only scorns to sin
Against my father's greatness.

ORFESTES:

But to win
A princess! Doth his heart not leap for
pride?

ELECTRA:

He honoreth not the hand that gave the
bride.

ORFESTES:

I see. He trembles for Orestes' wrath?

ELECTRA:

Aye, that would move him. But beside, he
hath
A gentle heart.

ORFESTES:

Strange! A good man. . . . I swear
He well shall be required.

ELECTRA:

Whence'er
Our wanderer comes again!

ORFESTES:

Thy mother stays
Unmoved 'mid all thy wrong?

ELECTRA:

A lover weighs
More than a child in any woman's heart.

ORFESTES:

But what end seeks Aegisthus, by such art
Of shame?

ELECTRA:

To make mine unborn children low
And weak, even as my husband

ORFESTES:

Lest there grow
From thee the avenger?

ELECTRA:

Such his purpose is:
For which may I requite him!

ORFESTES:

And of this
Thy virgin life—Aegisthus knows it?

ELECTRA:

Nay,
We speak it not. It cometh not his way.

ORFESTES:

These women hear us. Are they friends to
thee?

ELECTRA:

Aye, friends and true. They will keep faith-
fully

All words of mine and thine.

ORFESTES: [*Tying her*]

Thou art well stayed
With friends. And could Orestes give thee
aid

In aught, if e'er . . .

ELECTRA:

Shame on thee! Seest thou not?
Is it not time?

ORFESTES: [*Catching her excitement*]

How time? And if he sought
To slay, how should he come at his desire?

ELECTRA:

By daring, as they dared who slew his sire!

ORESTES:

Wouldst thou dare with him, if he came,
thou too,
To slay her?

ELECTRA:

Yes; with the same ax that slew
My father!

ORESTES:

'Tis thy message? And thy mood
Unchanging?

ELECTRA:

Let me shed my mother's blood,
And I die happy.

ORESTES:

God! . . . I would that now
Orestes heard thee here.

ELECTRA:

Yet, wottest thou,
Though here I saw him, I should know
him not.

ORESTES:

Surely. Ye both were children, when they
wrought
Your parting.

ELECTRA:

One alone in all this land
Would know his face.

ORESTES:

The thrall, methinks, whose hand
Stole him from death—or so the story ran?

ELECTRA:

He taught my father, too, an old old man
Of other days than these.

ORESTES:

Thy father's grave . . .
He had due rites and tendance?

ELECTRA:

What chance gave,
My father had, cast out to rot in the sun.

ORESTES:

God, 'tis too much! . . . To hear of such
things done

Even to a stranger, stings a man. . . . But
speak,

Tell of thy life, that I may know, and seek
Thy brother with a tale that must be heard
Hove'er it sicken If mine eyes be blurred,
Remember, 'tis the fool that feels not. Aye,
Wisdom is full of pity; and thereby
Men pay for too much wisdom with much
pain.

LEADLR:

My heart is moved as this man's. I would
fain

Learn all thy tale. Here dwelling on the
hills

Little I know of Argos and its ills.

ELECTRA:

If I must speak—and at love's call, God
knows,

I fear not—I will tell thee all; my woes,
My father's woes, and—O, since thou hast
stirred

This storm of speech, thou bear him this
my word—

His woes and shame! Tell of this narrow
cloak

In the wind; this grime and reek of toil,
that choke

My breathing; this low roof that bows
my head

After a king's. This raiment . . . thread by
thread,

'Tis I must weave it, or go bare—must
bring,

Myself, each jar of water from the spring.
No holy day for me, no festival,

No dance upon the green! From all, from
all

I am cut off. No portion hath my life

'Mid wives of Argos, being no true wife.

No portion where the maidens throng to
praise

Castor—my Castor, whom in ancient days,
Ere he passed from us and men worshipped
him,

They named my bridegroom!—

And she, she! . . . The grim
Troy spoils gleam round her throne, and
by each hand

Queens of the East, my father's prisoners,
stand,

A cloud of Orient webs and tangling gold.
And there upon the floor, the blood, the
old

Black blood, yet crawls and cankers, like a
rot

In the stone! And on our father's chariot
The murderer's foot stands glorying, and
the red

False hand uplifts that ancient staff, that
led

The armies of the world! . . . Aye, tell him
how

The grave of Agamemnon, even now,
Lacketh the common honor of the dead;
A desert barrow, where no tears are shed,
No tresses hung, no gift, no myrtle spray.

And when the wine is in him, so men say,
Our mother's mighty master leaps thereon,
Spurning the slab, or pelteth stone on
stone,

Flouting the lone dead and the twain that
live:

“Where is thy son Orestes? Doth he give
Thy tomb good tendance? Or is all for-
got?”

So is he scorned because he cometh not . . .

O Stranger, on my knees, I charge thee,
tell

This tale, not mine, but of dumb wrongs
that swell

Crowding—and I the trumpet of their
pain,

This tongue, these arms, this bitter burning
brain;

These dead shorn locks, and he for whom
they died!

His father slew Troy's thousands in their
pride

He hath but one to kill. . . . O God, but
one!

Is he a man, and Agamemnon's son?

LEADER:

But hold: is this thy husband from the
plain.

His labor ended, hasting home again?

[*Enter the Peasant*]

PEASANT:

Ha, who be these? Strange men in arms
before

My house! What would they at this lonely
door?

Seek they for me?—Strange gallants should
not stay

A woman's goings.

ELECTRA:

Friend and helper!—Nay,

Think not of any evil. These men be
Friends of Orestes, charged with words
for me! . . .

Strangers, forgive his speech.

PEASANT:

What word have they
Of him? At least he lives and sees the day?

ELECTRA:

So fares their tale—and sure I doubt it not!

PEASANT:

And ye two still are living in his thought,
Thou and his father?

ELECTRA:

In his dreams we live.
An exile hath small power.

PEASANT:

And did he give
Some privy message?

ELECTRA:

None: they come as spies
For news of me.

PEASANT:

Thine outward news their eyes

Can see; the rest, methinks, thyself will tell.

ELECTRA:

They have seen all, heard all. I trust them well.

PEASANT:

Why were our doors not open long ago?—
Be welcome, strangers both, and pass below

My lintel. In return for your glad words
Be sure all greeting that mine house affords

Is yours.—Ye followers, bear in their gear!—

Gainsay me not; for his sake are ye dear
That sent you to our house; and though my part

In life be low, I am no churl at heart.

[*The Peasant goes to the armed Servants at the back, to help them with the baggage*]

ORSTES: [*Aside to Electra*]

Is this the man that shields thy maidenhood

Unknown, and will not wrong thy father's blood?

ELECTRA:

He is called my husband. 'Tis for him I toil.

ORSTES:

How dark lies honor hid! And what turmoil

In all things human: sons of mighty men
Fallen to naught, and from ill seed again
Good fruit: yea, famine in the rich man's scroll

Writ deep, and in poor flesh a lordly soul.
As, lo, this man, not great in Argos, not
With pride of house uplifted, in a lot
Of unmarked life hath shown a prince's grace.

[*To the Peasant, who has returned*]

All that is here of Agamemnon's race,
And all that lacketh yet, for whom we come,

Do thank thee, and the welcome of thy home

Accept with gladness.—Ho, men; hasten ye

Within!—This open-hearted poverty
Is blither to my sense than feasts of gold.

Lady, thine husband's welcome makes me bold;

Yet would thou hadst thy brother, before all

Confessed, to greet us in a prince's hall!
Which may be, even yet. Apollo spake

The word; and surely, though small store
I make

Of man's divining, God will fail us not.

[*Orestes and Pylades go in, following the Servants*]

LEADER:

O never was the heart of hope so hot
Within me. How? So moveless in time
past,

Hath Fortune girded up her loins at last?

ELECTRA:

Now know'st thou not thine own ill furniture,

To bid these strangers in, to whom for sure

Our best were hardship, men of gentle breed?

PEASANT:

Nay, if the men be gentle, as indeed

I deem them, they will take good cheer
or ill

With even kindness.

ELECTRA:

'Twas ill done; but still—

Go, since so poor thou art, to that old friend

Who reared my father. At the realm's last end

He dwells, where Tanaos river foams between

Argos and Sparta. Long time hath he been

An exile 'mid his flocks. Tell him what
 thing
 Hath chanced on me, and bid him haste
 and bring
 Meat for the strangers' tending.—Glad, I
 trow,
 That old man's heart will be, and many
 a vow
 Will lift to God, to learn the child he stole
 From death, yet breathes.—I will not ask
 a dole
 From home; how should my mother help
 me? Nay,
 I pity him that seeks that door, to say
 Orestes liveth!

PEASANT:

Wilt thou have it so?

I will take word to the old man. But go
 Quickly within, and whatso there thou
 find
 Set out for them. A woman, if her mind
 So turn, can light on many a pleasant
 thing
 To fill her board. And surely plenshing
 We have for this one day.—'Tis in such
 shifts
 As these, I care for riches, to make gifts
 To friends, or lead a sick man back to
 health
 With ease and plenty. Else small aid is
 wealth
 For daily gladness; once a man be done
 With hunger, rich and poor are all as one.
 [*The Peasant goes off to the left; Elec-
 tra goes into the house*]

CHORUS:

[*Strophe 1.*]

O for the ships of Troy, the beat
 Of oars that shimmered
 Innumerable, and dancing feet
 Of Nereids glimmered;
 And dolphins, drunken with the lyre,
 Across the dark blue prows, like fire,
 Did bound and quiver,

To cleave the way for Thetis' son,
 Fleet-in-the-wind Achilles, on
 To war, to war, till Troy be won
 Beside the reedy river.

[*Antistrophe 1.*]

Up from Eubœa's caverns came
 The Nereids, bearing
 Gold armor from the Lords of Flame,
 Wrought for his wearing:
 Long sought those daughters of the deep,
 Up Pelion's glen, up Ossa's steep
 Forest enchanted,
 Where Peleus reared alone, afar,
 His lost sea-maiden's child, the star
 Of Hellas, and swift help of war
 When weary armies panted.

[*Strophe 2.*]

There came a man from Troy, and told
 Here in the haven,
 How, orb on orb, to strike with cold
 The Trojan, o'er that targe of gold,
 Dread shapes were graven.
 All round the level rim thereof
 Perseus, on winged feet, above
 The long seas hued him;
 The Gorgon's wild and bleeding hair
 He lifted; and a herald fair,
 He of the wilds, whom Maia bare,
 God's Hermes, flew beside him.

[*Antistrophe 2.*]

But midmost, where the boss rose higher,
 A sun stood blazing,
 And winged steeds, and stars in choir,
 Hyad and Pleiad, fire on fire,
 For Hector's dazing:
 Across the golden helm, each way,
 Two taloned Sphinxes held their prey,
 Song-drawn to slaughter:
 And round the breastplate ramping came
 A mingled breed of lion and flame,
 Hot-eyed to tear that steed of fame
 That found Pirên's water.

[*Epode.*]

The red red sword with steeds four-yoked
 Black-maned, was graven,

That labored, and the hot dust smoked
 Cloudwise to heaven.
 Thou Tyndarid woman! Fair and tall
 Those warriors were, and o'er them all
 One king great-hearted,
 Whom thou and thy false love did slay:
 Therefore the tribes of Heaven one day
 For these thy dead shall send on thee
 An iron death: yea, men shall see
 The white throat drawn, and blood's red
 spray,
 And lips in terror parted.
 [*As they cease, there enters from the
 left a very old man, bearing a lamb,
 a wineskin, and a wallet*]

OLD MAN:

Where is my little Princess? Ah, not now;
 But still my queen, who tended long ago
 The lad that was her father. . . . How steep-
 set
 These last steps to her porch! But faint
 not yet:
 Onward, ye failing knees and back with
 pain
 Bowed, till we look on that dear face again.
 [*Enter Electra*]
 Ah, daughter, is it thou?—Lo, here I am,
 With gifts from all my store; this suckling
 lamb
 Fresh from the ewe, green crowns for joy-
 fulness,
 And creamy things new-curdled from the
 press
 And this long-storèd juice of vintages
 Forgotten, cased in fragrance: scant it is,
 But passing sweet to mingle nectar-wise
 With feebler wine.—Go, bear them in;
 mine eyes . . .
 Where is my cloak?—They are all blurred
 with tears.

ELECTRA:

What ails thine eyes, old friend? After
 these years

Doth my low plight still stir thy memories?
 Or think'st thou of Orestes, where he lies
 In exile, and my father? Aye, long love
 Thou gavest him, and seest the fruit there-
 of
 Wasted, for thee and all who love thee!

OLD MAN:

All
 Wasted! And yet 'tis that lost hope withal
 I cannot brook. But now I turned aside
 To see my master's grave. All, far and
 wide,
 Was silence; so I bent these knees of mine
 And wept and poured drink-offerings from
 the wine
 I bear the strangers, and about the stone
 Land myrtle sprays. And, child, I saw
 thereon
 Just at the censer slain, a fleeced ewe,
 Deep black, in sacrifice: the blood was new
 About it: and a tress of bright brown hair
 Shorn as in mourning, close. Long stood
 I there
 And wondered, of all men what man had
 gone
 In mourning to that grave.—My child, 'tis
 none
 In Argos. Did there come . . . Nay, mark
 me now . . .
 Thy brother in the dark, last night, to bow
 His head before that unadorèd tomb?
 O come, and mark the color of it. Come
 And lay thine own hair by that mourner's
 tress!
 A hundred little things make likenesses
 In brethren born, and show the father's
 blood.
 ELECTRA: [*Trying to mask her excitement
 and resist the contagion of his*]
 Old heart, old heart, is this a wise man's
 mood? . . .
 O, not in darkness, not in fear of men,
 Shall Argos find him, when he comes
 again,

Mine own undaunted . . . Nay, and if it were,
 What likeness could there be? My brother's hair
 Is as a prince's and a rover's, strong
 With sunlight and with strife: not like the long
 Locks that a woman combs. . . And many a head
 Hath this same semblance, wing for wing,
 tho' bred
 Of blood not ours. . . 'Tis hopeless. Peace,
 old man.

OLD MAN:

The footprints! Set thy foot by his, and scan
 The track of frame and muscles, how they fit!

ELECTRA:

That ground will take no footprint! All of it
 Is bitter stone. . . It hath? . . . And who hath said
 There should be likeness in a brother's tread
 And sister's? His is stronger every way.

OLD MAN:

But hast thou nothing? . . . If he came this day
 And sought to show thee, is there no one sign
 Whereby to know him? . . . Stay; the robe was thine,
 Work of thy loom, wherein I wrapt him o'er
 That night, and stole him through the murderers' door.

ELECTRA:

Thou knowest, when Orestes was cast out I was a child. . . . If I did weave some clout
 Of raiment, would he keep the vesture now

He wore in childhood? Should my weaving grow
 As his limbs grew? . . . 'Tis lost long since. No more!
 O, either 'twas some stranger passed, and shore
 His locks for very ruth before that tomb:
 Or, if he found perchance, to seek his home,
 Some spy . . .

OLD MAN:

The strangers! Where are they? I fain
 Would see them, aye, and bid them answer plain . . .

ELECTRA:

Here at the door! How swift upon the thought!
 [*Enter Orestes and Pylades*]

OLD MAN:

High-born: albeit for that I trust them not
 The highest oft are false. . . . Howe'er it be,
 [*Approaching them*]
 I bid the strangers hail!

ORSTES:

All hail to thee,
 Greybeard!—Prithee, what man of all the King
 Trusted of old, is now this broken thing?

ELECTRA:

'Tis he that trained my father's boyhood.

ORSTES:

How?
 And stole from death thy brother? Sayest thou?

ELECTRA:

This man was his deliverer, if it be Deliverance.

ORSTES:

How his old eye pierceth me,
 As one that testeth silver and alloy!
 Sees he some likeness here?

ELECTRA:

Perchance 'tis joy,
 To see Orestes' comrade, that he feels.

ORESTES:
None dearer.—But what ails the man? He
reels
Dizzily back.

ELECTRA:
I marvel. I can say

No more.

OLD MAN: [*In a broken voice*]

Electra, mistress, daughter, pray!
Pray unto God!

ELECTRA:
Of all the things I crave,
The thousand things, or all that others
have,
What should I pray for?

OLD MAN:
Pray thine arms may hold
At last this treasure-dream of more than
gold
God shows us!

ELECTRA:
God, I pray thee! . . . Wouldst thou more?

OLD MAN:
Gaze now upon this man, and bow before
Thy dearest upon earth!

ELECTRA:
I gaze on thee!
O, hath time made thee mad?

OLD MAN:
Mad, that I see
Thy brother?

ELECTRA:
My . . . I know not what thou say'st:
I looked not for it . . .

OLD MAN:
I tell thee, here confessed
Standeth Orestes, Agamemnon's son!

ELECTRA:
A sign before I trust thee! O, but one!
How dost thou know? . . .

OLD MAN:
There, by his brow, I see
The scar he made, that day he ran with
thee

Chasing thy fawn, and fell.

ELECTRA: [*In a dull voice*]
A scar? 'Tis so.
I see a scar.

OLD MAN:
And fearest still to throw
Thine arms round him thou lovest?

ELECTRA:
O, no more!
Thy sign hath conquered me. . . [*Throw-
ing herself into Orestes' arms*] At last,
at last!
Thy face like light! And do I hold thee fast,
Unhoped for?

ORESTES:
Yea, at last! And I hold thee.

ELECTRA:
I never knew . . .

ORESTES:
I dreamed not.

ELECTRA:
Is it he,
Orestes?

ORESTES:
Thy defender, yea, alone
To fight the world! Lo, this day have I
thrown
A net, which once unbroken from the sea
Drawn home, shall . . . O, and it must
surely be!
Else men shall know there is no God, no
light
In Heaven, if wrong to the end shall con-
quer right.

CHORUS:
Comest thou, comest thou now,
Chained by the years and slow,
O Day long sought?
A light on the mountains cold
Is lit, yea, a fire burneth.
'Tis the light of one that turneth
From roamings manifold,
Back out of exile old
To the house that knew him not.

Some spirit hath turned our way,
 Victory visible,
 Walking at thy right hand,
 Belovèd; O lift this day
 Thine arms, thy voice, as a spell;
 And pray for thy brother, pray,
 Threading the perilous land,
 That all be well!

ORESTES:

Enough; this dear delight is mine at last
 Of thine embracing; and the hour comes
 fast
 When we shall stand again as now we
 stand,
 And stint not.—Stay, Old Man: thou, being
 at hand
 At the edge of time, advise me, by what
 way
 Best to requite my father's murderers. Say,
 Have I in Argos any still to trust;
 Or is the love, once borne me, trod in
 dust,
 Even as my fortunes are? Whom shall I
 seek?
 By day or night? And whither turn, to
 wreak
 My will on them that hate us? Say.

OLD MAN:

My son,
 In thine adversity, there is not one
 Will call thee friend. Nay, that were treas-
 ure-trove,
 A friend to share, not faltering from love,
 Fair days and foul the same. Thy name is
 gone
 Forth to all Argos, as a thing o'erthrown
 And dead. Thou hast not left one spark to
 glow
 With hope in one friend's heart! Hear all,
 and know:
 Thou hast God's fortune and thine own
 right hand,
 Naught else, to conquer back thy father-
 land.

ORESTES:

The deed, the deed! What must we do?

OLD MAN:

Strike down
 Aegisthus . . . and thy mother.

ORESTES:

'Tis the crown
 My race is run for. But how find him?

OLD MAN:

Not
 Within the city walls, however hot
 Thy spirit.

ORESTES:

Ha! With watchers doth he go
 Begirt, and mailèd pikemen?

OLD MAN:

Even so:
 He lives in fear of thee, and night nor day
 Hath slumber.

ORESTES:

That way blocked!—'Tis thine to say
 What next remains.

OLD MAN:

I will; and thou give ear.
 A thought has found me!

ORESTES:

All good thoughts be near,
 For thee to speak and me to understand!

OLD MAN:

But now I saw Aegisthus, close at hand
 As here I journeyed.

ORESTES:

That good word shall trace
 My path for me! Thou saw'st him? In
 what place?

OLD MAN:

Out on the pastures where his horses stray.

ORESTES:

What did he there so far?—A gleam of day
 Crosseth our darkness.

OLD MAN:

'Twas a feast, me thought,
Of worship to the wild-wood nymphs he
wrought.

ORESTES:

The watchers of men's birth? Is there a son
New born to him, or doth he pray for one
That cometh?

[*Movement of Electra*]

OLD MAN:

More I know not; he had there
A wreathèd ox, as for some weighty prayer.

ORESTES:

What force was with him? Not his serfs
alone?

OLD MAN:

No Argive lord was there; none but his
own
Household.

ORESTES:

Not any that might know my race,
Or guess?

OLD MAN:

Thralls, thralls; who ne'er have seen thy
face.

ORESTES:

Once I prevail, the thralls will welcome
me!

OLD MAN:

The slaves' way, that; and no ill thing for
thee!

ORESTES:

How can I once come near him?

OLD MAN:

Walk thy ways
Hard by, where he may see thee, ere he
slays
His sacrifice.

ORESTES:

How? Is the road so nigh?

OLD MAN:

He cannot choose but see thee, passing by,
And bid thee stay to share the beast they
kill.

ORESTES:

A bitter fellow-feaster, if God will!

OLD MAN:

And then . . . then swift be heart and
brain, to see
God's chances!

ORESTES:

Aye. Well hast thou counseled me.
But . . . where is she?

OLD MAN:

In Argos now, I guess;
But goes to join her husband, ere the press
Of the feast.

ORESTES:

Why goeth not my mother straight
Forth at her husband's side?

OLD MAN:

She fain will wait
Until the gathered country-folk be gone.

ORESTES:

Enough! She knows what eyes are turned
upon

Her passings in the land!

OLD MAN:

Aye, all men hate
The unholy woman.

ORESTES:

How then can I set
My snare for wife and husband in one
breath?

ELECTRA: [*Coming forward*]

Hold! It is I must work our mother's death.

ORESTES:

If that be done, I think the other deed
Fortune will guide.

ELECTRA:

This man must help our need,
One friend alone for both.

OLD MAN:

He will, he will!
Speak on. What cunning hast thou found
to fill
Thy purpose?

ELECTRA:

Get thee forth, Old Man, and quick
Tell Clytemnestra . . . tell her I lie sick,
New-mothered of a man-child.

OLD MAN:

Thou hast borne
A son! But when?

ELECTRA:

Let this be the tenth morn.
Till then a mother stays in sanctity,
Unseen.

OLD MAN:

And if I tell her, where shall be
The death in this?

ELECTRA:

That word let her but hear,
Straight she will seek me out!

OLD MAN:

The queen! What care
Hath she for thee, or pain of thine?

ELECTRA:

She will;
And weep my babe's low station!

OLD MAN:

Thou hast skill
To know her, child; say on.

ELECTRA:

But bring her here,
Here to my hand; the rest will come.

OLD MAN:

I swear,
Here at the gate she shall stand palpable!

ELECTRA:

The gate: the gate that leads to me and
Hell.

OLD MAN:

Let me but see it, and I die content.

ELECTRA:

First, then, my brother: see his steps be
bent . . .

OLD MAN:

Straight yonder, where Aegisthus makes
his prayer!

ELECTRA:

Then seek my mother's presence, and de-
clare
My news.

OLD MAN:

Thy very words, child, as tho' spoke
From thine own lips!

ELECTRA:

Brother, thine hour is struck.
Thou standest in the van of war this day.

ORESTES: [*Rousing himself*]

Aye, I am ready. . . . I will go my way,
If but some man will guide me.

OLD MAN:

Here am I,
To speed thee to the end, right thankfully.

ORESTES: [*Turning as he goes and raising
his hands to heaven*]

Zeus of my sires, Zeus of the lost battle,

ELECTRA:

Have pity; have pity; we have earned it
well!

OLD MAN:

Pity these twain, of thine own body
sprung!

ELECTRA:

O Queen o'er Argive altars, Hera high,

ORESTES:

Grant us thy strength, if for the right we
cry.

OLD MAN:

Strength to these twain, to right their
father's wrong!

ELECTRA:

O Earth, deep Earth, to whom I yearn in
vain,

ORESTES:

And deeper thou, O father darkly slain,

OLD MAN:

Thy children call, who love thee: hearken
thou!

ORESTES:

Girt with thine own dead armies, wake,
O wake!

ELECTRA:
With all that died at Iliou for thy sake . . .

OLD MAN:
And hate earth's dark defilers; help us
now!

ELECTRA:
Dost hear us yet, O thou in deadly wrong,
Wronged by my mother?

OLD MAN:
Child, we stay too long.
He hears; be sure he hears!

ELECTRA:
And while he hears,
I speak this word for omen in his ears:
"Aegisthus dies, Aegisthus dies." . . . Ah
me,
My brother, should it strike not him, but
thee,
This wrestling with dark death, behold, I
too
Am dead that hour. Think of me as one
true,
Not one that lives. I have a sword made
keen
For this, and shall strike deep.

I will go in
And make all ready. If there come from
thee
Good tidings, all my house for ecstasy
Shall cry; and if we hear that thou art
dead,
Then comes the other end!—Lo, I have
said.

ORESTES:
I know all, all.

ELECTRA:
Then be a man to-day!
[Orestes and the Old Man depart]
O Women, let your voices from this fray
Flash me a fiery signal, where I sit,
The sword across my knees, expecting it.
For never, though they kill me, shall they
touch

My living limbs!—I know my way thus
much.

[She goes into the house]

CHORUS:

[Strophe.

When white-haired folk are met
In Argos about the fold,
A story lingereth yet,
A voice of the mountains old,
That tells of the Lamb of Gold:
A lamb from a mother mild,
But the gold of it curled and beat;
And Pan, who holdeth the keys of the
wild,
Bore it to Atreus' feet:
His wild reed pipes he blew,
And the reeds were filled with peace,
And a joy of singing before him flew,
Over the fiery fleece:
And up on the basèd rock,
As a herald cries, cried he:
"Gather ye, gather, O Argive folk,
The King's Sign to see,
The sign of the blest of God,
For he that hath this, hath all!"
Therefore the dance of praise they trod
In the Atreid brethren's hall.

[Antistrophe.

They opened before men's eyes
That which was hid before,
The chambers of sacrifice,
The dark of the golden door,
And fires on the altar floor.
And bright was every street,
And the voice of the Muses' tree,
The carven lotus, was lifted sweet;
When afar and suddenly,
Strange songs, and a voice that grew:
"Come to your king, ye folk!
Mine, mine, is the Golden Ewel!"
'Twas dark Thyestes spoke.
For, lo, when the world was still,
With his brother's bride he lay,

And won her to work his will,
 And they stole the Lamb away!
 Then forth to the folk strode he,
 And called them about his fold,
 And showed that Sign of the King to be,
 The fleece and the horns of gold.

[*Strophe 2.*

Then, then, the world was changed;
 And the Father, where they ranged,
 Shook the golden stars and glowing,
 And the great Sun stood deranged
 In the glory of his going.

Lo, from that day forth, the East
 Bears the sunrise on his breast,
 And the flaming Day in heaven
 Down the dim ways of the west
 Driveth, to be lost at even.

The wet clouds to Northward beat;
 And Lord Ammon's desert seat
 Crieth from the South, unslaken,
 For the dews that once were sweet,
 For the rain that God hath taken.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

'Tis a children's tale, that old
 Shepherds on far hills have told;
 And we reck not of their telling,
 Deem not that the Sun of gold
 Ever turned his fiery dwelling,

Or beat backward in the sky,
 For the wrongs of man, the cry
 (Of his ailing tribes assembled,
 To do justly, ere they die!
 Once, men told the tale, and trembled;

Fearing God, O Queen: whom thou
 Hast forgotten, till thy brow
 With old blood is dark and daunted.
 And thy brethren, even now,
 Walk among the stars, enchanted.

LEADER:

Ha, friends, was that a voice? Or some
 dream sound
 Of voices shaketh me, as underground

God's thunder shuddering? Hark, again,
 and clear!

It swells upon the wind.—Come forth and
 hear!

Mistress, Electra!

[*Electra, a bare sword in her hand,
 comes from the house*]

ELECTRA:

Friends! Some news is brought?
 How hath the battle ended?

LEADER:

I know naught.
 There seemed a cry as of men massacred!

ELECTRA:

I heard it too. Far off, but still I heard.

LEADER:

A distant floating voice . . . Ah, plainer
 now!

ELECTRA:

Of Argive anguish!—Brother, is it thou?

LEADER:

I know not. Many confused voices cry . . .

ELECTRA:

Death, then for me! That answer bids me
 die.

LEADER:

Nay, wait! We know not yet thy fortune.
 Wait!

ELECTRA:

No messenger from him!—Too late, too
 late!

LEADER:

The message yet will come. 'Tis not a thing
 So light of compass, to strike down a king.
 [*Enter a Messenger, running*]

MESSENGER:

Victory, Maids of Argos, Victory!
 Orestes . . . all that love him, list to me! . . .
 Hath conquered! Agamemnon's murderer
 lies
 Dead! O give thanks to God with happy
 cries!

ELECTRA:

Who art thou? I mistrust thee. . . . 'Tis a plot!

MESSSENGER:

Thy brother's man. Look well. Dost know me not?

ELECTRA:

Friend, friend; my terror made me not to see

Thy visage. Now I know and welcome thee.

How sayst thou? He is dead, verily dead, My father's murderer? . . .

MESSSENGER:

Shall it be said

Once more? I know again and yet again Thy heart would hear. Aegisthus lieth slain!

ELECTRA:

Ye Gods! And thou, O Right, that seest all, Art come at last? . . . But speak; how did he fall?

How swooped the wing of death? . . . I crave to hear.

MESSSENGER:

Forth of this hut we set our faces clear To the world, and struck the open chariot road;

Then on toward the pasture lands, where stood

The great Lord of Mycenae. In a set Garden beside a channeled rivulet, Culling a myrtle garland for his brow, He walked: but hailed us as we passed: "How now,

Strangers! Who are ye? Of what city sprung, And whither bound?" "Thessalians," answered young

Orestes: "to Alpheüs journeying, With gifts to Olympian Zeus" Whereat the king:

"This while, beseech you, tarry, and make full

The feast upon my hearth. We slay a bull Here to the Nymphs. Set forth at break of day

To-morrow, and 'twill cost you no delay. But come"—and so he gave his hand, and led

The two men in—"I must not be gain-said;

Come to the house. Ho, there; set close at hand

Vats of pure water, that the guests may stand

At the altar's verge, where falls the holy spray."

Then quickly spake Orestes: "By the way We cleansed us in a torrent stream. We need

No purifying here. But if indeed Strangers may share thy worship, here are we

Ready, O King, and swift to follow thee." So spoke they in the midst. And every thrall

Laid down the spears they served the King withal,

And hied him to the work Some bore amain

The death-vat, some the corbs of hallowed grain;

Or kindled fire, and round the fire and in Set cauldrons foaming; and a festal din Filled all the place. Then took thy mother's lord

The ritual grains, and o'er the altar poured Its due, and prayed: "O Nymphs of Rock and Mere,

With many a sacrifice for many a year, May I and she who waits at home for me, My Tyndarid Queen, adore you. May it be Peace with us always, even as now; and all ill to mine enemies"—meaning withal

Thee and Orestes. Then my master prayed Against that prayer, but silently, and said No word, to win once more his fatherland. Then in the corb Aegisthus set his hand,

Took the straight blade, cut from the proud
 bull's head
 A lock, and laid it where the fire was red;
 Then, while the young men held the bull
 on high,
 Slew it with one clean gash; and suddenly
 Turned on thy brother: "Stranger, every
 true
 Thessalian, so the story goes, can hew
 A bull's limbs clean, and tame a mountain
 steed.
 Take up the steel, and show us if indeed
 Rumor speak true." Right swift Orestes
 took
 The Dorian blade, back from his shoulders
 shook
 His broochèd mantle, called on Pylades
 To aid him, and waved back the thralls.
 With ease
 Heelwise he held the bull, and with one
 glide
 Bared the white limb; then stripped the
 mighty hide
 From off him, swifter than a runner runs
 His furlongs, and laid clean the flank. At
 once
 Aegisthus stooped, and lifted up with care
 The ominous parts, and gazed. No lobe
 was there;
 But lo, strange caves of gall, and, darkly
 raised,
 The portal vein boded to him that gazed
 Fell visitations. Dark as night his brow
 Clouded. Then spake Orestes: "Why art
 thou
 Cast down so sudden?" "Guest," he cried,
 "there be
 Treasons from whence I know not, seek-
 ing me.
 Of all my foes, 'tis Agamemnon's son;
 His hate is on my house, like war." "Have
 done!"
 Orestes cried: "thou fear'st an exile's plot,
 Lord of a city? Make thy cold heart hot
 With meat.—Ho, fling me a Thessalian
 steel!
 This Dorian is too light. I will unscal
 The breast of him." He took the heavier
 blade,
 And clave the bone. And there Aegisthus
 stayed,
 The omens in his hand, dividing slow
 This sign from that; till, while his head
 bent low,
 Up with a leap thy brother flashed the
 sword,
 Then down upon his neck, and cleft the
 cord
 Of brain and spine. Shuddering the body
 stood
 One instant in an agony of blood,
 And gasped and fell. The henchmen saw,
 and straight
 Flew to their spears, a host of them to set
 Against those twain. But there the twain
 did stand
 Unflinching, each his iron in his hand,
 Edge fronting edge. Till "Hold," Orestes
 calls:
 "I come not as in wrath against these walls
 And mine own people. One man right-
 eously
 I have slain, who slew my father. It is I,
 The wronged Orestes! Hold, and smite me
 not,
 Old housefolk of my father!" When they
 caught
 That name, their lances fell. And one old
 man,
 An ancient in the house, drew nigh to scan
 His face, and knew him. Then with one
 accord
 They crowned thy brother's temples, and
 outpoured
 Joy and loud songs. And hither now he
 fares
 To show the head, no Gorgon, that he
 bears,

But that Aegisthus whom thou hatest!
 Yea,
 Blood against blood, his debt is paid this
 day.

[*He goes off to meet the others—Electra stands as though stupefied*]

CHORUS:

Now, now thou shalt dance in our dances,
 Beloved, as a fawn in the night!
 The wind is astir for the glances
 Of thy feet; thou art robed with delight.
 He hath conquered, he cometh to free us
 With garlands new-won,
 More high than the crowns of Alpheüs,
 Thine own father's son:
 Cry, cry, for the day that is won!

ELECTRA:

O Light of the Sun, O chariot wheels of
 flame,
 O Earth and Night, dead Night without
 a name
 That held me! Now mine eyes are raised
 to see,
 And all the doorways of my soul flung
 free.
 Aegisthus dead! My father's murderer
 dead!
 What have I still of wreathing for the
 head
 Stored in my chambers? Let it come forth
 now
 To bind my brother's and my conqueror's
 brow.

[*Some garlands are brought out from the house to Electra*]

CHORUS:

Go, gather thy garlands, and lay them
 As a crown on his brow, many-tressed,
 But our feet shall refrain not nor stay
 them:
 'Tis the joy that the Muses have blest.
 For our king is returned as from prison,
 The old king, to be master again,

Our beloved in justice re-risen:
 With guile he hath slain . . .
 But cry, cry in joyance again!

[*There enter from the left Orestes and Pylades, followed by some thralls*]

ELECTRA:

O conqueror, come! The king that tram-
 pled Troy
 Knoweth his son Orestes. Come in joy,
 Brother, and take to bind thy rippling hair
 My crowns! . . . O what are crowns, that
 runners wear
 For some vain race? But thou in battle true
 Hast felled our foe Aegisthus, him that
 slew
 By craft thy sire and mine.

[*She crowns Orestes*]

And thou no less,

O friend at need, O reared in righteousness,
 Take, Pylades, this chaplet from my hand.
 'Twas half thy battle. And may ye two
 stand
 Thus alway, victory-crowned, before my
 face!

[*She crowns Pylades*]

ORESTES:

Electra, first as workers of this grace
 Praise thou the Gods, and after, if thou
 will,
 Praise also me, as chosen to fulfil
 God's work and Fate's.—Aye, 'tis no more
 a dream;
 In very deed I come from slaying him.
 Thou hast the knowledge clear, but lo, I
 bring
 More also. See himself, dead!

[*Attendants bring in the body of Aegisthus on a bier*]

Wouldst thou fling
 This lord on the rotting earth for beasts to
 tear?
 Or up, where all the vultures of the air
 May glut them, pierce and nail him for a
 sign

Far off? Work all thy will. Now he is
thine.

ELECTRA:

It shames me; yet, God knows, I hunger
sore—

ORESTES:

What wouldst thou? Speak; the old fear
nevermore
Need touch thee.

ELECTRA:

To let loose upon the dead
My hate! Perchance to rouse on mine own
head
The sleeping hate of the world?

ORESTES:

No man that lives
Shall scathe thee by one word.

ELECTRA:

Our city gives
Quick blame; and little love have men
for me.

ORESTES:

If aught thou hast unsaid, sister, be free
And speak. Between this man and us no
bar
Cometh nor stint, but the utter rage of war.
*[She goes and stands over the body. A
moment's silence]*

ELECTRA:

Ah me, what have I? What first flood
of hate
To loose upon thee? What last curst to sate
My pain, or river of wild words to flow
Bank-high between? . . . Nothing? . . .
And yet I know
There hath not passed one sun, but through
the long
Cold dawns, over and over, like a song,
I have said them—words held back, O,
some day yet
To flash into thy face, would but the fret
Of ancient fear fall loose and let me free.

And free I am, now; and can pay to thee
At last the weary debt

Oh, thou didst kill

My soul within. Who wrought thee any
ill,

That thou shouldst make me fatherless?

Aye, me

And this my brother, loveless, solitary?

'Twas thou, didst bend my mother to her
shame:

Thy weak hand murdered him who led to
fame

The hosts of Hellas—thou, that never
crossed

O'erseas to Troy! . . . God help thee, wast
thou lost

In blindness, long ago, dreaming, some-
wise,

She would be true with thee, whose sin
and lies

Thyself had tasted in my father's place?

And then, that thou wert happy, when thy
days

Were all one pain? Thou knewest cease-
lessly

Her kiss a thing unclean, and she knew
thee

A lord so little true, so dearly won!

So lost ye both, being in falseness one,

What fortune else had granted; she thy
curse,

Who marred thee as she loved thee, and
thou hers . . .

And on thy ways thou heardst men whis-
pering,

"Lo, the Queen's husband yonder"—not
"the King."

And then the lie of lies that dimmed thy
brow,

Vaunting that by thy gold, thy chattels,
Thou

Wert Something; which themselves are
nothingness,

Shadows, to clasp a moment ere they cease.

The thing thou art, and not the things thou
hast,
Abideth, yea, and bindeth to the last
Thy burden on thee: while all else, ill-
won
And sin-companioned, like a flower o'er-
blown,
Flies on the wind away.

Or didst thou find

In women . . . Women? . . . Nay, peace,
peace! The blind
Could read thee. Cruel wast thou in thine
hour,
Lord of a great king's house, and like a
tower
Firm in thy beauty.

[*Starting back with a look of loathing*]

Ah, that girl-like face!

God grant, not that, not that, but some
plain grace
Of manhood to the man who brings me
love:
A father of straight children, that shall
move
Swift on the wings of War.

So, get thee gone!

Naught knowing how the great years,
rolling on,
Have laid thee bare, and thy long debt
full paid.

O vaunt not, if one step be proudly made
In evil, that all Justice is o'ercast:
Vaunt not, ye men of sin, ere at the last
The thin-drawn marge before you glimmereth
Close, and the goal that wheels 'twixt life
and death.

LEADER:

Justice is mighty. Passing dark hath been
His sin: and dark the payment of his sin.

ELECTRA: [*With a weary sigh, turning from
the body*]

Ah me! Go some of you, bear him from
sight,

That when my mother come, her eyes may
light

On nothing, nothing, till she know the
sword . . .

[*The body is borne into the hut. Py-
lades goes with it*]

ORESTES: [*Looking along the road*]

Stay, 'tis a new thing! We have still a word
To speak . . .

ELECTRA:

What? Not a rescue from the town
Thou seest?

ORESTES:

'Tis my mother comes: my own
Mother, that bare me.

[*He takes off his crown*]

ELECTRA: [*Springing, as it were, to life
again, and moving where she can
see the road*]

Straight into the snare!

Aye, there she cometh.—Welcome in thy
rare

Chariot! All welcome in thy brave array!

ORESTES:

What would we with our mother? Didst
thou say
Kill her?

ELECTRA: [*Turning on him*]

What? Is it pity? Dost thou fear
To see thy mother's shape?

ORESTES:

'Twas she that bare
My body into life. She gave me suck.
How can I strike her?

ELECTRA:

Strike her as she struck

Our father!

ORESTES: [*To himself, brooding*]

Phoebus. God, was all thy mind
Turned unto darkness?

ELECTRA:

If thy God be blind,
Shalt thou have light?

ORESTES: [*As before*]

Thou, thou, didst bid me kill
My mother: which is sin.

ELECTRA:

How brings it ill
To thee, to raise our father from the dust?

ORESTES:

I was a clean man once. Shall I be thrust
From men's sight, blotted with her blood?

ELECTRA:

Thy blot
Is black as death if him thou succor not!

ORESTES:

Who shall do judgment on me, when she
dies?

ELECTRA:

Who shall do judgment, if thy father lies
Forgotten?

ORESTES: [*Turning suddenly to Electra*]
Stay! How if some fiend of Hell,
Hid in God's likeness, spake that oracle?

ELECTRA:

In God's own house? I trow not.

ORESTES:

And I trow
It was an evil charge!
[*He moves away from her*]

ELECTRA: [*Almost despairing*]

To fail me now!

To fail me now! A coward!—O brother,
no!

ORESTES:

What shall it be, then? The same stealthy
blow . . .

ELECTRA:

That slew our father! Courage! thou hast
slain
Aegisthus.

ORESTES:

Aye. So be it.—I have ta'en
A path of many terrors: and shall do
Deeds horrible. 'Tis God will have it so. . .
Is this the joy of battle, or wild woe?
[*He goes into the house*]

LEADER:

O Queen o'er Argos thrond high,
O Woman, sister of the twain,
God's Horsemen, stars without a stain,
Whose home is in the deathless sky,
Whose glory in the sea's wild pain,
Toiling to succor men that die:

Long years above us hast thou been,
God-like for gold and marveled power:
Ah, well may mortal eyes this hour
Observe thy state: All hail, O Queen!

[*Enter from the right Clytemnestra on
a chariot, accompanied by richly
dressed Handmaidens*]

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Down from the wain, ye dames of Troy,
and hold

Mine arm as I dismount. . . .

[*Answering Electra's thought*]

The spoils and gold
Of Ilion I have sent out of my hall
To many shrines. These bondwomen are
all

I keep in mine own house . . . Deemst
thou the cost
Too rich to pay me for the child I lost—
Fair though they be?

ELECTRA:

Nay, mother, here am I
Bond likewise, yea, and homeless, to hold
high
Thy royal arm!

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Child, the war-slaves are here;
Thou needest not toil.

ELECTRA:

What was it but the spear
Of war, drove me forth too? Mine enemies
Have sacked my father's house, and, even
as these,
Captives and fatherless, made me their
prey.

CLYTEMNESTRA:

It was thy father cast his child away,

A child he might have loved! . . . Shall I
speak out?

[*Controlling herself*] Nay; when a woman
once is caught about

With evil fame, there riseth in her tongue
A bitter spirit—wrong, I know! Yet,
wrong

Or right, I charge ye look on the deeds
done;

And if ye needs must hate, when all is
known,

Hate on! What profits loathing ere ye
know?

My father gave me to be his. 'Tis so.

But was it his to kill me, or to kill
The babes I bore? Yet, lo, he tricked my
will

With fables of Achilles' love: he bore
To Aulis and the dark ship-clutching
shore,

He held above the altar-flame, and smote,
Cool as one reaping, through the strained
throat,

My white Iphigenia. . . Had it been
To save some falling city, leaguered in

With foemen; to prop up our castle towers,
And rescue other children that were ours,
Giving one life for many, by God's laws
I had forgiven all! Not so. Because

Helen was wanton, and her master knew
No curb for her: for that, for that, he slew
My daughter!—Even then, with all my
wrong,

No wild beast yet was in me. Nay, for long,
I never would have killed him. But he
came,

At last, bringing that damsel, with the
flame

Of God about her, mad and knowing all:
And set her in my room; and in one wall
Would hold two queens!—O wild are
woman's eyes

And hot her heart. I say not otherwise.

But, being thus wild, if then her master
stray

To love far off, and cast his own away,
Shall not her will break prison too, and
wend

Somewhere to win some other for a friend?
And then on us the world's curse waxes
strong

In righteousness! The lords of all the
wrong

Must hear no curse!—I slew him. I trod
then

The only road: which led me to the men
He hated. Of the friends of Argos whom
Durst I have sought, to aid me to the doom
I craved?—Speak if thou wouldst, and
fear not me,

If yet thou deemst him slain unrighteously.

LEADFR:

Thy words be just, yet shame their justice
brings;

A woman true of heart should bear all
things

From him she loves. And she who feels
it not,

I cannot reason of her, nor speak aught.

ELECTRA:

Remember, mother, thy last word of grace,
Bidding me speak, and fear not, to thy
face.

CLYTEMNESTRA:

So said I truly, child, and so say still.

ELECTRA:

Wilt softly hear, and after work me ill?

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Not so, not so. I will but pleasure thee.

ELECTRA:

I answer then. And, mother, this shall be
My prayer of opening, where hangs the
whole:

Would God that He had made thee clean
of soul!

Helen and thou—O, face and form were
fair,

Meet for men's praise; but sisters twain ye
were,

Both things of naught, a stain on Castor's
star.

And Helen slew her honor, borne afar
In wilful ravishment: but thou didst slay
The highest man of the world. And now
wilt say

'Twas wrought in justice for thy child
laid low

At Aulis? . . . Ah, who knows thee as I
know?

Thou, thou, who long ere aught of ill was
done

Thy child, when Agamemnon scarce was
gone,

Sate at the looking-glass, and tress by tress
Didst comb the twinèd gold in loneliness.

When any wife, her lord being far away,
'Toils to be fair, O blot her out that day
As false within! What would she with a
check

So bright in strange men's eyes, unless she
seek

Some treason? None but I, thy child, could
so

Watch thee in Hellas: none but I could
know

Thy face of gladness when our enemies
Were strong, and the swift cloud upon
thine eyes

If Troy seemed falling, all thy soul keen-
set

Praying that he might come no more! . . .
And yet

It was so easy to be true. A king
Was thine, not feebler, not in anything
Below Aegisthus; one whom Hellas chose
For chief beyond all kings. Aye, and God
knows,

How sweet a name in Greece, after the sin
Thy sister wrought, lay in thy ways to win.
Ill deeds make fair ones shine, and turn
thereto

Men's eyes.—Enough: but say he wronged
thee; slew

By craft thy child:—what wrong had I
done, what

'The babe Orestes? Why didst render not
Back unto us, the children of the dead.

Our father's portion? Must thou heap thy
bed

With gold of murdered men, to buy to
thee

'Thy strange man's arms? Justice! Why is
not he

Who cast Orestes out, cast out again?
Not slain for me whom doubly he hath
slain,

In living death, more bitter than of old
My sister's? Nay, when all the tale is told
Of blood for blood, what murder shall we
make,

I and Orestes, for our father's sake?

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Aye, child; I know thy heart, from long
ago.

'Thou hast alway loved him best. 'Tis oft-
time so:

One is her father's daughter, and one hot
'To bear her mother's part. I blame thee
not . . .

Yet think not I am happy, child; nor
flown

With pride now, in the deeds my hand
hath done . . .

[*Seeing Electra unsympathetic, she
checks herself*]

But thou art all untended, comfortless
Of body and wild of raiment; and thy
stress

Of travail scarce yet ended! . . . Woe is
me!

'Tis all as I have willed it. Bitterly
I wrought against him, to the last blind
deep

Of bitterness. . . . Woe's me!

ELECTRA:

Fair days to weep,
When help is not! Or stay: though he lie
cold

Long since, there lives another of thy fold
Far off; there might be pity for thy son?

CLYTEMNESTRA:

I dare not! . . . Yes, I fear him. 'Tis mine
own
Life, and not his, comes first. And rumor
saith
His heart yet burneth for his father's death.

ELECTRA:

Why dost thou keep thine husband ever
hot
Against me?

CLYTEMNESTRA:

'Tis his mood. And thou art not
So gentle, child!

ELECTRA:

My spirit is too sore!
Howbeit, from this day I will no more
Hate him.

CLYTEMNESTRA: [*With a flash of hope*]

O daughter!—Then, indeed, shall he,
I promise, never more be harsh to thee!

ELECTRA:

He lieth in my house, as 'twere his own.
'Tis that hath made him proud.

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Nay, art thou flown
To strife again so quick, child?

ELECTRA:

Well; I say
No more; long have I feared him, and al-
way
Shall fear him, even as now!

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Nay, daughter, peace!
It bringeth little profit, speech like this . . .
Why didst thou call me hither?

ELECTRA:

It reached thee,
My word that a man-child is born to me?
Do thou make offering for me—for the
rite
I know not—as is meet on the tenth night.
I cannot; I have borne no child till now.

CLYTEMNESTRA:

Who tended thee? 'Tis she should make
the vow.

ELECTRA:

None tended me. Alone I bare my child.

CLYTEMNESTRA:

What, is thy cot so friendless? And this
wild
So far from aid?

ELECTRA:

Who seeks for friendship sake
A beggar's house?

CLYTEMNESTRA:

I will go in, and make
Due worship for thy child, the Peace-
bringer.

To all thy need I would be minister.
Then to my lord, where by the meadow
side

He prays the woodland nymphs.

Ye handmaids, guide
My chariot to the stall, and when ye guess
The rite draws near its end, in readiness
Be here again. Then to my lord! . . . I owe
My lord this gladness, too.

[*The Attendants depart; Clytemnes-
tra, left alone, proceeds to enter the
house*]

ELECTRA:

Welcome below
My narrow roof! But have a care withal,
A grime of smoke lies deep upon the wall.
Soil not thy robe! . . .

Not far now shall it be,
The sacrifice God asks of me and thee.
The bread of Death is broken, and the
knife

Lifted again that drank the Wild Bull's
life:

And on his breast . . . Ha, Mother, hast
slept well

Aforetime? Thou shalt lie with him in
Hell.

That grace I give to cheer thee on thy
road;

Give thou to me—peace from my father's
blood!

*[She follows her mother into the
house]*

CHORUS:

Lo, the returns of wrong,
The wind as a changèd thing
Whispereth overhead
Of one that of old lay dead
In the water lapping long:
My King, O my King!

A cry in the rafters then
Rang, and the marble dome:
"Mercy of God, not thou,
"Woman! To slay me now,
"After the harvests ten
"Now, at the last, come home!"

O Fate shall turn as the tide,
Turn, with a doom of tears
For the flying heart too fond;
A doom for the broken bond.
She hailed him there in his pride,
Home from the perilous years,

In the heart of his wallèd lands,
In the Giants' cloud-capt ring;
Herself, none other, laid
The hone to the ax's blade;
She lifted it in her hands,
The woman, and slew her king.

Woe upon spouse and spouse,
Whatso of evil sway
Held her in that distress!
Even as a lioness
Breaketh the woodland boughs
Starving, she wrought her way.

VOICE OF CLYTEMNESTRA:

O children, children; in the name of God,
Slay not your mother!

A WOMAN:

Did ye hear a cry
Under the rafters?

ANOTHER:

I weep too, yea, I;
Down on the mother's heart the child hath
trod!

[A death-cry from within]

ANOIHER:

God bringeth Justice in his own slow tide.
Aye, cruel is thy doom; but thy deeds
done
Evil, thou piteous woman, and on one
Whose sleep was by thy side!
*[The door bursts open, and Orestes
and Electra come forth in disorder
Attendants bring out the bodies of
Clytemnestra and Aegisthus]*

LEADER:

Lo, yonder, in their mother's new-spilt
gore
Red-garmented and ghastly, from the door
They reel. . . . O horrible! Was it agony
Like this, she boded in her last wild cry?
There lives no seed of man calamitous,
Nor hath lived, like this seed of Tantalus.

ORFIES:

O Dark of the Earth, O God,
Thou to whom all is plain;
Look on my sin, my blood,
This horror of dead things twain:
Gathered as one they lie
Slain; and the slayer was I,
I, to pay for my pain!

ELECTRA:

Let tear rain upon tear,
Brother: but mine is the blame.
A fire stood over her,
And out of the fire I came,
I, in my misery. . . .
And I was the child at her knee.
"Mother" I named her name.

CHORUS:

Alas for Fate, for the Fate of thee,
O Mother, Mother of Misery:
And Misery, lo, hath turned again,
To slay thee, Misery and more,

Even in the fruit thy body bore.
Yet hast thou Justice, Justice plain,
For a sire's blood spilt of yore!

ORESTES:

Apollo, alas for the hymn
Thou sangest, as hope in mine ear!
The Song was of Justice dim,
But the Deed is anguish clear;
And the Gift, long nights of fear,
Of blood and of wandering,
Whercometh no Greek thing.
Nor sight, nor sound on the air.
Yea, and beyond, beyond,
Roaming—what rest is there?
Who shall break bread with me?
Who, that is clean, shall see
And hate not the blood-red hand,
His mother's murderer?

ELECTRA:

And I? What clime shall hold
My evil, or roof it above?
I cried for dancing of old,
I cried in my heart for love:
What dancing waiteth me now?
What love that shall kiss my brow
Nor blench at the brand thereof?

CHORUS:

Back, back, in the wind and rain
Thy driven spirit wheeleth again.
Now is thine heart made clean within
That was dark of old and murder-fraught.
But, lo, thy brother; what hast thou
wrought . . .
Yea, though I love thee . . . what woe,
what sin,
On him, who willed it not!

ORESTES:

Saw'st thou her raiment there,
Sister, there in the blood?
She drew it back as she stood,
She opened her bosom bare,
She bent her knees to the earth,
The knees that bent in my birth . . .

And I . . . Oh, her hair, her hair . . .

[*He breaks into inarticulate weeping*]

CHORUS:

Oh, thou didst walk in agony,
Hearing thy mother's cry, the cry
Of wordless wailing, well know I.

ELECTRA:

She stretched her hand to my cheek,
And there brake from her lips a moan;
"Mercy, my child, my own!"
Her hand clung to my cheek;
Clung, and my arm was weak;
And the sword fell and was gone.

CHORUS:

Unhappy woman, could thine eye
Look on the blood, and see her lie,
Thy mother, where she turned to die?

ORESTES:

I lifted over mine eyes
My mantle: blinded I smote,
As one smiteth a sacrifice;
And the sword found her throat.

ELECTRA:

I gave thee the sign and the word;
I touched with mine hand thy sword.

LEADER:

Dire is the grief ye have wrought.

ORESTES:

Sister, touch her again:
Oh, veil the body of her;
Shed on her raiment fair,
And close that death-red stain.
—Mother! And didst thou bear,
Bear in thy bitter pain,
To life, thy murderer?
[*The two kneel over the body of Cly-
temnestra, and cover her with rai-
ment*]

ELECTRA:

On her that I loved of yore,
Robe upon robe I cast:
On her that I hated sore.

CHORUS:

O House that hath hated sore,
Behold thy peace at the last!

LEADER:

Ha, see: above the roof-tree high
There shineth . . . Is some spirit there
Of earth or heaven? That thin air
Was never trod by things that die!
What bodes it now that forth they fare,
To men revealèd visibly?

[*There appears in the air a vision of
Castor and Polydeuces. The mortals
kneel or veil their faces*]

CASTOR:

Thou Agamemnon's Son, give ear! 'Tis
we,
Castor and Polydeuces, call to thee,
God's Horsemen and thy mother's brethren
twain.
An Argive ship, spent with the toiling
main,
We bore but now to peace, and, here
withal
Being come, have seen thy mother's bloody
fall,
Our sister's. Righteous is her doom this
day,
But not thy deed. And Phoebus, Phoebus
. . . Nay;
He is my lord; therefore I hold my peace.
Yet though in light he dwell, no light was
this
He showed to thee, but darkness! Which
do thou
Endure, as man must, chafing not. And
now
Fare forth where Zeus and Fate have laid
thy life.
The maid Electra thou shalt give for
wife
To Pylades; then turn thy head and flee
From Argos' land. 'Tis never more for
thee

To tread this earth where thy dead mother
lies.

And, lo, in the air her Spirits, bloodhound
eyes,

Most horrible yet Godlike, hard at heel
Following shall scourge thee as a burning
wheel,

Speed-maddened. Seek thou straight Ath-
ena's land,

And round her awful image clasp thine
hand,

Praying: and she will fence them back,
though hot

With flickering serpents, that they touch
thee not,

Holding above thy brow her gorgon shield.
There is a hill in Athens, Ares' field,

Where first for that first death by Ares
done

On Halirrhothius, Poseidon's son,
Who wronged his daughter, the great Gods
of vore

Held judgment: and true judgments ever-
more

Flow from that Hill, trusted of man and
God.

There shalt thou stand arraignèd of this
blood;

And of those judges half shall lay on thee
Death, and half pardon; so shalt thou go
free.

For Phoebus in that hour, who back thee
shed

'Thy mother's blood, shall take on his own
head

The stain thereof. And ever from that strife
The law shall hold, that when, for death
or life

Of one pursued, men's voices equal stand,
'Then Mercy conquereth:—But for thee, the
band

Of Spirits dread, down, down, in very
wrath,

Shall sink beside that Hill, making their
path

Through a dim chasm, the which shall aye
be trod

By reverent feet, where men may speak
with God.

But thou forgotten and far off shalt dwell,
By great Alpheüs' waters, in a dell
Of Arcady, where that gray Wolf-God's
wall

Stands holy. And thy dwelling men shall
call

Orestes Town. So much to thee be spoke.
But this dead man, Aegisthus, all the folk
Shall bear to burial in a high green grave
Of Argos. For thy mother, she shall have
Her tomb from Menelaus, who hath come
This day, at last, to Argos, bearing home
Helen. From Egypt comes she, and the
hall

Of Proteus, and in Troy hath ne'er at all
Set foot. 'Twas but a wraith of Helen, sent
By Zeus, to make much wrath and ravish-
ment.

So forth for home, bearing the virgin
bride,

Let Pylades make speed, and lead beside
Thy once-named brother, and with golden
store

Stablish his house far off on Phocis' shore.

Up, gird thee now to the steep Isthmian
way,

Seeking Athena's blessèd rock; one day,
Thy doom of blood fulfilled and this long
stress

Of penance past, thou shalt have happiness.

LEADER: [*Looping up*]

Is it for us, O Seed of Zeus,
To speak and hear your words again?

CASTOR:

Speak: of this blood ye bear no stain.

ELECTRA:

I also, sons of Tyndareus,
My kinsmen; may my word be said?

CASTOR:

Speak: on Apollo's head we lay
The bloody doings of this day.

LEADER:

Ye Gods, ye brethren of the dead,
Why held ye not the deathly herd
Of Kêres back from off this home?

CASTOR:

There came but that which needs must
come

By ancient Fate and that dark word
That rang from Phoebus in his mood.

ELECTRA:

And what should Phoebus seek with me,
Or all God's oracles that be,
That I must bear my mother's blood?

CASTOR:

Thy hand was as thy brother's hand,
Thy doom shall be as his. One stain,
From dim forc'fathers on the twain
Lighting, hath sapped your hearts as sand.

ORESTES: [*Who has never raised his head,
nor spoken to the Gods*]

After so long, sister, to see

And hold thee, and then part, then part,
By all that chained thee to my heart
Forsaken, and forsaking thee!

CASTOR:

Husband and house are hers. She bears
No bitter judgment, save to go
Exiled from Argos.

ELECTRA:

And what woe,
What tears are like an exile's tears?

ORESTES:

Exiled and more am I; impure,
A murderer in a stranger's hand:

CASTOR:

Fear not. There dwells in Pallas' land
All holiness. Till then endure!
[*Orestes and Electra embrace*]

ORESTES:

Aye, closer; clasp my body well,
 And let thy sorrow loose, and shed,
 As o'er the grave of one new dead,
 Dead evermore, thy last farewell!
 [*A sound of weeping*]

CASTOR:

Alas, what would ye? For that cry
 Ourselves and all the sons of heaven
 Have pity. Yea, our peace is riven
 By the strange pain of these that die.

ORESTES:

No more to see thee!

ELECTRA:

Nor thy breath
 Be near my face!

ORESTES:

Ah, so it ends.

ELECTRA:

Farewell, dear Argos. All ye friends,
 Farewell!

ORESTES:

O faithful unto death,
 Thou goest?

ELECTRA:

Aye, I pass from you,
 Soft-eyed at last.

ORESTES:

Go, Pylades,
 And God go with you! Wed in peace

My tall Electra, and be true.

[*Electra and Pylades depart to the left*]

CASTOR:

Their troth shall fill their hearts.—But on:
 Dread feet are near thee, hounds of
 prey,
 Snake-handed, midnight-visaged, yea,
 And bitter pains their fruit! Begone!
 [*Orestes departs to the right*]

But hark, the far Sicilian sea
 Calls, and a noise of men and ships
 That labor sunken to the lips
 In bitter billows; forth go we,

Through the long leagues of fiery blue,
 With saving; not to souls unshriven;
 But whoso in his life hath striven
 To love things holy and be true,

Through toil and storm we guard him; we
 Save, and he shall not die!—Therefore,
 O praise the lying man no more,
 Nor with oath-breakers sail the sea:
 Farewell, ye walkers on the shore
 Of death! A God hath counseled ye.
 [*Castor and Polyduces disappear*]

CHORUS:

Farewell, farewell!—But he who can so
 fare,
 And stumbleth not on mischief anywhere,
 Blessèd on earth is he!

Sophocles

(497-406 B.C.)

THE MAJOR PART of *Sophocles' long life, which practically spanned the fifth century B.C., was lived at the height of Athens' glory, when the city was enjoying the fruits of its victory over the Persians and its leadership of the Greek city states. More than any other of the classic dramatists he reflected the dreams and achievements of the Periclean Age, that brief, rare interval of civilization in the history of mankind.*

Sophocles, the son of a prosperous merchant, was born in 497 B.C. at "White Colonus," a beautiful village a mile northwest of Athens. Endowed with unusual personal beauty, a versatile actor (who played in his own tragedies), and a highly esteemed gentleman, Sophocles enjoyed the favor of his city as few men did. With characteristic good fortune he won first prize the very first time he entered a dramatic contest, at the age of twenty-eight, and during the next sixty years he received more first prizes than any of his compeers. He was never placed lower than second among the contestants, and was even honored with the rank of general in the Athenian army in deference to his popularity. Sophocles became the legendary happy man of Hellas and was eulogized as such by his compatriots.

It is of course impossible to accept the idyllic Sophoclean legend without qualification. There is an account of a law-suit between Sophocles and his children which cannot be discounted, and his plays reveal a comprehensive knowledge of the abysses of evil and suffering. His Ajax is a painful study in humiliation, madness, and suicide; the Electra presents an unrelenting picture of primitive vengeance; Oedipus Tyrannus is a gruesome tragedy of incest, suicide, and self-mutilation; and the Antigone, which culminates in a triple suicide, presents a welter of passion and conflict all the more horrible because it is the product of deliberate conduct rather than accident. Sophocles is perhaps the most perfect example of an illusionless man. Unlike Aeschylus, he reads no moral meaning into the order of the universe, and chance or blind fate is supreme in his world; its creator faced a universe devoid of moral purpose, justice or benevolence. "Human life," declares one of his choruses, "even in its utmost splendor hangs on the edge of a precipice."

It is the mark of Sophocles' unique genius that he was capable of disillusionment without cynicism or despair, that the horror of life could not obscure for him its beauty and splendor, that the cacophony of the universe could not submerge its music. As a later poet noted, Sophocles "saw life steadily, and he saw it whole." In the Philoctetes and Oedipus at Colonus the fever of passion is stilled in tenderness and idyllic wonder, and in all his plays the dignity of man is set up against the anarchic power of nature. Man can create beauty and justice in the universe by practicing the good life; as one of Sophocles' contemporaries, the philosopher Protagoras, announced, "Man is the measure of all things."

Humanity, however, cannot triumph over nature without the aid of reason. Each of Sophocles' tragedies is precipitated by human unreason or excess. There is excessive ambition in the hero of Ajax; Oedipus in Oedipus Tyrannus is the victim of his noblest quality, passionate intensity, Creon in the Antigone is destroyed, as is his victim Antigone, by excessive tyranny. If man led a life of reason, as these tragedies indicate, there might still be accident and death in the world, but there would not be tragedy.

There is always art, moreover, in Sophocles' philosophy; a product of reason which superimposes order on the chaos of the world, it heals the wounds of passion with the sweetness and light of ineffable beauty. He cultivated dramaturgy more skilfully and earnestly than any of his contemporaries, maintaining balance in the structure of his work, insisting upon harmony between feeling and expression. To him belongs the credit of advancing Greek tragedy furthest as a dramatic art independent of primitive ritual. He reduced the choral and lyric passages of classic tragedy, strove for concise and natural dialogue, added a third actor to enlarge the scope of his plays, and ordered his situations on the principle of progressive action. Without scaling the lyric heights of Aeschylus or attempting the psychological subtleties of Euripides, Sophocles created the most completely dramatic works of the ancient world.

These tragedies are, as Nietzsche was the first to point out, "the inevitable consequences of a glance into the secret and terrible things of nature. They are shining spots intended to heal the eye which dire night has seared." This playwright's so-called serenity is the direct result of his profoundly tragic insight.

Of Sophocles' seven extant plays the Antigone, written in 443 B.C., does perhaps the greatest justice to his varied genius. Though the play was the first to be written, it is thematically the middle portion of the great saga of the Theban

dynasty that begins in Oedipus Tyrannus and ends in Oedipus at Colonus. This tragedy possesses both tenderness and terror, and it contains one of the most appealing characters in literature. Antigone is not a romantic heroine—she is too strident and single-willed—and yet the sterling courage and the pathetic death of this daughter of Oedipus endow her with the moving beauty of Shakespeare's Juliet.

J. G.

ANTIGONE

BY SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE BY SIR RICHARD C. JEBB

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

ANTIGONE } *daughters of Oedipus*
ISMENE }
CREON, *King of Thebes*
EURYDICE, *his wife*
HAEMON, *his son*

TEIRESIAS, *the blind prophet*
GUARD, *set to watch the corpse of Polyneices*
FIRST MESSENGER
SECOND MESSENGER, *from the house*
CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS

SCENE: Before the Royal Palace at Thebes

ANTIGONE: Ismene, sister, mine own dear sister, knowest thou what ill there is, of all bequeathed by Oedipus, that Zeus fulfils not for us twain while we live? Nothing painful is there, nothing fraught with ruin, no shame, no dishonor, that I have not seen in thy woes and mine.

And now what new edict is this of which they tell, that our Captain hath just published to all Thebes? Knowest thou aught? Hast thou heard? Or is it hidden from thee that our friends are threatened with the doom of our foes?

ISMENE: No word of friends, Antigone, gladsome or painful, hath come to me, since we two sisters were bereft of brothers twain, killed in one day by a twofold blow; and since in this last night the Argive host hath fled, I know no more, whether my fortune be brighter, or more grievous.

ANTIGONE: I knew it well, and therefore sought to bring thee beyond the gates of the court, that thou mightest hear alone.

ISMENE: What is it? 'Tis plain that thou art brooding on some dark tidings.

ANTIGONE: What, hath not Creon destined our brothers, the one to honored burial,

the other to unburied shame? Eteocles, they say, with due observance of right and custom, he hath laid in the earth, for his honor among the dead below. But the hapless corpse of Polyneices—as rumor saith, it hath been published to the town that none shall entomb him or mourn, but leave unwept, unsepulchred, a welcome store for the birds, as they espy him, to feast on at will.

Such, 'tis said, is the edict that the good Creon hath set forth for thee and for me,—yes, for *me*,—and is coming hither to proclaim it clearly to those who know it not; nor counts the matter light, but, whose disobeys in aught, his doom is death by stoning before all the folk. Thou knowest it now; and thou wilt soon show whether thou art nobly bred, or the base daughter of a noble line.

ISMENE: Poor sister,—and if things stand thus, what could I help to do or undo?

ANTIGONE: Consider if thou wilt share the toil and the deed.

ISMENE: In what venture? What can be thy meaning?

ANTIGONE: Wilt thou aid this hand to lift the dead?

ISMENE: Thou wouldst bury him,—when 'tis forbidden to Thebes?

ANTIGONE: I will do my part,—and thine, if thou wilt not,—to a brother. False to him will I never be found.

ISMENE: Ah, over-bold! when Creon hath forbidden?

ANTIGONE: Nay, he hath no right to keep me from mine own.

ISMENE: Ah me! think, sister, how our father perished, amid hate and scorn, when sins bared by his own search had moved him to strike both eyes with self-blinding hand; then the mother wife, two names in one, with twisted noose did despite unto her life; and last, our two brothers in one day,—each shedding, hapless one, a kinsman's blood,—wrought out with mutual hands their common doom. And now *we* in turn—we two left all alone—think how we shall perish, more miserably than all the rest, if, in defiance of the law, we brave a king's decree or his powers. Nay, we must remember, first, that we were born women, as who should not strive with men; next, that we are ruled of the stronger, so that we must obey in these things, and in things yet sorer. I, therefore, asking the Spirits Infernal to pardon, seeing that force is put on me herein, will hearken to our rulers; for 'tis witless to be over busy.

ANTIGONE: I will not urge thee,—no, nor, if thou yet shouldst have the mind, wouldst thou be welcome as a worker with *me*. Nay, be what thou wilt; but I will bury him: well for me to die in doing that. I shall rest, a loved one with him whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living: in that world I shall abide for ever. But if *thou* wilt, be guilty of dishonoring laws which the gods have established in honor.

ISMENE: I do them no dishonor; but to defy the State,—I have no strength for that.

ANTIGONE: Such be thy plea:—I, then, will go to heap the earth above the brother whom I love.

ISMENE: Alas, unhappy one! How I fear for thee!

ANTIGONE: Fear not for me: guide thine own fate aright.

ISMENE: At least, then, disclose this plan to none, but hide it closely,—and so, too, will I.

ANTIGONE: Oh, denounce it! Thou wilt be far more hateful for thy silence, if thou proclaim not these things to all.

ISMENE: Thou hast a hot heart for chilling deeds.

ANTIGONE: I know that I please where I am most bound to please.

ISMENE: Aye, if thou canst; but thou wouldst what thou canst not.

ANTIGONE: Why, then, when my strength fails, I shall have done.

ISMENE: A hopeless quest should not be made at all.

ANTIGONE: If thus thou speakest, thou wilt have hatred from me, and will justly be subject to the lasting hatred of the dead. But leave me, and the folly that is mine alone, to suffer this dread thing; for I shall not suffer aught so dreadful as an ignoble death.

ISMENE: Go, then, if thou must; and of this be sure,—that, though thine errand is foolish, to thy dear ones thou art truly dear.

[*Exit Antigone on the spectator's left. Ismene retires into the palace by one of the two side-doors*]

[*Strophe I.*]

CHORUS¹: Beam of the sun, fairest light that ever dawned on Thebè of the seven gates, thou hast shone forth at last, eye of golden day, arisen above Dirce's streams! The warrior of the white shield, who

¹ Composed of Theban Senators.

came from Argos in his panoply, hath been stirred by thee to headlong flight, in swifter career.

Who set forth against our land by reason of the vexed claims of Polyneices; and, like shrill-screaming eagle, he flew over into our land, in snow-white pinion sheathed, with an armèd throng, and with plumage of helms.

[*Antistrophe 1.*

He paused above our dwellings; he ravened around our sevenfold portals with spears athirst for blood; but he went hence, or ever his jaws were glutted with our gore, or the Fire-god's pine-fed flame had seized our crown of towers. So fierce was the noise of battle raised behind him, a thing too hard for him to conquer, as he wrestled with his dragon foe.

For Zeus utterly abhors the boasts of a proud tongue; and when he beheld them coming on in a great stream, in the haughty pride of clanging gold, he smote with brandished fire one who was now hastening to shout victory at his goal upon our ramparts.

[*Strophe 2.*

Swung down, he fell on the earth with a crash, torch in hand, he who so lately, in the frenzy of the mad onset, was raging against us with the blasts of his tempestuous hate. But those threats fared not as he hoped; and to other foes the mighty War-god dispensed their several dooms, dealing havoc around, a mighty helper at our need.

For seven captains at seven gates, matched against seven, left the tribute of their panoplies to Zeus who turns the battle; save those two of cruel fate, who, born of one sire and one mother, set against

each other their twain conquering spears, and are sharers in a common death.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

But since Victory of glorious name hath come to us, with joy responsive to the joy of Thebè whose chariots are many, let us enjoy forgetfulness after the late wars, and visit all the temples of the gods with night-long dance and song; and may Bacchus be our leader, whose dancing shakes the land of Thebè.

But lo, the king of the land comes yonder, Creon, son of Menoeceus, our new ruler by the new fortunes that the gods have given; what counsel is he pondering, that he hath proposed this special conference of elders, summoned by his general mandate?

[*Enter Creon, from the central doors of the palace, in the garb of king; with two attendants*]

CREON: Sirs, the vessel of our State, after being tossed on wild waves, hath once more been safely steadied by the gods; and ye, out of all the folk, have been called apart by my summons, because I knew, first of all, how true and constant was your reverence for the royal power of Laius; how, again, when Oedipus was ruler of our land, and when he had perished, your steadfast loyalty still upheld their children. Since, then, his sons have fallen in one day by a twofold doom,—each smitten by the other, each stained with a brother's blood,—I now possess the throne and all its powers by nearness of kinship to the dead.

No man can be fully known, in soul and spirit and mind, until he hath been seen versed in rule and law-giving. For if any, being supreme guide of the State, cleaves

not to the best counsels, but, through some fear, keeps his lips locked, I hold, and have ever held, him most base; and if any makes a friend of more account than his fatherland, that man hath no place in my regard. For I—be Zeus my witness, who sees all things always—would not be silent if I saw ruin, instead of safety, coming to the citizens; nor would I ever deem the country's foe a friend to myself; remembering this, that our country is the ship that bears us safe, and that only while she prospers in our voyage can we make true friends. Such are the rules by which I guard this city's greatness. And in accord with them is the edict which I have now published to the folk touching the sons of Oedipus;—that Eteocles, who hath fallen fighting for our city, in all renown of arms, shall be entombed, and crowned with every rite that follows the noblest dead to their rest. But for his brother, Polyneices,—who came back from exile, and sought to consume utterly with fire the city of his fathers and the shrines of his fathers' gods,—sought to taste of kindred blood, and to lead the remnant into slavery;—touching this man, it hath been proclaimed to our people that none shall grace him with sepulture or lament, but leave him unburied, a corpse for birds and dogs to eat, a ghastly sight of shame. Such the spirit of my dealing; and never, by deed of mine, shall the wicked stand in honor before the just; but whoso hath good will to Thebes, he shall be honored of me, in his life and in his death.

CHORUS: Such is thy pleasure, Creon, son of Menoeceus, touching this city's foe, and its friend; and thou hast power, I ween, to take what order thou wilt, both for the dead, and for all us who live.

CREON: See, then, that ye be guardians of the mandate.

CHORUS: Lay the burden of this task on some younger man.

CREON: Nay, watchers of the corpse have been found.

CHORUS: What, then, is this further charge that thou wouldst give?

CREON: That ye side not with the breakers of these commands.

CHORUS: No man is so foolish that he is enamored of death.

CREON: In sooth, that is the meed; yet lucre hath oft ruined men through their hopes.

[Enter Guard]

GUARD: My liege, I will not say that I come breathless from speed, or that I have plied a nimble foot; for often did my thoughts make me pause, and wheel round in my path, to return. My mind was holding large discourse with me; "Fool, why goest thou to thy certain doom?" "Wretch, tarrying again? And if Creon hears this from another, must not thou smart for it?" So debating, I went on my way with lagging steps, and thus a short road was made long. At last, however, it carried the day that I should come hither—to thee; and, though my tale be nought, yet will I tell it; for I come with a good grip on one hope,—that I can suffer nothing but what is my fate.

CREON: And what is it that disquiets thee thus?

GUARD: I wish to tell thee first about myself—I did not do the deed—I did not see the doer—it were not right that I should come to any harm.

CREON: Thou hast a shrewd eye for thy mark; well dost thou fence thyself round against the blame:—clearly thou hast some strange thing to tell.

GUARD: Aye, truly; dread news makes one pause long.

CREON: Then tell it, wilt thou, and so get thee gone?

GUARD: Well, this is it.—The corpse—some one hath just given it burial, and gone away,—after sprinkling thirsty dust on the flesh, with such other rites as piety enjoins.

CREON: What sayest thou? What living man hath dared this deed?

GUARD: I know not; no stroke of pickaxe was seen there, no earth thrown up by mattock; the ground was hard and dry, unbroken, without track of wheels; the doer was one who had left no trace. And when the first day-watchman showed it to us, sore wonder fell on all. The dead man was veiled from us; not shut within a tomb, but lightly strewn with dust, as by the hand of one who shunned a curse. And no sign met the eye as though any beast of prey or any dog had come nigh to him, or torn him.

Then evil words flew fast and loud among us, guard accusing guard; and it would e'en have come to blows at last, nor was there any to hinder. Every man was the culprit, and no one was convicted, but all disclaimed knowledge of the deed. And we were ready to take red-hot iron in our hands;—to walk through fire;—to make oath by the gods that we had not done the deed,—that we were not privy to the planning or the doing.

At last, when all our searching was fruitless, one spake, who made us all bend our faces on the earth in fear; for we saw not how we could gainsay him, or escape mischance if we obeyed. His counsel was that this deed must be reported to thee, and not hidden. And this seemed best; and the lot doomed my hapless self to win this prize. So here I stand,—as unwelcome as unwilling, well I wot; for no man delights in the bearer of bad news.

CHORUS: O king, my thoughts have long

been whispering, can this deed, perchance, be e'en the work of gods?

CREON: Cease, ere thy words fill me utterly with wrath, lest thou be found at once an old man and foolish. For thou sayest what is not to be borne, in saying that the gods have care for this corpse. Was it for high reward of trusty service that they sought to hide his nakedness, who came to burn their pillared shrines and sacred treasures, to burn their land, and scatter its laws to the winds? Or dost thou behold the gods honoring the wicked? It cannot be. No! From the first there were certain in the town that muttered against me, chafing at this edict, wagging their heads in secret; and kept not their necks duly under the yoke, like men contented with my sway.

'Tis by them, well I know, that these have been beguiled and bribed to do this deed. Nothing so evil as money ever grew to be current among men. This lays cities low, this drives men from their homes, this trains and warps honest souls till they set themselves to works of shame; this still teaches folk to practice villainies, and to know every godless deed.

But all the men who wrought this thing for hire have made it sure that, soon or late, they shall pay the price. Now, as Zeus still hath my reverence, know this—I tell it thee on my oath:—If ye find not the very author of this burial, and produce him before mine eyes, death alone shall not be enough for you, till first, hung up alive, ye have revealed this outrage,—that henceforth ye may thieve with better knowledge whence lucre should be won, and learn that it is not well to love gain from every source. For thou wilt find that ill-gotten pelf brings more men to ruin than to weal.

GUARD: May I speak? Or shall I just turn and go?

CREON: Knowest thou not that even now thy voice offends?

GUARD: Is thy smart in the ears, or in the soul?

CREON: And why wouldst thou define the seat of my pain?

GUARD: The doer vexes thy mind, but I, thine ears.

CREON: Ah, thou art a born babbler, 'tis well seen.

GUARD: May be, but never the doer of this deed.

CREON: Yea, and more,—the seller of thy life for silver.

GUARD: Alas! 'Tis sad, truly, that he who judges should misjudge.

CREON: Let thy fancy play with "judgment" as it will;—but, if ye show me not the doers of these things, ye shall avow that dastardly gains work sorrows.

[Exit]

GUARD: Well, may he be found! so 'twere best. But, be he caught or be he not—fortune must settle that—truly thou wilt not see me here again. Saved, even now, beyond hope and thought, I owe the gods great thanks.

[Exit]

[Strophe 1.

CHORUS: Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man; the power that crosses the white sea, driven by the stormy south-wind, making a path under surges that threaten to engulf him; and Earth, the eldest of the gods, the immortal, the unwearied, doth he wear, turning the soil with the offspring of horses, as the ploughs go to and fro from year to year.

[Antistrophe 1.

And the light-hearted race of birds, and the tribes of savage beasts, and the sea-brood of the deep, he snares in the meshes of his woven toils, he leads captive, man excellent in wit. And he mas-

ters by his arts the beast whose lair is in the wilds, who roams the hills; he tames the horse of shaggy mane, he puts the yoke upon its neck, he tames the tireless mountain bull.

[Strophe 2.

And speech, and wind-swift thought, and all the moods that mould a state, hath he taught himself; and how to flee the arrows of the frost, when 'tis hard lodging under the clear sky, and the arrows of the rushing rain; yea, he hath resource for all; without resource he meets nothing that must come: only against Death shall he call for aid in vain; but from baffling maladies he hath devised escapes.

[Antistrophe 2.

Cunning beyond fancy's dream is the fertile skill which brings him, now to evil, now to good. When he honors the laws of the land, and that justice which he hath sworn by the gods to uphold, proudly stands his city: no city hath he who, for his rashness, dwells with sin. Never may he share my hearth, never think my thoughts, who doth these things!

[Enter the Guard on the spectator's left, leading in Antigone]

What potent from the gods is this?—my soul is amazed. I know her—how can I deny that yon maiden is Antigone?

O hapless, and child of hapless sire,—of Oedipus! What means this? Thou brought a prisoner?—thou, disloyal to the king's laws, and taken in folly?

GUARD: Here she is, the doer of the deed:—we caught this girl burying him:—but where is Creon?

CHORUS: Lo, he comes forth again from the house, at our need.

CREON: What is it? What hath chanced, that makes my coming timely?

GUARD: O king, against nothing should men pledge their word; for the after-

thought belies the first intent. I could have vowed that I should not soon be here again,—scared by thy threats, with which I had just been lashed: but,—since the joy that surprises and transcends our hopes is like in fulness to no other pleasure,—I have come, though 'tis in breach of my sworn oath, bringing this maid; who was taken showing grace to the dead. This time there was no casting of lots; no, this luck hath fallen to me, and to none else. And now, sire, take her thyself, question her, examine her, as thou wilt; but I have a right to free and final quittance of this trouble.

CREON: And thy prisoner here—how and whence hast thou taken her?

GUARD: She was burying the man; thou knowest all.

CREON: Dost thou mean what thou sayest? Dost thou speak aright?

GUARD: I saw her burying the corpse that thou hadst forbidden to bury. Is that plain and clear?

CREON: And how was she seen? how taken in the act?

GUARD: It befell on this wise. When we had come to the place,—with those dread menaces of thine upon us,—we swept away all the dust that covered the corpse, and bared the dank body well; and then sat us down on the brow of the hill, to windward, heedful that the smell from him should not strike us; every man was wide awake, and kept his neighbor alert with torrents of threats, if any one should be careless of this task.

So went it, until the sun's bright orb stood in mid heaven, and the heat began to burn: and then suddenly a whirlwind lifted from the earth a storm of dust, a trouble in the sky, and filled the plain, marring all the leafage of its woods; and the wide air was choked therewith:

we closed our eyes, and bore the plague from the gods.

And when, after a long while, this storm had passed, the maid was seen; and she cried aloud with the sharp cry of a bird in its bitterness,—even as when, within the empty nest, it sees the bed stripped of its nestlings. So she also, when she saw the corpse bare, lifted up a voice of wailing, and called down curses on the doers of that deed. And straightway she brought thirsty dust in her hands; and from a shapely ewer of bronze, held high, with thrice-poured drink-offering she crowned the dead.

We rushed forward when we saw it, and at once closed upon our quarry, who was in no wise dismayed. Then we taxed her with her past and present doings; and she stood not on denial of aught,—at once to my joy and to my pain. To have escaped from ill's one's self is a great joy; but 'tis painful to bring friends to ill. Howbeit, all such things are of less account to me than mine own safety.

CREON: Thou—thou whose face is bent to earth—dost thou avow, or disavow, this deed?

ANTIGONE: I avow it; I make no denial.

CREON: [*To Guard*] Thou canst betake thee whither thou wilt, free and clear of a grave charge.

[*Exit Guard*]

[*To Antigone*] Now, tell me thou—not in many words, but briefly—knewest thou that an edict had forbidden this?

ANTIGONE: I knew it: could I help it? It was public.

CREON: And thou didst indeed dare to transgress that law?

ANTIGONE: Yes; for it was not Zeus that had published me that edict; not such are the laws set among men by the Justice who dwells with the gods below; nor deemed I that thy decrees were of such

force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven. For their life is not of to-day or yesterday, but from all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth.

Not through dread of any human pride could I answer to the gods for breaking *these*. Die I must,—I knew that well (how should I not?)—even without thy edicts. But if I am to die before my time, I count that a gain: for when any one lives, as I do, compassed about with evils, can such an one find aught but gain in death?

So for me to meet this doom is trifling grief; but if I had suffered my mother's son to lie in death an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me; for this, I am not grieved. And if my present deeds are foolish in thy sight, it may be that a foolish judge arraigns my folly.

CHORUS: The maid shows herself passionate child of passionate sire, and knows not how to bend before troubles.

CREON: Yet I would have thee know that o'er-stubborn spirits are most often humbled; 'tis the stiffest iron, baked to hardness in the fire, that thou shalt oftenest see snapped and shivered; and I have known horses that show temper brought to order by a little curb; there is no room for pride, when thou art thy neighbor's slave.—This girl was already versed in insolence when she transgressed the laws that had been set forth; and, that done, lo, a second insult,—to vaunt of this, and exult in her deed.

Now verily I am no man, she is the man, if this victory shall rest with her, and bring no penalty. Not be she sister's child, or nearer to me in blood than any that worships Zeus at the altar of our house,—she and her kinsfolk shall not avoid a doom most dire; for indeed I charge that

other with a like share in the plotting of this burial.

And summon her—for I saw her e'en now within,—raving, and not mistress of her wits. So oft, before the deed, the mind stands self-convicted in its treason, when folks are plotting mischief in the dark. But verily this, too, is hateful,—when one who hath been caught in wickedness then seeks to make the crime a glory.

ANTIGONE: Wouldst thou do more than take and slay me?

CREON: No more, indeed; having that, I have all.

ANTIGONE: Why then dost thou delay? In thy discourse there is nought that pleases me,—never may there be!—and so my words must needs be displeasing to thee. And yet, for glory—whence could I have won a nobler, than by giving burial to mine own brother? All here would own that they thought it well, were not their lips sealed by fear. But royalty, blest in so much besides, hath the power to do and say what it will.

CREON: Thou differest from all these Thebans in that view.

ANTIGONE: These also share it; but they curb their tongues for thee.

CREON: And art thou not ashamed to act apart from them?

ANTIGONE: No; there is nothing shameful in piety to a brother.

CREON: Was it not a brother, too, that died in the opposite cause?

ANTIGONE: Brother by the same mother and the same sire.

CREON: Why, then, dost thou render a grace that is impious in his sight?

ANTIGONE: The dead man will not say that he so deems it.

CREON: Yea, if thou makest him but equal in honor with the wicked.

ANTIGONE: It was his brother, not his slave, that perished.

CREON: Wasting this land; while *he* fell
as its champion.

ANTIGONE: Nevertheless, Hades desires
these rites.

CREON: But the good desires not a like
portion with the evil.

ANTIGONE: Who knows but this seems
blameless in the world below?

CREON: A foe is never a friend—not even
in death.

ANTIGONE: 'Tis not my nature to join in
hating, but in loving.

CREON: Pass, then, to the world of the
dead, and, if thou must needs love, love
them. While I live, no woman shall rule
me.

[Enter Ismene from the house, led in
by two attendants]

CHORUS: Lo, yonder Ismene comes forth,
shedding such tears as fond sisters weep;
a cloud upon her brow casts its shadow
over her darkly-flushing face, and breaks
in rain on her fair cheek.

CREON: And thou, who, lurking like a
viper in my house, wast secretly draining
my life-blood, while I knew not that I
was nurturing two pests, to rise against
my throne—come, tell me now, wilt thou
also confess thy part in this burial, or wilt
thou forswear all knowledge of it?

ISMENE: I have done the deed,—if she
allows my claim,—and share the burden
of the charge.

ANTIGONE: Nay, justice will not suffer thee
to do that: thou didst not consent to the
deed, nor did I give thee part in it.

ISMENE: But, now that ills beset thee, I am
not ashamed to sail the sea of trouble at
thy side.

ANTIGONE: Whose was the deed, Hades
and the dead are witnesses: a friend in
words is not the friend I love.

ISMENE: Nay, sister, reject me not, but let

me die with thee, and duly honor the
dead.

ANTIGONE: Share not thou my death, nor
claim deeds to which thou hast not put
thy hand: my death will suffice.

ISMENE: And what life is dear to me, bereft
of thee?

ANTIGONE: Ask Creon; all thy care is for
him.

ISMENE: Why vex me thus, when it avails
thee nought?

ANTIGONE: Indeed, if I mock, 'tis with pain
that I mock thee.

ISMENE: Tell me,—how can I serve thee,
even now?

ANTIGONE: Save thyself: I grudge not thy
escape.

ISMENE: Ah, woe is me! And shall I have
no share in thy fate?

ANTIGONE: Thy choice was to live; mine,
to die.

ISMENE: At least thy choice was not made
without my protest.

ANTIGONE: One world approved thy wis-
dom; another, mine.

ISMENE: Howbeit, the offence is the same
for both of us.

ANTIGONE: Be of good cheer; thou livest;
but my life hath long been given to death,
that so I might serve the dead.

CREON: Lo, one of these maidens hath
newly shown herself foolish, as the other
hath been since her life began.

ISMENE: Yea, O king, such reason as nature
may have given abides not with the un-
fortunate, but goes astray.

CREON: Thine did, when thou chocest vile
deeds with the vile.

ISMENE: What life could I endure, without
her presence?

CREON: Nay, speak not of her "presence";
she lives no more.

ISMENE: But wilt thou slay the betrothed
of thine own son?

CREON: Nay, there are other fields for him to plough.

ISMENE: But there can never be such love as bound him to her.

CREON: I like not an evil wife for my son.

ANTIGONE: Haemon, beloved! How thy father wrongs thee!

CREON: Enough, enough of thee and of thy marriage!

CHORUS: Wilt thou indeed rob thy son of this maiden?

CREON: 'Tis Death that shall stay these bridals for me.

CHORUS: 'Tis determined, it seems, that she shall die.

CREON: Determined, yes, for thee and for me.—[*To the two attendants*] No more delay—servants, take them within! Henceforth they must be women, and not range at large; for verily even the bold seek to fly, when they see Death now closing on their life.

[*Exeunt attendants, guarding Antigone and Ismene.—Creon remains*]

CHORUS: Blest are they whose days have not tasted of evil. For when a house hath once been shaken from heaven, there the curse fails nevermore, passing from life to life of the race; even as, when the surge is driven over the darkness of the deep by the fierce breath of Thracian sea-winds, it rolls up the black sand from the depths, and there is a sullen roar from wind-vexed headlands that front the blows of the storm.

I see that from olden time the sorrows in the house of the Labdacidae are heaped upon the sorrows of the dead; and generation is not freed by generation, but some god strikes them down, and the race hath no deliverance.

For now that hope of which the light had been spread above the last root of the house of Oedipus—that hope, in turn, is

brought low—by the blood-stained dust due to the gods infernal, and by folly in speech, and frenzy at the heart.

Thy power, O Zeus, what human trespass can limit? That power which neither Sleep, the all-ensnaring, nor the untiring months of the gods can master; but thou, a ruler to whom time brings not old age, dwellest in the dazzling splendor of Olympus.

And through the future, near and far, as through the past, shall this law hold good: Nothing that is vast enters into the life of mortals without a curse.

For that hope whose wanderings are so wide is to many men a comfort, but to many a false lure of giddy desires; and the disappointment comes on one who knoweth nought till he burn his foot against the hot fire.

For with wisdom hath some one given forth the famous saying, that evil seems good, soon or late, to him whose mind the god draws to mischief; and but for the briefest space doth he fare free of woe.

But lo, Haemon, the last of thy sons;—comes he grieving for the doom of his promised bride, Antigone, and bitter for the baffled hope of his marriage?

[*Enter Haemon*]

CREON: We shall know soon, better than seers could tell us.—My son, hearing the fixed doom of thy betrothed, art thou come in rage against thy father? Or have I thy good will, act how I may?

HAEMON: Father, I am thine; and thou, in thy wisdom, tracest for me rules which I shall follow. No marriage shall be deemed by me a greater gain than thy good guidance.

CREON: Yea, this, my son, should be thy heart's fixed law,—in all things to obey

thy father's will. 'Tis for this that men pray to see dutiful children grow up around them in their homes,—that such may requite their father's foe with evil, and honor, as their father doth, his friend. But he who begets unprofitable children—what shall we say that he hath sown, but troubles for himself, and much triumph for his foes? Then do not thou, my son, at pleasure's beck, dethrone thy reason for a woman's sake; knowing that this is a joy that soon grows cold in claspings arms,—an evil woman to share thy bed and thy home. For what wound could strike deeper than a false friend? Nay, with loathing, and as if she were thine enemy, let this girl go to find a husband in the house of Hades. For since I have taken her, alone of all the city, in open disobedience, I will not make myself a liar to my people—I will slay her. So let her appeal as she will to the majesty of kindred blood. If I am to nurture mine own kindred in naughtiness, needs must I bear with it in aliens. He who does his duty in his own household will be found righteous in the State also. But if any one transgresses, and does violence to the laws, or thinks to dictate to his rulers, such an one can win no praise from me. No, whomsoever the city may appoint, that man must be obeyed, in little things and great, in just things and unjust; and I should feel sure that one who thus obeys would be a good ruler no less than a good subject, and in the storm of spears would stand his ground where he was set, loyal and dauntless at his comrade's side.

But disobedience is the worst of evils. This it is that ruins cities; this makes homes desolate; by this, the ranks of allies are broken into headlong rout; but, of the lives whose course is fair, the greater part owes safety to obedience. Therefore

we must support the cause of order, and in no wise suffer a woman to worst us. Better to fall from power, if we must, by a man's hand; then we should not be called weaker than a woman.

CHORUS: To us, unless our years have stolen our wit, thou seemest to say wisely what thou sayest.

HAEMON: Father, the gods implant reason in men, the highest of all things that we call our own. Not mine the skill—far from me be the quest!—to say wherein thou speakest not aright; and yet another man, too, might have some useful thought. At least, it is my natural office to watch, on thy behalf, all that men say, or do, or find to blame. For the dread of thy frown forbids the citizen to speak such words as would offend thine ear; but I can hear these murmurs in the dark, these moanings of the city for this maiden; “no woman,” they say, “ever merited her doom less,—none ever was to die so shamefully for deeds so glorious as hers; who, when her own brother had fallen in bloody strife, would not leave him unburied, to be devoured by carrion dogs, or by any bird:—deserves not *she* the meed of golden honor?”

Such is the darkling rumor that spreads in secret. For me, my father, no treasure is so precious as thy welfare. What, indeed, is a nobler ornament for children than a prospering sire's fair fame, or for sire than son's? Wear not, then, one mood only in thyself; think not that thy word, and thine alone, must be right. For if any man thinks that he alone is wise,—that in speech, or in mind, he hath no peer,—such a soul, when laid open, is ever found empty.

No, though a man be wise, 'tis no shame for him to learn many things, and to bend in season. Seest thou, beside the wintry torrent's course, how the trees that

yield to it save every twig, while the stiff-necked perish root and branch? And even thus he who keeps the sheet of his sail taut, and never slackens it, upsets his boat, and finishes his voyage with keel uppermost.

Nay, forego thy wrath; permit thyself to change. For if I, a younger man, may offer my thought, it were far best, I ween, that men should be all-wise by nature; but, otherwise and oft the scale inclines not so—'tis good also to learn from those who speak aught.

CHORUS: Sire, 'tis meet that thou shouldst profit by his words, if he speaks aught in season, and thou, Haemon, by thy father's; for on both parts there hath been wise speech.

CREON: Men of my age—are we indeed to be schooled, then, by men of his?

HAEMON: In nothing that is not right; but if I am young, thou shouldst look to my merits, not to my years.

CREON: Is it a merit to honor the unruly?

HAEMON: I could wish no one to show respect for evil-doers.

CREON: Then is not she tainted with that malady?

HAEMON: Our Theban folk, with one voice, denies it.

CREON: Shall Thebes prescribe to me how I must rule?

HAEMON: See, there thou hast spoken like a youth indeed.

CREON: Am I to rule this land by other judgment than mine own?

HAEMON: That is no city, which belongs to one man.

CREON: Is not the city held to be the ruler's?

HAEMON: Thou wouldst make a good monarch of a despot.

CREON: This boy, it seems, is the woman's champion.

HAEMON: If thou art a woman; indeed, my care is for thee.

CREON: Shameless, at open feud with thy father!

HAEMON: Nay, I see thee offending against justice.

CREON: Do I offend, when I respect mine own prerogatives?

HAEMON: Thou dost not respect them, when thou tramplest on the gods' honors.

CREON: O dastard nature, yielding place to woman!

HAEMON: Thou wilt never find me yield to baseness.

CREON: All thy words, at least, plead for that girl.

HAEMON: And for thee, and for me, and for the gods below.

CREON: Thou canst never marry her, on this side the grave.

HAEMON: Then she must die, and in death destroy another.

CREON: How! doth thy boldness run to open threats?

HAEMON: What threat is it, to combat vain selves?

CREON: Thou shalt rue thy witless teaching of wisdom.

HAEMON: Wert thou not my father, I would have called thee unwise.

CREON: Thou woman's slave, use not wheedling speech with me.

HAEMON: Thou wouldst speak, and then hear no reply?

CREON: Sayest thou so? Now, by the heaven above us—be sure of it—thou shalt smart for taunting me in this opprobrious strain. Bring forth that hated thing, that she may die forthwith in his presence—before his eyes—at her bridegroom's side!

HAEMON: No, not at my side—never think it—shall she perish; nor shalt thou ever set eyes more upon my face:—rave, then, with such friends as can endure thee.

[Exit Haemon]

CHORUS: The man is gone, O king, in angry haste; a youthful mind, when stung, is fierce.

CREON: Let him do, or dream, more than man—good speed to him!--But he shall not save these two girls from their doom.

CHORUS: Dost thou indeed purpose to slay both?

CREON: Not her whose hands are pure: thou sayest well.

CHORUS: And by what doom mean'st thou to slay the other?

CREON: I will take her where the path is loneliest, and hide her, living, in a rocky vault, with so much food set forth as piety prescribes, that the city may avoid a public stain. And there, praying to Hades, the only god whom she worships, perchance she will obtain release from death; or else will learn, at last, though late, that it is lost labor to revere the dead.

[Exit Creon]

[Strophe.]

CHORUS: Love, unconquered in the fight, Love, who makest havoc of wealth, who keepest thy vigil on the soft cheek of a maiden; thou roamest over the sea, and among the homes of dwellers in the wilds; no immortal can escape thee, nor any among men whose life is for a day; and he to whom thou hast come is mad.

[Antistrophe.]

The just themselves have their minds warped by thee to wrong, for their ruin: 'tis thou that hast stirred up this present strife of kinsmen; victorious is the love-kindling light from the eyes of the fair bride; it is a power enthroned in sway beside the eternal laws; for there the goddess Aphrodite is working her unconquerable will.

But now I also am carried beyond the bounds of loyalty, and can no more keep back the streaming tears, when I see

Antigone thus passing to the bridal chamber where all are laid to rest.

[Strophe 1.]

ANTIGONE: See me, citizens of my fatherland, setting forth on my last way, looking my last on the sunlight that is for me no more; no, Hades who gives sleep to all leads me living to Acheron's shore; who have had no portion in the chant that brings the bride, nor hath any song been mine for the crowning of brides; whom the lord of the Dark Lake shall wed.

CHORUS: Glorious, therefore, and with praise, thou deputedst to that deep place of the dead: wasting sickness hath not smitten thee; thou hast not found the wages of the sword; no, mistress of thine own fate, and still alive, thou shalt pass to Hades, as no other of mortal kind hath passed.

[Antistrophe 1.]

ANTIGONE: I have heard in other days how dread a doom befell our Phrygian guest, the daughter of Tantalus, on the Sipylian heights; how, like clinging ivy, the growth of stone subdued her; and the rains fail not, as men tell, from her wasting form, nor fails the snow, while beneath her weeping lids the tears bedew her bosom; and most like to hers is the fate that brings me to my rest.

CHORUS: Yet she was a goddess, thou knowest, and born of gods; we are mortals, and of mortal race. But 'tis great renown for a woman who hath perished that she should have shared the doom of the godlike, in her life, and afterward in death.

[Strophe 2.]

ANTIGONE: Ah, I am mocked! In the name of our fathers' gods, can ye not wait till I am gone,—must ye taunt me to my

face, O my city, and ye, her wealthy sons? Ah, fount of Dirce, and thou holy ground of Thebè whose chariots are many; ye, at least, will bear me witness, in what sort, unwept of friends, and by what laws I pass to the rock-closed prison of my strange tomb, ah me unhappy! who have no home on the earth or in the shades, no home with the living or with the dead.

[*Strophe 3.*

CITHRUS: Thou hast rushed forward to the utmost verge of daring; and against that throne where Justice sits on high thou hast fallen, my daughter, with a grievous fall! But in this ordeal thou art paying, haply, for thy father's sin.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

ANTIGONE: Thou hast touched on my bitterest thought,—awaking the ever-new lament for my sire and for all the doom given to us, the famed house of Labdacus. Alas for the horrors of the mother's bed! alas for the wretched mother's slumber at the side of her own son, —and my sue! From what manner of parents did I take my miserable being! And to them I go thus, accursed, unwept, to share their home. Alas, my brother, ill started in thy marriage, in thy death thou hast undone my life!

[*Antistrophe 3.*

CITHRUS: Reverent action claims a certain praise for reverence; but an offence against power cannot be brooked by him who hath power in his keeping. Thy self-willed temper hath wrought thy ruin.

[*Epode.*

ANTIGONE: Unwept, unfriended, without marriage-song, I am led forth in my sorrow on this journey that can be delayed no more. No longer, hapless one, may I behold von day-star's sacred eye;

but for my fate no tear is shed, no friend makes moan.

CREON. Know ye not that songs and wailings before death would never cease, if it profited to utter them? Away with her—away! And when ye have enclosed her, according to my word, in her vaulted grave, leave her alone, forlorn—whether she wishes to die, or to live a buried life in such a home. Our hands are clean as touching this maiden. But this is certain—she shall be deprived of her sojourn in the light.

ANTIGONE: Tomb, bridal-chamber, eternal prison in the caverned rock, whither I go to find mine own, those many who have perished, and whom Persephone hath received among the dead! Last of all shall I pass thither, and far most miserably of all, before the term of my life is spent. But I cherish good hope that my coming will be welcome to my father, and pleasant to thee, my mother, and welcome, brother, to thee; for, when ye died, with mine own hands I washed and dressed you, and poured drink-offerings at your graves; and now, Polyneices, 'tis for tending thy corpse that I win such recompense as this.

[And yet I honored thee, as the wise will deem, rightly. Never, had I been a mother of children, or if a husband had been mouldering in death, would I have taken this task upon me in the city's despite. What law, ye ask, is my warrant for that word? The husband lost, another might have been found, and child from another, to replace the first-born; but, father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again. Such was the law whereby I held thee first in honor; but Creon deemed me guilty of error therein, and of outrage. ah brother mine! And

now he leads me thus, a captive in his hands; no bridal bed, no bridal song hath been mine, no joy of marriage, no portion in the nurture of children; but thus, forlorn of friends, unhappy one, I go living to the vaults of death |

And what law of heaven have I transgressed? Why, hapless one, should I look to the gods any more,—what ally should I invoke,—when by piety I have earned the name of impious? Nay, then, if these things are pleasing to the gods, when I have suffered my doom, I shall come to know my sin; but if the sin is with my judges, I could wish them no fuller measure of evil than they, on their part, mete wrongfully to me

CHORUS: Still the same tempest of the soul vexes this maiden with the same fierce gusts.

CREON: Then for this shall her guards have cause to rue their slowness.

ANTIGONE: Ah me! that word hath come very near to death.

CREON: I can cheer thee with no hope that this doom is not thus to be fulfilled.

ANTIGONE: O city of my fathers in the land of Thebè! O ye gods, eldest of our race!—they lead me hence—now, now they tarry not! Behold me, princes of Thebes, the last daughter of the house of your kings,—see what I suffer, and from whom, because I feared to cast away the fear of Heaven!

[Antigone is led away by the guards]

[Strophe 1.

CHORUS: Even thus endured Danaë in her beauty to change the light of day for brass-bound walls; and in that chamber, secret as the grave, she was held close prisoner; yet was she of a proud lineage, O my daughter, and charged with the keeping of the seed of Zeus, that fell in the golden rain.

But dreadful is the mysterious power of fate; there is no deliv'rance from it by wealth or by war, by fenced city, or dark, sea-beaten ships.

[Antistrophe 1.

And bonds tamed the son of Dryis, swift to wrath, that king of the Edonians; so paid he for his frenzied taunts, when, by the will of Dionysus, he was pent in a rocky prison. There the fierce exuberance of his madness slowly passed away. That man learned to know the god, whom in his frenzy he had provoked with mockeries; for he had sought to quell the god-possessed women, and the Bacchanalian fire; and he angered the Muses that love the flute.

[Strophe 2.

And by the waters of the Dark Rocks, the waters of the twofold sea, are the shores of Bosphorus, and Thracian Salmydessus; where Ares, neighbor to the city, saw the accursed, blinding wound dealt to the two sons of Phineus by his fierce wife,—the wound that brought darkness to those vengeance-craving orbs, smitten with her bloody hands, smitten with her shuttle for a dagger.

[Antistrophe 2.

Pining in their misery, they bewailed their cruel doom, those sons of a mother hapless in her marriage; but she traced her descent from the ancient line of the Erechtheidæ; and in far-distant caves she was nursed amid her father's storms, that child of Boreas, swift as a steed over the steep hills, a daughter of gods; yet upon her also the gray Fates bore hard, my daughter.

[Enter Teiresias, led by a boy, on the spectator's right]

TEIRESIAS: Princes of Thebes, we have come with linked steps, both served by

the eyes of one; for thus, by a guide's help, the blind must walk.

CREON: And what, aged Teiresias, are thy tidings?

TEIRESIAS: I will tell thee; and do thou hearken to the seer.

CREON: Indeed, it has not been my wont to slight thy counsel.

TEIRESIAS: Therefore didst thou steer our city's course aright.

CREON: I have felt, and can attest, thy benefits.

TEIRESIAS: Mark that now, once more, thou standest on fate's fine edge.

CREON: What means this? How I shudder at thy message!

TEIRESIAS: Thou wilt learn, when thou hearest the warnings of mine art. As I took my place on mine old seat of augury, where all birds have been wont to gather within my ken, I heard a strange voice among them; they were screaming with dire, feverish rage, that drowned their language in a jargon; and I knew that they were rending each other with their talons, murderously; the whirr of wings told no doubtful tale.

Forthwith, in fear, I essayed burnt-sacrifice on a duly kindled altar: but from my offerings the Fire god showed no flame; a dank moisture, oozing from the thigh-flesh, trickled forth upon the embers, and smoked, and sputtered; the gall was scattered to the air; and the streaming thighs lay bared of the fat that had been wrapped round them.

Such was the failure of the rites by which I vainly asked a sign, as from this boy I learned; for he is my guide, as I am guide to others. And 'tis thy counsel that hath brought this sickness on our State. For the altars of our city and of our hearths have been tainted, one and all, by birds and dogs, with carrion from the hapless corpse, the son

of Oedipus: and therefore the gods no more accept prayer and sacrifice at our hands, or the flame of meat-offering; nor doth any bird give a clear sign by its shrill cry, for they have tasted the fatness of a slain man's blood.

Think, then, on these things, my son. All men are liable to err; but when an error hath been made, that man is no longer witless or unblest who heals the ill into which he hath fallen, and remains not stubborn.

Self-will, we know, incurs the charge of folly. Nay, allow the claim of the dead; stab not the fallen; what prowess is it to slay the slain anew? I have sought thy good, and for thy good I speak: and never is it sweeter to learn from a good counselor than when he counsels for thine own gain.

CREON: Old man, ye all shoot your shafts at me, as archers at the butts;—ye must needs practice on me with seer-craft also;—aye, the seer-tribe hath long trafficked in me, and made me their merchandise. Gain your gains, drive your trade, if ye list, in the silver-gold of Sardis and the gold of India; but ye shall not hide that man in the grave,—no, though the eagles of Zeus should bear the carrion morsels to their Master's throne—no, not for dread of that defilement will I suffer his burial:—for well I know that no mortal can defile the gods.—But, aged Teiresias, the wisest fall with a shameful fall, when they clothe shameful thoughts in fair words, for lucre's sake.

TEIRESIAS: Alas! Doth any man know, doth any consider . . .

CREON: Whereof? What general truth dost thou announce?

TEIRESIAS: How precious, above all wealth, is good counsel.

CREON: As folly, I think, is the worst mischief.

TIRESIAS: Yet thou art tainted with that distemper.

CREON: I would not answer the seer with a taunt.

TIRESIAS: But thou dost, in saying that I prophesy falsely.

CREON: Well, the prophet-tribe was ever fond of money.

TIRESIAS: And the race bred of tyrants loves base gain.

CREON: Knowest thou that thy speech is spoken of thy king?

TIRESIAS: I know it; for through me thou hast saved Thebes.

CREON: Thou art a wise seer; but thou lovest evil deeds.

TIRESIAS: Thou wilt rouse me to utter the dread secret in my soul.

CREON: Out with it!—Only speak it not for gain.

TIRESIAS: Indeed, methinks, I shall not,—as touching thee.

CREON: Know that thou shalt not trade on my resolve.

TIRESIAS: Then know thou—aye, know it well—that thou shalt not live through many more courses of the sun's swift chariot, ere one begotten of thine own loins shall have been given by thee, a corpse for corpses; because thou hast thrust children of the sunlight to the shades, and ruthlessly lodged a living soul in the grave; but keepest in this world one who belongs to the gods infernal, a corpse unburied, unhonored, all unhallowed. In such thou hast no part, nor have the gods above, but this is a violence done to them by thee. Therefore the avenging destroyers lie in wait for thee, the Furies of Hades and of the gods, that thou mayest be taken in these same ills.

And mark well if I speak these things as a hireling. A time not long to be delayed shall awaken the wailing of men

and of women in thy house. And a tumult of hatred against thee stirs all the cities whose mangled sons had the burial-rite from dogs, or from wild beasts, or from some winged bird that bore a polluting breath to each city that contains the hearths of the dead.

Such arrows for thy heart—since thou provokest me—have I launched at thee, archer-like, in my anger,—such sure arrows, of which thou shalt not escape the smart.—Boy, lead me home, that he may spend his rage on younger men, and learn to keep a tongue more temperate, and to bear within his breast a better mind than now he bears.

[Exit TIRESIAS]

CHORUS: The man hath gone, O king, with dread prophecies. And, since the hair on his head, once dark, hath been white, I know that he hath never been a false prophet to our city.

CREON: I, too, know it well, and am troubled in soul. 'Tis dire to yield; but, by resistance, to smite my pride with ruin—this, too, is a dire choice.

CHORUS: Son of Menoeceus, it behooves thee to take wise counsel.

CREON: What should I do, then? Speak, and I will obey.

CHORUS: Go thou, and free the maiden from her rocky chamber, and make a tomb for the unburied dead.

CREON: And this is thy counsel? Thou wouldst have me yield?

CHORUS: Yea, King, and with all speed; for swift harms from the gods cut short the folly of men.

CREON: 'Ah me, 'tis hard, but I resign my cherished resolve,—I obey. We must not wage a vain war with destiny.

CHORUS: Go, thou, and do these things; leave them not to others.

CREON: Even as I am I'll go:—on, on, my servants, each and all of you,—take axes

in your hands, and hasten to the ground that ye see yonder! Since our judgment hath taken this turn, I will be present to unloose her, as I myself bound her. My heart misgives me, 'tis best to keep the established laws, even to life's end.

[*Strophe 1.*

CHORUS: O thou of many names, glory of the Cadmeian bride, offspring of loud-thundering Zeus! thou who watchest over famed Italia, and reignest, where all guests are welcomed, in the sheltered plain of Eleusinian Deò! O Bacchus, dweller in Thebè, mother-city of Bacchants, by the softly-gliding stream of Ismenus, on the soil where the fierce dragon's teeth were sown!

[*Antistrophe 1.*

Thou hast been seen where torch-flames glare through smoke, above the crests of the twin peaks, where move the Corycian nymphs, thy votaries, hard by Castalia's stream.

Thou comest from the ivy-mantled slopes of Nysa's hills, and from the shore green with many-clustered vines, while thy name is lifted up on strains of more than mortal power, as thou visitest the ways of Thebè:

[*Strophe 2.*

Thebè, of all cities, thou holdest first in honor, thou, and thy mother whom the lightning smote; and now, when all our people is captive to a violent plague, come thou with healing feet over the Parnassian height, or over the moaning strait!

[*Antistrophe 2.*

O thou with whom the stars rejoice as they move, the stars whose breath is fire; O master of the voices of the night; son begotten of Zeus; appear, O king, with thine attendant Thyiads, who in

night-long frenzy dance before thee, the giver of good gifts, Iacchus!

[*Enter Messenger, on the spectators' left hand*]

MESSENGER: Dwellers by the house of Cadmus and of Amphion, there is no estate of mortal life that I would ever praise or blame as settled. Fortune raises and Fortune humbles the lucky or unlucky from day to day, and no one can prophesy to men concerning those things which are established. For Creon was blest once, as I count bliss; he had saved this land of Cadmus from its foes; he was clothed with sole dominion in the land; he reigned, the glorious sire of princely children. And now all hath been lost. For when a man hath forfeited his pleasures, I count him not as living, —I hold him but a breathing corpse. Heap up riches in thy house, if thou wilt; live in kingly state; yet, if there be no gladness therewith, I would not give the shadow of a vapor for all the rest, compared with joy.

CHORUS: And what is this new grief that thou hast to tell for our princes?

MESSENGER: Death; and the living are guilty for the dead.

CHORUS: And who is the slayer? Who the stricken? Speak.

MESSENGER: Haemon hath perished; his blood hath been shed by no stranger.

CHORUS: By his father's hand, or by his own?

MESSENGER: By his own, in wrath with his sire for the murder.

CHORUS: O prophet, how true, then, hast thou proved thy word!

MESSENGER: These things stand thus; ye must consider of the rest.

CHORUS: Lo, I see the hapless Eurydicè, Creon's wife, approaching; she comes from the house by chance, haply,—or

because she knows the tidings of her son.

[*Enter Eurydicè*]

EURYDICÈ: People of Thebes, I heard your words as I was going forth, to salute the goddess Pallas with my prayers. Even as I was loosing the fastenings of the gate, to open it, the message of a household woe smote on mine ear: I sank back, terror-stricken, into the arms of my handmaids, and my senses fled. But say again what the tidings were; I shall hear them as one who is no stranger to sorrow.

MESSENGER: Dear lady, I will witness of what I saw, and will leave no word of the truth untold. Why, indeed, should I soothe thee with words in which I must presently be found false? Truth is ever best.—I attended thy lord as his guide to the furthest part of the plain, where the body of Polyneices, torn by dogs, still lay unpieted. We prayed the goddess of the roads, and Pluto, in mercy to restrain their wrath; we washed the dead with holy washing; and with freshly-plucked boughs we solemnly burned such relics as there were. We raised a high mound of his native earth; and then we turned away to enter the maiden's nuptial chamber with rocky couch, the caverned mansion of the bride of Death. And, from afar off, one of us heard a voice of loud wailing at that bride's unhallowed bower; and came to tell our master Creon.

And as the king drew nearer, doubtful sounds of a bitter cry floated around him; he groaned, and said in accents of anguish, "Wretched that I am, can my foreboding be true? Am I going on the woofullest way that ever I went? My son's voice greets me.—Go, my servants,—haste ye nearer, and when ye have reached the tomb, pass through the gap, where the stones have been wrenched

away, to the cell's very mouth,—and look, and see if 'tis Hæmon's voice that I know, or if mine ear is cheated by the gods."

This search, at our despairing master's word, we went to make; and in the furthest part of the tomb we descried *her* hanging by the neck, slung by a thread-wrought halter of fine linen; while *he* was embracing her with arms thrown around her waist,—bewailing the loss of his bride who is with the dead, and his father's deeds, and his own ill-starred love.

But his father, when he saw him, cried aloud with a dread cry and went in, and called to him with a voice of wailing—"Unhappy, what a deed hast thou done! What thought hath come to thee? What manner of mischance hath marred thy reason? Come forth, my child! I pray thee—I implore!" But the boy glared at him with fierce eyes, spat in his face, and, without a word of answer, drew his cross-hilted sword.—as his father rushed forth in flight, he missed his aim;—then, hapless one, wroth with himself, he straightway leaned with all his weight against his sword, and drove it, half its length, into his side; and, while sense lingered, he clasped the maiden to his faint embrace, and, as he gasped, sent forth on her pale cheek the swift stream of the oozing blood.

Corpse enfolding corpse he lies; he hath won his nuptial rites, poor youth, not here, yet in the halls of Death; and he hath witnessed to mankind that, of all curses which cleave to man, ill counsel is the sovereign curse.

[*Eurydicè retires into the house*]

CHORUS: What wouldst thou augur from this? The lady hath turned back, and is gone, without a word, good or evil.

MESSENGER: I, too, am startled; yet I nourish the hope that, at these sore tidings of her son, she cannot deign to give her sorrow public vent, but in the privacy of the house will set her handmaids to mourn the household grief. For she is not untaught of discretion, that she should err.

CHORUS: I know not; but to me, at least, a strained silence seems to portend peril, no less than vain abundance of lament.

MESSENGER: Well, I will enter the house, and learn whether indeed she is not hiding some repressed purpose in the depths of a passionate heart. Yea, thou sayest well: excess of silence, too, may have a perilous meaning.

[Exit Messenger]

[Enter Creon, on the spectators' left, with attendants, carrying the shrouded body of Haemon on a bier]

CHORUS: Lo, yonder the king himself draws near, bearing that which tells too clear a tale,—the work of no stranger's madness,—if we may say it,—but of his own misdeeds.

[Strophe 1.]

CREON: Woe for the sins of a darkened soul, stubborn sins, fraught with death! Ah, ye behold us, the sire who hath slain, the son who hath perished! Woe is me, for the wretched blindness of my counsels! Alas, my son, thou hast died in thy youth, by a timeless doom, woe is me!—thy spirit hath fled,—not by thy folly, but by mine own!

[Strophe 2.]

CHORUS: Ah me, how all too late thou seemest to see the right!

CREON: Ah me, I have learned the bitter lesson! But then, methinks, oh then, some god smote me from above with crushing weight, and hurled me into ways of cruelty, woe is me,—overthrowing and

trampling on my joy! Woe, woe, for the troublous toils of men!

[Enter Messenger from the house]

MESSENGER: Sire, thou hast come, methinks, as one whose hands are not empty, but who hath store laid up besides; thou bearest yonder burden with thee; and thou art soon to look upon the woes within thy house.

CREON: And what worse ill is yet to follow upon ills?

MESSENGER: Thy queen hath died, true mother of yon corpse—ah, hapless lady!—by blows newly dealt.

[Antistrophe 1.]

CREON: Oh Hades, all-receiving, whom no sacrifice can appease! Hast thou, then, no mercy for me? O thou herald of evil, bitter tidings, what word dost thou utter? Alas, I was already as dead, and thou hast smitten me anew! What sayest thou, my son? What is this new message that thou bringest—woe, woe is me!—of a wife's doom,—of slaughter heaped on slaughter?

CHORUS: Thou canst behold: 'tis no longer hidden within.

[The doors of the palace are opened, and the corpse of Eurydicè is disclosed]

[Antistrophe 2.]

CREON: Ah me,—yonder I behold a new, a second woe! What destiny, ah what, can yet await me? I have but now raised my son in my arms,—and there, again, I see a corpse before me! Alas, alas, unhappy mother! Alas, my child!

MESSENGER: There, at the altar, self-stabbed with a keen knife, she suffered her darkening eyes to close, when she had wailed for the noble fate of Megareus who died before, and then for his fate who lies there,—and when, with her last breath,

she had invoked evil fortunes upon thee,
the slayer of thy sons.

[*Strophe 3.*

CREON: Woe, woe! I thrill with dread. Is there none to strike me to the heart with two-edged sword?—O miserable that I am, and steeped in miserable anguish!

MESSENGER: Yea, both this son's doom, and that other's, were laid to thy charge by her whose corpse thou seest.

CREON: And what was the manner of the violent deed by which she passed away?

MESSENGER: Her own hand struck her to the heart, when she had learned her son's sorely lamented fate.

[*Strophe 4.*

CREON: And what was the manner of the fixed on any other of mortal kind, for my acquittal! I, even I, was thy slayer, wretched that I am—I own the truth. Lead me away, O my servants, lead me hence with all speed, whose life is but as death!

CHORUS: Thy counsels are good, if there can be good with ills; briefest is best, when trouble is in our path.

[*Antistrophe 3.*

CREON: Oh, let it come, let it appear, that fairest of fates for me, that brings my

last day,—aye, best fate of all! Oh, let it come, that I may never look upon to-morrow's light.

CHORUS: These things are in the future; present tasks claim our care: the ordering of the future rests where it should rest.

CREON: All my desires, at least, were summed in that prayer.

CHORUS: Pray thou no more; for mortals have no escape from destined woe.

[*Antistrophe 4.*

CREON: Lead me away, I pray you; a rash, foolish man; who have slain thee, ah my son, unwittingly, and thee, too, my wife—unhappy that I am! I know not which way I should bend my gaze, or where I should seek support; for all is amiss with that which is in my hands,—and yonder, again, a crushing fate hath leapt upon my head.

[*As Creon is being conducted into the house, the Coryphaeus speaks the closing verses*]

CHORUS: Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with great blows, and, in old age, teach the chastened to be wise.

