TWO COMEDIES

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LOVE IN ALBANIA

AND

TO MEET THE MACGREGORS

by

ERIC LINKLATER

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TO

JOHN MOORE

WHOSE FRIENDSHIP PLATTERS FRIENDSHIP

Fortunatus et ille dcos qui novit agrtstis

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INTRODUCTION

IN 1945, when I was chosen Rector of Aberdeen University, my student-constituents very thoughtfully resolved to get some material return for the honour they had done me, and asked me to write a comedy for presentation at their annual festival on behalf of local chanties. Recognising the logic of their demand, and owning a sentimental regard for the festival, at the inception of which, many years before, I had played a minor part, I undertook to do what I could ; and feeling that Sir Walter Scott was in a position to ignore some small irreverence — remembering, too, the generous absurdities in the plot of *Rob Roy* — I made a light-hearted parody of that story, and buttressed it with a dozen songs written to airs that I took from a collection of Scottish tunes published between 1787 and 1803 by James Johnson, whose most useful and distinguished collaborator was Robert Burns. The outcome of my virtuous distortions and benevolent pilfering was *To Meet the MacGrcgors.*

The play was produced in Aberdeen in the spring of 1946, and in the autumn of the same year in Glasgow at Mr. Bridie's Citizens' Theatre. A comparison of the two productions was both interesting and instructive, for though both were modestly successful, they resembled each other in only two particulars : in each cast there was a towering and dominating Rob Roy, and in neither company was there anyone who could sing with more than a drawing-room talent. Such was the virtuosity of the Glasgow players that they made my frolic look almost like a drama ; and in Aberdeen were found two students

who portrayed the sons of Rob Roy with so happy a gift for clowning that my parody put on the likeness, when they were on the stage, of a most engaging comedy. It is possible, therefore, that the piece is workable clay for a producer and actors who have the necessary talent to model it ; and if they have voices in addition, they may do very well with it.

The music of the songs has the advantage — to a producer, that is, who has an alert and sensitive musical friend — that it requires some arrangement. In the Aberdeen production this was done with considerable spirit; in Glasgow, with much grace. But there is no reason why it should not be done again : I am jealous of the tunes, which are better than the words and deserve more attention.

Having said something of all this to the directors of that most liberal firm of publishers, Messrs. Macmillan, I suggested that the play might appeal to those amateur dramatic societies which, for their Christmas production, occasionally seek an alternative to *The Gondoliers,* and even, with the example of *Brigadoon* before us — though I cannot, alas, pretend that there is a sentimental interest in my *opusculum* — to some reckless producer in the commercial theatre ; and the Messrs. Macmillan most generously agreed to publish it in one volume with *Love in Albania.*

Of this I need say very little, but I should like to assert that the difference between two productions, the first in Mr. Bridie's Citizens' Theatre and the second under the prodigious hands of Mr. Ustinov, has induced in me a modesty, a humility indeed, that may be most salutary. As a novelist I exercise a masterly control over my characters ; as a tentative and incipient dramatist I am bound to realise, in consequence of Glasgow and Mr. Ustinov, that my control is no more than that of any other parent

whose offspring, in our modern times, have survived their infancy. In Glasgow Mr. Douglas Campbell as Sergeant Dohda, the most conspicuous character in the play, surprised and delighted me by a genial representation of the part that I had never envisaged, but which, when I saw it, convinced me of its truth ; while in Bath, and later in London, Mr. Ustinov daunted my parental mind with so masterly and huge a realisation of the mere germ I had conceived, that I was divided between pride in my share of him and wonderment at his conquest of me. Here, I believe, may be a useful lesson for the incipient and tentative dramatist ; and I am deeply grateful to both of them.

That I am grateful to the other members of the two companies is not likely to be doubted by any who have seen their playing, but by others must be taken for granted ; because I have promised, in some slight recognition of a friendship that has for long given me great comfort and pleasure, the dedication of this book, not to them, as might be expected, but to my dear companion John Moore. The author who is fair cannot play freely with his fancy.

LOVE IN ALBANIA

THE CHARACTERS

Robert Lawn

Susan Lawn, *his wife*

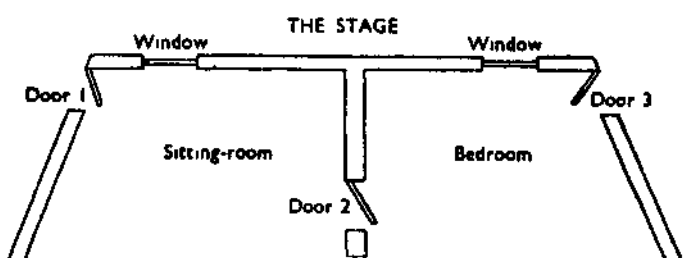
Flora Maclver, *their cook*

Will Ramilhes

Sergeant Dohda

The whole action of the play occurs during a single night in the early summer of 1944, in London. The scene throughout is the flat occupied by ROBERT LAWN and his wife ; two rooms of which — a sitting-room and a bedroom — are simultaneously shown. The furnishing of the flat exhibits the owners' good taste, and reveals their comfortable status in the world.

A rough plan of the stage is shown below.



A NOTE ON THE CHARACTERS

FLORA MAC!VER is a strongly-built, robust, and hearty woman of about thirty-five. She speaks in a well-marked Highland accent. There is no subservience in her attitude to the Lawns — her employers — but her independence is not offensive, because she has naturally good manners.

WILL RAMILLIES is a smallish, lightly-built man, of distinguished appearance. He is pale and intense — a little conscious, it may be, of both his ability and his looks. His nature is romantic, and therefore serious. Sometimes he excites ridicule and laughter in the audience ; but the actor who plays him must never try to excite laughter. Ramillies may occasionally be ridiculous, but he is always sincere. He is in his early thirties.

SUSAN LAWN is a charming woman, though her untidiness, her disregard of domestic discipline, quite justifiably rouse her husband's anger. She is both intelligent and good ; but trying to live with. Her nature is sweet, with a quite unsugared sweetness. Her age — twenty-nine, perhaps ?

ROBERT LAWN has nothing of his wife's gift of happiness. He is serious, ill-tempered, and aggrieved by the perplexities of life. He is in love with his wife, but often angry with her. He is physically attractive, and he has real virtue in him. He is in his middle thirties, and he may wear horn-rimmed spectacles.

SERGEANT DOHDA is a rough, tough, burly man in his forties. Physically he dominates all the rest; though Flora, when the time comes, is capable of challenging him. It becomes apparent, too, that under his tough exterior there is a profound sentimentality ; and the actor who plays him must, with equal seriousness, be tough and sentimental as the situation requires. Like Will Ramillies, Sergeant Dohda excites ridicule ; but like Ramillies he must be played sympathetically.

ACT I

SCENE. *The LAWNs' flat, about eleven o'clock at night.*

In both rooms the windows are heavily curtained, and when the light is turned on in the sitting-room, it is disclosed as a very pleasantly Jurnished room, but extremely untidy. The light is turned on as the Curtain goes up and FLORA *and* MR. RAMILLIES *come in by Door i.* MRS. LAWN, *it appears, has lately been practising her 'cello, and has left it standing against a chair, the bow lying on another. Sheets of music are scattered on the floor; a Jew books lie, open and jace down, on a soja and on the carpet too. A large picture on the left-hand wall — by John Piper — hangs noticeably askew. Under a chair there is visible a pair of bedroom slippers, once extremely smart, but now deplorably shabby ; and on the bookcase, a well-filled bookcase, at the back of the room, there is a brassiere which* MRS. LAWN *has forgotten.* WILL RAMILLIES *discovers it, early in the first scene, when be is left alone in the room.*

FLORA, *when she comes in, is wearing out-door dress: she is, perhaps, a little too smartly attired. She looks round, and with a confident stride walks across to Door 2, that leads to the bedroom.*

FLORA *(knocks and listens, then opens the door; turns on the light in the bedroom, and turns it off again).* Mrs. Lawn ! Are you there, Mrs. Lawn ? — She's not there ! She must have gone out, but it's a queer thing she wouldn't be telling me.

RAMILLIES. Doesn't she usually go out at night ?

FLORA. She'll be going to the theatre from time to time. — But come in, Mr. Ramillies. Come in and sit

down. She won't be away for long, I'm thinking, and you're not in all that hurry.

RAMILLIES. She may have gone to a party.

FLORA. She'd have told me, if she'd been thinking of that; she keeps nothing to herself. She'd enjoy a party too, for she's fond of the dancing, and it's little enough chance she gets at it. Mr. Lawn's not that way inclined. No, not at all.

RAMILLIES. She's unlucky, isn't she ? If her husband was in the Army, she could dance every night. And she probably would.

FLORA. No, indeed she wouldn't *I* She's got her faults, but not that one.

RAMILLIES *(looking round the dishevelled* room). She's a very untidy woman.

FLORA. There's no denying that.

RAMILLIES. How old is she ?

FLORA. The boy is five — there are two children, a boy and a girl, but they're in the country with Mr. Lawn's mother — and she told me she was twenty-two when she married : so that'll make her twenty-eight or thereabout.

RAMILLIES. Or perhaps a little more. Her husband ought to be careful.

FLORA. What do you mean by that ?

RAMILLIES. Between thirty and thirty-five no woman is to be trusted.

FLORA. You've always had fine notions, Mr. Ramillies, but I'd a trust a woman of any age before I'd trust your

theories about her. — And you're wrong about Mrs. Lawn, though I grant you that if I was a man, I wouldn't be married to her — no, not if I was to get the George Cross for it.

RAMILLIES. Why not ?

FLORA. She's light-hearted, poor soul.

RAMILLIES. That's an uncommon quality, among civilised people.

FLORA. It is indeed ; and I'm sorry for Mr. Lawn, for he's one of the serious kind. He's in one of these Government Departments and five nights a week he's up till midnight, trying to reform it. He's the kind that thinks everything ought to be improved, and all of us compelled to live happier lives.

RAMILLIES. So they don't get on very well together ?

FLORA. Well, that being his way of thinking, it's a great trial for the poor man to have a wife who's happy enough as she is, and wants no help from him at all.

RAMILLIES *(stooping to pick up a Jew scattered sheets of music that lie near him).* And yet — I may be wrong — but I wonder if Mrs. Lawn's as virtuous as you think ? Untidy habits and careless morals very often go together.

FLORA. Och, man, you've got a mind like a tram-car ! It's always running in the same track ! — Why, she told me herself that when the war had been going on for no more than six weeks, she made a great resolution. However long it might last, she said, she was going to have nothing to do with adultery.

RAMILLIES. Why not ?

FLORA. It was becoming far too common, she said*

While RAMILLIES is *considering this last remark, the outer door-bell rings, and* FLORA, *exclaiming* "**It'll** be herself! " *gets up to answer it. She leaves Door i open, and* SUSAN LAWN *is seen through it, and* SUSAN LAWN is *heard. She is wearing a light waterproof, and a handkerchief tied round her head.*

SUSAN. Oh, what a relief! I was afraid you wouldn't be home yet, and I'd forgotten my key — I do hope it isn't lost — so if you hadn't been here I might have had to sit on the mat for an hour. . . . *(She has come into the sitting-room, and now, turning, she sees* RAMILLIES, *utters a little note of surprise, and automatically greets him.* Oh ! How do you do ?

RAMILLIES. How do you do ?

FLORA. This is the gentleman that took me out to-night, Mrs. Lawn. I thought you would like to meet him too, so I made him come in and wait. You'll have heard of Will Ramilhes ? Well, this is him.

SUSAN. Mr. Ramillies ?

RAMILLIES. Flora is an old friend of mine, Mrs. Lawn—

SUSAN. Are you *the* Mr. Ramillies ?

RAMILLIES. How do I answer that? If I say *Yes* you'll think me arrogant, and to say *No* would only be stupid.

SUSAN. I'm sure you're neither, and I'm delighted to meet you. — Why have you never told me that you had such a distinguished friend, Flora ? I should have boasted about him at once.

FLORA. He was not distinguished at all when I first knew him. — You had never even caught a salmon, Mr. Ramillies, till my father showed you the way of it.

RAMILLIES. That's perfectly true.

FLORA. It's just this book of yours that's made you famous all of a sudden.

SUSAN. You must be tired of hearing it praised, Mr. Ramillies — but how good it is, and how exciting !

RAMILLIES. Albania's a wild and impetuous country. I doubt if anyone could write truthfully about it and be dull.

SUSAN. But so many people are dull when they write about love — and those five poems, at the end of your book, make the most exciting pages in it.

RAMILLIES. The spectacle of human agony has always drawn a crowd.

SUSAN. What a very uncomfortable thought! I wonder if it's true ? — Oh dear ! *(She has just caught sight of the gaudy, hut very shabby hedroom slippers that lie half-hidden under a chair.* I think I must go and change my shoes, Mr. Ramillies. They're uncomfortable too, but it was the only pair I could find. Do sit down. I'll be very quick, I promise you. — I want to speak to you for a moment, Flora.

SUSAN *pauses at Door* 2, *where* FLORA *comes to speak to her.* SUSAN *whispers* " Those slippers, Flora ! " *Then she goes into the hedroom takes off her coat and shoes, sits down at her dressing-table, turns on the light, and brushes her hair.* FLORA *brings in the shabby slippers, closing the door behind her. During the conversation that follows,* SUSAN is *occupied with her*

complexion, her hair, her nails, and so forth. RAMILUES, i/i *the meantime, in the sitting-room, has taken a book from the shelves, reading — or tasting — that and other books.*

FLORA *(regarding the slippers).* They're not the sort you'd put in a shop-window, are they ?

SUSAN. They're dreadful, but so comfortable. — Tell me, Flora, how did you come to know Mr. Ramillies ?

FLORA. He used to stay with us at Achiltimorie every year, where my father had the hotel.

SUSAN. He has rather an odd manner, hasn't he ?

FLORA. There are those that can't get on with him at all, but he's got a good head on him, and a kind heart, too.

SUSAN. Did you like his book ?

FLORA. It's a good book, there's no denying that. It's not the sort of book that you read one day, and forget the next. But I wouldn't say that I like the poetry at the end of it. There's three or four lines there that would have been better left to the imagination.

SUSAN. I went straight out and bought a new night-gown after reading them !

FLORA. Ay, they make you think. — But there's nothing wrong with his behaviour when you go out with him. It was a fine dinner he gave me, and then the Palladium, and we got a taxi and he never made a move that anyone could take exception to.

SUSAN. What a triumphant evening you've had !

FLORA. Well, I thought I should do something in return, so I brought him here to meet you and Mr. Lawn.

SUSAN. I do wish Robert would come home at a reasonable time. He's staying later and later at that office of his.

FLORA. It's a terrible burden, is a sense of duty.

SUSAN. And I'm another burden. Poor Robert! — But come and help me talk to our distinguished visitor. Have we any coffee left ?

FLORA. There's not very much, but it'll do. Would you like me to make some ?

SUSAN. If it's not too much trouble—

FLORA. It's no trouble at all.

SUSAN returns to the sitting-room. FLORA turns out the dressing-table light, follows her, and goes to the kitchen through Door 1.

SUSAN. Now I wasn't long, was I, Mr. Ramillies ? Flora's going to make some coffee, and then we'll talk about Scotland, I'm sure you're tired of Albania.

RAMILLIES. I hope you appreciate Flora. I've known her for a long time—

SUSAN. I hope I shall too.

RAMILLIES. I don't suppose she'd ever have left home, if her father hadn't married again.

SUSAN. It becomes a habit, doesn't it ? — But do sit down, Mr. Ramillies. You don't look comfortable standing there.

RAMILLIES. People sit too much. It's not good for them.

SUSAN. Well, won't you have a drink ? — I'm sure you'd like a whisky and soda.

RAMILLIES. No, thank you, I don't drink.

SUSAN. Not at all ? I thought great writers were utterly dependent on it.

RAMILLIES. I don't drink in small quantities.

SUSAN. Oh, but we've plenty.

RAMILLIES. I don't regard drink as a mere accompaniment to conversation, I don't make a habit of it. Anything that becomes a habit loses its value.

SUSAN. Even politeness ?

RAMILLIES. That's probably overdone, and drinking certainly is. I'm so fond of it that I keep it for great occasions ; and then I drink enormously, like a sailor coming home from a voyage to the Antarctic. Either total abstinence or magnificent debauchery : that's my rule of life.

SUSAN. I'm afraid there isn't enough for a debauch.— Will you have a cigarette ?

RAMILLIES. I don't smoke.

SUSAN. Not even twenty at a time ?

RAMILLIES. I don't smoke because tobacco is a narcotic, and I've no desire to drug my senses or reduce my appetite for life. The majority of people — so-called civilised people — are afraid of life ; but I'm not.

SUSAN. Neither am I, Mr. Ramillies.

RAMILLIES. Have you any imagination ?

SUSAN. I really don't know. My husband says that I haven't a constructive mind — but that's not the same thing, is it ?

RAMILLIES. Not quite.

SUSAN. And in any case I mustn't discuss Robert. He's told me not to.

RAMILLIES. He's quite right.

SUSAN. But why should we make a mystery of our husbands ? Very few of them are mysterious.

RAMILLIES. When you were a child, did you ever keep a secret ?

SUSAN. Yes, often. Well, sometimes.

RAMILLIES. And the secret, so long as it remained a secret, was immensely valuable, because it was yours alone.

SUSAN. But that was a childish pleasure, and we grow out of childish things. As soon as you have learnt to talk, you discover the pleasure of talking ; and silence becomes intensely boring. Surely, Mr. Ramillies, you are the last person to argue in favour of secrecy when you have just published, for all the world to read, five poems about a love-affair in Albania that was — well, I don't know much about Albania, but in this country it would be considered an outstanding event in anybody's life.

RAMILLIES. That's a different matter altogether.

SUSAN. It always is, when a man does something.

RAMILLIES. Have you ever been in love ?

SUSAN. I have been married for seven years.

RAMILLIES. That isn't an answer. To be married means that you lend yourself, against reasonable security, in return for a settled interest. But to be in love means that you give, freely and without condition, your whole life and spirit. Every thought that makes a man himself, that makes a woman more than herself — that makes her the very fount and principle of life — is given, *given,* I say, without care or foreboding or accountancy.

SUSAN. But why are you so fierce about it ? Must love always be given fiercely ?

RAMILLIES. Yes.

SUSAN. Surely that might be awkward in a modern flat?

RAMILLIES. Don't you see that by taming love, by domesticating it, you spoil it of all its meaning ? You make of love a trivial affair like a glass of sherry before dinner. If you rescue it from agony, you rob it of its glory. You turn the creative passion of the universe into a plaything, a parlour game ; but a game with no rules, because you and your sort are too idle to learn them !

FLORA *comes in with a coffee-pot and cups on a tray. She has taken off her hat and coat.*

FLORA. Has he been arguing already ? And what's gone wrong with the world now, Mr. Ramillies ?

SUSAN. A great deal, it appears ; and Mr. Ramillies is very worried about it.

FLORA. And just to make it worse, I've wasted half the coffee. For I left the gas on too full, and it boiled over.

SUSAN. That shows you the danger of too much pressure in a small flat, Mr. Ramillies. — But where's your own cup, Flora ? Mr. Ramillies is *your* guest.

FLORA. I'm needing nothing more to-night, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. Oh, please, Flora. Just to be friendly.

FLORA. Well, if that's the reason, I'll take a cup with you.

She goes out.

SUSAN. If I admit what you say — I think it's absurd, but if, for the sake of argument, I admit that love has become no better than a game, will you tell me why you think I don't know the rules ?

RAMILLIES. I've been abroad for a couple of years, but I've gathered, since I came back, that marriage vows in England have gone the way of all the peace treaties in Europe : they've been torn up.

SUSAN. By those, perhaps, who weren't clever enough to keep their peace.

RAMILLIES. Cleverness doesn't work that way — and promises are only kept by saints or simpletons. Women of your sort—

SUSAN. Not again, Mr. Ramillies. You've said that before, and it's not a phrase I like. I don't know what it means.

RAMILLIES. Shall I say, women of your vitality ? Women who have a little — they couldn't expect more — a little of your beauty ?

SUSAN. Really, Mr. Ramillies !

FLORA *returns with a third cup, and helps herself. She removes the bow of* SUSAN's *'cello from a chair, and sits down.*

FLORA. You haven't been playing as much as you used to, Mrs. Lawn. This is the first time you've had out the 'cello for a month or more.

SUSAN. I may have been neglecting my practice, but I'm learning some new theory.

FLORA. Mr. Ramilhes will have been telling you about Albania ?

SUSAN. I'm not quite sure. Have you been talking about Albania, Mr. Ramillies ?

RAMILLIES. A good deal of what I think, and something of what I say, are coloured by what I learnt there.

FLORA. It must be a wild sort of country.

RAMILLIES. It's a savage and magnificent country. Terrible in winter, terrible in the darkness — but in the morning sun the mountains are like the landscape of some heroic paradise.

FLORA. It must have reminded you of Scotland.

RAMILLIES. And the people can stand up to their background. They're fierce and noisy, like the mountain streams ; and the streams are crystal-clear. Men and women live with great bravery, and great passion, and a signal purity. A purity that's enforced by rigid law, by an iron convention, and the sanction of the blood-feud.

SUSAN. Do you find that attractive ?

RAMILLIES. The people never complain that life is unreal. They curse the hardships of life, but they never doubt the validity of their life.

FLORA. They'll have no time for consideration, the poor souls. Not in a country like that, without conveniences of any kind. They'll be working from morning to night, especially the women, and too tired to think what they're doing. — Will you take some more coffee, Mrs. Lawn ?

SUSAN, a little restless — RAMILLIES' intensity has slightly unnerved her — has got up and gone over to the picture that hangs askew on the left-hand wall. She makes a small and ineffectual effort to straighten it, and says,* " No, thank you, Flora." — RAMILLIES *looks at his watch, and gets up.*

RAMILLIES. Yes, they work hard, and because I work when I have to, I must go now. But I should like to come again.

SUSAN. To see Flora ?

RAMILLIES. Good-night, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. Mr. Ramillies.

RAMILLIES. Yes ?

SUSAN. I want to know why you published those poems. You said, a little while ago, that men and women should be reticent about their love. If you believe that, if you believe that people's life together should be kept a secret thing, why did you tell yours to all the world ?

RAMILLIES. Do you know the usual effect of exposure ?

SUSAN. After a shipwreck, when people take to the lifeboats and they're not quickly rescued, they sometimes die of exposure.

RAMILLIES. That was my reason for publishing the poems : so that my love should die of it. Good-night, Mrs. Lawn.

FLORA. Shall I see him out, ma'am ?

SUSAN. Please, Flora.

FLORA and RAMILLIES *go out by Door /. SUSAN, after a moment or two of thought, goes by Door z into the bedroom, turns on the light, and sitting before her looking-glass, earnestly considers her reflection.* FLORA, *re-entering the sitting-room by Door l, knocks at the bedroom door.*

SUSAN. Yes ?

FLORA. Is there anything more you'll be wanting ?

SUSAN. No, nothing more.

FLORA. Well, good-night, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. No, don't go, Flora. Come m and sit down. — Flora, I don't really like Mr. Ramillies.

FLORA. Och, hold your tongue ! Why, the first time I saw him I thought he was pure poison ! But when you get used to him you'll find a lot of good points in him. And he's got good intentions.

SUSAN. He's always been the same, has he ?

FLORA. The first time I ever saw him was in the hotel at Achiltimorie, and that was the first time he ever came. And there he was, laying down the law, as if he owned the place.

SUSAN. What was he talking about ?

FLORA. It was China, that time. He'd just come back from Pekin, and he was telling everyone that the Chinese were the only people in the world who understood good manners. You should have seen him, in a house where no one ever lost his temper, beating his tankard on the bar and shouting about good manners — but he hasn't much sense of humour, as you'll have noticed for yourself.

SUSAN. None at all, I should think. But that didn't matter in Albania, perhaps, and I suppose it's no disadvantage in poetry — or to love.

FLORA. But he's dead against love now. He says it's a plague, like the Black Death, only worse.

SUSAN. Did he suggest a remedy ?

FLORA. Well, he himself has set his face against it.

SUSAN. Then I must have been mistaken. Because for a moment, this evening, I thought he was — oh, how shall I put it ? — about to offer, or declare, or perhaps threaten his intention of making love to *me.*

FLORA. But what chance had he to be telling the tale ? It was no time at all — it wouldn't be more than three minutes — that I was out of the room.

SUSAN. Oh, there was no warning. But quite suddenly he made what I thought was the usual preliminary — with unusual violence — and paid me a compliment.

The outer door of the Jtat is slammed. In the sitting-room, Door i is opened by ROBERT LAWN, wio *does not immediately come in, but calls "* Susan ! " *while in*

the hall outside he is taking off his coat. He calls again, and annoyed when he gets no reply, comes in and looks about him, at the untidy room, with manifest displeasure. Then his attention is caught by the noise of laughter next door in the bedroom.

FLORA. A compliment on your looks, was it ?

SUSAN. Yes, Flora.

FLORA. Then it was no compliment at all. Or it wasn't meant to be. For it's another of his new ideas, that a pretty face is a crime against society.

SUSAN. A crime ?

FLORA. He's always getting new ideas.

SUSAN. Well, that one makes a difference, doesn't it ?

FLORA. There's some of his notions that you can't help laughing at.

SUSAN. I'm sure you can't.

She laughs — but tentatively and insincerely.

FLORA. And there was you afraid he might be making a pass at you ! Is that not funny when you think of it ?

FLORA *laughs heartily, and* SUSAN *accompanies her, but with rather a hollow note.* ROBERT, *who for a moment has stood listening on the other side of Door* 2, MOW *opens it quickly and comes into the bedroom.*

ROBERT. What's going on here ?

SUSAN. Robert 1 I thought you were never coming ! You're looking very tired.

ROBERT. There's a lot to be done, and someone must do it.

SUSAN. Flora and I have had such an exciting evening. Sit down, Robert, and we'll tell you all about it.

ROBERT. Don't you think we might find a more convenient occasion ?

FLORA. I'll be going to my bed, Mrs. Lawn, for it's getting late.

SUSAN. No, Flora, there's no hurry. Don't go yet.

FLORA. It's long past eleven, and I was always one for my bed. So good-night to you now. Good-night, Mr. Lawn.

SUSAN. Good-night, Flora, and thank you so much for bringing your friend here. (FLORA *goes out by Door 2. In the sitting-room she picks up the tray with the coffce-cups, and goes out by Door I.* ROBERT *returns to the sitting-room, and* SUSAN follows.) You weren't very polite to Flora.

ROBERT. The sight of this room destroys more than courtesy. I came in here — I had something to tell you, and I called to you. I called twice, and you paid no attention—

SUSAN. How could I, when I didn't hear you ?

ROBERT. — I came in, and found myself in a slum ! This room looking like a slum, and in the bedroom — our bedroom!— you sprawling in a chair and chattering to a servant !

SUSAN. And why not ? Flora's a charming woman, of whom I grow fonder every day. She's been wounded in defence of her country. She was a sergeant in the Artillery when you were only a private in the Home Guard—

ROBERT. I'm in no mood for badinage. The sight of this room, this disorder, the squalor you create — can't you realise, Susan that your neglect of all discipline is a destructive thing ? You're a slattern !

SUSAN. You always spoil your case, Robert, by overstating it. To-night, I admit, the room is a little untidy—

ROBERT. It's the very image and example of a slum ! A littered slum ! Even the pictures ! — What's the use of my buying a first-rate John Piper when you can't even hang him properly ?

SUSAN. I did try to straighten it, but one of the hooks will have to be moved. — Darling, don't you think it's a little petty to be so worried because everything isn't in apple-pie order ? I'm much tidier and more reasonable than Audrey, who's going to keep an alligator in her bathroom.

ROBERT. An alligator ?

SUSAN. She rang me up this evening, and asked me to come and see her at once ; and when I got there, she was in the bathroom feeding an alligator with sardines.

ROBERT. Where did she get it ?

SUSAN. She bought it from a sailor.

ROBERT. Good God.

SUSAN. So if you're honest about me — about us — you must admit that you've something to be thankful for.

ROBERT. Yes, I have. I've much to be thankful for, and I know it. But—

SUSAN. Oh, don't spoil it! I had a lovely evening till you came home.

ROBERT. With your 'cello ?

SUSAN. That gave me a lot of pleasure to begin with, and then I went to see Audrey, and when I came back I had a distinguished visitor. Flora brought him.

ROBERT. Flora ?

SUSAN. I thought he had bad manners, but Flora had no complaints. He gave her dinner, and took her to the Palladium—

ROBERT. Who did ?

SUSAN. Mr. Ramillies.

ROBERT. Do you mean Will Ramillies ? What was he doing here ?

SUSAN. Sitting in that chair, when he wasn't standing. He usually stood up to talk.

ROBERT. He came here with Flora ?

SUSAN. That's what I'm trying to tell you, Robert. You're not being very clever, are you ?

ROBERT. But how extraordinary. I've been hoping to meet him.

SUSAN. I expect you will. I think he means to come back.

ROBERT. To see Flora ?

SUSAN. You don't think it possible that I could be the attraction ?

ROBERT. Did you set yourself out to attract him ?

SUSAN. There was no need to.

ROBERT. I see. And I can assume, in consequence that you've formed a high opinion of him ?

SUSAN. He's rather conceited, and he has no sense of humour. No, I'm not sure that I like him — not yet.

ROBERT. He seems to have had some astonishing experiences.

SUSAN. They've had an astonishing effect on him. I wonder what happened to the girl ?

ROBERT. The girl in the book ?

SUSAN. She disappeared, didn't she ?

ROBERT. She disappeared from his last chapter ; I don't know what actually happened to her. Well, I'm glad he didn't stay. I'd like to meet him, but I'm tired to-night. I'm damned tired.

SUSAN. You really mustn't work so hard, Robert. It won't do anyone any good. — Now don't argue, but go to bed ! Shall I get you a drink first ?

ROBERT. No, I don't think so. Are you coming ?

SUSAN. In a minute or two. I'm going to tidy the room a little first.

They speak these last sentences at Door 2. SUSAN *kisses her husband, who, in the bedroom, takes off his coat and waistcoat and hangs them in a wardrobe ; while she, in the sitting-room, puts her 'cello into its case, and remembers to loosen the bow. Then* ROBERT, *taking off his tie, remembers something of which he had meant to speak, and returns to Door 2.*

ROBERT. When I was coming in to-night — I meant to tell you before, but you started that argument, and drove it out of my mind—

SUSAN. Yes, dear. What else do you want to tell me ?

ROBERT. Well, just as I was coming out of the lift, I saw an American soldier on the stairs.

SUSAN. You can't go anywhere in London without seeing an American soldier.

ROBERT. He was behaving in rather a suspicious manner. He'd been coming upstairs, but when he saw me he turned and went down again.

SUSAN. I suppose he was a little bit drunk, and had come into the wrong house.

ROBERT. He was a sinister-looking fellow.

SUSAN. The American army is very, very large, Robert. They couldn't possibly exclude everyone who hadn't a nice, honest, reassuring, Anglo-Saxon face. — Now do hurry up and have your bath, and I'll telephone to Audrey. I'm the least bit worried about her.

While ROBERT *puts on a dressing-gown, and leaves the bedroom by Door 3,* SUSAN *returns to the sitting-room and takes up the telephone.*

SUSAN *(on the telephone).* Audrey ? This is Susan. . . . Is everything all right ? . . . Oh, I'm so glad. I couldn't go to bed till I'd asked you. . . . No, I don't suppose he could, but it suddenly occurred to me that this is probably the first time in your life that you've ever been alone in your flat with an alligator. . . . And you think he's asleep ? . . . Well, I hope you both have a good night. . . . Yes, Robert's gone to bed. He came home looking very tired, and we had a little quarrel and patched it up. . . . Yes, he is being difficult, but it isn't altogether his fault. . . . No, I'm very cheerful.

I've had a delightful evening. You can't possibly guess whom I found here, when I came home. . . . *(The outer bell — the door-bell — rings ; and* SUSAN *looks round, surprised?)* I'm sorry, Audrey, I must ring off. There's someone at the door. ... I can't think who it is, at this time of night. . . . Well, give me a ring in the morning. . . . Yes, of course. Good-night, Audrey.

(The door-bell rings again. SUSAN *gets up, looks towards the bedroom, and after closing Door* 2, *goes out by Door I to see who her caller is. It is* RAMILLIES *who has returned; and she leads him into the sitting-room again.)*

RAMILLIES. I had to come back. I suddenly remembered something I'd said to you. Something you might have misunderstood. Something you probably did misunderstand. — And if so, you must have suspected me of a very gross intention. But I assure you that I had no such intention !

SUSAN. Please sit down, Mr. Ramillies. This little room isn't really meant for taking exercise.

RAMILLIES. In a moment, yes. But I must implore you, first of all, to rid your mind of any lurking fear that I was proposing to make love to you.

SUSAN. I'm only a timid woman, Mr. Ramillies, but I give you my word that so far you haven't caused me a moment's anxiety. And if you were to do so now, my husband is within call.

RAMILLIES. I'm quite willing to meet your husband ! My conscience is clean.

SUSAN. And my husband, who's in his bath, soon will be, — Oh, do sit down ! You'll tire yourself out.

RAMILLIES. I don't know what it is to feel tired. I've often done forty miles a day.

SUSAN. But not indoors ?

RAMILLIES. Good heavens, no ! On bridle-paths, sheep-tracks, over bare hillsides hidden in the clouds.

SUSAN. It sounds most exhausting. But tell me — if I'm not being indelicate — how exactly did you give me the impression — or suppose you had — that you were about to make love to me ?

RAMILLIES. You asked me what sort of woman I thought you.

SUSAN. Oh, surely not ! Only a perfect fool or someone quite shameless would do that. A fool to be rebuffed, and a person without shame — well, to invite what persons without shame do invite.

RAMILLIES. I had referred to you and your sort of woman—

SUSAN. And I objected to that ! I didn't ask a question at all, but I did protest against being classified. We've had too much of that ! Nature tried to put us all in the same class by giving us the same function ; and ever since then we've been doing our best — for your sake — to show a few local differences. So talk about *me* if you want to, but don't talk about " my sort ".

RAMILLIES. You are very clever, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. My husband doesn't think so.

RAMILLIES. Does he think you beautiful ?

SUSAN. He used to.

RAMILLIES. Whatever he thinks, you're a woman of rare and delectable beauty.

SUSAN. No woman could hear that without a little emotion. Thank you, Mr. Ramillies.

RAMILLIES. But when I say that, I'm not making love to you ! Nor was I making love to you when I said it before !

SUSAN. But why are you so vehement ?

RAMILLIES. Because my feelings are vehement.

SUSAN. Then you mustn't say it a third time, must you ?

RAMILLIES. No, I mustn't. I realise that. Because beauty — a woman's beauty — is no longer benign. I see it as one of civilisation's most powerful enemies.

SUSAN. A pair of eyes, large enough, and a nicely-shaped nose ; an agreeable mouth, a good complexion, and due proportion — if that's your enemy, Mr. Ramillies, you won't lack volunteers to face it, whatever it threatens.

RAMILLIES. In the history of barbarian states, how many ruling princes have lost their thrones and plunged their people into anarchy because they were obsessed by the beauty of their concubines and the pleasures of the harem ? It's the commonplace of their history. And now, for the first time in the world, the ordinary run of mankind is being tempted to destroy itself in the way that hitherto was reserved for princes only.

SUSAN. I do know, of course, that this is the Century of the Common Man. But perhaps I hadn't realised what his privileges were going to be.

RAMILLIES. In the civilised parts of the world there are more tolerably good-looking women than ever before. As their appearance improves, so does their power to attract ; and simultaneously they have learnt that the natural penalties of love can be controlled and circumvented. What's the result ? A universal, ever-increasing addiction to idle pleasure that threatens the whole seriousness of mankind, that undermines high endeavour, that rots ambition, destroys the soul, and reduces love itself to an insignificant exercise !

SUSAN. I think you're behaving like one of your barbarian princes, Mr. Ramilhes. They were enthralled by their concubines, and you're enthralled by your ideas. And theories can make a man quite as nervous as a harem.

RAMILLIES. If you look at the advertisement pages of any American magazine you'll see the confirmation of all I've been saying. The advertisers are already using the weapon that I'm afraid of, and using it effectively. They're using it to exploit the public, and to drug the public so that it shan't know it's being exploited. They use physical beauty and the allurements of sex to sell motor-cars, electric-washers, holiday-resorts, Bach concerts, soap, and life-insurance. The commerce of a continent depends on a good set of teeth and a pair of bare legs *I* Woman's been emancipated, and what use has she made of it ? She has commercialised her legs, and that's all.

SUSAN. I find it very difficult, Mr. Ramillies, to reconcile the sort of thing you're saying now with the poems in your book about Albania. I thought they were the most beautiful and exciting celebration of a woman and her love that I have read since — since I read Keats at school.

RAMILLIES. Like everyone else you have quite misunderstood the poems.

SUSAN. They are love-poems : you can't deny that.

RAMILLIES. But the love that inspired them was never consummated ; and in that lay the strength of it. Love that achieves a physical fulfilment doesn't need much celebration. Love that is satisfied at once gets none at all. But when love is hard and dangerous, when it's bitter and disappointed, it may produce poetry.

SUSAN. But surely — I don't mean to contradict you, of course — but surely, in the third of the poems especially — I've read it again and again — there's the most wonderful understanding and description of — well, I'm sure it isn't frustration.

RAMILLIES. Have you a copy of the book ?

SUSAN. Yes, it's here, I think. *(She goes to a book-case, stoops and looks along a shelfy* It certainly used to be here. . . . No, that's not it. It's got a red cover, hasn't it ? ... Well, that's very odd.

RAMILLIES. If I could read the poem to you—

SUSAN. That would be heavenly, but I wonder where it is ? Someone must have taken it.

RAMILLIES. No one has any scruples about stealing a book or a loaf of bread ; they're both necessary to life.

SUSAN. That's where it is ! In the kitchen. I saw it there this afternoon. Flora must have been reading it.

RAMILLIES. And now she has probably taken it to bed with her.

SUSAN. Oh no, Flora isn't the sort of girl to read in bed. I'll go and look for it.

RAMILUES. Shall I come with you ?

SUSAN. Yes, do. It's a nice friendly kitchen.

She goes out by Door I, followed by RAMILLIES. *As the door closes, the curtains covering the window in the bedroom blow inward and, as they part, reveal — in the white helmet, white belt and gaiters of an American Military Policeman — the figure of* SERGEANT DOHDA. *He looks cautiously round before entering, and having come in and closed the window behind him, briefly inspects the room ; then, with the air of a man dangerously reconnoitring, approaches Door* 2 *and stoops to peer through the keyhole. Almost immediately Door* j *opens, and* ROBERT, *in pyjamas and a most respectable dressing-gown, comes in and regards him with amazement and some small alarm.*

ROBERT. Who the devil are you ?

DOHDA. Keep it quiet, mister. Keep your trap shut, and you won't come to any harm.

ROBERT. You're the man I saw on the stairs. What are you ? A burglar ?

DOHDA. Pull down your vest, brother. Don't you know the Military Police when you see them ?

ROBERT. But who are you — and what do you mean by breaking into my house ?

DOHDA. I'm a top-sergeant serving Uncle Sam in the European Theatre of Operations to save Democracy !

ROBERT. What's that got to do with it ? You can't come and save democracy in my house !

DOHDA. You got to save democracy everywhere. That's what we're fighting for.

ROBERT. Well, of course. I know that as well as you do. But I'm not talking politics, I want to know what you're doing in my house !

DOHDA. I got a mission.

ROBERT. A mission ?

DOHDA. I got a purpose.

ROBERT. But why bring it here ?

DOHDA. I'm tailing a guy called Ramilhes.

ROBERT. What do you know about him ?

DOHDA. I know plenty.

ROBERT. My wife's met him. He's a very distinguished person.

DOHDA. He's a pole-cat. He's a two-timing, copper-hearted heel. He's a creeping, snake-eyed slicker on the make. If you was to hear what that slimy, unethical, dill-pickle's done to me and mine, you'd blow your top.

ROBERT. Now look here : you must be sensible. I don't know much about Ramilhes, and nothing at all about you. If you've suffered some injury at his hands, I'm sorry, of course, but you must realise that you can't invade another person's house in this criminal fashion, no matter what your purpose is.

DOHDA. So that's the line, is it ? That's what I get for coming three thousand miles into the European Theatre of Operations to save Democracy ! I need sympathy, I need human understanding. But when I come into another guy's house and look for it, what does

he tell me ? *Scram!* he says, and that's all the thanks I get.

ROBERT. I can't see that your presence here is serving democracy in the smallest degree ; or that you have any claim on me.

DOHDA. Where'd England be without the United States ? Tell me that !

ROBERT. If you really want to enquire into historical origins, tell me where the United States would be without England.

DOHDA. Keep your nose clean, brother ! You offend the United States, you're setting fire to your meal-ticket.

ROBERT. And you want me to believe that you represent the United States ?

DOHDA. No, sir ! I represent humanity ! Haven't I been telling you that I got a private mission on account of being in distress ? And you stand there, with that dead pan, and tell me the distress of another human bean means nothing to you. You ought to be ashamed !

ROBERT. If you're really in trouble, my dear fellow—

DOHDA. I got a broken heart ! Is that something ?

ROBERT. I'm sorry, very sorry indeed. But I still don't see how I can help you, and I'm not wholly persuaded that you should expect me to.

DOHDA. Didn't all of us ought to help one another ? Doesn't it mean nothing to you when a guy comes into your apartment and tells you he's got a broken heart ? Does that just roll off your knife, or do you want me to tell you why ?

ROBERT. I think you're being monstrously unreasonable and quite implausible. But if it will ease your mind to tell me your story, then go ahead.

DOHDA. That's better. That's better ! Well, I got a daughter, see ? An only beloved daughter. And she went on the lam with a crooked double-crossing chicken-butcher. Is that something ? And suppose I tell you — now listen to me, mister ! — suppose I tell you I'm aiming to find out what he's done to her ? Don't that mean more than peanuts ?

ROBERT. I'm not sure that I understand everything you say, or catch all the implications of it—

DOHDA. If you don't talk English, what do you talk ? Maybe you understand pictures ? Maybe you've heard of a magazine we read called *Life* magazine ? Get a load of this, mister, *(from a breast-pocket he takes a folded magazine-page of pictures, and bands it to* ROBERT.) Take your own time, and read out the spots.

ROBERT *(reading).* "Albanian guerrilla-fighter Draga Dohda is a tall slender brunette whose classic features and well-stacked figure might well have earned her, in happier times, front-page prominence as a Conover Model. Draga looks like a million dollars, but her record would make a sensation on the police-blotter. At an age when most American girls can still count their dates, Draga claims to have rubbed out twenty-seven of her country's enemies with her own hand."—She's a handsome girl, isn't she ?

DOHDA. That's my daughter. My only daughter.

ROBERT. Well, she's put up a remarkable performance, but she must be rather a handful in the house ?

DOHDA. I ain't seen her since she was a babe, since she was two years old.

ROBERT. And at that age you never know how they're going to develop.

DOHDA. I'm not beefing about what Draga's done. It's what this Limey's done that gripes me. Read that next piece, mister.

ROBERT. " Captain Will Ramillies, noted English author and traveller, now on special assignment with Albanian partisans, reconnoitres enemy-stronghold with Draga Dohda. Draga is easy on the eye but hard on the Hemies. Ramillies, too, has got what it takes." — What precisely does that mean ?

DOHDA. That's what I want to know ! There's my daughter, Draga, that I haven't seen for eighteen years, with this snake called Ramillies. Those pictures were taken eight months ago. Now Draga's disappeared — I got information about that, I got good information — and Ramillies, he's here in London. Well, how come he's here in London ? He's taken a powder, you say. Well, maybe. And maybe worse. Maybe he's given her a permanent.

ROBERT. A permanent ?

DOHDA. A one-way ticket, the pay-off, the big bounce.

ROBERT. You don't mean that he may have killed her?

DOHDA. That's what a goon does to his dame when he's had plenty.

ROBERT. But you have no reason to suppose that Ramillies is that sort of person — it seems unlikely to

me — and what evidence have you that your daughter is, in fact, dead ? You're letting your imagination run away with you : that's what's wrong.

DOHDA. You don't understand how a father feels when his only beloved daughter gets knocked-off by a Limey.

ROBERT. I don't believe anything of the sort has happened. Your daughter seems to be a girl who's quite able to look after herself.

DOHDA. You got no sympathy : that's your trouble.

ROBERT. Another thing I don't understand is how you, an American citizen, have a daughter who's an Albanian partisan.

DOHDA. How come, brother ? A guy's born where his old lady happens to be at the time, isn't he ? And my old lady was in Albania ; so that's where I was born and raised, and got married there too, for the first time.

ROBERT. So you're not American by birth ?

DOHDA. You don't have to be. Getting to be an American's like getting to be converted.

ROBERT. But you didn't take your daughter with you ?

DOHDA. She was only a babe, and I got in a hot box. In a jam, see ? And up to the gills. So I pulled a pin, see, and took the air. I soft-shoed out and hit the tracks for old New York.

ROBERT. And you've lived there ever since ?

DOHDA. No, sir. I been around plenty. I been in Cincinnati and Pittsburg, I been in Detroit and out on

the Coast. But I was back in New York when this man's war began. I was doing a stretch up the river, but I made a deal and came out on parole.

ROBERT. Doesn't " up the river " mean in prison ?

DOHDA. Sure. Sure it does. In the cooler. But Sing-Sing, it's a picnic beside the Cheese Box in Illinois.

ROBERT. So you've been in prison more than once ?

DOHDA. And what of it ? It all depends on circumstances, see ? You're a doctor or a priest, maybe, and the cops don't take no notice. You get by with it. But maybe you're in some other racket where the protection's not so hot ; and what happens ? You make a slip, and the bulls are on your tail before you know how.

ROBERT. And when you went into the army, in spite of your criminal record you were posted to the Military Police ?

DOHDA. Sure. That's sensible, isn't it ? They need guys with experience in the M.P.'s. — But you and me can't sit here all night just pounding our gums : I got a mission ! I got to go and look for that snake Ramillies.

ROBERT. Where do you expect to find him ?

DOHDA. Right here, brother. *(He listens at the door again.')* It's all quiet in the parlour, so I guess they're still in the kitchen. Playing house, maybe.

ROBERT. You're completely at fault now, I'm afraid. You've missed him by an hour or so. He was here, earlier in the evening, but he left before I came home.

DOHDA. And I was right on his tail ; and he turns in his tracks and comes back again. He's in your

kitchen right now, and I'm not worrying in case he gets out again. I took precautions.

ROBERT. What sort of precautions ?

DOHDA. I'd a couple of screws in my pocket, and a little iron bracket just made for a door you don't want to be opened ; and I screwed it up good and tight. So Mr. Ramillies is there when I want him.

ROBERT. In the kitchen — with the door fastened ? With my wife ? The man you suspect of killing your daughter ?

DOHDA. That gripes you, does it ? Maybe you're beginning to feel that human sympathy ? Maybe you're starting to realise what I said before, that a guy who's in dutch has got the right to ask some other guy to chip in and help ? You're learning, brother, you're learning fast.

ROBERT. Get out of my way ! I must go to her. . . .

DOHDA. Button your lip ! They're coming.

DOHDA, *standing near Door* 2, *has beard Door l being opened, and* SUSAN's *voice as she and* RAMILLIES *come in again from the kitchen. She carries* RAMlLLlEs's *book.*

SUSAN. We could argue for a long time about that. . . . But if love is a plague, your poetry won't stop the infection, Mr. Ramillies. It will spread it.

RAMILLIES. But it isn't love — I tell you again ! — it isn't the high passion of love that's our enemy. It's the belittling of love that belittles us too ! Love can exalt a civilisation, and playing at love can bring civilisation toppling to the ground !

In the bedroom.

DOHDA. He's giving her the works.

ROBERT. What do you mean ?

DOHDA. Big talk about love.

ROBERT. I'm not going to stand that !

He takes a step forward, and DOHDA, *kneeling at the door, pulls a revolver from his holster with great dexterity, and threatens him.*

DOHDA. Curl up, curl up ! I'll tell you when to go.

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN. Civilisation may topple in any case, and if we are to be ruined, I should much prefer low love to high explosives.

RAMILLIES. You're evading the issue, aren't you ?

SUSAN. I avoid trouble whenever I can. In my own set of Commandments, that's Number One. And if everyone did the same—

RAMILLIES. No, no. You mustn't joke about it.

SUSAN. How do you know that I'm joking ?

RAMILLIES. You are ! I put forward an argument — a serious argument — and you should either agree with it or disagree. But if you make light of it, you are either deliberately making a joke of what I say, or incapable of understanding. And if you are incapable of understanding, that's because your mind is lazy, undeveloped, untidy—

SUSAN. Oh !

RAMILLIES. What's the matter ?

SUSAN. My brassiere ! It's been there all evening and I never noticed it till now ! Oh, how right you are, Mr. Ramillies ! I am untidy ! I'm very untidy. No wonder Robert said the room was like a slum. It's utterly a slum, isn't it ? I did mean to put things in order before going to bed, but then you came back, Mr. Ramillies, and I really hadn't the opportunity, had I? Do pull that rug straight, will you ? And pick up that cushion ? I always try to leave things tidy at night, no matter what they are during the day. And this picture worries me : one of the hooks should come farther along the rail. Will you steady the chair for me, Mr. Ramillies ?

SUSAN, *while she talks, has been making a slap-dash effort to tidy the room ; and* RAMILLIES, *a little put out by her brusque interruption, rather unwillingly assists. Now she mounts a chair in Jront of the picture that hangs askew, and stretches to reach one of the hooks from which it is suspended.*

RAMILLIES. Let me do that for you.

SUSAN. No, no. I can reach it perfectly well—

Stretching a little farther, she overbalances — kicks the chair over— and Jailing into RAMILLIES''s *anns sends him sprawling on to a near-by couch where momentarily they lie in what appears to be a clumsy but close embrace. The noise of the Jailing chair alarms* SERGEANT DOHDA, *who throws open Door z, and closely followed by* ROBERT, *comes in behind a menacing revolver.*

DOHDA. Break it up there ! Break it up !

CURTAIN

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II

SCENE. *The same as before. Ten minutes later.*

In the bedroom RAMILLIES and DOHDA *sit silent and morose, an unfriendly distance between them.* RAMILLIES *is looking at the page of photographs torn from* Life ; DOHDA *is chewing gum.*

In the sitting-room ROBERT *and* SUSAN — *he as morose as the others, and she silent for a moment or two after the Curtain rises — sit equally apart.*

In the bedroom.

DOHDA. So you're not talking ?

RAMILLIES. I've got nothing to say.

DOHDA. You'll find something. They always do. And I got patience. I can wait.

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN. Queen Victoria herself might have fallen off a chair.

ROBERT. It's not very likely. And if she had, she wouldn't have fallen into the arms of a disreputable literary adventurer.

SUSAN. When we spoke of him earlier this evening, you seemed to think very highly of Mr. Ramillies.

ROBERT. It often happens that one is attracted by a book and repelled by its author. I've sometimes thought that going to meet a living author is like being presented to a goose because you enjoy *pate de foie gras.*

SUSAN. When I was talking to Mr. Ramillies I thought how much he resembled you in some ways. I like him, I confess, but he would be insufferable to live with.

ROBERT. You put that forward as a point of resemblance?

SUSAN. You're not easy, are you? When Mr. Ramillies complained that modern love had become too facile, it did occur to me that he might change his opinion if he were married to you.

ROBERT. So you weren't talking only about books? Your conversation was broad enough to include love?

SUSAN. We spoke of nothing else. The poor nice man is a monomaniac.

ROBERT, Then that American may be right about him; perhaps he did murder the girl! — Do you know, until to-night I'd never met a criminal.

SUSAN. What did it feel like, when he pointed his revolver at you?

ROBERT. It was a curious sensation. He took me by surprise, and, to begin with, it was most humiliating. I felt exactly as if I were at school, and a master had caught me cribbing.

SUSAN. Did you often crib?

ROBERT. Of course I did. I was a very clever boy. — But when I think of it now, the pistol, I mean, it makes me furiously angry. I wouldn't put up with it again.

SUSAN. But what else could you do?

ROBERT. I wouldn't stand it. I'd make him put it down.

SUSAN. Not if I'm present, Robert. It would be too painful.

ROBERT. In a way, you know, I rather admire Sergeant Dohda ; he's very frank and outspoken about himself.

SUSAN. That's common form in America. They're not so well corked as we are.

ROBERT. Now if Ramillies followed his example and were equally frank—

SUSAN. You think we might get a surprise ?

ROBERT. He looks quite respectable — but respectable-looking people have committed murder.

SUSAN. I can't believe it ; he's not that sort of man. — Being a woman, of course, I don't feel as strongly as you about men who do murder women ; but I don't think Mr. Ramillies would. In spite of the way in which he talks, I think he may be a little frightened of us.

ROBERT. It isn't a watertight defence, is it ? It's not inconceivable that a man should murder someone he's frightened of. It's a very good reason for murder. — Have you got that book of his ?

SUSAN. It's here. I was reading the poems again.

ROBERT. What happened in the end ? What's his last reference to her ?

SUSAN. I can't quite remember.

ROBERT, in a chair, finds the proper place in the book, and reads with close attention. SUSAN, *on a sofa, lights a cigarette and puts her feet up; and contemplates cigarette-smoke and her thoughts.*

In the bedroom SERGEANT DOHDA, *taking out a packet of cigarettes, goes to* RAMILLIES *and offers him one.* RAMILLIES *refuses.* DOHDA *lights one.*

DOHDA. You're an educated man, and you ought to understand what I feel. It's eighteen years since I seen the little cookie, but I'm her father, and blood's thicker than water. Now come clean, won't you ? Tell me what you did to her.

RAMILLIES. What do you suspect ? What do you think I did to her ?

DOHDA. I'm asking the questions, not you. I'm the loving father of a cute kid that I haven't seen in years, but you're the buttinski she's been living with, and now you've walked out on her. Well, I got the right to ask questions.

RAMILLIES. You've only got the excuse of knowing nothing whatever about the circumstances. In the first place, we didn't live together.

DOHDA. But maybe in the second place, eh ?

RAMILLIES. I did not live with Draga ! I saw a lot of her, I admit. I was with her for eight or nine months. But all that time we were fellow-soldiers, and that's all.

DOHDA. Yeah ? And because why ?

RAMILLIES. That was normal discipline among the partisans.

DOHDA. I don't see it, mister. Now look at Draga : she's got the it and that, you can't deny it. Well, what's wrong with you ?

RAMILLIES. Can't you realise that there were hundreds of girls and women, serving and fighting on equal terms

with men, and out of sheer necessity the first and most rigidly enforced of all orders was that there must be no relations between them except the common comradeship of ordinary soldiers? There was no thought or awareness of different sexes; there was only the thought and awareness of our common cause.

DOHDA. Well, maybe. Maybe for the majority. In the majority of broads there's always some old cows, and with them it's O.K. But with a girl like Draga it's different. You look at her — my little cookie — and you got to admit it. She's got the apple, she's got the old magoo! Are you going to tell me you lived with a girl like Draga, and weren't no more than buddies together?

RAMILLIES. That is the truth, whether you believe it or not.

DOHDA. Well, for Pete's sake! — Here, take a drag.

RAMILLIES. I don't smoke.

DOHDA. Holy cats, what *do* you do?

DOHDA *returns to his chair and smokes, gloomily. On the bed, hands under his head,* RAMILLIES *lies and stares at the ceiling.*

In the sitting-room.

ROBERT *(putting down the book).* He doesn't tell you. It's one of the worst tricks of these modern writers: they convey the atmosphere of a situation, they describe the psychology of their characters, they give you small, picturesque, irrelevant details — and they don't tell you what happened!

SUSAN. He doesn't admit that he murdered her, you mean?

ROBERT. No.

SUSAN. I don't suppose he did. I think he's far more likely to have packed his kit in a hurry, and gone off. without even saying good-bye — just to avoid giving her pain, of course.

ROBERT. There's a brilliant description of an argument he had with half a dozen partisans — Draga was one of them — in a tumbledown shepherd's hut in the mountains before they attacked a village. Then there's a remarkably vivid picture of the fighting, but he doesn't tell you whether Draga was killed or wounded or came out unhurt. He doesn't even condescend to tell you who won ! — That's the weakness of the modern method : it ignores facts. Now the Victorians, in spite of their reticence and all their upholstered phrases, never left you in any doubt as to what had actually occurred.

SUSAN. Poor Mr. Ramillies. And m some respects he's so very like the Victorians. He believes in repression.

ROBERT. As a means to an end, or an end in itself ?

SUSAN. Oh, as a means to an end, I'm almost sure. At least I think so, and I certainly hope so ; because if he believes that repression itself is a good thing, perhaps he did murder poor Draga. She may have been one of those irrepressible girls whom one can't repress in any other way.

ROBERT. What did he say about it ?

SUSAN. About repression ? He said it was the price of our survival. Four-fifths, or five-sixths, or seven-eighths of human nature — I forget the fraction — is either disgusting or destructive, he says, and it ought to

be put down with an iron hand. Then he said something about icebergs that sounded impressive at the time, but now I can't remember what it was. What can he have said to make me feel interested in icebergs ?

ROBERT. Only one-ninth of an iceberg is visible. The rest of it, like so much of human nature, is below the water-line.

SUSAN. You are clever, darling. It's one of the things that make you tolerable. You often think that I don't appreciate you, but I do ; I really do. I only wish you were more sympathetic.

ROBERT. I think I understand you fairly well.

SUSAN. You don't understand my difficulties. You see, in primitive times, it was so easy for a woman to give her heart away ; and when she had done that she had nothing left, and no need to worry. — She'd look up, some morning, and see a splendid creature swinging from branch to branch, farther and faster than anyone else, and she'd know at once that he was her destined mate and the father of her children. And nowadays, of course, clever people like you are just as important — but you don't make the same *instant* appeal, and so a woman doesn't give her heart away quite so quickly, or unthinkingly, or completely. But she does give it. — Or most of it.

ROBERT. A minute ago you wanted me to be more sympathetic ; and now, with a certain delicacy, you're excusing your disappointment because I'm not a gorilla. What are you really trying to say ?

SUSAN. That in spite of all your failings, dear, I'm not dissatisfied.

ROBERT. Is it necessary, after seven years of marriage, to make a special announcement of it ?

SUSAN. It becomes more and more necessary with every year that passes. All married women should make a habit — a constant habit — of saying, " In spite of everything, dear, I'm still devoted to you — if you are still devoted to me *because* of everything ".

ROBERT. If I hadn't some affection for you, I wouldn't go to the trouble I do to make you behave in a reasonable manner.

SUSAN. Mr. Ramilhes puts it much better. Do read this again, and see if you can't learn his method.

She shows him a page in RAMILLIES's *book, takes him by the arm, and leads him to a sofa that looks inward to the room ; where they sit and continue their conversation* sotto voce.

In the bedroom.

DOHDA. You sleeping ?

RAMILLIES. No.

DOHDA. I been thinking. I guess you're right, maybe. I reckon you may be telling the truth. I been around, see ? I ain't no small-town guy that thinks he knows all there is to know because he hasn't seen nothing else. I seen plenty — and I just don't know ! I don't know what a guy's going to do when he meets up with another guy. I don't know how a guy's going to act when he meets up with a broad. Maybe he wants to marry her before midnight and live happy ever after, and maybe it's murder in the first degree. You just don't know.

RAMILLIES. No, we don't know.

DOHDA. All these scientific guys, they raise the temperature and pour in the acid, and they can tell what's cooking ; but when a scientific guy meets a broad who isn't a scientific broad, can he tell you what's cooking then ? No, sir !

RAMILLIES. So you're willing now to admit that my relations with Draga were innocent ?

DOHDA. Maybe that's going too far and going too quick. You tell me that you and she weren't living together : O.K., maybe I believe you. But you drag your freight and come home, and she fades out. Well, where did she go, and where is she ?

RAMILLIES *(speaking slowly and carefully).* The last time I saw her was just before we attacked a village. We attacked in two columns. She went with one, and I led the other.

DOHDA. And how come you didn't connect up in the village ?

RAMILLIES. We failed to take it. There was a lot of opposition and we had to retire.

DOHDA. And Draga ? Didn't she retire ?

RAMILLIES. She didn't come back.

DOHDA. You mean — she took the rap ?

RAMILLIES. It was still dark — an hour or so before dawn — and there was some confusion. I didn't see her again.

Over DOHDA"s *face there spreads a look of incredulity that changes to dismay. He sits staring miserably in*

front of him; then presently puts a piece of gum into his mouth and begins to chew; hut retains his lugubrious expression. RAMILLIES *lies down again with his hands under his head.*

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN. Look at the time, Robert ! And we may not be able to go to bed for hours and hours.

ROBERT. I'm not going to wait any longer. If the fellow had a dozen missing daughters, he could have discussed them all by now. I'm going to tell them to go.

SUSAN. No, darling, you can't do that. He's an American, remember, and they're so touchy about any lack of hospitality.

ROBERT. The fellow's a gaol-bird.

SUSAN. Even gaol-birds are fond of their nestlings, I suppose. The poor man must be very worried.

ROBERT. And we've been very patient, but they can't stay here all night. I must get some sleep.

SUSAN. Then I'll go and talk to them. I'll be much more tactful than you, and I do think you ought to have a word with Mr. Ramillies before he goes. I'll send him through, and you can be nice to him while I deal with the Sergeant.

ROBERT. You can't stay there alone with him ! He's got a revolver.

SUSAN. Americans like to carry revolvers, dear. It doesn't mean anything generally, it's just playing at Indians.

ROBERT. He's a man with a criminal record.

SUSAN. And probably as quiet as a lamb in the house.

ROBERT. In any case, I don't want to sit here and talk to Ramillies. He may be worse than the American, for all we know.

SUSAN. In times like these, dear, you can't afford to be niminy-piminy.

ROBERT. I've got nothing whatever to say to him—

SUSAN. You're so clever, Robert, that if he did kill her I'm sure you'll find out. Ask him a lot of leading questions.

Their movements, during this exchange, have been gradually towards Door 2. *Now* SUSAN *knocks, and goes into the bedroom.* RAMILLIES *and* DOHDA *both rise.*

SUSAN. I hope I'm not interrupting you at the most awkward moment ? If I am — well, tell me at once.

RAMILLIES. No, Mrs. Lawn, we've said all we had to say.

SUSAN. Well, before you go — I don't want to hurry you, of course. You mustn't think that we're not happy to see you here, Sergeant Dohda — but my husband, Mr. Ramillies, was hoping that he would have an opportunity of telling you how much he has enjoyed your book, and I — well, I've had no chance at all of talking to Sergeant Dohda.

RAMILLIES. I'm sorry, Mrs. Lawn. We've kept you up far too long.

SUSAN. Oh no, Mr. Ramillies. Not at all. But do go through. — Robert! here's Mr. Ramillies.

In the sitting-room.

RAMILLIES. This has been rather an intrusion, I'm afraid.

ROBERT. Oh no, you mustn't think that. Very glad to see you here. Glad to see you at any time.

ROBERT, *embarrassed, unnecessarily empties an ash-tray into the fireplace.* RAMILLIES, *also embarrassed, remains standing.* SUSAN *stands at Door* 2 *for a moment, watching them ; then closes the door.*

In the bedroom.

SUSAN. Well, Sergeant Dohda, I hope you're beginning to feel at home in London ? How long have you been here?

DOHDA. A little more than three months, ma'am.

SUSAN. It's such a long war, isn't it ? But you're quite used to being away from home, aren't you ? My husband told me that you've had a most adventurous life.

DOHDA. I been around, I guess.

SUSAN. How interesting ! Do sit down, please.

In the sitting-room.

ROBERT. Will you have a cigarette ?

RAMILLIES. No, thank you. I don't smoke.

ROBERT. It's a foolish habit, does you no good. Difficult to break, though.

RAMILLIES. I **Suppose SO.**

ROBERT. Sit down, won't you? That's quite a comfortable chair.

RAMILLIES. Thank you.

ROBERT *lights his cigarette with rather elaborate care. They relapse into chairs and silence.*

In the bedroom DOHDA *still looks glum, and* SUSAN, *after waiting a moment for him to speak, resumes the conversation herself.*

SUSAN. You've lived in America for a long time, haven't you, Sergeant?

DOHDA. Why, sure. I'm an American citizen.

SUSAN. But by birth, my husband tells me, you're an Albanian?

DOHDA. I hadn't got no option.

SUSAN. I suppose that's a good thing, on the whole. If everyone could choose where he was going to be born, some countries would be left quite empty, wouldn't they? — But I was only thinking how well you've learnt to speak Amer — I mean, English. You haven't a trace of an Albanian accent, have you?

DOHDA. Say, listen! I guess you're well-intentioned, I guess you're aiming to make things nice and friendly so I can relax and feel right at home. But it won't go. I just had a tough break, see? And right now a million dollars wouldn't make me feel at home. And I don't ever want to hear of Albania again.

SUSAN. I *am* sorry! Truly I am. Did you get bad news from Mr. Ramillies?

DOHDA. I had a daughter. I hadn't seen her for eighteen years, but she was a mighty cute kid. And now it seems like she's been knocked-off.

SUSAN. An accident of some sort ?

DOHDA. No, ma'am. They was attacking a village — so that guy Ramillies says — and she got stopped in her tracks. And she was a peachamaroo ! Well, you can see for yourself: here's her picture.

He gives SUSAN *the page torn from* Life.

In the sitting-room ROBERT *and* RAMILLIES *are still awkward and stiff in each other's company.*

ROBERT. Extraordinary country Albania must be.

RAMILLIES. Yes, it has a quality of its own.

ROBERT. I spent a month or so in Greece a few years ago.

RAMILLIES. Interesting place for a holiday.

ROBERT. The food's not very good, of course.

RAMILLIES. Especially in the smaller towns.

ROBERT. Quite uneatable in some parts.

RAMILLIES. Yes, very bad.

In the bedroom SUSAN *has read with great interest the description of Dragas activities in guerrilla war.*

SUSAN. And is it really true that she's killed twenty-seven people ?

DOHDA. It says so right there in cold print, I got no reason to doubt it.

SUSAN. Except, of course, that one doesn't usually look forward to female children distinguishing themselves in quite that way. At present, I admit, one doesn't really know what to expect, but even though you take it calmly, I feel that Draga's mother must sometimes be a little surprised.

DOHDA. She hasn't got no mother. She died when Draga was six months old.

SUSAN. Oh, how dreadful — for both of you !

In the sitting-room.

ROBERT. Do you think you'll go back ?

RAMILLIES. To Albania ? No.

ROBERT. Once you've seen it, I suppose — well, you've seen it.

RAMILLIES. Yes, it's a small country.

ROBERT. And there are so many other places, of course.

RAMILLIES. If one could only go to them.

ROBERT. I wonder when we'll be able to travel again ?

RAMILLIES. I wonder. . . .

In the bedroom.

SUSAN. You're not all alone in the world, are you ?

DOHDA. It don't seem to worry me.

SUSAN. But it should ! A man oughtn't to live alone. Didn't you marry again when you went to America ?

DOHDA. And suppose I did ? So what ?

SUSAN. It was a very sensible thing to do. It's nice and companionable to have a wife somewhere.

DOHDA. It never did me any good.

SUSAN. Oh, surely that's not true. Doesn't she write to you ?

DOHDA. She's quit writing.

SUSAN. Well, you mustn't take it too much to heart. Often the mails are late, and even if she hasn't written for a week or two, there's probably some quite ordinary, common reason for it.

DOHDA. Lay off it, will you ? You start tangling with me and my private business, and maybe you'll find trouble. Plenty trouble. So keep out of it, lady. Keep your nose clean !

SUSAN. My nose is never otherwise.

DOHDA. Then try something new, and keep your trap shut.

SUSAN. Must I remind you, Sergeant Dohda, that you are in my house ; and in my house it is customary to behave in a civil manner ? If I make a friendly, innocent reference to your wife—

DOHDA. I don't want no references to her.

SUSAN. So it appears. But because I happen to mention her, in the most casual way, you have no excuse for behaving as if you had murdered the poor woman, and were still a fugitive from justice.

DOHDA. I'm no fugitive from justice ! I'd done a year of my term when the war began, and I came out legally on parole. Legally ! They give me my parole so I could join the Army and fight for democracy !

SUSAN. You had done a year of your term *I*

DOHDA. A year and twenty-one days. Up the river.

SUSAN. But — what for ?

DOHDA. For what you said, of course ! She got what was coming.

SUSAN. You murdered her ?

DOHDA. You can't call it murder, lady ! She was my wife. She wasn't a dame I didn't know; we was legally married. I'd given her the office again and again, and she just wouldn't listen. She wasn't no good, and she wasn't getting better. I don't like cats of any sort, and she was the worst sort : an alley cat. So I put her on a slab.

SUSAN. You murdered her !

DOHDA. You don't know the circumstances.

SUSAN. Circumstances don't matter.

DOHDA. Oh, baloney ! You stay there ! I'm going to show you something. . . .

He makes a violent gesture, bis hand plunging towards an inside pocket of his tunic, and SUSAN, *imagining that he is about to draw a gun, screams loudly.*

In the sitting-room ROBERT *and* RAMILLIES *jump up, and* ROBERT, *exclaiming " My* God ! " *rushes into the bedroom with* RAMILLIES *close behind.*

ROBERT. Susan ! What's the matter ?

SUSAN. Oh, Robert! Darling Robert, I've been so silly. I thought he had a pistol. He put his hand in his pocket, and the least thing I expected was a pistol.

DOHDA. And all I was doing, I was looking for some pictures to show you a picture of my wife. *(He has about a dozen photographs in his hand, heldjanwise, rather like a land of cards. He shows one to* ROBERT.) That's her in the bathing-suit. And here's another with her hat on.

SUSAN *(whispering to* ROBERT). He murdered her, Robert! — *(She speaks aloud, and now quite calmly.)* Do let me see her photograph.

ROBERT, *shocked by what* SUSAN *has told him, looks again at the photographs — looks Jrom them to* DOHDA, *and back — hands them to* SUSAN, *stands for a moment in perplexity. Then, decisively, he returns to the sitting-room, closing Door 2 behind him, and picks up the telephone. But now his intention wavers.*

In the bedroom.

SUSAN. It's a very revealing photograph.

DOHDA. She'd all the fixings. You got to admit that.

SUSAN. I was referring to her character.

DOHDA. You couldn't do justice to that, except in colour.

In the sitting-room ROBERT *seems about to telephone when Door i opens and* FLORA *appears in a resplendent dressing-gown, and with her hair preserved against the pillows in a net that increases the gaiety of her appearance.*

FLORA. Whatever has been happening, Mr. Lawn ? I woke in a fright, for I heard someone screaming.

ROBERT. My wife got a fright too.

FLORA. Is it bad news she has had ?

ROBERT Well, she heard something that upset her.

FLORA, *bosom heaving, stares at htm in surprise. In the bedroom* SUSAN *holds out a photograph to* DOHDA.

SUSAN. Is that a view of Wall Street, Sergeant ?

DOHDA *(laughing* with *surprising geniality).* Why no, ma'am. That's the Homicide Block at Sing-Sing.

SUSAN. It looks very business-like.

In the sitting-room.

FLORA. Who's that that's talking ?

ROBERT. There's an American murderer in there, and possibly an English one too.

FLORA. In there with Mrs. Lawn ?

ROBERT. And you're responsible for their presence. You brought that fellow Ramillies—

FLORA. Mr. Ramillies is no murderer !

ROBERT. Are you sure ?

FLORA. He's had no occasion to be ! And he's not here now, in any case. I put him out myself—

ROBERT. But he came back.

FLORA *again is shocked into silence; and* ROBERT *lays an irresolute hand on the telephone again.*

In the bedroom SUSAN *is still looking at the photograph of Sing-Sing.*

SUSAN. And this window marked with a cross ? Is that where you lived ?

DOHDA. No, ma'am. That's where a buddy of mine made his get-away. I marked it up as a kind of sacred spot.

In the sitting-room.

ROBERT. I don't want to be unfair to Ramillies — I'm not accusing him of murder — but the other man, the American soldier, is certainly a criminal : he killed his wife.

FLORA. And what brought him here ?

ROBERT. He followed Ramillies.

FLORA. And he's in bye with Mrs. Lawn, in her own room, while you stand havering here, doing nothing at all?

ROBERT. I was on the point of nngmg-up the police.

FLORA. Oh, but I wouldn't do that, Mr. Lawn ! It's a terrible thing, to bring in the police.

ROBERT. It seems the obvious way to get rid of him. To get rid of both of them.

FLORA. I wouldn't do it, Mr. Lawn. Not the police. You never know what's going to come of it when you start to meddle with the police. And think of the talk it would make !

ROBERT, *still at the telephone hesitates and considers the matter. In the bedroom* SUSAN *inspects another photograph.*

SUSAN. Was there a mutiny while you were in prison, Sergeant ?

DOHDA. No, ma'am. That's just a pipe-dream in Sing-Sing.

SUSAN. Then I don't understand this picture at all.

DOHDA. Why, that's a ball-game between us canaries and the screws.

SUSAN. How very friendly !

In the sitting-room.

FLORA. Would it not be better to talk it over with Mrs. Lawn first ?

ROBERT. Can you think of some excuse to get her away from them ?

FLORA. She'll be needing a cup of tea by this time. Go you into the kitchen, Mr. Lawn, and make a pot of tea — there's everything ready for the morning — and I'll take in a dram for the American.

ROBERT. If you give him a drink, he'll never go.

FLORA. No fear of that, no fear at all ! I'll deal with him when the time comes. I've dealt with Americans before now ; and with Poles forbye.

ROBERT. Well, get my wife out of there to begin with !

ROBERT *goes out by Door I.* FLORA, *who has taken Jrom a sideboard the decanter of whisky, glasses, and a bottle of cider for* RAMILLIES, *sets them on a tray and carries it to Door* 2, *where she calls to* SUSAN.

FLORA. Are you there, Mrs. Lawn ?

RAMILLIES *comes to let her in.*

SUSAN. Flora ! How nice of you to join us. We're having a rather unexpected party.

FLORA. I heard voices, Mrs. Lawn, so I came down to see — well, I thought I might be wanted — and when Mr. Lawn told me you had company, it crossed my mind that the gentlemen might like a dram. There's a cup of tea for you in the kitchen, that Mr. Lawn is making.

SUSAN. Robert making tea? How he must hate it! — But let me introduce you, Flora. Mr. Ramillies you know, of course, and this is Sergeant Dohda, who has been showing us some photographs. Miss Maclver, Sergeant.

DOHDA. Pleased to meet you.

FLORA. I hope you are enjoying your visit to England, Sergeant?

DOHDA. Suits me — but *I'm* not choosy.

FLORA. Just so, Sergeant! And we're learning to put up with things too. — It didn't take you long to come back, Mr. Ramillies!

RAMILLIES. I made a great mistake in coming back and I'm very sorry for it.

SUSAN. No, I won't hear such a thing. You've given us a very eventful evening. — I'm sure you'd like some whisky, Sergeant. Do help yourself.

FLORA. There's cider for you, Mr. Ramillies — *(she speaks emphatically)* — and tea in the kitchen for you, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. Yes, I'm coming, Flora. — You'll excuse me, won't you? *(She follows* FLORA *into the sitting-room, but at the door* SUSAN *pauses, and turns to speak to* RAMILLIES

again.) Can I have a word with you, Mr. Ramillies ? Just a word.

RAMILLIES, *showing a trace of nervousness, follows them.* DOHDA *is helping himself to whisky.*

DOHDA. Go ahead, son. Don't mind me.

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN *(whispering).* I think it's nearly time for Sergeant Dohda to go home. So don't say anything that will encourage him to settle down.

RAMILLIES. I wish to God he would go. But I don't want to go with him.

SUSAN. No, I'm sure you don't ; and you can stay as long as you like — Robert will be delighted — but do use your influence with the Sergeant !

RAMILLIES. I'll do what I can.

He returns to the bedroom, pours himself a glass of cider, and sits down. DOHDA *watches him contemptuously.*

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN. That man — the American — murdered his wife *I*

FLORA. Mr. Lawn was telling me. It's an awful thing to have a murderer in the house — but in times like these you've got to be prepared for anything.

SUSAN. And I think, on the whole, that I'd rather have him than her. He showed me some photographs of her. In a bathing-suit, Flora. Showing all her teeth, and the sort of figure that makes sailors whistle.

FLORA. It's a warning, is it not ? You should never judge a man without knowing the facts !

SUSAN. No, indeed you shouldn't. — But poor Robert's in the kitchen, making tea! Come along, Flora.

They go out by Door l.

In the bedroom.

DOHDA. You don't drink liquor, eh ?

RAMILLIES. Only on rare occasions.

DOHDA. I never met a guy who didn't do nothing in more different ways. Do you get any satisfaction out of life at all ?

RAMILLIES. I don't look for cheap satisfaction. And I don't live like a house-fly, with all its values upside down and the goal of its desire a smear of stale jam on a dirty tablecloth.

DOHDA. I guess a house-fly knows what's good for it.

RAMILLIES. Which is more than human beings have learnt.

DOHDA. Sounds like you're all burned-up about something. What's gotten in your hair ?

RAMILLIES. It's time we were going, for one thing. We're keeping Mr. and Mrs. Lawn out of their beds.

DOHDA. That's a lot of bull ! Why, they're glad for us to be here. She said herself we'd given them a swell time.

RAMILLIES. She was polite, of course, but none the less it's late ; and we ought to go — now !

DOHDA. Wait a minute, wait a minute. I got plenty I want to talk about first, and what's wrong witn this joint anyway? I'm feeling pretty comfortable, and there's most of a quart of liquor there. So sit down and tell me something.

RAMILLIES. I've told you all I know. There's no point in repeating a story you've already heard — and you must have some consideration for the Lawns. You can't spend the night here.

DOHDA. You're too picky. I've taken myself a flop in worse dumps than this — yes, sir ! — and anyways you and me ought to stick together.

RAMILLIES. In God's name, why ?

DOHDA. Because you're the only hook-up I got with my daughter Draga, whether she's dead or alive. And if she's dead — well, I been thinking about an old custom they got in Albania. Maybe you give some guy the works, see ? Well, it don't rest there. That guy's got a brother, or maybe it's an uncle or his old man who's kinda handy with a rod and quick on the draw ; so he turns the heat on you, and the next thing you know, someone's patting you down with a spade. So what ? It don't rest there ! You got a cousin, maybe, or a son who's old enough to get around and show some mean stuff. So he rumbles this other guy, him that put the skids under you, and lets him know that one more clean shirt is all he's going to need ; and reaches for the meat-axe. And so it goes on, and on.

RAMILLIES. You don't seriously mean that you're going to take up a blood-feud for Draga ?

DOHDA. She was my daughter, wasn't she ? And she got brushed off.

RAMILLIES. But in time of war ! That makes all the difference. There's no compulsion to start a feud from a casualty in war. There's no compulsion — there's no excuse — at any time, except a barbarian instinct that's been kept alive by sheer idiocy and a vicious habit.

DOHDA. My little proposition seems to have got you all steamed up, mister.

RAMILLIES. Is that surprising ? Wouldn't any civilised person show himself impatient if he heard someone putting forward an argument for chain-murder ?

DOHDA. So you haven't got no sympathy with a father's feelings, eh ?

RAMILLIES. That's not the point. The whole thing is so ridiculous. You don't know who killed her—

DOHDA. Maybe I can find out.

RAMILLIES. Never, never ! It's impossible. (DOHDA *helps himself to more* whisky.) O God, how much longer are you going to stay ?

DOHDA. It doesn't seem right to leave all this liquor behind.

RAMILLIES. Then you can stay by yourself. I'm going.

DOHDA. You sure got ants in your pants, mister.

RAMILLIES. What shall I tell the Lawns? That you're settling down for the night ?

DOHDA. Suit yourself about that.

RAMILLIES. I shall ! *(He gets up and goes to the door.)* And I'm going !

He goes into the sitting-room, slamming the door behind him.

DOHDA. You needn't pack a grip, you won't go far.

DOHDA, *lying down on the bed, makes himself comfortable with the whisky beside him.*

In the sitting-room RAMILLIES *walks quickly to Door !, and calls,* " Mrs. Lawn ! " — SUSAN *comes tn, followed by* FLORA.

RAMILLIES. It's no good. I've told him that he ought to leave, but he won't move. He's got an idea that I can give him news of his daughter ; but I can't. So I may as well say good-bye to you, and go.

SUSAN. It's a reasonable suggestion, Mr. Ramillies, but there's one objection to it.

RAMILLIES. If I can help you, or if you want me to stay, of course——

SUSAN. No, it isn't that. It's a more material objection. We can't open the front door.

RAMILLIES. I don't quite understand.

SUSAN. The door won't open, Mr. Ramillies, and therefore no one can leave the flat except by my bedroom window, from which it is possible — though not very easy — to reach a fire-escape.

RAMILLIES. But why can't you open the door ?

SUSAN. Because Sergeant Dohda has fastened it from the outside.

RAMILLIES. But surely there's someone who can let us out ? Isn't there a hall-porter ?

SUSAN. He goes off duty at eleven ; and the only people whom we know in this block of flats are away from home.

RAMILLIES. Then ring up the police !

SUSAN. That is Robert's idea, but Flora and I aren't sure that it's wise.

FLORA. It is never wise to bring in the police, Mr. Ramillies. You never know what it will lead to. — I was brought up in the hotel at Achiltimone, and I know what I'm talking about.

SUSAN. If Sergeant Dohda believes that you know something about his daughter's death — oh, it's absurd, of course, but if that's what he thinks — well, the police might listen to him.

FLORA. Yes, Mr. Ramillies, suppose he was to tell them that ! They'd get their long noses into that like kittens into a dish of cream.

RAMILLIES. You don't think — you don't suspect me of being a common murderer, do you ?

SUSAN. I could have perfect confidence in you, Mr. Ramillies, but if the police had the smallest suspicion, my opinion wouldn't help you.

RAMILLIES. I'm not afraid of the police. Why should I be ?

FLORA. You're not wanting to make trouble now, are you ? I'd go bail for you anywhere, but there's no sense in putting yourself in a position where you need someone to come and get you out of it.

RAMILLIES. Yes, I know. I can see that. And you're being very kind, both of you. Some day I'll explain

everything more fully, and then you'll understand the difficulty I'm in. It's not beyond comprehension. It's awkward at the moment, that's all. And now — Oh, surely there's some way of opening that door ! Can't we force it ?

SUSAN. Robert's looking for a screw-driver. He has the romantic belief that he can take off the hinges — but he isn't, in fact, very clever with his hands.

RAMILLIES. I could do that, if there's a screw-driver. That's a good idea. — But what about Dohda ?

SUSAN. Flora's going back to him. She thinks she can manage him better than we did.

FLORA. I've had advantages that you never had, being brought up in Achiltimone, and then three years in the Army.

RAMILLIES. He's a rougher character than you're used to.

FLORA. If I can't manage the like of him, after three years with the Royal Artillery, I ought to be ashamed of myself.

SUSAN. Come along and help Robert. — Good luck, Flora.

RAMILLIES *first, then* SUSAN, *go out by Door i, and* FLORA, wio *has been standing* with *her hand on the door-knob of Door* 2, *goes boldly into the bedroom. Her deliberately grim expression changes to genuine indignation when she sees* DOHDA *lying asprawl on the bed.*

FLORA. Well, of all the cheek ! If it's not an idle, loafing, good-for-nothing tramp that you are ! Get up out of that! What do you mean by it, lying down on

Mrs. Lawn's bed with your dirty great feet on her counterpane ? Get up, I say, before I lose my temper with you !

DOHDA. Well, for Pete's sake *I* What's eating you, sister ?

FLORA. It's not me that's your sister, and don't you insult my father by suggesting it. If you were a brother of mine you might or you might not be better-looking, but you *would* have better manners. Now get *off* that bed, and go and sit decently in a chair.

DOHDA *(somewhat abashed and obeying).* I don't tumble. I don't get your angle. I done nothing wrong, have I ?

FLORA. Do you not know better than to go to bed with your boots on, on a good silk counterpane the like of that one ?

DOHDA. Ah, baloney ! Is that what you're squawking about ? Say, if I've scuffed her covers, I'll go buy her new ones.

FLORA. There's no one asking you to buy anything, and no one will. All that we're wanting is to see the back-end of you going out through that window.

DOHDA. Well, can you tie that!

FLORA. It's the way you came in, and it's the way you'll go out. And then you'll come round and open the front door, and when you've done that, you can go home.

DOHDA. At this time of night! Why, you wouldn't put a dog out at this time of night.

FLORA. Were you hearing me, Sergeant ? It's telling you to get out I am.

DOHDA. Well, that's gratitude ! That's hospitality !

FLORA. It's too fond of talking you are.

DOHDA. Say, let me tell you something. Let me put you wise to something mighty big and mighty important, and you're forgetting all about it.

FLORA. You'll need to hurry.

DOHDA. I'm in the United States Army, see ? And I come over here because I'm needed. I come over to fight for democracy, in the European Theatre of Operations, and all the welcome I get, you tell me to get the hell out of it *I*

FLORA. So you're fighting for democracy, is that it ?

DOHDA. Why, sure. That's what I come for.

FLORA. And what will we have been doing ?

DOHDA. Why, sister, there's no one blaming you, but what the hell ! There wasn't much you could do till we come over and fix it for you.

FLORA. Do you think we have been sitting quietly at home all the time, just waiting for you to come ? Is that all you know about it ? Then tell me what you think of this.

She puts her left foot on a chair, pulls up her dressing-gown, and shows on her fat left leg the long ruffled scar of a wound. DOHDA *bends and examines it with interest.*

DOHDA. Is that genuine ?

FLORA. I got it in action, if that's what you're meaning. And we hit them before I got hit. There were three of them we brought down in twenty minutes. So I wasn't sitting quietly at home that night.

DOHDA. You mean, you got caught in an air-raid ?

FLORA. Just so ! I was caught in an air-raid ! But we caught them first, for I wasn't a civilian then, I was a Gunner! In the 536 Ack-Ack Regiment of the Royal Artillery. And not in the office, Sergeant, but on the guns !

DOHDA. Well, for Pete's sake ! Sister, this is a mighty proud moment for me. It's an honour to meet you.

FLORA. You've begun to think again, have you ? Well, go on with your thinking, for it's a great improvement.

DOHDA. I'm not joshing, I'm being serious. To meet a fine, brave woman who's been wounded fighting for democracy : that's something to make you think *I*

FLORA. Och, you mustn't go too far and spoil it, Sergeant. I wasn't the only one.

DOHDA. Was it just the once you was in action ?

FLORA. Just the once, indeed ! There was weeks of it, down on the Thames estuary, when we were in action every night.

DOHDA. Well, if that doesn't beat all! I sure would like another gander at that wound of yours, just to remember.

FLORA *(obliging).* It was a good deep scratch, was it not ? And there was another, but not so big, across here.

DOHDA. No !

FLORA. But you'll need to take that one for granted.

DOHDA. Wounded in the bosoom ! You don't know what this is doing to me ! This gets right under my skin.

FLORA. It healed up fine. It was no trouble at all.

DOHDA. I've always been cuckoo about those fine women you read about in the history books, that go through the mill and come out like a million dollars. I'm a sucker for all those kind of stories, and now to meet up with a moll that's been wounded, wounded in the bosoom for democracy, it makes me feel like I could cry like a baby !

FLORA. Oh, you mustn't take it like that, Sergeant! I'd have said nothing about it if I'd thought it was going to upset you.

DOHDA. I just can't help it. It's the way I'm made, see ? I've always been the same. It's the heavy stuff that gets me every time.

FLORA. You've a soft heart in you, Sergeant.

DOHDA. I sure have ! — And there's another thing ! I hadn't got no cause to bawl you out the way I did ! I'm a louse, I'm a low-down heel. I guess I hadn't got no right to come in here, upsetting you folks the way I did. I see it all now, just like you been seeing it.

FLORA. Well, it might have been worse. It was very interesting to meet you, but now it is getting late indeed.

DOHDA. It's God-awful late — and you know what I'm going to do ? I'm going to get the hell out of here right now !

FLORA. Just whatever you say, Sergeant. And you will not be going with any hard feelings ?

DOHDA, I got no feelings I didn't ought to have. I'm a heel and I know it, and I'm going to pile out of here as quick as I can.

He puts on his helmet.

FLORA. And you won't forget about the front door, now will you ?

DOHDA, No, ma'am, you can depend on me. Any little thing I can do just to make up for being a low-down, ornery heel — you only got to say it.

FLORA. Take the screws out of the front door, and that is all I'm asking.

DOHDA. I sure will. — But listen, sister. I'm going to take it on the lam, right now, but just before I shake the lead out of my pants, I sure would like to ask you a favour.

FLORA. And what is that ?

DOHDA. Could you let me grab another look at that wound of yours ?

FLORA. But you have seen it twice already.

DOHDA. I certainly would appreciate it.

FLORA. And if I let you see it again, you'll not bother me for any more ?

DOHDA, I promise you !

FLORA. Well, see and keep your promise — and there it is. *(She pulls up her dressing-gown again, and as* DOHDA *bends to examine the sear, the distant wail of an air-raid*

warning is heard. They both look up, and round in the direction from which it comes.) Would you not have known that would happen ! *(With a sigh of resignation, she sits down, wearily, Joeing front.}* Take off your hat and sit down, Sergeant. You'll no can go till that's over.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT TWO

ACT III

SCENE I

The same as before. A couple of hours later.

Just before the curtain rises the All Clear is sounded, and its noise continues, and mingles with another melody ; for SUSAN, *in a somewhat ungainly attitude, is playing her 'cello. Bach? It is probably Bach.*

In the bedroom DOHDA, *alone with the whisky beside him — the decanter now half-empty — is studiously reading a book.*

In the sitting-room, RAMILLIES *is looking ill;* ROBERT *is half-asleep, but rouses at the All Clear.*

ROBERT. Thank heaven for that ! Now you can stop too.

SUSAN *(continuing to play).* There are just three — no, four — more bars. . . . There now. Wasn't that useful?

The All Clear concludes its uncomely din as she finishes her piece.

RAMILLIES. Thank you very much, Mrs. Lawn.

ROBERT. I've never heard anything that so clearly suggests the agony of primitive man as your attempt to play the 'cello.

SUSAN. Is that a really polite remark, Robert ?

ROBERT. Do you expect anyone to be polite at this time of the morning ?

SUSAN. You might at least be grateful. You may not enjoy my playing—

ROBERT. That is an understatement.

SUSAN. But you must admit it served a purpose. It covered up the worst of the noises outside, when something burst quite close to us ; so even if it wasn't high-class, it was helpful.

RAMILLIES. I thought you played charmingly.

ROBERT. Oh, nonsense. — You can't play, and you never will play, because you can't concentrate, you can't be serious about anything. If you ever had to earn your own living—

SUSAN. I do.

ROBERT. By trading on your luck ! There's a sort of buoyancy in you, and you rely on that to keep you afloat.

SUSAN. Why do you despise mere luck ? Luck may be as much a real thing as courage or cleverness or virtue. If it weren't for luck we might have been blown up half an hour ago. So instead of despising me for being lucky, you ought to be very, very thankful that you're married to me.

ROBERT. That's how you justify yourself, is it ? You make a philosophy of indolence and ask me to subscribe to it ? Before I was married, I led a planned and orderly existence. I entertained reasonable and decent ambitions—

SUSAN. And you were utterly miserable, weren't you ? But now you're only unhappy every second day; and you've improved in other ways as well. — Poor

Robert had a duodenal ulcer when I married him, Mr, Ramillies—

ROBERT. I won't have my private affairs discussed in this manner !

SUSAN. Now do be reasonable, Robert. Your duodenal ulcer has been X-rayed and photographed a score of times. It's not at all a private affair, it's had the publicity of a film-star ; and everyone agrees that it's a most interesting complaint.

RAMILLIES. It certainly interests me, Mrs. Lawn, because for a good many years I've suffered from the same thing myself.

ROBERT. Have you really ?

SUSAN. There now ! I've brought you together at last !

RAMILLIES. It's interesting because your condition is subjective and objective at the same time ; and a mere state of mind can cause you pain. It's a clear case of mind dominating matter.

ROBERT. I agree with you entirely. The doctors tell you to stop smoking, but the real cure is to stop working and worrying. It's worry and fatigue that set the vulture gnawing at your vitals.

RAMILLIES. And emotion ! I've sometimes found that intense emotion — a high dramatic pitch of emotion — is followed by really excruciating pain.

SUSAN. That's rather depressing. Because Robert suffered all the time before we were married, and now he's ill only once a year. I thought I had cured him, but perhaps I've only killed his emotion.

ROBERT. That's the sort of utterly foolish remark that annoys me so much. If you examine it, if you look for either information or logic in it—

SUSAN. Ordinary remarks aren't meant to be treated like that, Robert.

ROBERT. If a statement won't bear analysis, it shouldn't be made. You make a habit of such statements because you have a loose, undisciplined mind—

SUSAN. Your analysis of my character, Robert, never fails to rivet my attention — I could listen to you for ever — but perhaps Mr. Ramillies doesn't find it so interesting. *(Turning to* RAMILLIES) Why, what's the matter ? Aren't you feeling well ?

On RAMILLIES's f*ace there is an expression of pain, and in his posture the slight forward stoop of one whose duodenum has hegun to ache.*

RAMILLIES. It's nothing at all. A little discomfort, nothing more.

SUSAN. In your duodenum, Mr. Ramillies !

RAMILLIES. It's nothing to worry about. I've had a little pain — for an hour or so — I didn't want to mention it — but talking about it seems to have aggravated it. I do apologise for letting you see that I was — oh, not suffering, but a little uncomfortable.

SUSAN. You should have told me at once. I know *all* about duodenums. — Robert, you've got some powder, haven't you ?

ROBERT. It's in the bathroom. I'll go and get it.

SUSAN. Poor Mr. Ramillies ! You'll feel better in a minute.

ROBERT *goes through the bedroom to the bathroom by Door 3, and pauses on the way to speak to* DOHDA, *who, intent on his book, answers without looking up.*

ROBERT. You're quite comfortable, are you, Sergeant ?

DOHDA. Sure. I'm O.K.

ROBERT. Oh, good.

In the sitting-room.

RAMILLIES. I'm so sorry to make a nuisance of myself in this way, but there's been a certain amount of strain and excitement since I came here ; and that, I suppose, is what upset me.

SUSAN *(talking while she puts away her 'cello).* You mustn't think for a moment that you're being any trouble. I'm really quite used to people being unwell. Robert takes everything so seriously, and that's bad for anyone's inside, isn't it ? It always seems to me so foolish to worry, because little things don't matter anyway, and big things are quite beyond your control, so you can't do anything about them. But Robert won't see that. He fell in love with me because we were so utterly different. In those days he was rather unhappy, and I've always enjoyed myself, so he was wildly attracted to something utterly strange ; like an orphan to a Christmas tree. But now he's much happier, and his health has improved, and I'm just the same and he finds me extremely annoying. Married life is very difficult, isn't it ? To stay married should really be recognised as one of the fine arts.

RAMILLIES. Are you still in love with him ?

SUSAN. Well, after all I've done, I've a sort of vested interest in him. I wouldn't dream of giving him up

now; or giving him a chance to discard me. It would be such a waste.

RAMILLIES. You've a stronger character than I thought. When I first met you I should have said that you took marriage very lightly.

SUSAN. Oh, I'm a model wife — though Robert won't always believe it.

RAMILLIES. By instinct or conviction ?

SUSAN. I don't quite know. I think I'm a sensible woman, though other people won't believe it. And I've a good digestion, I've always enjoyed myself — and I dislike vulgarity !

RAMILLIES. Yes, I was wrong.

SUSAN. You're like Robert in many ways, aren't you ? You take little things too seriously.

RAMILLIES. Perhaps I do. But sometimes little things lie in the shadow of greater things.

SUSAN. I always find that little things get lost. — I wonder if Robert has found that powder ? He's so helpless. . . .

She gets up, stands for a moment, thoughtful, then shrugs and sits down at a small tahle, from a drawer in which she takes a pack of cards and begins to shuffle them and lay them out for Patience.

ROBERT *returns through Door 3 into the bedroom, carrying a bottle and a small bundle of letters. He again pauses and looks curiously at* DOHDA.

ROBERT. The *All Clear* has sounded, you know.

DOHDA. Sure, I heard it.

ROBERT. Your book's interesting, is it ?

DOHDA. It's kind of difficult to follow. That guy Ramillies don't write good English.

ROBERT. Oh, that's what you're reading !

DOHDA. I been doing some heavy studying. Just leave me be, will you ? and I'll let you know when I can speak my piece.

ROBERT. Wouldn't you like to take it home with you ?

DOHDA. No need for that, brother. I can read right here just as good as any place.

ROBERT, *nonplussed, goes into the sitting-room, closing Door 2 behind him.*

ROBERT. I found these in the medicine-cupboard.

SUSAN. What are they ? — Oh, those wonderful letters you wrote last year, when you had to go to Scotland for a month !

ROBERT. Do you keep all your letters in cupboards in the bathroom ?

SUSAN. I had been reading them again. Don't be inquisitive, Robert. Did you find the powder ?

ROBERT. Here it is.

SUSAN. There, Mr. Ramillies. Now if you take it to the kitchen, Flora will give you a glass of water, if the main hasn't been cut.

RAMILLIES. It's most kind of you.

RAMILLIES *goes out by Door i.* SUSAN *closes the door behind him and then speaks hotly to* ROBERT.

SUSAN. Really, Robert, you have no tact at all! It was most embarrassing to be confronted with those letters.

ROBERT. If you don't want it to be known that you read letters in the bathroom, you should keep them somewhere else.

SUSAN. It isn't *that,* it's being discovered reading *your* old letters, like a moon-struck girl. Mr. Ramillies had already asked me, rather brusquely, I thought, if I were still in love with you—

ROBERT. Does every man, with whom you are left alone for three minutes, immediately enquire into the state of your emotions ?

SUSAN. The subject usually crops up sooner or later.

ROBERT. You've no sense of dignity, have you ? If you had a scrap of self-respect you'd resent it if a stranger became familiar. I don't understand you !

SUSAN. Because you won't believe in a simple explanation. I like people, and most people like me ; and that's all there is to it. And it's quite absurd to complain about my having a friendly disposition, because if it hadn't been for a very friendly disposition, I'd have left you long ago.

ROBERT. So it's you alone who've preserved our marriage from disaster ? No credit comes to me ? I've had nothing to do with it, in your opinion ?

SUSAN. You're clever, Robert, and that's had a lot to do with it — I couldn't live with a really stupid man — but your sort of cleverness doesn't hold things together. Cleverness is never content with things as they are.

ROBERT. I should hope not.

SUSAN. You see, you don't even want to be contented. You're a very difficult person indeed, and I think you're typical of what's wrong with the world to-day — you and poor Mr. Ramillies. Both of you suffer from new theories and chronic indigestion. . . . *(The telephone rings and* SUSAN, *who is nearer to it, picks up the receiver.* Hullo ? . . . Audrey ! Are you all right, darling ? Did anything come down near you ? . . . Well, that was lucky, wasn't it ? — (To ROBERT) Audrey had a couple of windows broken — What was that, dear ? . . . He's probably hiding. . . . Yes, he was frightened, I suppose. . . . Well, hold on a minute and I'll ask Robert. . . . Yes, we've been up all night, but not bombs : visitors. . . . Yes, hold on. (To ROBERT) I told you about Audrey's alligator, didn't I ? The one she got from a sailor.

ROBERT. Every few weeks you tell me something about Audrey. It's usually incredible and sometnrtes it raises a little doubt of her sanity. What was the last story ?

SUSAN. Don't be pompous, Robert. I told you she had bought an alligator—

ROBERT. So you did. I remember now. And she kept it in her bathroom ?

SUSAN. Well, it's got out. It must have been frightened when the bomb went off that broke Audrey's windows, and now it's at large in the flat, and Audrey's all alone and rather upset about it.

ROBERT. How big is it ?

SUSAN. It's not a little one. It must be nearly five feet long.

ROBERT. The woman's a fool to keep a brute like that in the house.

SUSAN. It isn't very helpful to tell her that now. What do you think she ought to do ?

ROBERT. Nothing at all till the morning. Tell her to shut her door and go back to bed.

SUSAN. She thought of ringing up the Fire Brigade.

ROBERT. Oh, nonsense. Let me speak to her. *(At the telephone)* Audrey ? This is Robert. Look here, you can't do anything about your alligator to-night. Close your door, go back to bed, and in the morning ring up the Zoo and ask them to send along a keeper from the Aquarium. . . . Yes, that's my considered opinion. . . . No, I can't come round myself, and I can't explain why. . . . No, no. Do as I advise, and you'll be all right. . . . Yes, I'm sure. Good-night, Audrey. *(To* SUSAN) The woman's a fool.

In the bedroom DOHDA *props* RAMILLIES'J *book against the lamp on the bedside table, so that he may continue to read it, and taking out his autotnatic pistol, removes the magazine which he carefully cleans with his handkerchief; and replaces it.*

In the sitting-room.

SUSAN. You were rather curt with her, Robert. You may regard her as a fool, but she's nice and amusing and kind-hearted — and, in fact, I don't think she is a fool !

ROBERT. I have no patience with her.

Through Door I RAMILLIES *returns to the sitting-room.*

RAMILLIES. That powder's done me a lot of good.

SUSAN. I'm so glad !

ROBERT. Isn't it curious that a nervous or mental strain should produce an acid condition in the stomach, and a simple alkaline powder can cure the mind's mistake ?

RAMILLIES. If all our intellectual errors could be repaired as easily — well, we should probably take more powders.

SUSAN. You and Robert think far too highly of your intellect, Mr. Ramillies. It's one of the great mistakes that clever people make : they rely on the power of their minds, and quite forget that their minds are always under the influence of fear, or greed, or whisky, or stomach-powder.

ROBERT. Not a civilised mind. A civilised mind is master of itself—

In the bedroom, DOHDA, *having replaced his pistol in its holster, has crossed the floor to Door* 2, *which he* HOW *roughly opens, interrupting* ROBERT,s *sentence.*

DOHDA, Ramillies ! Come in here.

RAMILLIES. What for ?

DOHDA. I want to talk to you.

RAMILLIES. Can't you come in here and talk ?

DOHDA. I want to talk private.

SUSAN, Surely you know us all well enough by now—

DOHDA. It's no concern of yours, ma'am.

ROBERT. But it's my concern, as you're in my house. What right have you to set up an inquisition ?

DOHDA. He knows. Come on, Ramillies, and get it over.

RAMILLIES. Well, to save trouble—

ROBERT. I don't see why you should be coerced.

RAMILLIES. No, no ! I'm quite willing. I've already told him all I can, but if he wants to hear it again, well, I don't really mind, (To DOHDA) But you'll have to be quick. I've no intention of sitting down to some endless, pointless debate.

DOHDA. Maybe I'll be too quick.

RAMILLIES *goes into the bedroom, and* DOHDA *closes the door behind him.* RAMILLIES *sits down and speaks with an assumption of confidence.*

RAMILLIES. What is it you want ?

DOHDA. You got to help me out with something I been studying.

DOHDA *walks past him to the bedside table where he had left his book ; and stands for a moment or two, turning the pages to find his reference.*

In the sitting-room, SUSAN, *returning to the small table, sits down and resumes her game of Patience.*

ROBERT. Now what do you make of that ?

SUSAN. Poor Mr. Ramillies. He's got something on his conscience, hasn't he ?

ROBERT. But the way that other fellow's behaving — do you think I should have been firmer with him ?

SUSAN. You couldn't, without starting a very vulgar row. And the front door is still fastened.

ROBERT. Yes, I know. Susan, I'm getting worried !

SUSAN. I keep thinking about poor Audrey. An alligator in the house must be just as embarrassing as Sergeant Dohda.

ROBERT, *making an impatient gesture, sits in the chair close to Door* 2.

In the bedroom, RAMILLIES, *watching* DOHDA *with suppressed nervousness, has perceived that it is his book — his book about Albania — that* DOHDA *is studying.*

RAMILLIES. Have you been reading my book ?

DOHDA. If you spill the soup in cold print, I guess it's there for anyone to read.

RAMILLIES. But you must have understanding ! A book should never be read by people incapable of understanding it.

DOHDA. Then why don't you write good English ? Take a slant at that, and tell me what it means if it don't mean what it says.

RAMILLIES. But that's a poem.

DOHDA. So what ?

RAMILLIES. Well, a poem more often describes a state of mind or an emotion than some actual occurrence.

DOHDA. You mean, poetry don't give you the low-down ? If a guy writes poetry, that's just an alibi ?

RAMILLIES. That's a travesty of what I said. But poetry—

DOHDA. Maybe it's this, and maybe it's that. All right ! And who cares ? But right here it's about some guy that's been sleeping with Draga my daughter !

RAMILLIES. What do you know about it ? You know nothing about poetry, nothing about symbolism—

DOHDA. Maybe I don't, but I know plenty about lugs like you that promote a dame, and then give her the dust-off when they've had everything from A to Izzard ! I want to know about Draga my daughter, if she's gone home in a box, and who did it, and where.

RAMILLIES. We've discussed all this before. Must we go back to the beginning again ?

DOHDA. You flim-flammed me, you played me for a sucker the last time, with that smooth talk of yours about her and you being only buddies together ; but if you want to cover up all the goona-goona in your life, mister, you ought to keep your trap shut and not write poetry about it. Now come clean, will you ? Where's Draga, and what did you do to her ?

RAMILLIES *(shouting).* I've got nothing more to tell you!

DOHDA. Well, that's too bad. But you got time to change your mind — if you take it on high.

DOHDA, *with his quick action, produces his pistol and points it at* RAMILLIES's *stomach; who, alarmed but not excessively —for he finds the threat incredible — backs slowly away.*

In the sitting-room ROBERT, *roused by the louder voices within, has risen and moved towards Door* 2. *He speaks to* SUSAN, *and immediately after enters the bedroom.*

ROBERT. They're going too far. I won't put up with it. *(In the bedroom, to* DOHDA) Now look here ! You tried that once before, and once was plenty. Put down

that pistol ! I won't have you behaving like that in my house !

DOHDA. You go lay an egg, brother. I'm skinning this cat.

ROBERT. Oh, don't talk like an idiot — and give me that pistol before there's an accident.

DOHDA. Keep out of it, or I'll shoot the daylights into you.

SUSAN *(in the doorway).* Robert, oh Robert ! Let him alone.

ROBERT *(ignoring her, his temper rising).* You fool ! Do you realise the danger you're in ?

DOHDA. It looks to me like you're in the middle.

ROBERT. Do you understand that if you shoot me you'll go, inevitably and without hope of reprieve, to the gallows ? Do you understand that there's law in this country, and the penalty for death is death again ?

DOHDA. There needn't be no funny business if you go easy !

ROBERT. If your finger trembles, if you get more frightened than you are already, and your hand twitches, then six weeks from now, as sure as night follows day, you'll see the black cap on a Judge's head and think of rope — rope round your neck ! — and every night you'll dream of rope till the morning comes when you're marched out of your cell, and before they put a cloth over your eyes you'll see the gallows in front of you, and a rope dangling in the air that'll look as stiff as a rod when it takes your weight. That's the danger you're in.

DOHDA *(who has listened with growing perturbation).*

Ah, turn it off, mister! For God's sake, turn it *off.* What was I doing ? I wasn't doing nothing wrong.

ROBERT. You're already guilty of technical assault, and if I cared to give you in charge—

DOHDA. You can't do that. I was only arguing with the guy !

ROBERT. With a pistol in your hand.

DOHDA. Ah, that's nothing !

He makes a movement to return it to the bolster.

ROBERT. No, not there. Give it to me.

DOHDA. No, sir, I couldn't do it. It's Government property, this rod.

ROBERT. If there's an accident with it, you'll go to the gallows. You'd better let me have it.

DOHDA. Well, if that's what you want—

ROBERT *takes the pistol, looks at the sajety-eatch, and puts it in his pocket.*

SUSAN. Robert darling, I shall never doubt your word again.

ROBERT. Now sit down, Dohda — over there. Before you go, I've got something to say to you.

DOHDA. You got no cause to be tough with me. *He's* the guy that started things : him that was playing house with Draga my daughter, and stopped her clock when he got tired !

RAMILLIES. I've put up with this for long enough—

ROBERT. You're partly responsible for the trouble. I want an explanation from you too.

RAMILLIES. Haven't I given my explanation ?

SUSAN. Yes, of course. You mustn't go too far, Robert.

ROBERT. If I want your opinion, I'll ask for it. I'm in charge here, and I'm going to clear up this business once and for all.

DOHDA. That's talking turkey ! I'm right with you, mister !

ROBERT. Quiet, you. You'll speak when you're told to—

DOHDA. I was coming in on your side ! You give him the works, and you and me can string together all the way.

RAMILLIES. He can tell you nothing ! He's got nothing to contribute but prejudice, vicious and irresponsible prejudice !

SUSAN. Robert, you mustn't let yourself be carried away by excitement. Don't, for heaven's sake, make things *more* uncomfortable !

ROBERT *(loud and angry).* Will you be quiet ?

SUSAN. Oh, Robert, I'm so frightened you make things worse ! Surely it's more sensible to wait till morning, and then everything may solve itself—

RAMILLIES. I'm coming to the end of my tether, I warn you ! I won't be cross-examined by you ! I can't stand any more of it ! I can't !

DOHDA. You can depend on me. You roast him, mister, you make him sweat, and I'll sit quiet as the grave. He'll sing all right, he'll crack wide open !

ROBERT. Quiet, I say ! I want silence ! *(He bangs his fist on the bedside table, and the unexpected forcefulness of his manner at last impresses the others, who fall silent and remain quiet?)* That's better ; and I want no interruption. — Now, Ramillies ; you're the source of all this unpleasantness — not wholly by intention, I admit that — but your association with the girl Draga was the beginning of it. I know nothing of her except what you told in your book, and what I've learnt to-night. Apparently she herself was not averse to violence. If that magazine-story is true, she killed over a score of men in battle ; and violence has a habit of attracting violence. Sergeant Dohda, who claims to be her father, believes that you killed her, and because his suspicion has become a burden to me — and I've endured it long enough — I want to know the truth. Did you or did you not kill the girl?

There is silence for a couple of seconds before RAMILLIES *replies.* FLORA, *alarmed by the noisy discussion, has come in from the kitchen, and stands anxiously in the doorway of Door* 2. *When* RAMILLIES *speaks it is, at first, in the voice of utter exhaustion.*

RAMILLIES. Yes, I did.

DOHDA (on *his feet at once).* You rat !

FLORA. No, no ! That's not the truth !

ROBERT. Sit down, Dohda. *(To* FLORA) What do you know about it ?

FLORA. He's not that sort of a man ! I've known him for ten years, and — oh, he's a good man.

ROBERT. That may be so; we haven't heard everything yet. Do you want to go into details, Ramillies ?

RAMILLIES. You had better hear the whole story now. No, not the whole of it; that's the story of a campaign. We were together all the time, going about the country, and I fell in love with her, though love was forbidden. She had no feeling for me, no feeling for anything but war. She enjoyed it, I hated it. But I hoped that some day she would change — I was in love — and when I got orders to return to Italy I tried to persuade her to come with me. I was desperate to get away, the mountains were a nightmare, I had pain all the time gnawing at my belly, and the squalor of life was unendurable ; but I couldn't bear to leave her behind. I was living in torment, but to live without seeing her would be hell itself. I tried to persuade her — it was the night we were attacking the village, we were waiting to go forward — and I told her I couldn't live without her. Well, it wasn't true, of course. I'm still alive, aren't I ?

ROBERT. What happened then ?

RAMILLIES. I was in great pain that night — I was ill — and she laughed at me. We got up, and went in to attack. She looked round, and I saw again how lovely she was. There was nothing in the world more beautiful, but her beauty was destructive. And then she laughed at me — jeered at me ! — and because she was the only thing in the world I loved, I shot her.

There is a little pause before DOHDA *speaks. His face is contorted with gritf his voice breaks — and then strengthens suddenly and is loud with honest indignation.*

DOHDA. That was Draga my daughter. . . . And was she a bitch !

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE ONE

*

ACT III

SCENE II

The same as before. About forty minutes later.

In both rooms the blinds have been drawn up curtains pulled back, and windows opened to a pleasant sunlit morning, with a view of tree-tops and in the distance a silver barrage-balloon.

The bedroom is empty. In the sitting-room RAMILUES, *at the small table on which stand the decanter — nearly empty now — a couple of glasses and a siphon, is gloomily drinking whisky and soda, when* FLORA, *carrying a jug of milk, comes in by Door I.*

FLORA. Now don't be making a fool of yourself, Mr. Ramillies ! You can't stand the whisky — you never could — and to be drinking it now, when your stomach's out of order in any case, is just asking for trouble. You ought to know better !

RAMILLIES. Don't they drug the condemned man before he's led out to what waits for him ?

FLORA. And who's the condemned man ? It's a wicked thing to talk rubbish like that, and to imagine rubbish too ! A girl like she was — well, you've got to be reasonable, and someone was bound to shoot her sooner or later. It's a pity it hadn't been sooner, if you ask me.

RAMILLIES. You see, it was *because* I was in love with her—

FLORA. There's no one asking you the why or the wherefore of it. It did you no good being in love with

her, and it'll do you no good thinking about her. Put that whisky away and have a glass of milk.

RAMILLIES. No, let me finish it.

FLORA. You'll suffer for it if you do.

RAMILLIES. Don't I deserve to ?

FLORA. Oh, why will you be talking like that? There's nobody wants you to suffer. If you only knew what some of us are feeling. *(Through Door i* SERGEANT DOHDA *comes in. His demeanour shows — though not obtrusively — that he has drunk a good deal of whisky during the night; his expression is worried, and one hand is pressed to his stomach.* FLORA, *a little upset by the interruption, pours a glass of milk for* RAMILLIES.) Now drink this, and stop your worrying. — And is it yourself, Sergeant ? And have you got the front door open ?

DOHDA. Sure, it's open. It was tough, too, getting those screws out.

FLORA. It was you that screwed them in, was it not ? But what's the matter with you ?

DOHDA. I'm feeling sick to the stomach.

FLORA. Oh, for God's sake, are you another? You're not going to tell me, are you, that you've got a duodenal ulcer too ?

DOHDA. And why shouldn't I ? I guess I've had my ulcer longer than anyone in this house ! I got my ulcer way back in 1930, in the Depression ! — You had yours as long as that, mister ?

RAMILLIES. No.

DOHDA. Just what I told you ! I got a very, very deep respect for you, sister, but you got no right to beef about

my insides. Give me a glass of milk, will you ?

He sits down beside RAMILLIES, *without taking off his helmet, and* FLORA *pours another glass.*

FLORA. I might just as well be a nurse in a sick children's hospital. *(She retires to Door I, and before going out speaks again,,)* I don't know what men are coming to ! You get no fun out of life, and you make no sense of it either ! You cannot live at peace together, so it seems , and it does not seem that you enjoy going to war. You choose the wrong women, and you've all got nervous stomachs. If you ask me, I think men are over-rated !

She goes out with a hang of the door, and DOHDA *sips his milk.*

DOHDA. What she don't realise is we got a conscience. It's the big, big difference between a guy and a dame. Yes, sir ! And whenever my conscience begins to operate in a big way, I get its number right here. It registers in my ulcer every time ! The day, for instance, when I give my former wife the brush-off: I got a pain in the gut that was something to shout about ! She wasn't no better than a tramp, and she got what was coming ; but still I was kind of sorry for what I did, and that was conscience. Yes, sir.

RAMILLIES *(who has been listening to his own thoughts rather than to* DOHDA). They say confession is good for the soul, but I'm not so sure of it. I feel like an outcast — homeless, penniless, at everybody's mercy — since I told you the truth.

DOHDA. No, son, you got no cause to feel that way. I been through it, same as you, and what we both got wise to is that a dame with a cute face and a swell lay-out can be as mean and low as the ring round an orphan's

bath-tub. I went and married a chippy, and you fell for a chicken out of cold storage. Both of them had all the fixings, and that was all they had. Maybe in some ways we made the grade, but when it come to dames, we sure took a dive.

RAMILLIES. It's the universal mockery. I wonder if hatred isn't more innocent ? Hatred never caused half the pain that love has given. If we loved our neighbours as we're told to, there'd be universal bloodshed and every town would be a shambles. With hatred you can keep your reason, but love turns reason to despair. There's nothing deadlier in the poison-cupboard than love.

DOHDA, And it sure is hell when you get an ulcer on the side. (RAMILLIES *drinks half bis glass of* milki.) Say, do you like this stuff ?

RAMILLIES. No, not much.

DOHDA. It kills me. But I made a discovery once, that none of the doctors know about ; it comes a whole lot better if you spike it with a little good liquor. You try it and see. *(He reaches for the decanter; but* RAMILLIES *has drunk the last of the* wii'jfy.) Well, for Pete's sake ! Someone's gone and killed the soldier !

RAMILLIES. I did. I don't drink at all as a rule, but when I do, I don't put back the cork. Drink's the only cure for misery. When a man's stripped naked by shame and disgrace, drink's the only thing that'll give him clothes again ; and Dutch courage is better than no courage at all.

DOHDA. Sonny boy, I like you better and better all the time ! Let's be honest about it : you and me's just Nature's buddies. — Now listen : when I seen you first,

I thought you was lower than a snake's belly. When I thought there'd been shenanigans between you and my daughter Draga, and then when you'd had plenty, you pull a gat, and *blooey-blooey I* that's Draga gone for a ride — well, at that moment, sonny boy, I hated your guts. But then I seen you got a conscience, then you told us all about your ulcer, and I knew that you and me were going to get together.

RAMILLIES. You've got a big heart, Dohda. You've got the great natural virtue : you're magnanimous.

DOHDA. Why, sure ! I'm a democrat, I'm an American citizen !

RAMILLIES. It is a fine thing to be. But don't let it occupy your mind to the exclusion of everything else. You said, a minute ago, that you knew how to improve the depressing taste of milk.

DOHDA. You need to spike it, son. And I got a little something on the hip that'll maybe do the trick. *(From his hip-pocket he pulls a silver flask of enormous size, and generously Jills up* RAMILLIES''s *glass and his* own.) It's good stuff, and you don't need to be scared of it. I'd a couple of shots before I come in, when I was pulling them screws out of the front door ; and I sure needed it after all we been through together. Well, down the hatch, son.

RAMILLIES. Your extremely good health, Sergeant Dohda.

DOHDA. Nice and smooth, isn't it ?

RAMILLIES. It's a great improvement, a very great improvement. I had no idea that milk could be made so palatable.

DOHDA. It just takes a little Scotch to build it up.

They sit for a minute or so, slowly and appreciatively drinking.

In the bedroom : ROBERT *comes in through Door 3, carrying a glass of water and the hottle of medicinal powder, at which he looks with distaste.* SUSAN"s *voice is heard from within, her hare arm protrudes from the doorway.*

SUSAN. You've forgotten the spoon, Robert.

ROBERT. The bottle's nearly empty.

SUSAN *(unseen).* I don't suppose there's any whisky left either.

ROBERT. It's more than you bargain for, when your guests drink all your whisky *and* all your stomach-powder.

SUSAN *(unseen).* People drink anything nowadays, darling.

She closes the door. ROBERT *mixes and drinks his draught, and lies down on the hed to doze ; and presently jails asleep.*

In the sitting-room.

DOHDA. When you were telling that story about Draga, about going in to attack that village, and her laughing, it sure made me think. It was just the very same way I shot my God-damned wife. She was a looker, all right, but she was no good. She was a bed-bunny from the start, and nothing would stop her, and still I was that way about her. I used to talk and argue with her, though I knew it didn't serve no purpose, and that last night, before I blew her lights out, I remember telling her it wasn't just a personal matter between me

and her, but the way she was going on was all wrong. It wasn't ethical ! So then she turns and gives me the big laugh — and she fell off the hooks with a bump*

RAMILLIES (wio *by* HOW is *plainly affected by drink, though his speech is unimpaired).* A sensitive observer whose emotions have been deeply engaged, suddenly perceives the ordinary coarseness of humanity — a psychological trigger is released, and there's another crime of violence, We murderers are more finely and delicately adjusted than our victims. You and I, Sergeant Dohda, are not so much malefactors as martyrs. Martyrs of circumstance.

DOHDA. We just didn't get the breaks : that was it.

RAMILLIES. You are a sensitive and intelligent man.— What was your profession ?

DOHDA. I used to work for some of those big steel corporations, and coal corporations. I was one of their strong-arm guys.

RAMILLIES. And what was the nature of your work ?

DOHDA. Well, those big corporations, they're always having trouble with the unions, see ? You get these agitators, these Reds, coming in and talking to the working stiffs, and telling them they didn't ought to work so long, and ought to get more potatoes in addition ,* so then there's a strike, see ? But the employers, they don't lie down to it all at once. They hire some other outfit, they're maybe scabs, they call them, and they need us strong-arm guys to protect them ; and now and again, just for a bonus, we meet up with one of these Reds, these agitators, and bust him on the snoot.

RAMILLIES. You were, in cold fact, a strike-breaker ?

DOHDA. That's what they call it, son. It's tough sledding in places like Pittsburg and Scranton, but you've got to have them if you're going to have democracy.

RAMILLIES. What precisely do you mean by democracy?

DOHDA. Well, for Pete's sake! An educated guy like you ought to know about democracy!

RAMILLIES. Yes, by God. So ought we all. But do we?

His philosophic doubt is interrupted by the telephone, and DOHDA, *after looking round to see if anyone is coming to answer it, gets up and goes to it himself.*

DOHDA *(on the telephone).* Hullo. . . . Yeah, this is Mr. Lawn's apartment. . . . No, ma'am, I'm not Mr. Lawn. I'm a friend of his. I'm an old family friend, I been here all night. . . . What's that? . . . Well, for Pete's sake, but that's terrible, that's just terrible. . . . And he's hammering at the door right now? . . . Why, no, ma'am, you did right. . . . Sure. I'll come myself. . . . I'll say it's serious, it's the darnedest thing I ever heard.

SUSAN, *from the bathroom, has come into the bedroom by Door* j, *tying a dressing-gown that is an attractive feminine counterpart of* ROBERT'S, *and pausing only to ask him,* "That was the telephone, wasn't it?"—*to which he, asleep, makes no reply—goes into the sitting-room, where, a moment before,* FLORA *had appeared through Door l.*

SUSAN. Who is it, Sergeant?

DOHDA. Hush up.

SUSAN. But I want to know !

DOHDA. Pull your tongue in, will you ?

SUSAN. Well, really !

DOHDA *(on the telephone).* Ah, keep your pants on. That wasn't you I was talking to. ... Why, sure, I'm all hepped up, I'm coming right along. . . . But say, wait a minute. I don't know your address. . . . And the top floor ? I got it. ... No, ma'am, I don't forget an address. . . . And just one little thing: don't say nothing to scare him, I want to catch him right there and bust him on the snoot. . . . Yes, ma'am, I'm on my way ! *(He puts down the receiver, stands up, and looks round, puffed-up with a pleasant excitement and his own importance.* FLORA *and* SUSAN *are a little anxious, a little* pulled; *and* RAMILLIES, *now hlandly drunk, has been listening with perfect indifference.)* And you folk have been kidding me that this England's a law-abiding country !

SUSAN. But what's wrong ? Who was on the telephone ?

DOHDA. A dame that says she's a friend of yours, called Mrs. Farrafield.

SUSAN. Audrey !

DOHDA. And this very instant she's holding out, in her own apartment, against some big hoodlum — one of these Reds, an agitator ! — and he's hammering on the door, and clamouring to get in and shake her down and beat her can off!

SUSAN. Oh no, Sergeant ! I do assure you, you're making a mistake—

DOHDA. No, siree ! I been talking to her. I know what she said. " There's an agitator outside my door," she says—

SUSAN. No, no ! I can explain everything—

RAMILLIES. You're too late, too late. The old war-horse has smelt powder.

SUSAN. If you would listen to me for one minute—

FLORA. Let him go, Mrs. Lawn, if he wants to.

DOHDA. I'm on my way ! I've beaten the tar out of these Reds in Pittsburg and Scranton; I can knock 'em for a loop in London ! You wait till I get my paddies on that little old agitator. Oh boy, oh boy ! This is where I go to fight for democracy ! *(He goes out, by Door I, with a triumphant flourish of his night-stick.)* So long, folks ! I'll be seeing you !

FLORA *looks out, hears the front door slam, and closes Door l.*

FLORA. Well, that's him away.

SUSAN. But, Flora ! The agitator — Mrs. Farrafield's agitator — isn't at all what Sergeant Dohda thinks he is.

FLORA. He's got drink taken, Mrs. Lawn. I thought he might be making a mistake of some sort, but it did seem a way of getting rid of him; and so long as Mrs. Farrafield doesn't let him in, she'll come to no harm.

SUSAN. But the agitator may. He's only five feet long, Flora, and most of that is a tail.

FLORA. What you're needing, Mrs. Lawn, is a good stiff dram ; and then you should be going to your bed

SUSAN. There's no more whisky in the house, and even the stomach-powder has all been drunk.

RAMILLIES, *increasingly somnolent, has been unperturbed by the excitement of* SERGEANT DOHDA'J *leave-taking. Now he reveals, on the table with in tbe sbelter of bis arms, tbe* SERGEANT'S *forgotten flask.*

RAMILLIES. Here is the bounty of America : America, the arsenal of democracy,

FLORA. Well, he drank ours to begin with, so we can drink some of his now. For it all came from Scotland in the first place.

Sbe takes anotber glass from the sideboard, and gives SUSAN *a long drink.*

SUSAN. Mrs. Farrafield — that's Audrey — used to keep her agitator in the bath, Flora.

FLORA. You can tell me about him some other time, Mrs. Lawn. There's Mr. Ramillies to think of first.

RAMILLIES *gets up, sleepily, and staggers sligbtly.*

RAMILLIES. It's time, high time, that I also take my leave.

FLORA. Dinna be daft, man! Ye canna go out like that!

SUSAN. No, of course not. There's no need for you to go.

RAMILLIES. Except good manners. That's the dire necessity.

SUSAN. A good long sleep is what you want. — In the spare room, Flora.

RAMILLIES. My home, my spiritual home, is a spare room. But before I go—

FLORA. Now you'll come with me, Mr. Ramillies, and you won't make a fuss. You've said plenty in the last few hours.

RAMILLIES. A child, a good child, wouldn't go to bed without saying his prayers, and I can't go without saying my apology. I was once a poet, Mrs. Lawn.

SUSAN. You *are* a poet, Mr. Ramillies. A wonderful poet.

RAMILLIES. No, no, no, no. That's done with now. No more poetry, but only an apology. My humble apology. *(He sits down again, on a sofa, and composes himself for sleep.)* Good-night, sweet ladies. Good-night, good-night.

FLORA. You doited fool ! You drunken stirk ! You canna go to sleep there ! Get up, and I'll take you to your bed !

RAMILLIES. Is that Flora ?

FLORA. And who else do you think it would be ?

RAMILLIES. Flora, dear Flora, will look after me.

FLORA *(shaking him, but to no effect).* I tell't him he shouldna be drinking. He canna stand it, and he never could !

SUSAN. He's quite comfortable there. Let him stay and sleep it off.

FLORA. And have Mr. Lawn come in and find him like that ? No, indeed, that wouldn't do at all. But don't you worry, you mustn't fash yourself, for I'll get him through. *(She kneels down by the sofa, and pulling* RAMILLIES *towards her, gets him over her shoulder in a fireman's lift, and rises with him. When she turns round again, her mouth is quivering, and her cheeks are wet with tears.)* It's sorry I am, for I didna want you to see him like this. It's no like him at all ! There's that much good in him,

when you get to know him. There's a hundred times more good in him than in all those bloody upright folk that never give themselves away !

SUSAN. Oh, dear Flora ! I *am* so sorry. I had no idea you were fond of him.

FLORA. No. I told no one, for there was no use my telling *I (She carries him to the door —* Door *I — and after opening it, turns to speak again?)* But it's not me that would have said no to him, like that damned fool in Albania !

She goes out, and SUSAN, *closing the door behind her, comes forward again, much distressed.*

SUSAN. Oh, how unfortunate ! Poor Flora ! How sad life is. ... *(She stands for a moment, perplexed and tearful, and then she goes into the bedroom to confide in* ROBERT.) Robert! Wake up, Robert!

ROBERT. What's the matter now ?

SUSAN. Something really dreadful. It's poor Flora now.

ROBERT. What's happened ? They haven't murdered her, have they ?

SUSAN. It's almost as bad. She's in love with him. With Ramillies.

ROBERT. And what's wrong with that ?

SUSAN. Oh, Robert, you must understand ! I don't say it wouldn't be suitable — she's a splendid woman, and I couldn't be fonder of her — but it isn't exactly probable that Mr. Ramillies is in love with her.

ROBERT. No, I don't suppose he is. But she'll get over it, won't she ?

SUSAN. Yes, I expect so. But it isn't a very pleasant process. (ROBERT, *still sleepy, yawns loudly, and* SUSAN *shakes him impatiently.')* Wake up, Robert, I've got something to tell you *I* I've been thinking things over — very seriously, Robert — and I've just made a discovery that's going to change my whole life. I've just begun to realise how *important* we are.

ROBERT. It isn't very widely recognised.

SUSAN. But it should be ! Every newspaper in the country ought to announce that we've lived together for seven years, and though we quarrel twice a week we've never even tried to shoot each other !

ROBERT. Well, as civilised people—

SUSAN. And doesn't that make us important ? To be civilised is an extremely rare distinction nowadays.

ROBERT. It's less common than it used to be.

SUSAN. And to put up with other people's faults without shooting them or telephoning for help all the time — for me to put up with your bad temper, for you to put up \vith my untidiness — oh, Robert, when I think of us, in comparison with other people, we seem almost saintly !

SUSAN *looks for a moment as rapt as any saint; and* ROBERT, *seeing a splendid vision of himself, is perceptibly gratified. . . . And upon this scene of mutual satisfaction there descends the final*

CURTAIN

TO MEET THE MACGREGORS

A VARIATION, WITH SONGS,
ON A THEME BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

DRAMATIS PERSONS

Diana Vernon

Sir Frederick Vernon, *her father*

Francis Osbaldistone, *her cousin*

Rashleigh Osbaldistone, *another cousin*

Mr, Owen, *Head Clerk in Osbaldistone and Company*

Andrew Fairservice, *a gardener*

Bailie Nicol Jarvie

Mattie, *his housekeeper*

Captain Thornton, *commanding a Company of the Guards*

Sergeant, *a Sergeant in the Company*

Rob Roy MacGregor, *a Highland gentleman*

Helen MacGregor, *his wife*

Ronald, *his son*

Donald, *another son*

Angus, *the youngest son*

Morag, *a daughter of Rob Roy, and Leader of the MacGregor Girls*

The MacGregor Girls, *a Chorus*

The Seer, *a Highland seer*

Soldiers, *the soldiers of Captain Thornton s Company*

NOTE

All but one of the airs are in James Johnson's *The Scots Musical Museum* (Edinburgh, 1787).

The name of the air, and its number in the *Museum,* is given in each case, except that of "Blue Bonnets," which can be found elsewhere.

ACT I

SCENE. *The library at Osbaldistone Hall. It should be furnished, as well as may be, to represent a country gentleman's library in the early eighteenth century. At each side of the stage there is (not too conspicuously) a draught-screen, and a principal feature of the scene is a full-length portrait of a gentleman in a handsome and very solid frame. Somewhere, high up on a book-shelf or a bracket, there is a stuffed owl.*

As the curtain rises the MACGREGOR GIRLS, *in the costume of domestic service, are discovered at work, dusting and so forth. Their leader sings :*

"Jenny Nettles", *S.M.M.*, No. 52

Happy housemaids all are we —
Table maidens, parlour maidens —
Dusting, sweeping, shaking rugs,
All in merry cadence.
Domestic service isn't dull,
Though silly creatures flout it ;
When girls like us come doon the stair,
There's nothing dull about it !

Busy housemaids such as we
(Rub it, scrub it, dust it, shake it!)
Have no time for discontent,
Life is what we make it.
Once a month we've evenings out,
We don't care, it doesn't matter —
The lads they all come courting here,
And our evenings in are better.

Rise at six and light the fire,
Cook the porridge, eggs and bacon,
Take the master up his tea,
Give his bed a shaking.
Hearty meals at noon and night,
We get both, we're like the gentry,
And a glass of port at ten o'clock
With the butler in his pantry.

Happy housemaids all are we,
Table maidens, parlour maidens,
Washing, drying, breaking plates,
All in merry cadence.
We like domestic service here,
Cooking, too, it doesn't bore us,
But when we're married we'll retire,
While our husbands do it for us !

At the conclusion of the song they go off, right, and ANDREW FAIRSERVICE *enters, left, followed by* RONALD *and* DONALD, *who carry a large old-jasbioned trunk boldly painted with the name* OSBALDISTONE & CO.

ANDREW. Now, canny, lads, canny. Tak' good care of the trunk. Set it doon over there. A piece farther back, where there'll be less chance of folk stumbling and fumbling with it. For its contents are valuable. Lord save us all, there's naebody here forbye mysel' that kens the hale value of them. But I'll tell you this much, that if it werena for the trunk and what's in it, there'd be no play the night! (To *audience)* And that's a fact, ladies and gentlemen. In that trunk lie all the deeds, documents, stocks, shares, bills, and bonds of the great London business firm of Osbaldistone and Company, E.G.4. And now they've been stolen and

brought here ! They're a gey careless, fusionless lot, they English : aye losing things, aye forgetting things They're that careless, it fair dumbfoonders you. *(Here* RONALD, *sitting beside* DONALD, *with their backs to the trunk, begins to play a little spring on his chanter.)* Wheest, man, wheest. Can ye no see that I'm talking ? — These puir lads, ladies and gentlemen, are just a pair of daft, ignorant Hieland stots. Ignorant bodies, ignorant.

RONALD. We are Hieland gentlemen, whatever. We may be ignorant of many things that you are acquainted with, Mr. Fairservice, but we are naturally gifted with an appreciation of life of which you are quite incapable.

DONALD. With your duller perceptions you cannot see that you are in danger of talking too much, and thereby boring this very distinguished audience, who have paid good money to come and see the play.

ANDREW. Am I no telling them aboot the play ? If you kent your business as well as I ken mine, you'd have mair claes and better claes to cover your great hairy shanks and your muckle naked hurdies ! — Ladies and gentlemen, these twa Hieland callants are the sons of a man called MacGregor, who's mair widely known by the name of Rob Roy. He's no' the sort of man you'd care to introduce to a decent, well-conducted, Presbyterian family—

RONALD. He is a great gentleman !

DONALD. He has a genius for life, moreover, that you poor Lowlanders will never learn, and to us, his sons, he has transmitted his aptitude in the several arts and graces of life, such as music and dancing. Ronald my brother, let us show these poor people, who must be weary of listening to that man, how we are accustomed

to dance the sword-dance in the clachan of Aberfoyle, and on the adjacent mountain-side.

RONALD. It will be a pleasure to accompany you. There, on the wall, is a pair of very good swords for you.

ANDREW *(confidentially to the audience, while* DONALD *takes down the swords and arranges them for the dance).* They're gey and ill tae manage, these Hieland folk. They're no tae be driven, you must just humour them as best you can. They're bairnly creatures. But just have patience and wait till they've finished their bit ploy ; it'll no' be long. *(While* RONALD *plays on his chanter,* DONALD, *with great skill and tremendous spirit, dances a sword-dance : and* ANDREW *watches sourly.*)* Even if it's no' bonny, it's useful. It keeps them fine and warm, there's no denying that. — Now be quiet, lads, like good loons, while I tell these folk aboot the play. It was Sir Walter Scott, you ken, that invented this notion aboot Rob Roy and the MacGregors, the daft callants, but he didna write it in precisely the same way as we're going to present it the night; for these are difficult times, and nowadays we just need to tak' things as they come. It's a grand play, though, you can be sure of that. There's a trunk full of documents over there that'll stir up trouble wherever they go — and that's why they're here, just to stir up trouble — and there's a lassie, that's the heroine of the play, a wild bit lassie called Diana Vernon, that'll make all you young folk just loup in your seats, and all you puir auld bald-heided creatures, with your wives sitting doucely beside you, will groan in your hearts to think of the days of auld langsyne, and to realise that all that kind of thing is past, long past, for the likes of you and me. Just wait till you see her.

DIANA'S VOICE *(off).* Andrew! Where are you, Andrew ?

ANDREW. What's the matter noo ?

DIANA'S VOICE *(approaching).* Come and help me, Andrew.

DIANA *enters, handsomely attired in a green riding-habit and a plumed hat.*

DIANA. Oh, there you are. Dear Andrew, my dresser's very busy talking to a young man about her daughter. I can't think what they're saying, but she's far too occupied to attend to me. Will you fasten me up the back, Andrew ?

She turns, and exposes her spine and a gaping dress.

ANDREW *(to audience).* I'm a gardener to trade. I'm a good gardener, and if any of you would offer me a place where I would hear pure doctrine, and hae a free coo's grass, and a hoose and a yeard, and ten pounds of annual fee, and where there's nae lady aboot the place to coont the apples, I'd be muckle indebted to you. But forbye being a gardener, I'm a decent sort of body that's aye ready to obleege his neighbours, and that's why I consented to help them oot with this play aboot Rob Roy. And what's the result ?

DIANA. I'm getting cold, Andrew.

ANDREW. Me, that's a gardener like Adam was before me, like Adam before me am turned into a household serf!

ANDREW *buttons up the dress, and while he is busy at her back she sings:*

"The Gallant Weaver", *S.M.M.*, No. 389

Buttons and laces, brooches and strings,
Are necess'ry all for a lady ;
How she must cream and bedizen her face
For a Hallowe'en party or May-day !
Powder and lipstick, ribbons and rings,
And perfume to make it a gay day —
What a lot has to be done to attire
A pretty young, witty young lady !

None of us may, nor the young nor the old,
The virtuous girl or the shady,
Ever walk out till we're dressed for parade,
For *tbis* day perhaps is our hey-day !
Garters and gloves and flounces and frills,
And scent for a hip-hip-hooray day —
Then don't you admire, in her smartest attire,
A pretty young, witty young lady ?

DIANA. Thank you so much, Andrew. Let me know when I'm wanted, won't you ? *(To audience)* Do forgive me for this intrusion. We don't know what to expect nowadays, do we ?

She goes out.

RONALD. A very beautiful lady is that one.

DONALD. She must be a Hieland lady surely. Everything that is beautiful comes from the Hielands.

ANDREW. Now see here, my billies ! I'm getting tired of all these interruptions. I've got my work to do, and I'll be thankful if you'll keep your gabbing tongues quiet till I've done it.

RONALD. That is no way to speak to a gentleman whatever.

DONALD. You would not dare to speak so in our own country, Mr. Fairservice. With a sword in my hand I would make you dance if you did.

RONALD. With a bullet from my gun I can bring down the lordliest stag that ever trod Ben Scratchy !

DONALD. With a single shot I can kill a black-cock in the middle of the sky. Like this, Mr. Fairservice !

Taking a musket from tbe wall, be points it at the stuffed owl, *and fires. Tbe owl jails.*

RONALD. That will learn you whatever.

DONALD. Come, Ronald. Let us go and look for the beautiful lady in the green dress.

They go out, following DIANA.

ANDREW. And that's the Hielanders for you I Oh, they're no' like you and me at all, but we've just got to put up with them. Well noo, I was telling you aboot the play, and there's the missing documents for one thing, and the next thing to say is that we're somewhat concerned with the Jacobite Rebellion, this being the year 1715 —you'll need to remember that — and Miss Diana, her in the green dress that wasna buttoned up the back, she's hot and strong for the cause. They're all like her, the Jacobites. They've all got their buttons undone, and looking for someone to fasten them up. Fusionless, that's the way of them. — And then there's a hero in the play, Mr. Frank Osbaldistone. He's half-English, and near as daft as the Jacobites himsel'. There's a bonny face on him, but an empty heid. A good complexion, but neither sense nor mense. Half an

Englishman and daft as a Jacobite, that's the hero, Mr. Frank, in a nutshell.

FRANK'S VOICE *(off).* Andrew !

ANDREW. Weel?

FRANK'S VOICE. Andrew, what are you doing there ?

FRANK OSBALDISTONE *Comes in.*

ANDREW. Naething. Naething ava.

FRANK. I heard you talking.

ANDREW. I was just having a crack with these folk oot here. They're auld friends of mine.

FRANK. You weren't discussing my affairs ?

ANDREW. Na, na. Naething like that. Just a friendly crack aboot the crops, and the weather, and the way of the world.

FRANK. We're leaving early in the morning. We're going to Scotland.

ANDREW. Do you tell me that, man ?

FRANK. You'll have to pack for me.

ANDREW. Just SO.

FRANK. And remember, you must be discreet.

ANDREW. You can lippen on me.

FRANK. Not a word to anyone about my intentions.

ANDREW. Not a cheep.

FRANK. Have you seen Miss Vernon ?

ANDREW. She was here a wee minute ago.

FRANK. I cannot leave without speaking to her. Oh, what a fever this infection of love has spread through my veins ! I have no peace by day, no sleep by night, for thinking of her. I know what madness it is to love her, and still I love. I know that she can never be mine — and still I love *I* She the most fervent of Jacobites, I a staunch Hanoverian — it is the very top of madness, and still I love. But there is a greater barrier than that between us, for her father — that portrait, Andrew, is of Miss Vernon's father.

ANDREW. And a Papist at that.

FRANK. Draw the curtain, Andrew. (ANDREW *draws a curtain that covers the portrait?)* I cannot bear to look at him. All fathers, in my experience, are inclined to be tyrannical, but he is the worst of all, for by his orders Diana must either marry her cousin Rashleigh, or retire into a convent. And Rashleigh is a traitor to his king, a crooked villain, a monster—

DIANA *comes in, hurriedly.*

DIANA. Frank, are you mad indeed ? How often have I told you that Rashleigh is dangerous ? He has his spies everywhere, and he himself comes and goes like a shadow in the forest. We never know where he is. Even now he may be within hearing ! And if he has indeed heard you speak of him as a villain, a crooked villain and a monster, he will never forgive you, Frank.

FRANK. I do not want his forgiveness. There is only one thing I crave, and that is your love, Diana.

DIANA. You are too familiar, Mr. Osbaldistone. I am, I confess, quite unconventional in my manners, frank of speech, a bold and friendly girl — far too modern for this absurd age that we are living in — but

there are limits which even I cannot permit you to overstep. You must not call me Diana,

FRANK. Andrew, you can go.

ANDREW. And that's all the thanks I get ! Go, he says, just when the action begins to get interesting. They've no consideration for a man's feelings, these high and mighty English folk. And if I hadna buttoned the lassie up the back, she wouldna be here at all. — Go, he says !

FRANK. Did you hear me, Andrew ?

ANDREW. I heard you.

FRANK. Then do what I tell you, and go.

ANDREW. That to me ! Me, to do what another man tells him to do ! Me, that's a good Scot and a gardener forbye. Who ever heard of a gardener that did what anyone tell't him to do ?

FRANK. Andrew.

ANDREW. Go on, I'm still hearing you.

FRANK. As we are leaving early in the morning, Andrew, you may want to make some small purchases before we go. Here is a guinea for you.

ANDREW. Isna' that the English for you all over ! They wound a body's feelings and then think they can repair the damage with their dirty gold ! — Ah weel, a guinea's aye a guinea, and I'd have gone for less than that. I didna expect mair than hauf a croon, to tell the truth. But they're wasteful, the English. Real wasteful.

ANDREW *goes OUt.*

FRANK. Diana — Miss Vernon, if you insist — I

cannot leave you without saying that I love you. That our love is impossible of fulfilment, I know too well. I know, because you have told me so, that there are insuperable obstacles to our marriage—

DIANA. Mr. Osbaldistone, pray ! You must not be so indelicate.

FRANK. Is it indelicate to speak of marriage ?

DIANA. When I am alone, without a father's protection — yes.

FRANK. Yet you make a boast of your unconventionality. You have shown, again and again, that you care nothing for all those petty restraints that make the society of most young ladies so dull, so foolish, and so tasteless. Your intelligence is bold, your thoughts are free. You ride daringly to hounds, and your mind is as daring as your horsemanship. Oh Diana, Diana, before I go, let me—

DIANA. No, Frank, you must not.

FRANK. Before I go, let me embrace you once.

DIANA. I beg you to restrain yourself. This passion is most unmanly.

FRANK. Unmanly ! I should have thought—

DIANA. Then you would have been wrong. Passion is most unmanly.

Here they sing a duet :

" 'Twas at the shining mid-day hour", *S.M.M.,* No. 519

FRANK. Love inspires my maddest fancy
To invite its instant fate,

Should love merely lift an eyebrow,
I become most passionate !

DIANA. Love should make a man most gentle,
Teach him courtesy and grace,
He must learn to be submissive,
Passion learn to keep its place.

FRANK. That is far from my opinion,
Love to me is hot as fire,
And that you should quickly quench it
Ought to be our joint desire.

DIANA. How ignoble ! How unmanly !
How uncouth, how very crude !
Rather than a selfish passion
I prefer my solitude.

FRANK. You, my dear, are much too timid —
Be as I am, unafraid !

DIANA. Don't forget the facts, my sweeting —
You're a man and I'm a maid I

FRANK. Let's be thankful for the diff'rence,
Nor deny our natural bliss —

DIANA. Yours the bliss but mine the burden,
There's the cruel antithesis.

FRANK. Darling, you are most ungenerous.

DIANA. Don't be stupid, darling, pray.

FRANK* Darling, let us both admit it —

DIANA. This is not our wedding-day !

BOTH. This is not our wedding-day !

DIANA. And now, before you go, Frank, let me warn

you once again to be cautious. Remember that my cousin Rashleigh is a most accomplished villain* Never under-rate him. He is a man—

FRANK. He is a scoundrel. A limping, crooked scoundrel.

DIANA. Hush, hush ! The walls of this old house are full of ears. Rashleigh himself may lie concealed not far away. Have you searched the room ?

FRANK. Of course I haven't.

DIANA. In times like these you cannot be too careful. Look behind that screen. — Oh, heavens, who are you ?

FRANK, *moving the draught-screen on the right, has revealed a man of magnificent appearance, dressed superbly in full Highland costume. In fact,* ROB ROY.

ROB. Well, well ! This is a very bad mistake you have made, Miss Diana. This is not my proper entrance at all. I was not supposed to come on till — well, till I was truly needed. In time of need you can always depend on Rob Roy. I'll turn up in the most unexpected places, without rhyme or reason, but just because it is my nature to be in the midst of trouble, and because it is my pleasure to be of help to my friends. For I am a Highland gentleman, Miss Vernon, and as such I have nothing but contempt for the ordinary rules of life, and disregard probability itself.

DIANA. Mr. MacGregor, I am sorry indeed for my clumsiness. I can only say, in my own excuse, that I was over-anxious for the safety of my cousin : you know my cousin, Mr. Frank Osbaldistone ?

ROB. We have met before, and we shall meet again.

FRANK. Let me add my apology to Miss Vernon's. I hope you will overlook my very foolish mistake.

ROB. Say no more, say no more. In the Highlands we are quite used to our friends making mistakes, and we have learnt to ignore them. And indeed — since I have been discovered — I will admit that I am glad of the opportunity to ask you a question. There are two young sons of mine, good boys, but not very witty, who came to this house, and I am anxious to have a word with them. Could you tell me where to find them ?

DIANA. Yes, indeed I can. They came to see me, not very long ago, and they looked so hungry that I asked them if they would like something to eat. I took them to the housekeeper's room, and I daresay they'll still be there.

ROB. In the housekeeper's room ?

DIANA. Come with me, and I'll show you the way. You may come too, Cousin Frank.

As thy go out at one side, RONALD *and* DONALD *appear cautiously at the other.* RONALD *crosses the room, makes sure that* ROB *and his companions have really gone, then signals to* DONALD, *who draws lack the curtain that covers the picture and reveals — in a striking attitude within the Jrame —* RASHLEIGH OSBALDISTONE. DONALD *places a chair for him, and he steps out.* DONALD *again draws the curtain.*

RONALD. He is a very clever gentleman, is Mr. Rashleigh.

RASHLEIGH. This is no time for idle compliments, and good-neighbour's conversation. Where is the trunk ?

DONALD. It is over there, Mr. Rashleigh.

RASHLEIGH. Good. You are good fellows, both of you. You know your business. Now open the trunk and put in these other documents. In this file there are the English Government's secret instructions to the Officers Commanding all garrisons in Scotland ; and in this one the confidential plans for a Jacobite rising that will take place on the — I have forgotten the date ; let me see that file again — yes, on the 16th of September, on the Braes of Mar. Here, Donald, handle them carefully.

DONALD. It is a real pleasure to work for an artist like you, Mr. Rashleigh.

RONALD. No matter what his medium may be, a man who is a true artist is worthy of great respect. To have stolen the Government's plans, and the Jacobites' plans too, is a very great accomplishment indeed.

DONALD. And all the deeds and the documents belonging to Osbaldistone and Company forbye. You are a pure genius, Mr. Rashleigh. There must be Hieland blood in you whatever.

RASHLEIGH. Your flattery is very pleasant, my friends, and it warms my heart. But in time of danger, courtesy must be cut short. Is the trunk fastened ?

RONALD. It is safe enough.

RASHLEIGH. And you know where to take it ?

RONALD. To the clachan of Aberfoyle. Those were your very words.

RASHLEIGH. Then be on your way, and we shall meet again before long. I wish you God-speed.

RONALD. It will be a pleasure, Mr. Rashleigh. Come, Donald.

They take up the trunk, one at either end, and very solemnly march off with it, whistling as they go " The Road to the Isles ".

RASHLEIGH. How right they were, those brave innocent boys with the clear sight and the instant comprehension that belong to simple folk ! What a villain I am ! What an artist in evil stands here ! Now, I'm pretty sure, the plot cannot fail. In that trunk lies what should bring to ruin the English Government,- the Jacobite cause, and the great mercantile firm of Osbaldistone and Company. One or other of them may escape the general doom, but doom there must be for at least a part — and doom is what I dote upon f One thing only remains to be done, and if that may be contrived, I shall be the happiest man alive. I must think of some device to rum my fair cousin Diana. . . .

While he stands, musing, DIANA *and* FRANK *return ; and are properly astonished to see him.*

DIANA. Cousin Rashleigh ! I had not thought to see you here. This is a great surprise to me.

RASHLEIGH. Your destiny and mine go hand in hand. For some time, I grant you, there was an impediment to our marriage, for I was poor. But now that hindrance has been removed, and in a little while I shall be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. We shall both be rich, for our lives henceforth shall be united. Give me your hand, Diana—

DIANA. No, Rashleigh, it cannot be. I will not be your wife.

RASHLEIGH. It was your father's desire that we should wed. Do you deny a father's wish as lightly as you reject a cousin's love ?

DIANA. My father gave me a choice : either my cousin or a convent. And I prefer a convent.

RASHLEIGH. Do you think I shall permit that? How little you know me !

FRANK. I have been very patient, cousin, most patient indeed, but now my patience is wearing thin. There is nothing in life more boring than to listen to another man's proposal of marriage, even when it is well done; and such gaucherie as yours, such ineptitude, such a bungled approach, is really intolerable. I must beg you to leave us, for clearly your company is not desired.

DIANA. What a very imprudent speech — and yet I sympathise with every word of it. What have you to say, Rashleigh ?

RASHLEIGH. There is only one answer possible, and that is not an answer which can be parsed or analysed. *(He draws bis sword.}* For some time, Cousin Francis, I have been considering various ways by which you could be removed from Osbaldistone Hall, and this, perhaps, is the quickest and most certain.

FRANK *(who has also drawn).* You have chosen your own way, but what lies at the end of it has yet to be seen.

DIANA. Oh, cousins, this is not good manners ! Frank, if you love me—

FRANK. Pray stand a little to one side, Miss Vernon.

They fight, and very soon it becomes obvious that RASHLEIGH *is the master. He forces* FRANK *to give ground, and is on the very point of breaking through his guard when, from behind the draught-screen on the left side of the room — to which* FRANK *has been driven back —* ROB ROY *steps out, and with his own much larger sword strikes down the blades of the duellists.*

ROB. That is enough, gentlemen. — *(To* RASHLEIGH) Put up your sword, sir, or you will be faced with a more powerful weapon. You have no manners, gentlemen, or you would not be trying to commit manslaughter in the presence of a lady. We have more politeness in the Highlands.

RASHLEIGH. You will regret this interference. You and all your nameless clan will suffer dearly for crossing me!

ROB. He that will to Athole, maun to Athole. None of us can avoid his destiny, Mr. Osbaldistone, but if you care to postpone yours, you had better take the chance and leave us now. Say no more !

RASHLEIGH. So be it ! But you have not seen the last of me. Nor you, Cousin Francis ! We shall meet again.

He goes out, limping.

DIANA. Mr. MacGregor, we are greatly in your debt, but once again you have roused my curiosity.

FRANK. I owe you my life, sir, but you, I think, owe us an explanation.

ROB. I told you that when you needed me you should find me ready. There is nothing strange about that. It all comes of my being a Highland gentleman who finds a natural pleasure in helping his friends, and behaving incomprehensibly. And now, I must warn you, you have no time to lose. Rashleigh has discovered that your father is in this house, Miss Vernon, and if he values his life he must not stay another hour. His only chance of safety is to flee at once into Scotland. (Ib FRANK) You will go westward to Glasgow, and her

father will come into my country. I have no time for explanation, for much remains to be done. — But tell your father I shall meet him.

DIANA. Where ?

ROB. At the clachan of Aberfoyle.

He goes out, hurriedly, with a gesture of farewell.

DIANA. Our danger is not yours, Frank, and we must not embroil you in it. You must go at once.

FRANK. I shall not leave you, Diana, until I know that you are with some one better fitted than I to protect you.

DIANA. There is no such person but my father. Had you known, Frank, that my father was here in this house, in hiding ?

FRANK. I had guessed as much.

DIANA. Because of his loyalty to the King — to our rightful monarch, King James the Eighth—

FRANK. I am loyal to King George, Diana.

DIANA. At a time like this, Frank, you must not be selfish. My father, I tell you, has a price on his head, and for the last six weeks he has been hiding here. Behind his portrait there, a secret passage leads to his apartments in the old tower. If I keep watch here, will you go and warn him, and tell him that we must leave within the hour ?

FRANK. You trust me, though he is a Jacobite with a price on his head ?

DIANA. He is my father. You would not betray my father.

FRANK. If I do not, shall I be entitled to another reward?

She gives him her hand to kiss, then speaks decisively — and pulls back the curtain.

DIANA. Now go to my father. *(The withdrawn curtain exposes, within the frame,* SIR FREDERICK VERNON *with his back to the audience. With one hand he is scratching his leg, with the other his head.)* Father!

SIR F. Oh, there you are. I was just coming out. Look here, Diana, I'm not going to stay in this damned place any longer. It's full of fleas.

DIANA. We must go immediately, father.

SIR F. The sooner the better. It's very tiresome, living in hiding, especially when you get flea-bitten.

DIANA. Mr. MacGregor has been here. He says that you are in grave danger, and must leave at once.

SIR F. Stuff and nonsense. It's that fellow Rashleigh again, I suppose? He'll go too far one of these days. And who is this young man?

FRANK. I am Francis Osbaldistone, sir.

SIR F. You are, are you? And do you belong to the honest party?

FRANK. I am loyal, sir, to the Hanoverian interest.

SIR F. I might have guessed as much. All you young men are the same: Left Wing, Labour Party, Socialism, Bolshevism, Hanovenanism! Anything that's new fangled, and you young fellows, who call yourselves intellectuals, are at it like kittens at a saucer of milk. I knew it as soon as I looked at you. Hanoverians, indeed! It'll be Communism next.

DIANA. We must hurry, father.

SIR F. I'm ready to go now. But where have I got to go ?

DIANA. The clachan of Aberfoyle.

SIR F. Til bet you a dozen bottles of good claret to half a pint of small beer that I get flea-bitten there too. But it's in a good cause. Well, good-bye, my dear.

DIANA. Not good-bye, father. I'm coming with you.

SIR F. Nonsense, nonsense. You can't come to Aberfoyle, among a pack of wild Highlanders. Good God, you're a girl !

DIANA. But a modern girl ! I'm not one of your delicate, stay-at-home, useless creatures who sit at their mother's knee and faint when they hear the voice of a man. I've been brought up to live on equal terms with men — *(To audience)* Ladies and gentlemen, this is one of the really important parts of the play ; this speech that I'm making now. Because I am, in fact, an historical personage. I am the first modern heroine, and I shall insist on behaving as such. Thank you. — Are you paying attention, father ? I say that I have received a modern education, and I am not to be treated lightly. I can ride a horse and groom a horse, and read Latin and Greek. I can train a dog, and worm a dog, and crop his ears. I speak French and German fluently, I have some knowledge of mathematics, and modern science. I cannot cook, and I know nothing whatever about housework, needlework, or how to bring up a baby. But I am educated, father. I am a modern woman, and I insist on my rights.

SIR F. Well, if that's the way you look at it—

DIANA. I do.

SIR F. What's that noise ?

Music is heard, growing rapidly louder, and the MAC-GREGOR GIRLS *appear,* MOW *in the uniform of Girl Guides, and march across the stage. Their Leader steps to thejront and sings a song to the tune of their march.*

" Blue Bonnets over the Border "

Girls of the Highland hills ! Warriors feminine !
(Though you look tender as woodland anemones),
Dead as a doornail or boar with a lemon in
His gaping jaws will you strike all your enemies !

CHORUS

March, march, Poplar and Pimpernel —
Keep your patrols in a ladylike order !
March, march, Wagtail and Woodpecker —
All the Blue Bloomers are over the Border !

Now for austerity ! — Chocolate and liquors and
Love you must forfeit till honour's receiptable.
Victory beckons you ! Pull up your knickers and
Show the whole world that the Guides are unbeatable!

CHORUS

March, march, Brambles and Bulrushes —
Keep your patrols in a ladylike order !
March, march, Cuckoos and Cormorants —
All the Blue Bloomers are over the Border !

SIR F. Now what's the meaning of this ?

LEADER. We have come to salute Miss Diana Vernon, the first modern heroine in literature ! We who, in fact,

are not yet born — though we shall be ! Oh, we shall be ! — we owe our existence to her. We, in our time, shall also be the heralds of a new world, the precursors of modernity, — Girls ! Salute Miss Vernon !

DIANA, Thank you very much. This is really most gratifying. But you will excuse the brevity of my welcome when I tell you that we have an important engagement. We are leaving immediately for Scotland,

LEADER. So we heard, and we have come here to escort you over the border.

SIR F. Well, God bless my soul ! What an extra ordinary thing to be sure !

While the MACGREGOR GIRLS *repeat their chorus* DIANA *offers an arm to* SIR FREDERICK, *her other to* FRANK, *and marches off; followed by the Girls.*

CURTAIN

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II

SCENE I

A scene in front of a curtain representing a rather dull view of *Lowland Scotland. On the right of the stage — like a tongue profecting on to it — is a large rock on which grows a rowan-tree.* RONALD *and* DONALD *come in, left. They are tired, and walk slowly. They still carry the trunk, and are still whistling "The Road to the Isles". They halt beside the rock, and set the trunk down behind it.*

RONALD. It is a long walk we are having.

DONALD. I have a blister under the wee small toe of my left foot, Ronald.

RONALD. It will be from walking on these new-fangled roads that they have made in the south country. A road is a great inconvenience for walking.

DONALD. It is not the same as the heather at all. I think it is time, Ronald, that we sat down and rested ourselves.

RONALD. That is just the very thing I was going to say myself.

DONALD. It is very comfortable here by the side of the rock.

RONALD. I have seen harder-looking rocks indeed. But you cannot say that the rocks here in the south country are as comfortable as the very fine rocks that we

have in the Hielands. There are no rocks so good as them, either for scenery or for sleeping under. Do you not agree with me, Donald ? — But you are sleeping already, are you ? I was maybe wrong about the rocks, and to show that I have no ill-feeling against the south country I will have a little nap myself.

DONALD, *sitting behind the rock, disappeared from sight when his head fell down in slumber.* RONALD, *joining him, is also hidden. One end of the trunk remains in view.*

Music is heard: "The British Grenadiers". Marching in slow time, a party of red-coated soldiers appears, left, led by CAPTAIN THORNTON, *a fife, and a drum. In the midst of them walks a stout elderly gentleman in the dress of a merchant of the time :* MR. OWEN, *from London.*

THORNTON. Company, halt! Right turn. Mr. Owen, will you fall out, please ? — Dressing by the left. Look lively now. Company, order arms. Stand at ease. Stand easy. . Now when you break *off* you mustn't stray or wander about. You must keep on the road. The country here is in a somewhat unsettled condition, and not all the natives are to be trusted. You understand that ? Right. Break off. — Are you feeling weary, Mr. Owen ?

OWEN. My legs aren't used to this sort of thing, you know. After spending the greater part of my life in a City office, and the greater part of every day on an office stool, I find a march from Tyneside to Clydeside some what exhausting.

THORNTON. It will make a new man of you.

OWEN. It's too late for that, I fear. I have wasted

my life, Captain Thornton, and now I can't do anything about it. But the fact remains that I have wasted my strength on work ! — Not that I am grumbling, mind you. Far from it ! Far from it indeed. In the firm of Osbaldistone and Company — one of the greatest mercantile houses in London ; or so it was before this dreadful misfortune overtook us — we were treated most handsomely, most handsomely ! I was their Head Clerk, you know.

THORNTON. Yes, I think you have told me that before.

OWEN, And our office-stools were quite reasonably comfortable. As comfortable, that is, as an office-stool can be. But in spite of my sore feet, you know, I am enjoying this little escape from the office, and if I could only be confident of regaining the missing documents, I should be perfectly happy. You do think, don't you, that I stand a good chance of recovering them ?

THORNTON. We shall do our best to help you, Mr, Owen.

The soldiers have gathered round the rock where the Osbaldistone trunk stands, and RONALD *and* DONALD *lie sleeping.* Now *a* SERGEANT *leaves them and, approaching* CAPTAIN THORNTON, *salutes.*

SERGEANT. Sir. I wish to make a report, sir.

THORNTON. What is it, Sergeant ?

SERGEANT. There are two natives, sir, asleep in the vicinity. They do not appear to be dangerous. Further more, sir, I understand that this gentleman is looking for some property belonging to the firm of Osbaldistone and Company.

THORNTON. That is SO.

SERGEANT. The two natives, sir, are in possession of a trunk bearing that name.

OWEN. The name of Osbaldistone ? Where ? Where is it?

THORNTON. Most extraordinary.

He follows OWEN, *who, pushing soldiers aside, lurries to the trunk and, opening it, begins to examine its contents. The soldiers crowd round, watching him, and* OWEN *can be heard exclaiming :* "Yes, they're all here! Deeds — dockets — share-certificates — receipts — bank receipts — balance-sheets — Government bonds — everything!" *And during this excitement there emerge, between the legs of the soldiers (like a football trickling out of the scrum), the figures of* RONALD *and* DONALD, *who, as soon as they are clear of the confusion, take to their heels and run off, left.*

OWEN *(seizing* THORNTON *by the hands).* This, sir, is the happiest day of my life ! Oh, thank God for this day ! The firm of Osbaldistone and Company has been saved from ruin !

THORNTON. Well, that's very gratifying, isn't it ? I'm very glad indeed. — Sergeant!

SERGEANT. Sir.

THORNTON. You said there were two natives with that trunk. Where are they now ?

SOLDIERS. They've gone, Sergeant!

SERGEANT. In the confusion, sir, they appear to have escaped.

THORNTON. That was rather careless of you, Sergeant. We should have interrogated them, you know.

TWO SOLDIERS *(pointing and shouting).* There they are, sir ! There they go.

THORNTON. Have a shot at them, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. Two hundred — natives running left — one round — fire ! *(A volley is fired. After observing the result, the* SERGEANT *again turns to* THORNTON, *and salutes.)* Beg to report, sir, that the volley was ineffective. The natives are still running and are now out of range.

THORNTON. Well, it doesn't matter very much, I suppose. There are plenty more of them. Let the men fall in again, Sergeant, and detail two of them to carry the trunk. Mr. Owen, would you care to walk with me ?

The soldiers Jail in, in column of march facing right (the SERGEANT'S *commands need not be heard), with the trunk in the middle of the column,* THORNTON *and* OWEN *in rear, fife and drum in front. When they are ready, the drum taps, the fife plays again "The British Grenadiers " — still in slow time — and they march off.*

Hardly have they disappeared when, from behind the rock, rises the figure of RASHLEIGH OSBALDISTONE.

RASHLEIGH. A lesser man than I might be discon certed by this mishap. But I am well aware that the course of villainy, like that of love, never runs smoothly, and he who sets up to be a scoundrel must be a man, not only of great accomplishment, but of heroic temper. And such am I ! Misfortune does not cast me down, but spurs me on *I (He puts his fingers to his mouth and whistles shrilly.* RONALD *and* DONALD *return.)* You have been negligent, my friends. I am not pleased with you.

DONALD *(exhibiting a bullet-hole in his tattered plaid).*

We have been in great danger, Mr, Rashleigh, and my good plaid is ruined with a bullet going through it!

RASHLEIGH. You are lucky to be alive. You were caught asleep while on duty, and deserve to be hanged.

RONALD. That is a hard saying indeed.

DONALD. Will the Government pay me compensation for the spoiling of my good plaid, Mr. Rashleigh ?

RASHLEIGH. Retrieve your mistake, follow those soldiers, discover where they go — and I shall pay you for it!

DONALD. That will be easy enough. They are very kenspeckle in their red coats.

RASHLEIGH. You must not lose sight of them, but you yourselves must not be seen.

RONALD. We understand.

RASHLEIGH. Then be on your way.

DONALD. It was a very good plaid, Mr. Rashleigh. It belonged to my grandfather.

They go out, right. RASHLEIGH, *brooding a moment, happens to glance the other way and observes something 'which greatly surprises him. He retires again to hide behind the rock. A moment later* DIANA VERNON *comes in, left.*

DIANA. This life of adventure is a very exhausting one. My father and I have been riding since early morning, and fortune has been sadly against us. My horse developed a splint, then a spavin, and has now begun to whistle. My father's horse lost one shoe in a bog, another in a moss, and a third in a mire. My father

is a very conventional man, and he refuses to ride any farther on a horse which has only one shoe. He has sent me to look for a blacksmith — and believe it or not, I can't find a blacksmith anywhere. I shall certainly write and complain to the Automobile Association when I get home, but for the moment I am completely at a loss, and cannot think what to do next.

She sits down on tie rock, and RASHLEIGH *appears from behind it.*

RASHLEIGH. Permit me to make a suggestion.

DIANA. Oh ! Oh !

RASHLEIGH. On this stricken moor it is a waste of breath to scream. Resign yourself to your fate, my pretty cousin. You are, at last, within my power.

DIANA. Oh !

RASHLEIGH. What a dainty, pretty little hand. So white and soft.

DIANA. Don't touch me. Oh !

RASHLEIGH. Do not struggle so. I am much stronger than you and we are quite alone. . . .

Music is heard, rapidly growing louder : " The British Grenadiers", now played in very quick time. Led by the drum and fife, Jour soldiers appear, right, marching briskly, and followed by THORNTON. *While he, after saluting* DIANA, *leads her to the other side of the stage, the soldiers, obedient to tap of drum, halt and turn towards* RASHLEIGH, *and bring their muskets to the aiming position. He, with his back to the audience, remains motionless.*

THORNTON. I observed your plight, madam, from

some little distance and hastened to your rescue.

DIANA* I am infinitely indebted, sir. I was in the gravest peril.

THORNTON. So I surmised.

DIANA. You are most courteous.

THORNTON. I know my duty, madam, as a soldier of the king.

DIANA. My father will be happy to make your acquaintance, though I fear that his political opinions differ radically from yours.

THORNTON. Surely politics need not obscure good manners?

DIANA. That is my opinion too. And if, sir, you can procure fresh horses for my father and myself, we shall be greatly obliged.

THORNTON. You are able to walk a little way? You do not feel faint after your dreadful ordeal?

DIANA. Oh dear no, not at all. I have a good voice, and I merely screamed for assistance — not because I was frightened.

THORNTON. Then let me offer you my arm as far as that farm-house, and there I shall requisition whatever you require.

DIANA. You are too kind.

As thy go out, DIANA *on* THORNTON's *arm, the drummer, by tap of drum, directs the soldiers to slope their arms and fall in,* two *in front of* RASHLEIGH, two *behind him. The fife leading, the drummer in the*

rear, they march off, right, to the brisk air of "The British Grenadiers ".

A moment later, ROB ROY *comes on, left, limping.*

ROB. That soldier, who calls himself Captain Thornton, is no better than a poacher ! I was coming, I myself, to rescue Miss Vernon. It is my business, not his, to save people. The play has not been properly rehearsed, that is the trouble with it. And then, when I was running to save her, I lost my shoe in a bog, and so I was late. But I will have a word to say to that Captain Thornton when I meet him again — and that will be at the clachan of Aberfoyle !

lie goes off, right, limping in his stockinged foot.

To indicate that this is only an episode while the characters are moving towards Glasgow, the soldiers may again march across the stage, from left to right: one party with MR. OWEN *in their midst; the next escorting* RASHLEIGH ; *followed by* CAPTAIN THORNTON *arm-in-arm with* DIANA; *followed by* RONALD *and* DONALD, *behaving like scouts ; followed by* ROB *now hot, angry, and limping more noticeably.*

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE ONE

ACT II

SCENE II

The Tolbooth, Glasgow. This should resemble rather a mediaeval dungeon than a modern prison : arches, a column or two of dark masonry, and gloomy corners. It is reasonably well lighted, however, by a couple of lanterns, and a conspicuous piece of furniture — almost the only one, indeed—is a very large water-butt, plainly lettered Drinking Water. *Also Jour wooden stools, and (left front) a large old-fashioned hat-rack.*

The MACGREGOR GIRLS, *muffled in great dark shawls, sit forlornly on the floor, and sing a song — sad to begin with, but growing somewhat livelier as it proceeds — that confesses the reason for their arrest . which is vagrancy.*

" John Come Kiss Me Now ", S *M M* , No 305

We're country girls and innocent
Of any harm or ill intent,
But now they say we robbed a gent-
leman who was in drink.
It was pure friendliness that made
Me hold his money till he'd paid
The barman for our lemonade —
Yet here we are in clink !

We're country girls and far too good
To be believed or understood,
But should a p'liceman be so rude
To ladies in a shop ?

The shop was full of lovely things,
Of sable coats and diamond rings,
And as we had no angels' wings,
The coppers made a cop.

We're country girls and simple too,
And when we had no home in view
We did our best — well, wouldn't you ?
Oh, life is very odd.
Why should a poor girl give offence
Who asks a man to share th' expense
Of quite a humble residence ?
Yet that's why we're in quod !

As they conclude, ANDREW FAIRSERVICE, *dangling a hunch ofprison keys, comes in, followed by* CAPTAIN THORNTON, MR. OWEN, *and two soldiers carrying the trunk. The latter set down the trunk and go out again immediately.*

ANDREW. It's just a wee thing crowded the night, last night being a Saturday, but we'll get rid of these weemen and soon give you mair room, Mr. Owen. — Noo lassies, ye canna bide here. We need the cell for this gentleman, so you'll just have tae pack and go. Awa' tae your hames, noo, and try to live better and mair useful lives in the future.

MORAG. But oh, sir, ye wouldna turn us oot of the gaol on a cauld nicht like this !

ANDREW. There's no help for it. Ye'll need to go.

MORAG. Tae leave the crouse, canty, canny, decent bit gaol for the gumlie jaups and the rowtin' skriechin' wind on the streets, and the snaw-broo of a Scots simmer nicht — ochone, ochone !

GIRLS. Ochone, ochone ! Ochone, ochone !

MORAG. No, sir, ye canna do't. We ken oor rights, and we winna leave !

THORNTON. There's something in what they say, you know. It's hardly fair to turn women out on one of these bitter August nights. Is there nowhere else they can go ?

ANDREW. There's the t'lther cell, that we pit yon desperate billy intil. If I bring him in here with Mr. Owen — he's got the manacles on him, and the ankle-irons forbye, so he canna dae ony harm — then the weemen can bide where he is 1100.

THORNTON. That's the proper thing to do. You don't mind, Mr. Owen, do you ?

OWEN. Well, I hope he isn't dangerous.

ANDREW. Not he, faith. Come awa', then, lassies. Come ben the hoose.

MORAG. God bless you, Mr. Fairservice, for a kind man and a good man !

GIRLS. God bless you, Mr. Fairservice, for a kind man and a good man, too !

ANDREW *ushers the 'women out.*

THORNTON. It's not very comfortable, is it ? But I'm sure you'll be safer here than anywhere else in Glasgow. The country's very unsettled, you see, and I'm responsible for you.

OWEN. It's not quite what I expected — but it's certainly a change from the office.

THORNTON. Yes, I'm sure it is. And you will be safe here, you see, and that's the main thing, isn't it ?

Now I've sent a message to your business acquaintance, the Bailie—

OWEN, Bailie Nicol Jarvie.

THORNTON. —telling him where you are, and suggesting that he should come and see you as soon as possible, and perhaps take charge of this trunk for you. You'll want to have the various documents arranged and classified as soon as possible, won't you ?

OWEN. Yes, perhaps that would be wise. I am not myself acquainted with the Bailie, but he is the Glasgow correspondent of the firm of Osbaldistone and Company, and a person, I am told, of great notability in this part of Scotland. But the fatigue of the journey, Captain Thornton, prevents me from thinking with (I may say it without immodesty, I believe) my usual clarity. . . .

THORNTON. The Bailie will help you, I am sure. Take what rest you can till he comes. And now, I fear, I must leave you, for I have duties of my own.

OWEN. I am most grateful to you for all you have done.

THORNTON. We shall meet in the morning. Good-night, Mr. Owen.

THORNTON goes out, and OWEN, *still looking somewhat bewildered and ill at ease, sits down on the trunk.* ANDREW *returns, leading* RASHLEIGH OSBALDISTONE, *whose heavy chains jangle as he walks.* RASHLEIGH *leans against a wall and surveys the scene with Byronic gloom.*

ANDREW. Weel, there's your fellow-lodger, and a randy, raucle carlm he is, though he canna dae muckle hairm with four and twenty punds of iron upon him.

OWEN. I hope you're right, Mr. Fairservice. You, of course, have had long experience of people of this sort—

ANDREW. Me with experience of gaol-birds, is it? Faith, not I. I'm a gardener to trade, and all my experience has been with flooers and vegetables and fine fruit like tatties, ingans, and neeps. It's my mither's first cousin's husband's daughter's man that's the gaoler here, but he's a dwaibly body at the best, and beddit noo with a sair curmurrm of the guts; so I just said that I'd tak' care of the gaol till he was better; and that's why I'm here.

OWEN. That was very obliging of you.

ANDREW. I've aye been a ceevil, decent kind of a body, sair put upon by the neebours. It's the way with us gardeners. But if you should ken a good place where I would hear pure doctrine, and hae a free coo's grass, and a hoose and a yaird, and ten pounds of annual fee, I'd be real grateful to hear of it, Mr. Owen.

OWEN. I live in the city, Mr. Fairservice, and none of my friends, I'm afraid, employs a gardener.

ANDREW. Puir bodies, puir bodies. Weel, there's no muckle we can do till the Bailie comes. The Bailie's a good man, Mr. Owen. A thought pernickety, it may be, and clean mad if you put his beard in a bleeze, and neether to haud nor to bind at the best of times, but a good man for all that. —*(A jangling bell rings, decisively)* — That'll be him: the Bailie himsel'! You can aye tell a Bailie's ring: prood and impatient! You come with me, sir, and we'll hae a crack with him in my ain room.

RASHLEIGH, *in his Byronic attitude, las till* HOW *remained motionless, leaning against the wall; but* HOW

he walks up and down, his chains rattling, till with a start of surprise he observes the trunk.

RASHLEIGH. Irony, what irony ! The thief and his theft in gaol together ! *(He raises Us arms, and the chains clash.)* Irony ! All life is irony.

He sits glumly on the trunk, Jacing the audience. Behind him, from the large cask lettered Drinking Water, *rise cautiously the heads of* RONALD *and* DONALD ; *who presently emerge from it.*

RONALD *(whispering).* Mr. Rashleigh !

DONALD. Hsst ! Mr. Rashleigh !

RASHLEIGH *(turning).* My friends! My most ingenious and trusty friends !

RONALD. You must not be down-hearted, Mr. Rashleigh.

DONALD. It is no disgrace for a man to be in the gaol for a little while once and again.

RASHLEIGH. Never has a poor prisoner's heart been lighted by a more joyful surprise. My heart, that was full of care, plumps out with joy. My mind, that was half-inclined to repentance, recovers its old spirit and most iniquitous resolution. Tell me, how did you succeed in entering this fearful dungeon ?

RONALD. There was no difficulty at all, Mr. Rashleigh.

DONALD. We came in to visit some of our sisters who were arrested last night, most unfairly, we think, on a charge of vagrancy.

RONALD. They are now in the other cell, the poor lassies.

RASHLEIGH. Those girls — they are all your sisters ?

DONALD. Ours is a large family, Mr. Rashleigh.

RONALD. Our father is a great Hieland gentleman.

RASHLEIGH. And you, I think, are not unworthy of his blood.

RONALD. We belong to a very ancient clan.

Here a song, by all three, about the MacGregors :

" Blythe was **she", *S.M.M.*, No 180**

When Noah launched his Noah's ark,
He offered us all a holiday trip,
It was very well meant, but we had to say no—
We'd built ourselves a better ship.

CHORUS

Blithe, blithe, and merry are we,
Blithe, blithe, in kitchen and ha',
Blithe wi' the lasses at e'en,
And blithe wi' the usqueba'.

When Pharaoh was building the Pyramids,
We broke away from our former mates ;
We went on strike and we all came home
For he wasn't paying the Union rates.

Chorus.

When William the Conqueror came to Kent,
And the Saxons died in a Saxon ditch,
We made munitions for both, and became
Like neutrals everywhere, terribly rich.

Chorus.

Professor MacGregor at Bannockburn
Offered the Bruce an atomic bomb,
But he wasn't allowed to use it because
The patent belonged to his Uncle Sam.

Chorus.

It was Shakespeare who asked us to carry some trees,
From Birnam Wood to Dunsinane,
Then he thankit us kindly, and wrote *Macbeth*,
For we had proved that it could be dane.

Chorus.

Now the world wants a recipe : How to Make Peace —
For if peace isn't whole, then the war'll be total —
We ken fine how to make it, we made it langsyne,
And still carry the stuff about in a bottle.

Chorus.

So if to-morrow the skies are grey,
And Fate begins to rock the boat,
We'll drown our care in Mountain Dew,
The universal antidote.

Chorus.

RASHLEIGH. But now to business : there was little point in your breaking into the gaol, unless you can help me to break out. And how shall that be done ?

DONALD. That will be very easy. We have been listening and learning what they mean to do with the trunk, and in a little while two porters are coming to carry it to the house of a man called Bailie Nicol Jarvie.

RONALD. There is room for you in the trunk, Mr. Rashleigh, though you will not be very comfortable; but if you can double yourself up a little bit, you will be carried out of the gaol, and no trouble at all.

RASHLEIGH. Who will the porters be ?

RONALD. We do not yet know, but they may be friends of yours.

RASHLEIGH. That will suit me very well ; but these chains will incommode me when the time comes for me to take my leave.

DONALD. I think Ronald may have some little keys that will fit them.

RONALD *(producing skeleton keys).* They are not very good, Mr. Rashleigh, they are all home-made. But perhaps they will serve their purpose.

DONALD. They are very useful implements, the skeleton keys/

RASHLEIGH *(emerging from his chains which he throws into the water-butt).* You are good boys, brave lads, fine fellows. Your father and I have had our differences of opinion, but I have always respected him, and now I say this : that he has taught you well !

RONALD. We have been taught that you cannot make a science of life ; that life is an art.

DONALD. And in the Hielands we are natural artists. Now get into the trunk, Mr. Rashleigh.

RONALD. You will have plenty of room, will you not ?

RASHLEIGH. I can endure discomfort for a good cause. Close the lid !

DONALD. And now let us go and visit our sisters.

As they go out by one door, BAILIE NICOL JARVIE *enters by another, followed by* MR. OWEN, *the* BAILIE's *housekeeper* MATTIE, *who carries a lantern, and* ANDREW.

BAILIE. A sad tale, Mr. Owen, a sad tale indeed. But it's an ill fault that canna be mendit, or — as they say in the Gallowgate — it's a long lane that hasna got a spirit-licence. We'll see what we can do for you. It's no' typical of Scots hospitality to clap a visitor into the gaol as soon as he puts his neb through the door, you must understand that. — Turn doon the light, Mattie, there's no sense in wasting good paraffin oil, with the price it is. She's my housekeeper, Mr. Owen, and a very respectable lass, near-hand tae the gentry. She's a third cousin of the Laird of Limmerfield.

OWEN. Indeed ! I am very pleased to meet you.

ANDREW *(who has been scratching his head and looking round him in a pulled way ; to* MATTIE). There's something missing. There was a man in the place, was there no' ? Come you wi' me, lassie. You and your lantern, and we'll take a look for him.

They examine — rather aimlessly, and not in such a way as to attract much attention — the darker parts of the cell.

BAILIE. Now see here, Mr. Owen ; I'm a careful man, as is weel kent, and industrious, as the hale toon can testify ; and I can win siller, and coont siller, and keep siller with onybody in the Sautmarket, and maybe in the Gallowgate too. I'm a prudent man, as the deacon, my faither, was before me — but I'm no sae prudent that I'll sit canmly at hame and dae naething to help when an honest civil man like yourself, that understands business, finds himself in trouble.

OWEN. I do assure you that any help you can give me will be most welcome, Mr. Jarvie.

BAILIE. What we do, we'll do for the best; you can be sure of that. And this will be the trunk you were speaking of?

OWEN. That is the trunk.

BAILIE. With all the assets, bills, bonds, and share-certificates of the great firm of Osbaldistone and Company snugly tucked away in it ?

OWEN. They're all there.

BAILIE. Is it no a solemn thocht, Mr. Owen, that here before us lies what, with but small exaggeration, may be called the wealth of the Indies ? — I maun just hae a wee glisk at it. *(The* BAILIE *is about to open the trunk when a scream from* MATTIE *distracts his attention)* My conscience ! Was that you, Mattie ? What's wrang with you, lass ?

MATTIE. Oh, sir, he pinched me ! In that dark corner there.

BAILIE. It's pinching, is it ? What way to behave is that tae a decent lass ? And a man of your age forbye ! Ye auld, bauld, bare-faced, randy scoondrel !

ANDREW. Dinna fash yoursel', Bailie. There was nae scoondrelism ava. What was done was done in the way of civeehty, and naething else. Juist civeelity.

MATTIE. It was naething of the sort, and ye ken that right weel. With his great thumb and finger he mppit ma leg ! It was right sair.

BAILIE. There, sir ! What have you to say to that ?

ANDREW. It was nae mair than a lassie would expect from any hale and healthy single man.

MATTIE. No, if she's a decent lassie ! No' if she's been weel brought-up, and is weel-connected. No' if she's near-hand tae the gentry, like me that's a cousin of the Laird of Limmerfield. That's no' what I expected from an auld man like you !

BAILIE. Weel said, Mattie, and true enough.

Here a song by MATTIE :

" The Collier's Bonny Lassie ", *S.M.M.*, No. 47

We girls who're well-connected,
However you adore us,
We still must be respected,
And you must be decorous —
No cuddling on a stairway,
Or kissing in the pantry,
But only on the fairway
Can you approach the gentry.

A crofter's humble daughter
May not be so particular,
And French girls o'er the water
Are easier and fickler.
But in the upper classes
Good manners, like a sentry,
Still stand to guard the lasses —
You must respect the gentry !

A kiss — there's nothing in it;
A pinch — a bruise at best, sir ;
My heart they'll never win it,
Or much promote your quest, sir.
But *pearls* would make me pensive,
And to my heart an entry —
Do realise it's expensive
To woo and win the gentry !

ANDREW. And that's time enough spent on daikerin' aboot the lassie and her blue blood. I've been waiting all this while to tell you that we've lost a prisoner. That

desperate gallus rogue with the manacles and the leg-irons on him, that was here a wee minute back : what's come of him ?

OWEN. You mean Rashleigh Osbaldistone ? Has he escaped ?

ANDREW. He's no' here noo, that's all I ken. I'm a gardener, no' a fortune-teller.

BAILIE. Whatever you may be, you have nae sense of responsibeelity if you've permitted a dangerous prisoner to escape.

ANDREW. He got no permission from me. Na, na, Bailie, you'll no' pin the blame on me like that.

BAILIE. Then go and search the gaol ! You'll do no good standing here, with your daffin' and gabbin'. You maun search the gaol.

ANDREW. It's no' very safe, looking for a desperate character like yon. *(He goes reluctantly to a door, opens it, and immediately the sound of women's voices is heard, singing, with boisterous gaiety, "Over the sea to Skye ".* ANDREW *shows his relief, and after listening for a moment or two, closes the door again.* That's where he'll be. With the lassies ! You could tell by the roving look in his e'e that he was a man for the weemen.

BAILIE. What weemen are they, that you keep here in the Tolbooth ?

ANDREW. A hale clamjamfry of glaikit hizzies that were brought in for vagrancy. — That's where he'll be, depend on't.

BAILIE. Weel, if you're satisfied—

The prison door-bell rings again.

ANDREW *(going to see who comes).* There's no peace in a gaol, no peace at all. No' in Glasgow !

BAILIE. I was about to say, Mr. Owen, that the best place of safe-keeping for this trunk of yours will be my ain hoose in the Sautmarket. I'll see to it that proper arrangements are made with the military, so that you'll can find a mair comfortable lodging the morn, and in the meanwhile I'll tak' a look through these documents of yours, and set them oot in due form and order, so that we can set to our business without delay.

OWEN. That will suit me very well. It is high time indeed that I returned to business. Now there should be, I think, an index of documents that will simplify your task if I can find it. Let me look through the papers quite quickly—

As he is about to open the trunk, ANDREW *comes back with* RONALD *and* DONALD.

ANDREW. These twa callants say they've come to fetch yon trunk.

BAILIE. You, you rogues, you impudent dogs ! Who are you ? You're no' the twa caddies I took with me, and left at the door, and bade them wait there till they were needed. Who are you, you red-shanked ruffians ?

RONALD. We are cousins of the two poor men we found standing at the gate. They were both crying. They were crying most bitterly.

DONALD. They had the toothache, the poor souls, and they did not want to wait any longer out there in the cold summer night. So we told them to go to their homes, and Ronald and I would carry the trunk for them.

BAILIE. And they've gone ? Do you tell me they've gone ?

RONALD. They were very glad to go. They were still crying with the pain in their teeth. But we will carry the trunk, sir. You can trust it to us.

OWEN. Do you think so ? Do you think they are honest ?

BAILIE. They're just twa daft-hke Hieland gomerils, nae vice in them, nae vice at all. But I dinna ken them, and I winna put the trunk in charge of strangers. — Mattie ! You'll need to go with them, Mattie. You'll no' be feart ?

MATTIE. Faith, not I. I'm no' feart of the young ones, not at all. It's just an auld man, like him, that gies me a scunner and makes me skreich when he puts his hand on me. I can manage the young ones fine.

BAILIE. Awa' with you, then, and I'll be following in maybe ten meenutes or so. — Tak' up the trunk, lads, and show proper respect tae this young lady or she'll sort ye, and sae will I. (MATTIE *leading them with her lantern,* RONALD *and* DONALD *take up the trunk and walk slowly out, whistling "The Road to the* **Isles.** *ANDREW follows?)* These are sair times we live in, Mr. Owen.

OWEN. Oh, difficult, very difficult indeed. We who are simple, honest business-men do not expect to encounter wild adventure one day, and to land in prison the next. — And yet, do you know, I am rather enjoying my holiday from the office ?

BAILIE. I've sometimes had the notion masel' of takin' a holiday. But it's no' the custom in the Sautmarket, no' the custom at all. And a holiday at this moment

would hardly be possible ; for the poleetical situation is dangerous, Mr. Owen, there's no denying that.

OWEN. Yes, yes. And the economic situation is fraught with the most fearful difficulties.

BAILIE. Ay, that's a fact. And the social situation is developing in a way that I, for one, can not approve.

OWEN. True, true. The domestic situation — or rather my domestic situation — is, indeed, the only one in which I can take any comfort at all.

BAILIE. You'll be a bachelor, I presume ?

OWEN. I am, Mr. Jarvie.

BAILIE. So am I, so am I. Let us count our blessings and number our mercies while we can, Mr. Owen.

ANDREW *returns, leading* SIR FREDERICK VERNON, DIANA, *and* FRANK.

ANDREW. Ane goes, and t'ither comes in. I never jaloused that a gaoler's life was sic a stirring sort of existence. Here's a puckle of Jacobites for you noo. Rebels, rebels all, caught red-handed.

SIR F. Nonsense, my good fellow. The rebellion doesn't start till the week after next. How can we be rebels before it's begun ?

DIANA. Dear father, do try to be discreet. Your honest, soldierly simplicity has caused sufficient trouble already.

FRANK. Owen ! My dear old friend, what are you doing here ?

OWEN. Mr. Frank ! Well, you're no rebel, I'll go bail for that. But oh, what trouble you've brought to

your family by running away from London just when you were needed most! Your poor father's looking old,

FRANK. Well, he is old, isn't he ? — But don't start talking about my behaviour, Owen. It's a depressing subject, and you know very well that I left London because I wanted to write poetry, and I couldn't write poetry in an office, could I ?

OWEN. And how much poetry have you written ?

FRANK. Practically none ; because no sooner had I started than I met the most charming young lady in the world, and so I had no time for writing. You must meet her. — Diana, Sir Frederick ; let me introduce a very old friend of mine, my father's right-hand man, Mr. Owen.

BAILIE. Is it a family party that you're entertaining, Mr. Fairservice ?

ANDREW. It's a gey queer family, Bailie. They're Jacobites, I'm telling you. Red-handed rebels.

SIR F. . . . So there we were, in a very inferior sort of hotel, and after dinner I heard some curious-looking individuals talking a lot of Bolshevistical, Hanoverian nonsense. So I told them they ought to think twice about what they were saying. I told them they ought to show a decent sense of loyalty to their rightful king.

DIANA. And then the row started.

SIR F. Well, you can't say that I began it.

DIANA. But Frank had to join it in order to save your life.

SIR F. He was very helpful — I'm most grateful to him — but really, my dear, I'm quite capable of looking after myself.

BAILIE *(to* ANDREW), Gentry ! You can tell they're gentry by the daft way they're speaking. I'm no' muckle ta'en up with the gentry masel', but I could wish Mattie was here. Mattie would be weel pleased to meet others of her ain kind and condition.

ANDREW and the BAILIE *have been talking together on one side of the stage;* SIR FREDERICK, DIANA, FRANK, *and* OWEN *on the other. But during the* BAILIE'* *last speech,* FRANK *and* DIANA *have drawn apart from the others and come into the middle.*

FRANK, At least we are together. I could endure prison for a long time in your company.

DIANA. Even a life-sentence ?

FRANK. That is what I am constantly inviting you to share.

DIANA. And every time you ask me, you know perfectly well that I shall decline — because I must decline.

FRANK. But if you were free to make your own choice ?

DIANA. Ah, if I were free !

Here a duet hy FRANK *and* DIANA. *During their chorus the* MACGREGOR GIRLS *come in, Jrom a door at the back of the stage, and fling past the large old-fashioned hat-rack that stands, left front, throw on to it the shawls that have muffled them, and reveal themselves in short white tunics, each wearing across her shoulders a sash boldly lettered Miss Ballachulish, Miss Dunoon, Miss Auchtermuchty, Miss Bridge of Allan, and so forth. They form a line behind* FRANK *and* DIANA ; MORAG, *their leader, sings the next verse of the song, and that is followed by a full chorus.*

" **Colin Clout**", ***S.M.M,*** **No.** 549

FRANK. Cruel fortune takes me captive,
Claps me in a prison cell ;
Gentle fortune, most adaptive,
Brings my sweetheart here as well.

DIANA. Gentle fortune, I adore you !
You have robbed his liberty.—
Cruel fortune, I abhor you,
For myself I am not free.

FRANK. Love itself is half a prison,
Half a song-bird soaring high.

DIANA. 'Love is like the sun new-risen.—
Why, oh why, do lovers sigh ?

FRANK. When I try to clasp you nearly
Why must you escape from me ?

DIANA. Though I love you most sincerely,) *Repeat during entrance of the* MACGREGOR GIRLS
Love Will die UnleSS It' S tree.

LEADER OF MACGREGOR GIRLS

Cruel fortune has betrayed us,
Let us with the Law collide !
Common critics may upbraid us,
We retain our Hieland pride !
Nothing daunts a true MacGregor,
Dungeon dark or gallows hie,
We were reared upon the heather,
And our Hieland hearts are free !

DIANA. But what a delightful surprise ! — Scotland is really the most astonishing country, Frank. And am I allowed to ask for an explanation ?

BAILIE. Allowed, she says ! It's no a matter of allowing an explanation, my lady, for I, who am a Bailie of the City of Glasgow, demand an explanation ! Here are fine on-gauns for a decent Scots gaol ! Explanation, quotha ! Ay, we'll need an explanation, and a good yin, too. — What's the meaning of this, young woman ?

MORAG. Ye'll no' dae yersel' ony guid, Bailie, by taking that sort of a tone with me. Let me tell you that ! And if you want an explanation, you'll need tae ask thae dozent pohsmen of yours that arrested us when we were daem' nae harm whatever. Arrested for vagrancy in the streets of Glasgow ! Us, the daughters of Rob Roy MacGregor !

BAILIE. You the daughters of Rob Roy ! Do you tell me that ?

MORAG. And a better father no daughter ever had !

BAILIE. I'm blithe to hear there's some good in the man, for, to my shame be it said, he's a cousin of my am — ay, there's a quarter of Hieland blood in my veins, though I dmna say muckle aboot that m the Sautmarket. Na, na. Hieland blood's no' weel regarded in business circles. But my conscience ! You'd have been wiser to have chosen a different father, and I a different cousin, lass ; for Rob Roy's the maist notorious, gilravagmg thief in the hale of Scotland, and we'll see him yet, I sair misdoot it, with his held in the hangman's tow and kilted up as high as Haman.

From behind the hat-rack (swathed with the girls' shawls, it has quite concealed him) steps ROB *himself.*

ROB. Say you so, Cousin Nicol ? Say you so ?

BAILIE. My conscience, wha's this ? It's the deevil himsel', or it's Rob Roy. It's Rob Roy !

THE GIRLS. Father ! Father !

ROB. Morag, my dear — Shiona — Catriona — Fiona — Deirdre — Gruach — Grizel — Kirsty — Sheila — Bella — Jean. *(He has walked along the line, kissing each in turn)* And who has stolen your good dresses ?

MORAG. Oh, father, you don't understand at all. We are dressed like this because we were all going in for a Beauty Competition, and each of us is representing some famous city, as you can see for yourself. And then we were arrested for vagrancy in the streets of Glasgow. It was most unfair, because one of us, surely, would have got the first prize, and that would have been a great day for the children of Gregarach. To win a Beauty Competition for the whole of Perthshire, Inverness, and Argyll is a thing that no MacGregor ever did before.

ROB. What is your sex's earliest, latest care — your heart's ambition ? — To be accounted fair. . . . Thus it is to have daughters. — But leave me now, for I have business with these gentlemen. *(The girls retire to the background)* Sir Frederick, I am sorry to see you in prison.

SIR F. I'm sorry to be here, MacGregor. But we old soldiers learn to rough it, you know.

ROB. And you, Cousin Nicol : I apprehend that you are not too well pleased to see me here ?

BAILIE. Ye reivm' villain, ye cheat-the-gallows rogue, ye daft Hieland rascal that you are !

ROB. So that's the tone of it, is it ?

BAILIE. What the deil do you mean by settin' foot here — here in the Tolbooth of Glasgow ? It's just as I

said : ye've put your heid in the tow at last, Rob, and it's no my fault if you're kilted up as ye deserve to be.

ROB. It's not you, Cousin Nicol, that'll have me kilted in a tow. There's three good reasons against that, and a fourth forbye.

BAILIE. They'll need to be good yins, Rob. What are they ?

ROB. There's auld langsyne for the first, Cousin Nicol. There was the auld wife that was your grandmother and mine, and she's the second. And the third is that if you make a move to betray me, I'll plaster the walls with your brains before the hand of man can save you.

BAILIE. They're all three good reasons, Cousin Rob, and maybe the third is the best of them all. But what was the fourth you spoke of ?

ROB. Mattie, your housekeeper, is in grave danger. In the trunk that was carried from here, she going with it, there lay concealed a desperate man called Rashleigh Osbaldistone.

BAILIE. In the trunk, you tell me ?

OWEN. But that was my trunk !

SIR F. Rashleigh, you say ? I know him well. A shocking fellow.

ROB. They had barely gone two hundred yards from the Tolbooth here, when Rashleigh leapt out, overpowered poor Mattie, bundled her into the trunk where he had lain, and with the two porters who were carrying it, continued his journey.

BAILIE. The poor lassie. And her the cousin of the Laird of Limmerfield ! Oh, Rob, Rob, what can we do?

ROB. Why, follow and save her. Follow hot-foot, seize and overpower Rashleigh ; rescue poor Mattie ; recover the documents that lie in the trunk — your bills and bonds, Mr. Owen, your secret papers, Sir Frederick—

SIR F. That's where they are, are they ?

ROB. In the trunk.

SIR F. I've lost my secret papers far too often. They're a damned nuisance, if you ask me.

ROB. So now you know, Cousin Nicol, why I ventured to set foot in your city gaol. Have you any more questions to ask me ?

BAILIE. No, no. Save poor Mattie, that is all I ask.

ROB. I am ready.

THE GIRLS. Can we come too, father ?

ROB. Put on your shawls, then. The night is cold.

THE GIRLS. Yes, father.

ROB. And now, let us be on our way.

OWEN. But where ?

ROB. To the clachan of Aberfoyle !

CURTAIN

END OF ACT TWO

ACT III

SCENE I

The scene is played in front of a curtain that represents a romantic and rather purple Highland landscape. On the left there is a profection or tongue of rock — rather like that in Act II, Scene I — and behind it a road running, back left. At the tip of the tongue of rock stands a signpost that reads : To the Clachan of Aberfoyle. *It points to the road running, back left.*

ANGUS, *a very ragged and dirty little boy, comes in from this road, looks cautiously to left and right, and then turns the signpost so that it points to the right; and goes out again.*

RONALD *and* DONALD, *still carrying the trunk and whistling "The Road to the Isles ", come in by the road, front left, and stop, surprised, to look at the signpost.*

RONALD. That is not the way to the clachan, Donald.

DONALD. No indeed it is not. Unless they have been rebuilding it elsewhere.

RONALD. It is not likely they would put themselves to all that trouble. No, Donald, it will be someone has changed the signpost just for a mischief.

DONALD. That will be it indeed. We are full of mischief in the Hielands. Well, thank God we have not far to go now, Ronald, so let us be on our way again.

RONALD. Whatever you say, Donald.

They go out, carrying the trunk, by the road, back left. Scarcely has the sound of their whistling died away when RASHLEIGH *and* MATTIE, *affectionately arm-in-arm, come in by the road, front left.*

RASHLEIGH. What an idyllic day this has been, dear Mattie ! I shall never forget the happiness, the intoxicating bliss, of walking with you, dearest of women, through this enchanted Highland landscape. My cup of happiness is full.

MATTIE. That's just how I feel masel'. I've been in a dwaum all day, it's no' like real life at all. Is it no' wonderful to be in love ?

RASHUEIGH. It was what we were made for, Mattie : to love !

MATTIE. And to think that it all began when you loupit oot of that auld trunk, and snatched me up withoot sae muckle as a by-your-leave, and stuffed me intil't.

RASHLEIGH. And as you lay, so snugly within it, like a bird in its nest—

MATTIE. Oh, Rashleigh !

RASHLEIGH. I looked into your dark and lovely eyes, and felt my soul melting into yours.

MATTIE. Oh, it was wonderful in that trunk.

RASHLEIGH. In that moment my whole nature changed. I cast away that vile shadow of villainy, which for so long had dogged my steps, and became on the instant, not merely your devoted lover, Mattie, but pure in heart and a good man !

MATTIE. That is what they call the healing power of love, Rashleigh. I've often heard tell of it, but I

never thocht tae see it. Oh, it's just wonderful. — And I'll be a good wife tae you, you needna fear for that.

RASHLEIGH. And I shall try to be worthy of your love.

MATTIE. We'll dae our best, and there's naebody can dae mair. And now let's be on our way to the clachan, for I'm just dying for a cup of tea.

After glancing at the signpost they walk, arm-in-arm again, towards the right; but a whistle attracts them, and they turn and see RONALD *beckoning.*

RONALD, This way, Mr. Rashleigh. The signpost has been altered just for a mischief.

RASHLEIGH. Thank you, dear boy, thank you.

MATTIE. Just what you might expect ! They're full of mischief in the Hielands.

They follow RONALD, *on the road, back left, and then the sound of drum and fife playing " The British Grenadiers" comes up the road, front left, and the soldiers appear, led by* CAPTAIN THORNTON. *He carries a map and pauses below the signpost in doubt for a moment. The soldiers mark time, fife and drum still playing. Then* THORNTON *makes up his mind, and leads them straight on, to the right. As they go, a tall and imposing figure appears from the road, back left, and mounts the rock. She is* HELEN MACGREGOR, *and the barbaric splendour of her costume proclaims her importance.*

HELEN. May that be your fate, you Southron dogs, ever to take the wrong road and lose yourselves on a vain journey ! We want none of you here. No man, be he Scot or Sassenach, who was fatly reared in a Lowland kennel shall ever cross the Highland Line while Helen MacGregor has the strength to bid him turn. *(She flourishes her sword, and shouts)* Angus !

ANGUS. Yes, ma ?

HELEN. That was well contrived, that trick of yours to turn the signpost.

ANGUS. Yes, ma.

HELEN. You are a good boy, and a credit to your parents.

ANGUS. It would hae been awfie nice if the sodgers had come to the clachan, ma.

HELEN. What!

ANGUS. A' thae sodgers have got lots of cigarettes and chewing-gum. I could do wi' a cigarette fine.

HELEN. No child of mine shall ever sorn on the red soldiers !

ANGUS. Just whatever you say, ma. But it seems an awfie waste.

HELEN. You do not understand, child. Go and tell your sister Morag that I want to speak to her.

ANGUS. Yes, ma.

He goes out, by the road, back left, and MORAG *comes in. She now, like her mother, is plaided and wears a sword.*

MORAG. You were asking for me, mother.

HELEN. Are the women in position ?

MORAG. All in position. There's an outpost line running from here to Ben Scratchy, and the main line is south and east of the clachan.

HELEN. You know how serious the position is. All our menfolk are away, some lifting cattle in the south.

some driving their stolen herds into England for the Black Market—

MORAG. Ay, it's a fine life for the men.

HELEN. So for the present the defence of our country lies in the hands of us women. Can we keep it safe ?

MORAG. We'll do our best. There's every member of thirteen Women's Rural Institutes lying out in the heather, and maist of them just ettlm* to get to grips with the Sassenach.

HELEN. Our brave women !

MORAG. Ay, the Hielands would be in a sair way of it withoot the Women's Rural Institutes.

HELEN. Hush ! Down, Morag, down. Here come more travellers.

DIANA, SIR FREDERICK, and FRANK *appear on the road, front left. All carry shot-guns, and* ANDREW, *very disconsolate, follows with a heavy game-bag and leading a dog.*

SIR F. I've never seen a better year for grouse. Any quantity of them, fine big coveys, no cheepers, not a trace of disease. — What a pity we can't get some driven birds.

FRANK. I wonder if we could get some of the boys from the clachan to come and drive for us ?

SIR F. We might, you know. It would be worth trying, wouldn't it ?

DIANA. Oughtn't you to be thinking more seriously about the rebellion, father ? It's getting very near the date for raising the standard on the Braes of Mar, you

know, and if you spend all your time shooting grouse, the whole plan may be jeopardised.

SIR F, You can overdo this political business, my dear. I told them it was a bad time of year to start a rebellion, when everybody's out shooting — but they wouldn't listen to me. They wouldn't listen.

DIANA. Anyway, I don't want to shoot any more to-day. Let's go straight to the clachan, and see if anything is happening.

SIR F. All right, my dear. Just what you say.

DIANA. No, not that way. This is the way.

SIR F/ Oh, nonsense. Look at the signpost.

DIANA. But we're in the Highlands now, father, and in the Highlands you should never go by appearances.

SIR F. Something in that. Yes, something in that. Come on then, Andrew,

ANDREW. Me that's a gardener, working noo as a beast of burden and a dog-trainer ! There'll be trouble yet.

They go off by the road, back left; but FRANK *shows a tendency to linger.*

FRANK. It is a lovely evening, Diana. Must we go with them ?

DIANA. Yes, Frank. For I know exactly what you will say if we dally, and at the moment I am not in the rtiood for a proposal.

FRANK. There are times when you seem strangely hard of heart.

DIANA. My heart will be much softer when I have

had a cup of tea. That is what I really want, and then you can propose as often as you like. Come along.

They follow tie others, and, as they disappear, HELEN MACGREGOR, *appearing behind them and mounting the rock again, looks after them, exclaims contemptuously "* Sassenachs ! " *and spits. At that moment* ROB ROY *comes in by the road, left front.*

ROB. Think shame on yourself, woman.

HELEN. Robin ! Robin, my heart ! O joyful return. How long and weary the months have been in your absence ! — When will you be going away again ?

ROB. Now isn't that like a woman, to welcome her man with the question, " When are you going away again ? "

HELEN. It was just so that I could make arrangements, Robin. The women are all out in the heather.

ROB. Then call them in again, and set them to work. And tell me this, Helen : why should you be spitting at my guests ?

HELEN. Your guests, indeed ? They were a pack of dirty Sassenachs.

ROB. No matter about that. They are my guests, and yours, and you will treat them with all courtesy.

HELEN. Whatever you say yourself. It is only when you are away that I become bad-tempered and angry with folk, Robin. I would be very good-natured indeed if you would stay at home all the time.

ROB. Then show your good-nature now. Here come two other visitors, both footsore and weary. Take them to the clachan and use them kindly. (OWEN *and the* BAILIE

came in by the road, left front.) This is Mr. Owen from London, and Bailie Nicol Jarvie, a cousin of my own. My wife, gentlemen, will take care of you.

BAIUE. A dram to weet ma craig, and a tub of mustard and hot water for ma feet ; that's what I'm sairly needin', mistress.

HELEN. Then come with me — and you too, Mr. Owen — and whatever comfort our humble home can provide is yours to command. *(She points to road, back left, and they hobble away. Then she speaks to* ROB.) Was that weel said, Robin ? And you'll no' be long, will you ? For I canna be polite to a Sassenach for more than ten mmtites, unless you're there to compel me.

ROB. Go with them, wife. I'll follow soon.

As she follows them out, ROB comes forward and addresses the audience.

ROB. For once in my life I'm in a difficulty that I see no way out of. My Highland generosity has got the better of me, and that's the trouble. Here have I invited all these folk to the clachan of Aberfoyle, and now the devil take me if I ken what to do with them ! And there's that trunk full of documents forbye. All the secret plans of the Jacobite rebellion ; all the Government's confidential orders to its garrisons in Scotland ; and all the bills, bonds, and assets of Osbaldistone and Company. The responsibility for everything lies on me. I must think of some means of disposing of them, the men and the women and the documents too, so as to make a clean, tidy, satisfying finish to the play — and how to do it I'll be damned if I ken ! By common consent I'm the most cunning, wily, and ingenious man in Scotland ; but this fair beats me.

I'm in more than half a mind to turn my back on the whole clamjamfry, and leave them to settle it as they can. — But who's this, that's coming ? Here, by heaven, is another problem !

From the right comes the music of " The British Grenadiers ". As THORNTON *appears, leading drum and fife and Jour soldiers,* ROB *draws his sword and jaces them. The drum and fife, still playing, wheel and go out again, right.*

THORNTON. You are Rob Roy MacGregor ?

ROB. My foot is on my native heath, and the name, as you infer — is MacGregor.

THORNTON. Then I arrest you in the King's name.

ROB. Which king ?

THORNTON. His Majesty King George.

ROB. It may be he is not the king I recognise.

THORNTON. You will, however, have no difficulty in recognising the significance of these muskets.

His soldiers come to the aiming position.

ROB. The broad moor lies behind me, and the gloaming will soon be upon us. I am not yet your captive.

THORNTON. You will not run far, Mr. MacGregor. (ROB, *who has heen hacking gradually towards the road, left front, turns his head in that direction, and listens. The drum and fife are heard again, and now the* SERGEANT *leads on another Jour men.)* You are surrounded, you see, and your only course is to surrender.

ROB. And then ?

THORNTON. You will, of course, come with us,

ROB. Where are you going ?

THORNTON. To the clachan of Aberfoyle.

The evening light has been Jading, and as ROB *is marched off closely guarded, it darkens appreciably.*

The stage empties and then,Jrom their posts in the heather, the MACGREGOR GIRLS *come in — singly, cautiously, armed with rifles and other weapons — and gather under their leader* MORAG, *who sings a lament for their sad life in the heather.*

" The Weary Fund o' Tow ", *S.M.M.,* No. 350

We women had ambitions once
To change the marriage vow,
And claim equality with men —
We ken the difference now.

CHORUS

A soldier's life is very hard,
He rarely goes to bed ;
He has to fight to save the right,
He's left when he is dead.

We used to blame men for their pride,
The cold unfeeling brutes !
And prove that we were just as good
In Rural Institutes.

Chorus.

For we can plough, and we can hoe,
And sell a beast or buy it;

We're good as you, we said — but now
We wish we had kept quiet.

Chorus.

So be it, they answered, arm yourselves
To guard the motherland ;
And so we went on sentry-go,
And sentries now we stand.

Chorus.

And oh ! we're weary ; oh ! we're sad,
We want to go to sleep —
So sad it is to be a man
That we need peace to weep.

Chorus.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE ONE

ACT III

SCENE II

The clachan of Aberfoyle. At the back of the stage, diagonally situated, one on either side, are two turf-roofed cabins, 'whose broad open doors give a view of their dark interiors. Rough benches stand outside ; and between the cottages there is an open space of turf, with a view of purple mountains behind them. In the left foreground there is an extremely primitive still with steam leaking from the barrel. In front of the left-hand cottage stands the trunk.

Tending the still are DONALD *and* RONALD : *the latter at the discharging end of it, the former kneeling beside the stove.*

RONALD *(dipping a cup into the basin).* It is very good whisky. It is as good as I have ever tasted.

DONALD. But the stove is going out, Ronald, and the mash will be wasted if we do not keep the fire burning. Go, will you, and get me a peat.

RONALD. There is no peats left in the clachan. There was none cut this year, with all the men away at the cattle-lifting, and all the women at the Rural Institutes.

DONALD. Then bring me some wood whatever.

RONALD. The wood was all burnt long ago.

DONALD. Then the stove will go out, and the mash will be wasted.

RONALD. Oh, but we cannot let that happen, for that would be a tragedy indeed. Donald !

DONALD. Yes, Ronald?

RONALD. There is all those papers in the trunk, Donald. They are no use to anyone here in the clachan of Aberfoyle.

DONALD. No use at all, and we didn't carry them all this way to be wasted. They will keep the fire burning very prettily, and save the good mash.

RONALD *(fetching bundles of documents from the trunk, all neatly tied in pink tape, and giving them to* DONALD, *who stuffs than into the stove).* Put them well in, Donald, and blow it with your breath. Is it burning now ?

DONALD. It will be a bonny fire in just one minute. Are there any more documents, Ronald ?

RONALD *(returning with another armful).* Here is one marked *Top Secret:* put that in quickly. And here is another that says *Destroy when read* — but we haven't time to read it now. And here are Negotiable Securities, Donald. You can negotiate them just as you please.

He loosens the clip at the end of the tube from' the worm and tastes the whisky again. The whisky is better than ever. It is coming more strongly now.

While DONALD *continues to feed the fire, a very old man with a long white beard comes towards them from one of the cottages. He is the* SEER OF ABERFOYLE.

SEER. And what is going on here, boys ?

RONALD. Just a small illicit still that we're working, grandpapa. Will you try a taste of the whisky ?

SEER. It is good. It is nearly as good as the whisky

I used to make myself when I was a young boy* I will take another cup of it. . . . Did I ever tell you of the prophecy I once made ?

RONALD. I have heard it often, grandpapa.

SEER. Then you will be glad to hear it again. This is the way it goes :

When money tastes as hot as fire,
And whisky falls like the mountain dew, . . .
And whisky falls—

oh, but I have forgotten it! I have quite forgotten it, and it was a very fine prophecy. I invented it myself, with no'one helping me at all. Put down the basin, Ronald, and let me sit on the chair.

RONALD *moves the basin from the chair, and the chair a little ; and the* SEER *sits where, behind the still, he mil be out of the way, and still can replenish his glass.*

The BAILIE *and* OWEN *come from one of the cottages, and* RONALD *and* DONALD, *observing them, discreetly vanish.*

BAILIE. The very air is perneecious, Mr. Owen, and induces a habit of slothfulness. Here have we been for twa days, and what have we done in the way of business ? Naething. Naething ava. And it's all the fault of the Hieland air, that maist abominably inclines a man tae tak' pleasure in life ! Here am I, that's weel respected in the Sautmarket of Glasgow, a man that's never wasted a day in idle pleasure before — and no more did my father the deacon before me — and now, to my shame I confess it, I'm as idle as an auld mare oot at grass, and enjoying masel' fine. Oh, it's fair scandalous.

And yet, Mr. Owen, I've no inclination to improve masel'.

OWEN. I must confess, Mr. Jarvie, that I am in the same frame of mind. I am well aware that my indolence and self-indulgence are most reprehensible, and yet I have to admit that they are giving me a great deal of happiness. The Highland air is to blame : there can be no doubt of that.

BAILIE. Nae doot ava.

OWEN. This is the first holiday I have ever had in my life, and now I want my whole life to be a holiday ! Oh, what I really want is quite shocking ! And yet we must set to work, some time or other, and examine the documents — all those horrid documents — that wait for us in that disgusting trunk over there.

BAILIE. All in good time, Mr. Owen. We'll tak' a dram first, and maybe that will compose our minds and incline us to business.

OWEN. I'm sure I hope so — but do you think it will ?

BAILIE. You never can tell till you try.

A girl has appeared carrying a tray on which are glasses and a jug. She has filled the jug from the still —from the dripping pipe — and offered drinks to the BAILIE *and* OWEN. *They take them and retire to a bench beside one of the cottages. From the other come* CAPTAIN THORNTON *and his* SERGEANT.

THORNTON. And there's no reply from Scottish Command yet ?

SERGEANT. No, sir. There was a signal to say that you had overdrawn your rations last month, and failed

to return a parade-state for this month, and reminding you that in the event of action all cartridge-cases must be collected and returned to Ordnance. But nothing really helpful, sir,

THORNTON. In that case, Sergeant, I'm very glad that I used my own judgment and accepted the prisoners' parole. It would have been very difficult and embarrassing to have kept them all under close arrest.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

THORNTON. I feel sure they can be trusted not to escape. Indeed, he would be a very foolish person who ran away from such an idyllic spot as this.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir. I'm coming back here for my next leave, and bringing the wife.

THORNTON. I think you're very wise. Now as to the prisoners: Mrs. MacGregor is keeping an eye on her husband, and Rashleigh Osbaldistone won't leave so long as Miss Mattie is here. Miss Vernon — whom I was most reluctant to arrest, but she's a Jacobite, there's no doubt of that — she is under the benevolent eye of Mr. Frank Osbaldistone ; and Sir Frederick has been getting some very good shooting, so he won't go. Yes, it was safe enough to give them parole.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

THORNTON. But this evening, Sergeant, we really must examine that trunk and see what it contains. There are War Office instructions in it, you know : instructions to all the English garrisons in Scotland.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

THORNTON. I loathe and detest office work, but one must do it from time to time. — Why, what a pleasant

idea ! This is most kind of you, my dear. Thank you very much indeed. *(The girl who carries jug and glasses has appeared again and offered them drinks, which they have taken.)* And this reminds me, Sergeant, to warn you again, and through you to warn the other ranks, that so long as they stay here there must be no fraternisation.

SERGEANT. No, sir.

THORNTON. The people here are very agreeable, and seem to be most friendly, but the Government has laid down a certain policy, and we must adhere to it. So remember : no fraternisation !

Here a song by the SERGEANT:

" Yon Wild Mossy Mountains", *S.MM.* No. 331

The life of a soldier is full of heart-burn,
His soul is so tender, his duty so stern,
He fights like a lion while there's fight in his foes,
But when they are beaten he's sweet as a rose.

He enters a town that has stubbornly fought
To keep him outside — as indeed it had ought —
He meets a fair maiden and looks in her eyes,
Then remembers his order : *You don't Jratefnise.*

He says to the maiden, " You're lovely and slim,
And if you'd a sweetheart, I'd like to be him,
But the Government's issued a horrid respite :
Though we conquer by day, we're still neutral by night".

" Oh, sir," she replied, " then your Government's daft ! "
" All Governments are," I responded, and laughed:

" Mr. Stalin himself, if he looked in your eyes,
Would declare to the world, ' We must all fraternise!"

" Then come, sir," she whispered, " to my little house,
We'll be lively as larks, but as quiet as a mouse ! "—
But I had to refuse her because of my oath
To his Majesty George and his daughters, them both.

Now I'm told that in certain less orderly mobs
They all have their sweethearts, quite regular jobs,
But whatever the practice in Reg'ments of the Line—
We men of the Guards have our own disci-plyne !

CAPTAIN THORNTON. And a very good thing too, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN THORNTON. No nonsense in the Guards !

SERGEANT. No, sir.

And so you young girls, though we look in your eyes,
Remember that none of us may fraternise ;
For soldiers say *yes,* but their Governments *no,*
And that's why the Fountain of Peace doesn't flow!

THORNTON. And now I must go and .resume my examination of Sir Frederick. He's a most interesting man, and full of information, but I think he knows more about grouse than politics. Now remember, Sergeant—

SERGEANT, Yes, sir. No fraternisation.

As THORNTON *retires to the cottage,* ANGUS *appears and addresses the* SERGEANT, wio *is lighting a cigarette.*

ANGUS. Gie's a cigarette, mister.

SERGEANT. Go away.

ANGUS. Gie's a cigarette and I'll go.

SERGEANT. You're much too young to be smoking.

ANGUS. It's no' for masel' I'm speirin', it's for ma puir auld mither.

SERGEANT. I'm not going to give you a cigarette. I'm not going to give you anything.

ANGUS. Hae ye ony chewing-gum ?

SERGEANT. No.

ANGUS. I like the chewing-gum fine. And so does ma puir auld mither.

SERGEANT. I haven't got any, and I wouldn't give it you if I had.

ANGUS. Will you be wanting a souvenir of bonny Aberfoyle ? *(He pulls from behind his back a little slung tray Jull of tartan ribbons and the like.*)* Here's a right bonny thing: that's the MacGregor tartan. And here's a real Cairngorm brooch, it's only hauf a croon. And here's the songs of Robbie Burns—

SERGEANT. I don't want any of them.

ANGUS. You're no wanting the songs of Robbie Burns?

SERGEANT. No !

ANGUS. Well, you'll be needing some picture post-cards onywye. Here's ane of the Trossachs, and that's Loch Lomond, and that's the Forth Bridge.

SERGEANT. Go away, you disgusting little boy, go away !

The girl with the jug and the glasses has come again.

GIRL. Yes, yes, go away, Angus. You are being a nuisance to the gentleman.

ANGUS. Well, gie's a cigarette.

He gets his cigarette and goes.

GIRL. I hope little Angus was not annoying you, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. No, indeed, miss. He's a smart little youngster, isn't he ? He's the sort that'll make his way in the world one of these days.

GIRL. He is very self-assured. It is a great thing to be self-assured.

SERGEANT. I wouldn't say but what you're right there.

GIRL. You will be having a dram, Sergeant ? Yes, it is a fine thing to be self-assured. I am not like Angus at all ; for I am blate, I am unco blate.

SERGEANT. Go on !

GIRL. Yes, it is a fact that cannot be disputed. I am SO blate that I cannot ask you to do me a favour, though I am in very great need of someone who would be friendly and come to my assistance.

SERGEANT. Well, miss, I'm very sorry, but I've got

my orders, and my orders are that I'm not to go fraternising with the natives.

GIRL. Oh, but indeed, Sergeant, I wouldn't be asking the like of that at all ! No, no ! It is just a friendly act that I am seeking, and nothing like fraternisation or anything nasty at all.

SERGEANT. Well, miss—

GIRL. I have broken my spinning-wheel, and I am wondering if you could not help me to mend it. That is all.

SERGEANT. Well, that's different, of course. I'll be only too pleased, miss.

As they go off together to one of the cottages, there appear, from the one side, RASHLEIGH *and* MATTIE ; *from the other,* FRANK *and* DIANA. DIANA *comes forward and joins* MATTIE *on the left,* RASHLEIGH *joins* FRANK *on the right.*

DIANA. Dear Mattie, I have scarcely had a chance to speak to you since I heard your good news. It is one of the most tiresome attributes of a man that he takes up so much of a girl's time.

MATTIE. They're terribly dependent on you, there's no gainsaying that. But surely that's just what makes you realise the privilege of being a woman : you can take care of the poor soul.

DIANA. In your particular case you are undoubtedly right , for to take care of Rashleigh is a task that would test the capacity of any woman. In your married life, dear Mattie, I am sure you will never have a dull moment.

MATTIE. Oh, but neither will you, Miss Diana: not if you truly love your man, and I'm sure you do that.

DIANA. Yes, yes. But Frank, dear fellow, is essentially a good man, and Rashleigh, say what you like in his favour, is naturally a villain, and therefore a more exciting person for a woman to have in the house ; and so your life will be more interesting than mine — though perhaps not so pleasant — and I am inclined to envy you a little.

MATTIE. Whether he's a villain or a saint, I'm going to be real happy. . . .

RASHLEIGH *(to* FRANK). It is true that we have had our differences in the past, but nowadays, I can promise you, I am a changed man. I am like a jelly that has been re-melted and cast into another mould : such are the elemental power of love and the remarkable personality of my dear Mattie. And so I can, without *arrihe-pensee,* congratulate you with all my heart on your success with my lovely cousin Diana.

FRANK. I am much indebted to you for it, Rashleigh ; for if you had not jilted her—

RASHLEIGH. Jilted is a harsh word, cousin.

FRANK. —if you had not decided to wed your Mattie, Diana would still have considered herself pledged either to marry you, or enter a convent. But you set her free from one half of her promise, and her father from the other ; for now that he is a prisoner of the Government, he cannot possibly pay for her maintenance at the very select and most expensive convent he had intended for her. And so, when you and he both failed her, I stepped into the breach and won her.

RASHLEIGH. You are too modest, cousin. You would have won her against any odds.

FRANK. I know my place, cousin. I am marrying a modern girl, and therefore I cannot hope to do anything but play second fiddle.

RASHLEIGH. We are both in the same boat; for I, as a reformed character, will certainly have to toe the line as Mattie bids me.

Here a song in which each pair takes a part, and so to the ensemble :

" Love will find out the way", 5 *M.M* , No 150

Despite all confusion
Of story and plot,
By timely collusion
And knowing what's what —
Though the heroine falters
And heroes may stray,
When circumstance alters
Love will find out the way.

Once fate seemed uncertain,
And fortune amiss,
But now the last curtain
Can fall on a kiss !
So vanish all trouble
From our *partie carreè ;*
Though the wedding be double,
Love will find out the way.

Then RASHLEIGH *and* MATTIE *to one side,* FRANK *and* DIANA *to the other, go off as* SIR FREDERICK *and* CAPTAIN THORNTON *come out from their cottage.*

SIR F. So you're a son of old Copper Thornton, are you ? Well, well, now isn't that an extraordinary thing. We fought at Blenheim together ! And how's your father getting on ?

THORNTON. He's very cheerful, though he doesn't move about much on a wooden leg, you know.

SIR F. No, I suppose he doesn't. And you're old Copper Thornton's boy ! God bless my soul, do you realise that when we charged at Blenheim your father was leading the right-hand squadron of his regiment—

THORNTON. The 3rd Carabimers.

SIR F 3rd Carabmiers it was ; and I was immediately on his flank leading the left-hand squadron of the Skins ! I remember him standing up in his stirrups, just before we broke into the Frenchmen, and shouting — well, what he shouted was rather rude.

THORNTON. His language is still rather violent.

SIR F. I'm sure it is.

THORNTON. Well, sir, I hope you will admit that I have treated my father's old friend without undue harshness.

SIR F. You've treated me splendidly. I've had a couple of days of good shooting, and if it wasn't for this damned political squabble, I've no doubt we should be very good friends.

THORNTON. Indeed I hope so. And now, sir, if you will examine these Jacobite papers of yours, and decide what's to be done with them, I'll have a look at my confidential instructions, and we'll try to get things straightened out a bit.

SIR F. Quite right, quite right. It's a damned nuisance, all this paper work, but it's got to be done some time.

THORNTON *(shouting).* Sergeant!

SERGEANT *(comingfrom behind cottage).* Sir.

THORNTON. Pull that trunk up here, will you.

BAILIE *(rising with* OWEN *from their bench — where they need not have remained all this time, but to which they have returned at a convenient opportunity — and now coming forward).* Me and my friend Mr. Owen were just thinking it was about time to hae a look into it, Captain. There's a swatch of documents in there that's of muckle concern to him, ye ken.

OWEN. Most important documents. Oh, most important.

THORNTON. We shall divide them according to subject, and make a full examination.

BAILIE. Back to work, Mr. Owen — though I never felt less inclined for it.

OWEN. It seems so unnecessary, here in the Highlands — but I suppose we must.

THORNTON. Why, what's the matter, Sergeant ?

The trunk has been brought to the front and middle of the stage. DIANA *and* FRANK, RASHLEIGH *and* MATTIE, *have returned from either side, and they, witl* THORNTON *and* SIR FREDERICK, *the* BAILIE *and* OWEN, *form a rough line behind it. In front of them, kneeling, the* SERGEANT *has thrown up the lid and exclaimed,* " Well, I'll be hanged ! "

SERGEANT. It's empty.

OWEN. EMPTY!

They lean forward to look in, and then, like a feu de joie, *the following remarks run swiftly from end to end of the line.*

FRANK. Good heavens.

DIANA. It's empty.

OWEN. We're ruined.

BAILIE. You're sunk.

THORNTON. I can't understand it.

SIR F. Well, really. Well, really.

MATTIE. It's toom, it is true.

RASHLEIGH. I'm delighted, I'm sure.

FRANK. But this is disastrous.

DIANA. And wholly absurd.

OWEN. We're bankrupt and broke.

BAILIE. We'll be hammered on 'Change.

THORNTON. My secret instructions.

SIR F. My Jacobite plans.

MATTIE. It's quite true that it's toom.

RASHLEIGH. And a good thing for me, I can tell you.

Here a song by the SERGEANT, *with chorus ;*

" Auld King Coul", *S.M.M.*, No. 473

Oh, once I was rich, a circumstance which
Did suit my personal whim ;

But the ship coming home sank underneath the foam,
And then I had to swim.

CHORUS

Wirra, wirra, tirra-lirra, and you can't deny
That an empty glass and a runaway lass
They are not worth a fly !

Now I had a little wife, as sharp as a knife,
And she sang night and day,
So sharp in every note that I cut her little throat,
And left her where she lay.

CHORUS

Tittle-tattle, what a prattle ! Oh, I felt so shy,
Wirra, wirra, etc.

When sitting in a snug with a bottle and a jug,
My life is just sublime.
But the clock upon the wall is a traitor to us all,
And soon it's closing-time.

CHORUS

Ripple, tipple, till a sip'll make you soar on high,
Tittle-tattle, etc.

So the less that is said, you're the quicker into bed,
And *vive la compagnie !*
What you can't kill or cure you will have to endure,
And that's philosophee.

CHORUS

Hit the bottle, Aristotle, that's philoso-phy,
Ripple, tipple, till a sip'll make you soar on high,

Tittle-tattle, what a prattle ! Oh, I felt so shy,
Wirra-wirra, tirra-lirra, and you can't deny
That an empty glass and a runaway lass
They are not worth a fly !

THORNTON. Sergeant, we must assemble immediately a Court of Inquiry. Send for Mr. MacGregor.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

BAILIE. Your Highland holiday is going to be prolonged, Mr. Owen.

OWEN. At very great expense, perhaps.

The SERGEANT *leads* ROB ROY *forward, from one of the cottages. The others Jail back, half to either side.*

THORNTON. Mr. MacGregor, we are confronted by a most embarrassing situation. This trunk, which we had supposed to contain the most valuable and important documents, is now discovered to be empty. Can you suggest what has happened to them ?

ROB. If mischief has been done, I can guess who did it. *(Shouting first to the one side, then to the other.)* Ronald ! Donald !

RONALD }
and *From opposite sides}.* Yes, father.
DONALD.]

ROB. What have you done with the papers that lay in yon trunk ?

RONALD. You'll not want us to answer that before all these folk ?

ROB. I do.

DONALD. We just did what we were told.

ROB. By whom ?

DONALD. By our mother, of course. It is always she who is telling us to do things.

ROB. What thing was this ?

RONALD. She told us to set up the illicit still and make a little good whisky against your return.

ROB. Yes ?

DONALD. But there was nothing to keep the fire going. There was no peats cut this year, with all the men out at the cattle-lifting.

RONALD. And the women at the Rural Institutes all the time. There was nothing to make a fire with, except—

DONALD. Except some paper that we found.

ROB. In the trunk ?

RONALD. They were bundles of old paper that were no good to anyone at all.

ROB. So you have burnt them ?

DONALD. What else could we do ?

RONALD. Our mother had told us to make some whisky, and you would not like us to be disobedient.

ROB. Well, Captain Thornton, that is the answer : the documents have been burnt and we have nothing to show that they ever existed except a gallon or two of whisky.

THORNTON. My secret instructions — the evidence against my prisoners — they have all gone ?

ROB. All gone.

SIR F. My plans for the rebellion ?

OWEN. My stocks and shares, my bills and bonds ?

RASHLEIGH. The proofs of my villainy ?

ROB. All gone !

THE SEER *(waking with a long-drawn-out and very noisy yawn and coining down to the centre of the stage).* Well, well. And what is this great gathering for ? Is it you yourself, Rob ? I am glad to see you, very glad to see you. I have been having a fine dream, Rob. I have been dreaming that my prophecy came true. *(To* THORNTON) When I was a young man I invented a prophecy, a most beautiful prophecy, that sometimes I remember and sometimes I forget. It goes like this :

When money tastes as hot as fire,
And whisky falls like the mountain dew,
Young men will come to their desire,
And red will be the truest blue.

When grass grows strong and iron bends,
And plots and plans the pot do boil,
Then foes will be the dearest friends,
And we'll dance all night in Aberfoyle.

DIANA. But really — well, now, that's most remarkable ! *(To* SEER) My dear sir, I do congratulate you most heartily. I think this solves all our problems, doesn't it ? For no one can dispute a prophecy, especially in the Highlands. *(To audience)* Ladies and Gentlemen, J was getting rather worried, for I couldn't see how we were ever going to bring the play to an end ; but this old gentleman has cleared things up very nicely indeed.

We shan't be more than a few minutes now. You *do* see, don't you, how the prophecy fits the case ? " When money tastes as hot as fire, when plots and plan? the pot do boil " — well, that is exactly what has happened.

THORNTON. And foes, willy-nilly, have become friends, for all my evidence against my prisoners has vanished, and I have decided to withdraw — take note of this, Sergeant — I have decided to withdraw my order against fraternisation.

Here, from behind the cottages, appear momentarily soldiers and girls — two and two — who cry Hurrah!" *and promptly vanish again.*

SIR F. *(to* THORNTON). And red, sir, the red of the King's uniform, has always been true blue.

RASHLEIGH. There was one line in the prophecy that I failed to understand : a line that went, if I remember, [41] When grass grows strong and iron bends ".

SEER. That was just put m to make it more difficult. It doesn't mean anything at all.

DIANA. So that's that. Now is everybody satisfied ?

OWEN. How can I feel satisfied when the great firm of Osbaldistone and Company is now ruined ?

DIANA. I shouldn't bother too much about that, Mr. Owen. My intellectual friends all tell me that capitalism is doomed in any case. My dear Frank here is going to be very poor indeed, but we aren't worrying.

FRANK. Our love will make us rich.

DIANA. What an adorable thing to say ! — And now that everything has been settled, we have only to arrange the dance.

HELEN'S VOICE *(off).* Robin !

ROB. Just a moment. Yes, my dear ?

HELEN'S VOICE. Where are you, Robin ?

ROB. Here !

HELEN *(coming from one of the cottages with some red garments over one arm).* Robin, I've been thinking about those two boys of ours. Oh, there they are. Have you made that whisky yet ?

RONALD and DONALD. Yes, mother.

HELEN. Well done, you're good boys. But the fact is, Robin, that here, in this simple place, they haven't got enough to occupy their minds ; and I'm very much afraid that some day they will get into mischief.

ROB. That is a true word, Helen. You are very wise.

HELEN. It's time they were getting a more formal education than we can give them here, Robin. We who are parents must sacrifice ourselves to give our children a chance in life that we were denied ; and so I have decided that Ronald and Donald must go immediately to the University. Yes, and all this day I have been stitching wearily to make their University gowns. Here, Ronald. Here, Donald. Wear these, work hard, be good boys and a credit to your father.

They put on the red togas that she has given them.

RONALD. I am very grateful to you, mother. I will be proud indeed to become an educated man.

DONALD. Indeed yes. I think, when I have been educated, that I will become a Civil Servant, Ronald.

RONALD. It is a fine easy life to be sure. I will do the same, Donald, and there we shall both sit in a warm, comfortable office until it is time for us to ^et our pension.

DONALD. And then we shall come home again, and spend our declining years in the clachan. of Aberfoyle.

Here a song, by one or other of the MACGREGORS, *and* CHORUS.

The soldiers of CAPTAIN THORNTON's *company appear from each side, escorting the* MACGREGOR GIRLS *who, like their brothers, now wear the red toga. Their Leader sings the second verse, and they the second chorus. As it finishes,* ANDREW FAIRSERVICE *pushes his way to the front, and addresses the audience.*

" AW Whigs, awa' I " S *M M*, No 263

Come ben the hoose, the good wife said,
Come ben, and be my leal anes ;
In my auld-farrant hoose, she said,
The benmost pairt's the Hielan's !

CHORUS

Now a health to the King !
And a health to the Gael !
Rise, and let the people sing
Scotland shall prevail !

We've shed our blood in every land,
It blooms still in the rowans ;
We've little wealth into our hand,
But the gold of a' the gowans.

Chorus.

The bluebell and the wee white rose,
The bonny Hielan' heather —
We've usquebae and good kail brose,
And a wheen O' dirty weather.

Chorus.

We've bonny lasses, burly men
Upon the pattern built, sirs,
That Eve approved *when,* swaggerm' ben
Cam' Adam in a kilt, sirs !

Chorus.

From Balaclava to the Rhine,
In battle we'll be foremost —
And fill us with our native wine,
Our virtue is enormous !

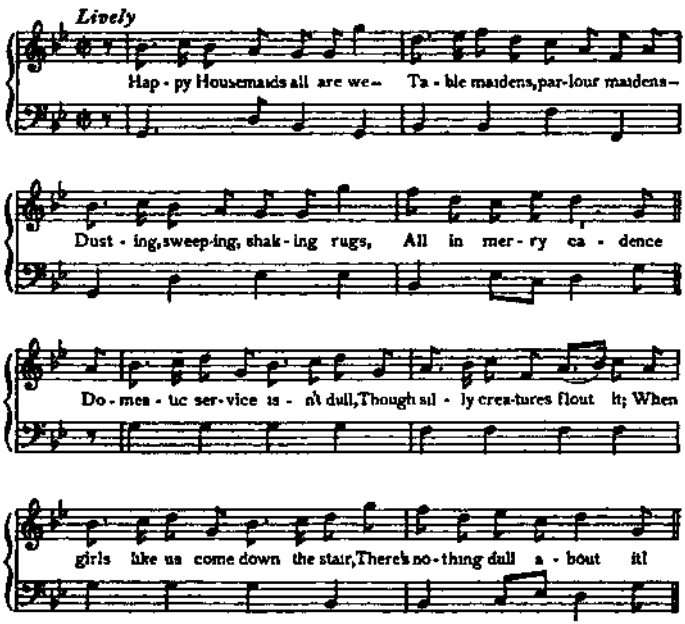
Chorus.

ANDREW. There's just ae thing that's been forgotten. Just ae thing — and that's me ! I'm a gardener to trade. It was just sheer good-nature that persuaded me to come and help all these dozent loons and glaikit hizzies to act a play for you — and what's the result ? What's my reward ? I'm gaun tae be unemployed again ; that's all. So if any of you ladies and gentlemen should ken of a good place where I would hear pure doctrine, and hae a free coo's grass, and a hoose and a yaird, and ten pounds annual fee — weel, if you'll just come roond tae the Stage Door and gie me the particulars, I'll be real grateful.

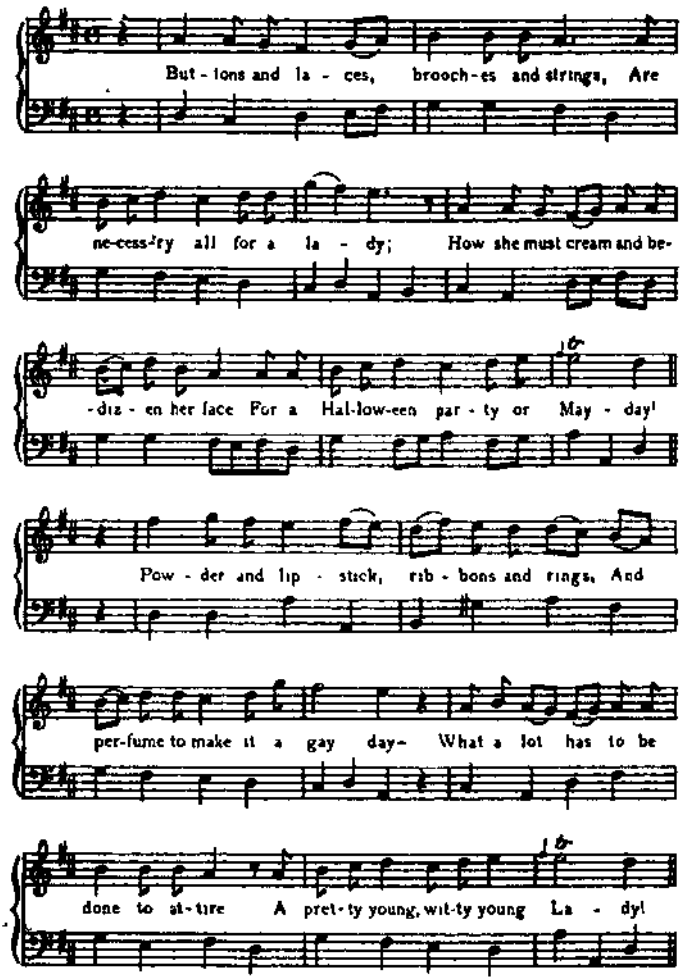
He steps back into the line, and there follow the remaining verses, and, by the whole company, the final concluding Chorus.

CURTAIN

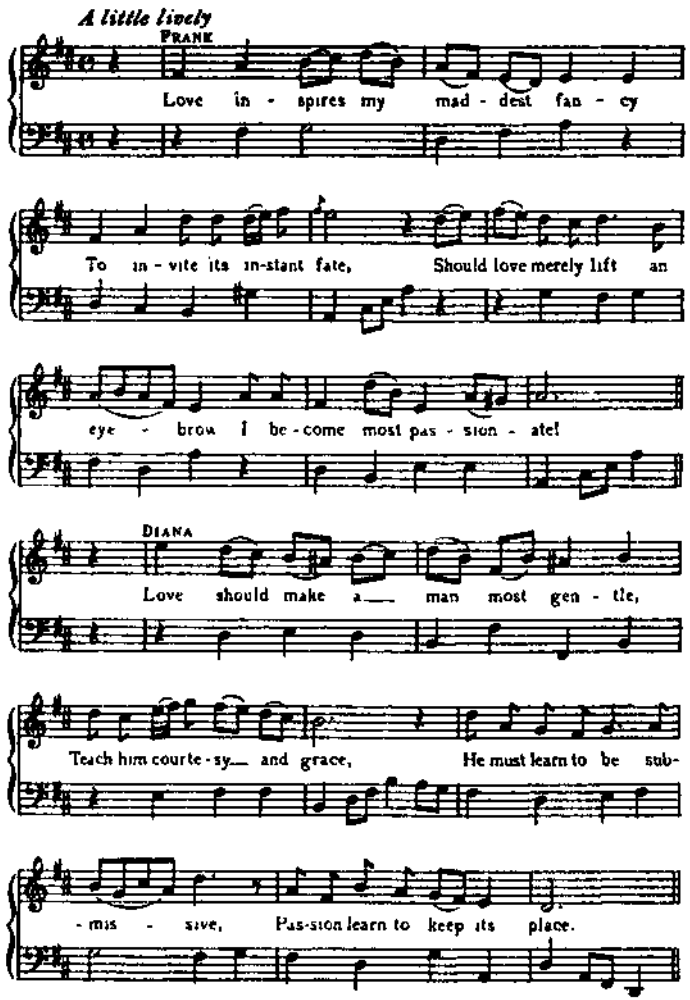
Song i. Leader and the MacGregor Girls



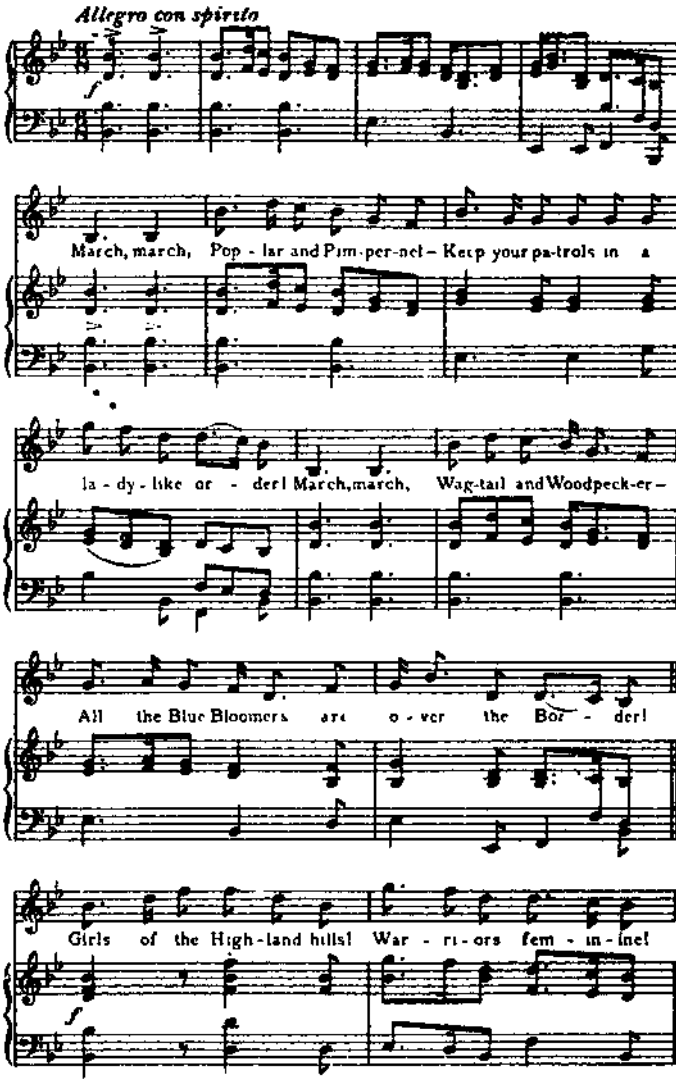
Song 2. Diana


But - tons and la - ces, brooch-es and strings, Are
ne-cess-ry all for a la - dy; How she must cream and be-
-diz - en her face For a Hal-low-een par - ty or May - day!
Pow - der and lip - stick, rib - bons and rings, And
per-fume to make it a gay day- What a lot has to be
done to at-tire A pret-ty young, wit-ty young La - dy!

Song 3. Frank and Diana

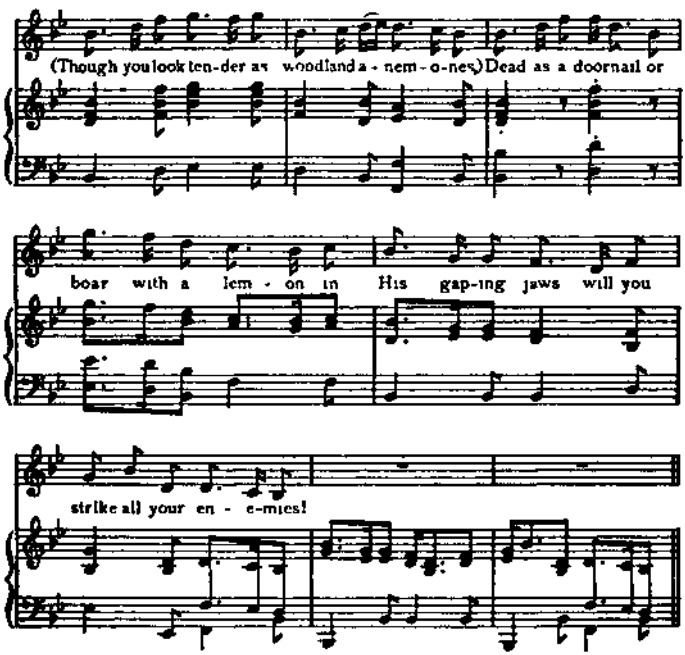


Song 4. The MacGregor Girls

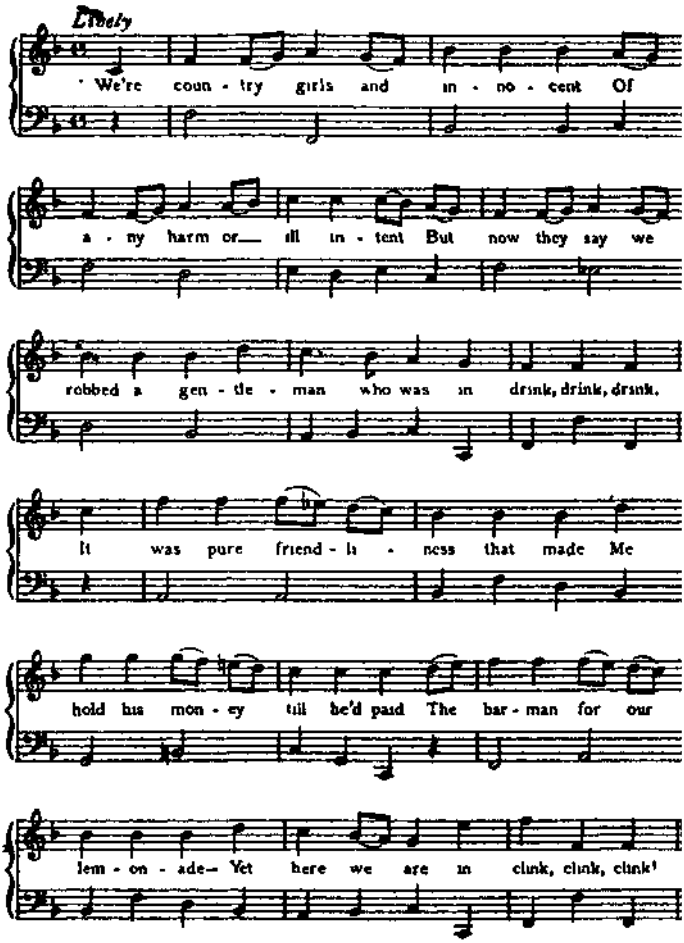


*

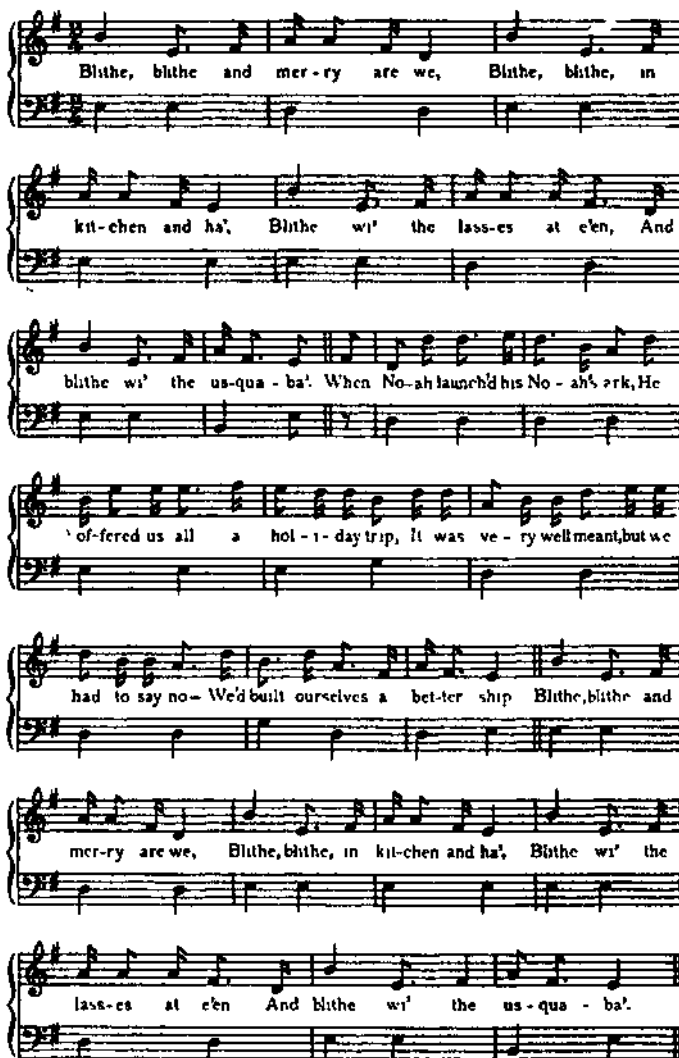
Song 4. (contd.)


(Though you look ten-der as woodland a - nem - o-nes) Dead as a doornail or
boar with a lem - on in His gap-ing jaws will you
strike all your en - e-mies!

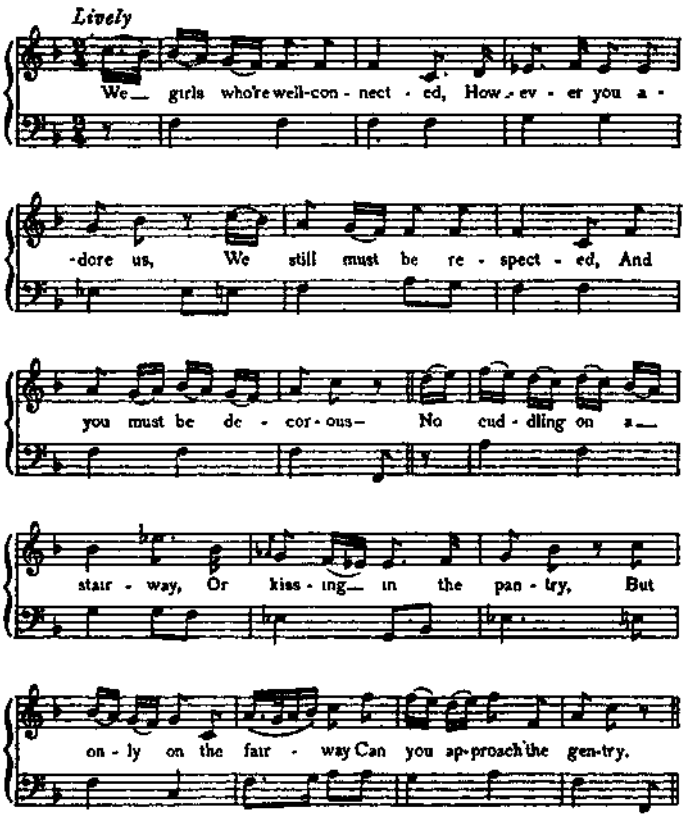
Song 5. Leader and the MacGregor Girls



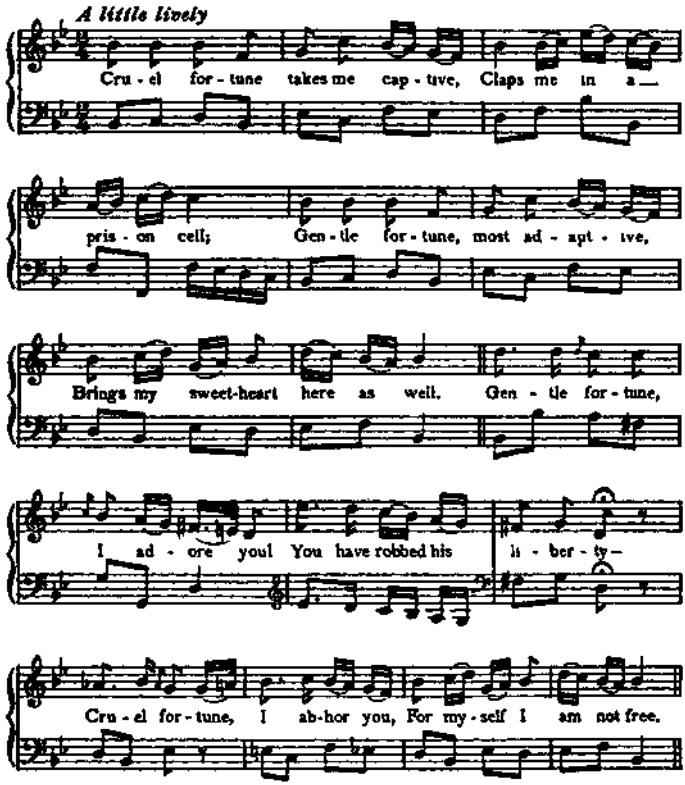
Song 6. Ronald, Donald, and Rashleigh



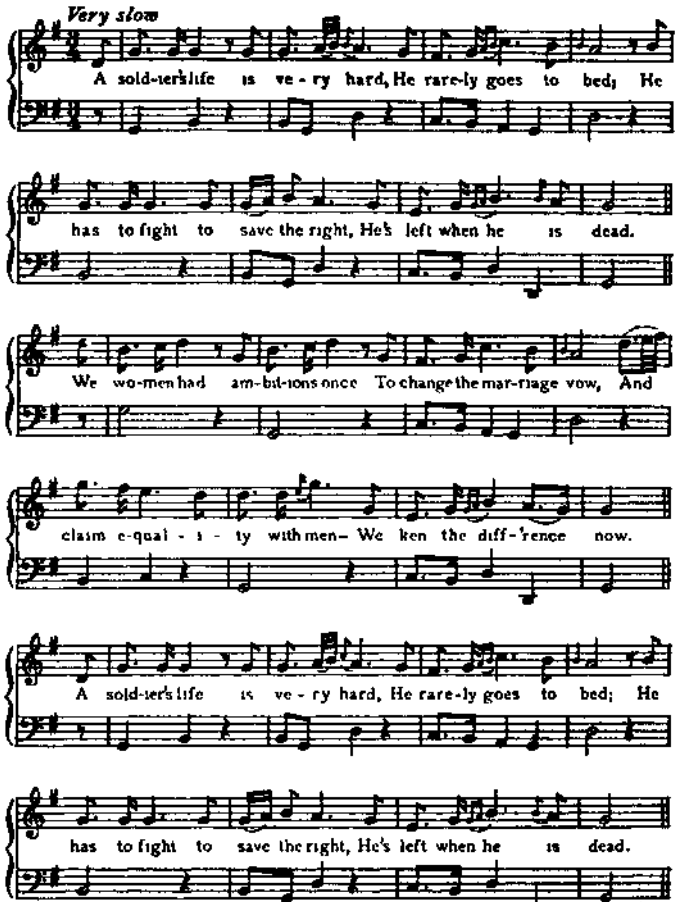
Song 7. ivlattie



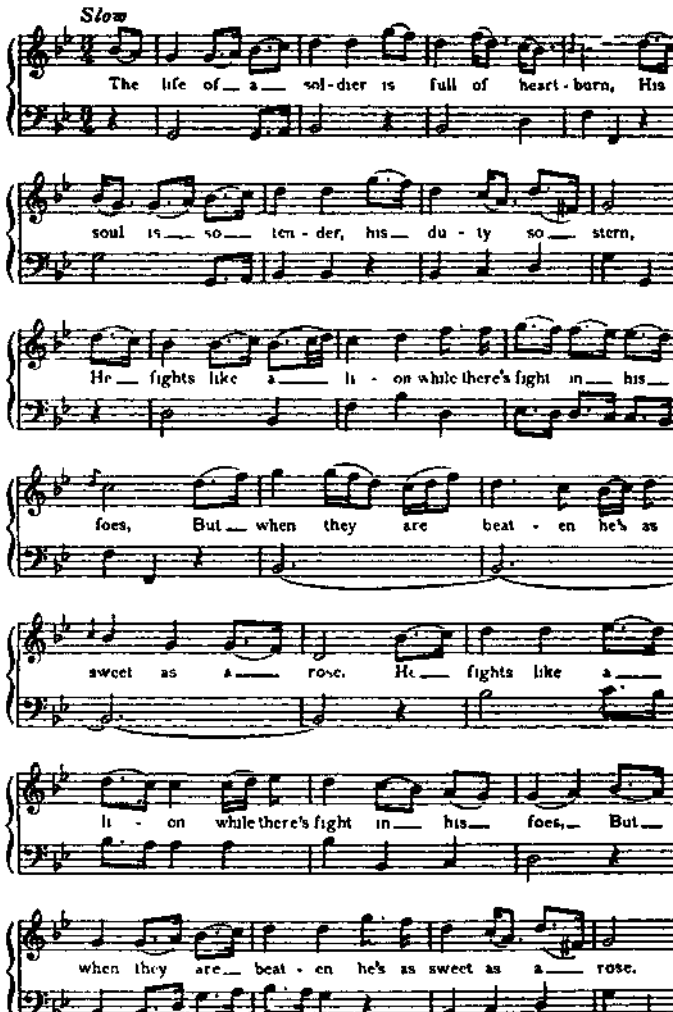
Song 8. Frank, Diana, Leader, and the MacGregor Girls

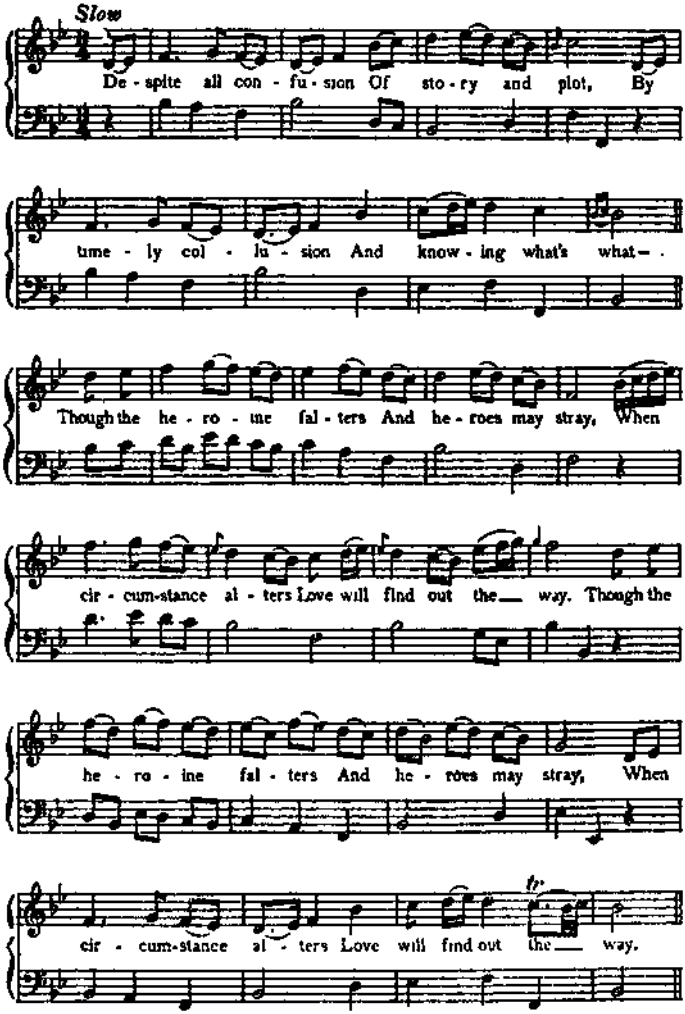


Song 9. Leader and the MacGregor Girls

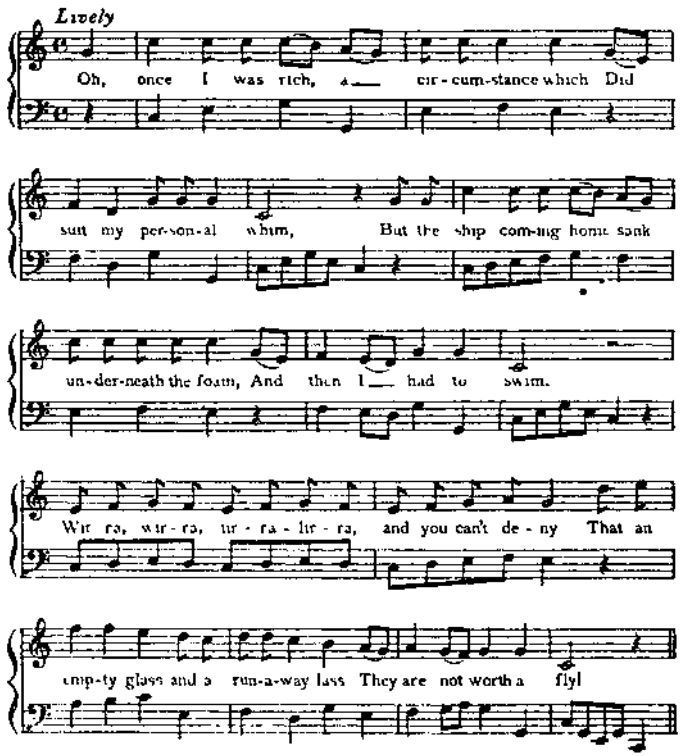


Song 10. The Sergeant

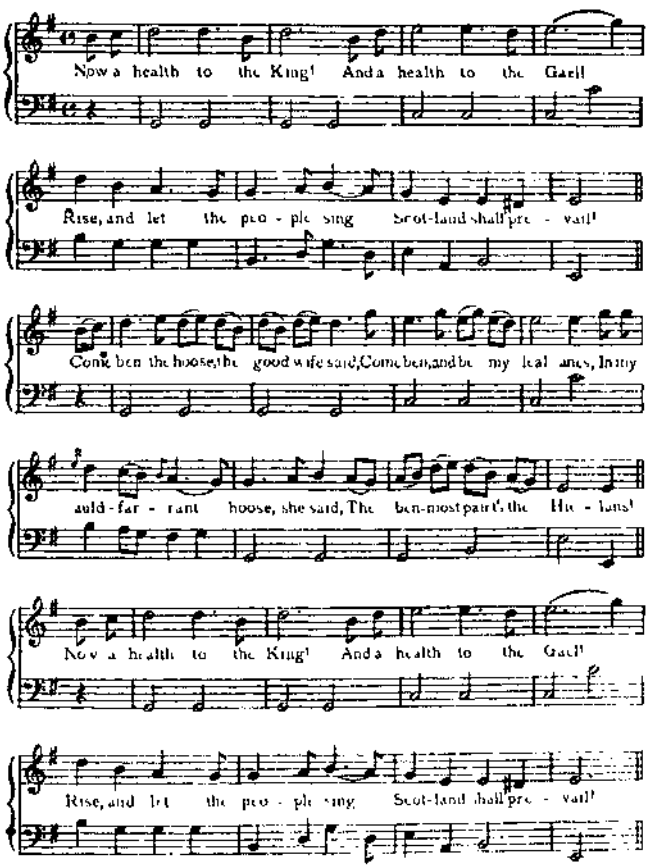



Slow
De - spite all con - fu - sion Of sto - ry and plot, By
time - ly col - lu - sion And know - ing what's what - .
Though the he - ro - ine fal - ters And he - roes may stray, When
cir - cum-stance al - ters Love will find out the — way. Though the
he - ro - ine fal - ters And he - roes may stray, When
tr
cir - cum-stance al - ters Love will find out the — way.

Song 12. The Sergeant



Song 13. The Company



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