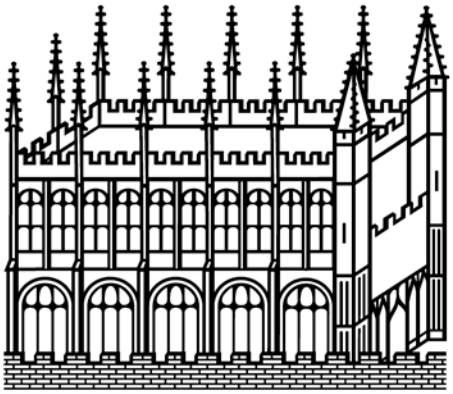


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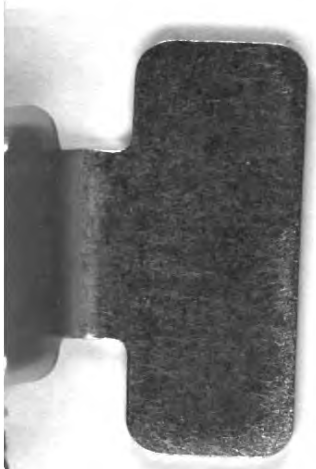
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Rudds 110 c. 1575



THE PLAYS OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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D. H. LAWRENCE

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THE WIDOWING OF MRS. HOLROYD

(1914)

PERSONS

MRS. HOLROYD.
HOLROYD.
BLACKMORE.
JACK HOLROYD.
MINNIE HOLROYD.
GRANDMOTHER.
RIGLEY.
CLARA.
LAURA.
MANAGER.
TWO MINERS.



THE FIRST ACT

Scene I

The kitchen of a miner's small cottage. On the left is the fireplace, with a deep, full red fire. At the back is a white-curtained window, and beside it the outer door of the room. On the right, two white wooden stairs intrude into the kitchen below the closed stair-foot door. On the left, another door.

The room is furnished with a chintz-backed sofa under the window, a glass-knobbed painted dresser on the right, and in the centre, toward the fire, a table with a red and blue check tablecloth. On one side of the hearth is a wooden rocking-chair, on the other an arm-chair of round staves. An unlighted copper-shaded lamp hangs from the raftered ceiling. It is dark twilight, with the room full of warm fireglow. A woman enters from the outer door. As she leaves the door open behind her, the colliery rail can be seen not far from the threshold, and, away back, the headstocks of a pit.

The woman is tall and voluptuously built. She carries a basket heaped full of washing, which she has just taken from the clotheslines outside. Setting down the basket heavily, she feels among the clothes. She lifts out a white heap of sheets and other linen, setting it on the table; then she takes a woollen shirt in her hand.

MRS. HOLROYD (*aloud, to herself*): You know they're not dry even now, though it's been as fine as it has. (*She spreads the shirt on the back of her rocking-chair, which she turns to the fire.*)

VOICE (*calling from outside*): Well, have you got them dry?

[MRS. HOLROYD *starts up, turns and flings her hand in the direction of the open door, where appears a man in blue overalls, swarfed and greased. He carries a dinner-basket.*

MRS. HOLROYD: You—you—I don't know what to call you! The idea of shouting at me like that—like the Evil One out of the darkness!

BLACKMORE: I ought to have remembered your tender nerves. Shall I come in?

MRS. HOLROYD: No—not for your impudence. But you're late, aren't you?

BLACKMORE: It's only just gone six. We electricians, you know, we're the gentlemen on a mine: ours is gentlemen's work. But I'll bet Charles Holroyd was home before four.

MRS. HOLROYD (*bitterly*): Ay, and gone again before five.

BLACKMORE: But mine's a lad's job, and I do nothing! —Where's he gone?

MRS. HOLROYD (*contemptuously*): Dunno! He'd got a game on somewhere—toffed himself up to the nines, and skedaddled off as brisk as a turkey-cock. (*She smirks in front of the mirror hanging on the chimney-piece, in imitation of a man brushing his hair and moustache and admiring himself.*)

BLACKMORE: Though turkey-cocks aren't brisk as a rule. Children playing?

MRS. HOLROYD (*recovering herself, coldly*): Yes. And they ought to be in. (*She continues placing the flannel garments before the fire, on the fender and on chair-backs, till the stove is hedged in with a steaming fence; then she takes a sheet in a bundle from the table, and going up to* BLACKMORE, *who stands watching her, says*): Here, take hold, and help me fold it.

BLACKMORE: I shall swarf it up.

MRS. HOLROYD (*snatching back the sheet*): Oh, you're as tiresome as everybody else.

BLACKMORE (*putting down his basket and moving to door on right*): Well, I can soon wash my hands.

MRS. HOLROYD (*ceasing to flap and fold pillowcases*): That roller-towel's ever so dirty. I'll get you another. (*She goes to a drawer in the dresser, and then back toward the scullery, where is a sound of water.*)

BLACKMORE: Why, bless my life, I'm a lot dirtier than the towel. I don't want another.

MRS. HOLROYD (*going into the scullery*): Here you are.

BLACKMORE (*softly, now she is near him*): Why did you trouble now? Pride, you know, pride, nothing else.

MRS. HOLROYD (*also playful*): It's nothing but decency.

BLACKMORE (*softly*): Pride, pride, pride!

[*A child of eight suddenly appears in the doorway.*

JACK: Oo, how dark!

MRS. HOLROYD (*hurrying agitated into the kitchen*): Why, where have you been—what have you been doing now?

JACK (*surprised*) : Why—I've only been out to play.

MRS. HOLROYD (*still sharply*) : And where's Minnie ?

[*A little girl of six appears by the door.*

MINNIE : I'm here, mam, and what do you think——?

MRS. HOLROYD (*softening, as she recovers equanimity*) : Well, and what should I think ?

JACK : Oh, yes, mam—you know my father——?

MRS. HOLROYD (*ironically*) : I should hope so.

MINNIE : We saw him dancing, mam, with a paper bonnet.

MRS. HOLROYD : What——?

JACK : There's some women at New Inn, what's come from Nottingham——

MINNIE : An' he's dancin' with the pink one.

JACK : Shut up, our Minnie. An' they've got paper bonnets on——

MINNIE : All colours, mam !

JACK (*getting angry*) : Shut up, our Minnie ! An' my dad's dancing with her.

MINNIE : With the pink-bonnet one, mam.

JACK : Up in the club-room over the bar.

MINNIE : An' she's a lot littler than him, mam.

JACK (*piteously*) : Shut up, our Minnie— An' you can see 'em go past the window, 'cause there isn't no curtains up, an' my father's got the pink bonnet one——

MINNIE : An' there's a piano, mam——

JACK : An' lots of folks outside watchin', lookin' at my dad ! He can dance, can't he, mam ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*she has been lighting the lamp, and holds the lamp-glass*): And who else is there?

MINNIE: Some more men—an' *all* the women with paper bonnets on.

JACK: There's about ten, I should think, an' they say they came in a brake from Nottingham.

[MRS. HOLROYD, *trying to replace the lamp-glass over the flame, lets it drop on the floor with a smash.*

JACK: There, now—now we'll have to have a candle.

BLACKMORE (*appearing in the scullery doorway with the towel*): What's that—the lamp-glass?

JACK: I never knowed Mr. Blackmore was here.

BLACKMORE (*to* MRS. HOLROYD): Have you got another?

MRS. HOLROYD: No. (*There is silence for a moment.*) We can manage with a candle for to-night.

BLACKMORE (*stepping forward and blowing out the smoky flame*): I'll see if I can't get you one from the pit. I shan't be a minute.

MRS. HOLROYD: Don't—don't bother—I don't want you to.

[*He, however, unscrews the burner and goes.*

MINNIE: Did Mr. Blackmore come for tea, mam?

MRS. HOLROYD: No; he's had no tea.

JACK: I bet he's hungry. Can I have some bread?

MRS. HOLROYD (*she stands a lighted candle on the table*): Yes, and you can get your boots off to go to bed.

JACK: It's not seven o'clock yet.

MRS. HOLROYD: It doesn't matter.

MINNIE: What do they wear paper bonnets for, mam?

MRS. HOLROYD : Because they're brazen hussies.

JACK : I saw them having a glass of beer.

MRS. HOLROYD : A nice crew !

JACK : They say they are old pals of Mrs. Meakins. You could hear her screaming o' laughin', an' my dad says : " He-ah, missis—here—a dog's-nose for the Dachess—hopin' it'll smell samthing "— What's a dog's-nose ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*giving him a piece of bread and butter*) : Don't ask me, child. How should I know ?

MINNIE : Would she eat it, mam ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Eat what ?

MINNIE : Her in the pink bonnet—eat the dog's nose ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No, of course not. How should I know what a dog's-nose is ?

JACK : I bet he'll never go to work to-morrow, mother—will he ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Goodness knows. I'm sick of it—disgracing me. There'll be the whole place cackling *this* now. They've no sooner finished about him getting taken up for fighting than they begin on this. But I'll put a stop to it some road or other. It's not going on, if I know it : it isn't.

[*She stops, hearing footsteps, and* BLACKMORE *enters.*

BLACKMORE : Here we are then—got one all right.

MINNIE : Did they give it you, Mr. Blackmore ?

BLACKMORE : No, I took it.

[*He screws on the burner and proceeds to light the lamp. He is a tall, slender, mobile man of twenty-*

seven, brown haired, dressed in blue overalls. JACK HOLROYD *is a big, dark, ruddy, lusty lad.* MINNIE *is also big, but fair.*

MINNIE: What do you wear blue trousers for, Mr. Blackmore?

BLACKMORE: They're to keep my other trousers from getting greasy.

MINNIE: Why don't you wear pit-breeches, like dad's?

JACK: 'Cause he's a 'lectrician. Could you make me a a little injun what would make electric light?

BLACKMORE: I will, some day.

JACK: When?

MINNIE: Why don't you come an' live here?

BLACKMORE (*looking swiftly at* MRS HOLROYD): Nay, you've got your own dad to live here.

MINNIE (*plaintively*): Well, you could come as well. Dad shouts when we've gone to bed, an' thumps the table. He wouldn't if you was here.

JACK: He dursn't——

MRS. HOLROYD: Be quiet now, be quiet. Here, Mr. Blackmore. (*She again gives him the sheet to fold.*)

BLACKMORE: Your hands *are* cold.

MRS. HOLROYD: Are they?—I didn't know.

[BLACKMORE *puts his hand on hers.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*confusedly, looking aside*): You must want your tea.

BLACKMORE: I'm in no hurry.

MRS. HOLROYD: Selvidge to selvidge. You'll be quite a domestic man, if you go on.

BLACKMORE: Ay.

[*They fold the two sheets.*

BLACKMORE : They are white, your sheets !

MRS. HOLROYD : But look at the smuts on them—look ! This vile hole ! I'd never have come to live here, in all the thick of the pit-grime, and lonely, if it hadn't been for him, so that he shouldn't call in a public-house on his road home from work. And now he slinks past on the other side of the railway, and goes down to the New Inn instead of coming in for his dinner. I might as well have stopped in Bestwood.

BLACKMORE : Though I rather like this little place, standing by itself.

MRS. HOLROYD : Jack, can you go and take the stockings in for me ? They're on the line just below the pigsty. The prop's near the apple-tree—mind it. Minnie, you take the peg-basket.

MINNIE : Will there be any rats, mam ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Rats—no. They'll be frightened when they hear you, if there are.

[*The children go out.*

BLACKMORE : Poor little beggars !

MRS. HOLROYD : Do you know, this place is fairly alive with rats. They run up that dirty vine in front of the house—I'm always at him to cut it down—and you can hear them at night overhead like a regiment of soldiers tramping. Really, you know, I *hate* them.

BLACKMORE : Well—a rat is a nasty thing !

MRS. HOLROYD : But I s'll get used to them. I'd give anything to be out of this place.

BLACKMORE : It *is* rotten, when you're tied to a life you don't like. But I should miss it if you weren't here.

When I'm coming down the line to the pit in the morning—it's nearly dark at seven now—I watch the firelight in here— Sometimes I put my hand on the wall outside where the chimney runs up to feel it warm— There isn't much in Bestwood, is there ?

MRS. HOLROYD : There's less than nothing if you can't be like the rest of them—as common as they're made.

BLACKMORE : It's a fact—particularly for a woman— But this place is cosy— God love me, I'm sick of lodgings.

MRS. HOLROYD : You'll have to get married— I'm sure there are plenty of nice girls about.

BLACKMORE : Are there ? I never see 'em. (*He laughs.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : Oh, come, you can't say that.

BLACKMORE : I've not seen a single girl—an unmarried girl—that I should want for more than a fortnight—not one.

MRS. HOLROYD : Perhaps you're very particular.

[*She puts her two palms on the table and leans back. He draws near to her, dropping his head.*

BLACKMORE : Look here !

[*He has put his hand on the table near hers.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I know you've got nice hands—but you needn't be vain of them.

BLACKMORE : No—it's not that— But don't they seem—(*he glances swiftly at her ; she turns her head aside ; he laughs nervously*)—they sort of go well with one another. (*He laughs again.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : They *do*, rather—

[*They stand still, near one another, with bent*

heads, for a moment. Suddenly she starts up and draws her hand away.

BLACKMORE : Why—what is it ?

[*She does not answer. The children come in—* JACK *with an armful of stockings,* MINNIE *with the basket of pegs.*

JACK : I believe it's freezing, mother.

MINNIE : Mr. Blackmore, could you shoot a rat an' hit it ?

BLACKMORE (*laughing*): Shoot the lot of 'em, like a wink.

MRS. HOLROYD : But you've had no tea. What an awful shame to keep you here !

BLACKMORE : Nay, I don't care. It never bothers me.

MRS. HOLROYD : Then you're different from most men.

BLACKMORE : All men aren't alike, you know.

MRS. HOLROYD : But do go and get some tea.

MINNIE (*plaintively*) : Can't you stop, Mr. Blackmore ?

BLACKMORE : Why, Minnie ?

MINNIE : So's we're not frightened. Yes, do. Will you ?

BLACKMORE : Frightened of what ?

MINNIE : 'Cause there's noises, an' rats—an' perhaps dad'll come home and shout.

BLACKMORE : But he'd shout more if I was here.

JACK : He doesn't when my uncle John's here. So you stop, an' perhaps he won't.

BLACKMORE : Don't you like him to shout when you're in bed ?

[*They do not answer, but look seriously at him.*

CURTAIN

Scene II

The same scene, two hours later. The clothes are folded in little piles on the table and the sofa. MRS. HOLROYD *is folding a thick flannel undervest or singlet which her husband wears in the pit and which has just dried on the fender.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*to herself*): Now, thank goodness, they're all dried. It's only nine o'clock, so he won't be in for another two hours, the nuisance. (*She sits on the sofa, letting her arms hang down in dejection. After a minute or two she jumps up, to begin rudely dropping the piles of washed clothes in the basket.*) I don't care, I'm not going to let him have it all *his* way—no! (*She weeps a little, fiercely, drying her eyes on the edge of her white apron.*) Why should *I* put up with it all?—He can do what he likes. But I don't care, no, I don't—

[*She flings down the full clothes-basket, sits suddenly in the rocking-chair, and weeps. There is the sound of coarse, bursting laughter, in vain subdued, and a man's deep guffaws. Footsteps draw near. Suddenly the door opens, and a little, plump, pretty woman of thirty, in a close-fitting dress and a giddy, frilled bonnet of pink paper, stands perkily in the doorway.* MRS HOLROYD *springs up; her small, sensitive nose is inflamed with weeping, her eyes are wet and flashing. She fronts the other woman.*

CLARA (*with a pert smile and a jerk of the head*): Good evenin'!

MRS. HOLROYD: What do you want?

CLARA (*she has a Yorkshire accent*): Oh, we've not come beggin'—this is a visit.

[*She stuffs her handkerchief in front of her mouth in a little snorting burst of laughter. There is the sound of another woman behind going off into uncontrollable laughter, while a man guffaws.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*after a moment of impotence—tragically*): What——!

CLARA (*faltering slightly, affecting a polite tone*): We thought we'd just call——

[*She stuffs her handkerchief in front of her explosive laughter—the other woman shrieks again, beginning high, and running down the scale.*

MRS. HOLROYD: What do you mean?—What do you want here?

CLARA (*she bites her lip*): We don't want anything, thanks. We've just called. (*She begins to laugh again—so does the other.*) Well, I don't think much of the manners in this part of the country. (*She takes a few hesitating steps into the kitchen.*)

MRS. HOLROYD (*trying to shut the door upon her*): No, you are not coming in.

CLARA (*preventing her closing the door*): Dear me, what a to-do! (*She struggles with the door. The other woman comes up to help; a man is seen in the background.*)

LAURA: My word, aren't we good enough to come in?

[MRS. HOLROYD, *finding herself confronted by what seems to her excitement a crowd, releases the door and draws back a little—almost in tears of anger.*

MRS. HOLROYD: You have no business here. What do you want?

CLARA (*putting her bonnet straight and entering in brisk defiance*): I tell you we've only come to see you. (*She looks round the kitchen, then makes a gesture toward the arm-chair.*) Can I sit here? (*She plumps herself down.*) Rest for the weary.

[*A woman and a man have followed her into the room.* LAURA *is highly coloured, stout, some forty years old, wears a blue paper bonnet, and looks like the landlady of a public-house. Both she and* CLARA *wear much jewellery.* LAURA *is well dressed in a blue cloth dress.* HOLROYD *is a big blond man. His cap is pushed back, and he looks rather tipsy and lawless. He has a heavy blond moustache. His jacket and trousers are black, his vest grey, and he wears a turn-down collar with dark bow.*

LAURA (*sitting down in a chair on right, her hand on her bosom, panting*): I've laughed till I feel fair bad.

CLARA: 'Aven't you got a drop of nothink to offer us, mester? Come, you are slow. I should 'ave thought a gentleman like you would have been out with the glasses afore we could have got breaths to ask you.

HOLROYD (*clumsily*): I dunna believe there's owt in th' 'ouse but a bottle of stout.

CLARA (*putting her hand on her stomach*): It feels as if th' kettle's going to boil over.

[*She stuffs her handkerchief in front of her mouth, throws back her head, and snorts with laughter, having now regained her confidence.* LAURA *laughs in the last state of exhaustion, her hand on her breast.*

HOLROYD : Shall ta ha'e it then ?

CLARA : What do you say, Laura—are you having a drop ?

LAURA (*submissively, and naturally tongue-tied*) : Well—I don't mind—I will if *you* do.

CLARA (*recklessly*) : I think we'll 'ave a drop, Charlie, an' risk it. It'll 'appen hold the rest down.

[*There is a moment of silence, while* HOLROYD *goes into the scullery.* CLARA *surveys the room and the dramatic pose of* MRS. HOLROYD *curiously.*

HOLROYD (*suddenly* : Heh ! What, come 'ere——!

[*There is a smash of pots, and a rat careers out of the scullery.* LAURA, *the first to see it, utters a scream, but is fastened to her chair, unable to move.*

CLARA (*jumps up to the table, crying*) : It's a rat— Oh, save us ! (*She scrambles up, banging her head on the lamp, which swings violently.*)

MRS. HOLROYD (*who, with a little shriek, jerks her legs up on to the sofa, where she was stiffly reclining, now cries in despairing falsetto, stretching forth her arms*) : The lamp—mind, the lamp !

[CLARA *steadies the lamp, and holds her hand to her head.*

HOLROYD (*coming from the scullery, a bottle of stout in his hand*) : Where is he ?

CLARA : I believe he's gone under the sofa. My, an' he's a thumper, if you like, as big as a rabbit.

[HOLROYD *advances cautiously toward the sofa.*

LAURA (*springing suddenly into life*) : Hi, hi, let me go —let me go— Don't touch him— Where is he ?

(*She flees and scrambles on to* CLARA'S *arm-chair, catching hold of the latter's skirts.*)

CLARA : Hang off—do you want to have a body down—Mind, I tell you.

MRS. HOLROYD (*bunched up on the sofa, with crossed hands holding her arms, fascinated, watches her husband as he approaches to stoop and attack the rat; she suddenly screams*) : Don't, he'll fly at you !

HOLROYD : He'll not get a chance.

MRS. HOLROYD : He will, he will—and they're poisonous ! (*She ends on a very high note. Leaning forward on the sofa as far as she dares, she stretches out her arms to keep back her husband, who is about to kneel and search under the sofa for the rat.*)

HOLROYD : Come off, I canna see him.

MRS. HOLROYD : I won't let you ; he'll fly at you.

HOLROYD : I'll settle him——

MRS. HOLROYD : Open the door and let him go.

HOLROYD : I shonna. I'll settle him. Shut thy claver. He'll non come anigh thee.

[*He kneels down and begins to creep to the sofa. With a great bound,* MRS. HOLROYD *flies to the door and flings it open. Then she rushes back to the couch.*

CLARA : There he goes !

HOLROYD (*simultaneously*) : Hi !—Ussza ! (*He flings the bottle of stout out of the door.*)

LAURA (*piteously*) : Shut the door, do.

[HOLROYD *rises, dusting his trousers knees, and closes the door.* LAURA *heavily descends and drops in the chair.*

CLARA: Here, come an' help us down, Charlie. Look at her; she's going off. (*Though* LAURA *is still purple-red, she sinks back in the chair.* HOLROYD *goes to the table.* CLARA *places her hands on his shoulders and jumps lightly down. Then she pushes* HOLROYD *with her elbow.*) Look sharp, get a glass of water.

[*She unfastens* LAURA'S *collar and pulls off the paper bonnet.* MRS. HOLROYD *sits up, straightens her clothing, and tries to look cold and contemptuous.* HOLROYD *brings a cup of water.* CLARA *sprinkles her friend's face.* LAURA *sighs and sighs again very deeply, then draws herself up painfully.*

CLARA (*tenderly*): Do you feel any better—shall you have a drink of water? (LAURA *mournfully shakes her head;* CLARA *turns sharply to* HOLROYD.) She'll 'ave a drop o' something. (HOLROYD *goes out.* CLARA *meanwhile fans her friend with a handkerchief.* HOLROYD *brings stout. She pours out the stout, smells the glass, smells the bottle—then finally the cork.*) Eh, mester, it's all of a work—it's had a foisty cork.

[*At that instant the stairfoot door opens slowly, revealing the children—the girl peering over the boy's shoulder—both in white nightgowns. Everybody starts.* LAURA *gives a little cry, presses her hand on her bosom, and sinks back, gasping.*

CLARA (*appealing and anxious, to* MRS. HOLROYD): You don't 'appen to 'ave a drop of brandy for her, do you, missis?

[MRS. HOLROYD *rises coldly without replying, and goes to the stairfoot door where the children stand.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*sternly, to the children*): Go to bed!

JACK : What's a matter, mother ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Never you mind, go to bed !

CLARA (*appealingly*) : Be quick, missis.

[MRS. HOLROYD, *glancing round, sees* LAURA *going purple, and runs past the children upstairs. The boy and girl sit on the lowest stair. Their father goes out of the house, shamefaced.* MRS. HOLROYD *runs downstairs with a little brandy in a large bottle.*

CLARA : Thanks, awfully. (*To* LAURA) : Come on, try an' drink a drop, there's a dear.

[*They administer brandy to* LAURA. *The children sit watching, open-eyed. The girl stands up to look.*

MINNIE (*whispering*) : I believe it's blue bonnet.

JACK (*whispering*) : It isn't—she's in a fit.

MINNIE (*whispering*) : Well, look under th' table—JACK *peers under*)—there's 'er bonnet. (JACK *creeps forward.*) Come back, our Jack.

JACK (*returns with the bonnet*) : It's all made of paper.

MINNIE : Let's have a look—it's stuck together, not sewed.

[*She tries it on.* HOLROYD *enters—he looks at the child.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*sharply, glancing round*) : Take that off !

[MINNIE *hurriedly takes the bonnet from her head. Her father snatches it from her and puts it on the fire.*

CLARA : There, you're coming round now, love.

[MRS. HOLROYD *turns away. She sees* HOLROYD'S *eyes on the brandy-bottle, and immediately removes it, corking it up.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*to* CLARA): You will not need this any more?

CLARA: No, thanks. I'm very much obliged.

MRS. HOLROYD (*does not unbend, but speaks coldly to the children*): Come, this is no place for you—come back to bed.

MINNIE: No, mam, I don't want to.

MRS. HOLROYD (*contralto*): Come along!

MINNIE: I'm frightened, mam.

MRS. HOLROYD: Frightened, what of?

MINNIE: Oo, there *was* a row.

MRS. HOLROYD (*taking* MINNIE *in her arms*): Did they frighten you, my pet? (*She kisses her.*)

JACK (*in a high whisper*): Mother, it's pink bonnet and blue bonnet, what was dancing.

MINNIE (*whimpering*): I don't want to go to bed, mam, I'm frightened.

CLARA (*who has pulled off her pink bonnet and revealed a jug-handle coiffure*): We're going now, duckie—you're not frightened of us, are you?

[MRS. HOLROYD *takes the girl away before she can answer.* JACK *lingers behind.*

HOLROYD: Now then, get off after your mother.

JACK (*taking no notice of his father*): I say, what's a dog's-nose?

[CLARA *ups with her handkerchief and* LAURA *responds with a faint giggle.*

HOLROYD: Go thy ways upstairs.

CLARA: It's only a small whiskey with a spoonful of beer in it, my duck.

JACK : Oh !

CLARA : Come here, my duck, come on.

[JACK *curious, advances.*

CLARA : You'll tell your mother we didn't mean no harm, won't you ?

JACK (*touching her earrings*) : What are they made of ?

CLARA : They're only earrings. Don't you like them ?

JACK : Um ! (*He stands surveying her curiously. Then he touches a bracelet made of many little mosaic brooches.*) This is pretty, isn't it ?

CLARA (*pleased*) : Do you like it ?

[*She takes it off. Suddenly* MRS. HOLROYD *is heard calling, "Jack, Jack !"* CLARA *starts.*

HOLROYD : Now then, get off !

CLARA (*as* JACK *is reluctantly going*) : Kiss me good night, duckie, an' give this to your sister, shall you ?

[*She hands* JACK *the mosaic bracelet. He takes it doubtfully. She kisses him.* HOLROYD *watches in silence.*

LAURA (*suddenly, pathetically*) : Aren't you going to give me a kiss, an' all ?

[JACK *yields her his cheek, then goes.*

CLARA (*to* HOLROYD) : Aren't they nice children ?

HOLROYD : Ay.

CLARA (*briskly*) : Oh, dear, you're very short, all of a sudden. Don't answer if it hurts you.

LAURA : My, isn't he different ?

HOLROYD (*laughing forcedly*) : I'm no different.

CLARA : Yes, you are. You shouldn't 'ave brought us if you was going to turn funny over it.

HOLROYD : I'm not funny.

CLARA : No, you're not. (*She begins to laugh.* LAURA *joins in in spite of herself.*) You're about as solemn as a roast potato. (*She flings up her hands, claps them down on her knees, and sways up and down as she laughs,* LAURA *joining in, hand on breast.*) Are you ready to be mashed ? (*She goes off again—then suddenly wipes the laughter off her mouth and is solemn.*) But look 'ere, this'll never do. Now I'm going to be quiet. (*She prims herself.*)

HOLROYD : Tha'd 'appen better.

CLARA : Oh, indeed ! You think I've got to pull a mug to look decent ? You'd have to pull a big un, at that rate.

[*She bubbles off, uncontrollably—shaking herself in exasperation meanwhile.* LAURA *joins in.* HOLROYD *leans over close to her.*

HOLROYD : Tha's got plenty o' fizz in thee, seemly.

CLARA (*putting her hand on his face and pushing it aside, but leaving her hand over his cheek and mouth like a caress*) : Don't, you've been drinking. (*She begins to laugh.*)

HOLROYD : Should we be goin' then ?

CLARA : Where do you want to take us ?

HOLROYD : Oh—you please yourself o' that ! Come on wi' me.

CLARA (*sitting up prim*) : Oh, indeed !

HOLROYD (*catching hold of her*) : Come on, let's be movin'—(*he glances apprehensively at the stairs*).

CLARA : What's your hurry ?

HOLROYD (*persuasively*) : Yi, come on wi' thee.

CLARA : I don't think. (*She goes off, uncontrollably.*)

HOLROYD (*sitting on the table, just above her*) : What's use o' sittin' 'ere ?

CLARA : I'm very comfy : I thank thee.

HOLROYD : Tha'rt a baffling little 'ussy.

CLARA (*running her hand along his thigh*) : Aren't you havin' nothing, my dear ? (*Offers him her glass.*)

HOLROYD (*getting down from the table and putting his hand forcibly on her shoulder*) : No. Come on, let's shift.

CLARA (*struggling*) : Hands off !

[*She fetches him a sharp slap across the face.* MRS. HOLROYD *is heard coming downstairs.* CLARA, *released, sits down, smoothing herself.* HOLROYD *looks evil. He goes out to the door.*

CLARA (*to* MRS. HOLROYD, *penitently*) : I don't know what you think of us, I'm sure.

MRS. HOLROYD : I think nothing at all.

CLARA (*bubbling*) : So you fix your thoughts elsewhere, do you ? (*Suddenly changing to seriousness.*) No, but I *have* been awful to-night.

MRS. HOLROYD (*contralto, emphatic*) : I don't want to know anything about you. I shall be glad when you'll go.

CLARA : Turning-out time, Laura.

LAURA (*turtling*) : I'm sorry, I'm sure.

CLARA : Never mind. But as true as I'm here, missis, I should never ha' come if I'd thought. But I had a drop—it all started with your husband sayin' he wasn't a married man.

LAURA (*laughing and wiping her eyes*): I've never knowed her to go off like it—it's after the time she's had.

CLARA: You know, my husband was a brute to me——an' I was in bed three month after he died. He was a brute, he was. This is the first time I've been out; it's a'most the first laugh I've had for a year.

LAURA: It's true, what she says. We thought she'd go out of 'er mind. She never spoke a word for a fortnight.

CLARA: Though he's only been dead for two months, he was a brute to me. I was as nice a young girl as you could wish when I married him and went to the Fleece Inn—I was.

LAURA: Killed hisself drinking. An' she's that excitable, she is. We s'll 'ave an awful time with 'er to-morrow, I know.

MRS. HOLROYD (*coldly*): I don't know why I should hear all this.

CLARA: I know I must 'ave seemed awful. An' them children—aren't they nice little things, Laura?

LAURA: They are that.

HOLROYD (*entering from the door*): Hanna you about done theer?

CLARA: My word, if this is the way you treat a lady when she comes to see you. (*She rises.*)

HOLROYD: I'll see you down th' line.

CLARA: You're not coming a stride with us.

LAURA: We've got no hat, neither of us.

CLARA: We've got our own hair on our heads, at any rate. (*Drawing herself up suddenly in front of* MRS.

HOLROYD.) An' I've been educated at a boarding school as good as anybody. I can behave myself either in the drawing-room or in the kitchen as is fitting and proper. But if you'd buried a husband like mine, you wouldn't feel you'd much left to be proud of—an' you might go off occasionally.

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't want to hear you.

CLARA (*bobbing a curtsy*) : Sorry I spoke.

[*She goes out stiffly, followed by* LAURA.

HOLROYD (*going forward*) : You mun mind th' points down th' line.

CLARA'S VOICE : I thank thee, Charlie—mind thy own points.

[*He hesitates at the door—returns and sits down. There is silence in the room.* HOLROYD *sits with his chin in his hand.* MRS. HOLROYD *listens. The footsteps and voices of the two women die out. Then she closes the door.* HOLROYD *begins to unlace his boots.*

HOLROYD (*ashamed yet defiant, withal anxious to apologize*) : Wheer's my slippers ?

[MRS. HOLROYD *sits on the sofa with face averted and does not answer.*

HOLROYD : Dost hear ? (*He pulls off his boots, noisily, and begins to hunt under the sofa.*) I canna find the things. (*No answer.*) Humph !—then I'll do be 'out 'em. (*He stumps about in his stockinged feet ; going into the scullery, he brings out the loaf of bread ; he returns into the scullery.*) Wheer's th' cheese ? (*No answer—suddenly*) God blast it ! (*He hobbles into the kitchen.*) I've trod on that broken basin, an' cut my foot open. (MRS. HOLROYD *refuses to take*

any notice. He sits down and looks at his sole—pulls off his stocking and looks again.) It's lamed me for life. (MRS. HOLROYD *glances at the wound.*) Are 'na ter goin' ter get me öwt for it ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Psh !

HOLROYD : Oh, a' right then. (*He hops to the dresser, opens a drawer, and pulls out a white rag ; he is about to tear it.*)

MRS. HOLROYD (*snatching it from him*) : Don't tear that !

HOLROYD (*shouting*) : Then what the deuce am I to do ? (MRS. HOLROYD *sits stonily.*) Oh, a' right then ! (*He hops back to his chair, sits down, and begins to pull on his stocking.*) A' right then—a' right then. (*In a fever of rage he begins pulling on his boots.*) I'll go where I *can* find a bit o' rag.

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, that's what you want ! All you want is an excuse to be off again—" a bit of rag " !

HOLROYD (*shouting*) : An' what man'd want to stop in wi' a woman sittin' as fow as a jackass, an' canna get a word from 'er edgeways.

MRS. HOLROYD : Don't expect me to speak to you after to-night's show. How dare you bring them to my house, how dare you ?

HOLROYD : They've non hurt your house, have they ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I wonder you dare to cross the door-step.

HOLROYD : I s'll do what the deuce I like. They're as good as you are.

MRS. HOLROYD (*stands speechless, staring at him ; then low*) : Don't you come near me again——

HOLROYD (*suddenly shouting, to get his courage up*): She's as good as you are, every bit of it.

MRS. HOLROYD (*blazing*): Whatever I was and whatever I may be, don't you ever come near me again.

HOLROYD: What! I'll show thee. What's the hurt to you if a woman comes to the house? They're women as good as yourself, every whit of it.

MRS. HOLROYD: Say no more. *Go* with them then, and don't come back.

HOLROYD: What! Yi, I will go, an' you s'll see. What! You think you're something, since your uncle left you that money, an' Blackymore puttin' you up to it. I can see your little game. I'm not as daft as you imagine. I'm no fool, I tell you.

MRS. HOLROYD: No, you're not. You're a drunken beast, that's all you are.

HOLROYD: What, what—I'm what? I'll show you who's gaffer, though. (*He threatens her.*)

MRS. HOLROYD (*between her teeth*): No, it's not going on. If *you* won't go, I will.

HOLROYD: Go then, for you've always been too big for your shoes, in my house——

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes—I ought never to have looked at you. Only you showed a fair face then.

HOLROYD: What! What! We'll see who's master i' this house. I tell you, I'm goin' to put a stop to it. (*He brings his fist down on the table with a bang.*) It's going to stop. (*He bangs the table again.*) I've put up with it long enough. Do you think I'm a dog in the house, an' not a man, do you——

MRS. HOLROYD: A dog would be better.

HOLROYD : Oh ! Oh ! Then we'll see. We'll see who's the dog and who isna. We're goin' to see. (*He bangs the table.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : Stop thumping that table ! You've wakened those children once, you and your trollops.

HOLROYD : I shall do what the deuce I like !

MRS. HOLROYD : No more, you won't, no more. I've stood this long enough. Now I'm going. As for you—you've got a red face where she slapped you. Now go to her.

HOLROYD : What ? What ?

MRS. HOLROYD : For I'm sick of the sights and sounds of you.

HOLROYD (*bitterly*) : By God, an' I've known it a long time.

MRS. HOLROYD : You have, and it's true.

HOLROYD : An, I know who it is th'rt hankerin' after.

MRS. HOLROYD : I only want to be rid of you.

HOLROYD : I know it mighty well. But *I* know him !

[MRS. HOLROYD *sinking down on the sofa, suddenly begins to sob half-hysterically.* HOLROYD watches *her. As suddenly, she dries her eyes.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Do you think I care about what you say ? (*Suddenly.*) Oh, I've had enough. I've tried, I've tried for years, for the children's sakes. Now I've had enough of your shame and disgrace.

HOLROYD : Oh, indeed !

MRS. HOLROYD (*her voice is dull and inflexible*) : I've had enough. Go out again after those trollops—leave me alone. I've had enough. (HOLROYD *stands*

looking at her.) Go, I mean it, go out again. And if you never come back again, I'm glad. I've had enough. (*She keeps her face averted, will not look at him, her attitude expressing thorough weariness.*)

HOLROYD : All right then !

[*He hobbles, in unlaced boots, to the door. Then he turns to look at her. She turns herself still farther away, so that her back is toward him. He goes.*

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The scene is the same, two hours later. The cottage is in darkness, save for the firelight. On the table is spread a newspaper. A cup and saucer, a plate, a piece of bacon in the frying tin are on the newspaper ready for the miner's breakfast. MRS. HOLROYD *has gone to bed. There is a noise of heavy stumbling down the three steps outside.*

BLACKMORE'S VOICE : Steady, now, steady. It's all in darkness. Missis !—Has she gone to bed ?

[*He tries the latch—shakes the door.*

HOLROYD'S VOICE (*he is drunk*) : Her's locked me out. Let me smash that bloody door in. Come out—come out—ussza ! (*He strikes a heavy blow on the door. There is a scuffle.*)

BLACKMORE'S VOICE : Hold on a bit—what're you doing ?

HOLROYD'S VOICE : I'm smashing that blasted door in.

MRS. HOLROYD (*appearing and suddenly drawing the bolts, flinging the door open*) : What do you think you're doing ?

HOLROYD (*lurching into the room, snarling*) : What ? What ? Tha thought tha'd play thy monkey tricks on me, did ter ? (*Shouting.*) But I'm going to show thee. (*He lurches at her threateningly ; she recoils.*)

BLACKMORE (*seizing him by the arm*): Here, here—! Come and sit down and be quiet.

HOLROYD (*snarling at him*): What?—What? An' what's thäigh got ter do wi' it? (*Shouting.*) What's thäigh got ter do wi' it?

BLACKMORE: Nothing—nothing; but it's getting late, and you want your supper.

HOLROYD (*shouting*): I want nöwt. I'm allowed nöwt in this 'ouse. (*Shouting louder.*) 'Er begrudges me ivry morsel I ha'e.

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh, what a story!

HOLROYD (*shouting*): It's the truth, an' you know it.

BLACKMORE (*conciliatory*): You'll rouse the children. You'll rouse the children, at this hour.

HOLROYD (*suddenly quiet*): Not me—not if I know it. *I* shan't disturb 'em—bless 'em.

[*He staggers to his arm-chair and sits heavily.*

BLACKMORE: Shall I light the lamp?

MRS. HOLROYD: No, don't trouble. Don't stay any longer, there's no need.

BLACKMORE (*quietly*): I'll just see it's all right.

[*He proceeds in silence to light the lamp.* HOLROYD *is seen dropping forward in his chair. He has a cut on his cheek.* MRS. HOLROYD *is in an old-fashioned dressing-gown.* BLACKMORE *has an overcoat buttoned up to his chin. There is a very large lump of coal on the red fire.*

MRS. HOLROYD: Don't stay any longer.

BLACKMORE: I'll see it's all right.

MRS. HOLROYD: I shall be all right. He'll go to sleep now.

BLACKMORE : But he can't go like that.

MRS. HOLROYD : What has he done to his face ?

BLACKMORE : He had a row with Jim Goodwin.

MRS. HOLROYD : What about ?

BLACKMORE : I don't know.

MRS. HOLROYD : The beast !

BLACKMORE : By Jove, and isn't he a weight ! He's getting fat, must be——

MRS. HOLROYD : He's big made—he has a big frame.

BLACKMORE : Whatever he is, it took me all my time to get him home. I thought I'd better keep an eye on him. I knew you'd be worrying. So I sat in the smoke-room and waited for him. Though it's a dirty hole—and dull as hell.

MRS. HOLROYD : Why did you bother ?

BLACKMORE : Well, I thought you'd be upset about him. I had to drink three whiskies—had to, in all conscience—(*smiling*).

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't want to be the ruin of you.

BLACKMORE (*smiling*) : Don't you ? I thought he'd pitch forward on to the lines and crack his skull.

[HOLROYD *has been sinking farther and farther forward in drunken sleep. He suddenly jerks too far and is awakened. He sits upright, glaring fiercely and dazedly at the two, who instantly cease talking.*

HOLROYD (*to* BLACKMORE) : What are thäigh doin' 'ere ?

BLACKMORE : Why, I came along with you.

HOLROYD : Thou'rt a liar, I'm only just come in.

MRS. HOLROYD (*coldly*) : He is no liar at all. He brought

you home because you were too drunk to come yourself.

HOLROYD (*starting up*): Thou'rt a liar! I niver set eyes on him this night, afore now.

MRS. HOLROYD (*with a "Pf" of contempt*): You don't know what you *have* done to-night.

HOLROYD (*shouting*): I s'll not ha'e it, I tell thee.

MRS. HOLROYD: Psh!

HOLROYD: I s'll not ha'e it. I s'll ha'e no carryin's on i' my 'ouse——

MRS. HOLROYD (*shrugging her shoulders*): Talk when you've got some sense.

HOLROYD (*fiercely*): I've as much sense as thäigh. Am I a fool? Canna I see? What's *he* doin' here then, answer me that. What——?

MRS. HOLROYD: Mr. Blackmore came to bring *you* home because you were *too drunk* to find your own way. And this is the thanks he gets.

HOLROYD (*contemptuously*): Blackymore, Blackymore. It's him tha cuts thy cloth by, is it?

MRS. HOLROYD (*hotly*): You don't know what you're talking about, so keep your tongue still.

HOLROYD (*bitingly*): I don't know what I'm talking about—I don't know what I'm talking about—don't I? An' what about him standing there then, if I don't know what I'm talking about?—What?

BLACKMORE: You've been to sleep, Charlie, an' forgotten I came in with you, not long since.

HOLROYD: I'm not daft, I'm not a fool. I've got eyes in my head and sense. You needn't try to get over me. I know what you're up to.

BLACKMORE (*flushing*): It's a bit off to talk to me like that, Charlie, I must say.

HOLROYD: I'm not good enough for 'er. She wants Mr. Blackymore. He's a gentleman, he is. Now we have it all; now we understand.

MRS. HOLROYD: I wish you understood enough to keep your tongue still.

HOLROYD: What? What? I'm to keep my tongue still, am I? An' what about *Mr. Blackymore?*

MRS. HOLROYD (*fiercely*): Stop your mouth, you—you vulgar, low-minded brute.

HOLROYD: Am I? Am I? An' what are you? What tricks are you up to, an' all? But that's all right——that's all right. (*Shouting.*) That's all right, if it's *you.*

BLACKMORE: I think I'd better go. You seem to enjoy—er—er—calumniating your wife.

HOLROYD (*mockingly*): Calamniating—calamniating—I'll give you calamniating, you mealy-mouthed jockey: I'll give you calamniating.

BLACKMORE: I think you've said about enough.

HOLROYD: 'Ave I, 'ave I? Yer flimsy jack—'ave I? (*In a sudden burst.*) But I've not done wi' thee yet?

BLACKMORE (*ironically*): No, and you haven't.

HOLROYD (*shouting—pulling himself up from the arm-chair*): I'll show thee—I'll show thee.

[BLACKMORE *laughs.*

HOLROYD: Yes!—yes, my young monkey. It's thäigh, is it?

BLACKMORE: Yes, it's *me.*

HOLROYD (*shouting*): An' I'll ma'e thee wish it worn't, I will. What—? What? Tha'd come slivin' round here, would ta? (*He lurches forward at* BLACKMORE *with clenched fist.*)

MRS. HOLROYD: Drunken, drunken fool—oh, don't.

HOLROYD (*turning to her*): What?

[*She puts up her hands before her face.* BLACKMORE *seizes the upraised arm and swings* HOLROYD *round.*

BLACKMORE (*in a towering passion*): Mind what tha'rt doing!

HOLROYD (*turning fiercely on him—incoherent*): Wha'—wha'——!

[*He aims a heavy blow.* BLACKMORE *evades it, so that he is struck on the side of the chest. Suddenly he shows his teeth. He raises his fists ready to strike* HOLROYD *when the latter stands to advantage.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*rushing upon* BLACKMORE): No, no! Oh, no!

[*She flies and opens the door, and goes out.* BLACKMORE *glances after her, then at* HOLROYD, *who is preparing, like a bull, for another charge. The young man's face lights up.*

HOLROYD: Wha'—wha'——!

[*As he advances,* BLACKMORE *quickly retreats out-of-doors.* HOLROYD *plunges upon him.* BLACKMORE *slips behind the door-jamb, puts out his foot, and trips* HOLROYD *with a crash upon the brick yard.*

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh, what has he done to himself?

BLACKMORE (*thickly*): Tumbled over himself.

[HOLROYD *is seen struggling to rise, and is heard incoherently cursing.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Aren't you going to get him up ?

BLACKMORE : What for ?

MRS. HOLROYD : But what shall we do ?

BLACKMORE : Let him go to hell.

[HOLROYD, *who had subsided, begins to snarl and struggle again.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*in terror*) : He's getting up.

BLACKMORE : All right, let him.

[MRS. HOLROYD *looks at* BLACKMORE, *suddenly afraid of him also.*

HOLROYD (*in a last frenzy*) : I'll show thee—I'll——

[*He raises himself up, and is just picking his balance when* BLACKMORE, *with a sudden light kick, sends him sprawling again. He is seen on the edge of the light to collapse into stupor.*

MRS. HOLROYD : He'll kill you, he'll kill you !

[BLACKMORE *laughs short.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Would you believe it ! Oh, isn't it awful ! (*She begins to weep in a little hysteria ;* BLACKMORE *stands with his back leaning on the doorway, grinning in a strained fashion.*) Is he hurt, do you think ?

BLACKMORE : I don't know—I should think not.

MRS. HOLROYD : I wish he was dead ; I do, with all my heart.

BLACKMORE : Do you ? (*He looks at her quickly ; she wavers and shrinks ; he begins to smile strainedly as*

before.) You don't know *what* you wish, or what you want.

MRS. HOLROYD (*troubled*): Do you think I could get past him to come inside?

BLACKMORE: I should think so.

[MRS. HOLROYD, *silent and troubled, manœuvres in the doorway, stepping over her husband's feet, which lie on the threshold.*

BLACKMORE: Why, you've got no shoes and stockings on!

MRS. HOLROYD: No. (*She enters the house and stands trembling before the fire.*)

BLACKMORE (*following her*): Are you cold?

MRS. HOLROYD: A little—with standing on the yard.

BLACKMORE: What a shame!

[*She, uncertain of herself, sits down. He drops on one knee, awkwardly, and takes her feet in his hands.*

MRS. HOLROYD: Don't—no, don't!

BLACKMORE: They are frightfully cold. (*He remains, with head sunk, for some moments, then slowly rises.*) Damn him!

[*They look at each other; then, at the same time, turn away.*

MRS. HOLROYD: We can't leave him lying there.

BLACKMORE: No—no! I'll bring him in.

MRS. HOLROYD: But——!

BLACKMORE: He won't wake again. The drink will have got hold of him by now. (*He hesitates.*) Could you take hold of his feet—he's so heavy.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

[*They go out and are seen stooping over* HOLROYD.

BLACKMORE: Wait, wait, till I've got him—half a minute.

[MRS. HOLROYD *backs in first. They carry* HOLROYD *in and lay him on the sofa.*

MRS. HOLROYD: Doesn't he look awful?

BLACKMORE: It's more mark than mar. It isn't much, really.

[*He is busy taking off* HOLROYD'S *collar and tie, unfastening the waistcoat, the braces and the waist buttons of the trousers; he then proceeds to unlace the drunken man's boots.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*who has been watching closely*): I shall never get him upstairs.

BLACKMORE: He can sleep here, with a rug or something to cover him. *You* don't want him—upstairs?

MRS. HOLROYD: Never again.

BLACKMORE (*after a moment or two of silence*): He'll be all right down here. Have you got a rug?

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

[*She goes upstairs.* BLACKMORE *goes into the scullery, returning with a ladling can and towel. He gets hot water from the boiler. Then, kneeling down, he begins to wipe the drunken man's face lightly with the flannel, to remove the blood and dirt.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*returning*): What are you doing?

BLACKMORE: Only wiping his face to get the dirt out.

MRS. HOLROYD: I wonder if he'd do as much for you.

BLACKMORE: I hope not.

MRS. HOLROYD: Isn't he horrible, horrible——

BLACKMORE (*looks up at her*) : Don't look at him then.

MRS. HOLROYD : I can't take it in, it's too much.

BLACKMORE : He won't wake. I will stay with you.

MRS. HOLROYD (*earnestly*) : No—oh, no.

BLACKMORE : There will be the drawn sword between us. (*He indicates the figure of* HOLROYD, *which lies, in effect, as a barrier between them.*)

MRS. HOLROYD (*blushing*) : Don't !

BLACKMORE : I'm sorry.

MRS. HOLROYD (*after watching him for a few moments lightly wiping the sleeping man's face with a towel*) : I wonder you can be so careful over him.

BLACKMORE (*quietly*) : It's only because he's helpless.

MRS. HOLROYD : But why should you love him ever so little ?

BLACKMORE : I don't—only he's helpless. Five minutes since I could have killed him.

MRS. HOLROYD : Well, I don't understand you men.

BLACKMORE : Why ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know.

BLACKMORE : I thought as I stood in that doorway, and he was trying to get up—I wished as hard as I've ever wished anything in my life——

MRS. HOLROYD : What ?

BLACKMORE : That I'd killed him. I've never wished anything so much in my life—if wishes were anything.

MRS. HOLROYD : Don't, it *does* sound awful.

BLACKMORE : I *could* have done it, too. He ought to be dead.

MRS. HOLROYD (*pleading*): No, don't! You know you don't mean it, and you make me feel so awful.

BLACKMORE: I do mean it. It is simply true, what I say.

MRS. HOLROYD: But don't say it.

BLACKMORE: No?

MRS. HOLROYD: No, we've had enough.

BLACKMORE: Give me the rug.

[*She hands it him, and he tucks* HOLROYD *up.*

MRS. HOLROYD: You only do it to play on my feelings.

BLACKMORE (*laughing shortly*): And now give me a pillow—thanks.

[*There is a pause—both look at the sleeping man.*

BLACKMORE: I suppose you're fond of him, really.

MRS. HOLROYD: No more.

BLACKMORE: You *were* fond of him?

MRS. HOLROYD: I was—yes.

BLACKMORE: What did you like in him?

MRS. HOLROYD (*uneasily*): I don't know.

BLACKMORE: I suppose you really care about him, even now?

MRS. HOLROYD: Why are you so sure of it?

BLACKMORE: Because I think it is so.

MRS. HOLROYD: I did care for him—now he has destroyed it——

BLACKMORE: I don't believe he can destroy it.

MRS. HOLROYD (*with a short laugh*): Don't you? When you are married you try. You'll find it isn't so hard.

BLACKMORE : But what did you like in him—because he was good-looking, and strong, and that ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I liked that as well. But if a man makes a nuisance of himself, his good looks are ugly to you, and his strength loathsome. Do you think I *care* about a man because he's got big fists, when he is a coward in his real self ?

BLACKMORE : Is he a coward ?

MRS. HOLROYD : He *is*—a pettifogging, paltry one.

BLACKMORE : And so you've really done with him ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I have.

BLACKMORE : And what are you going to do ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know.

BLACKMORE : I suppose nothing. You'll just go on—even if you've done with him—you'll go on with him.

[*There is a long pause.*

BLACKMORE : But was there nothing else in him but his muscles and his good looks to attract you to him ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Why ? What does it matter ?

BLACKMORE : What did you *think* he was ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Why must we talk about him ?

BLACKMORE : Because I can never quite believe you.

MRS. HOLROYD : I can't help whether you believe it or not.

BLACKMORE : Are you just in a rage with him, because of to-night ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I know, to-night finished it. But it was never right between us.

BLACKMORE : Never ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Not once. And then to-night—no, it's too much ; I can't stand any more of it.

BLACKMORE : I suppose he got tipsy. Then he said he wasn't a married man—vowed he wasn't, to those paper bonnets. They found out he was, and said he was frightened of his wife getting to know. Then he said they should all go to supper at his house—I suppose they came out of mischief.

MRS. HOLROYD : He did it to insult me.

BLACKMORE : Oh, he was a bit tight—you can't say it was deliberate.

MRS. HOLROYD : No, but it shows how he feels toward me. The feeling comes out in drink.

BLACKMORE : How does he feel toward you ?

MRS. HOLROYD : He wants to insult me, and humiliate me, in every moment of his life. Now I simply despise him.

BLACKMORE : You really don't care any more about him ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No.

BLACKMORE (*hesitates*) : And you would leave him ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I would leave him, and not care *that* about him any more. (*She snaps her fingers.*)

BLACKMORE : Will you come with me ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*after a reluctant pause*) : Where ?

BLACKMORE : To Spain : I can any time have a job there, in a decent part. You could take the children.

[*The figure of the sleeper stirs uneasily—they watch him.*

BLACKMORE : Will you ?

MRS. HOLROYD : When would you go ?

BLACKMORE : To-morrow, if you like.

MRS. HOLROYD : But why do you want to saddle yourself with me and the children ?

BLACKMORE : Because I want to.

MRS. HOLROYD : But you don't love me ?

BLACKMORE : Why don't I ?

MRS. HOLROYD : You don't.

BLACKMORE : I don't know about that. I don't know anything about love. Only I've gone on for a year, now, and it's got stronger and stronger——

MRS. HOLROYD : What has ?

BLACKMORE : This—this wanting you, to live with me. I took no notice of it for a long time. Now I can't get away from it, at no hour and nohow. (*He still avoids direct contact with her.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : But you'd *like* to get away from it.

BLACKMORE : I hate a mess of any sort. But if you'll come away with me—you and the children——

MRS. HOLROYD : But I couldn't—you don't love me——

BLACKMORE : I don't know what you mean by I don't love you.

MRS. HOLROYD : I can feel it.

BLACKMORE : And do you love *me ?* (*A pause.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know. Everything is so—so——

[*There is a long pause.*

BLACKMORE : How old are you ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Thirty-two.

BLACKMORE : I'm twenty-seven.

MRS. HOLROYD : And have you never been in love ?

BLACKMORE : I don't think so. I don't know.

MRS. HOLROYD : But you must know. I must go and shut that door that keeps clicking.

[*She rises to go upstairs, making a clatter at the stairfoot door. The noise rouses her husband. As she goes upstairs, he moves, makes coughing sounds, turns over, and then suddenly sits upright, gazing at* BLACKMORE. *The latter sits perfectly still on the sofa, his head dropped, hiding his face. His hands are clasped. They remain thus for a minute.*

HOLROYD : Hello ! (*He stares fixedly.*) Hello ! (*His tone is undecided, as if he mistrusts himself.*) What are—who are ter ? (BLACKMORE *does not move ;* HOLROYD *stares blankly ; he then turns and looks at the room.*) Well, I dunna know.

[*He staggers to his feet, clinging to the table, and goes groping to the stairs. They creak loudly under his weight. A door-latch is heard to click. In a moment* MRS. HOLROYD *comes quickly downstairs.*

BLACKMORE : Has he gone to bed ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*nodding*) : Lying on the bed.

BLACKMORE : Will he settle now ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know. He is like that sometimes. He will have delirium tremens if he goes on.

BLACKMORE (*softly*) : You can't stay with him, you know.

MRS. HOLROYD : And the children ?

BLACKMORE : We'll take them.

MRS. HOLROYD : Oh !

[Her face puckers to cry. Suddenly he starts up and puts his arms round her, holding her protectively and gently, very caressingly. She clings to him. They are silent for some moments.

BLACKMORE (*struggling, in an altered voice*): Look at me and kiss me.

[Her sobs are heard distinctly. BLACKMORE *lays his hand on her cheek, caressing her always with his hand.*

BLACKMORE: My God, but I hate him! I wish either he was dead or me. (MRS. HOLROYD *hides against him; her sobs cease; after a while he continues in the same murmuring fashion.*) It can't go on like it any more. I feel as if I should come in two. I can't keep away from you. I simply can't. Come with me. Come with me and leave him. If you knew what a hell it is for me to have you here—and to see him. I can't go without you, I can't. It's been hell every moment for six months now. You say I don't love you. Perhaps I don't, for all I know about it. But oh, my God, don't keep me like it any longer. Why should *he* have you—and I've never had anything.

MRS. HOLROYD: Have you never loved anybody?

BLACKMORE: No—I've tried. Kiss me of your own wish—will you?

MRS. HOLROYD: I don't know.

BLACKMORE (*after a pause*): Let's break clear. Let's go right away. Do you care for me?

MRS. HOLROYD: I don't know. (*She loosens herself, rises dumbly.*)

BLACKMORE : When do you think you *will* know ?

[*She sits down helplessly.*

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know.

BLACKMORE : Yes, you do know, really. If he was dead, should you marry me ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Don't say it——

BLACKMORE : Why not ? If wishing of mine would kill him, he'd soon be out of the way.

MRS. HOLROYD : But the children !

BLACKMORE : I'm fond of them. I shall have good money.

MRS. HOLROYD : But he's their father.

BLACKMORE : What does that mean——?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I know—(*a pause*) but——

BLACKMORE : Is it *him* that keeps you ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No.

BLACKMORE : Then come with me. Will you ? (*He stands waiting for her ; then he turns and takes his overcoat ; pulls it on, leaving the collar turned up, ceasing to twist his cap.*) Well—will you tell me to-morrow ?

[*She goes forward and flings her arms round his neck. He suddenly kisses her passionately.*

MRS. HOLROYD : But I ought not. (*She draws away a little ; he will not let her go.*)

BLACKMORE : Yes, it's all right. (*He holds her close.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : Is it ?

BLACKMORE : Yes, it is. It's all right.

[*He kisses her again. She releases herself but holds his hand. They keep listening.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Do you love me ?

BLACKMORE : What do you ask for ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Have I hurt you these months ?

BLACKMORE : *You* haven't. And I don't care what it's been if you'll come with me. (*There is a noise upstairs and they wait.*) You *will* soon, won't you ?

[*She kisses him.*

MRS. HOLROYD : He's not safe. (*She disengages herself and sits on the sofa.*)

BLACKMORE (*takes a place beside her, holding her hand in both his*) : You should have waited for me.

MRS. HOLROYD : How wait ?

BLACKMORE : And not have married him.

MRS. HOLROYD : I might never have known you—I married him to get out of my place.

BLACKMORE : Why ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I was left an orphan when I was six. My Uncle John brought me up, in the Coach and Horses at Rainsworth. He'd got no children. He was good to me, but he drank. I went to Mansfield Grammar School. Then he fell out with me because I wouldn't wait in the bar, and I went as nursery governess to Berryman's. And I felt I'd nowhere to go, I belonged to nowhere, and nobody cared about me, and men came after me, and I hated it. So to get out of it, I married the first man that turned up.

BLACKMORE : And you never cared about him ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I did. I did care about him. I wanted to be a wife to him. But there's nothing at the bottom of him, if you know what I mean. You can't *get* anywhere with him. There's just his body

and nothing else. Nothing that keeps him, no anchor, no roots, nothing satisfying. It's a horrible feeling there is about him, that nothing is safe or permanent—nothing is anything——

BLACKMORE : And do you think you can trust *me ?*

MRS. HOLROYD : I think you're different from him.

BLACKMORE. Perhaps I'm not.

MRS. HOLROYD (*warmly*) : You are.

BLACKMORE : At any rate, we'll see. You'll come on Saturday to London ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Well, you see, there's my money. I haven't got it yet. My uncle has left me about a hundred and twenty pounds.

BLACKMORE : Well, see the lawyer about it as soon as you can. I can let you have some money if you want any. But don't let us wait after Saturday.

MRS. HOLROYD : But isn't it wrong ?

BLACKMORE : Why, if you don't care for him, and the children are miserable between the two of you—which they are——

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes.

BLACKMORE : Well, then I see no wrong. As for him—he would go one way, and only one way, whatever you do. Damn him, he doesn't matter.

MRS. HOLROYD : No.

BLACKMORE : Well, then—have done with it. Can't you cut clean of him ? Can't you now ?

MRS. HOLROYD : And then—the children——

BLACKMORE : They'll be all right with me and you—won't they ?'

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes——

BLACKMORE : Well, then. Now, come and have done with it. We can't keep on being ripped in two like this. We need never hear of him any more.

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes—I love you. I do love you——

BLACKMORE : Oh, my God ! (*He speaks with difficulty—embracing her.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : When I look at him, and then at you—ha—(*she gives a short laugh.*)

BLACKMORE : He's had all the chance—it's only fair—Lizzie——

MRS. HOLROYD : My love.

[*There is silence. He keeps his arm round her. After hesitating, he picks up his cap.*

BLACKMORE : I'll go then—at any rate. Shall you come with me ?

[*She follows him to the door.*

MRS. HOLROYD : I'll come on Saturday.

BLACKMORE : Not now ?

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

Scene, the same. Time, the following evening, about seven o'clock. The table is half-laid, with a large cup and saucer, plate, etc., ready for HOLROYD'S *dinner, which, like all miners, he has when he comes home between four and five o'clock. On the other half of the table* MRS. HOLROYD *is ironing. On the hearth stand newly baked loaves of bread. The irons hang at the fire.*

JACK, *with a bowler hat hanging at the back of his head, parades up to the sofa, on which stands* MINNIE *engaged in dusting a picture. She has a soiled white apron tied behind her, to make a long skirt.*

JACK : Good mornin', missis. Any scissors or knives to grind ?

MINNIE (*peering down from the sofa*) : Oh, I can't be bothered to come downstairs. Call another day.

JACK : I shan't.

MINNIE (*keeping up her part*) : Well, I can't come down now. (JACK *stands irresolute.*) Go on, you have to go and steal the baby.

JACK : I'm not.

MINNIE : Well, you can steal the eggs out of the fowl-house.

JACK : I'm not.

MINNIE : Then I shan't play with you. (JACK *takes off*

his bowler hat and flings it on the sofa; tears come in MINNIE'S *eyes.*) Now I'm *not* friends. (*She surveys him ruefully; after a few moments of silence she clambers down and goes to her mother.*) Mam, he won't play with me.

MRS. HOLROYD (*crossly*): Why don't you play with her? If you begin bothering, you must go to bed.

JACK: Well, I don't want to play.

MRS. HOLROYD: Then you must go to bed.

JACK: I don't want to.

MRS. HOLROYD: Then what do you want, I should like to know?

MINNIE: I wish my father'd come.

JACK: I do.

MRS. HOLROYD: I suppose he thinks he's paying me out. This is the third time this week he's slunk past the door and gone down to Old Brinsley instead of coming in to his dinner. He'll be as drunk as a lord when he does come.

[*The children look at her plaintively.*

MINNIE: Isn't he a nuisance?

JACK: I hate him. I wish he'd drop down th' pit-shaft.

MRS. HOLROYD: Jack!—I never heard such a thing in my life! You mustn't say such things—it's wicked.

JACK: Well, I do.

MRS. HOLROYD (*loudly*): I won't have it. He's your father, remember.

JACK (*in a high voice*): Well, he's always comin' home an' shoutin' an' bangin' on the table. (*He is getting tearful and defiant.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : Well, you mustn't take any notice of him.

MINNIE (*wistfully*) : 'Appen if you said something nice to him, mother, he'd happen go to bed, and not shout.

JACK : I'd hit him in the mouth.

MRS. HOLROYD : Perhaps we'll go to another country, away from him—should we ?

JACK : In a ship, mother ?

MINNIE : In a ship, mam ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, in a big ship, where it's blue sky, and water and palm-trees, and——

MINNIE : An' dates——?

JACK : When should we go ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Some day.

MINNIE : But who'd work for us ? Who should we have for father ?

JACK : You don't want a father. I can go to work for us.

MRS. HOLROYD : I've got a lot of money now, that your uncle left me.

MINNIE (*after a general thoughtful silence*) : An' would my father stop here ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Oh, he'd be all right.

MINNIE : But who would he live with ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know—one of his paper bonnets, if he likes.

MINNIE : Then she could have her old bracelet back, couldn't she ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes—there it is on the candlestick, waiting for her.

[*There is a sound of footseps—then a knock at the door. The children start.*

MINNIE (*in relief*) : Here he is.

[MRS. HOLROYD *goes to the door.* BLACKMORE *enters.*

BLACKMORE : It is foggy to-night— Hello, aren't you youngsters gone to bed ?

MINNIE : No, my father's not come home yet.

BLACKMORE (*turning to* MRS. HOLROYD) : Did he go to work then, after last night ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I suppose so. His pit things were gone when I got up. I never thought he'd go.

BLACKMORE : And he took his snap as usual ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, just as usual. I suppose he's gone to the New Inn. He'd say to himself he'd pay me out. That's what he always does say, " I'll pay thee out for that bit—I'll ma'e thee regret it."

JACK : We're going to leave him.

BLACKMORE : So you think he's at the New Inn ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I'm sure he is—and he'll come when he's full. He'll have a bout now, you'll see.

MINNIE : Go and fetch him, Mr. Blackmore.

JACK : My mother says we shall go in a ship and leave him.

BLACKMORE (*after looking keenly at* JACK : *to* MRS. HOLROYD) : Shall I go and see if he's at the New Inn ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No—perhaps you'd better not——

BLACKMORE : Oh, he shan't see me. I can easily manage that.

JACK : Fetch him, Mr. Blackmore.

BLACKMORE: All right, Jack. (*To* MRS. HOLROYD.) Shall I?

MRS. HOLROYD: We're always pulling on you—— But yes, do!

[BLACKMORE *goes out.*

JACK: I wonder how long he'll be.

MRS. HOLROYD: You come and go to bed now: you'd better be out of the way when he comes in.

MINNIE: And you won't say anything to him, mother, will you?

MRS. HOLROYD: What do you mean?

MINNIE: You won't begin of him—row him.

MRS. HOLROYD: Is he to have all his own way? What *would* he be like, if I didn't row him?

JACK: But it doesn't matter, mother, if we're going to leave him——

MINNIE: But Mr. Blackmore'll come back, won't he, mam, and dad won't shout before him?

MRS. HOLROYD (*beginning to undress the children*): Yes, he'll come back.

MINNIE: Mam—could I have that bracelet to go to bed with?

MRS. HOLROYD: Come and say your prayers.

[*They kneel, muttering in their mother's apron.*

MINNIE (*suddenly lifting her head*): Can I, mam?

MRS. HOLROYD (*trying to be stern*): Have you finished your prayers?

MINNIE: Yes.

MRS. HOLROYD: If you want it—beastly thing! (*She reaches the bracelet down from the mantelpiece.*) Your

father must have put it up there—I don't know where I left it. I suppose he'd think I was proud of it and wanted it for an ornament.

[MINNIE *gloats over it.* MRS. HOLROYD *lights a candle and they go upstairs. After a few moments the outer door opens, and there enters an old woman. She is of middling stature and wears a large grey shawl over her head. After glancing sharply round the room, she advances to the fire, warms herself, then, taking off her shawl, sits in the rocking-chair. As she hears* MRS. HOLROYD'S *footsteps, she folds her hands and puts on a lachrymose expression, turning down the corners of her mouth and arching her eyebrows.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Hello, mother, is it you ?

GRANDMOTHER : Yes, it's me. Haven't you finished ironing ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Not yet.

GRANDMOTHER : You'll have your irons red-hot.

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I s'll have to stand them to cool. (*She does so, and moves about at her ironing.*)

GRANDMOTHER : And you don't know what's become of Charles ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Well, he's not come home from work yet. I supposed he was at the New Inn— Why ?

GRANDMOTHER : That young electrician come knocking asking if I knew where he was. "Eh," I said, "I've not set eyes on him for over a week—nor his wife neither, though they pass th' garden gate every time they go out. I know nowt on 'im." I axed him what was the matter, so he said Mrs. Holroyd

was anxious because he'd not come home, so I thought I'd better come and see. Is there anything up ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No more than I've told you.

GRANDMOTHER : It's a rum 'un, if he's neither in the New Inn nor the Prince o' Wales. I suppose something you've done's set him off.

MRS. HOLROYD : It's nothing I've done.

GRANDMOTHER : Eh, if he's gone off and left you, whativer shall we do ! Whativer 'ave you been doing ?

MRS. HOLROYD : He brought a couple of bright daisies here last night —two of those trollops from Nottingham—and I said I'd not have it.

GRANDMOTHER (*sighing deeply*) : Ay, you've never been able to agree.

MRS. HOLROYD : We agreed well enough except when he drank like a fish and came home rolling.

GRANDMOTHER (*whining*) : Well, what can you expect of a man as 'as been shut up i' th' pit all day ? He must have a bit of relaxation.

MRS. HOLROYD : He can have it different from that, then. At any rate, I'm sick of it.

GRANDMOTHER : Ay, you've a stiff neck, but it'll be bowed by you're my age.

MRS. HOLROYD : Will it ? I'd rather it were broke.

GRANDMOTHER : Well—there's no telling what a jealous man will do. (*She shakes her head.*)

MRS. HOLROYD : Nay, I think it's my place to be jealous, when he brings a brazen hussy here and sits carryin' on with her.

GRANDMOTHER : He'd no business to do that. But you know, Lizzie, he's got something on *his* side.

MRS. HOLROYD : What, pray ?

GRANDMOTHER : Well, I don't want to make any mischief, but you're my son's wife, an' it's nothing but my duty to tell you. They've been saying a long time now as that young electrician is here a bit too often.

MRS. HOLROYD : He doesn't come for my asking.

GRANDMOTHER : No, I don't suppose he wants for asking. But Charlie's not the man to put up with that sort o' work.

MRS. HOLROYD : Charlie put up with it ! If he's anything to say, why doesn't he say it, without going to other folks. . . . ?

GRANDMOTHER : Charlie's never been near me with a word—nor 'as he said a word elsewhere to my knowledge. For all that, this is going to end with trouble.

MRS. HOLROYD : In this hole, every gossiping creature thinks she's got the right to cackle about you—sickening ! And a parcel of lies.

GRANDMOTHER : Well, Lizzie, I've never said anything against you. Charlie's been a handful of trouble. He made my heart ache once or twice afore you had him, and he's made it ache many, many's the time since. But it's not all on his side, you know.

MRS. HOLROYD (*hotly*) : No, I don't know.

GRANDMOTHER : You thought yourself above him, Lizzie, an' you know he's not the man to stand it.

MRS. HOLROYD : No, he's run away from it.

GRANDMOTHER (*venomously*): And what man wouldn't leave a woman that allowed him to live on sufferance in the house with her, when he was bringing the money home?

MRS. HOLROYD: "Sufferance!"—Yes, there's been a lot of letting him live on "sufferance" in the house with me. It is *I* who have lived on sufferance, for his service and pleasure. No, what he wanted was the drink and the public house company, and because he couldn't get them here, he went out for them. That's all.

GRANDMOTHER: You have always been very clever at hitting things off, Lizzie. I was always sorry my youngest son married a clever woman. He only wanted a bit of coaxing and managing, and you clever women won't do it.

MRS. HOLROYD: He wanted a slave, not a wife.

GRANDMOTHER: It's a pity your stomach wasn't too high for him, before you had him. But no, you could have eaten him ravishing at one time.

MRS. HOLROYD: It's a pity you didn't tell me what he was before I had him. But no, he was all angel. You left me to find out what he really was.

GRANDMOTHER: Some women could have lived with him happy enough. An' a fat lot you'd have thanked me for my telling.

[*There is a knock at the door.* MRS. HOLROYD *opens.*

RIGLEY: They tell me, missus, as your mester's not hoom yet.

MRS. HOLROYD: No—who is it?

GRANDMOTHER: Ask him to step inside. Don't stan' there lettin' the fog in.

[RIGLEY *steps in. He is a tall, bony, very roughly hewn collier.*

RIGLEY: Good evenin'.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, is it you, Mr. Rigley? (*In a querulous, spiteful tone to* MRS. HOLROYD.) He butties along with Charlie.

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh!

RIGLEY: Au' han yer seen nowt on 'im?

MRS. HOLROYD: No—was he all right at work?

RIGLEY: Well, e' wor nowt to mention. A bit short, like: 'adna much to say. I canna ma'e out what 'e's done wi' 'issen. (*He is manifestly uneasy, does not look at the two women.*)

GRANDMOTHER: An' did 'e come up i' th' same bantle wi' you?

RIGLEY: No—'e didna. As Ah was comin' out o' th' stall, Ah shouted, "Art comin', Charlie? We're a' off." An' 'e said, "Ah'm comin' in a minute." 'E wor just finishin' a stint, like, an' 'e wanted ter get it set. An' 'e 'd been a bit roughish in 'is temper, like, so I thöwt 'e didna want ter walk to th' bottom wi' us. . . .

GRANDMOTHER (*wailing*): An' what's 'e gone an' done to himself?

RIGLEY: Nay, missis, yo munna ax me that. 'E's non done owt as Ah know on. On'y I wor thinkin', 'appen summat 'ad 'appened to 'im, like, seein' as nob'dy had any knowings of 'im comin' up.

MRS. HOLROYD: What is the matter, Mr. Rigley? Tell us it out.

RIGLEY: I canna do that, missis. It seems as if 'e niver come up th' pit—as far as we can make out. 'Appen a bit o' stuff's fell an' pinned 'im.

GRANDMOTHER (*wailing*): An' 'ave you left 'im lying down there in the pit, poor thing?

RIGLEY (*uneasily*): I couldna say for certain where 'e is.

MRS. HOLROYD (*agitated*): Oh, it's very likely not very bad, mother! Don't let us run to meet trouble.

RIGLEY: We 'ave to 'ope for th' best, missis, all on us.

GRANDMOTHER (*wailing*): Eh, they'll bring 'im 'ome, I know they will, smashed up an' broke! An' one of my sons they've burned down pit till the flesh dropped off 'im, an' one was shot till 'is shoulder was all of a mosh, an' they brought 'em 'ome to me. An' now there's this. . . .

MRS. HOLROYD (*shuddering*): Oh, don't, mother. (*Appealing to* RIGLEY.) You don't know that he's hurt?

RIGLEY (*shaking his head*): I canna tell you.

MRS. HOLROYD (*in a high hysterical voice*): Then what is it?

RIGLEY (*very uneasy*): I canna tell you. But yon young electrician—Mr. Blackmore—'e rung down to the night deputy, an' it seems as though there's been a fall or summat. . . .

GRANDMOTHER: Eh, Lizzie, you parted from him in anger. You little knowed how you'd meet him again.

RIGLEY (*making an effort*): Well, I'd 'appen best be goin' to see what's betide. (*He goes out.*)

GRANDMOTHER : I'm sure I've had my share of bad luck, I have. I'm sure I've brought up five lads in the pit, through accidents and troubles, and now there's this. The Lord has treated me very hard, very hard. It's a blessing, Lizzie, as you've got a bit of money, else what would 'ave become of the children ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Well, if he's badly hurt, there'll be the Union-pay, and sick-pay—we shall manage. And perhaps it's *not* very much.

GRANDMOTHER : There's no knowin' but what they'll be carryin' him to die 'i th' hospital.

MRS. HOLROYD : Oh, don't say so, mother—it won't be so bad, you'll see.

GRANDMOTHER : How much money have you, Lizzie, comin' ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't know—not much over a hundred pounds.

GRANDMOTHER (*shaking her head*) : An' what's that, what's that ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*sharply*) : Hush !

GRANDMOTHER (*crying*) : Why, what ?

[MRS. HOLROYD *opens the door. In the silence can be heard the pulsing of the fan engine, then the driving engine chuffs rapidly : there is a skirr of brakes on the rope as it descends.*

MRS. HOLROYD : That's twice they've sent the chair down—I wish we could see. . . . Hark !

GRANDMOTHER : What is it ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes—it's stopped at the gate. It's the doctor's.

GRANDMOTHER (*coming to the door*): What, Lizzie?

MRS. HOLROYD: The doctor's motor. (*She listens acutely.*) Dare you stop here, mother, while I run up to the top an' see?

GRANDMOTHER: You'd better not go, Lizzie, you'd better not. A woman's best away.

MRS. HOLROYD: It is unbearable to wait.

GRANDMOTHER: Come in an' shut the door—it's a cold that gets in your bones. (*She goes in.*)

MRS. HOLROYD: Perhaps while he's in bed we shall have time to change him. It's an ill wind brings no good. He'll happen be a better man.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, you can but try. Many a woman's thought the same.

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh, dear, I wish somebody would come. He's never been hurt since we were married.

GRANDMOTHER: No, he's never had a bad accident, all the years he's been in the pit. He's been luckier than most. But everybody has it, sooner or later.

MRS. HOLROYD (*shivering*): It *is* a horrid night.

GRANDMOTHER (*querulous*): Yes, come your ways in.

MRS. HOLROYD: Hark!

[*There is a quick sound of footsteps.* BLACKMORE *comes into the light of the doorway.*

BLACKMORE: They're bringing him.

MRS. HOLROYD (*quickly putting her hand over her breast*): What is it?

BLACKMORE: You can't tell anything's the matter with him—it's not marked him at all.

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh, what a blessing! And is it much?

BLACKMORE : Well——

MRS. HOLROYD : What is it ?

BLACKMORE : It's the worst.

GRANDMOTHER : Who is it ?—What does he say ?

[MRS. HOLROYD *sinks on the nearest chair with a horrified expression.* BLACKMORE *pulls himself together and enters. He is very pale.*

BLACKMORE : I came to tell you they're bringing him home.

GRANDMOTHER : And you said it wasn't very bad, did you ?

BLACKMORE : No—I said it was—as bad as it could be.

MRS. HOLROYD (*rising and crossing to her* MOTHER-IN-LAW, *flings her arms round her ; in a high voice*) : Oh, mother, what shall we do ? What shall we do ?

GRANDMOTHER : You don't mean to say he's dead ?

BLACKMORE : Yes.

GRANDMOTHER (*staring*) : God help us, and how was it ?

BLACKMORE : Some stuff fell.

GRANDMOTHER (*rocking herself and her daughter-in-law—both weeping*) : Oh, God have mercy on us ! Oh, God have mercy on us ! Some stuff fell on him. An' he'd not even time to cry for mercy ; oh, God spare him ! Oh, what shall we do for comfort ? To be taken straight out of his sins. Oh, Lizzie, to think he should be cut off in his wickedness ! He's been a bad lad of late, he has, poor lamb. He's gone very wrong of late years, poor dear lamb, very wrong. Oh, Lizzie, think what's to become of him now ! If only you'd have tried to be different with him.

MRS. HOLROYD (*moaning*): Don't, mother, don't. I can't bear it.

BLACKMORE (*cold and clear*): Where will you have him laid? The men will be here in a moment.

MRS. HOLROYD (*starting up*): They can carry him up to bed——

BLACKMORE: It's no good taking him upstairs. You'll have to wash him and lay him out.

MRS. HOLROYD (*startled*): Well——

BLACKMORE: He's in his pit-dirt.

GRANDMOTHER: He is, bless him. We'd better have him down here, Lizzie, where we can handle him.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

[*She begins to put the tea things away, but drops the sugar out of the basin and the lumps fly broadcast.*

BLACKMORE: Never mind, I'll pick those up. You put the children's clothes away.

[MRS. HOLROYD *stares witless around. The* GRANDMOTHER *sits rocking herself and weeping.* BLACKMORE *clears the table, putting the pots in the scullery. He folds the white tablecloth and pulls back the table. The door opens.* MRS. HOLROYD *utters a cry.* RIGLEY *enters.*

RIGLEY: They're bringing him now, missis.

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh!

RIGLEY (*simply*): There must ha' been a fall directly after we left him.

MRS. HOLROYD (*frowning, horrified*): No—no!

RIGLEY (*to* BLACKMORE): It fell a' back of him, an' shut 'im in as you might shut a loaf 'i th' oven. It never touched him.

MRS. HOLROYD (*staring distractedly*): Well, then——

RIGLEY: You see, it come on 'im as close as a trap on a mouse, an' gen him no air, an' what wi' th' gas, it smothered him. An' it wouldna be so very long about it neither.

MRS. HOLROYD (*quiet with horror*): Oh!

GRANDMOTHER: Eh, dear—dear. Eh, dear—dear.

RIGLEY (*looking hard at her*): I wasna to know what 'ud happen.

GRANDMOTHER (*not heeding him, but weeping all the time*): But the Lord gave him time to repent. He'd have a few minutes to repent. Ay, I hope he did, I hope he did, else what was to become of him. The Lord cut him off in his sins, but He gave him time to repent.

[RIGLEY *looks away at the wall.* BLACKMORE *has made a space in the middle of the floor.*

BLACKMORE: If you'll take the rocking-chair off the end of the rug, Mrs. Holroyd, I can pull it back a bit from the fire, and we can lay him on that.

GRANDMOTHER (*petulantly*): What's the good of messing about—— (*She moves.*)

MRS. HOLROYD: It suffocated him?

RIGLEY (*shaking his head, briefly*): Yes. 'Appened th' after-damp——

BLACKMORE: He'd be dead in a few minutes.

MRS. HOLROYD: No—oh, think!

BLACKMORE: You mustn't think.

RIGLEY (*suddenly*): They commin'!

[MRS. HOLROYD *stands at bay. The* GRANDMOTHER *half rises.* RIGLEY *and* BLACKMORE *efface themselves as much as possible. A man backs into the room, bearing the feet of the dead man, which are shod in great pit boots. As the head bearer comes awkwardly past the table, the coat with which the body is covered slips off, revealing* HOLROYD *in his pit-dirt, naked to the waist.*

MANAGER (*a little stout, white-bearded man*): Mind now, mind. Ay, missis, what a job, indeed, it is! (*Sharply.*) Where mun they put him?

MRS. HOLROYD (*turning her face aside from the corpse*): Lay him on the rug.

MANAGER: Steady now, do it steady.

SECOND BEARER (*rising and pressing back his shoulders*): By Guy, but 'e 'ings heavy.

MANAGER: Yi, Joe, I'll back my life o' that.

GRANDMOTHER: Eh, Mr. Chambers, what's this affliction on my old age. You kept your sons out o' the pit, but all mine's in. And to think of the trouble I've had—to think o' the trouble that's come out of Brinsley pit to me.

MANAGER: It has that, it'as that, missis. You seem to have had more'n your share; I'll admit it, you have.

MRS. HOLROYD (*who has been staring at the men*): It is too much!

[BLACKMORE *frowns;* RIGLEY *glowers at her.*

MANAGER: You never knowed such a thing in your life. Here's a man, holin' a stint, just finishin', (*He puts himself as if in the holer's position, gesticulating*

freely) an' a lot o' stuff falls behind him, clean as a whistle, shuts him up safe as a worm in a nut and niver touches him—niver knowed such a thing in your life.

MRS. HOLROYD: Ugh!

MANAGER: It niver hurt him—niver touched him.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes, but—but how long would he *be* (*she makes a sweeping gesture; the* MANAGER *looks at her and will not help her out*)—how long would it take—oh—to—to kill him?

MANAGER: Nay, I canna tell ye. 'E didna seem to ha' strived much to get out—did he, Joe?

SECOND BEARER: No, not as far as Ah'n seen.

FIRST BEARER: You look at 'is ands, you'll see then. 'E'd non ha'e room to swing the pick.

[*The* MANAGER *goes on his knees.*

MRS. HOLROYD (*shuddering*): Oh, don't!

MANAGER: Ay, th' nails is broken a bit——

MRS. HOLROYD (*clenching her fists*): Don't!

MANAGER: E'd be sure ter ma'e a bit of a fight. But th' gas 'ud soon get hold on 'im. Ay, it's an awful thing to think of, it is indeed.

MRS. HOLROYD (*her voice breaking*): I can't bear it!

MANAGER: Eh, dear, we none on us know what's comin' next.

MRS. HOLROYD (*getting hysterical*): Oh, it's too awful, it's too awful!

BLACKMORE: You'll disturb the children.

GRANDMOTHER: And you don't want *them* down here.

MANAGER: 'E'd no business to ha' been left, you know.

RIGLEY : An' what man, dost think, wor goin' to sit him down on his hams an' wait for a chap as wouldna say " thank yer " for his cump'ny ? 'E'd bin ready to fall out wi' a flicker o' the candle, so who dost think wor goin' ter stop when we knowed 'e on'y kep on so's to get shut on us.

MANAGER : Tha'rt quite right, Bill, quite right. But theer you are.

RIGLEY : Ah' if we'd stopped, what good would it ha' done——

MANAGER : No, 'appen not, 'appen not.

RIGLEY : For, not known——

MANAGER : I'm sayin' nowt agen thee, neither one road nor t'other. (*There is general silence—then, to* MRS. HOLROYD.) I should think th' inquest'll be at th' New Inn to-morrow, missis. I'll let you know.

MRS. HOLROYD : Will there have to be an inquest ?

MANAGER : Yes—there'll have to be an inquest. Shall you want anybody in, to stop with you to-night ?

MRS. HOLROYD : No.

MANAGER : Well, then, we'd best be goin'. I'll send my missis down first thing in the morning. It's a bad job, a bad job, it is. You'll be a' right then ?

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes.

MANAGER : Well, good night then—good night all.

ALL : Good night. Good night.

[*The* MANAGER, *followed by the two bearers, goes out, closing the door.*

RIGLEY : It's like this, missis. I never should ha' gone, if he hadn't wanted us to.

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I know.

RIGLEY : 'E wanted to come up by 's sen.

MRS. HOLROYD (*wearily*) : I know how it was, Mr. Rigley.

RIGLEY : Yes——

BLACKMORE : Nobody could foresee.

RIGLEY (*shaking his head*) : No. If there's owt, missis, as you want——

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes—I think there isn't anything.

RIGLEY (*after a moment*) : Well—good night—we've worked i' the same stall ower four years now——

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes.

RIGLEY : Well, good night, missis.

MRS. HOLROYD AND BLACKMORE : Good night.

[*The* GRANDMOTHER *all this time has been rocking herself to and fro, moaning and murmuring beside the dead man. When* RIGLEY *has gone* MRS. HOLROYD *stands staring distractedly before her. She has not yet looked at her husband.*

GRANDMOTHER : Have you got the things ready, Lizzie ?

MRS. HOLROYD : What things ?

GRANDMOTHER : To lay the child out.

MRS. HOLROYD (*she shudders*) : No—what ?

GRANDMOTHER : Haven't you put him by a pair o' white stockings, nor a white shirt ?

MRS. HOLROYD : He's got a white cricketing shirt—but not white stockings.

GRANDMOTHER : Then he'll have to have his father's. Let me look at the shirt, Lizzie. (MRS. HOLROYD

takes one from the dresser drawer).) This'll never do——a cold, canvas thing wi' a turndown collar. I s'll 'ave to fetch his father's. (*Suddenly.*) You don't want no other woman to touch him, to wash him and lay him out, do you ?

MRS. HOLROYD (*weeping*) : No.

GRANDMOTHER : Then I'll fetch him his father's gear. We mustn't let him set, he'll be that heavy, bless him. (*She takes her shawl.*) I shan't be more than a few minutes, an' the young fellow can stop here till I come back.

BLACKMORE : Can't I go for you, Mrs. Holroyd ?

GRANDMOTHER : No. *You* couldn't find the things. We'll wash him as soon as I get back, Lizzie.

MRS. HOLROYD : All right.

[*She watches her mother-in-law go out. Then she starts, goes in the scullery for a bowl, in which she pours warm water. She takes a flannel and soap and towel. She stands, afraid to go any further.*

BLACKMORE : Well !

MRS. HOLROYD : This is a judgment on us.

BLACKMORE : Why ?

MRS. HOLROYD : On me, it is——

BLACKMORE : How ?

MRS. HOLROYD : It is.

[BLACKMORE *shakes his head.*

MRS. HOLROYD : Yesterday you talked of murdering him.

BLACKMORE : Well !

MRS. HOLROYD : Now we've done it.

BLACKMORE : How ?

MRS. HOLROYD : He'd have come up with the others, if he hadn't felt—felt me murdering him.

BLACKMORE : But we can't help it.

MRS. HOLROYD : It's my fault.

BLACKMORE : Don't be like that !

MRS. HOLROYD (*looking at him—then indicating her husband*) : I daren't see him.

BLACKMORE : No ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I've killed him, that is all.

BLACKMORE : No, you haven't.

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes, I have.

BLACKMORE : *We* couldn't help it.

MRS. HOLROYD : If he hadn't felt, if he hadn't *known*, he wouldn't have stayed, he'd have come up with the rest.

BLACKMORE : Well, and even if it was so, we can't help it now.

MRS. HOLROYD : But we've killed him.

BLACKMORE : Ah, I'm tired——

MRS. HOLROYD : Yes.

BLACKMORE (*after a pause*) : Shall I stay ?

MRS. HOLROYD : I—I daren't be alone with him.

BLACKMORE (*sitting down*) : No.

MRS. HOLROYD : I don't love him. Now he's dead. I don't love him. He lies like he did yesterday.

BLACKMORE : I suppose, being dead—I don't know——

MRS. HOLROYD : I think you'd better go.

BLACKMORE (*rising*) : Tell me.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

BLACKMORE: You want me to go.

MRS. HOLROYD: No—but *do* go. (*They look at each other.*)

BLACKMORE: I shall come to-morrow (*he goes out*).

[MRS. HOLROYD *stands very stiff, as if afraid of the dead man. Then she stoops down and begins to sponge his face, talking to him.*

MRS. HOLROYD: My dear, my dear—oh, my dear! I can't bear it, my dear—you shouldn't have done it. You shouldn't have done it. Oh—I can't bear it, for you. Why couldn't I do anything for you? The children's father—my dear—I wasn't good to you. But you shouldn't have done this to me. Oh, dear, oh, dear! Did it hurt you?—oh, my dear, it hurt you—oh, I can't bear it. No, things aren't fair—we went wrong, my dear. I never loved you enough—I never did. What a shame for you! It was a shame. But you didn't—you didn't try. I *would* have loved you—I tried hard. What a shame for you! It was so cruel for you. You couldn't help it—my dear, my dear. You couldn't help it. And I can't do anything for you, and it hurt you so! (*She weeps bitterly, so her tears fall on the dead man's face; suddenly she kisses him.*) My dear, my dear, what can I do for you, what can I? (*She weeps as she wipes his face gently.*)

GRANDMOTHER (*enters, puts a bundle on the table, takes off her shawl*): You're not all by yourself?

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

GRANDMOTHER: It's a wonder you're not frightened. You've not washed his face.

MRS. HOLROYD: Why should I be afraid of him—now, mother?

GRANDMOTHER (*weeping*): Ay, poor lamb, I can't think as ever you could have had reason to be frightened of him, Lizzie.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes—once——

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, but he went wrong. An' he was a taking lad, as iver was. (*She cries pitifully.*) And when I waked his father up and told him, he sat up in bed staring over his whiskers, and said should he come up? But when I'd managed to find the shirt and things, he was still in bed. You don't know what it is to live with a man that has no feeling. But you've washed him, Lizzie?

MRS. HOLROYD: I was finishing his head.

GRANDMOTHER: Let me do it, child.

MRS. HOLROYD: I'll finish that.

GRANDMOTHER: Poor lamb—poor dear lamb! Yet I wouldn't wish him back, Lizzie. He must ha' died peaceful, Lizzie. He seems to be smiling. He always had such a rare smile on him—not that he's smiled much of late——

MRS. HOLROYD: I loved him for that.

GRANDMOTHER: Ay, my poor child—my poor child.

MRS. HOLROYD: He looks nice, mother.

GRANDMOTHER: I hope he made his peace with the Lord.

MRS. HOLROYD: Yes.

GRANDMOTHER: If he hadn't time to make his peace with the Lord, I've no hopes of him. Dear o' me, dear o' me. Is there another bit of flannel anywhere?

[MRS. HOLROYD *rises and brings a piece. The* GRANDMOTHER *begins to wash the breast of the dead man.*

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I hope you'll be true to his children at least, Lizzie. (MRS. HOLROYD *weeps—the old woman continues her washing.*) Eh—and he's fair as a lily. Did you ever see a man with a whiter skin —and flesh as fine as the driven snow. He's beautiful, he is, the lamb. Many's the time I've looked at him, and I've felt proud of him, I have. And now he lies here. And such arms on 'im! Look at the vaccination marks, Lizzie. When I took him to be vaccinated, he had a little pink bonnet with a feather. (*Weeps.*) Don't cry, my girl, don't. Sit up an' wash him a' that side, or we s'll never have him done. Oh, Lizzie!

MRS. HOLROYD (*sitting up, startled*): What—what?

GRANDMOTHER: Look at his poor hand!

[*She holds up the right hand. The nails are bloody.*

MRS. HOLROYD: Oh, no! Oh, no! No!

[*Both women weep.*

GRANDMOTHER (*after a while*): We maun get on, Lizzie.

MRS. HOLROYD (*sitting up*): I can't touch his hands.

GRANDMOTHER: But I'm his mother—there's nothing I couldn't do for him.

MRS. HOLROYD: I don't care—I don't care.

GRANDMOTHER: Prithee, prithee, Lizzie, I don't want thee goin' off, Lizzie.

MRS. HOLROYD (*moaning*): Oh, what shall I do!

GRANDMOTHER : Why, go thee an' get his feet washed. He's setting stiff, and how shall we get him laid out ?

[MRS. HOLROYD, *sobbing, goes, kneels at the miner's feet, and begins pulling off the great boots.*

GRANDMOTHER : There's hardly a mark on him. Eh, what a man he is ! I've had some fine sons, Lizzie, I've had some big men of sons.

MRS. HOLROYD : He was always a lot whiter than me. And he used to chaff me.

GRANDMOTHER : But his poor hands ! I used to thank God for my children, but they're rods o' trouble, Lizzie, they are. Unfasten his belt, child. We mun get his things off soon, or else we s'll have such a job.

[MRS. HOLROYD, *having dragged off the boots, rises. She is weeping.*

CURTAIN

TOUCH AND GO

(1919)

CHARACTERS

GERALD BARLOW.
MR. BARLOW (*his father*).
OLIVER TURTON.
JOB ARTHUR FREER.
WILLIE HOUGHTON.
ALFRED BREFFITT.
WILLIAM (*a butler*).
CLERKS, MINERS, ETC.
ANABEL WRATH.
MRS. BARLOW.
WINIFRED BARLOW.
EVA (*a maid*).

PREFACE

A NICE phrase : " A People's Theatre." But what about it ? There's no such thing in existence as a People's Theatre : or even on the way to existence, as far as we can tell. The name is chosen, the baby isn't even begotten : nay, the would-be parents aren't married, nor yet courting.

A People's Theatre. Note the indefinite article. It isn't The People's Theatre, but A People's Theatre. Not The People : il popolo, le peuple, das Volk, this monster is the same the world over : Plebs, the proletariat. Not the theatre of Plebs, the proletariat, but the theatre of A People. What people ? Quel peuple donc ?—A People's Theatre. Translate it into French for yourself.

A People's Theatre. Since we can't produce it, let us deduce it. Major premiss : the seats are cheap. Minor premiss : the plays are good. Conclusion : A People's Theatre. How much will you give me for my syllogism ? Not a slap in the eye, I hope.

We stick to our guns. The seats are cheap. That has a nasty proletarian look about it. But appearances are deceptive. The proletariat isn't poor. Everybody is poor except Capital and Labour. Between these upper and nether millstones great numbers of decent people are squeezed.

The seats are cheap : in decency's name. Nobody wants to swank, to sit in the front of a box like a geranium on a window-sill—" the cynosure of many

eyes." Nobody wants to profiteer. We all feel that it is as humiliating to pay high prices as to charge them. No man consents in his heart to pay high prices unless he feels that what he pays with his right hand he will get back with his left, either out of the pocket of a man who isn't looking, or out of the envy of the poor neighbour who *is* looking, but can't afford the figure. The seats are cheap. Why should A People, fabulous and lofty giraffe, want to charge or to pay high prices ? If it were *the people* now— But it isn't. It isn't Plebs, the proletariat. The seats are cheap.

The plays are good. Pah !—this has a canting smell. Any play is good to the man who likes to look at it. And at that rate " Chu Chin Chow " is extra-super-good. What about your *good* plays ? Whose good ? *Pfui* to your goodness !

That minor premiss is a bad egg : it will hatch no bird. Good plays ? You might as well say mimsy bomtittle plays, you'd be saying as much. The plays are—don't say good or you'll be beaten. The plays—the plays of A People's Theatre are—oh, heaven, what are they ?—not popular nor populous nor plebeian nor proletarian nor folk nor parish plays. None of that adjectival spawn.

The only clue-word is People's, for all that. A People's—— Chaste word, it will bring forth no adjective. The plays of A People's Theatre are People's plays. The plays of A People's Theatre are plays about people.

It doesn't look much, at first sight. After all—people ! Yes, people ! Not *the people*, i.e. Plebs, nor yet the Upper Ten. People. Neither Piccoli nor Grandi in our republic. People.

People, ah God! Not mannequins. Not lords nor proletariats nor bishops nor husbands nor co-respondents nor virgins nor adulteresses nor uncles nor noses. Not even white rabbits nor presidents. People.

Men who are somebody, not men who are something. Men who *happen* to be bishops or co-respondents, women who happen to be chaste, just as they happen to freckle, because it's one of their innumerable odd qualities. Even men who happen, by the way, to have long noses. But not noses on two legs, not burly pairs of gaiters, stuffed and voluble, not white meringues of chastity, not incarnations of co-respondence. Not proletariats, petitioners, presidents, noses, bits of fluff. Heavens, what an assortment of bits! And aren't we sick of them!

People, I say. And after all, it's saying something. It's harder to be a human being than to be a president or a bit of fluff. You can be a president, or a bit of fluff, or even a nose, by clockwork. Given a rôle, a *part*, you can play it by clockwork. But you can't have a clockwork human being.

We're dead sick of parts. It's no use your protesting that there is a man behind the nose. We can't see him, and he can't see himself. Nothing but nose. Neither can you make us believe there is a man inside the gaiters. He's never showed his head yet.

It may be, in real life, the gaiters wear the man, as the nose wears Cyrano. It may be Sir Auckland Geddes and Mr. J. H. Thomas are only clippings from the illustrated press. It may be that a miner is a complicated machine for cutting coal and voting on a ballot-paper. It may be that coal-owners are like the *petit*

bleu arrangement, a system of vacuum tubes for whooshing Bradburys about from one to the other.

It may be that everybody delights in bits, in parts, that the public insists on noses, gaiters, white rabbits, bits of fluff, automata and gewgaws. If they do, then let 'em. Chu Chin Chow for ever!

In spite of them all: A People's Theatre. A People's Theatre shows men, and not parts. Not bits, nor bundles of bits. A whole bunch of rôles tied into one won't make an individual. Though gaiters perish, we will have men.

Although most miners may be pick-cum-shovel-cum-ballot implements, and no more, still, among miners there must be two or three living individuals. The same among the masters. The majority are suction-tubes for Bradburys. But in this Sodom of Industrialism there are surely ten men, all told. My poor little withered grain of mustard seed, I am half afraid to take you across to the seed-testing department!

And if there are men, there is A People's Theatre.

How many tragic situations did Goethe say were possible? Something like thirty-two. Which seems a lot. Anyhow, granted that men are men still, that not all of them are bits, parts, machine-sections, then we have added another tragic possibility to the list: the Strike situation. As yet no one tackles this situation. It is a sort of Medusa head, which turns—no, not to stone, but to sloppy treacle. Mr. Galsworthy had a peep, and sank down towards bathos.

Granted that men are still men, Labour *v.* Capitalism is a tragic struggle. If men are no more than implements, it is non-tragic and merely disastrous. In tragedy the man is more than his part. Hamlet is

more than Prince of Denmark, Macbeth is more than murderer of Duncan. The man is caught in the wheels of his part, his fate, he may be torn asunder. He may be killed, but the resistant, integral soul in him is not destroyed. He comes through, though he dies. He goes through with his fate, though death swallows him. And it is in this facing of fate, this going right through with it, that tragedy lies. Tragedy is not disaster. It is a disaster when a cart-wheel goes over a frog, but it is not a tragedy. Tragedy is the working out of some immediate passional problem within the soul of man. If this passional problem and this working out be absent, then no disaster is a tragedy, not the hugest: not the death of ten million men. It is only a cart-wheel going over a frog. There must be a supreme *struggle*.

In Shakespeare's time it was the people *versus* king storm that was brewing. Majesty was about to have its head off. Come what might, Hamlet and Macbeth and Goneril and Regan had to see the business through.

Now a new wind is getting up. We call it Labour *versus* Capitalism. We say it is a mere material struggle, a money-grabbing affair. But this is only one aspect of it. In so far as men are merely mechanical the struggle is one which, though it may bring disaster and death to millions, is no more than accident, an accidental collision of forces. But in so far as men are men, the situation is tragic. It is not really the bone we are fighting for. We are fighting to have somebody's head off. The conflict is in pure, passional antagonism, turning upon the poles of belief. Majesty was only *hors d'œuvres* to this tragic repast.

So, the strike situation has this dual aspect. First

it is a mechanico-material struggle, two mechanical forces pulling asunder from the central object, the bone. All it can result in is the pulling asunder of the fabric of civilisation, and even of life, without any creative issue. It is no more than a frog under a cart-wheel. The mechanical forces, rolling on, roll over the body of life and squash it.

The second is the tragic aspect. According to this view, we see more than two dogs fighting for a bone, and life hopping under the Juggernaut wheel. The two dogs are making the bone a pretext for a fight with each other. That old bull-dog, the British capitalist, has got the bone in his teeth. That unsatisfied mongrel, Plebs, the proletariat, shivers with rage not so much at sight of the bone, as at sight of the great wrinkled jowl that holds it. There is the old dog, with his knowing look and his massive grip on the bone: and there is the insatiable mongrel, with his great splay paws. The one is all head and arrogance, the other all paws and grudge. The bone is only the pretext. A first condition of the being of Bully is that he shall hate the prowling great paws of Plebs, whilst Plebs by inherent nature goes mad at the sight of Bully's jowl. "Drop it!" cries Plebs. "Hands off!" growls Bully. It is hands against head, the shambling, servile body in a rage of insurrection at last against the wrinkled, heavy head.

Labour not only wants his debt. He wants his pound of flesh. It is a quandary. In our heart of hearts we must admit the debt. We must admit that it is long overdue. But this last condition! In vain we study our anatomy to see which part we can best spare.

Where is our Portia, to save us with a timely quibble? We've plenty of Portias. They've recited their heads

off—" The quality of mercy is not strained." But the old Shylock of the proletariat persists. He pops up again, and says, " All right, I can't have my pound of flesh with the blood. But then you can't keep my pound of flesh with your blood—you owe it me. It is your business to deliver the goods. Deliver it then—with or without blood—deliver it." Then Portia scratches her head, and thinks again.

What's the solution ? There is no solution. But still there is a choice. There's a choice between a mess and a tragedy. If Plebs and Bully hang on one to each end of the bone, and pull for grim life, they will at last tear the bone to atoms : in short, destroy the whole material substance of life, and so perish by accident, no better than a frog under the wheel of destiny. That may be a disaster, but it is only a mess for all that.

On the other hand, if they have a fight to fight they might really drop the bone. Instead of wrangling the bone to bits they might really go straight for one another. They are like hostile parties on board a ship, who both proceed to scuttle the ship so as to sink the other party. Down goes the ship, with all the bally lot on board. A few survivors swim and squeal among the bubbles—and then silence.

It is too much to suppose that the combatants will ever drop the obvious old bone. But it is not too much to imagine that some men might acknowledge the bone to be merely a pretext, another hollow *casus belli.* If we really could know what we were fighting for, if we could deeply believe in what we were fighting for, then the struggle might have dignity, beauty, satisfaction for us. If it were a profound struggle for something that

was coming to life in us, a struggle that we were convinced would bring us to a new freedom, a new life, then it would be a creative activity, a creative activity in which death is a climax in the progression towards new being. And this is tragedy.

Therefore, if we could but comprehend or feel the tragedy in the great Labour struggle, the intrinsic tragedy of having to pass through death to birth, our souls would still know some happiness, the very happiness of creative suffering. Instead of which we pile accident on accident, we tear the fabric of our existence fibre by fibre, we confidently look forward to the time when the whole great structure will come down on our heads. Yet after all that, when we are squirming under the debris, we shall have no more faith or hope or satisfaction than we have now. We shall crawl from under one cart-wheel straight under another.

The essence of tragedy, which is creative crisis, is that a man should go through with his fate, and not dodge it and go bumping into an accident. And the whole business of life, at the great critical periods of mankind, is that men should accept and be one with their tragedy. Therefore we should open our hearts. For one thing, we should have a People's Theatre. Perhaps it would help us in this hour of confusion better than anything.

HERMITAGE,
June, 1919.

ACT I

SCENE I

Sunday morning. Market-place of a large mining village in the Midlands. A man addressing a small gang of colliers from the foot of a stumpy memorial obelisk. Church bells heard. Church-goers passing along the outer pavements.

WILLIE HOUGHTON: What's the matter with you folks, as I've told you before, and as I shall keep on telling you every now and again, though it doesn't make a bit of difference, is that you've got no idea of freedom whatsoever. I've lived in this blessed place for fifty years, and I've never seen the spark of an idea, nor of any response to an idea, come out of a single one of you, all the time. I don't know what it is with colliers—whether it's spending so much time in the bowels of the earth—but they never seem to be able to get their thoughts above their bellies If you've got plenty to eat and drink, and a bit over to keep the missis quiet, you're satisfied. I never saw such a satisfied bloomin' lot in my life as you Barlow and Walsall's men are, really. Of course you can growse as well as anybody, and you do growse. But you don't do anything else. You're stuck in a sort of mud of contentment, and you feel yourselves sinking, but you make no efforts to get out. You

bleat a bit, like sheep in a bog—but you like it, you know. You like sinking in—you don't have to stand on your own feet then.

I'll tell you what'll happen to you chaps. I'll give you a little picture of what you'll be like in the future. Barlow and Walsall's 'll make a number of compounds, such as they keep niggers in in South Africa, and there you'll be kept. And every one of you'll have a little brass collar round his neck, with a number on it. You won't have names any more. And you'll go from the compound to the pit, and from the pit back again to the compound. You won't be allowed to go outside the gates, except at week-ends. They'll let you go home to your wives on Saturday nights, to stop over Sunday. But you'll have to be in again by half-past nine on Sunday night; and if you're late, you'll have your next week-end knocked off. And there you'll be—and you'll be quite happy. They'll give you plenty to eat, and a can of beer a day, and a bit of bacca—and they'll provide dominoes and skittles for you to play with. And you'll be the most contented set of men alive.—But you won't be men. You won't even be animals. You'll go from number one to number three thousand, a lot of numbered slaves—a new sort of slaves——

VOICE: An' wheer shall thee be, Willie?

WILLIE: Oh, I shall be outside the palings, laughing at you. I shall have to laugh, because it'll be your own faults. You'll have nobody but yourself to thank for it. You don't *want* to be men. You'd rather *not* be free—much rather. You're like those people spoken of in Shakespeare: "Oh, how eager

these men are to be slaves!" I believe it's Shakespeare—or the Bible—one or the other—it mostly is——

ANABEL WRATH (*she was passing to church*): It was Tiberius.

WILLIE: Eh?

ANABEL: Tiberius said it.

WILLIE: Tiberius!—Oh, did he? (*Laughs.*) Thanks! Well, if Tiberius said it, there must be something in it. And he only just missed being in the Bible, anyway. He was a day late, or they'd have had him in. "Oh, how eager these men are to be slaves!"—It's evident the Romans deserved all they got from Tiberius—and you'll deserve all you get, every bit of it. But don't you bother, you'll get it. You won't be at the mercy of Tiberius, you'll be at the mercy of something a jolly sight worse. Tiberius took the skin off a few Romans, apparently. But you'll have the soul taken out of you—every one of you. And I'd rather lose my skin than my soul, any day. But perhaps you wouldn't.

VOICE: What art makin' for, Willie? Tha seems to say a lot, but tha goes round it. Tha'rt like a donkey on a gin. Tha gets ravelled.

WILLIE: Yes, that's just it. I am precisely like a donkey on a gin—a donkey that's trying to wind a lot of colliers up to the surface. There's many a donkey that's brought more colliers than you up to see daylight, by trotting round.—But do you want to know what I'm making for? I can soon tell you that. You Barlow and Walsall's men, you haven't a soul to call your own. Barlow and Walsall's have only to

say to one of you, Come, and he cometh ; Go, and he goeth, Lie down and be kicked, and he lieth down and he *is* kicked—and serve him jolly well right.

VOICE : Ay—an' what about it ? Tha's got a behind o' thy own, hasn't ter ?

WILLIE : Do you stand there and ask me what about it, and haven't the sense to alter it ? Couldn't you set up a proper Government to-morrow, if you liked ? Couldn't you contrive that the pits belonged to you, instead of you belonging to the pits, like so many old pit-ponies that stop down till they are blind, and take to eating coal-slack for meadow-grass, not knowing the difference ? If only you'd learn to think, I'd respect you. As you are, I can't, not if I try my hardest. All you can think of is to ask for another shilling a day. That's as far as your imagination carries you. And perhaps you get sevenpence ha'penny, but pay for it with half a crown's worth of sweat. The masters aren't fools—as you are. They'll give you two-thirds of what you ask for, but they'll get five-thirds of it back again—and they'll get it out of your flesh and blood, too, in jolly hard work. Shylock wasn't in it with them. He only wanted a pound of flesh. But you cheerfully give up a pound a week, each one of you, and keep on giving it up.—But you don't seem to see these things. You can't think beyond your dinners and your 'lowance. You think if you can get another shilling a day you're set up. You make me tired, I tell you.

JOB ARTHUR FREER : We think of others besides ourselves.

WILLIE: Hello, Job Arthur—are you there? I didn't recognise you without your frock-coat and silk hat—on the Sabbath.—What was that you said? You think of something else, besides yourselves?—Oh ay—I'm glad to hear it. Did you mean your own importance?

[*A motor car*, GERALD BARLOW *driving*, OLIVER TURTON *with him, has pulled up.*)

JOB ARTHUR (*glancing at the car*): No, I didn't.

WILLIE: Didn't you, though?—Come, speak up, let us have it. The more the merrier. You were going to say something.

JOB ARTHUR: Nay, you were doing the talking.

WILLIE: Yes, so I was, till you interrupted, with a great idea on the tip of your tongue. Come, spit it out. No matter if Mr. Barlow hears you. You know how sorry for you we feel, that you've always got to make your speeches twice—once to those above, and once to us here below. I didn't mean the angels and the devils, but never mind. Speak up, Job Arthur.

JOB ARTHUR: It's not everybody as has as much to say as you, Mr. Houghton.

WILLIE: No, not in the open—that's a fact. Some folks says a great deal more, in semi-private. You were just going to explain to me, on behalf of the men, whom you so ably represent and so wisely lead, Job Arthur—we won't say by the nose—you were just going to tell me—on behalf of the men, of course, not of the masters—that you think of others, besides yourself. Do you mind explaining *what* others?

JOB ARTHUR: Everybody's used to your talk, Mr. Houghton, and for that reason it doesn't make much impression. What I meant to say, in plain words, was that we have to think of what's best for everybody, not only for ourselves.

WILLIE: Oh, I see. What's best for everybody! I see! Well, for myself, I'm much obliged—there's nothing for us to do, gentlemen, but for all of us to bow acknowledgments to Mr. Job Arthur Freer, who so kindly has *all* our interests at heart.

JOB ARTHUR: I don't profess to be a red-rag Socialist. I don't pretend to think that if the Government had the pits it would be any better for us. No. What I mean is, that the pits are there, and every man on this place depends on them, one way or another. They're the cow that gives the milk. And what I mean is, how every man shall have a proper share of the milk, which is food and living. I don't want to kill the cow and share up the meat. It's like killing the goose that laid the golden egg. I want to keep the cow healthy and strong. And the cow is the pits, and we're the men that depend on the pits.

WILLIE: Who's the cat that's going to lick the cream?

JOB ARTHUR: My position is this—and I state it before masters and men—that it's our business to strike such a balance between the interests of the men and the interests of the masters that the pits remain healthy, and everybody profits.

WILLIE: You're out for the millennium, I can see—with Mr. Job Arthur Freer striking the balance. We all see you, Job Arthur, one foot on either side of the fence, balancing the see-saw, with masters at one

end and men at the other. You'll have to give one side a lot of pudding.—But go back a bit, to where we were before the motor car took your breath away. When you said, Job Arthur, that you think of others besides yourself, didn't you mean, as a matter of fact, the office men? Didn't you mean that the colliers, led—we won't mention noses—by you, were going to come out in sympathy with the office clerks, supposing they didn't get the rise in wages which they've asked for—the office clerks? Wasn't that it?

JOB ARTHUR: There's been some talk among the men of standing by the office. I don't know what they'll do. But they'll do it of their own decision, whatever it is.

WILLIE: There's not a shadow of doubt about it, Job Arthur. But it's a funny thing the decisions all have the same foxy smell about them, Job Arthur.

OLIVER TURTON (*calling from the car*): What was the speech about, in the first place?

WILLIE: I beg pardon?

OLIVER: What was the address about, to begin with?

WILLIE: Oh, the same old hat—Freedom. But partly it's given to annoy the Unco Guid, as they pass to their Sabbath banquet of self-complacency.

OLIVER: What *about* Freedom?

WILLIE: Very much as usual, I believe. But you should have been here ten minutes sooner, before we began to read the lessons. (*Laughs.*)

ANABEL W. (*moving forward, and holding out her hand*): You'd merely have been told what Freedom *isn't*: and you know that already. How are you, Oliver?

OLIVER: Good God, Anabel!—are you part of the meeting? How long have you been back in England?

ANABEL: Some months, now. My family have moved here, you know.

OLIVER: Your family! Where have they moved from?—from the moon?

ANABEL: No, only from Derby.—How are you, Gerald?

[GERALD *twists in his seat to give her his hand.*

GERALD: I saw you before.

ANABEL: Yes, I know you did.

[JOB ARTHUR *has disappeared. The men disperse sheepishly into groups, to stand and sit on their heels by the walls and the causeway edge.* WILLIE HOUGHTON *begins to talk to individuals.*

OLIVER: Won't you get in and drive on with us a little way?

ANABEL: No, I was going to church.

OLIVER: Going to church! Is that a new habit?

ANABEL: Not a habit. But I've been twice since I saw you last.

OLIVER: I see. And that's nearly two years ago. It's an annual thing, like a birthday?

ANABEL: No. I'll go on, then.

OLIVER: You'll be late now.

ANABEL: Shall I? It doesn't matter.

OLIVER: We are going to see you again, aren't we?

ANABEL (*after a pause*): Yes, I hope so, Oliver.

OLIVER: How have you been these two years—well?—happy?

ANABEL : No, neither. How have you ?

OLIVER : Yes, fairly happy. Have you been ill ?

ANABEL : Yes, in France I was very ill.

OLIVER : Your old neuritis ?

ANABEL : No. My chest. Pneumonia—oh, a complication.

OLIVER : How sickening ! Who looked after you ? Is it better ?

ANABEL : Yes, it's a great deal better.

OLIVER : And what are you doing in England—working ?

ANABEL : No, not much.—I won't keep the car here : good-bye.

GERALD : Oh, it's all right.

OLIVER : But, Anabel—we must fix a meeting. I say, wait just a moment. Could I call on your people ? Go into town with me one day. I don't know whether Gerald intends to see you—whether he intends to ask you to Lilley Close.

GERALD : I——

ANABEL : He's no need. I'm fixed up there already.

GERALD : What do you mean ?

ANABEL : I am at Lilley Close every day—or most days—to work with your sister Winifred in the studio.

GERALD : What ?—why, how's that ?

ANABEL : Your father asked me. My father was already giving her some lessons.

GERALD : And you're at our house every day ?

ANABEL : Most days.

GERALD: Well, I'm—well, I'll be—you managed it very sharp, didn't you? I've only been away a fortnight.

ANABEL: Your father asked me—he offered me twelve pounds a month—I wanted to do something.

GERALD: Oh yes, but you didn't hire yourself out at Lilley Close as a sort of upper servant just for twelve pounds a month.

ANABEL: You're wrong—you're wrong. I'm not a sort of upper servant at all—not at all.

GERALD: Oh yes, you are, if you're paid twelve pounds a month—three pounds a week. That's about what father's sick-nurse gets, I believe. You're a kind of upper servant, like a nurse. You don't do it for twelve pounds a month. You can make twelve pounds in a day, if you like to work at your little models: I know you can sell your little statuette things as soon as you make them.

ANABEL: But I *can't* make them. I *can't* make them. I've lost the spirit—the *joie de vivre*—I don't know what, since I've been ill. I tell you I've *got* to earn something.

GERALD: Nevertheless, you won't make me believe, Anabel, that you've come and buried yourself in the provinces—*such* provinces—just to earn father's three pounds a week. Why don't you admit it, that you came back to try and take up the old threads?

OLIVER: Why not, Gerald? Don't you think we ought to take up the old threads?

GERALD: I don't think we ought to be left without choice. I don't think Anabel ought to come back

and thrust herself on me—for that's what it amounts to, after all—when one remembers what's gone before.

ANABEL: I *don't* thrust myself on you at all. I know I'm a fool, a fool, to come back. But I wanted to. I wanted to see you again. Now I know I've presumed. I've made myself *cheap* to you. I wanted to—I wanted to. And now I've done it, I won't come to Lilley Close again, nor anywhere where you are. Tell your father I have gone to France again—it will be true.

GERALD: You play tricks on me—and on yourself. You know you do. You do it for the pure enjoyment of it. You're making a scene here in this filthy market-place, just for the fun of it. You like to see these accursed colliers standing eyeing you, and squatting on their heels. You like to catch me out, here where I'm known, where I've been the object of their eyes since I was born. This is a great *coup de main* for you. I knew it the moment I saw you here.

OLIVER: After all, we *are* making a scene in the market-place. Get in, Anabel, and we'll settle the dispute more privately. I'm glad you came back, anyhow. I'm glad you came right down on us. Get in, and let us run down to Whatmore.

ANABEL: No, Oliver. I don't want to run down to Whatmore. I wanted to see you—I wanted to see Gerald—and I've seen him—and I've heard him. That will suffice me. We'll make an end of the scene in the market-place. (*She turns away.*)

OLIVER: I knew it wasn't ended. I knew she would come back and tell us she'd come. But she's done her

bit—now she'll go again. My God, what a fool of a world!—You go on, Gerald—I'll just go after her and see it out. (*Calls.*) One moment, Anabel.

ANABEL (*calling*): Don't come, Oliver. (*Turns.*)

GERALD: Anabel! (*Blows the horn of the motor car violently and agitatedly—she looks round—turns again as if frightened.*) God damn the woman! (*Gets down from the car.*) Drive home for me, Oliver.

CURTAIN



SCENE II

WINIFRED'S *studio at Lilley Close.* ANABEL *and* WINIFRED *working at a model in clay.*

WINIFRED: But isn't it lovely to be in Paris, and to have exhibitions, and to be famous?

ANABEL: Paris *was* a good place. But I was never famous.

WINIFRED: But your little animals and birds were famous. Jack said so. You know he brought us that bronze thrush that is singing, that is in his room. He has only let me see it twice. It's the loveliest thing I've ever seen. Oh, if I can do anything like that! —I've worshipped it, I have. Is it your best thing?

ANABEL: One of the best.

WINIFRED: It must be. When I see it, with its beak lifted, singing, something comes loose in my heart, and I feel as if I should cry, and fly up to heaven. Do you know what I mean? Oh, I'm sure you do,

or you could never have made that thrush. Father is so glad you've come to show me how to work. He says now I shall have a life-work, and I shall be happy. It's true, too.

ANABEL: Yes, till the life-work collapses.

WINIFRED: Oh, it can't collapse. I can't believe it could collapse. Do tell me about something else you made, which you loved—something you sculpted. Oh, it makes my heart burn to hear you!—Do you think I might call you Anabel? I should love to. You do call me Winifred already.

ANABEL: Yes, do.

WINIFRED: Won't you tell me about something else you made—something lovely?

ANABEL: Well, I did a small kitten—asleep—with its paws crossed. You know, Winifred, that wonderful look that kittens have, as if they were blown along like a bit of fluff—as if they weighed nothing at all—just wafted about—and yet so *alive*—do you know——?

WINIFRED: Darlings—darlings—I love them!

ANABEL: Well, my kitten really came off—it had that quality. It looked as if it had just wafted there.

WINIFRED: Oh, yes!—oh, I know! And was it in clay?

ANABEL: I cut it in soft grey stone as well. I loved my kitten. An Armenian bought her.

WINIFRED: And where is she now?

ANABEL: I don't know—in Armenia, I suppose, if there is such a place. It would have to be kept under glass, because the stone wouldn't polish—and I

didn't want it polished. But I dislike things under glass—don't you ?

WINIFRED : Yes, I do. We had a golden clock, but Gerald wouldn't have the glass cover, and Daddy wouldn't have it without. So now the clock is in father's room. Gerald often went to Paris. Oliver used to have a studio there. I don't care much for painting—do you ?

ANABEL : No. I want something I can touch, if it's something outside me.

WINIFRED : Yes, isn't it wonderful, when things are substantial. Gerald and Oliver came back yesterday from Yorkshire. You know we have a colliery there.

ANABEL : Yes, I believe I've heard.

WINIFRED : I want to introduce you to Gerald, to see if you like him. He's good at the bottom, but he's very overbearing and definite.

ANABEL : Is he ?

WINIFRED : Terribly clever in business. He'll get awfully rich.

ANABEL : Isn't he rich enough already ?

WINIFRED : Oh yes, because Daddy is rich enough, really. I think if Gerald was a bit different, he'd be really nice. Now he's so *managing*. It's sickening. Do you dislike managing people, Anabel ?

ANABEL : I dislike them extremely, Winifred.

WINIFRED : They're such a bore.

ANABEL : What does Gerald manage ?

WINIFRED : Everything. You know he's revolutionised the collieries and the whole Company. He's made a whole new thing of it, so *modern*. Father says he

almost wishes he'd let it die out—let the pits be closed. But I suppose things *must* be modernised, don't you think ? Though it's very unpeaceful, you know, really.

ANABEL : Decidedly unpeaceful, I should say.

WINIFRED : The colliers work awfully hard. The pits are quite wonderful now. Father says it's against nature—all this electricity and so on. Gerald adores electricity. Isn't it curious ?

ANABEL : Very. How are you getting on ?

WINIFRED : I don't know. It's so hard to make things *balance* as if they were alive. Where *is* the balance in a thing that's alive ?

ANABEL : The poise ? Yes, Winifred—to me, all the secret of life is in that—just the—the inexpressible poise of a living thing, that makes it so different from a dead thing. To me it's the soul, you know—all living things have it—flowers, trees as well. It makes life always marvellous.

WINIFRED : Ah, yes !—ah, yes ! If only I could put it in my model.

ANABEL : I think you will. You are a sculptor, Winifred.—Isn't there someone there ?

WINIFRED (*running to the door*) : Oh, Oliver !

OLIVER : Hello, Winnie ! Can I come in ? This is your sanctum : you can keep us out if you like.

WINIFRED : Oh, no. Do you know Miss Wrath, Oliver ? She's a famous sculptress.

OLIVER : Is she ? We have met.—Is Winifred going to make a sculptress, do you think ?

ANABEL : I do.

OLIVER: Good! I like your studio, Winnie. Awfully nice up here over the out-buildings. Are you happy in it?

WINIFRED: Yes, I'm perfectly happy—only I shall *never* be able to make real models, Oliver—it's so difficult.

OLIVER: Fine room for a party—give us a studio party one day, Win, and we'll dance.

WINIFRED (*flying to him*): Yes, Oliver, do let us dance. What shall we dance to?

OLIVER: Dance?—Dance *Vigni-vignons*—we all know that. Ready?

WINIFRED: Yes.

[*They begin to sing, dancing meanwhile, in a free little ballet-manner, a wine-dance, dancing separate and then together.*

De terre en vigne
La voilà la jolie vigne,
Vigni-vignons—vignons le vin,
La voilà la jolie vigne au vin,
La voilà la jolie vigne.

OLIVER: Join in—join in, all.

[ANABEL *joins in; the three dance and move in rhythm.*

WINIFRED: I love it—I love it! Do *Ma capote à trois boutons*—you know it, don't you, Anabel? Ready—now——

[*They begin to dance to a quick little march-rhythm, all singing and dancing till they are out of breath.*

OLIVER: Oh!—tired!—let us sit down.

WINIFRED: Oliver!—oh, Oliver!—I *love* you and Anabel.

OLIVER: Oh, Winifred, I brought you a present—you'll love me more now.

WINIFRED: Yes, I shall. Do give it me.

OLIVER: I left it in the morning-room. I put it on the mantelpiece for you.

WINIFRED: Shall I go for it?

OLIVER: There it is, if you want it.

WINIFRED: Yes—do you mind? I won't be long.

[*Exit.*

OLIVER: She's a nice child.

ANABEL: A *very* nice child.

OLIVER: Why did you come back, Anabel?

ANABEL: Why does the moon rise, Oliver?

OLIVER: For some mischief or other, so they say.

ANABEL: You think I came back for mischief's sake?

OLIVER: Did you?

ANABEL: No.

OLIVER: Ah!

ANABEL: Tell me, Oliver, how is everything now?—how is it with you?—how is it between us all?

OLIVER: How is it between us all?—How *isn't* it, is more the mark.

ANABEL: Why?

OLIVER: You made a fool of us.

ANABEL: Of whom?

OLIVER: Well—of Gerald particularly—and of me.

ANABEL: How did I make a fool of you, Oliver?

OLIVER: That you know best, Anabel.

ANABEL: No, I don't know. Was it ever right between Gerald and me, all the three years we knew each other—we were together?

OLIVER: Was it all wrong?

ANABEL: No, not all. But it was terrible. It was terrible, Oliver. You don't realise. You don't realise how awful passion can be, when it never resolves, when it never becomes anything else. It is hate, really.

OLIVER: What did you want the passion to resolve into?

ANABEL: I was blinded—maddened. Gerald stung me and stung me till I was mad. I left him for reason's sake, for sanity's sake. We should have killed one another.

OLIVER: You stung him too, you know—and pretty badly, at the last: you dehumanised him.

ANABEL: When? When I left him, you mean?

OLIVER: Yes, when you went away with that Norwegian—playing your game a little too far.

ANABEL: Yes, I knew you'd blame me. I knew you'd be against me. But don't you see, Oliver, you helped to make it impossible for us.

OLIVER: Did I? I didn't intend to.

ANABEL: Ha, ha, Oliver! Your good intentions! They are too good to bear investigation, my friend. Ah, but for your good and friendly intentions——

OLIVER: You might have been all right?

ANABEL: No, no, I don't mean that. But we were a vicious triangle, Oliver—you must admit it.

OLIVER: You mean my friendship with Gerald went against you?

ANABEL: Yes. And your friendship with me went against Gerald.

OLIVER: So I am the devil in the piece.

ANABEL: You see, Oliver, Gerald loved you far too well ever to love me altogether. He loved us both. But the Gerald that loved you so dearly, old, old friends as you were, and *trusted* you, he turned a terrible face of contempt on me. You don't know, Oliver, the cold edge of Gerald's contempt for me—because he was so secure and strong in his old friendship with you. You don't know his sneering attitude to me in the deepest things—because he shared the deepest things with you. He had a passion for me. But he loved you.

OLIVER: Well, he doesn't any more. We went apart after you had gone. The friendship has become almost casual.

ANABEL: You see how bitterly you speak.

OLIVER: Yet you didn't hate me, Anabel.

ANABEL: No, Oliver—I was *awfully* fond of you. I trusted you—and I trust you still. You see I knew how fond Gerald was of you. And I had to respect this feeling. So I *had* to be aware of you: I *had* to be conscious of you: in a way, I had to love you. You understand how I mean? Not with the same fearful love with which I loved Gerald. You seemed to me warm and protecting—like a brother, you know—but a brother one *loves*.

OLIVER: And then you hated me?

ANABEL: Yes, I had to hate you.

OLIVER: And you hated Gerald?

ANABEL: Almost to madness—almost to madness.

OLIVER: Then you went away with that Norwegian. What of him?

ANABEL: What of him? Well, he's dead.

OLIVER: Ah! That's why you came back?

ANABEL: No, no. I came back because my only hope in life was in coming back. Baard was beautiful—and awful. You know how glisteningly blond he was. Oliver, have you ever watched the polar bears? He was cold as iron when it is so cold that it burns you. Coldness wasn't negative with him. It was positive—and awful beyond expression—like the aurora borealis.

OLIVER: I wonder you ever got back.

ANABEL: Yes, so do I. I feel as if I'd fallen down a fissure in the ice. Yet I have come back, haven't I?

OLIVER: God knows! At least, Anabel, we've gone through too much ever to start the old game again. There'll be no more sticky love between us.

ANABEL: No, I think there won't, either.

OLIVER: And what of Gerald?

ANABEL: I don't know. What do you think of him?

OLIVER: I can't think any more. I can only blindly go from day to day, now.

ANABEL: So can I. Do you think I was wrong to come back? Do you think I wrong Gerald?

OLIVER: No. I'm glad you came. But I feel I can't *know* anything. We must just go on.

ANABEL: Sometimes I feel I ought never to have come to Gerald again—never—never—never.

OLIVER: Just left the gap?—Perhaps, if everything has to come asunder. But I think, if ever there is to be life—hope,—then you had to come back. I always knew it. There is something eternal between you and him; and if there is to be any happiness, it depends on that. But perhaps there is to *be* no more happiness—for our part of the world.

ANABEL (*after a pause*): Yet I feel hope—don't you?

OLIVER: Yes, sometimes.

ANABEL: It seemed to me, especially that winter in Norway,—I can hardly express it,—as if any moment life might give way under one, like thin ice, and one would be more than dead. And then I knew my only hope was here—the only hope.

OLIVER: Yes, I believe it. And I believe——

[*Enter* MRS. BARLOW.

MRS. BARLOW: Oh, I wanted to speak to you, Oliver.

OLIVER: Shall I come across?

MRS. BARLOW: No, not now. I believe father is coming here with Gerald.

OLIVER: Is he going to walk so far?

MRS. BARLOW: He will do it.—I suppose you know Oliver?

ANABEL: Yes, we have met before.

MRS. BARLOW (*to* OLIVER): You didn't mention it. Where have you met Miss Wrath? She's been about the world, I believe.

ANABEL: About the world?—no, Mrs. Barlow. If one happens to know Paris and London——

MRS. BARLOW: Paris and London! Well, I don't say you are altogether an adventuress. My husband seems very pleased with you—for Winifred's sake, I suppose—and he's wrapped up in Winifred.

ANABEL: Winifred is an artist.

MRS. BARLOW: All my children have the artist in them. They get it from my family. My father went mad in Rome. My family is born with a black fate—they all inherit it.

OLIVER: I believe one is master of one's fate sometimes, Mrs. Barlow. There are moments of pure choice.

MRS. BARLOW: Between two ways to the same end, no doubt. There's no changing the end.

OLIVER. I think there is.

MRS. BARLOW: Yes, you have a *parvenu's* presumptuousness somewhere about you.

OLIVER: Well, better than a blue-blooded fatalism.

MRS. BARLOW. The fate is in the blood: you can't change the blood.

[*Enter* WINIFRED.

WINIFRED: Oh, thank you, Oliver, for the wolf and the goat, thank you so much!—The wolf has sprung on the goat, Miss Wrath, and has her by the throat.

ANABEL: The wolf?

OLIVER: It's a little marble group—Italian—in hard marble.

WINIFRED: The wolf—I love the wolf—he pounces so beautifully. His backbone is so terribly fierce. I don't feel a bit sorry for the goat, somehow.

OLIVER : I didn't. She is too much like the wrong sort of clergyman.

WINIFRED : Yes—such a stiff, long face. I wish he'd kill her.

MRS. BARLOW : There's a wish !

WINIFRED : Father and Gerald are coming. That's them, I suppose.

[*Enter* MR. BARLOW *and* GERALD.

MR. BARLOW : Ah, good morning—good morning—quite a little gathering ! Ah——

OLIVER : The steps tire you, Mr. Barlow.

MR. BARLOW : A little—a little—thank you.—Well, Miss Wrath, are you quite comfortable here ?

ANABEL : Very comfortable, thanks.

GERALD : It was clever of you, father, to turn this place into a studio.

MR. BARLOW : Yes, Gerald. You make the worldly schemes and I the homely. Yes, it's a delightful place. I shall come here often if the two young ladies will allow me.—By the way, Miss Wrath, I don't know if you have been introduced to my son Gerald. I beg your pardon. Miss Wrath, Gerald—my son, Miss Wrath. (*They bow.*) Well, we are quite a gathering, quite a pleasant little gathering. We never expected anything so delightful a month ago, did we, Winifred, darling ?

WINIFRED : No, daddy, it's much nicer than expectations.

MR. BARLOW : So it is, dear—to have such exceptional companionship and such a pleasant retreat. We are very happy to have Miss Wrath with us—very happy.

GERALD: A studio's awfully nice, you know; it is such a retreat. A newspaper has no effect in it—falls quite flat, no matter what the headlines are.

MR. BARLOW: Quite true, Gerald, dear. It is a sanctum the world cannot invade—unlike all other sanctuaries, I am afraid.

GERALD: By the way, Oliver—to go back to profanities—the colliers really are coming out in support of the poor, ill-used clerks.

MR. BARLOW. No, no, Gerald—no, no! Don't be such an alarmist. Let us leave these subjects before the ladies. No, no: the clerks will have their increase quite peacefully.

GERALD: Yes, dear father—but they can't have it peacefully now. We've been threatened already by the colliers—we've already received an ultimatum.

MR. BARLOW: Nonsense, my boy—nonsense! Don't let us split words. You won't go against the clerks in such a small matter. Always avoid trouble over small matters. Don't make bad feeling—don't make bad blood.

MRS. BARLOW: The blood is already rotten in this neighbourhood. What it needs is letting out. We need a few veins opening, or we shall have mortification setting in. The blood is black.

MR. BARLOW: We won't accept your figure of speech literally, dear. No, Gerald, don't go to war over trifles.

GERALD: It's just over trifles that one must make war, father. One can yield gracefully over big matters. But to be bullied over trifles is a sign of criminal weakness.

MR. BARLOW: Ah, not so, not so, my boy. When you are as old as I am, you will know the comparative insignificance of these trifles.

GERALD: The older *I* get, father, the more such trifles stick in my throat.

MR. BARLOW: Ah, it is an increasingly irritable disposition in you, my child. Nothing costs so bitterly, in the end, as a stubborn pride.

MRS. BARLOW: Except a stubborn humility—and that will cost you more. Avoid humility, beware of stubborn humility: it degrades. Hark, Gerald—fight! When the occasion comes, fight! If it's one against five thousand, fight! Don't give them your heart on a dish! Never! If they want to eat your heart out, make them fight for it, and then give it them poisoned at last, poisoned with your own blood.—What do you say, young woman?

ANABEL: Is it for me to speak, Mrs. Barlow?

MRS. BARLOW: Weren't you asked?

ANABEL: Certainly I would *never* give the world my heart on a dish. But can't there ever be peace—real peace?

MRS. BARLOW: No—not while there is devilish enmity.

MR. BARLOW: You are wrong, dear, you are wrong. The peace can come, the peace that passeth all understanding.

MRS. BARLOW: That there is already between me and Almighty God. I am at peace with the God that made me, and made me proud. With men who humiliate me I am at war. Between me and the shameful humble there is war to the end, though they are

millions and I am one. I hate the people. Between my race and them there is war—between them and me, between them and my children—for ever war, for ever and ever.

MR. BARLOW: Ah, Henrietta—you have said all this before.

MRS. BARLOW: And say it again. Fight, Gerald. You have my blood in you, thank God. Fight for it, Gerald. Spend it as if it were costly, Gerald, drop by drop. Let no dogs lap it.—Look at your father. He set his heart on a plate at the door, for the poorest mongrel to eat up. See him now, wasted and crossed out like a mistake—and swear, Gerald, swear to be true to my blood in you. Never lie down before the mob, Gerald. Fight it and stab it, and die fighting. It's a lost hope—but fight!

GERALD: Don't say these things here, mother.

MRS. BARLOW: Yes, I will—I will. I'll say them before you, and the child Winifred—she knows. And before Oliver and the young woman—they know, too.

MR. BARLOW: You see, dear, you can never understand that, although I am weak and wasted, although I may be crossed out from the world like a mistake, I still have peace in my soul, dear, the peace that passeth all understanding.

MRS. BARLOW: And what right have you to it? All very well for you to take peace with you into the other world. What do you leave for your sons to inherit?

MR. BARLOW: The peace of God, Henrietta, if there is no peace among men.

MRS. BARLOW: Then why did you have children? Why weren't you celibate? They have to live among men. If they have no place among men, why have you put them there? If the peace of God is no more than the peace of death, why are your sons born of you? How can you have peace with God, if you leave no peace for your sons—no peace, no pride, no place on earth?

GERALD: Nay, mother, nay. You shall never blame father on my behalf.

MRS. BARLOW: Don't trouble—he is blameless—I, a hulking, half-demented woman, I am *glad* when you blame me. But don't blame me when I tell you to fight. Don't do that, or you will regret it when you must die. Ah, your father was stiff and proud enough before men of better rank than himself. He was overbearing enough with his equals and his betters. But he humbled himself before the poor, he made me ashamed. He must hear it—he must hear it! Better he should hear it than die coddling himself with peace. His humility, and my pride, they have made a nice ruin of each other. Yet he is the man I wanted to marry—he is the man I would marry again. But never, never again would I give way before his goodness. Gerald, if you must be true to your father, be true to me as well. Don't set me down at nothing because I haven't a humble case.

GERALD: No, mother—no, dear mother. You see, dear mother, I have rather a job between the two halves of myself. When you come to have the wild horses in your own soul, mother, it makes it difficult.

MRS. BARLOW: Never mind, you'll have help.

GERALD: Thank you for the assurance, darling.—Father, you don't mind what mother says, I hope. I believe there's some truth in it—don't you?

MR. BARLOW: I have nothing to say.

WINIFRED: *I* think there's some truth in it, Daddy. You were always worrying about those horrid colliers, and they didn't care a bit about you. And they *ought* to have cared a million pounds.

MR. BARLOW: You don't understand, my child.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Evening of the same day. Drawing-room at Lilley Close.* MR. BARLOW, GERALD, WINIFRED, ANABEL, OLIVER *present.* BUTLER *pours coffee.*

MR. BARLOW: And you are quite a stranger in these parts, Miss Wrath?

ANABEL: Practically. But I was born at Derby.

MR. BARLOW: I was born in this house—but it was a different affair then: my father was a farmer, you know. The coal has brought us what moderate wealth we have. Of course, we were never poor or needy—farmers, substantial farmers. And I think we were happier so—yes.—Winnie, dear, hand Miss Wrath the sweets. I hope they're good. I ordered them from London for you.—Oliver, my boy, have you everything you like? That's right.—It gives me such pleasure to see a little festive gathering in this room again. I wish Bertie and Elinor might be here. What time is it, Gerald?

GERALD: A quarter to nine, father.

MR. BARLOW: Not late yet. I can sit with you another half-hour. I am feeling better to-day. Winifred, sing something to us.

WINIFRED: Something jolly, father?

MR. BARLOW: Very jolly, darling.

WINIFRED: I'll sing "The Lincolnshire Poacher," shall I?

MR. BARLOW: Do, darling, and we'll all join in the chorus.—Will you join in the chorus, Miss Wrath?

ANABEL: I will. It is a good song.

MR. BARLOW: Yes, isn't it!

WINIFRED: All dance for the chorus, as well as singing.

[*They sing; some pirouette a little for the chorus.*

MR. BARLOW: Ah, splendid, splendid! There is nothing like gaiety.

WINIFRED. I do love to dance about. I know: let us do a little ballet—four of us—oh, do!

GERALD: What ballet, Winifred?

WINIFRED: Any. Eva can play for us. She plays well.

MR. BARLOW: You won't disturb your mother? Don't disturb Eva if she is busy with your mother. (*Exit* WINIFRED.) If only I can see Winifred happy, my heart is at rest: if only I can hope for her to be happy in her life.

GERALD: Oh, Winnie's all right, father—especially now she has Miss Wrath to initiate her into the mysteries of life and labour.

ANABEL: Why are you ironical?

MR. BARLOW: Oh, Miss Wrath, believe me, we all feel that—it is the greatest possible pleasure to me that you have come.

GERALD: I wasn't ironical, I asure you.

MR. BARLOW: No, indeed—no, indeed! We have every belief in you.

ANABEL : But why should you have ?

MR. BARLOW : Ah, my dear child, allow us the credit of our own discernment. And don't take offence at my familiarity. I am afraid I am spoilt since I am an invalid.

[*Re-enter* WINIFRED, *with* EVA.

MR. BARLOW : Come, Eva, you will excuse us for upsetting your evening. Will you be so good as to play something for us to dance to ?

EVA : Yes, sir. What shall I play ?

WINIFRED : Mozart—I'll find you the piece. Mozart's the saddest musician in the world—but he's the best to dance to.

MR. BARLOW : Why, how is it you are such a connoisseur in sadness, darling ?

GERALD : She isn't. She's a flagrant amateur.

[EVA *plays ; they dance a little ballet.*

MR. BARLOW : Charming—charming, Miss Wrath : will you allow me to say *Anabel*, we shall all feel so much more at home ? Yes—thank you—er—you enter into the spirit of it wonderfully, Anabel, dear. The others are accustomed to play together. But it is not so easy to come in on occasion as you do.

GERALD : Oh, Anabel's a genius !—I beg your pardon, Miss Wrath—familiarity is catching.

MR. BARLOW : Gerald, my boy, don't forget that you are virtually host here.

EVA : Did you want any more music, sir ?

GERALD : No, don't stay, Eva. We mustn't tire father.

[*Exit* EVA.

MR. BARLOW: I am afraid, Anabel, you will have a great deal to excuse in us, in the way of manners. We have never been a formal household. But you have lived in the world of artists: you will understand, I hope.

ANABEL: Oh, surely——

MR. BARLOW: Yes, I know. We have been a turbulent family, and we have had our share of sorrow, even more, perhaps, than of joys. And sorrow makes one indifferent to the conventionalities of life.

GERALD: Excuse me, father: do you mind if I go and write a letter I have on my conscience?

MR. BARLOW: No, my boy. (*Exit* GERALD.) We have had our share of sorrow and of conflict, Miss Wrath, as you may have gathered.

ANABEL: Yes—a little.

MR. BARLOW: The mines were opened when my father was a boy—the first—and I was born late, when he was nearly fifty. So that all my life has been involved with coal and colliers. As a young man, I was gay and thoughtless. But I married young, and we lost our first child through a terrible accident. Two children we have lost through sudden and violent death. (WINIFRED *goes out unnoticed.*) It made me reflect. And when I came to reflect, Anabel, I could not justify my position in life. If I believed in the teachings of the New Testament—which I did, and do—how could I keep two or three thousand men employed underground in the mines, at a wage, let us say, of two pounds a week, whilst I lived in this comfortable house, and took something like two thousand pounds a year—let us name any figure——

ANABEL: Yes, of course. But is it money that really matters, Mr. Barlow?

MR. BARLOW: My dear, if you are a working man, it matters. When I went into the homes of my poor fellows, when they were ill or had had accidents—then I knew it mattered. I knew that the great disparity was wrong—even as we are taught that it is wrong.

ANABEL: Yes, I believe that the great disparity is a mistake. But take their lives, Mr. Barlow. Do you think they would *live* more, if they had more money? Do you think the poor live less than the rich?—is their life emptier?

MR. BARLOW: Surely their lives would be better, Anabel.

OLIVER: All our lives would be better, if we hadn't to hang on in the perpetual tug-of-war, like two donkeys pulling at one carrot. The ghastly tension of possessions, and struggling for possession, spoils life for everybody.

MR. BARLOW: Yes, I know now, as I knew then, that it was wrong. But how to avoid the wrong? If I gave away the whole of my income, it would merely be an arbitrary dispensation of charity. The money would still be mine to give, and those that received it would probably only be weakened instead of strengthened. And then my wife was accustomed to a certain way of living, a certain establishment. Had I any right to sacrifice her, without her consent?

ANABEL: Why, no!

MR. BARLOW: Again, if I withdrew from the Company, if I retired on a small income, I knew that another

man would automatically take my place, and make it probably harder for the men.

ANABEL: Of course—while the system stands, if one makes self-sacrifice one only panders to the system, makes it fatter.

MR. BARLOW: One panders to the system—one panders to the system. And so, you see, the problem is too much. One man cannot alter or affect the system; he can only sacrifice himself to it. Which is the worst thing probably that he can do.

OLIVER: Quite. But why feel guilty for the system? —everybody supports it, the poor as much as the rich. If every rich man withdrew from the system, the working classes and socialists would keep it going, every man in the hope of getting rich himself at last. It's the people that are wrong. They want the system much more than the rich do—because they are much more anxious to be rich—never having been rich, poor devils.

MR. BARLOW: Just the system. So I decided at last that the best way was to give every private help that lay in my power. I would help my men individually and personally, wherever I could. Not one of them came to me and went away unheard; and there was no distress which could be alleviated that I did not try to alleviate. Yet I am afraid that the greatest distress I never heard of, the most distressed never came to me. They hid their trouble.

ANABEL: Yes, the decent ones.

MR. BARLOW: But I wished to help—it was my duty. Still, I think that, on the whole, we were a comfortable and happy community. Barlow and Walsall's

men were not unhappy in those days, I believe. We were liberal; the men lived.

OLIVER: Yes, that is true. Even twenty years ago the place was still jolly.

MR. BARLOW: And then, when Gerald was a lad of thirteen, came the great lock-out. We belonged to the Masters' Federation—I was but one man on the Board. We had to abide by the decision. The mines were closed till the men would accept the reduction.—Well, that cut my life across. We were shutting the men out from work, starving their families, in order to force them to accept a reduction. It may be the condition of trade made it imperative. But, for myself, I would rather have lost everything. —Of course, we did what we could. Food was very cheap—practically given away. We had open kitchen here. And it was mercifully warm summer-time. Nevertheless, there was privation and suffering, and trouble and bitterness. We had the redcoats down—even to guard this house. And from this window I saw Whatmore head-stocks ablaze, and before I could get to the spot the soldiers had shot two poor fellows. They were not killed, thank God——

OLIVER: Ah, but they enjoyed it—they enjoyed it immensely. I remember what grand old sporting weeks they were. It was like a fox-hunt, so lively and gay—bands and tea-parties and excitement everywhere, pit-ponies loose, men all over the country-side——

MR. BARLOW: There was a great deal of suffering which you were too young to appreciate. However, since

that year I have had to acknowledge a new situation —a radical if unspoken opposition between masters and men. Since that year we have been split into opposite camps. Whatever I might privately feel, I was one of the owners, one of the masters, and therefore in the opposite camp. To my men I was an oppressor, a representative of injustice and greed. Privately, I like to think that even to this day they bear me no malice, that they have some lingering regard for me. But the master stands before the human being, and the condition of war overrides individuals—they hate the master, even whilst, as a human being, he would be their friend. I recognise the inevitable justice. It is the price one has to pay.

ANABEL: Yes, it is difficult—very.

MR. BARLOW: Perhaps I weary you ?

ANABEL: Oh, no—no.

MR. BARLOW: Well—then the mines began to pay badly. The seams ran thin and unprofitable, work was short. Either we must close down or introduce a new system, American methods, which I dislike so extremely. Now it really became a case of men working against machines, flesh and blood working against iron, for a livelihood. Still, it had to be done —the whole system revolutionised. Gerald took it in hand—and now I hardly know my own pits, with the great electric plants and strange machinery, and the new coal-cutters—iron men, as the colliers call them—everything running at top speed, utterly dehumanised, inhuman. Well, it had to be done; it was the only alternative to closing down and throwing three thousand men out of work. And

Gerald has done it. But I can't bear to see it. The men of this generation are not like my men. They are worn and gloomy; they have a hollow look that I can't bear to see. They are a great grief to me. I remember my men even twenty years ago—a noisy, lively, careless set, who kept the place ringing. Now it is too quiet—too quiet. There is something wrong in the quietness, something unnatural. I feel it is unnatural; I feel afraid of it. And I cannot help feeling guilty.

ANABEL: Yes—I understand. It terrifies me.

MR. BARLOW: Does it?—does it?—Yes.—And as my wife says, I leave it all to Gerald—this terrible situation. But I appeal to God, if anything in my power could have averted it, I would have averted it. I would have made any sacrifice. For it is a great and bitter trouble to me.

ANABEL: Ah, well, in death there is no industrial situation. Something must be different there.

MR. BARLOW: Yes—yes.

OLIVER: And you see sacrifice isn't the slightest use. If only people would be sane and decent.

MR. BARLOW: Yes, indeed.—Would you be so good as to ring, Oliver? I think I must go to bed.

ANABEL: Ah, you have over-tired yourself.

MR. BARLOW: No, my dear—not over-tired. Excuse me if I have burdened you with all this. It relieves me to speak of it.

ANABEL: I realise *how* terrible it is, Mr. Barlow—and how helpless one is.

MR. BARLOW: Thank you, my dear, for your sympathy.

OLIVER: If the people for one minute pulled themselves up and conquered their mania for money and machine excitement, the whole thing would be solved.—Would you like me to find Winnie and tell her to say good-night to you?

MR. BARLOW: If you would be so kind. (*Exit* OLIVER.) Can't you find a sweet that you would like, my dear? Won't you take a little cherry brandy?

[*Enter* BUTLER.

ANABEL: Thank you.

WILLIAM: You will go up, sir?

MR. BARLOW: Yes, William.

WILLIAM: You are tired to-night, sir.

MR. BARLOW: It has come over me just now.

WILLIAM: I wish you went up before you became so over-tired, sir. Would you like Nurse?

MR. BARLOW: No, I'll go with you, William. Good night, my dear.

ANABEL: Good night, Mr Barlow. I am so sorry if you are over-tired.

[*Exit* BUTLER *and* MR. BARLOW. ANABEL *takes a drink and goes to the fire. Enter* GERALD.

GERALD: Father gone up?

ANABEL: Yes.

GERALD: I thought I heard him. Has he been talking too much?—Poor father, he will take things to heart.

ANABEL: Tragic, really.

GERALD: Yes, I suppose it is. But one can get beyond tragedy—beyond the state of feeling tragical, I

mean. Father himself is tragical. One feels he is mistaken—and yet he wouldn't be any different, and be himself, I suppose. He's sort of crucified on an idea of the working people. It's rather horrible when he's one's father.—However, apart from tragedy, how do you like being here, in this house?

ANABEL: I like the house. It's rather too comfortable.

GERALD: Yes. But how do you like being here?

ANABEL: How do you like my being in your home?

GERALD: Oh, I think you're very decorative.

ANABEL: More decorative than comfortable?

GERALD: Perhaps. But perhaps you give the necessary finish to the establishment.

ANABEL: Like the correct window-curtains?

GERALD: Yes, something like that. I say, why did you come, Anabel? Why did you come slap-bang into the middle of us?—It's not expostulation—I want to know.

ANABEL: You mean you want to be told.

GERALD: Yes, I want to be told.

ANABEL: That's rather mean of you. You should savvy, and let it go without saying.

GERALD: Yes, but I don't savvy.

ANABEL: Then wait till you do.

GERALD: No, I want to be told. There's a difference in you, Anabel, that puts me out, rather. You're sort of softer and sweeter—I'm not sure whether it isn't a touch of father in you. There's a little sanctified smudge on your face. Are you really a bit sanctified?

ANABEL : No, not sanctified. It's true I feel different. I feel I want a new way of life—something more dignified, more religious, if you like—anyhow, something *positive.*

GERALD : Is it the change of heart, Anabel ?

ANABEL : Perhaps it is, Gerald.

GERALD : I'm not sure that I like it. Isn't it like a berry that decides to get very sweet, and goes soft ?

ANABEL : I don't think so.

GERALD : Slightly sanctimonious. I think I liked you better before. I don't think I like you with this touch of aureole. People seem to me so horribly self-satisfied when they get a change of heart—they take such a fearful lot of credit to themselves on the strength of it.

ANABEL : I don't think I do.—Do you feel no different, Gerald ?

GERALD : Radically, I can't say I do.—I feel very much more *in*different.

ANABEL : What to ?

GERALD : Everything.

ANABEL : You're still angry—that's what it is.

GERALD : Oh yes, I'm angry. But that is part of my normal state.

ANABEL : Why are you angry ?

GERALD : Is there any reason why I shouldn't be angry ? I'm angry because you treated me—well, so impudently, really—clearing out and leaving one to whistle to the empty walls.

ANABEL: Don't you think it was time I cleared out, when you became so violent, and really dangerous, really like a madman?

GERALD: Time or not time, you went—you disappeared and left us high and dry—and I am still angry.—But I'm not only angry about that. I'm angry with the colliers, with Labour for its low-down impudence—and I'm angry with father for being so ill—and I'm angry with mother for looking such a hopeless thing—and I'm angry with Oliver because he thinks so much——

ANABEL: And what are you angry with yourself for?

GERALD: I'm angry with myself for being myself—I always was that. I was always a curse to myself.

ANABEL: And that's why you curse others so much?

GERALD: You talk as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth.

ANABEL: You see, Gerald, there has to be a change. You'll have to change.

GERALD: Change of heart?—Well, it won't be to get softer, Anabel.

ANABEL: You needn't be softer. But you can be quieter, more sane even. There ought to be some part of you that can be quiet and apart from the world, some part that can be happy and gentle.

GERALD: Well, there isn't. I don't pretend to be able to extricate a soft sort of John Halifax, Gentleman, out of the machine I'm mixed up in, and keep him to gladden the connubial hearth. I'm angry, and I'm angry right through, and I'm not going to play bo-peep with myself, pretending I'm not.

ANABEL: Nobody asks you to. But is there no part of you that can be a bit gentle and peaceful and happy with a woman?

GERALD: No, there isn't.—I'm not going to smug with you—no, not I. You're smug in your coming back. You feel virtuous, and expect me to rise to it. I won't.

ANABEL: Then I'd better have stayed away.

GERALD: If you want me to virtuise and smug with you, you had.

ANABEL: What *do* you want, then?

GERALD: I don't know. I know I don't want *that*.

ANABEL: Oh, very well. (*Goes to the piano; begins to play.*)

[*Enter* MRS. BARLOW.

GERALD: Hello, mother! Father *has* gone to bed.

MRS. BARLOW: Oh, I thought he was down here talking. You two alone?

GERALD: With the piano for chaperone, mother.

MRS. BARLOW: That's more than I gave you credit for. I haven't come to chaperone you either, Gerald.

GERALD: Chaperone *me*, mother! Do you think I need it?

MRS. BARLOW: If you do, you won't get it. I've come too late to be of any use in that way, as far as I hear.

GERALD: What have you heard, mother?

MRS. BARLOW: I heard Oliver and this young woman talking.

GERALD: Oh, did you? When? What did they say?

MRS. BARLOW : Something about married in the sight of heaven, but couldn't keep it up on earth.

GERALD : I don't understand.

MRS. BARLOW : That you and this young woman were married in the sight of heaven, or through eternity, or something similar, but that you couldn't make up your minds to it on earth.

GERALD : Really ! That's very curious, mother.

MRS. BARLOW : Very common occurrence, I believe.

GERALD : Yes, so it is. But I don't think you heard quite right, dear. There seems to be some lingering uneasiness in heaven as a matter of fact. We'd quite made up our minds to live apart on earth. But where did you hear this, mother ?

MRS. BARLOW : I heard it outside the studio door this morning.

GERALD : You mean you happened to be on one side of the door while Oliver and Anabel were talking on the other ?

MRS. BARLOW : You'd make a detective, Gerald—you're so good at putting two and two together. I listened till I'd heard as much as I wanted. I'm not sure I didn't come down here hoping to hear another conversation going on.

GERALD : Listen outside the door, darling ?

MRS. BARLOW : There'd be nothing to listen to if I were inside.

GERALD : It isn't usually done, you know.

MRS. BARLOW : I listen outside doors when I have occasion to be interested—which isn't often, unfortunately for me.

GERALD: But I've a queer feeling that you have a permanent occasion to be interested in me. I only half like it.

MRS. BARLOW: It's surprising how uninteresting you are, Gerald, for a man of your years. I have not had occasion to listen outside a door, for you, no, not for a great while, believe me.

GERALD: I believe you implicitly, darling. But do you happen to know me through and through, and in and out, all my past and present doings, mother? Have you a secret access to my room, and a spy-hole, and all those things? This is uncomfortably thrilling. You take on a new lustre.

MRS. BARLOW: Your memoirs wouldn't make you famous, my son.

GERALD: Infamous, dear?

MRS. BARLOW: Good heavens, no! What a lot you expect from your very mild sins! You and this young woman have lived together, then?

GERALD: Don't say "this young woman," mother dear—it's slightly vulgar. It isn't for me to compromise Anabel by admitting such a thing, you know.

MRS. BARLOW: Do you ask me to call her Anabel? I won't.

GERALD: Then say "this person," mother. It's more becoming.

MRS. BARLOW: I didn't come to speak to you, Gerald. I know you. I came to speak to this young woman.

GERALD: "Person," mother.—Will you curtsey, Anabel? And I'll twist my handkerchief. We shall

make a Cruikshank drawing, if mother makes her hair a little more slovenly.

MRS. BARLOW: You and Gerald were together for some time?

GERALD: Three years, off and on, mother.

MRS. BARLOW: And then you suddenly dropped my son, and went away?

GERALD: To Norway, mother—so I have gathered.

MRS. BARLOW: And now you have come back because that last one died?

GERALD: Is he dead, Anabel? How did he die?

ANABEL: He was killed on the ice.

GERALD: Oh, God!

MRS. BARLOW: Now, having had your fill of tragedy, you have come back to be demure and to marry Gerald. Does he thank you?

GERALD: You must listen outside the door, mother, to find that out.

MRS. BARLOW: Well, it's your own affair.

GERALD: What a lame summing up, mother!—quite unworthy of you.

ANABEL: What did you wish to say to me, Mrs. Barlow? Please say it.

MRS. BARLOW: What did I wish to say! Ay, what did I wish to say! What is the use of my saying anything? What am I but a buffoon and a slovenly caricature in the family?

GERALD: No, mother dear, don't climb down—please don't. Tell Anabel what you wanted to say.

MRS. BARLOW : Yes—yes—yes. I came to say—don't be good to my son—don't be good to him.

GERALD : Sounds weak, dear—mere contrariness.

MRS. BARLOW : Don't presume to be good to my son, young woman. I won't have it, even if he will. You hear me ?

ANABEL : Yes. I won't presume, then.

GERALD : May she presume to be bad to me, mother ?

MRS. BARLOW : For that you may look after yourself.—But a woman who was good to him would ruin him in six months, take the manhood out of him. He has a tendency, a secret hankering, to make a gift of himself to somebody. He shan't do it. I warn you. I am not a woman to be despised.

ANABEL : No—I understand.

MRS. BARLOW : Only one other thing I ask. If he must fight—and fight he must—let him alone : don't you try to shield him or save him. *Don't interfere*—do you hear ?

ANABEL : Not till I must.

MRS. BARLOW : *Never.* Learn your place, and keep it. Keep away from him, if you are going to be a wife to him. Don't go too near. And don't let him come too near. Beat him off if he tries. Keep a solitude in your heart even when you love him best. Keep it. If you lose it, you lose everything.

GERALD But that isn't love, mother.

MRS. BARLOW : What ?

GERALD : That isn't love.

MRS. BARLOW : *What ?* What do you know of love, you ninny ? You only know the feeding-bottle. It's

what you want, all of you—to be brought up by hand, and mew about love. Ah, God !—Ah, God !—that you should none of you know the only thing which would make you worth having.

GERALD : I don't believe in your only thing, mother. But what is it ?

MRS. BARLOW : What you haven't got—the power to be alone.

GERALD : Sort of megalomania, you mean ?

MRS. BARROW : What ? Megalomania ! What is your *love* but a megalomania, flowing over everybody, and everything like spilt water ? Megalomania ! I hate you, you softy ! I would *beat* you (*suddenly advancing on him and beating him fiercely*)—beat you into some manhood—beat you——

GERALD : Stop, mother—keep off.

MRS. BARLOW : It's the men who need beating nowadays, not the children. Beat the softness out of him, young woman. It's the only way, if you love him enough—if you love him enough.

GERALD : You hear, Anabel ?

> Speak roughly to your little boy,
> And beat him when he sneezes.

MRS. BARLOW (*catching up a large old fan, and smashing it about his head*) : You softy—you piffler—you will never have had enough ! Ah, you should be thrust in the fire, you should, to have the softness and the brittleness burnt out of you !

[*The door opens*—OLIVER TURTON *enters, followed by* JOB ARTHUR FREER. MRS. BARLOW *is still attacking* GERALD. *She turns, infuriated.*

Go out! Go out! What do you mean by coming in unannounced. Take him upstairs—take that fellow into the library, Oliver Turton.

GERALD: Mother, you improve our already pretty reputation. Already they say you are mad.

MRS. BARLOW (*ringing violently*): Let me be mad then. I am mad—driven mad. One day I shall kill you, Gerald.

GERALD: You won't, mother, because I shan't let you.

MRS. BARLOW: Let me!—let me! As if I should wait for you to let me!

GERALD: I am a match for you even in violence, come to that.

MRS. BARLOW: A match! A damp match. A wet match.

[*Enter* BUTLER.

WILLIAM: You rang, madam?

MRS. BARLOW: Clear up those bits.—Where are you going to see that white-faced fellow? Here?

GERALD: I think so.

MRS. BARLOW: You will *still* have them coming to the house, will you? You will still let them trample in our private rooms, will you? Bah! I ought to leave you to your own devices. [*Exit.*

GERALD: When you've done that, William, ask Mr. Freer to come down here.

WILLIAM: Yes, sir.

[*A pause. Exit* WILLIAM.

GERALD: So—o—o. You've had another glimpse of the family life.

ANABEL: Yes. Rather—disturbing.

GERALD: Not at all, when you're used to it. Mother isn't as mad as she pretends to be.

ANABEL: I don't think she's mad at all. I think she has most desperate courage.

GERALD: "Courage" is good. That's a new term for it.

ANABEL: Yes, courage. When a man says "courage" he means the courage to die. A woman means the courage to live. That's what women hate men most for; that they haven't the courage to live.

GERALD: Mother takes her courage into both hands rather late.

ANABEL: We're a little late ourselves.

GERALD: We are, rather. By the way, you seem to have had plenty of the courage of death—you've played a pretty deathly game, it seems to me—both when I knew you and afterwards, you've had your finger pretty deep in the death-pie.

ANABEL: That's why I want a change of—of——

GERALD: Of heart?—Better take mother's tip, and try the poker.

ANABEL: I will.

GERALD: Ha—corraggio!

ANABEL: Yes—corraggio!

GERALD: Corraggiaccio!

ANABEL: Corraggione!

GERALD: Cock-a-doodle-doo!

[*Enter* OLIVER *and* FREER.

Oh, come in. Don't be afraid; it's a charade. (ANABEL *rises.*) No, don't go, Anabel. Corraggio! Take a seat, Mr. Freer.

JOB ARTHUR: Sounds like a sneezing game, doesn't it?

GERALD: It is. Do you know the famous rhyme:

Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes?

JOB ARTHUR: No, I can't say I do.

GERALD: My mother does. Will you have anything to drink? Will you help yourself?

JOB ARTHUR: Well—no—I don't think I'll have anything, thanks.

GERALD: A cherry brandy?—Yes?—Anabel, what's yours?

ANABEL: Did I see Kümmel?

GERALD: You did. (*They all take drinks.*) What's the latest, Mr. Freer?

JOB ARTHUR: The latest? Well, I don't know, I'm sure——

GERALD: Oh, yes. Trot it out. We're quite private.

JOB ARTHUR: Well—I don't know. There's several things.

GERALD: The more the merrier.

JOB ARTHUR: I'm not so sure. The men are in a very funny temper, Mr. Barlow—very funny.

GERALD: Coincidence—so am I. Not surprising, is it?

JOB ARTHUR: The men, perhaps not.

GERALD: What else, Job Arthur?

JOB ARTHUR: You know the men have decided to stand by the office men?

GERALD: Yes.

JOB ARTHUR: They've agreed to come out next Monday.

GERALD : Have they ?

JOB ARTHUR : Yes ; there was no stopping them. They decided for it like one man.

GERALD : How was that ?

JOB ARTHUR : That's what surprises me. They're a jolly sight more certain over this than they've ever been over their own interests.

GERALD : All their love for the office clerks coming out in a rush ?

JOB ARTHUR : Well, I don't know about love ; but that's how it is.

GERALD : What is it, if it isn't love ?

JOB ARTHUR : I can't say. They're in a funny temper. It's hard to make out.

GERALD : A funny temper, are they ? Then I suppose we ought to laugh.

JOB ARTHUR : No, I don't think it's a laughing matter. They're coming out on Monday for certain.

GERALD : Yes—so are daffodils.

JOB ARTHUR : Beg pardon ?

GERALD : Daffodils.

JOB ARTHUR : No, I don't follow what you mean.

GERALD : Don't you ? But I thought Alfred Breffitt and William Straw were not very popular.

JOB ARTHUR : No, they aren't—not in themselves. But it's the principle of the thing—so it seems.

GERALD : What principle ?

JOB ARTHUR : Why, all sticking together, for one thing—all Barlow and Walsall's men holding by one another.

GERALD : United we stand ?

JOB ARTHUR: That's it. And then it's the strong defending the weak as well. There's three thousand colliers standing up for thirty-odd office men. I must say I think it's sporting myself.

GERALD: You do, do you? United we stand, divided we fall. What do they stand for, really? What is it?

JOB ARTHUR: Well—for their right to a living wage. That's how I see it.

GERALD: For their right to a living wage! Just that?

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, sir—that's how I see it.

GERALD: Well, that doesn't seem so preposterously difficult, does it?

JOB ARTHUR: Why, that's what I think myself, Mr. Gerald. It's such a little thing.

GERALD: Quite. I suppose the men themselves are to judge what is a living wage?

JOB ARTHUR: Oh, I think they're quite reasonable, you know.

GERALD: Oh, yes, eminently reasonable. Reason's their strong point.—And if they get their increase they'll be quite contented?

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, as far as I know, they will.

GERALD: As far as you know? Why, is there something you don't know?—something you're not sure about?

JOB ARTHUR: No—I don't think so. I think they'll be quite satisfied this time.

GERALD: Why this time? Is there going to be a next time—every-day-has-its-to-morrow kind of thing?

JOB ARTHUR: I don't know about that. It's a funny world, Mr. Barlow.

GERALD : Yes, I quite believe it. How do you see it funny ?

JOB ARTHUR : Oh, I don't know. Everything's in a funny state.

GERALD : What do you mean by everything ?

JOB ARTHUR : Well—I mean things in general—Labour, for example.

GERALD : You think Labour's in a funny state, do you ? What do you think it wants ? What do you think, personally ?

JOB ARTHUR : Well, in my own mind, I think it wants a bit of its own back.

GERALD : And how does it mean to get it ?

JOB ARTHUR : Ha ! that's not so easy to say. But it means to have it, in the long run.

GERALD : You mean by increasing demands for higher wages ?

JOB ARTHUR : Yes, perhaps that's one road.

GERALD : Do you see any other ?

JOB ARTHUR : Not just for the present.

GERALD : But later on ?

JOB ARTHUR : I can't say about that. The men will be quiet enough for a bit, if it's all right about the office men, you know.

GERALD : Probably. But have Barlow and Walsall's men any special grievance apart from the rest of the miners ?

JOB ARTHUR : I don't know. They've no liking for you, you know, sir.

GERALD : Why ?

JOB ARTHUR : They think you've got a down on them.

GERALD : Why should they ?

JOB ARTHUR : I don't know, sir ; but they do.

GERALD : So they have a personal feeling against me ? You don't think all the colliers are the same, all over the country ?

JOB ARTHUR : I think there's a good deal of feeling——

GERALD : Of wanting their own back ?

JOB ARTHUR : That's it.

GERALD : But what can they do ? I don't see what they can do. They can go out on strike—but they've done that before, and the owners, at a pinch, can stand it better than they can. As for the ruin of the industry, if they do ruin it, it falls heaviest on them. In fact, it leaves them destitute. There's nothing they can do, you know, that doesn't hit them worse than it hits us.

JOB ARTHUR : I know there's something in that. But if they had a strong man to head them, you see——

GERALD : Yes, I've heard a lot about that strong man —but I've never come across any signs of him, you know. I don't believe in one strong man appearing out of so many little men. All men are pretty big in an age, or in a movement, which produces a really big man. And Labour is a great swarm of hopelessly little men. That's how I see it.

JOB ARTHUR : I'm not so sure about that.

GERALD : I am. Labour is a thing that can't have a head. It's a sort of unwieldy monster that's bound to run its skull against the wall sooner or later, and knock out what bit of brain it's got. You see, you need

wit and courage and real understanding if you're going to do anything positive. And Labour has none of these things—certainly it shows no sign of them.

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, when it has a chance, I think you'll see plenty of courage and plenty of understanding.

GERALD: It always has a chance. And where one sees a bit of courage, there's no understanding; and where there's some understanding, there's absolutely no courage. It's hopeless, you know—it would be far best if they'd all give it up, and try a new line.

JOB ARTHUR: I don't think they will.

GERALD: No, I don't either. They'll make a mess, and when they've made it, they'll never get out of it. They can't—they're too stupid.

JOB ARTHUR: They've never had a try yet.

GERALD: They're trying every day. They just simply couldn't control modern industry—they haven't the intelligence. They've no *life* intelligence. The owners may have little enough, but Labour has none. They're just mechanical little things that can make one or two motions, and they're done. They've no more idea of life than a lawn-mower has.

JOB ARTHUR: It remains to be seen.

GERALD: No, it doesn't. It's perfectly obvious—there's nothing remains to be seen. All that Labour is capable of, is smashing things up. And even for that I don't believe it has either energy or the courage or the bit of necessary passion, or slap-dash—call it whatever you will. However, we'll see.

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, sir. Perhaps you see now why you're not so very popular, Mr. Gerald.

GERALD: We can't all be popular, Job Arthur. You're very high up in popularity, I believe.

JOB ARTHUR: Not so very. They listen to me a bit. But you never know when they'll let you down. I know they'll let me down one day—so it won't be a surprise.

GERALD: I should think not.

JOB ARTHUR: But about the office men, Mr. Gerald. You think it'll be all right?

GERALD: Oh, yes, that'll be all right.

JOB ARTHUR: Easiest for this time, anyhow, sir. We don't want bloodshed, do we?

GERALD: I shouldn't mind at all. It might clear the way to something. But I have absolutely no belief in the power of Labour even to bring about anything so positive as bloodshed.

JOB ARTHUR: I don't know about that—I don't know. —Well.

GERALD: Have another drink before you go.—Yes, do. Help yourself.

JOB ARTHUR: Well—if you're so pressing. (*Helps himself.*) Here's luck, all!

ALL: Thanks:

GERALD: Take a cigar—there's the box. Go on—take a handful—fill your case.

JOB ARTHUR: They're a great luxury nowadays, aren't they? Almost beyond a man like me.

GERALD: Yes, that's the worst of not being a bloated capitalist. Never mind, you'll be a Cabinet Minister

some day.—Oh, all right—I'll open the door for you.

JOB ARTHUR: Oh, don't trouble. Good night—good night. [*Exeunt.*

OLIVER: Oh God, what a world to live in!

ANABEL: I rather liked him. What is he?

OLIVER: Checkweighman—local secretary for the Miners' Federation—plays the violin well, although he was a collier, and it spoilt his hands. They're a musical family.

ANABEL: But isn't he rather nice?

OLIVER: I don't like him. But I confess he's a study. He's the modern Judas.

ANABEL: Don't you think he likes Gerald?

OLIVER: I'm sure he does. The way he suns himself here—like a cat purring in his luxuriation.

ANABEL: Yes, I don't mind it. It shows a certain sensitiveness and a certain taste.

OLIVER: Yes, he has both—touch of the artist, as Mrs. Barlow says. He loves refinement, culture, breeding, all those things—loves them—and a presence, a fine free manner.

ANABEL: But that is nice in him.

OLIVER: Quite. But what he loves, and what he admires, and what he aspires to, he *must* betray. It's his fatality. He lives for the moment when he can kiss Gerald in the Garden of Olives, or wherever it was.

ANABEL: But Gerald shouldn't be kissed.

OLIVER: That's what I say.

ANABEL: And that's what his mother means as well, I suppose.

[*Enter* GERALD.

GERALD: Well—you've heard the voice of the people.

ANABEL: He isn't the people.

GERALD: I think he is, myself—the epitome.

OLIVER: No, he's a special type.

GERALD: Ineffectual, don't you think?

ANABEL: How pleased you are, Gerald! How pleased you are with yourself! You love the turn with him.

GERALD: It's rather stimulating, you know.

ANABEL: It oughtn't to be, then.

OLIVER: He's your Judas, and you love him.

GERALD: Nothing so deep. He's just a sort of Æolian harp that sings to the temper of the wind. I find him amusing.

ANABEL: I think it's boring.

OLIVER: And I think it's nasty.

GERALD: I believe you're both jealous of him. What do you think of the British working man, Oliver?

OLIVER: It seems to me he's in nearly as bad a way as the British employer: he's nearly as much beside the point.

GERALD: What point?

OLIVER: Oh, just life.

GERALD: That's too vague, my boy. Do you think they'll ever make a bust-up?

OLIVER: I can't tell. I don't see any good in it, if they do.

GERALD : It might clear the way—and it might block the way for ever : depends what comes through. But, sincerely, I don't think they've got it in them.

ANABEL : They may have something better.

GERALD : That suggestion doesn't interest me, Anabel. Ah well, we shall see what we shall see. Have a whisky and soda with me, Oliver, and let the troubled course of this evening run to a smooth close. It's quite like old times. Aren't you smoking, Anabel ?

ANABEL : No, thanks.

GERALD : I believe you're a reformed character. So it won't be like old times, after all.

ANABEL : I don't want old times. I want new ones.

GERALD : Wait till Job Arthur has risen like Antichrist, and proclaimed the resurrection of the gods.—Do you see Job Arthur proclaiming Dionysus and Aphrodite ?

ANABEL : It bores me. I don't like your mood. Good night.

GERALD : Oh, don't go.

ANABEL : Yes, good night. [*Exit.*

OLIVER : She's *not* reformed, Gerald. She's the same old moral character—moral to the last bit of her, really—as she always was.

GERALD : Is that what it is ?—But one must be moral.

OLIVER : Oh, yes. Oliver Cromwell wasn't as moral as Anabel is—nor such an iconoclast.

GERALD : Poor old Anabel !

OLIVER : How she hates the dark gods !

GERALD : And yet they cast a spell over her. Poor old Anabel ! Well, Oliver, is Bacchus the father of whisky ?

OLIVER : I don't know.—I don't like you either. You seem to smile all over yourself. It's objectionable. Good night.

GERALD : Oh, look here, this is censorious.

OLIVER : You smile to yourself. [*Exit.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

An old park. Early evening. In the background a low Georgian hall, which has been turned into offices for the Company, shows windows already lighted. GERALD *and* ANABEL *walk along the path.*

ANABEL: How beautiful this old park is!

GERALD: Yes, it is beautiful—seems so far away from everywhere, if one doesn't remember that the hall is turned into offices.—No one has lived here since I was a little boy. I remember going to a Christmas party at the Walsalls'.

ANABEL: Has it been shut up so long?

GERALD: The Walsalls didn't like it—too near the ugliness. They were county, you know—we never were: father never gave mother a chance, there. And besides, the place is damp, cellars full of water.

ANABEL: Even now?

GERALD: No, not now—they've been drained. But the place would be too damp for a dwelling-house. It's all right as offices. They burn enormous fires. The rooms are quite charming. This is what happens to the stately homes of England—they buzz with inky clerks, or their equivalent. Stateliness is on its last legs.

ANABEL: Yes, it grieves me—though I should be bored if I had to be stately, I think.—Isn't it beautiful in this light, like an eighteenth-century aquatint? I'm sure no age was as ugly as this, since the world began.

GERALD: For pure ugliness, certainly not. And I believe none has been so filthy to live in.—Let us sit down a minute, shall we? and watch the rooks fly home. It always stirs sad, sentimental feelings in me.

ANABEL: So it does in me.—Listen! one can hear the coal-carts on the road—and the brook—and the dull noise of the town—and the beating of New London pit—and voices—and the rooks—and yet it is so still. We seem so still here, don't we?

GERALD: Yes.

ANABEL: Don't you think we've been wrong?

GERALD: How?

ANABEL: In the way we've lived—and the way we've loved.

GERALD: It hasn't been heaven, has it? Yet, I don't know that we've been wrong, Anabel. We had it to go through.

ANABEL: Perhaps.—And, yes, we've been wrong too.

GERALD: Probably. Only, I don't feel it like that.

ANABEL: Then I think you ought. You ought to feel you've been wrong.

GERALD: Yes, probably. Only, I don't. I can't help it. I think we've gone the way we had to go, following our own natures.

ANABEL: And where has it landed us?

GERALD : Here.

ANABEL : And where is that ?

GERALD : Just on this bench in the park, looking at the evening.

ANABEL : But what next ?

GERALD : God knows ! Why trouble ?

ANABEL : One must trouble. I want to feel sure.

GERALD : What of ?

ANABEL : Of you—and of myself.

GERALD : Then *be* sure.

ANABEL : But I can't. Think of the past—what it's been.

GERALD : This isn't the past.

ANABEL : But what is it ? Is there anything sure in it ? Is there any real happiness ?

GERALD : Why not ?

ANABEL : But how can you ask ? Think of what our life has been.

GERALD : I don't want to.

ANABEL : No, you don't. But what *do* you want ?

GERALD : I'm all right, you know, sitting here like this.

ANABEL : But one can't sit here for ever, can one ?

GERALD : I don't want to.

ANABEL : And what will you do when we leave here ?

GERALD : God knows ! Don't worry me. Be still a bit.

ANABEL : But *I'm* worried. You don't love me.

GERALD : I won't argue it.

ANABEL : And I'm not happy.

GERALD: Why not, Anabel?

ANABEL: Because you don't love me—and I can't forget.

GERALD: I do love you—and to-night I've forgotten.

ANABEL: Then make me forget, too. Make me happy.

GERALD: I *can't* make you—and you know it.

ANABEL: Yes, you can. It's your business to make me happy. I've made you happy.

GERALD: You want to make me unhappy.

ANABEL: I *do* think you're the last word in selfishness. If I say I can't forget, you merely say, "*I've* forgotten"; and if I say I'm unhappy, all *you* can answer is that I want to make *you* unhappy. I don't in the least. I want to be happy myself. But you don't help me.

GERALD: There is no help for it, you see. If you *were* happy with me here you'd be happy. As you aren't, nothing will make you—not genuinely.

ANABEL: And that's all you care.

GERALD: No—I wish we could both be happy at the same moment. But apparently we can't.

ANABEL: And why not?—Because you're selfish, and think of nothing but yourself and your own feelings.

GERALD: If it is so, it is so.

ANABEL: Then we shall never be happy.

GERALD: Then we shan't. (*A pause.*)

ANABEL: Then what are we going to do?

GERALD: Do?

ANABEL: Do you want me to be with you?

GERALD: Yes.

ANABEL: Are you sure?

GERALD: Yes.

ANABEL: Then why don't you want me to be happy?

GERALD: If you'd only *be* happy, here and now——

ANABEL: How can I?

GERALD: How can't you?—You've got a devil inside you.

ANABEL: Then make me not have a devil.

GERALD: I've known you long enough—and known myself long enough—to know I can make you nothing at all, Anabel: neither can you make me. If the happiness isn't there—well, we shall have to wait for it, like a dispensation. It probably means we shall have to hate each other a little more.—I suppose hate is a real process.

ANABEL: Yes, I know you believe more in hate than in love.

GERALD: Nobody is more weary of hate than I am—and yet we can't fix our own hour, when we shall leave off hating and fighting. It has to work itself out in us.

ANABEL: But I don't *want* to hate and fight with you any more. I don't *believe* in it—not any more.

GERALD: It's a cleansing process—like Aristotle's Katharsis. We shall hate ourselves clean at last, I suppose.

ANABEL: Why aren't you clean now? Why can't you love? (*He laughs.*) *Do* you love me?

GERALD: Yes.

ANABEL: Do you want to be with me for ever?

GERALD: Yes.

ANABEL: Sure?

GERALD: Quite sure.

ANABEL: Why are you so cool about it?

GERALD: I'm not. I'm only sure—which you are not.

ANABEL: Yes, I am—I *want* to be married to you.

GERALD: I know you want me to want you to be married to me. But whether off your own bat you have a positive desire that way, I'm not sure. You keep something back—some sort of female reservation—like a dagger up your sleeve. You want to see me in transports of love for you.

ANABEL: How can you say so? There—you see—there—this is the man that pretends to love me, and then says I keep a dagger up my sleeve. You liar!

GERALD: I do love you—and you do keep a dagger up your sleeve—some devilish little female reservation which spies at me from a distance, in your soul, all the time, as if I were an enemy.

ANABEL: How *can* you say so?—Doesn't it show what you must be yourself? Doesn't it show?—What is there in your soul?

GERALD: I don't know.

ANABEL: Love, pure love?—Do you pretend it's love?

GERALD: I'm so tired of this.

ANABEL: So am I, dead tired: you self-deceiving, self-complacent thing. Ha!—aren't you just the same. You haven't altered one scrap, not a scrap.

GERALD: All right—you are always free to change yourself.

ANABEL: I *have* changed, I *am* better, I *do* love you—I love you wholly and unselfishly—I do—and I want a good new life with you.

GERALD: You're terribly wrapped up in your new goodness. I wish you'd make up your mind to be downright bad.

ANABEL: Ha!—Do you?—You'd soon see. You'd soon see where you'd be if—— There's somebody coming. (*Rises.*)

GERALD: Never mind; it's the clerks leaving work, I suppose. Sit still.

ANABEL: Won't you go?

GERALD: No. (*A man draws near, followed by another.*) Good evening.

CLERK: Good evening, sir. (*Passes on.*) Good evening, Mr. Barlow.

ANABEL: They are afraid.

GERALD: I suppose their consciences are uneasy about this strike.

ANABEL: Did you come to sit here just to catch them, like a spider waiting for them?

GERALD: No. I wanted to speak to Breffitt.

ANABEL: I believe you're capable of any horridness.

GERALD: All right, you believe it. (*Two more figures approach.*) Good evening.

CLERKS: Good night, sir. (*One passes, one stops.*) Good evening, Mr. Barlow. Er—did you want to see Mr. Breffitt, sir?

GERALD: Not particularly.

CLERK: Oh! He'll be out directly, sir—if you'd like me to go back and tell him you wanted him.

GERALD : No, thank you.

CLERK : Good night, sir. Excuse me asking.

GERALD : Good night.

ANABEL : Who is Mr. Breffitt ?

GERALD : He is the chief clerk—and cashier—one of father's old pillars of society.

ANABEL : Don't you like him ?

GERALD : Not much.

ANABEL : Why ?—You seem to dislike very easily.

GERALD : Oh, they all used to try to snub me, these old buffers. They detest me like poison, because I am different from father.

ANABEL : I believe you enjoy being detested.

GERALD : I do. (*Another clerk approaches—hesitates —stops.*)

CLERK : Good evening, sir. Good evening, Mr. Barlow. Er—did you want anybody at the office, sir ? We're just closing.

GERALD : No, I didn't want anybody.

CLERK : Oh, no, sir. I see. Er—by the way, sir—er—I hope you don't think this—er—bother about an increase—this strike threat—started in the office.

GERALD : Where did it start ?

CLERK : I should think it started—where it usually starts, Mr. Barlow—among a few loud-mouthed people who think they can do as they like with the men. They're only using the office men as a cry—that's all. They've no interest in us. They want to show their power.—That's how it is, sir.

GERALD : Oh, yes.

CLERK : We're powerless, if they like to make a cry out of us.

GERALD : Quite.

CLERK : We're as much put out about it as anybody.

GERALD : Of course.

CLERK : Yes—well—good night, sir. (*Clerks draw near —there is a sound of loud young voices and bicycle bells. Bicycles sweep past.*)

CLERKS : Good night, sir.—Good night, sir.

GERALD : Good night.—They're very bucked to see me sitting here with a woman—a young lady as they'll say. I guess your name will be flying round to-morrow. They stop partly to have a good look at you. Do they know you, do you think ?

ANABEL : Sure.

CLERKS : Mr. Breffitt's just coming, sir.—Good night, sir.—Good night, sir. (*Another bicycle passes.*)

ANABEL : The bicycles don't see us.—Isn't it rather hateful to be a master ? The attitude of them all is so ugly. I can quite see that it makes you rather a bully.

GERALD : I suppose it does. (*Figure of a large man approaches.*)

BREFFITT : Oh—ah—it's Mr. Gerald !—I couldn't make out who it was.—Were you coming up to the office, sir ? Do you want me to go back with you ?

GERALD : No, thank you—I just wanted a word with you about this agitation. It'll do just as well here. It's a pity it started—that the office should have set it going, Breffitt.

BREFFITT : It's none of the office's doing, I think you'll find, Mr. Gerald. The office men did nothing but ask

for a just advance—at any rate, times and prices being what they are, I consider it a fair advance. If the men took it up, it's because they've got a set of loud-mouthed blatherers and agitators among them like Job Arthur Freer, who deserve to be hung—and hanging they'd get, if I could have the judging of them.

GERALD: Well—it's very unfortunate—because we can't give the clerks their increase now, you know.

BREFFITT: Can't you ?—can't you ? I can't see that it would be anything out of the way, if I say what I think.

GERALD: No. They won't get any increase now. It shouldn't have been allowed to become a public cry with the colliers. We can't give in now.

BREFFITT: Have the Board decided that ?

GERALD: They have—on my advice.

BREFFITT: Hm ! then the men will come out.

GERALD: We will see.

BREFFITT: It's trouble for nothing—it's trouble that could be avoided. The clerks could have their advance, and it would hurt nobody.

GERALD: Too late now.—I suppose if the men come out, the clerks will come out with them ?

BREFFITT: They'll have to—they'll have to.

GERALD: If they do, we may then make certain alterations in the office staff which have needed making for some time.

BREFFITT. Very good—very good. I know what you mean.—I don't know how your father bears all this, Mr. Gerald.

GERALD : We keep it from him as much as possible.—You'll let the clerks know the decision. And if they stay out with the men, I'll go over the list of the staff with you. It has needed revising for a long time.

BREFFITT : I know what you mean—I know what you mean—I believe I understand the firm's interest in my department. I ought, after forty years studying it. I've studied the firm's interests for forty years, Mr. Gerald. I'm not likely to forget them now.

GERALD : Of course.

BREFFITT : But I think it's a mistake—I think it's a mistake, and I'm bound to say it, to let a great deal of trouble rise for a very small cause. The clerks might have had what they reasonably asked for.

GERALD : Well, it's too late now.

BREFFITT : I suppose it is—I suppose it is. I hope you'll remember, sir, that I've put the interest of the firm before everything—before every consideration.

GERALD : Of course, Breffitt.

BREFFITT : But you've not had any liking for the office staff, I'm afraid, sir—not since your father put you amongst us for a few months.—Well, sir, we shall weather this gale, I hope, as we've weathered those in the past. Times don't become better, do they ? Men are an ungrateful lot, and these agitators should be lynched. They would, if I had my way.

GERALD : Yes, of course. Don't wait.

BREFFITT : Good night to you. [*Exit.*

GERALD : Good night.

ANABEL : He's the last, apparently.

GERALD : We'll hope so.

ANABEL: He puts you in a fury.

GERALD: It's his manner. My father spoilt them—abominable old limpets. And they're so self-righteous. They think I'm a sort of criminal who has instigated this new devilish system which runs everything so close and cuts it so fine—as if they hadn't made this inevitable by their shameless carelessness and wastefulness in the past. He may well boast of his forty years—forty years' crass, stupid wastefulness.

[Two or three more clerks pass, talking till they approach the seat, then becoming silent after bidding good night.

ANABEL: But aren't you a bit sorry for them?

GERALD: Why? If they're poor, what does it matter in a world of chaos?

ANABEL: And aren't you an obstinate ass not to give them the bit they want. It's mere stupid obstinacy.

GERALD: It may be. I call it policy.

ANABEL: Men always do call their obstinacy policy.

GERALD: Well, I don't care what happens. I wish things would come to a head. I only fear they won't.

ANABEL: Aren't you rather wicked?—*Asking* for strife?

GERALD: I hope I am. It's quite a relief to me to feel that I may be wicked. I fear I'm not. I can see them all anticipating victory, in their low-down fashion wanting to crow their low-down crowings. I'm afraid I feel it's a righteous cause, to cut a lot of little combs before I die.

ANABEL: But if they're in the right in what they want?

GERALD: In the right—in the right!—They're just greedy, incompetent, stupid, gloating in a sense of the worst sort of power. They're like vicious children, who would like to kill their parents so that they could have the run of the larder. The rest is just cant.

ANABEL: If you're the parent in the case, I must say you flow over with loving-kindness for them.

GERALD: I don't—I detest them. I only hope they will fight. If they would, I'd have some respect for them. But you'll see what it will be.

ANABEL: I wish I needn't, for it's very sickening.

GERALD: Sickening beyond expression.

ANABEL: I wish we could go right away.

GERALD: So do I—if one could get oneself out of this. But one can't. It's the same wherever you have industrialism—and you have industrialism everywhere, whether it's Timbuctoo or Paraguay or Antananarivo.

ANABEL: No, it isn't: you exaggerate.

JOB ARTHUR (*suddenly approaching from the other side*): Good evening, Mr. Barlow. I heard you were in here. Could I have a word with you?

GERALD: Get on with it, then.

JOB ARTHUR: Is it right that you won't meet the clerks?

GERALD: Yes.

JOB ARTHUR: Not in any way?

GERALD: Not in any way whatsoever.

JOB ARTHUR: But—I thought I understood from you the other night——

GERALD : It's all the same what you understood.

JOB ARTHUR : Then you take it back, sir ?

GERALD : I take nothing back, because I gave nothing.

JOB ARTHUR : Oh, excuse me, excuse me, sir. You said it would be all right about the clerks. This lady heard you say it.

GERALD : Don't you call witnesses against me.—Besides, what does it matter to you ? What in the name of——

JOB ARTHUR : Well, sir, you said it would be all right, and I went on that——

GERALD : You went on that ! Where did you go to ?

JOB ARTHUR : The men'll be out on Monday.

GERALD : So shall I.

JOB ARTHUR : Oh, yes, but—where's it going to end ?

GERALD : Do you want me to prophesy ? When did I set up for a public prophet ?

JOB ARTHUR : I don't know, sir. But perhaps you're doing more than you know. There's a funny feeling just now among the men.

GERALD : So I've heard before. Why should I concern myself with their feelings ? Am I to cry when every collier bumps his funny-bone—or to laugh ?

JOB ARTHUR : It's no laughing matter, you see.

GERALD : And I'm sure it's no crying matter—unless you want to cry, do you see ?

JOB ARTHUR : Ah, but, very likely, it wouldn't be me who would cry.—You don't know what might happen, now.

GERALD: I'm waiting for something to happen. I should like something to happen—very much—very much indeed.

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, but perhaps you'd be sorry if it did happen.

GERALD: Is that a warning or a threat?

JOB ARTHUR: I don't know—it might be a bit of both. What I mean to say——

GERALD (*suddenly seizing him by the scruff of the neck and shaking him*): What do you mean to say?—I mean you to say less, do you see?—a great deal less—do you see? You've run on with your saying long enough: that clock had better run down. So stop your sayings—stop your sayings, I tell you—or you'll have them shaken out of you—shaken out of you—shaken out of you, do you see? (*Suddenly flings him aside.*)

[JOB ARTHUR, *staggering, falls.*

ANABEL: Oh no!—oh, no!

GERALD: Now get up, Job Arthur; and get up wiser than you went down. You've played your little game and your little tricks and made your little sayings long enough. You're going to stop now. We've had quite enough of strong men of your stamp, Job Arthur—quite enough—such Labour leaders as you.

JOB ARTHUR: You'll be sorry, Mr. Barlow—you'll be sorry. You'll wish you'd not attacked me.

GERALD: Don't you trouble about me and my sorrow. Mind your own.

JOB ARTHUR: You will—you'll be sorry. You'll be

sorry for what you've done. You'll wish you'd never begun this.

GERALD: Begun—begun?—I'd like to finish, too, that I would. I'd like to finish with you, too—I warn *you*.

JOB ARTHUR: I warn you—I warn you. You won't go on much longer. Every parish has its own vermin.

GERALD: Vermin?

JOB ARTHUR: Every parish has its own vermin; it lies with every parish to destroy its own. We shan't have a clean parish till we've destroyed the vermin we've got.

GERALD: Vermin? The fool's raving. Vermin!—Another phrase-maker, by God! Another phrase-maker to lead the people.—Vermin? What vermin? I know quite well what *I* mean by vermin, Job Arthur. But what do you mean? Vermin? Explain yourself.

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, vermin. Vermin is what lives on other people's lives, living on their lives and profiting by it. We've got 'em in every parish—vermin, I say—that live on the sweat and blood of the people—live on it, and get rich on it—get rich through living on other people's lives, the lives of the working men—living on the bodies of the working men—that's vermin—if it isn't, what is it? And every parish must destroy its own—every parish must destroy its own vermin.

GERALD: The phrase, my God! the phrase.

JOB ARTHUR: Phrase or not phrase, there it is, and face it out if you can. There it is—there's not one in every parish—there's more than one—there's a number——

GERALD (*suddenly kicking him*): Go! (*Kicks him.*) Go! (*Kicks him.*) Go! (JOB ARTHUR *falls.*) Get out! (*Kicks him.*) Get out, I say! Get out, I tell you! Get out! Get out!—Vermin!—Vermin!—I'll vermin you! I'll put my foot through your phrases. Get up, I say, get up and go—*go!*

JOB ARTHUR: It'll be you as'll go, this time.

GERALD: What? What?—By God! I'll kick you out of this park like a rotten bundle if you don't get up and go.

ANABEL: No, Gerald, no. Don't forget yourself. It's enough now. It's enough now.—Come away. Do come away. Come away—leave him——

JOB ARTHUR (*still on the ground*): It's your turn to go. It's you as'll go, this time.

GERALD (*looking at him*): One can't even tread on you.

ANABEL: Don't, Gerald, don't—don't look at him.—Don't say any more, you, Job Arthur.—Come away, Gerald. Come away—come—do come.

GERALD (*turning*): *That* a human being! My God!—But he's right—it's I who go. It's we who go, Anabel. He's still there.—My God! a human being!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Market-place as in Act I. WILLIE HOUGHTON, *addressing a large crowd of men from the foot of the obelisk.*

WILLIE: And now you're out on strike—now you've

been out for a week pretty nearly, what further are you? I heard a great deal of talk about what you were going to do. Well, what *are* you going to do? You don't know. You've not the smallest idea. You haven't any idea whatsoever. You've got your leaders. Now then, Job Arthur, throw a little light on the way in front, will you: for it seems to me we're lost in a bog. Which way are we to steer? Come—give the word, and let's gee-up.

JOB ARTHUR: You ask me which way we are to go. I say we can't go our own way, because of the obstacles that lie in front. You've got to remove the obstacles from the way.

WILLIE: So said Balaam's ass. But you're not an ass—beg pardon; and you're not Balaam—you're Job. And we've all got to be little Jobs, learning how to spell patience backwards. We've lost our jobs and we've found a Job. It's picking up a scorpion when you're looking for an egg.—Tell us what you propose doing. . . . Remove an obstacle from the way! What obstacle? And whose way?

JOB ARTHUR: I think it's pretty plain what the obstacle is.

WILLIE: Oh ay. Tell us then.

JOB ARTHUR: The obstacle to Labour is Capital.

WILLIE: And how are we going to put salt on Capital's tail?

JOB ARTHUR: By Labour we mean us working men; and by Capital we mean those that derive benefit from us, take the cream off us and leave us the skim.

WILLIE: Oh yes.

JOB ARTHUR: So that, if you're going to remove the obstacle, you've got to remove the masters, and all that belongs to them. Does everybody agree with me?

VOICES (*loud*): Ah, we do—yes—we do that—we do an' a'—yi—yi—that's it!

WILLIE: Agreed unanimously. But how are we going to do it? Do you propose to send for Williamson's furniture van, to pack them in? I should think one pantechnicon would do, just for this parish. I'll drive. Who'll be the vanmen to lift and carry?

JOB ARTHUR: It's no use fooling. You've fooled for thirty years, and we're no further. What's got to be done will have to be begun. It's for every man to sweep in front of his own doorstep. You can't call your neighbours dirty till you've washed your own face. Every parish has got its own vermin, and it's the business of every parish to get rid of its own.

VOICES: That's it—that's it—that's the ticket—that's the style!

WILLIE: And are you going to comb 'em out, or do you propose to use Keating's?

VOICES: Shut it! Shut it up! Stop thy face! Hold thy gab!—Go on, Job Arthur.

JOB ARTHUR: How it's got to be done is for us all to decide. I'm not one for violence, except it's a force-put. But it's like this. We've been travelling for years to where we stand now—and here the road stops. There's only room for one at a time on this path. There's a precipice below and a rock-face above. And in front of us stand the masters. Now there's three things we can do. We can either throw

ourselves over the precipice; or we can lie down and let the masters walk over us; or we can *get on.*

WILLIE: Yes. That's all right. But how are you going to get on?

JOB ARTHUR: Well—we've either got to throw the obstacle down the cliff—or walk over it.

VOICES: Ay—ay—ay—yes—that's a fact.

WILLIE: I quite follow you, Job Arthur. You've either got to do for the masters—or else just remove them, and put them somewhere else.

VOICES: Ged rid on 'em—drop 'em down the shaft—sink 'em—ha' done wi' 'em—drop 'em down the shaft—bust the beggars—what do you do wi' vermin?

WILLIE: Supposing you begin. Supposing you take Gerald Barlow, and hang him up from this lamp-post, with a piece of coal in his mouth for a sacrament——

VOICES: Ay—serve him right—serve the beggar right! Shove it down 's throttle—ay!

WILLIE: Supposing you do it—supposing you've done it—and supposing you aren't caught and punished—even supposing that—what are you going to do next? *that's* the point.

JOB ARTHUR: We know what we're going to do. Once we can get our hands free, we know what we're going to do.

WILLIE: Yes, so do I. You're either going to make *such* a mess that we shall never get out of it—which I don't think you will do, for the English working man is the soul of obedience and order, and he'd behave himself to-morrow as if he was at Sunday school, no

matter what he does to-day.—No, what you'll do, Job Arthur, you'll set up another lot of masters, such a jolly sight worse than what we've got now. I'd rather be mastered by Gerald Barlow, if it comes to mastering, than by Job Arthur Freer—oh, *such* a lot! You'll be far less free with Job Arthur for your boss than ever you were with Gerald Barlow. You'll be far more degraded.—In fact, though I've preached socialism in the market-place for thirty years—if you're going to start killing the masters to set yourselves up for bosses—why, kill me along with the masters. For I'd rather die with somebody who has one tiny little spark of decency left—though it *is* a little tiny spark—than live to triumph with those that have none.

VOICES: Shut thy face, Houghton—shut it up—shut him up—hustle the beggar! Hoi!—hoi-ee!—whoo!—whoam-it, whoam-it!—whoo!—bow-wow!—wet-whiskers!——

WILLIE: And it's no use you making fools of yourselves—— (*His words are heard through an ugly, jeering, cold commotion.*)

VOICE (*loudly*): He's comin'.

VOICES: Who?

VOICE: Barlow.—See 's motor?—comin' up—sithee?

WILLIE: If you've any sense left—— (*Suddenly and violently disappears.*)

VOICES: Sorry!—he's comin'—'s comin'—sorry, ah! Who's in?—That's Turton drivin'—yi, he's behind wi' a woman—ah, he's comin'—he'll none go back—hold on. Sorry!—wheer's 'e comin'?—up from Loddo—ay—— (*The cries die down—the motor car*

slowly comes into sight, OLIVER *driving,* GERALD *and* ANABEL *behind. The men stand in a mass in the way.*)

OLIVER: Mind yourself, there. (*Laughter.*)

GERALD: Go ahead, Oliver.

VOICE: What's yer 'urry ?

[*Crowd sways and surges on the car.* OLIVER *is suddenly dragged out.* GERALD *stands up—he, too, is seized from behind—he wrestles—is torn out of his great-coat—then falls—disappears. Loud cries* —" Hi !—hoi !—hoi-ee ! "—*all the while. The car shakes and presses uneasily.*

VOICE: Stop the blazin' motor, somebody.

VOICE: Here y'are !—hold a minute. (*A man jumps in and stops the engine—he drops in the driver's seat.*)

COLLIER (*outside the car*): Step down, miss.

ANABEL: I am Mrs. Barlow.

COLLIER: Missis, then. (*Laugh.*) Step down—lead 'er forrard. Take 'em forrard—take 'em forrard.

JOB ARTHUR: Ay, make a road.

GERALD: You're makin' a proper fool of yourself now, Freer.

JOB ARTHUR: You've brought it on yourself. *You've* made fools of plenty of men.

COLLIERS: Come on, now—come on ! Whoa !—whoa ! —he's a jibber—go pretty now, go pretty !

VOICES (*suddenly*): Lay hold o' Houghton—nab 'im—seize 'im—rats !—rats !—bring 'im forrard !

ANABEL (*in a loud, clear voice*): I never knew anything so *ridiculous.*

VOICES (*falsetto*): Ridiculous! Oh, ridiculous! Mind the step, dear!—I'm Mrs. Barlow!—Oh, are you?—Tweet—tweet!

JOB ARTHUR: Make a space, boys, make a space. (*He stands with prisoners in a cleared space before the obelisk.*) Now—now—quiet a minute—we want to ask a few questions of these gentlemen.

VOICES: Quiet!—quiet!—Sh-h-h! Sh-h-h!—Answer pretty—answer pretty now!—Quiet!—Shh-h-h!

JOB ARTHUR: We want to ask you, Mr. Gerald Barlow, why you have given occasion for this present trouble?

GERALD: You are a fool.

VOICES: Oh!—oh!—naughty Barlow!—naughty baa-lamb—answer pretty—answer pretty—be good baa-lamb—baa—baa!—answer pretty when gentleman asks you.

JOB ARTHUR: Quiet a bit. Sh-h-h!—We put this plain question to you, Mr. Barlow. Why did you refuse to give the clerks this just and fair advance, when you knew that by refusing you would throw three thousand men out of employment?

GERALD: You are a fool, I say.

VOICES: Oh!—oh!—won't do—won't do, Barlow—wrong answer—wrong answer—be good baa-lamb—naughty boy—naughty boy!

JOB ARTHUR: Quiet a bit—now!—If three thousand men ask you a just, straightforward question, do you consider they've no right to an answer?

GERALD: I would answer you with my foot.

VOICES (*amid a threatening scuffle*): Da-di-da! Hark

ye—hark ye! Oh—whoa—whoa a bit!—won't do!—won't do!—naughty—naughty—say you're sorry—say you're sorry—kneel and say you're sorry—kneel and beg pardon!

JOB ARTHUR: Hold on a bit—keep clear!

VOICES: Make him kneel—make him kneel—on his knees with him!

JOB ARTHUR: I think you'd better kneel down.

[*The crowd press on* GERALD—*he struggles—they hit him behind the knees, force him down.*

OLIVER: This is shameful and unnecessary.

VOICES: All of 'em—on your knees—all of 'em—on their knees!

[*They seize* OLIVER *and* WILLIE *and* ANABEL, *hustling.* ANABEL *kneels quietly—the others struggle.*

WILLIE: Well, of all the damned, dirty, cowardly——

VOICES: Shut up, Houghton—shut him up—squeeze him!

OLIVER: Get off me—let me alone—I'll kneel.

VOICES: Good little doggies—nice doggies—kneel and beg pardon—yap-yap—answer—make him answer!

JOB ARTHUR (*holding up his hand for silence*): It would be better if you answered straight off, Barlow. We want to know why you prevented that advance?

VOICES (*after a pause*): Nip his neck! Make him yelp!

OLIVER: Let me answer, then.—Because it's worse, perhaps, to be bullied by three thousand men than by one man.

VOICES: Oh!—oh!—dog keeps barking—stuff his mouth—stop him up—here's a bit of paper—answer,

Barlow—nip his neck—stuff his mug—make him yelp—cork the bottle!

[*They press a lump of newspaper into* OLIVER'S *mouth, and bear down on* GERALD.

JOB ARTHUR: Quiet—quiet—quiet—a minute, everybody. We give him a minute—we give him a minute to answer.

VOICES: Give him a minute—a holy minute—say your prayers, Barlow—you've got a minute—tick-tick, says the clock—time him!

JOB ARTHUR: Keep quiet.

WILLIE: Of all the damned, cowardly——

VOICES: Sh-h-h!—Squeeze him—throttle him! Silence is golden, Houghton.—Close the shutters, Willie's dead.—Dry up, wet-whiskers!

JOB ARTHUR: You've fifteen seconds.

VOICES: There's a long, long trail a-winding——

JOB ARTHUR: The minute's up.—We ask you again, Gerald Barlow, why you refused a just and fair demand, when you know it was against the wishes of three thousand men all as good as yourself?

VOICES: And a sight better—I don't think—we're not all vermin—we're not all crawlers, living off the sweat of other folks—we're not all parish vermin—parish vermin.

JOB ARTHUR: And on what grounds you think you have no occasion to answer the straightforward question we put you here?

ANABEL (*after a pause*): Answer them, Gerald. What's the use of prolonging this?

GERALD: I've nothing to answer.

VOICES: Nothing to answer—Gerald, darling—Gerald, duckie—oh, lovey-dovey—I've nothing to answer—no, by God—no, by God, he hasna—nowt to answer—ma'e him find summat, then—answer for him—gi'e him 's answer—let him ha'e it—go on—mum—mum—lovey-dovey—rub his nose in it—kiss the dirt, ducky—bend him down—rub his nose in—he's saying something—oh no, he isn't—sorry I spoke—bend him down!

JOB ARTHUR: Quiet a bit—quiet, everybody—he's got to answer—keep quiet.—Now—— (*A silence.*) Now then, Barlow, will you answer, or won't you? (*Silence.*)

ANABEL: Answer them, Gerald—never mind.

VOICES: Sh-h-h! Sh-h-h! (*Silence.*)

JOB ARTHUR: You won't answer, Barlow?

VOICE: Down the beggar!

VOICES: Down him—put his nose down—flatten him!

[*The crowd surges and begins to howl—they sway dangerously*—GERALD *is spread-eagled on the ground, face down.*

JOB ARTHUR: Back—back—back a minute—back—back! (*They recoil.*)

WILLIE: I *hope* there's a God in heaven.

VOICES: Put him down—flatten him!

[WILLIE *is flattened on the ground.*

JOB ARTHUR: Now then—now then—if you won't answer, Barlow, I can't stand here for you any more.—Take your feet off him, boys, and turn him over. Turn him over—let us look at him. Let us see if he *can* speak. (*They turn him over, with another scuffle.*)

Now then, Barlow—you can see the sky above you. Now do you think you're going to play with three thousand men, with their lives and with their souls ? —now do you think you're going to answer them with your foot ?—do you—do you ?

[*The crowd has begun to sway and heave dangerously, with a low, muffled roar, above which is heard* JOB ARTHUR'S *voice. As he ceases, the roar breaks into a yell—the crowd heaves.*

VOICES : Down him—crack the vermin—on top of him—put your foot on the vermin !

ANABEL (*with a loud, piercing cry, suddenly starting up*) : Ah no ! Ah no ! Ah-h-h-h no-o-o-o ! Ah-h-h-h no-o-o-o ! Ah-h-h-h no-o-o-o ! No-o-o-o ! No-o-o-o ! No-o ! No-o-o !—Ah-h-h-h !—it's enough, it's enough, it's enough ! It's enough—he's a man as you are. He's a man as you are. He's a man as you are. He's a man as you are. (*Weeps—a breath of silence.*)

OLIVER : Let us stop now—let us stop now. Let me stand up. (*Silence.*) I want to stand up. (*A muffled noise.*)

VOICE : Let him get up. (OLIVER *rises.*)

OLIVER : Be quiet. Be quiet.—Now—choose ! Choose ! Choose ! Choose what you will do ! Only choose ! Choose !—it will be irrevocable. (*A moment's pause.*) Thank God we haven't gone too far.—Gerald, get up. (*Men still hold him down.*)

JOB ARTHUR : Isn't he to answer us ? Isn't he going to answer us ?

OLIVER : Yes, he shall answer you. He shall answer

you. But let him stand up. No more of this. Let him stand up. He must stand up. (*Men still hold* GERALD *down.*) (OLIVER *takes hold of their hands and removes them.*) Let go—let go now. Yes, let go—yes—I ask you to let go. (*Slowly, sullenly, the men let go.* GERALD is *free, but he does not move.*) There—get up, Gerald! Get up! You aren't hurt, are you? You must get up—it's no use. We're doing our best—you must do yours. When things are like this, we have to put up with what we get. (GERALD *rises slowly and faces the mob. They roar dully.*) You ask why the clerks didn't get this increase? Wait! Wait! Do you still wish for any answer, Mr. Freer?

JOB ARTHUR: Yes, that's what we've been waiting for.

OLIVER: Then answer, Gerald.

GERALD: They've trodden on my face.

OLIVER: No matter. Job Arthur will easily answer that you've trodden on their souls. Don't start an altercation. (*The crowd is beginning to roar.*)

GERALD: You want to know why the clerks didn't get their rise?—Because you interfered and attempted to bully about it, do you see. That's why.

VOICES: You want bullying.—You'll get bullying, you will.

OLIVER: Can't you see it's no good, either side? It's no mortal use. We might as well all die to-morrow, or to-day, or this minute, as go on bullying one another, one side bullying the other side, and the other side bullying back. We'd *better* all die.

WILLIE: And a great deal better. I'm damned if I'll take sides with anybody against anything, after this. If I'm to die, I'll die by myself. As for living, it seems impossible.

JOB ARTHUR: Have the men nothing to be said for their side?

OLIVER: They have a great deal—but not *everything*, you see.

JOB ARTHUR: Haven't they been wronged? And *aren't* they wronged?

OLIVER: They have—and they are. But haven't they been wrong themselves, too?—and aren't they wrong now?

JOB ARTHUR: How?

OLIVER: What about this affair? Do you call it right?

JOB ARTHUR: Haven't we been driven to it?

OLIVER: Partly. And haven't you driven the masters to it, as well?

JOB ARTHUR: I don't see that.

OLIVER: Can't you see that it takes two to make a quarrel? And as long as each party hangs on to its own end of the stick, and struggles to get full hold of the stick, the quarrel will continue. It will continue till you've killed one another. And even then, what better shall you be? What better would you be, really, if you'd killed Gerald Barlow just now? You wouldn't, you know. We're all human beings, after all. And why can't we try really to leave off struggling against one another, and set up a new state of things?

JOB ARTHUR: That's all very well, you see, while you've got the goods.

OLIVER: I've got very little, I assure you.

JOB ARTHUR: Well, if you haven't, those you mix with have. They've got the money, and the power, and they intend to keep it.

OLIVER: As for power, somebody must have it, you know. It only rests with you to put it into the hands of the best men, the men you *really* believe in.—And as for money, it's life, it's living that matters, not simply having money.

JOB ARTHUR: You can't live without money.

OLIVER: I know that. And therefore why can't we have the decency to agree simply about money—just agree to dispose of it so that all men could live their own lives.

JOB ARTHUR: That's what we want to do. But the others, such as Gerald Barlow, they keep the money—*and* the power.

OLIVER: You see, if you wanted to arrange things so that money flowed more naturally, so that it flowed naturally to every man, according to his needs, I think we could all soon agree. But you don't. What you want is to take it away from one set and give it to another—or keep it yourselves.

JOB ARTHUR: We want every man to have his proper share.

OLIVER: I'm sure *I* do. I want every man to be able to live and be free. But we shall never manage it by fighting over the money. If you want what is natural and good, I'm sure the owners would soon agree with you.

JOB ARTHUR: What? Gerald Barlow agree with us?

OLIVER: Why not? I believe so.

JOB ARTHUR: You ask him.

OLIVER: Do you think, Gerald, that if the men really wanted a whole, better way, you would agree with them?

GERALD: I want a better way myself—but not their way.

JOB ARTHUR: There, you see!

VOICES: Ah-h! look you!—That's him—that's him all over.

OLIVER: You want a better way,—but not his way: he wants a better way—but not your way. Why can't you both drop your buts, and simply say you want a better way, and believe yourselves and one another when you say it? Why can't you?

GERALD: Look here! I'm quite as tired of my way of life as you are of yours. If you make me believe you want something better, then I assure you I do: I want what you want. But Job Arthur Freer's not the man to lead you to anything better. You can tell what people want by the leaders they choose, do you see? You choose leaders whom I respect, and I'll respect you, do you see? As it is, I don't. And now I'm going.

VOICES: Who says?—Oh ay!—Who says goin'?

GERALD: Yes, I'm going. About this affair here we'll cry quits; no more said about it. About a new way of life, a better way all round—I tell you I want it and need it as much as ever you do. I don't care about money really. But I'm never going to be bullied.

VOICE : Who doesn't care about money ?

GERALD : I don't. I think we ought to be able to alter the whole system—but not by bullying, not because one lot wants what the other has got.

VOICE : No, because you've got everything.

GERALD : Where's my coat ? Now then, step out of the way.

[*They move towards the car.*

CURTAIN

DAVID

(1926)

CHARACTERS

DAVID, *son of Jesse.*

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

SAMUEL, *Prophet of God.*

JONATHAN, *son of Saul.*

ABNER, *leader of Saul's host.*

AGAG, *King of Amalek.*

MERAB, *daughter of Saul.*

MICHAL, *daughter of Saul.*

WOMAN-SERVANT.

MAIDENS.

JESSE, *father of David.*

ELIAB, ABINADAB, SHAMMAH, *brothers of David.*

FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH, AND SEVENTH BROTHERS *of David.*

ADRIEL THE MEHOLATHITE.

CAPTAINS, FIGHTING-MEN, HERALD, ARMOUR-BEARER, ELDERS, NEIGHBOURS, PROPHETS, HERDSMEN, AND LAD.

SCENE I

Courtyard of SAUL'S *house in Gilgal: sort of compound with an adobe house beyond.* AGAG, *bound, seated on the ground, and fastened by a rope to a post of the shed. Men with spears. Enter* MERAB *and* MICHAL, *daughters of* SAUL, *with tambourines.* MAIDENS.

MERAB (*running and dancing*): Saul came home with the spoil of the Amalekite.

MAIDENS: Hie! Amalekite! Hie! Amalekite!

MICHAL: Saul threw his spear into the desert of Shur, through the heart of the Amalekite.

MAIDENS: Stuck the Amalekite, pierced him to the ground.

MICHAL: Wind of the desert blows between the ribs of Amalek, only the jackal is fat on that land. Who smote the Amalekite, as a sand-storm smites the desert?

MAIDENS: Saul! Saul! Saul is the slayer and the death of Amalek.

MERAB (*before* AGAG): What is this dog with a string round his neck?

MAIDENS: What dog is this?

MICHAL: I know this dog, men used to call it King!

MAIDENS: Look at this King!

MERAB: Agag, Agag, King of the Amalekites! Dog on a string at the heel of mighty Saul!

MICHAL (*speaking to* AGAG): Are you the King of the Amalekites?

AGAG: I am he, maiden!

MICHAL: I thought it was a dog my father had brought home, and tied to a post.

MERAB: Why are you alone, Agag? Where are all your armed men, that ran like lions, round the road to Egypt? Where are your women, with gold on their foreheads? Let us hear the tinkle of the bracelets of your women, O King, King Agag, King of mighty Amalek!

MAIDENS (*laughing—shaking tambourines in* AGAG'S *face—spitting on him*): Dog! Dog! Dog of an Amalekite!

MICHAL: Who hung on the heels of Israel when they journeyed out of the wilderness of Shur, coming from Egypt, in the days of our fathers, in the day of Moses, our great deliverer?

MAIDENS: Ay! Ay! Who threw their spears in the backs of the wandering Israelites?

MICHAL: Who killed our women, and the weary ones, and the heavy-footed, in the bitter days of wandering, when we came up out of Egypt?

MERAB: Who among our enemies was accursed like the Amalekite? When Moses held the rod of God uplifted in his hand, Joshua smote the Amalekite till the sun went down. But even when the sun was gone, came the voice of the Almighty: *War, and war with Amalek, till Amalek is put out from under heaven.*

MICHAL: Dog! Son of dogs that lay in wait for us as we passed by! Dog! Why has Saul left you eyes to see, and ears to hear!

SAUL (*coming from house*): Agag is among the maidens!

MICHAL: See, Father, is *this* a king?

SAUL: Even so.

MICHAL: It is a dog that cannot scratch his own fleas.

SAUL: Even so, it is a king: King of rich Amalek. Have you seen the presents he has brought for the household of Saul?

MICHAL: For the daughters of Saul, Father?

SAUL: Surely for Merab and Michal, daughters of Saul. (*To a man.*) Ho! Bring the basket of spoils for the daughters of the King.

MICHAL: Listen! Listen! King Agag seeks a wife in Gilgal! Oh, Father, I do not like him! He looks like a crow the dogs have played with. Merab, here is a King for your hand!

MERAB: Death is his portion, the Amalekite.

MICHAL: Will you put him to death, Father? Let us laugh a little longer at his Amalek nose.

[*Enter man with basket—also* JONATHAN *and* ABNER.

SAUL: See the gifts of Agag, King of Amalek, to the daughters of Saul! Tissue from Egypt, head-veils from Pharaoh's house! And see, red robes from Tyre, and yellow from Sidon.

MICHAL (*screams*): That for *me*, Father, that for me! Give the other to Merab.—Ah! Ah! Ah!—Thank you, King Agag; thank you, King of Amalek.

SAUL: Goldsmith's work for arms and ankles, gold and dropping silver, for the ears.

MICHAL: Give me those! Give me those! Give the others to Merab! Ay! Ay! Maidens! How am I?—See, Agag, noble Agag, how am I now? Listen! (*She dances, the ornaments clink.*) They say: *Noble Agag!—King of Givers!* Poor draggled crow that had gold in its nest! Caw! King Agag! Caw! It's a

daughter of Saul, of long-limbed Saul, smiter of Amalek, who tinkles with joys of the Amalekite.

JONATHAN: Peace, maiden! Go in and spin wool with the women. You are too much among the men.

MICHAL: Art thou speaking, O Jonathan, full of thy own manhood?

JONATHAN: Take in these spoils from the eye of men, and the light of day. Father, there came one saying that Samuel sought you in Carmel.

SAUL: Let him find me in Gilgal.

ABNER: They are calling even now at the gate. (*Moves to gate.*)

SAUL (*to girls*): Go to the house and hide your spoil, for if this prophet of prophets finds the treasure of the Amalekite upon you, he will tear it away, and curse your youth.

MICHAL: That he shall not! Oh, Merab, you got the blue shawl from me! Run! Maidens! Run! Farewell, King Agag, your servant thanks your lordship! —Caw!—Nay, he cannot even say caw!

[*Exit—running*—MICHAL, *and other* MAIDENS *follow.*

ABNER: It is so, my lord. Samuel even now has passed the stone of directions, seeking Saul in Gilgal.

SAUL: It is well. He has come to bless our triumph.

JONATHAN: Father, will you leave that man in the sight of Samuel?

SAUL: No! Go you quickly into the house, O Agag! Take him quickly, men, and let no mouth speak his name.

[*Exeunt* AGAG *and men.*

JONATHAN: I have a misgiving, Father, that Samuel comes not in peace, after Saul in Gilgal.

SAUL: Has Saul laid low the Amalekite, to fear the coming of an old prophet?

ABNER: Samuel is a jealous man, full of the tyranny of prophecy. Shall we wait him here, or go into the house and be seated on the mats? Or shall we go forth from the gate towards him?

SAUL: I will stay here, and brighten my sword-edge in the waiting.

ABNER (*at the gate—calling*): He is coming across the field; an old man in a mantle, alone, followed by two of his prophets.

JONATHAN (*joining* ABNER): It is he. And coming in anger.

ABNER: In anger against whom?

JONATHAN: Against my father. Because we have not destroyed the Amalekite utterly, but have saved the best spoil.

ABNER: Nay, but it is a foolish thing, to throw fine linen into the fire, and fat young oxen down a dry well.

JONATHAN: It was the commandment.

ABNER: Why should the maidens not rejoice in their ornaments, and the God of the Unknown Name enjoy the scent of blood-sacrifice?

[*They retreat from the gate;* SAUL *sharpens his sword. After a pause, enter* SAMUEL, *followed by the prophets.*

SAUL (*laying down his sword*): Blessed be thou of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

SAMUEL: What meaneth the bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

SAUL: They have brought them from the Amalekites. The people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto thy God, but the rest we have utterly destroyed.

SAMUEL: Stay, and I will tell thee what I have heard out of the inner darkness, this night.

SAUL: Say on.

SAMUEL: When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the chieftain of the tribes of Israel, and the Deep poured His power over thee, to anoint thee King? And the Voice out of the deeps sent thee on a journey, saying: Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.—Why then did you not obey the Voice, instead of flying upon the spoil, and doing evil in the sight of the Unclosing Eyes?

SAUL: Yea, I have obeyed the Voice from the beyond. I have gone the way which the Great One sent me, and have brought Agag the King of Amalek prisoner, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice in Gilgal unto the Lord thy God.

SAMUEL: Does the Breather of the skies take as great delight in sacrifice and burnt offerings as in obedience to the Voice that spoke on the breath of the night? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

SAUL: Is not God the sender of life, and the bread of life? And shall we deny the meat and destroy the bread that is sent?

SAMUEL: Behold, is the Lord my God a sutler, to stock the larders of Saul? Lo, He heeds not the fat beef nor the fine raiment, but threshes out His anger in the firmament. Amalek has defied the living Breath, and cried mockery on the Voice of the Beyond. Therefore the living Wrath will wipe out the Amalekite, by the hand of His servant, Israel. And if the Nameless is without compunction, whence the compunction of Saul?

SAUL: I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

SAMUEL: Yea, that was bravely done! Thou didst not fear the Great Lord, thou fearest the people, smaller than thyself. Thou didst not obey the Cry from the midst of the dark, but the voice of the people!—I tell thee, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord the Lord hath also rejected thee from being King.

SAUL: Shall a King not hearken to the voice of his people?

SAMUEL: The people cried for a King, in the frowardness of their hearts. But can they make a King out of one of themselves? Can they whistle a lion forth from a litter of dogs? The people cried for a King, and the Lord gave to them. Even thee, Saul. But why art thou King! Because of the voice of the people?

SAUL: Thou didst choose me out.

SAMUEL: The finger of the Thunder pointed me to thee, and the Wind of Strength blew me in thy way. And thou art King because from out of the middle world the great Wish settled upon thee. And thou art King because the Lord poured the oil of His might

over thee. But thou art disobedient, and shuttest thine ears to the Voice. Thou hearest the barkings of dogs and the crying of the people, and the Voice of the Midmost is nothing to thee. Therefore thou hast become as nothing unto the Lord, and He that chose thee rejecteth thee again. The power of the Lord shall fall away from thee, and thou shalt become again a common man, and a little thing, as when the Lord first found thee.

SAUL: I have sinned. For I have transgressed the commandments of the Lord, which thou didst hear out of the deeps of the night. Because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. But now, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may find the Lord, to worship Him.

SAMUEL: I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being King over Israel. (SAMUEL *turns away.* SAUL *catches hold of the hem of* SAMUEL'S *garment and it tears in his hand.*) The Lord hath rent the Kingdom of Israel away from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou (*pause*);—and the Mighty One that moveth Israel will not lie, nor repent towards thee again: for He is not a man that He should repent.

SAUL: I have sinned, I have sinned, I have turned my face the wrong way. Yet honour me now, I pray thee! Honour me before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may find the Lord thy God, and worship Him.

SAMUEL (*turning*): Thou hast turned away from the Hidden Sun, and the gleam is dying from out of thy face. Thou hast disowned the Power that made

thee, and the glow is leaving thy limbs, the glisten of oil is waning on thy brow, and the vision is dying in thy breast. Yet because thou art the Lord's anointed I will bless thee again in the sight of the elders. Yet if the Lord hath decided against thee, what avails an old man's blessing?

SAUL: Yet bless me, my Father.

SAMUEL (*lifting his hand*): The Lord be with thee! The Lord's strength strengthen thee! The power and the might of the Lord brighten thine eyes and light thy face: the Lord's life lift thy limbs and gladden the walls of thy breast, and put power in thy belly and thy hips! The Lord's haste strengthen thy knees and quicken thy feet!

SAUL (*lifting both hands to heaven*): Lo, I have sinned, and lost myself, I have been mine own undoing. But I turn again to Innermost, where the flame is, and the wings are throbbing. Hear me, take me back! Brush me again with the wings of life, breathe on me with the breath of Thy desire, come in unto me, and be with me, and dwell in me. For without the presence of the awful Lord, I am an empty shell. Turn to me, and fill my heart, and forgive my transgression. For I will wash myself clean of Amalek, to the last speck, and remove the source of my sinning (*drops his hands—turns to* SAMUEL). Is it well, O Samuel?

SAMUEL: May it be well! Bring me hither Agag, King of the Amalekites.

SAUL: Ho, Jonathan, send here Agag the Amalekite. And send thou the chief of the herdsmen, O Abner, for we must wipe away the stain of Amalek swiftly, out of Gilgal.

[*Exeunt* JONATHAN *and* ABNER.

SAUL (*to* SAMUEL): The Lord shall be with me again this day, that the Kingdom be not rent from me.

SAMUEL: Who knoweth the ways of the Deep? I will entreat, ah! for thee in the night-time, and in the day. But if He hath turned His face away, what am I but an old man crying like an infant in the night!

[*Enter* AGAG—*coming forward delicately.*

AGAG: Surely the bitterness of death is past.

SAMUEL (*seizing* SAUL'S *sword*): As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. (*Rushes on* AGAG *with sword* —AGAG *steps behind a wall,* SAMUEL *upon him.*)

[*Enter* HERDSMAN.

JONATHAN: Better it had been in battle, on the field of the fight.

ABNER: It is a sacrifice.

SAUL (*to* HERDSMAN): Gather together the cattle of the Amalekite which came as spoil, and fasten them in a pen. Leave out no sheep and no calf, nor any goat, but put them all in.

HERDSMAN: It shall be as Saul says. [*Exit.*

SAMUEL (*entering with red sword*): I have hewed him in pieces before the Lord, and his blood has gone up to the Most High; it is in the nostrils of the God of Wrath.

SAUL: Come now, I pray thee, within the house, and let them bring water for thy feet and food to gladden thine heart.

SAMUEL: It may not be. But I must go to Ramah to entreat for thee before the Lord, and even now must I go. And may the Might be with thee.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A room in Ramah. Night. SAMUEL *in prayer.*

SAMUEL: Speak to me out of the whirlwind, come to me from behind the sun, listen to me where the winds are hastening. When the power of the whirlwind moves away from me, I am a worthless old man. Out of the deep of deeps comes a breath upon me, and my old flesh freshens like a flower. I know no age. Oh, upon the wings of distance turn to me, send the fanning strength into my hips. I am sore for Saul, and my old bones are weary for the King. My heart is like a fledgling in a nest, abandoned by its mother. My heart opens its mouth with vain cries, weak and meaningless, and the Mover of the deeps will not stoop to me. My bowels are twisted in a knot of grief, in a knot of anguish for my son, for him whom I anointed beneath the firmament of might. On earth move men and beasts, they nourish themselves and know not how they are alive. But in all the places moves Unseen Almighty, like a breath among the stars, or the moon, like the sea turning herself over. I eat bread, but my soul faints, and wine will not heal my bones. Nothing is good for me but God. Like waters He moves through the world, like a fish I swim in the flood of God Himself. Answer me, Mover of the waters, speak to me as waves speak without mouths. Saul has fallen off, as a ripe fig falls and bursts. He, anointed, he moved in the flood of power, he was God's, he was not his own. Now he is cast up like a fish among the dry stones, he

beats himself against the sun-licked pebbles. He jumped out from the deeps of the Lord, the sea of God has seen him depart. He will die within the smell of his own violence. Lord, Lord, Ocean and Mover of oceans, lick him into the flood of Thyself. Wilt Thou not reach for him with the arm of a long wave, and catch him back into the deeps of living God? Is he lost from the sway of the tide for ever and for ever? When the rain wets him, will it wet him Godless, and will the wind blow on him without God in it? Lord, wilt Thou not reach for him, he is Thine anointed? Bitter are the waters of old age, and tears fall inward on the heart. Saul is the son whom I anointed, and Saul has crawled away from God, he creeps up the rocks in vanity, the stink of him will rise up like a dead crab. Lord, is it verily so with Saul, is he gone out from Thee for ever, like a creeping thing crawled in vanity from the element of elements? I am old, and my tears run inward, they deaden my heart because of Saul. For Saul has crawled away from the Fountain of Days, and the Ancient of Days will know him no more. I hear the voice of the Lord like waters washing through the night, saying: *Saul has fallen away and is no more in the way of the power of God.* Yea, what is love, that I should love him! He is fallen away, and stinketh like a dead crab, and my love stinks with him. I must wash myself because of Saul, and strip myself of him again, and go down into the deeps of God. Speak, Lord, and I will obey. Tell me, and I will do it. I sink like a stone in the sea, and nothing of my own is left me. I am gone away from myself, I disappear in the deeps of God.

And the oracle of the Lord stirs me, as the fountains of the deep. Lo ! I am not mine own. The flood has covered me and the waters of the beginning sound in the shell of my heart. And I will find another King for Israel, I shall know him by the whispers of my heart. Lo, I will fill the horn with oil again, with the oil from the body of Him, and I will go into the hills of Judah. I will find out one, in whom the power sleeps. And I will pour potency over his head and anoint him with God's fecundity, and place him beyond forgetting. I will go into the hills of Judah, where the sheep feed among the rocks, and find a man fresh in the morning of God. And he shall be King. On the morrow I will gather myself and go, silently, carrying the kingship away from Saul, because the virtue is gone out of him. And Saul will kill me with a spear, in one stroke, for rage he will kill me, if I tell him. But I shall not tell him. I shall say : I must away to the land of Judah, it is the time to sacrifice in the place of Bethlehem, the appointed time is at hand.—So I shall go away from Saul for ever, and never shall I see his face again. I shall hide myself away from his face, lest he hurt himself, slaying me. I shall go in the morning with sure feet, but the shell of my heart will be weary. For I am the Lord's and servant of the Lord, and I go in obedience, even with the alacrity of willingness. But alas, that I should have loved Saul, and had pride in him ! I am old.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

Bethlehem: an open place in the village. An old man on a roof calling aloud and kindling a signal fire.

1ST ELDER (*calling, on the roof*): Come in! Come in! Come in! Come all men in! Come all in to the place of counsel! Gather into the place of counsel, all men gather now. Come in! Come in!

2ND ELDER (*on the plaza*): What now?

3RD ELDER: The watchman on the fourth hill saw a host of prophets coming, even Samuel among them.

2ND ELDER: Yea! What does this bode?

JESSE: What have we done wrong, that Samuel comes down upon us? If he curses us we are dead men.

4TH ELDER: Dread is on me. The sun looks darkened.

3RD ELDER: Nay, let us wait. It may be he comes in peace.

ELIAB (*brother of* DAVID): Why do we, who are men that fear not the lion nor the bear, nor even the Philistine, tremble before the raging of these prophets?

2ND ELDER: Hush then! For the Bolt is above us, and can strike out of a clear sky. Canst thou hear His meaning, or know His vision, Who is secret save to the prophets? Peace then, hush thy mouth.

JESSE: Verily, there is no open vision, and the word of One is precious. Without Samuel, we should stare with the stare of deaf men, and the fixed eyes of the blind. We should run our faces against the wall, and fall with our feet into a hole. We should not hear the lion roaring upon us.

ELIAB : Not so, my Father. Without a prophet I seek the lion when he roars about the herd, I slay him without advice from the Lord. We live our lives as men, by the strength of our right hand. Why heed the howlings of priests in linen ephods, one or many !

JESSE : My son, shut thy teeth on such words. Seal thy heart to silence. The strength of a man lasts for a little time, and wastes like the oil in a lamp. You are young, and your lamp is unbroken. But those that live long needs must renew their strength again, and have their vessel replenished. And only from the middle-middle of all the worlds, where God stirs amid His waters, can strength come to us.

ELIAB : Will it not come without Samuel ?

JESSE : There is a path that the gazelle cannot follow, and the lion knows not, nor can the eagle fly it. Rare is the soul of the prophet, that can find the hidden path of the Lord. There is no open vision, and we, who can see the lion in the thicket, cannot see the Lord in the darkness, nor hear Him out of the cloud. But the word of One is precious, and we perish without it.

ELIAB : *I* cannot bow my heart to Samuel. Is he a King to lead us into battle, and share the spoil with us ? Why should we fare worse without him ?

JESSE : My son, day follows day, and night travels between the days. But the heart of man cannot wander among the years like a wild ass in the wilderness, running hither and thither. The heart at last stands still, crying : *Whither ? Whither ?* Like a lost foal whinnying for his dam, the heart cries and nickers for God, and will not be comforted. Then

comes the prophet with the other vision in his eyes, and the inner hearing in his ears, and he uncovers the secret path of the Lord, Who is at the middlemost place of all. And when the heart is in the way of God, it runs softly and joyously, without weariness.

ELIAB: I would sooner follow the King, with spear and shield.

JESSE: Samuel is more precious than the King, and more to be obeyed. As God is to Samuel, Samuel to the King is God. The King is as a boy awaiting his father's bidding, uneasy till he is told what he shall do. Even so Samuel speaks to Saul, with the mouth of authority, to be obeyed. For he is the lips of God.

ELIAB: For me, give me the right arm of Saul.

[SAMUEL *enters—followed by wild prophets. The* ELDERS *go to meet him.*

1ST ELDER: The Lord be with thee!

SAMUEL: The Lord keep this people!

1ST ELDER: Comest thou in peace?

SAMUEL: In peace. I come to sacrifice unto the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come to sacrifice, according to your families. Renew your clothes and purify yourselves.

1ST ELDER: Into which house will you go?

SAMUEL: Into the house of Jesse.

JESSE: I am here, my lord.

SAMUEL: Call your household together, and sanctify yourselves, for we will sacrifice a heifer to the Lord this day, in your house. And it shall be a feast unto you.

CURTAIN

SCENE IV



JESSE'S *house. A small inner courtyard: a rude altar smoking, and blood sprinkled round:* SAMUEL *before the altar, hands bloody. In another part a large red fire with a great pot seething, and pieces of meat roasting on spits.* JESSE *turning the spits. It is evening, sun going down.*

SAMUEL: Call your sons. Call them one by one to pass before me. For I will look on them, before we sit around to the feast of the sacrifice.

JESSE: They are in the house, waiting. I will call the first-born first. (*Calling.*) Eliab, come forth! Samuel asks for thee!

ELIAB (*entering*): The Lord be with you.

SAMUEL (*aside*): Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him! (*Gazes at* ELIAB *who is big and handsome.*)

SAMUEL (*aside*): I shall not look on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature. For the voice of my soul tells me he is rejected. The Lord sees not as men see. For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

SAMUEL (*to* JESSE): Him hath the Lord not chosen. Call thy other son.

JESSE: Ha! Abinadab! And, Eliab, gather all thy brothers together, for the feast shall be set forth.

[*Exit* ELIAB.

ABINADAB (*entering*): The Lord be with you.

SAMUEL (*gazing on* ABINADAB): Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

JESSE: Go thou, Abinadab! Be all thy brethren ready in the house?

ABINADAB: They be all there, waiting for the sacrifice meat.

JESSE (*calling*): Come, Shammah! And when I call, come you others in your order, one by one.

SHAMMAH (*entering*): The Lord be with you.

SAMUEL (*slowly*): Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

JESSE: Go thou! Nay! Rather go to the fire and turn the spitted meat.

SHAMMAH: Yea! For it should not singe.

JESSE (*calling*): Ho! Son! Come forward!

FOURTH SON: The Lord be with you!

SAMUEL: Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

JESSE: Go thou hence, and wait yet a while.

FOURTH SON: What wouldst thou then with me?

JESSE (*calling*): Ho! Son! (*To him who waits.*) Nay, go or stay, as thou wilt. But stand aside. (*He stands aside.*)

FIFTH SON: The Lord be with you.

JESSE: Turn thy face to the sun, that it may be seen.

SAMUEL: Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

JESSE: Thou art not he whom Samuel seeks. Stand thou aside. (*Calling.*) Ho! Son! (*To him who waits.*) Bring in thy brother.

[*Enter* SIXTH SON: *all the other brothers edge in after him.*

SIXTH SON: The Lord be with you!

SAMUEL: Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

SIXTH SON: Wherefore hast thou called me, my Father?

JESSE: Samuel would look on the faces of all my sons. Go now! Who then was not called? Who among you has not come forward?

SEVENTH SON: I! Wilt thou me?

JESSE: Nay, but come into the light before the prophet of God.

SAMUEL: Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

JESSE: Nay, then it is finished, for there be no more.

SAMUEL: Are here all thy children?

JESSE: Yea, verily, there remaineth yet the youngest. And behold he keepeth the sheep.

SAMUEL: Send and fetch him. For we will not sit down till he come hither.

JESSE: Go thou, Shammah, for he will be coming in now. I will see——!

[*Exit* JESSE, *also* SHAMMAH.

ELIAB: My lord, will the Lord of Hosts anoint a King, while Saul yet liveth?

SAMUEL: My son, out of the deep cloud the lightning cometh, and toucheth its own. Even so, from the whirlwind of the whole world's middle, leaneth out the Wonderful and toucheth His own, but whether the anointing be for prophecy or priesthood, or for a leader or a King over Israel, the Mover of all hath it in His own deeps.

ELIAB: Yea! But if the Lord anoint a man to be King, can the Lord again take back the anointing, and wipe out the oil, and remove the gift, and undo the man He has made?

SAMUEL: The power is beyond us, both before and after. Am I not anointed before the people? But if I should say: *The power is my own; I will even do my own bidding*, then this is the sin of witchcraft, which stealeth the power of the whirlwind for its own. And the power will be taken from me, and I shall fall into a pit.

ELIAB: It is a hard thing, to be the Lord's anointed.

SAMUEL: For the froward and irreverent spirit, it is a thing well-nigh impossible.

[*Enter* JESSE *with* DAVID.

JESSE: This is David, the last of the sons of Jesse.

[*Enter* SHAMMAH.

SAMUEL (*aside*): I shall arise and anoint him. For this is he. (*Aloud.*) The Lord hath chosen this one. (*Takes the horn of oil and holds it over* DAVID'S *head.*) The skies will anoint thee with their glory, the oil of the Sun is poured over thee, and the strength of His power. Thou shalt be a master of the happenings among men. Answer then. Does thy soul go forth to the Deep, does the Wonderer move in thy soul?

DAVID: Yea, my lord. Surely my soul leaps with God!

SAMUEL (*anointing* DAVID): The Glory pours Himself out on thee. The Chooser chooseth thee. Thou shalt be no more thine own, for the chosen belongs to the Chooser. When thou goest in, it shall be at the whisper of the Mover, and when thou comest out, it shall be the Lord. Thy strength is at the heart of the world, and thy desires are from thence. The walls of thy breast are the front of the Lord, thy

loins are the Deep's, and the fire within them is His. The Lord looketh out of thy eyes and sits on thy lips. Thou closest thy fist on the Deep, and thy knees smile with His strength. He holdeth the bow of thy body erect, and thy thighs are the pillars of His presence. Henceforward thou art not thine own. The Lord is upon thee, and thou art His.

DAVID (*making an obeisance*): I am thy servant, my lord.

SAMUEL: Ye shall sit around, and divide the meat, and eat of the feast, and bid the neighbours to your feast of sacrifice this night.

[*They move around, fetching trenchers of wood, and a huge dish, and a heap of flat bread. They begin to take the meat from the fire, and with a cry lift down the pot.*

JESSE: David is a child, and the Lord hath chosen him. What shall become of him? Make it plain to us, O Samuel, this night!

SAMUEL: Ask not, for none knoweth. Let him live till such time as the Unseen stretcheth out His hands upon him. When the time is fulfilled, then we shall know. Beforehand no man knoweth. And now the meat is ready from the fire, and the feast of sacrifice is prepared, and I have done. Eat you of the feast, and live before the Lord, and be blessed. Speak nothing of this hour, lest mischance befall you. I go my way. Do not seek to stay me. Call whom ye will to meat, eat then what is before you, for this is your hour.

JESSE: The sun has gone down, and it is night. Wilt thou verily go forth?

[*Exit* SAMUEL.

ELIAB: He has anointed the youngest, and the oldest he has passed over.

JESSE: It is the Lord. Go, Abinadab, and bid in the neighbours to the feast.

ELIAB: Nay, it is Samuel, who envies a strong man his strength, and settles on the weak.

JESSE: These things, at this hour, thou shalt not say. Is my son David chosen beneath the heavens, and shall Eliab his brother cast it up a reproach to him? Yea! pile up the dish from the pot, that it may cool, and not burn the hand of him that tasteth.

ELIAB (*to* DAVID): Wilt thou be a priest in a blue ephod?

DAVID: I know not. To-day and to-morrow I shall keep my father's sheep. More I know not.

ELIAB: Canst thou see the Bolt within the cloud? Canst thou hear His voice out of the ground?

DAVID: I know not. I wish the Lord be with me.

ELIAB: Is He nearer thee, than thine own father?

DAVID: My father sits before me and I see his face. But the Lord is in my limbs as a wind in a tree, and the tree is shaken.

ELIAB: Is not the Lord also in me, thou stripling? Is thine the only body that is visited?

DAVID: I know not. My own heart I know. Thou knowest thine own. I wish the Lord be with me.

ELIAB: Yea, I know my own heart indeed. Neither is it the heart of a whelp that minds the sheep, but the heart of a man that holds a spear. Canst thou draw my bow, or wield my sword?

DAVID : My day is not yet come.

JESSE : It is enough. The guests we have bidden are here ! O David, my son, even carry out their portion to the womenfolk, for they may not come here. And think thou no more of this day. The Lord will move in His own time, thou canst not hasten Him. (*To the* NEIGHBOURS.) Nay, come ! And sit ye to meat ! For we will eat this night of the sacrifice that Samuel hath slain before the Lord.

NEIGHBOURS : Peace be to this house ! And is Samuel at once gone forth ? Yea ! Good seemeth thy feast, O Jesse !

JESSE : An heifer, of the first year, fat and goodly ! Reach forth thy hand.

[*They all sit around the huge, smoking platter.* JESSE *dips in his hand, and carries the mess to his mouth.*

NEIGHBOUR : Yea ! Good is the feast ! And blessed be Samuel, who came to Bethlehem this day ! (*Re-enter* DAVID : *sits down and eats. They all dip their hands in the great platter, and eat in silence.*) Verily, this is a great feast ! Surely the Lord hath visited thy house this day, O Jesse !

CURTAIN

SCENE V

SAUL'S *house in Gilgal.* MERAB *and* MICHAL *in the courtyard, spinning wool, with their maidens. They are laughing and giggling.*

1ST MAIDEN : Now I'll ask one ! I'll ask one.

MERAB : Ask then !

3RD MAIDEN : Why does a cow look over a wall ?

MICHAL : Yah ! Yah ! We know that old one. We all know it.

MERAB : Who knows the answer ? Hold your hand up.

[*Only* MICHAL *holds up her hand.*

3RD MAIDEN : There ! There ! They don't know it ! Why does a cow look over a wall ?

1ST MAIDEN : To see what's on the other side.

MICHAL : Wrong ! Wrong ! How silly ! (*Laughter.*)

2ND MAIDEN : Because it wants to get out.

MICHAL : Wrong ! And it's such an easy one.

3RD MAIDEN : Why does a cow look over a wall ?

4TH MAIDEN : To scratch its neck. (*Much laughter.*)

3RD MAIDEN : Wrong ! Wrong ! All wrong ! Give it up !

MICHAL : No ! No ! Let them guess again. Why does a cow look over a wall ?

1ST MAIDEN : To see if David's coming to drive her to pasture. (*Wild laughter.*)

MICHAL : That's wrong ! That's not the answer !

MERAB : Give it up ?

3RD MAIDEN (*laughing wildly*) : *To see if David's coming to drive her to pasture !*

MICHAL: That's not the answer, *Stupid!*

1ST MAIDEN: Why not, say I? It's as good as the real answer.—The cows of Jesse will have to look a long time over a wall. (*Much laughter.*) No doubt they're looking at this moment. (*Shrieks of laughter.*) Mooo-oo! Moo-oo! David, come home. (*Hysterical laughter.*)

MICHAL: Fool! Fool! That's not the answer.

1ST MAIDEN: Yes. That's the answer in Bethlehem. Why does a Bethlehem cow look over a wall?—Because David's come to Gilgal. (*Much laughter.*)

MICHAL: That's wrong! That's wrong!

2ND MAIDEN: It's not wrong for a Bethlehem cow.

MICHAL: But it's not a Bethlehem cow. (*Much laughter.*)

1ST MAIDEN: Is it the heifers of Gilgal? (*Wild laughter.*)

4TH MAIDEN: Why do the heifers of King Saul look over the wall in Gilgal?

1ST MAIDEN: Listening to the music. (*Wild laughter.*)

MERAB (*amid her laughter*): If my father hears us!

MICHAL: You are all fools! You don't know the right answer. You can't guess it! You can't guess it.

2ND MAIDEN: Well, what is it then? Only Michal knows what the cow is looking for! (*Laughter.*)

MAIDENS: Go on! Go on! Tell us, Michal!

MICHAL: Because she can't see through it. (*Laughter.*)

1ST MAIDEN: See through what? (*Wild laughter.*)

MAIDENS: See through what? (*All laughing.*)

2ND MAIDEN: Because who can't see through what? (*Shrieks of laughter.*)

1ST MAIDEN: What a senseless answer! *Because she can't see through it!* (*Shrieks of laughter.*)

MICHAL: You are all fools! fools! fools! You know *nothing*. You don't know *anything*.

[*Enter* SAUL—*angry*.

SAUL: Enough! Enough! What is all this? Is there a madness among the women? Silence, I say!

MICHAL: We are but telling riddles.

SAUL: It shall not be! What! am I to hear the shrieks of my daughters' folly spoiling the morning? I will riddle you a riddle you shall not care for. (MAIDENS *steal away*.)

MERAB: We had thought my father was abroad among the men.

SAUL: You had thought, had you! And your father's being abroad was timely to let loose your ribaldry!

MICHAL: Nay, Father, there was no ribaldry. The maid did only ask, why does a cow look over a wall?

SOUL (*shouting*): Be still! Or I will run this spear through your body. Am I to wrestle with the Lord and fail because of the wantoning of my daughters among their maidens! Oh! cursed in my offspring as in all things! (MERAB *steals away*.) Cursed above all in my womenfolk!

MICHAL: Could we not help you, Father, to strive with the Lord? They say the wise women can command the spirits of the deep.

SAUL: Art thou then a seeress? art thou amongst the witches?

MICHAL: Not so. But Saul my father is among the wondrous. Should not his daughter be as wise as the wise women who can see into the mysteries?

SAUL (*groaning*): This is the sin of witchcraft! The hand of my children is against me!

MICHAL: Nay Father, we would indeed be for you, and not against you.

SAUL: I have sworn to wipe out the sin of witchcraft from the land, I have sworn the death of all who lure the people with spirits and with wizardry. I have killed the soothsayers in the towns and the villages.

MICHAL: But, Father, might I not see the Bolt in a cloud, or call the Spirits out of the earth! I am your daughter, is that to be a witch?

SAUL: Thou art a spawn of evil, and I will run thee through.

MICHAL: But why! Oh, why!

SAUL: Thy soul is a soul of a witch that workest against thy father. I call on the Lord, and my heart foams, because He will not hear me. I know it now. It is thee, thou witch! (*Wanting to strike her with the spear.*)

MICHAL (*weeping*): It is not so! It is not so! The people say of thee, the Lord has departed from thee, and I would only help thee with the Lord, as Jonathan helps thee against the Philistines.

SAUL (*horrified*): Is the Deep a Philistine! Nay, now I know thou art the brood of witches, who catch the powers of the earth by cunning. Now I will surely pierce thee through, that my house may be pure, and the Fire may look on me again.

MICHAL (*screams*): My lord! My lord!

SAUL: I will pierce thee through. For I have sworn the death of all witches, and such as steal the powers of earth and sky by their cunning. It will be as good a

deed in the sight of the Lord, as when the prophet of God slew Agag, and Samuel will turn to me again. For I am empty when the Lord abandons me. And evil spirits break into my empty place, and torture me.—I will surely slay this witch, though she were seven times my youngest. For she lifts the latch to the evil spirit that gets into my soul unawares.

MICHAL: My lord! My lord! I am no witch! I am not!

SAUL: Thou art a witch, and thy hand worketh against me, even when thou knowest not. Nay, thou art a witch and thy soul worketh witchcraft even when thou sleepest. Therefore I will pierce thee through. And I will say unto the people: Saul hath slain the witch that gnawed nearest into his heart.

MICHAL: I will not be slain! (*Shrieks.*)

[*Enter* JONATHAN *and* DAVID, *running.*

JONATHAN: My Father!

DAVID: O King!

SAUL: This is the witch that hinders me with the Lord!

JONATHAN: This, Father! Why, Michal is a child, what can she know of witchcraft?

SAUL: It is in her will. My soul tells me that women with their evil intentions are playing against me, with the Lord. And this is she. She shall die as the others, seeresses, died, to cleanse the land before the Lord God.

DAVID: But yet, O King, thy servant has heard it is a hard thing to be a witch, a work of silent labour and of years. And this maiden your daughter is not silent, I think, nor does she seem to waste her young brows in secret labours.

JONATHAN: This is true enough. She is a feather-brain.

SAUL: Yet is her spirit against her father's.

MICHAL (*still weeping*): No! No! I would help him.

DAVID: If some spirit of evil hinder King Saul with the Lord of Hosts, it will be more than the whims of a girl. The spirits that hamper the soul of the King cannot be children and girls.

SAUL: It may be so. Yet though I wrestle, the spirit of the Deep will not come to me. And the wound is greater than a wound in battle, bleeding inwardly. I am a strange man unto myself.

DAVID: Yet Saul is King, comely in his pride, and a great leader in battle. His *deeds* cry unto the whirlwind and are heard. Why should Saul wrestle with the Lord? Saul speaks in actions, and in the time of action the spirit of God comes upon him, and he is King in the sight of all men.

SAUL: It is even so. Yet my soul does not cease to ache, like the soul of a scorned woman, because the Lord will not descend upon me and give me peace in strength.

DAVID: Who is strong like Saul, in Israel?

SAUL: Yet his strength is as a drunken man's—great with despair.

DAVID: Nay, O King! These are fancies. How can my lord speak of despair, when victory is with him, and the light is on his brow in the sight of all Israel!

SAUL: Can I so deceive myself?

DAVID: Surely the King deceives himself.

JONATHAN: Surely, Father, it is a strange self-deception you put on yourself.

SAUL: Can it be so? Yet if so, why does Samuel visit me no more, and withhold his blessing? And why do I feel the ache in me, and the void, where the Full should be? I cannot get at the Lord.

MICHAL: May I speak, my Father?

SAUL: Yea!

MICHAL: Why not laugh as you used to laugh, Father, and throw the spear in sport, at a mark, not grip it in anger? Saul is beautiful among men, to make women weep for joy if he smile at them. Yet his face is heavy with a frown.

SAUL: Why should I smile at thee, witch?

MICHAL: To gladden me, Father. For I am no witch.

SAUL: And when dost thou need gladdening, say?

MICHAL: Now, Father, even here!

SAUL: Thy sorrows are deep, I warrant me.

[*Touches her cheek with his fingers.*

MICHAL: Yea! Did not this strange young man—indeed he is but a boy—find me chidden and disgraced and in tears before the King?

SAUL: And what then?

MICHAL: Who is this boy from the sheepfolds of Bethlehem, that he should think lightly of the King's daughter in Gilgal?

DAVID: Nay! What man could think lightly of Michal the daughter of Saul? Her eyes are like the stars shining through a tree at midnight.

MICHAL: Why through a tree?

SAUL (*laughing suddenly*): Thou bird of the pert whistle!

Run! Run, quail! Get thee among the maidens! Thou hast piped long enough before the men.

MICHAL: Even if I run my thoughts run with me.

SAUL: What thoughts, bird of mischief?

MICHAL: That this boy, ruddy with the shepherd's sun, has seen my tears and my disgrace.

DAVID: Surely the tears of Michal are like falling stars in the lonely midnight.

MICHAL: Why, again, in the night?

SAUL (*laughing aloud*): Be gone! Be gone! No more!

[*Exit* MICHAL.

SAUL: She is a chick of the King's nest! Think not of her, David!

DAVID: But she is pleasant to think of.

SAUL: Even when she mocks thee?

DAVID: Very pleasant.

SAUL: The young men flee from a mocking woman.

DAVID: Not when the voice is sweet.

SAUL: Is Michal's voice sweet? To me at times it is snarling and bad in my ears.

DAVID: That is only when the harp-strings of the King's ears are unstrung.

SAUL: It may be. Yet I think I am cursed in my womenfolk. Was not the mother of Jonathan a thorn in my heart? What dost thou prescribe for a thorn in the heart, young wiseling?

DAVID: Pluck it out, O King, and throw it aside, and it is forgotten.

SAUL: But is it easy to pluck out a rancorous woman from the heart?

DAVID: I have no certain knowledge. Yet it should not be hard, I think.

SAUL: How?

DAVID: A man asks in his heart: *Lord, Who fannest the fire of my soul into strength, does the woman cast fuel on the Lord's fire within me, or does she cast wet sand?* Then if the Lord says: *She casts wet sand*, she departs for ever from a man's presence, and a man will go nigh unto her no more, because she seeks to quench the proper fire which is within him.

SAUL: Thou art wiser than if thou hadst been many times wived. Thou art a cocksure stripling.

DAVID: My brothers say of me, I am a cocksure malapert. Yet I do not wish to be! Why am I so, my lord?

SAUL (*laughing*): It must be the Lord made thee so.

DAVID: My brother has struck me in the face, before now, for words in which I saw no harm.

SAUL (*laughing*): Didst see the harm afterwards?

DAVID: Not I. I had a bruised mouth, and that was harm enough. But I thought still the words were wise.

SAUL (*laughing*): Dost think so even yet?

DAVID: Yea, they were wise words. But unwisely spoken.

SAUL (*laughing heartily*): The Lord sends the wisdom, and leaves thee to spend it! You offer a tit-bit to a wolf, and he take your fingers as well.

DAVID: I shall learn in the King's household.

SAUL: Among the wolves?

DAVID: Nay, the lion is nobler than the wolf.

SAUL: He will not grudge thee thy callow wisdom.—I go to speak with Abner.

DAVID: Can I serve the King in anything?

SAUL: Not now. [*Exit.*

DAVID: He has gone in good humour.

JONATHAN: We found him in an evil one.

DAVID: Evil spirits out of the earth possess him, and laughter from a maiden sounds to him as the voice of a hyena sounds to a wounded man stricken in the feet.

JONATHAN: It is so. He rails at his daughter, and at the mother who bore me, till my heart swells with anger. Yet he was not always so. Why is it?

DAVID: He has lost the Lord, he says.

JONATHAN: But how? Have I lost the Lord, too?

DAVID: Nay! You are good.

JONATHAN: I wish I knew how my father had lost the Lord.—You, David, the Dawn is with you. It is in your face.—Do you wrestle before the Lord?

DAVID: Who am I, that I should wrestle before the Lord? But when I feel the Glory is with me, my heart leaps like a young kid, and bounds in my bosom, and my limbs swell like boughs that put forth buds.—Yet I would not be vainglorious.

JONATHAN: Do you dwell willingly here in Gilgal?

DAVID: I am strange here, and I miss my father, and the hills where the sheep are, in Bethlehem. Yet I comfort myself, turning my soul to the Nameless; and the flame flares up in my heart, and dries my tears, and I am glad.

JONATHAN: And when my father has been bitter and

violent, and you go alone in tears, in a strange place—I have seen the tears, and my heart has been sad—then do you yearn for Bethlehem, and your own ?

DAVID : I am weak still.—But when I see the stars, and the Lord in darkness alive between them, I am at home, and Bethlehem or Gilgal is the same to me.

JONATHAN : When I lie alone in camp, and see the stars, I think of my mother, and my father, and Michal, and the home place.—You, the Lord becomes a home to you, wherever you are.

DAVID : It is so. I had not thought of it.

JONATHAN : I fear you would never love man nor woman, nor wife nor child, dearly.

DAVID : Nay ! I love my father dearly, and my brothers and my mother.

JONATHAN : But when the Lord enters your soul, father or mother or friend is as nothing to you.

DAVID : Why do you say so ?—They are the same. But when the Lord is there, all the branches are hidden in blossom.

JONATHAN : Yea !—I, alas, love man or woman with the heart's tenderness, and even the Lord cannot make me forget.

DAVID : But nor do I forget.—It is as if all caught fire at once, in the flame of the Hope.

JONATHAN : Sometimes I think the Lord takes from me the flame I have. I love my father. And my father lifts the short spear at me, in wild anger, because, he says, the Fire has left him, and I am undutiful.

DAVID : The King is the Lord's anointed. The King has known, as none know, the strong gladness of the

Lord's presence in his limbs. And then the pain of wanting the Lord, when He cometh not, passes the pain of a woman moaning for the man she loves, who has abandoned her.

JONATHAN: Yet we love the King. The people look up to him. Abner, the chief captain, is faithful to him unto death. Is this nothing to a man?

DAVID: To a man, it is much. To the Lord's anointed, it is much riches. But to the King whom the Lord hath rejected, even love is a hurt.

JONATHAN: Is my father truly rejected from being King, as Samuel said? And merely that he spared Agag and a few Amalekite cattle? I would not willingly have drawn the sword on naked Agag.

DAVID: Who knows? I know not.—When a people choose a King, then the will of the people is as God to the King. But when the Lord of All chooses a King, then the King must answer to the Lord of All.

JONATHAN: And the Lord of All required the death of defenceless Agag?

DAVID: Amalek has set his will against the Whirlwind. There are two motions in the world. The will of man for himself, and the desire that moves the Whirlwind. When the two are one, all is well, but when the will of man is against the Whirlwind, all is ill, at last. So all is decreed ill, that is Amalek. And Amalek must die, for he obstructs the desire of the breathing God.

JONATHAN: And my father?

DAVID: He is King, and the Lord's anointed.

JONATHAN: But his will is the will of a man, and he cannot bend it with the Lord's desire?

DAVID : It seems he cannot. Yet I know nothing.

JONATHAN : It grieves me for my father. Why is it you can soothe him ? Why cannot I ?

DAVID : I know not. It is the Lord.

JONATHAN : And why do I love thee ?

DAVID : It is the Lord.

JONATHAN : But do you love me again, David ?

DAVID : If a man from the sheep dare love the King's son, then I love Jonathan. But hold it not against me for presumption.

JONATHAN : Of a surety, lovest thou me, David ?

DAVID : As the Lord liveth.

JONATHAN : And it shall be well between us, for ever ?

DAVID : Thou art the King's son. But as the Lord liveth and keepeth us, it shall be well between me and thee. And I will serve thee.

JONATHAN : Nay, but love my soul.

DAVID : Thy soul is dear to my soul, dear as life.

[*They embrace silently.*

JONATHAN : And if my father sends thee away, never forget me.

DAVID : Not while my heart lives, can I forget thee.— But David will easily pass from the mind of the son of the King.

JONATHAN : Ah never ! For my heart is sorrowful, with my father, and thou art my comfort. I would thou wert King's son, and I shepherd in Bethlehem.

DAVID : Say not so, lest thine anger rise on me at last, to destroy me.

JONATHAN : Nay, it will not.

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

Yard of SAUL'S *house in Gilgal.* MICHAL, *with tambourine, singing or talking to herself.*

MICHAL: As for me, I am sad, I am sad, I am sad, and why should I not be sad? All things together want to make me sad. I hate the house when the men are gone to war. All the men are gone out against the Philistine. Gone these many days. And never a victory. No one coming home with spoil, and no occasion to dance. I am sad, I am sad, my life is useless to me. Even when they come, they will not bring David. My father looked pleasantly on him for a while, then sent him away. So are men! Such is a king! Sent him away again! And I know, some day when the Lord has left Saul, he will marry me to some old sheik.—Unless he dies in the war. Anyhow, everybody is gone, and I am dull, dull. They say it is the Lord. But why should the Lord make the house of Saul dreary? As for me, I don't know whether the Lord is with me, or whether He is not with me. How should I know? Why should I care! A woman looks with different eyes into her heart, and, Lord or no Lord, I want what I want. I wish I had a sure charm to call back David, son of Jesse. The spells I have tried were no good. I shall try again with the sand and the bones. (*She puts a little sand, and three small white bones, in her tambourine —mutters and bends—tosses her tambourine softly and drops it on the ground. Kneels and gazes intently.*) Bones, bones, show me the ways in the sand. Sand,

lie still; sand, lie still and speak. Now then, I see the hills of Judah, where Bethlehem is. But David is not there, he is gone. At least I don't see him. In the sand is a road to Gilgal, by the white crown-bone. But he is not coming this way, that I can see. Where else? Where else? This must be Elah in the sand, where my father is. And there is Shochoh, opposite, where the Philistines are. Ah yes, two hills, and a valley between, with a brook in the bottom. And my father with our men on one slope, the Philistines on the other. Ah yes, that will be my father among our men; at least that is his black tent. But Jonathan is not there. O woe, if Jonathan were killed! My heart is afraid for Jonathan. Though how should I know Jonathan as a speck of sand, anyhow? There is nothing in the sand. I am no wise woman, nor a seeress, even though I would like to be. How dull it is! How dull it is here! How dull it is to be a woman! (*Throws away her tambourine.*) Why do they sit in front of the Philistines without defeating them!

WATCHMAN (*entering from the gate*): Men are coming, from the host of Saul. They come with a litter.

SOLDIER (*entering*): The Lord strengthen you.

MICHAL: Who comes? Is it news of victory?

SOLDIER: No, lady! Jonathan is wounded in the knee, and comes home to rest.

MICHAL: Wounded in the knee? And what else?

SOLDIER: How, else?

MICHAL: Oh, slow-witted! What other news? Are the Philistines defeated and slaughtered?

SOLDIER: Nay, they are not.

MICHAL: Then what has happened?

SOLDIER: Naught has happened.

MICHAL: Where is the King? Is all well with him?

SOLDIER: The King is with the host at Elah, and all is well with him.

MICHAL: Then where are the Philistines?

SOLDIER: The Philistines are arranged over against us, on the opposite hill at Shochoh.

MICHAL: And what has happened? Do Israel and the Philistines sing songs to one another?

SOLDIER: Nay! A portion of the men go forth to fight, wellnigh each day. And the champion of the Philistines comes each day to challenge us.

MICHAL: And who answers out of Israel?

SOLDIER: None answers.

MICHAL: None answers! Yea, that is news to hear! Has Israel never a champion? Is my father, the King, sick?

SOLDIER: Many champions have we, forsooth. But we are men. And this Philistine is huge: he is out of the old days, before the Flood. He is a huge giant, whose great voice alone shakes the tents.

MICHAL: And not one man answers his challenge?

SOLDIER: Nay, where shall we find a huge giant among us, to answer him?

MICHAL: If he were a mountain, I would prick him with my needle.

SOLDIER: Yes, and would you might prick the eyeballs of him!

[*Enter litter-bearers with* JONATHAN.

MICHAL: This is most strange!—Ah, Jonathan, and art thou wounded in the knee?

JONATHAN: Yea!

MICHAL: The Lord be praised it is not in the calf!

JONATHAN: Hush, shrew!

MICHAL: Did the Philistine giant wound thee in the knee, O Jonathan?

JONATHAN: A Philistine wounded me.

MICHAL: But I hear they boast a giant, a champion.

JONATHAN: Yea, verily.

MICHAL: A huge unheard-of giant.

JONATHAN: Hugh enough: and heard daily.

MICHAL: What does he say, daily?

JONATHAN: Oh—he asks that we send down a man to fight with him. And if he, the Philistine of Gath, slay our man, then shall all Israel be servant to the Philistines. But if our man slay this Goliath, then the Philistines shall be our servants. And seeing that this giant be so large, no ordinary man can get past his sword to attack him, therefore the King is not willing that the fight be settled between champions, lest we lose our freedom in a moment.

MICHAL: And dare no man go up against this huge one?

JONATHAN: Nay, many dare. And many a man seeks to go. I myself would willingly go. Though I know I should die. But what would I care about dying, if the Philistine died first? Yet I doubt *I* should die first, and Israel be delivered into bondage. Hence the King will accept no champion from our midst. But we shall sally forth in daily companies, and defeat the Philistines at length.

MICHAL: At a great length.

JONATHAN: Hast thou wounds or pain, to find it so?

MICHAL: Yea, the wound of shame, that Israel, challenged, is dumb. Israel has no champion! What wound of shame for the woman!

JONATHAN: Why risk the nation in a fight between champions? We are all champions, and we all fight the Philistine.

MICHAL: Only not this big one.

JONATHAN: In single combat, with the fate of the nation hanging in the issue, no! But if Goliath mingle in the battle ranks, then every man of Benjamin will have at him.

MICHAL: And mingles he not in the battle ranks?

JONATHAN: Ah no! He saves himself for the single combat, for this bawling of the challenge and the rattling of the oversized shield.

MICHAL: Some man should think of a way.

JONATHAN: Think thou! I must rest, and recover, and return to the field of battle.

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

The camp of the Israelites at Elah. In the background, black tents of worsted. Morning. Men assembling in arms, to battle. Much shouting of war-cries—much noise of war-like anticipation. DAVID *entering, carrying a staff.*

DAVID: Is yon the tent of Eliab of Bethlehem?

SOLDIER: The tent of the sons of Jesse.

SHAMMAH (*coming armed from the tent*): Is not this our brother David? (*Calling.*) Ho! David is here! (*Embracing* DAVID.) And art thou also come to the fight?

ELIAB (*also armed*): What, David! Hast thou left the sheep to come among the men-at-arms? (*They embrace.*)

DAVID: My father sent me here to inquire of you, and to bring you bread, and the cheeses for the captain of your thousand. The loaves and the parched corn and the cheeses have I left with the keeper of the victuals. But where is Abinadab?

ELIAB: With the host, where we must form to battle.

[*The men are forming in loose array,* ABINADAB *comes and embraces* DAVID.

ABINADAB: Hast thou come from Bethlehem? And how is our father, and all the homestead?

DAVID: Yea, all are well. My father sent me with victual, and to see how you fare, and to take your pledge.

ELIAB: The pledge we will give you after the fight. And how fares my young son at home?

CAPTAIN (*calling*): The thousand of Judah, get you to your hundreds: get you to your places. (*Bustle of men falling into rank.*)

DAVID (*following his brothers*): Your son was bitten by a hound, but all is well.

ELIAB: What hound, forsooth? And lives the dog yet?

SAUL (*passing*): Five hundred of Benjamin, lead into the valley!

SOLDIERS: Ah! Ah! The five hundred are moving forth! (*Loud shouting of* SOLDIERS.)

DAVID: And how goes the fight?

SHAMMAH: Wellah, this way and that, as wind bloweth!

DAVID: The days are many, that you are afield. My father grew uneasy, and could stay no longer. Long days and no news are ill to live, said he.

ELIAB: Tell my father, this is no folding of sheep, out here.

DAVID: And has no weighty blow been struck, on either side?

SOLDIERS (*calling*): Ha! Ha! The five hundred are near the brook! And behold, the Philistine champion cometh forth from the ranks, to meet them. (*Hush in the camp.*)

MIGHTY VOICE OF GOLIATH: Ho! Ho, there! Israel! Why are ye come to set your battle array? Am I not a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

DAVID (*in the hush*): But who is this?

SOLDIERS: Ha! Ha! The five hundred are fleeing back from him! They are sore afraid.

[*A hush.*

SHAMMAH: This is Goliath, their champion.

VOICE OF GOLIATH: Ha! ha! Why run ye? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he can fight with me, and kill me, then will we be your servants. But if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. It is fairly said. Choose you a man for you!

DAVID (*in the hush*): Surely he is a huge man! Goeth no man forth to meet him?

SOLDIER: Have you seen this man! Surely, forty days has he come up to defy Israel. And it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the King will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

DAVID: What will the King do to the man that killeth this Philistine and taketh away the reproach from Israel? Will he surely give him his daughter? The daughter of his house in Gilgal?

SOLDIER: Ay, surely he will. And much riches. And make his father's house free in Israel.

DAVID: Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

SOLDIERS: Ah! He is what thou seest.

DAVID: As the Lord liveth, there shall be an end to him.

SOLDIERS: Would it were so! But who shall do it?

DAVID: Is the Lord naught in the reckoning? The Lord is with me, and I will do it.

SOLDIERS : Thou ? How canst thou kill this great giant?

DAVID : I can do it. I will kill him, as the Lord liveth in me, were his name six times Goliath.

SOLDIER : Nay, but how ?

DAVID : The Lord will show you how. I, I will kill him.

ELIAB (*coming forward*) : What art thou doing here ? Why camest thou hither, and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness ? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart. For thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

DAVID : What have I now done ? Was I not sent by my father, for a cause ?

ELIAB (*turning away in anger*) : Thou didst persuade him, in the vanity of thy mind.

SOLDIER : Shall we say to Saul of thee, that thou art minded to kill the giant ?

DAVID : Say so to him. For the Lord is with me.

ANOTHER SOLDIER : Verily, feelest thou in the power to kill this mighty man ?

DAVID : Verily ! And is it sooth the King will give his daughter to him that slayeth the roaring Philistine ?

SOLDIER : Yea, it is sooth, for it is so proclaimed. But tell us how thou wilt come nigh him, to slay him.

DAVID : The Lord will show you.

SOLDIERS : Saul is coming.

SAUL (*approaching*) : Which is this man will go forth against the Philistine ?

DAVID : Let no man's heart fail because of the giant, for thy servant will go out and fight with him.

SAUL : Thou ? Thou art not able to go against this

Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth, and he is a man of war from his youth.

DAVID: Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

SAUL: But neither lion nor bear came against thee in greaves of brass nor armed with sword a man's length. How shallst thou fight with this giant in panoply?

DAVID: The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine.

SAUL: Thou shalt go. And the Lord be with thee. (*To* ARMOUR-BEARER.) Fetch hither my armour, and another sword. For we will put them on him.

[*Exit* ARMOUR-BEARER.

DAVID: Shall thy servant go in armour clad?

SAUL: How else canst thou keep thy life?

VOICE OF GOLIATH: Ho! men of Saul! Is there no man among you, to answer when a fighter calls? Are you all maidens, combing your hair? Where is Saul, the slayer of foemen? Is he crying like a quail to his God? Call to Baal, and call to Astaroth, for the God of Israel is a pigeon in a box.

DAVID: Ha! Lord God! Deliver him into my hand this day!

SAUL: Yea! (*Enter* ARMOUR-BEARER.) Put the coat of proof upon him, and the helmet of brass.

[*They put the armour of the* KING *on* DAVID.

DAVID: I am not used to it.

SAUL (*unbuckling his sword*): Take thou my sword.

DAVID (*girding it on*): Thy servant hath honour beyond his lot. Lo! I am strange in this array! The Lord hath not intended it for me. [*Takes shield.*

SAUL: Now thou art ready. A man shall bear thy shield.

DAVID: Then let me go. But let me assay this sword and battle harness that is on me. (*Sets forth. Tries his sword; goes a little way. Turns suddenly back.*) I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them.

[*Drops his shield. Hastily unbuckles sword, and gives it to* SAUL. *Unfastens the helmet. The* ARMOUR-BEARER *disarms* DAVID.

SAUL: Then thou goest not! Uncovered thou canst not go.

DAVID: As the Lord liveth, I will go with naught but God upon me.

VOICE OF GOLIATH: The God of Israel is a blue pigeon in a box, and the men of Israel are quails in the net of the Philistine. Baal is laughing aloud, and Astarte smiles behind her sleeve, for Israel is no more than worms in a dung-hill.

DAVID: I shall go. Sound the trumpet!

[*He picks up his staff, recrosses hastily to the back of the stage, downwards as to a valley. Stoops in the distance: meanwhile trumpet sounds and the voice of the* HERALD *is heard, crying:*

HERALD: Come down, Goliath! Come forward, Philistine! For Israel sendeth a champion against thee. (*Noise of shouting in both camps.*)

SHAMMAN : See, David is picking smooth stones from the brook bed.

ABINADAB : He has put them in his leather pouch, and taken his sling in his hand. Surely he will go after the Philistine as after a wolf.

SAUL : The Philistine cometh down with his shield-bearer before him.—Yea, but the youth is naked and unafraid.

VOICE OF GOLIATH : Where art thou, champion of Israel ? I see thee not. Hast thou already perished of thy dread ?

VOICE OF DAVID (*small*) : Yea, I am coming.

VOICE OF GOLIATH : Thou !

SAUL : How he disdains the youth ! If we have lost all on this throw !

VOICE OF GOLIATH : Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves ? Now shall Astaroth slay thee with spittle, and Baal shall break thy bones with a loud laugh.

VOICE OF DAVID : Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied.

VOICE OF GOLIATH : Come ! Ha-ha ! Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the hills.

[*Meanwhile the bystanders,* SHAMMAH, ABINADAB, SOLDIERS, *all save the* ARMOUR-BREARER *and* SAUL, *have been running to the far background, to look closer.*

VOICE OF DAVID : This day will the Lord deliver thee

into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee.

VOICE OF GOLIATH: Ha! Ha! Canst thou chirp? Come over, thou egg, that they see me swallow thee. (*Loud yelling from Philistines.*)

VOICE OF DAVID: I will give the carcass of the host of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the earth. That all the earth may know there is a God in Israel. (*Loud yelling of Israel.*)

VOICE OF GOLIATH: Come, thou whistling bird! Come! Seest thou this sword? (*Loud yelling of Philistines.*)

VOICE OF DAVID: Yea! and all this people shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will deliver you into our hands. (*Great defiance heard in Israel.*)

VOICE OF GOLIATH: Must we die of thy talking? And wilt thou not come forth? Then must I fetch thee. . . . (*Tumult in Philistia.*)

ARMOUR-BEARER: The Philistine is hastening down!—Oh, and behold, the youth is running at him fast! Ha-a-a!

[ARMOUR-BEARER *rushes away, leaving* SAUL *alone.*

SAUL (*in a pause*): Ah! Ah!—Lord, my Lord!—Is he down? (*Great shouting heard—men running.*) What? Yea, the Philistine has fallen! The boy but slang a stone at him! It is the Lord! Nay, he riseth not! —Ah God! was it so easy a thing? Why had I not done it! See, see, Saul, see, thou King of Israel, see this nameless boy who hath run upon the fallen

Philistine, and seized his sword from his hand, and stands upon his body hewing at the neck of the giant! Ah, sight for the King of Israel, who stands alone, in safety, far off, and watches this thing done for him! Yea, they may shout! It is not for me. It is for that boy, whom I know not. How should I know him, with his young beard on his lip! It is a hard thing to hack off the head of such a giant, and he cannot find the neck joint. I see him stooping! (*A great wild shout is heard.*) Ah! Even so! Even so!

ABNER (*entering running*): The youth hath slain the Philistine with a stone from a sling, and even now has hewn his head loose, and is holding it up before the armies.

SAUL: Even so!

ABNER: Yea! He stands upon the body of that which was Goliath, and holds up the head to Israel! The Lord has prevailed. (*Loud shouting.*)

SOLDIERS (*running past*): The host of the Philistines is in flight! After them! After them!

ABNER: Shall we not pursue? Will not the King lead the pursuit? Lo! they flee in abandon, flinging away their spears in their haste.

SAUL: This needs no leader. Any man can strike in the back of a running enemy. What of the youth?

ABNER: He hath stripped the Philistine of his gear. Yea, I can see the body of the giant naked in blood upon the ground.

SAUL: Who is this youth? Whose son is he?

ABNER: As thy soul liveth, O King, I cannot tell.

SAUL: Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.

ABNER: He is coming towards the brook. I will bring him hither. (*Exit.*)

SAUL: Yea, he is coming! And alone up the slope, for the men have gone like hounds after the Philistine, and to the stripping of the tents. Yea, as bees swarm in upon the sweetmeats, when the window is opened. This is a day to make songs for. But not in the name of Saul. Whom will the maidens sing to? To him yonder, coming up the hill slowly, with the swinging head, and the bright brass armour of the Philistine. To that ruddy-faced fair youth, with a young beard on his mouth. It seems I should know him, if I would. Yea, I shall know him in my hour. Ah the blithe thing! Ah the blithe boy! Ah God! God! was I not blithe? Where is it gone? Yea, where! Blitheness in a man is the Lord in his body. Nay, boy, boy! I would not envy thee the head of the Philistine. Nay, I would not envy thee the Kingdom itself. But the blitheness of thy body, that is thy Lord in thee, I envy it thee with a sore envy. For once my body too was blithe. But it hath left me. It hath left me. Not because I am old. And were I ancient as Samuel is, I could still have the alertness of God in me, and the blithe bearing of the living God upon me. I have lost the best. I had it, and have let it go. Ha! whither is he going? He turns aside, among the tents. Aha! Aha! So it is. Among the tents of Judah, and to the booth of the Bethlehemite! So, he has gone in to lay down his spoil, the helmet of brass, and the greaves of brass, the coat, the great sword, and the shirt fringed with scarlet. Lay them by, they are

thine. Yea, they are thine, lay them in thy tent. No need to bring them unto the King. They are no king's spoil. Yea, lead him hither, Abner! Lead him hither! He is bringing the head in his hand. Oh yes, the champion, the victor! He is bringing the head in his hand, to swing it under the nose of the King. But the sword, the great sword, and the greaves of brass and the body-spoil he has e'en laid by in his own tent, where no man may lay hand on it. Oh! it is a shrewd youth, and a canny youth, cunning as the Lord makes them.

[*Enter* DAVID, *with head of* GOLIATH—*and* ABNER.

SAUL: So! Comest thou again?

DAVID: Even so! To lay the head of thine enemy before thee, O King!

SAUL: Whose son art thou, thou young man?

DAVID: I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

SAUL: Art thou so! Ay, thou art David! And brother to Eliab, and Abinadab, and Shammah, three men of war!—Thou hast put cunning in thy skill, and slain thine enemy as he were a hare among the bushes.

ABNER: See! The place where the stone sunk in, in the side of the forehead bone! It lies still there, the stone of David.

SAUL: Yea, that was death without weapons meeting, indeed.

ABNER: Surely the Lord was in that round stone, that digged the pit in Goliath's head-bone!

DAVID: Except the Lord had been with me, I had not done it.

SOLDIERS (*standing round*): Yea, the Lord sped the hand of David. The Lord is with this young man.

SAUL: Praise we must give to the Lord, and to David the promised reward. Seekest thou thy reward at the King's hand, thou young man?

DAVID: It is as the King willeth. Yet what should the reward be?

SAUL: Hast thou not heard it proclaimed?

DAVID: Nay, I arrived but in the dawn, with provender from my father to my brethren.

SAUL: Didst thou not set forth even now against the Philistine, hoping big for the reward?

DAVID: Not so, O King. But the Lord moved me to go, to take off the shame and the reproach from the army of the living God.

SAUL: Thou hast done well! Yet claimest thou thy reward?

DAVID: Shall I not hear from the King's mouth, what the reward should be?

SAUL: How was it said, Abner? Recallest thou?

ABNER: Yea, O King! Riches and the King's daughter, and freedom for his father's house, to the man that should slay Goliath in the single combat.

SAUL: Single-handed hath David slain Goliath, indeed! Even without any combat at all. But how likest thou thy reward, thou young man?

DAVID: Were it mine, O King, I should rejoice for my father's sake and fall to the ground beneath the honour put upon me, being son-in-law to the King.

SAUL: Even so! Now thou shalt stay with me, and live in my house and return no more to thy father's

house. And all shall be done to thee, as was said.— For surely thou hast brought much honour upon Israel. And we will make much of thee. For thou art champion of Israel in the sight of all the people. And thou shalt sit at the King's right hand, that all men may delight in thee. Yet, since thou art young, and fresh from the sheepfold, we will not hasten thee to thy confusion. But thou shalt dwell as as on among us, and rise in degree as a son rises, sitting at the King's meat. And behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife. Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.

DAVID : Let but thy servant serve thee, O King, in the sight of the Lord. And Saul will take the head of this Philistine to put it on a pole ?

SAUL : Nay ! Thou thyself shalt bring it before the people, in Jerusalem of Judah.

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

The king's tent at Elah: a square tent of dark worsted, with the wide front open. Heaps of panoply and spoil without. Within, in the public part of the tent, SAUL, *with* DAVID *on his right hand,* JONATHAN *on his left, and sitting around, the* CAPTAINS *of the armies of Israel.*

SAUL: We have numbered the armies in tens, in hundreds, and in thousands. And now are all men returned from pursuing after the Philistine, and the spoil is all brought in. And the wounded of the Philistine have fallen by the way, even to the valley of Ekron and the gates of Gath, their dead are more than their living. Yet are their princes within the land, holding on to strong places. Therefore we will rejoice not yet, nor go home to the feasting. But while his heart is sunk low, we will follow up the Philistine in every place where he holds out. Is it sooth?

CAPTAINS: It is good, O King.

ABNER: The blow that was struck with a pebble, we will follow up with swords and spears, till in the Lord's name not one uncircumcised remains in the land.

CAPTAINS: It is good! It is good! (*They strike their shields.*)

SAUL (*presenting* DAVID): This is David, that slew Goliath the Philistine, and delivered Israel from reproach. Sits not David high in the heart of every man in Israel, this day?

CAPTAINS: Yea! David! David! (*Striking shields.*)

SAUL: Who is first among the men of war this day? Is it not David, my son David?

CAPTAINS: David! David! It is David!

SAUL: Yea, Captains! Your King is but captain of the captains! Whom shall we set over the men of war this day? Shall it not be David? This time, shall not David lead the hosts? Is he not the first against the Philistine? Yea, in this foray of triumph and this campaign of victory, should any man lead but David?

CAPTAINS: It is good! David shall command, till we return home this time from smiting the Philistine. (*They clash shields with martial noise.*)

SAUL (*to* DAVID): Hearest thou, David, son of my delight?

DAVID: O King, I am no leader of men of war. I have no skill in arts of battle. Honour me not to my confusion.

SAUL: Nay, this time shalt thou take the charge. For in *this* fight art thou the first man among the men of war in Israel. Answer, Captains! Is it not so?

CAPTAINS: Verily! This time we will have David.

ABNER: Verily, save David lead us, we will not go.

[*The* CAPTAINS *rise, and lift locked shields before* DAVID *as if to raise him up.*

SAUL: If we go not now, we lose the golden hour. The choice is upon thee, David.

DAVID: Thy servant will do according to thy will, O King, and according to the will of Abner, and of the Captains. (*He rises before the* CAPTAINS.) But I am

young, and not brought up to war. And the Captains and the strong men will laugh at me, seeing my inexperience and my presumption.

ABNER: Nay! No man shall find occasion to laugh at thee, for the fight is in thee as in a young eagle. Leading to war shalt thou learn war.

DAVID: It is as the King and the Captains shall bid me.

SAUL (*rising*): We will make ready, and send out the news through the camp: *In this is David our leader!* Then David shall choose his men, and go forth. He shall give his orders, and the Captains shall march at his bidding. David, the day is thine!

[*Salutes. The* CAPTAINS *again salute* DAVID *with spear on shield, then they go out.*

CAPTAINS: To thee, David! (*Exeunt.*)

DAVID (*to* JONATHAN): How shall I bring this to a pass?

JONATHAN: Thy soul will not fail thee. Thou art the young lion of Judah, thou art the young eagle of the Lord. O David, is it well between me and thee, and hast thou verily not forgotten me?

DAVID: Verily, thou hast not left my soul. But how shall I go before these men?

JONATHAN: We have sworn a covenant, is it not between us? Wilt thou not swear with me, that our souls shall be as brothers, closer even than the blood? O David, my heart hath no peace save all be well between thy soul and mine, and thy blood and mine.

DAVID: As the Lord liveth, the soul of Jonathan is dearer to me than a brother's.—O brother, if I were but come out of this pass, and we might live before the Lord, together!

JONATHAN : What fearest thou then ?

DAVID : In the Lord, I fear nothing. But before the faces of men, my heart misgives me.

JONATHAN : Sittest thou not high in the hearts of Israel ?

DAVID : Yea, but who am I, to be suddenly lifted up ! Will they not throw me as suddenly down ?

JONATHAN : Who would throw thee down, that art strong as a young eagle, and subtle as the leopard ?

DAVID : I will rest in the Lord.

JONATHAN : And in me wilt thou not trust ?

DAVID : I will trust thee, Jonathan, and cleave to thee till the sun sets on me. Thou art good to me as man never before was good to me, and I have not deserved it. Say thou wilt not repent of thy kindness towards me !

JONATHAN : O brother, give me the oath, that naught shall sunder our souls, for ever.

DAVID : As the Lord liveth, my soul shall not part for ever from the soul of my brother Jonathan ; but shall go with him up the steeps of heaven, or down the sides of the pit. And between his house and my house the covenant shall be everlasting. For as the hearts of men are made on earth, the heart of Jonathan is gentlest and most great.

JONATHAN : The covenant is between us. (*Covers his face.*)

DAVID (*after a pause*) : But how shall I go before these captains, O my brother ? Comest thou not with me ? Wilt thou not stand by me ? Oh, come !

JONATHAN : I am limping still in the knee, and how

shall I lead a foray? But thou art mine and I am thine. And I will clothe thee in my clothes, and give thee my sword and my bow, and so shall my spirit be added to thy spirit, and thou shalt be as the King's son and the eagle of the Lord, in the eyes of the people.

[*Takes off striped coat, or wide-sleeved tunic.*

DAVID: But can I do this thing?

JONATHAN: Yea! That all men know thou art as the King's son in the world. For the eagle hath gold in his feathers and the young lion is bright. So shall David be seen in Israel.

[DAVID *slowly pulls off his loose robe, a herdsman's tunic cut off at the knee.* JONATHAN *takes off his sleeveless shirt, and is seen in his leather loin-strap. From his upper arm he takes a metal bracelet.*

JONATHAN: Even all my garments thou shalt take, even the armlet that should not leave me till I die. And thou shalt wear it for ever. And thy garments will I take upon me, so the honour shall be mine.

DAVID *pulls off his shirt, and is seen in the leather loin-strap,* JONATHAN *puts his bracelet on* DAVID'S *arm, then his own shirt over* DAVID'S *head, and holds up his coloured robe.* DAVID *robed,* JONATHAN *brings him a coloured head-kerchief and girdle, then his sword and his bow and quiver and shoes.* JONATHAN *puts on* DAVID'S *clothes.*

DAVID: How do I appear?

JONATHAN: Even as the eagle in his own plumage. It is said, David, that thou art anointed of Samuel, before the Lord. Is it so?

DAVID : Yea.

JONATHAN : Thou hast the sun within thee, who shall deny thee ?

DAVID : Why speakest thou sadly, Jonathan, brother ?

JONATHAN : Lest thou go beyond me, and be lost to me.

DAVID : Lord ! Lord ! Let not my soul part from the soul of Jonathan for ever, for all that man can be to man on earth, is he to me.

JONATHAN : Would I could give thee more !

SAUL (*entering*) : Yea ! And which now is the King's son, and which the shepherd ?

DAVID : Thy son would have it so, O King.

JONATHAN : It is well, Father ! Shall not the leader shine forth ?

SAUL : Even so. And the young King-bird shall moult his feathers in the same hour.

JONATHAN : The robe of David honours the shoulders of Jonathan.

SAUL : Art thou ready, thou brave young man ?

DAVID : I am ready, O King.

SAUL : The host is in array, awaiting thy coming.

DAVID : I will come where the King leads me.

SAUL (*to* JONATHAN) : Put another robe upon thee, ere thou come forth.

JONATHAN : I will not come forth. (*Turns abruptly.*)

[DAVID *follows* SAUL *from the tent—loud shouting of the army.*

JONATHAN (*alone*) : If the Lord hath anointed him for the kingdom, Jonathan will not quarrel with the

Lord. My father knoweth. Yet Saul will strain against God. The Lord hath not revealed Himself unto me: save that once I saw the glisten in my father that now I see in David. My life belongs to my father, but my soul is David's. I cannot help it. The Lord sees fit to split me between King and King-to-be, and already I am torn asunder as between two wild horses straining opposite ways. Yet my blood is my father's. And my soul is David's. And the right hand and the left hand are strangers on me.

CURTAIN

SCENE IX

Outside the courtyard of SAUL'S *house in Gilgal. Doorway of courtyard seen open.* MAIDENS *running forth with instruments of music. Men-servants gazing into the distance. People waiting.*

MAIDENS : Lu-lu-a-li-lu-lu-lu ! Lu-lu-lu-li-a-li-lu-lu ! A-li-lu-lu-lu-a-li-lu ! Lu-al-li-lu ! Lu-al-li-lu-a !

MERAB : Out of Judah Saul comes in !

MICHAL : David slew the Philistine.

MERAB AND HER MAIDENS : Out of Judah Saul comes in !

MICHAL AND HER MAIDENS : David slew the Philistine.

ALL (*repeat several times*) : A-li-lu-lu ! A-li-lu-lu-lu ! Lu ! lu ! lu ! lu ! li ! lu ! lu ! a ! li ! lu ! lu ! lu ! lu !

MERAB : All the Philistine has fled.

MICHAL : By the roadside fell their dead.

MERAB : Wounded fell down in the path.

MICHAL : Beyond Ekron unto Gath.

MERAB AND MAIDENS : All the Philistine has fled.

MICHAL AND MAIDENS : By the roadside fell their dead.

MERAB AND MAIDENS : Wounded fell down in the path.

MICHAL AND MAIDENS : Beyond Ekron unto Gath.

ALL (*repeat continuously*) : Lu-li-lu-lu-lu ! Lu-lu-li-a-lu-lu ! Li-a-li-lu-lu-lu ! Lu ! Lu ! Lu ! A ! li ! Lu ! Lu ! Lu ! Lu ! Li ! A ! Lu ! Lu ! Li ! Lu ! A ! Li ! Lu ! Lu ! Lu ! Lu ! u !

MERAB : Saul in thousands slew their men !

MICHAL : David slew his thousands ten !

MERAB AND MAIDENS: Saul in thousands slew their men!

MICHAL AND MAIDENS: David slew his thousands ten! Oh! Lu! Lu! Lu! Lu! Lu! Lu! A! Li! Lu! Lu! Lu!

ALL: Lu! Lu! Lu! Li! Lu! Lu! Lu!—A-li-lu-lu-a-li-lu-lu! Lu-a-li-lu-lu-lu! Lu-lu-lu!

MERAB! Out of Judah Saul comes in.

MICHAL: David slew the Philistine.

MERAB AND MAIDENS: Out of Judah Saul comes in.

MICHAL AND MAIDENS: David slew the Philistine.

ALL: Lu-li-lu-lu-lu-li-lu! Lu-lu-a-li-lu-lu-lu!

[*They continue the repetition of the simple rhymes, as* SAUL *draws near, followed by* DAVID, JONATHAN, ABNER *and the armed men. The* MAIDENS *keep up the singing, all the time dancing;* MERAB *with her* MAIDENS *on one side of the men,* MICHAL *and her* MAIDENS *on the other, singing loudly back and forth all the time. The men pass slowly into the gate, without response. The* MAIDENS *run peering at the spoil the servant-men are carrying in. All pass in at the gate.*

CURTAIN

SCENE X

Courtyard of SAUL'S *house in Gilgal. Confusion of people and men just come in—*MAIDENS *still singing outside.*

ABNER : The King is returned to his own house once more full of victory. When shall we slay the sacrifice ?

SAUL : To-night I will slay a bull calf for my house, and an ox will I sacrifice for my household. And for the men will we slay oxen and sheep and goats.

ABNER : Yea ! For this is a great day before the Lord in Israel ! And we will sprinkle the spoil with the sacrifice.

SAUL : Hast thou heard the song of the women ? Nay, hearest thou ? Hark ! (*In the distance is heard the singing.*)

MERAB : *Saul in thousands slew his men.*

MICHAL : *David slew his thousands ten.*

ALL : *Lu-lu-lu-li-lu-lu-a ! A-li-lu-lu-a-li-lu !*

ABNER : Ay !

SAUL : May such mouths be bruised !

ABNER : Nay ! Nay ! King Saul ! In this hour !

SAUL : In this instant ! They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands. And what can he have more, but the Kingdom ?

ABNER : Nay, nay, O Saul ! It is but the light words of women. Ay, let them sing ! For as vain women they fancy naught but that head of Goliath, with the round stone sunken in. But the King is King.

SAUL: Shall that shepherd oust me, even from the mouths of the maidens?

ABNER: Nay, this is folly, and less than kingly.

MICHAL (*followed by* MERAB—*running round the* KING *with their tambourines*): Lu-li-lu-lu-a-li-lu! A-li-lu-lu-a-li-lu-lu-lu!

SAUL: Away!

MERAB AND MICHAL: Lu-lu-lu-lu! Saul, the King! Lu-lu-lu-lu-al-li-lu-lu! Saul! Saul! Lu-lu-lu! Saul! Saul! Lu-lu-lu!

SAUL: Peace, I say! (*Exit, passing into house.*)

MERAB AND MICHAL: Jonathan and David. Lu-lu-lu! Here they come, the friendly two! Lu-lu-lu-lu-a-li-lu! Lu-lu-a-li-lu-lu-lu!

MERAB: Jonathan is kingly bred.

MICHAL: David took Goliath's head.

BOTH: Jonathan and David! Lu-lu-lu!—a! Here they come, the loving two-a!

MICHAL (*to* DAVID): Where is the giant's head?

DAVID: It is in Jerusalem of Judah, O Maiden.

MICHAL: Why did you not bring it here, that we might see it?

DAVID: I am of Judah, and they would have it there.

MICHAL: But Saul is King, and could have it where he would.

DAVID: Saul would leave it in Jerusalem.

MICHAL: And the armour, and the greaves of brass, and the shield, and the sword? The coat of brass that weighs five thousand shekels. Where are these? I want to see them, O David!

DAVID: The armour is in my father's house, and in

Jerusalem. The sword lies before the Lord in Ramah, with Samuel, O Maiden!

MICHAL: Why take it to Samuel? Do you not know my name, O David!

DAVID: You are Michal.

MICHAL: I am she. And this is Merab! Look at him, Merab, and see if you like him. Is it true, O my brother Jonathan, that the King will give Merab his daughter to the slayer of the Philistine?

JONATHAN: He hath said so.

MICHAL: To us he has not said one word. O Merab! Look at thy man! How likest thou him?

MERAB: I will not look at him yet.

MICHAL: Oh, thou! Thou hast spied out every hair in his beard. Is he not fox-red? I think the beard of a man should be raven-black. O Merab, thy David is very ruddy.

MERAB: Nay! He is not yet mine, nor I his.

MICHAL: Thou wouldst it were so! Aiee! Thou art hasty and beforehand with the red youth! Shame on thee, that art a King's daughter.

MERAB: Nay, now, I have said naught.

MICHAL: Thou shouldst have said somewhat, to cover thy unmaidenly longing.—O David, this Merab sighs in her soul for you. How like you her?

DAVID: She is fair and a modest maiden.

MICHAL: As am not I! Oh, but I am Saul's very daughter, and a hawk that soars king high. And what has David brought, to lay before Merab?

DAVID: All I have is laid before the King.

MICHAL: But naught of the Philistine Goliath! All

that spoil you took home to your father's house, as the fox brings his prey to his own hole. Ah, David, the wary one!

MERAB: It was his own! Where should he take it, but to his father's house!

MICHAL: Is not the King his father! Why should he not bring it here? Is Merab not worth the bride-money?

JONATHAN: Oh, peace! Thou art all mischief, Michal. Thou shouldst be married to a Philistine, for his undoing.

MICHAL: Ayee! This David has come back to trouble us! Why didst not *thou* slay the Philistine, Jonathan?

JONATHAN: Peace! Let us go in, David! These maidens are too forward. My father did never succeed in ruling his household of women.

MICHAL: Ayee! His household of women! Thou, Jonathan! Go in, David! They shall not put poison in your meat.

[*As* DAVID *and* JONATHAN *depart she sings:*

Empty-handed David came!
Merab saw him full of shame!
Lu-lu-lu-lu-lu-li-lu! A-li-lu-a! A-li-lu!
Empty-handed David came!
Merab saw him full of shame!
A-li-lu-lu! A-li-lu-li! Li-lu-li-lu-a!

(*To* MERAB.) So he has come!

MERAB: Even so! Yet his brow says: *Have a care!*

MICHAL: Have a care, Merab! Have a care, David! Have a care, Michal! Have a care, Jonathan! Have

a care, King Saul! I do not like his brow, it is too studied.

MERAB: Nay, it is manly, and grave.

MICHAL: Ayee! Ayee! He did not laugh. He did not once laugh. It will not be well, Merab.

MERAB: What will not be well?

MICHAL: The King will not give thee to him.

MERAB: But the King hath spoken.

MICHAL: I have read the brow of Saul, and it was black. I have looked at David's brow, and it was heavy and secret. The King will not give thee to David, Merab. I know it, I know it.

MERAB: A King should keep his word!

MICHAL: What! Art thou hot with anger against thy father, lest he give thee not to this shepherd boy! David hath cast a spell on Merab! The ruddy herdsman out of Judah has thrown a net over the King's daughter! Oh, poor quail! poor partridge!

MERAB: I am not caught! I am not!

MICHAL: Thou art caught! And not by some chieftain, nor by some owner of great herds. But by a sheep-tending boy! Oh, fie!

MERAB: Nay, I do not want him.

MICHAL: Yea, thou dost. And if some man of great substance came, and my father would give thee to him, thou wouldst cry: *Nay! Nay! Nay! I am David's!*

MERAB: Never would I cry this and that thou sayest. For I am not his.—And am I not first daughter of the King!

MICHAL: Thou waitest and pantest after that red

David. And he will climb high in the sight of Israel, upon the mound of Merab. I tell thee, he is a climber who would climb above our heads.

MERAB : Above my head he shall not climb.

MICHAL : Empty-handed David came !
Merab saw him full of shame !
Lu-li-lu-li ! Lu-li-lu-lu-li ! A-li-lu-lu !

CURTAIN

SCENE XI

Room in KING'S *house at Gilgal. Bare adobe room, mats on the floor.* SAUL, ABNER *and* ADRIEL *reclining around a little open hearth.*

SAUL : And how is the slayer of Goliath looked upon, in Gilgal ?

ABNER : Yea ! he is a wise young man, he brings no disfavour upon himself.

SAUL : May Baal finish him ! And how looks he on the King's daughter ? Does he eye Merab as a fox eyes a young lamb ?

ABNER : Nay, he is wise, a young man full of discretion, watching well his steps.

SAUL : Ay is he ! Smooth-faced and soft-footed, as Joseph in the house of Pharaoh ! I tell you, I like not this weasel.

ABNER : Nay, he is no enemy of the King. His eyes are clear, with the light of the Lord God. But he is alone and shy, as a rude young shepherd.

SAUL : Thou art his uncle, surely. I tell you, I will send him back to Bethlehem, to the sheep-cotes.

ABNER : He is grown beyond the sheep-cotes, O King ! And wilt thou send him back into Judah, while the giant's head still blackens above the gates of Jerusalem, and David is darling of all Judea, in the hearts of the men of Judah ? Better keep him here, where the King alone can honour him.

SAUL : I know him ! Should I send him away, he will have them name him King in Judah, and Samuel will

give testimony. Yea, when he carried the sword of the giant before Samuel in Ramah, did not Samuel bless him in the sight of all men, saying: Thou art chosen of the Lord out of Israel!

ABNER: If it be so, O King, we cannot put back the sun in heaven. Yet is David faithful servant to the King, and full of love for Jonathan. I find in him no presumption.

SAUL: My household is against me. Ah, this is the curse upon me! My children love my chief enemy, him who hath supplanted me before the Lord. Yea, my children pay court to David, and my daughters languish for him. But he shall not rise upon me. I say he shall not! Nor shall he marry my elder daughter Merab. Wellah, and he shall not.

ABNER: Yet Saul has given his word.

SAUL: And Saul shall take it back. What man should keep his word with a supplanter? Abner, have we not appointed him captain over a thousand? Captain over a thousand in the army of Saul shall he be. Oh yes! And to-morrow I will say to him, I will even say it again: *Behold Merab, my elder daughter, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.* And then he shall go forth with his thousand again, quickly, against the Philistine. Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistine be upon him.

ABNER: But if the Lord be with him, and he fall not, but come back once more with spoil, wilt thou then withhold the hand of thy daughter Merab from him?

SAUL: He shall not have her! Nay, I know not. When the day comes that he returns back to this house, then

Saul will answer him. We will not tempt the Thunderer.

ADRIEL: I have it sure, from Eliab his brother, that David was anointed by Samuel to be King over Israel, secretly, in the house of his father Jesse. And Eliab liketh not the youngster, saying he was ever heady, naughty-hearted, full of a youngling's naughty pride, and the conceit of the father's favourite. Now the tale is out in Judah, and many would have him King, saying: Why should Judah look to a King out of Benjamin? Is there no horn-anointed among the men of Judah?

SAUL: So is it! So is it!—To-morrow he shall go forth with his men, and the hand of the Philistine shall be upon him. I will not lift my hand upon him, for fear of the Dark! Yet where is he now? What is he conniving at this moment, in the house of Saul? Go see what he is about, O Adriel!

[*Exit* ADRIEL.

ABNER: It is a bad thing, O Saul, to let this jealous worm eat into a King's heart, that always was noble!

SAUL: I cannot help it. The worm is there. And since the women sang—nay, in all the cities they sang the same—*Saul hath slain his thousands, but David hath slain his tens of thousands*, it gnaws me, Abner, and I feel I am no longer King in the sight of the Lord.

ABNER: Canst thou not speak with the Morning Wind? And if the Lord of Days have chosen David to be king over Israel after thee, canst thou not answer the great Wish of the Heavens, saying: *It is well!*?

SAUL: I cannot! I cannot deny my house, and my blood! I cannot cast down my own seed, for the seed

of Jesse to sprout. I cannot! Wellah, and I will not! Speak not to me of this!

ABNER: Yet wert *thou* chosen of God! And always hast thou been a man of the bright horn.

SAUL: Yea, and am I brought to this pass! Yea, and must I cut myself off? Almost will I rather be a man of Belial, and call on Baal. Surely Astaroth were better to me. For I have kept the faith, yet must I cut myself off! Wellah, is there no other strength?

ABNER: I know not. Thou knowest, who hast heard the thunder and hast felt the Thunderer.

SAUL: I hear It no more, for It hath closed Its lips to me. But other voices hear I in the night—other voices!

[*Enter* ADRIEL.

SAUL: Well, and where is he?

ADRIEL: He is sitting in the house of Jonathan, and they make music together, so the women listen.

SAUL: Ah! And sings the bird of Bethlehem? What songs now?

ADRIEL: Even to the Lord: *How excellent is thy name in all the earth.* And men and women listen diligently, to learn as it droppeth from his mouth. And Jonathan, for very love, writes it down.

SAUL: Nay, canst thou not remember?

ADRIEL: I cannot, O King. Hark!

[*A man is heard in the courtyard, singing loud and manly, from Psalm viii.*

Voice of singer: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

[SAUL *listens moodily.*

SAUL: I hear him! Yea, they sing after him! He will set all Israel singing after him, and all men in all lands. All the world will sing what he sings. And I shall be dumb. Yea, I shall be dumb, and the lips of my house will be dust! What, am I naught; and set at naught! What do I know? Shall I go down into the grave silenced, and like one mute with ignorance? Ha! Ha! There are wells in the desert that go deep. And even there we water the sheep, when our faces are blackened with drought. Hath Saul no sight into the unseen? Ha, look! look down the deep well, how the black water is troubled.—Yea, and I see death, death, death! I see a sword through my body, and the body of Jonathan gaping wounds, and my son Abinadab, and my son Melchishua, and my son Ishbosheth lying in blood. Nay, I see the small pale issue of my house creeping on broken feet, as a lamed worm. Yea, yea, what an end! And the seed of David rising up and covering the earth, many, with a glory about them, and the wind of the Lord

in their hair. Nay, then they wheel against the sun, and are dark, like the locusts sweeping in heaven, like the pillars of locusts moving, yea, as a tall, dark cloud upon the land. Till they drop in drops of blood, like thunder-rain, and the land is red. Then they turn again into the glory of the Lord. Yea, as a flight of birds down all the ages, now shedding sun and the gleam of God, now shedding shadow and the fall of blood, now as quails chirping in the spring, now as the locust pillars of cloud, as death upon the land. And they thicken and thicken, till the world's air grates and clicks as with the wings of locusts. And man is his own devourer, and the Deep turns away, without wish to look on him further. So the earth is a desert, and manless, yet covered with houses and iron. Yea, David, the pits are digged even under the feet of thy God, and thy God shall fall in. Oh, their God shall fall into the pit, that the sons of David have digged. Oh, men can dig a pit for the most high God, and He falls in—as they say of the huge elephant in the lands beyond the desert. And the world shall be Godless, there shall no God walk on the mountains, no whirlwind shall stir like a heart in the deeps of the blue firmament. And God shall be gone from the world. Only men there shall be, in myriads, like locusts, clicking and grating upon one another, and crawling over one another. The smell of them shall be as smoke, but it shall rise up into the air, without finding the nostrils of God. For God shall be gone! gone! gone! And men shall inherit the earth! Yea, like locusts and whirring on wings like locusts. To this the seed of David shall come, and this is their triumph, when the house of Saul has been swept up,

long, long ago into the body of God. Godless the world! Godless the men in myriads even like locusts. No God in the air! No God on the mountains! Even out of the deeps of the sky they lured Him, into their pit! So the world is empty of God, empty, empty, like a blown egg-shell bunged with wax and floating meaningless. God shall fall Himself into the pit these men shall dig for Him! Ha! Ha! O David's Almighty, even He knows not the depth of the dark wells in the desert, where men may still water their flocks! Ha! Ha! Lord God of Judah, thou peepest not down the pit where the black water twinkles. Ha-ha! Saul peeps and sees the fate that wells up from below! Ha! Lo! Death and blood, what is this Almighty that sees not the pits digged for Him by the children of men? Ha! Ha! saith Saul. Look in the black mirror! Ha!

ABNER: It is not well, O King.

SAUL: Ha! It is very well! It is very well. Let them lay their trap for his Lord. For his Lord will fall into it. Aha! Aha! Give them length of days. I do not ask it.

ABNER: My lord, the darkness is over your heart.

SAUL: And over my eyes! Ha! And on the swim of the dark are visions. What? Are the demons not under the works of God, as worms are under the roots of the vine? Look! (*Stares transfixed.*)

ABNER (*to* ADRIEL): Go quickly and bring Jonathan, and David, for the King is prophesying with the spirit of the under-earth.

[*Exit* ADRIEL.

SAUL: The room is full of demons! I have known it

filled with the breath of Might. The glisten of the dark, old movers that first got the world into shape. They say the god was once as a beetle, but vast and dark. And he rolled the earth into a ball, and laid his seed in it. Then he crept clicking away to hide for ever, while the earth brought forth after him. He went down a deep pit. The gods do not die. They go down a deep pit, and live on at the bottom of oblivion. And when a man staggers, he stumbles and falls backwards down the pit—down the pit, down through oblivion after oblivion, where the gods of the past live on. And they laugh, and eat his soul. And the time will come when even the God of David will fall down the endless pit, till He passes the place where the serpent lies living under oblivion, on to where the Beetle of the Beginning lives under many layers of dark. I see it! Aha! I see the Beetle clambering upon Him, Who was the Lord of Hosts.

ABNER: I cannot hear thee, O King. I would e'en be deaf in this hour. Peace! I bid thee! Peace!

SAUL: What? Did someone speak within the shadow? Come thou forth then from the shadow, if thou hast aught to say.

ABNER: I say Peace! Peace, thou! Say thou no more!

SAUL: What? Peace! saith the voice? And what is peace? Hath the Beetle of the Beginning peace, under many layers of oblivion? Or the great serpent coiled for ever, is he coiled upon his own peace?

[*Enter* JONATHAN, DAVID, *and* MEN.

SAUL (*continuing*: I tell you, till the end of time, unrest will come upon the serpent of serpents, and he will

lift his head and hiss against the children of men—thus will he hiss! (SAUL *hisses.*) *Hiss! Hiss!* and he will strike the children of men—thus——

[SAUL *strikes as a serpent, and with his javelin.*

JONATHAN: Father, shall we sound music?

SAUL: Father! Who is father? Know ye not, the vast, dark, shining beetle was the first father, who laid his eggs in a dead ball of the dust of forgotten gods? And out of the egg the serpent of gold, who was great Lord of Life, came forth.

JONATHAN (*to* DAVID): Now sing, that peace may come back upon us.

DAVID: If he heed me. (*Sings Psalm viii.*)

[SAUL *meanwhile raves—then sinks into gloom, staring fixedly.*

SAUL: And the serpent was golden with life. But he said to himself: I will lay an egg. So he laid the egg of his own undoing. And the Great White Bird came forth. Some say a dove, some say an eagle, some say a swan, some say a goose—all say a bird. And the serpent of the sun's life turned dark, as all the gods turn dark. Yea, and the Great White Bird beat wings in the firmament, so the dragon slid into a hole, the serpent crawled out of sight, down to the oblivion of oblivion, yet above the oblivion of the Beetle.

[DAVID *meanwhile sings.*

SAUL (*striking with his hands as if at a wasp*): Na-a! But what is this sound that comes like a hornet at my ears, and will not let me prophesy! Away! Away!

JONATHAN: My Father, it is a new song to sing.

SAUL: What art thou, Jonathan, thy father's enemy?

JONATHAN: Listen to the new song, Father.

SAUL: What? (*Hearkens a moment.*) I will not hear it! What! I say I will not hear it! Trouble me not, nor stop the dark fountain of my prophecy! I will not hearken! (*Listens.*)

DAVID (*singing*): When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.

SAUL: What! art thou there, thou brown hornet, thou stealer of life's honey! What, shalt thou stay in my sight! (*Suddenly hurls his javelin at* DAVID. DAVID *leaps aside.*)

JONATHAN: My Father, this shall not be!

SAUL: What! art thou there? Bring me here my dart.

JONATHAN (*picking up the javelin*): Look then at the hole in the wall! Is not that a reproach against the house of the King for ever? (*Gives the javelin to* SAUL.)

[SAUL *sinks into moody silence, staring.* DAVID *begins to sing very softly.*

DAVID (*singing*): O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who has set thy glory above the heavens.

[SAUL *very softly, with the soft, swift suddenness of a great cat, leaps round and hurls the javelin again.* DAVID *as swiftly leaps aside.*

SAUL: I will smite David even to the wall.

ABNER: Go hence, David! Swiftly hence!

JONATHAN: Twice, Father!

[*Exit* DAVID.

ABNER (*seizing javelin*): The evil spirits upon thee have done this. O Saul! They have not prevailed.

SAUL: Have I pierced him? Is he down with the dead? Can we lay him in the sides of the pit?

ABNER: He is not dead! He is gone forth.

SAUL (*wearily*): Gone forth! Ay! He is gone forth!—What, did I seek to slay him?

JONATHAN: Yea, twice.

SAUL: I was out of myself. I was then beside myself.

ABNER: Yea, the evil spirits were upon thee.

SAUL: Tell him, O Jonathan, Saul seeks not his life. Nay! Nay! Do I not love him, even as thou dost, but more, even as a father! O David! David! I have loved thee. Oh, I have loved thee and the Lord in thee.—And now the evil days have come upon me, and I have thrown the dart against thee, and against the Lord. I am a man given over to trouble, and tossed between two winds. Lo, how can I walk before the faces of men! (*Covers his face with his mantle.*)

ABNER: The evil spirits have left him. Peace comes with sorrow.

JONATHAN: And only then.

SAUL: Bring David hither to me, for I will make my peace with him, for my heart is very sore.

JONATHAN: Verily, shall it be peace?

SAUL: Yea! For I fear the Night. (*Exit* JONATHAN.) Surely now will David publish it in Judah: *Saul hath lifted his hand to slay me.*

ABNER: He will not publish it in Judah.

SAUL: And wherefore not? Is he not as the apple of their eyes to the men of Judah, who love not overmuch the tribe of Benjamin?

ABNER: But David is the King's man.

SAUL: Ah, would it were verily so.

[*Enter* JONATHAN *and* DAVID.

DAVID: The Lord strengthen the King!

SAUL: Ah, David, my son, come, and come in peace. For my hands are bare and my heart is washed and my eyes are no longer deluded. May the Lord be with thee, David, and hold it not against me, what I have done. Spirits of the earth possess me, and I am not my own. Thou shalt not cherish it in thy heart, what Saul did against thee, in the season of his bewilderment?

DAVID: Naught has the King done against me. And the heart of thy servant knoweth no ill.

SAUL: Hatest thou me not, David?

DAVID: Let the word be unspoken, my Father!

SAUL: Ah, David! David! Why can I not love thee untroubled?—But I will right the wrong.—Thou shalt henceforth be captain of the thousand of Hebron, and dwell in thine own house, by the men. And behold, Merab, my elder daughter, I will give thee to wife.

DAVID: Who am I, and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the King?

SAUL: Nay, thou art of mine own heart, and the Lord is thy great strength. Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.

DAVID: All my life is the King's, and my strength is to serve.

SAUL: It shall be well. And with thy thousand shalt thou succour Israel.

CURTAIN

SCENE XII

The well at Gilgal: MAIDENS *coming with water-jars. Two* HERDSMEN *filling the trough—one below, at the water, one on the steps. They swing the leathern bucket back and forth with a rough chant: the lower shepherd swinging the load to the upper, who swings it to the trough, and hands it back.* DAVID *approaching.*

1ST HERDSMAN: Ya! David missed her.

2ND HERDSMAN: Let him get her sister—Oh! Oh-oh-h!

1ST HERDSMAN: Ya! David missed her.

2ND HERDSMAN: Let him get her sister—Oh-h-h-h! (*Continue several times.*)

1ST MAIDEN: How long, O Herdsman!

2ND HERDSMAN: Ho-o-o! Enough!

1ST HERDSMAN (*coming up*): Ya! David missed her!

[MAIDENS *run away from him.*

1ST MAIDEN: Ho, thou! Seest thou not David?

1ST HERDSMAN: Yea, he is there! Ho! David! And hast thou missed her?

[MAIDENS *laugh.*

DAVID: What sayest thou, O Man?

1ST HERDSMAN: Thou hast missed her—say!—am I not right?

DAVID: And whom have I missed?

1ST HERDSMAN: Wellah! And knowest thou not?

DAVID: Nay!

1ST HERDSMAN: Wellah! But Merab, the King's elder daughter! Wellah! We feasted her week half a

moon ago, whilst you and your men were gone forth against the Philistines. Wellah, man, and didst thou not know ?

DAVID : Sayest thou so ?

1ST HERDSMAN : Wellah ! And is it not so ? Say, Maidens, hath not Adriel the Meholathite got Merab, Saul's daughter, to wife ? And hath he not spent his week with her ? Wellah, thou art ousted from that bed, O David.

DAVID : And hath the King given his daughter Merab unto Adriel the Meholathite ! Wellah, shall he not do as he choose, with his own ?

1ST HERDSMAN : Ay, wellah, shall he ! But thou wert promised. And in thy stead, another hath gone in unto her. Is it not so, O Maidens ? Sleeps not Merab in the tent of Adriel the Meholathite ?

1ST MAIDEN : Yea, the King hath married her to the man.

DAVID : And sings she as she shakes his butter-skin ?

1ST MAIDEN : Nay, as yet she sings not. But if David sits here beneath the tree, she will come with her jar. Nay, is that not Adriel the Meholathite himself, coming forth ? O Herdsman, drive not the cattle as yet to the drinking troughs ! (*Goes down and fills her pitcher.*)

2ND MAIDEN : Will David sit awhile beneath the tree ?

DAVID : Yea !

2ND MAIDEN : Then shall Michal, daughter of Saul, come hither with her water-jar. Is it well, O David ?

DAVID : Yea, it is very well.

[MAIDEN *goes down with her pitcher.*

ADRIEL : Ha, David ! And art thou returned ? I have not seen thee before the King.

DAVID : I returned but yesterday. And I saw the King at the dawn. Now art thou become a great man in Israel, O Adriel, and son-in-law to the King. How fareth Merab in the tents of the Meholathite ?

ADRIEL : Yea, and blithely. And to-morrow even in the early day will I set her on an ass, and we will get us to my father's house. For he is old, and the charge of his possessions is heavy upon him, and he fain would see his daughter Merab, who shall bring him sons—sons to gladden him. And she shall have her handmaidens about her, and her store-barns of wool, and corn, and clotted figs, and bunches of raisins, all her wealth she shall see in store !

DAVID : May she live content, and bring thee sons, even males of worth.

ADRIEL : The Lord grant it ! And thou hast come home once more with spoil ! How thou chastenest the Philistine ! Yea, and behold, the King hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee ! Lo ! I am the King's son-in-law, of Merab. Now, therefore, be thou also the King's son-in-law, for there is yet a daughter.

DAVID : Seemeth it to you a light thing, to be the King's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed ?

ADRIEL : By my beard, the King delighteth in thee, and all his servants love thee. There is no man in Israel more fit to take a daughter of the King.

DAVID : Yea, there be men of mighty substance such as thou, whose flocks have not been counted, and who send men-at-arms pricking with iron lance-points, to

the King's service. But what have I, save the bare hands and heart of a faithful servant ?

ADRIEL : Nay, thy name is high among men. But lo ! here cometh Saul, as he hath promised. He is coming out to my tents. I will go forward to bring him in. Come thou ?

DAVID : Nay ! Leave me here.

[*Exit* ADRIEL.

1ST HERDSMAN : I have heard the mouth of Adriel, O David ! Surely he is the King's listener.

DAVID : And thou ! Who made *thee* a listener ?

1ST HERDSMAN : Nay, I must guard the water-troughs till the cattle have drunk. Adriel hath flocks and men-servants, but David hath the Lord, and the hearts of all Israel ! Better a brave and bright man, with a face that shines to the heart, than a great owner of troops and herds, who struts with arms akimbo. As I plant this driving-stick in the soft earth, so hath the Lord planted David in the heart of Israel. I say : Stick, may thou flourish ! May thou bud and blossom and be a great tree. For thou art not as the javelin of Saul, levelled at David's bosom.

DAVID : Peace ! Saul cometh.

1ST HERDSMAN : Wellah ! And I will go down to the water. (*Goes to the well.*)

DAVID : The Lord strengthen the King.

SAUL : Art thou my son, David ? Yea, David, have they told thee, I have married my daughter Merab unto Adriel the Meholathite, even to him who stands here ?

DAVID : Yea, O Saul ! They told me the King's pleasure. May the Lord bless thy house for ever !

SAUL: Have I not promised my daughter unto thee? But my servants tell me the heart of Michal goes forth wishful unto David. Say now, is she fair in thine eyes?

DAVID: Yea! Yea, O King, yea!

SAUL: When the new moon shows her tender horns above the west, thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in one of the twain.

DAVID: Let thy servant but serve the King!

SAUL: Yea, an thou serve me, it shall be on the day of the new moon.

DAVID: Yea, will I serve without fail.

SAUL: So be it!

[*Exit with* ADRIEL.

HERDSMAN (*coming up*): Now is David the richest man in Israel—in promises! Wilt thou not sell me a King's promise, for this my camel-stick?

DAVID: It is well.

HERDSMAN: Sayest thou? Then it is a bargain? Wellah! Take my stick. It is worth the word of a King.

DAVID: Peace!

HERDSMAN: Thou meanest *war!*

DAVID: How?

HERDSMAN: If thou get her, it is war. If thou get her not, it is more war. Sayest thou peace?

MAIDENS (*running*): Oh, master David, hath Saul passed with Adriel?

HERDSMAN: They have passed, letting fall promises as the goat droppeth pills.

DAVID: Peace, O Man!

MAIDEN : Oh, master David, shall Michal come forth to fill her water-jar ? For Merab is setting meats before the King, in the booth of Adriel. Oh, David, shall Michal bring her jar to the well ?

HERDSMAN : Ay, wellah, shall she ! And I will hold back the cattle this little while, for I hear their voices.

[*Exit.*

DAVID : Run back quickly and let her come.

[*Exit* MAIDEN.

DAVID (*alone*) : Lord ! dost Thou send this maiden to me ? My entrails strain in me, for Michal, daughter of Saul. Lord God of my Salvation, my wanting of this maiden is next to my wanting Thee. My body is a strung bow. Lord, let me shoot mine arrow unto this mark. Thou fillest me with desire as with thunder, Thy lightning is in my loins, and my breast like a cloud leans forward for her. Lord ! Lord ! Thy left hand is about her middle, and Thy right hand grasps my life. So Thou bringest us together in Thy secret self, that it may be fulfilled for Thee in us. Lord of the Great Wish, I will not let her go.

MICHAL (*entering—covering her chin and throat with her kerchief*) : Wilt thou let me pass to fill my jar, O thou stranger ?

DAVID : Come, Michal, and I will fill thy jar.

[*She comes forward—he takes her jar and goes down the steps. Returning he sets it on the ground at his feet.*

MICHAL : Oh, David ! And art thou still unslain ?

DAVID : As the Lord wills, no man shall slay me. And livest thou in thine house lonely, without thy sister Merab ?

MICHAL : Is thy heart sore in thee, David, that thou hast lost Merab ? Her heart is gentle, and she sighed for thee. But e'en she obeyed.

DAVID : She hath a man of more substance than David. And my heart is very glad on her account.

MICHAL : It is well.

DAVID : O Michal, didst thou come willingly to the well, when the maiden told thee I waited here ?

MICHAL : Yea, willingly.

DAVID : O Michal, my heart runs before me, when it sees thee far off, like one eager to come to his own place. Oh, thou with the great eyes of the wilderness, shall my heart leap to thee, and shall thou not say Nay ! to it ?

MICHAL : What said my father, O David, when he passed ?

DAVID : He said : when the new moon showeth her horns in the west, on this day shalt thou surely be my son-in-law of one of the twain.

MICHAL : Yea, and is thy heart uplifted, to be a King's son-in-law ?

DAVID : So she be Michal, my body is uplifted like the sail of a ship when the wind arouses.

MICHAL : Nay, thou art a seeker of honours ! Merab had been just as well to thy liking.

DAVID : Ah, no ! Ah ! Ah ! Merab is gentle and good, and my heart softened with kindness for her, as a man unto a woman. But thou art like the rising

moon, that maketh the limbs of the mountain glisten. O Michal, we twain are upon the hillsides of the Lord, and surely He will bring our strength together!

MICHAL: And if the Lord God say thee nay!

DAVID: He will not. He hath thy life in His left hand, and my life He holdeth in His right hand. And surely He will lay us together in the secret of His desire, and I shall come unto thee by the Lord's doing.

MICHAL: But if He say thee nay, thou wilt let me go.

DAVID: Thou knowest not the Lord my God. The flame He kindles He will not blow out. He is not yea-and-nay! But my Lord my God loveth a bright desire and yearneth over a great Wish, for its fulfilment. Oh, the Lord my God is a glowing flame and He loveth all things that do glow. So loves He thee, Michal, O woman before me, for thou glowest like a young tree in full flower, with flowers of gold and scarlet, and dark leaves. O thou young pomegranate tree, flowers and fruit together show on thy body. And flame calleth to flame, for flame is the body of God, like flowers of flame. Oh, and God is a great Wish, and a great Desire, and a pure flame for ever. Thou art kindled of the Lord, O Michal, and He will not let thee go.

MICHAL: Yet the Lord Himself will not marry me.

DAVID: I will marry thee, for the Lord hath kindled me unto thee, and hath said: Go to her, for the fruits of the pomegranate are ripe.

MICHAL: Will thou not seek me for thyself?

DAVID: Yea, for my very self; and for my very self; and for the Lord's own self in me.

MICHAL: Ever thou puttest the Lord between me and thee.

DAVID: The Lord is a sweet wind that fills thy bosom and thy belly as the sail of a ship; so I see thee sailing delicately towards me, borne onwards by my Lord.

MICHAL: Oh, David, would the new moon were come! For I fear my father, and I misdoubt his hindrances.

DAVID: Thinkest thou, he would marry thee away, as Merab?

MICHAL: Nay, but thou must make a song, and sing it before all Israel, that Michal is thine by the King's promise, no man shall look on her but David.

DAVID: Yea! I will make a song. And yea, I will not let thee go. Thou shalt come to me as wife, and I will know thee, and thou shall lie in my bosom. Yea! As the Lord liveth!

MICHAL: And as the Lord liveth, not even my father shall constrain me, to give me to another man, before the new moon showeth her horns.

DAVID: It is well, O Michal! O Michal, wife of David, thou shalt sleep in my tent! In the tent of the men of war, beside the sword of David, Michal sleeps, and the hand of David is upon her hip. He has sealed her with his seal, and Michal of David is her name, and kingdoms shall he bring down to her. Michal of David shall blossom in the land, her name shall blossom in the mouths of soldiers as the rose of Sharon after rain. And men-at-arms shall shout her name, like a victory cry it shall be heard. And she shall be known in the land but as Michal of David; blossom of God, keeper of David's nakedness.

MICHAL : They shall not reive me from thee.—I see men coming.

DAVID : Wilt thou go ?

MICHAL : I shall call my maidens. So ho ! So ho ! (*Waves the end of her kerchief.*)

HERDSMAN (*entering*) : There are two captains, servants of Saul, coming even now from the booths of the Meholathite, where the King is.

MICHAL : Yea, let them come, and we will hear the words they put forth.

HERDSMAN : And the cattle are being driven round by the apricot garden. They will soon be here.

DAVID : In two words we shall have the mind of Saul from these captains.

MAIDENS (*entering—running*) : O Michal, men are approaching !

MICHAL : Fill you your jar, and with one ear let us listen. David stays under the tree.

1ST MAIDEN : Stars are in thine eyes, O Michal, like a love night !

2ND MAIDEN : Oh ! and the perfume of a new-opened flower ! What sweetness has she heard ?

3RD MAIDEN : Oh, say ! what words like honey, and like new sweet dates of the Oasis, hath David the singer said to Michal ? Oh, that we might have heard !

1ST CAPTAIN (*entering*) : David is still at the well ?

DAVID : Yea, after war and foray, happy is the homely passage at the well ?

2ND CAPTAIN : Wilt thou return to the King's house with us, and we will tell thee what is toward : even the words of Saul concerning thee.

DAVID: Say on! For I must in the other way.

1ST CAPTAIN: The King delighteth in thee more than in any man of Israel. For no man layeth low the King's enemies like David, in the land.

DAVID: Sayest thou so?

1ST CAPTAIN: Yea! And when the new moon shows her horns shalt thou be son-in-law to Saul, in his daughter Michal.

DAVID: As the Lord, and the King, willeth. Saul hath said as much to me, even now. Yet I am a poor man, and how shall the King at last accept me?

2ND CAPTAIN: This too hath Saul considered. And he hath said: Tell my son David, the King desireth not any bride-money, nay, neither sheep nor oxen nor asses, nor any substance of his. But an hundred foreskins of the Philistines shall he bring to the King, to be avenged of his enemies.

1ST CAPTAIN: So said the King: Before the new moon, as she cometh, sets on her first night, shall David bring the foreskins of an hundred Philistines unto Saul. And that night shall Saul deliver Michal, his daughter, unto David, and she shall sleep in David's house.

2ND CAPTAIN: And Israel shall be avenged of her enemies.

DAVID: Hath the King verily sent this message to me?

1ST CAPTAIN: Yea, he hath sent it, and a ring from his own hand. Lo! here it is! For said Saul: Let David keep this for a pledge between me and him, in this matter. And when he returneth, he shall give me my ring again, and the foreskins of the Philistine, and I will give him my daughter Michal to wife.

DAVID: Yea! Then I must hence, and call my men, and go forth against the Philistine. For while the nights are yet moonless, and without point of moon, will I return with the tally.

[*Exit.*

2ND CAPTAIN: Yea, he is gone on the King's errand.

1ST CAPTAIN: Let him meet what the King wishes.

[*Exeunt.*

HERDSMAN: Yea, I know what ye would have. Ye would slay David with the sword of the Philistine. For who keeps promise with a dead man! (MICHAL *and* MAIDENS *edge in.*) Hast thou heard, O Michal? David is gone forth against the Philistine. For Saul asketh an hundred foreskins of the enemy as thy bride-money. Is it not a tall dowry?

MICHAL: Yea! hath my father done this!

HERDSMAN: Wellah, hath he! For dead men marry no king's daughters. And the spear of some Philistine shall beget death in the body of David. Thy father hath made thee dear!

MICHAL: Nay, he hath made my name cheap in all Israel.

2ND HERDSMAN (*entering*): Run, Maidens! The cattle are coming round the wall, athirst!

MAIDENS (*shouldering their jars*): Away! Away!

[*Exeunt.*

CURTAIN

SCENE XIII

A room in DAVID'S *house in Gilgal. Almost dark.* DAVID *alone, speaking softly: an image in a corner.*

DAVID: Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre: they flatter with their tongue.

Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice : let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him, as with a shield.

[*Pause.*

Nay Lord, I am Thy anointed, and Thy son. With the oil of anointment hast Thou begotten me. Oh, I am twice begotten : of Jesse, and of God ! I go forth as a son of God, and the Lord is with me. Yet for this they hate me, and Saul seeks to destroy me. What can I do, O Lord, in this pass ?

[*Enter* MICHAL, *through curtain at side, with tray and lamp.*

MICHAL : The dawn is at hand. Art thou not faint with this long watching before the Lord ? Oh ! why wilt thou leave thy bed and thy pleasure of the night, to speak out into the empty, chill hour towards morning ? Come then, eat of the food which I have brought.

DAVID : I will not eat now, for my soul still yearns away from me.

MICHAL : Art thou sick ?

DAVID : Yea ! My soul is sick.

MICHAL : Why ?

DAVID : Nay, thou knowest. Thy father hates me beyond measure.

MICHAL : But I love you.

DAVID (*takes her hand*) : Yea !

MICHAL: Is it nothing to you that Michal is your wife and loves you?

DAVID: Verily, it is not nothing. But, Michal, what will come to me at last? From moon to moon Saul's anger waxes. I shall lose my life at last. And what good shall I be to thee then?

MICHAL: Ah, no! Ah, no! Never shall I see thee dead. First thou shalt see me dead. Never, never shall I tear my hair for thee, as a widow. It shall not be. If thou go hence, it shall not be into death.

DAVID: Yet death is near. From month to month, since I came back with the foreskins of the Philistine, and got thee to wife, Saul has hated me more. Michal loves David, and Saul's hate waxes greater. Jonathan loves David, and the King commands Jonathan, saying: There, where thou seest him, there shalt thou slay David.

MICHAL: My father is no more a man. He is given over entirely to evil spirits. But Jonathan will save thee through it all.

DAVID: The Lord will save me. And Jonathan is dearer to me than a heart's brother.

MICHAL: Think, O husband, if Saul hateth thee, how Michal and Jonathan, who are children of Saul, do love thee.

DAVID: Yea, verily! It is like the rainbow in the sky unto me. But, O Michal, how shall we win through? I have loved Saul. And I have not it in me to hate him. Only his perpetual anger puts on me a surpassing heaviness, and a weariness, so my flesh wearies upon my bones.

MICHAL: But why? Why? Why does it matter to thee? I love thee, all the time—Jonathan loves thee—thy men love thee. Why does the frenzy of one distracted man so trouble thee? Why? It is out of all measure.

DAVID: Nay, he is Saul, and the Lord's anointed. And he is King over all Israel.

MICHAL: And what then? He is no man among men any more. Evil possesses him. Why heed him, and wake in the night for him?

DAVID: Because he is the Lord's anointed, and one day he will kill me.

MICHAL: He will never kill thee. Thou sayest thyself the Lord will prevent him. And if not the Lord, then I will prevent him—for I am not yet nothing in Gilgal. And Jonathan will prevent him. And the captains will prevent him. And art thou not also the Lord's anointed? And will not the Lord set thee King on the hill of Zion, in thine own Judah?

DAVID: O Michal! O Michal! That the hand of the Lord's anointed should be lifted against the Lord's anointed! What can I do? For Saul is the Lord's, and I may not even see an enemy in him. I cannot verily! Yet he seeks to slay me. All these months since he gave thee to me, after I brought the foreskins of the Philistine for thy dowry, he has hated me more, and sought my life. Before the moon of our marriage was waned away thy father commanded his servants, and even Jonathan, to slay David on that spot where they should find him. So Jonathan came to me in haste and secret, and sent me away into the fields by night and hid me. Yea, before the month of our

marriage was finished I had to flee from thee in the night, and leave my place cold.

MICHAL: But not for long. Not for long. Jonathan persuaded my father, so he took thee back. Even he loved thee again.

DAVID: Yea, he also loves me! But Saul is a man falling backward down a deep pit, that must e'en clutch what is nearest him, and drag it down along with him.

MICHAL: But Saul swore: As the Lord liveth, David shall not be slain.

DAVID: Ay, he swore. But before two moons were passed his brow was black again. And when the season of the year came, that the Kings of the Philistine go forth, I went up against them, and fought. The months of the fighting I fought with them, and all the people rejoiced. But I saw with a sinking heart the face of Saul blacken, blacken darker with greater hate! Yea, he hath loved me, as the Lord's anointed must love the Lord's anointed. But Saul is slipping backward down the pit of despair, away from God. And each time he strives to come forth, the loose earth yields beneath his feet, and he slides deeper. So the upreach of his love fails him, and the downslide of his hate is great and greater in weight. I cannot hate him—nor love him—but, O Michal, I am oppressed with a horror of him.

MICHAL: Nay, do not dwell on him.

DAVID: And the year went round its course, and once more there was war with the Philistine. And once more we prevailed, in the Lord. And once more the armies shouted my name. And once more I came

home to thee—and thou didst sing. And my heart did sing above thee. But as a bird hushes when the shadow of the hawk dances upon him from heaven, my heart went hushed under the shadow of Saul. And my heart could not sing between thy breasts, as it wanted to, even the heart of a bridegroom. For the shadow of Saul was upon it.

MICHAL: Oh, why do you care? Why do you care? Why do you not love me and never care?

DAVID: It is not in me. I have been blithe of thy love and thy body. But now three days ago, even in the midst of my blitheness, Saul again threw his javelin at me—yea, even in the feast. And I am marked among all men. And the end draws nigh.—For scarce may I leave this house, lest at some corner they slay me.

MICHAL: What end, then? What end draws nigh?

DAVID: I must get me gone. I must go into the wilderness.

MICHAL (*weeping*): Oh, bitter! Bitter! My joy has been torn from me, as an eagle tears a lamb from the ewe. I have no joy in my life, nor in the body of my lord and my husband. A serpent is hid in my marriage bed, my joy is venomed. Oh, that they had wed me to a man that moved me not, rather than be moved to so much hurt.

DAVID: Nay, nay! Oh, nay, nay! Between me and thee is no bitterness, and between my body and thy body there is constant joy! Nay, nay! Thou art a flame to me of man's forgetting, and God's presence. Nay, nay! Thou shalt not weep for me, for thou art a delight to me, even a delight and a forgetting.

MICHAL: No! No! Thou leavest me in the night, to make prayers and moaning before the Lord. Oh, that thou hadst never married in thy body the daughter of thine enemy!

DAVID: Say not so, it is a wrong thing; thou art sweet to me, and all my desire.

MICHAL: It is not true! Thou moanest, and leavest me in the night, to fall before the Lord.

DAVID: Yea, trouble is come upon me. And I must take my trouble to the Lord. But thy breasts are my bliss and my forgetting. Oh, do not remember my complaining! But let thyself be sweet to me, and let me sleep among the lilies.

MICHAL: Thou wilt reproach me again with my father.

DAVID: Ah, no! Ah, never I reproached thee! But now I can forget, I can forget all but thee, and the blossom of thy sweetness. Oh, come with me, and let me know thee. For thou art ever again as new to me.

MICHAL (*rising as he takes her hand*): Nay, thou wilt turn the bitterness of thy spirit upon me again.

DAVID: Ah, no! I will not! But the gate of my life can I open to thee again, and the world of bitterness shall be gone under as in a flood.

MICHAL: And wilt thou not leave me?

DAVID: Nay, lift up thy voice no more, for the hour of speech has passed.

[*Exeunt through curtain at back.*

SCENE XIV

The same room, unchanged, an hour or so later: but the grey light of day. A WOMAN-SERVANT *comes in. There is a wooden image in a corner.*

WOMAN-SERVANT: Yea, the lighted lamp, and the food! My lord David hath kept watch again before the Lord, and tears will fall in Michal's bosom, and darken her heart! Aiee! Aiee! That Saul should so hate the life of David! Surely the evil spirits are strong upon the King.

BOY (*entering*): Jonathan, the King's son, is below, knocking softly at the door.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Go! Open swiftly, and make fast again. Aiee! Aiee! My lord Jonathan comes too early for a pleasure visit. I will see if they sleep. (*Goes through the curtain.*)

[*Enter* JONATHAN. JONATHAN *stands silent, pensive. Goes to window. Re-enter* WOMAN-SERVANT. *She starts, seeing* JONATHAN—*then puts her hand on her mouth.*

WOMAN-SERVANT: O my lord Jonathan! Hush!

JONATHAN: They are sleeping still?

WOMAN-SERVANT: They are sleeping the marriage sleep. David hath even watched before the Lord, in the night. But now with Michal he sleeps the marriage sleep in the lands of peace. Now grant a son shall come of it, to ease the gnawing of Michal's heart.

JONATHAN: What gnaws in Michal's heart?

WOMAN-SERVANT: Ah, my lord, her love even for David, that will not be appeased. If the Giver gave her a son, so should her love for David abate, and cease to gnaw in her.

JONATHAN: But why should it gnaw in her? Hath she not got him, and the joy of him?

WOMAN-SERVANT: O Jonathan, she is even as the house of Saul. What she hath cannot appease her.

JONATHAN: What then would she more?

WOMAN-SERVANT: She is of the house of Saul, and her very love is pain to her. Each cloud that crosses her is another death of her love. Ah, it is better to let love come and to let it go, even as the winds of the hills blow along the heavens. The sun shines, and is dulled, and shines again; it is the day, and its alterings; and after, it is night.

JONATHAN: David and Michal are asleep?

WOMAN-SERVANT: In the marriage sleep. Oh, break it not!

JONATHAN: The sun will soon rise. Lo! this house is upon the wall of the city, and the fields and the hills lie open.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Shall I bring food to Jonathan?

JONATHAN: Nay! Hark! Men are crying at the city's western gate, to open. The day is beginning.

WOMAN-SERVANT: May it bring good to this house!

JONATHAN: It is like to bring evil.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Ah, my lord!

DAVID (*appearing through the curtain at the back*): Jonathan!

JONATHAN: David! Thou art awake!

DAVID (*laughing*): Yea! Am I not? Thou art my brother Jonathan, art thou not? (*They embrace.*)

JONATHAN: O David, the darkness was upon my father in the night, and he hath again bid slay thee. Leave not the house. Unbar not the door! Watch! And be ready to flee! If armed men stand round the door (MICHAL *appears*), then let down the boy from the window, and send instantly to me. I will come with thy men and with mine, and we will withstand the hosts of Saul, if need be.

MICHAL: Is something new toward?

JONATHAN: My father bade his men take David, and slay him in the dawn. I must away, lest they see that I have warned thee. Farewell, O David!

DAVID: Farewell, my brother Jonathan! But I will come down the stair with thee. [*Exeunt.*

MICHAL: Yea! Yea! So sure as it is well between me and him, so sure as we have peace in one another, so sure as we are together—comes this evil wind, and blows upon us! And oh, I am weary of my life, because of it!

WOMAN-SERVANT: Aiee! Aiee! Say not so, O Michal! For thy days are many before thee.

MICHAL: This time, an they take him, they will surely kill him.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Sayest thou so! Oh, why, in the Lord's name!

MICHAL: I know it. If they take him this time, he is lost.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Oh, then shall they surely not take him! Oh, but what shall we do?

MICHAL: Creep thou on the roof! Let no man see thee. And there lie: watch if armed men approach the house.

DAVID (*entering*): There is no one there.

MICHAL: They will come as the sun comes. (*To* WOMAN.) Go thou and watch.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Verily I will! [*Exit.*

MICHAL: O David! So sure as it is springtime in me, and my body blossoms like an almond-tree, comes this evil wind upon me, and withers my bud! Oh, how can I bring forth children to thee when the spear of this vexation each times pierces my womb?

DAVID: Trouble not thyself, my flower. No wind shall wither thee.

MICHAL: Oh, but I know. This time, an they take thee, thou shalt lose thy life.—And Jonathan will not save thee.

DAVID: Nay! Be not afraid for me.

MICHAL: Yes! I am afraid! I am afraid! Ho! Ho, there! (*Claps her hands. Enter* BOY. *To* BOY.) Bring the water-skin for thy master, filled with water. And his pouch with bread—for he goeth on a journey.—O David! David! Now take thy cloak, and thy bow, and thy spear, and put on thy shoes. For thou must go! Jonathan cannot avail thee this time.

DAVID: Nay! Why shall I flee, when the sun is rising?

MICHAL: Yea! If thou go not before the sun is here in the morning shalt thou be slain. Oh make ready! Thy shoes! Put them on! (DAVID *reluctantly obeys.*) Thy cloak, so they shall not know thee! (*He puts it on.*) Thy spear and bow!

BOY (*entering*): Here is the pouch and the water-flask.

MICHAL: Run, bring figs and dry curds. Dost thou hear aught at the door?

BOY: Naught! [*Exit.*

MICHAL: O David, art thou ready! Oh, that thou leavest me!

DAVID: I need not go! Yea, to comfort thee, I will go to the place that Jonathan knoweth of, and thou shalt send thither for me. Or wilt thou——

WOMAN-SERVANT (*re-entering*): O Michal! O David, master! There be men-at-arms approaching, under the wall, and walking by stealth. Oh, flee! Oh, flee! for they mean thy life.

MICHAL: Now must thou go by the window, into the fields. I see the sun's first glitter. Even for this hour have I kept the new rope ready. (*She fastens the rope to a stout stake, and flings the ends from the window. To* DAVID.) Go! Go! Swiftly be gone!

DAVID: I will come again to thee. Sooner or later as the Lord liveth, I will take thee again to me, unto my bed and my body.

MICHAL: Hark! They knock! Ha—a!

BOY (*entering*): There are men at the door!

MICHAL: Go! Call to them! Ask what they want! But touch thou not the door!

[DAVID *meanwhile climbs through the window—the stake holds the rope.*

WOMAN-SERVANT (*climbing with her hands*): So! So! So! My lord David! So! So! Swing him not against the wall, O spiteful rope. So! So! He kicks free! Yea! And God be praised, he is on the ground,

looking an instant at his hands. So he looks up and departs! Lifts his hand and departs!

MICHAL: Is he gone? Draw in the rope, and hide it safe.

WOMAN-SERVANT: That I will!

[*Meanwhile* MICHAL *has flung back the curtain of the recess where the low earthen bank of the bed is seen with skins and covers. She takes the wooden image of a god and lays it in the bed, puts a pillow at its head, and draws the bed-cover high over it.*

MICHAL (*to herself*): Yea, and my house's god which is in my house, shall lie in my husband's place, and the image of my family god, which came of old from my mother's house, shall deceive them. For my house has its own gods, yea, from of old (*enter* BOY), and shall they forsake me?

BOY: They demand to enter. The King asketh for David, that he go before the King's presence.

MICHAL: Go thou, say to them: My lord and my master, David, is sick in his bed.

BOY: I will say that. [*Exit.*

WOMAN-SERVANT: Sit thou nigh the bed. And if they still will come up thou shalt say he sleepeth.

MICHAL: Yea, will I. (*Sits by bed.*) O god of my household, O god of my mother's house, O god in the bed of David, save me now!

[*Enter* BOY.

BOY: They will e'en set eyes on my master.

MICHAL: Stay! Say to them, that their captains shall come up, two only: but softly, for my lord David hath been sick these three days, and at last sleepeth.

BOY: I will tell them. [*Exit.*

WOMAN-SERVANT: And I too will go bid them hush.

[*Exit.* MICHAL *sits in silence.*

[*Enter two* CAPTAINS *with the* WOMAN-SERVANT.

WOMAN-SERVANT: There he sleepeth in the bed.

MICHAL: Sh-h-h!

1ST CAPTAIN: I will go even now and tell the King.

[*Exeunt the* CAPTAINS *after a pause.*

CURTAIN

[*Curtain rises after a short time on same scene.*

WOMAN-SERVANT (*rushing in*): They are coming again down the street, but boldly now.

MICHAL: Yea! Let them come! By this time is David beyond their reach, in the secret place.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Oh, and what shall befall thee! Oh!

MICHAL: I am the King's daughter. Even Saul shall not lift his hand against me. Go down thou to the door, and hold the men whilst thou mayst. Why should we admit them forthwith? Say that Michal is performing her ablutions.

WOMAN-SERVANT: Will I not! [*Exit.*

MICHAL: And shall I strip the bed? They will search the house and the fields. Nay, I will leave it, and they shall see how they were fools. O teraphim, O my god of my own house, hinder them and help me. O thou my teraphim, watch for me!

[*Sound of knocking below.*

VOICE OF SERVANT: Ho, ye! Who knocks, in the Lord's name?

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Open! Open ye! In the name of the King.

VOICE OF SERVANT: What would ye in this house of sickness?

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Open, and thou shalt know.

VOICE OF SERVANT: I may not open, save Michal bid me.

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Then bid Michal bid thee open forthwith.

VOICE OF SERVANT: O thou captain of the loud shout, surely thou wert here before! Know then, my master is sick, and my mistress performeth her ablutions in the sight of the Lord. At this moment may I not open.

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: An thou open not, it shall cost thee.

VOICE OF SERVANT: Nay, now, is not my mistress King's daughter, and is not her command laid on me? O Captain, wilt thou hold it against me, who tremble between two terrors?

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Tremble shalt thou, when the terror nips thee. E'en open the door, lest we break it in.

VOICE OF SERVANT: Oh, what uncouth man is this, that will break down the door of the King's daughter, and she naked at her bath, before the Lord!

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: We do but the King's bidding.

VOICE OF SERVANT: How can that be? What, did the King indeed bid ye break down the door of his daughter's house, and she uncovered in the Lord's sight, at her ablutions?

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Yea! The King bade us bring

before him instantly the bed of David, and David upon the bed!

VOICE OF SERVANT: Oh, now, what unseemly thing is this! Hath not the King legs long enough? And can he not walk hither on his feet? Oh, send, fetch the King, I pray thee, thou Captain. Say, I pray thee, that Michal prays the King come hither.

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: Word shall be sent. Yet open now this door, that the bird escapes me not.

VOICE OF SERVANT: O Captain! And is my master then a bird? O would he were, even the young eagle, that he might spread wing! O man, hast thou no fear what may befall thee, that you namest David a bird? O Israel, uncover now thine ear!

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: I name him not.

VOICE OF SERVANT: And what would ye, with this bird my master! Oh, the Lord forbid that any man should call him a bird!

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: We e'en must bring him upon his bed before the King.

VOICE OF SERVANT: Now what is this! Will the King heal him with mighty spells? Or is David on his sick-bed to be carried before the people, that they may know his plight? What new wonder is this?

VOICE OF CAPTAIN: I cannot say—— Yet I will wait no longer.

MICHAL: Open, Maiden! Let them come up.

VOICE OF SERVANT: Oh, my mistress crieth unto me, that I open. Yea, O Michal, I will e'en open to these men. For who dare look aslant at the King's daughter?

CAPTAIN (*entering, followed by soldiers*): Is David still in the bed? An he cannot rise, will we carry him upon the bed, before the King.

MICHAL: Now what is this?

CAPTAIN: Sleeps he yet? Ho, David, sleepest thou?

2ND SOLDIER: We will take up the bed, and wake him.

3RD SOLDIER: He stirs not at all.

CAPTAIN (*to* MICHAL): Yea, rouse him and tell him the King's will.

MICHAL: I will not rouse him.

CAPTAIN (*going to the bed*): Ho, thou! Ho! David! (*He suddenly pulls back the bed-cover.*) What is this? (*Sudden loud shrilling laughter from the* WOMAN-SERVANT, *who flees when the men look round.*)

SOLDIERS (*crowding*): We are deceived. Ha-ha! It is a man of wood and a goats'-hair bolster! Ha-ha-ha! What husband is this of Michal's?

MICHAL: My teraphim, and the god of my house.

CAPTAIN: Where hast thou hidden David?

MICHAL: I have not hidden him.

[*Pause.*

VOICE OF SAUL (*on the stair*): Why tarry ye here? What! Must the King come on his own errands? (SAUL *enters.*) And are ye here?

MICHAL: The Lord strengthen thee, my Father.

SAUL: Ha! Michal! And can then David not rise from his bed, when the King sendeth for him?

CAPTAIN: Lo! O King! Behold the sick man on the bed! We are deceived of Michal.

SAUL: What is this? (*Flings the image across the room.*)

MICHAL: Oh, my teraphim! Oh, god of my house! Oh, alas, alas, now will misfortune fall on my house! Oh, woe is! woe is me! (*Kneels before teraphim.*)

SAUL: Where is David? Why hast thou deceived me?

MICHAL: O god of my house, god of my mother's house, visit it not upon me!

SAUL: Answer me, or I will slay thee!

MICHAL: God of my house, I am slain! I am slain!

SAUL: Where is David?

MICHAL: O my lord, he is gone; he is gone ere the sun made day.

SAUL: Yea, thou hast helped him against me.

MICHAL (*weeping*): Oh! Oh! He said unto me: *Let me go; why shouldst thou make me slay thee, to trouble my face in the sight of men.* I could not hinder him, he would have slain me there!

SAUL: Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he escaped?

MICHAL (*weeping*): I could not prevent him.

SAUL: Even when did he go?

MICHAL: He rose up before the Lord, in the deep night. And then he would away, while no man saw.

SAUL: Whither is he gone?

MICHAL: Verily, and verily, I know not.

[*Pause.*

SAUL: So! He hath escaped me! And my flesh and my blood hath helped mine enemy. Woe to you, Michal! Woe to you! Who have helped your father's enemy, who would pull down thy father to

the ground. Lo! my flesh and my blood rebel against me, and my seed lies in wait for me, to make me fall!

MICHAL: Oh, why must David be slain?

SAUL: Woe to you, Michal! And David shall bring woe to you, and woe upon you. David shall pull down Saul, and David shall pull down Jonathan; thee, Michal, he will pull down, yea, and all thy house. Oh, thou mayst call on the teraphim of thy house. But if thy teraphim love thy house, then would he smite David speedily to the death, for if David liveth I shall not live, and thou shalt not live, and thy brother shall not live. For David will bring us all down in blood.

MICHAL (*weeping*): O my Father, prophesy not against him!

SAUL: It shall be so. What, have I no insight into the dark! And thou art now a woman abandoned of her man, and thy father castest thee off, because thou hast deceived him, and brought about his hurt.

MICHAL: O my Father, forgive me! Hold it not against me!

SAUL: Nay, thou hast bent thy will against thy father, and called destruction upon thy father's house.

MICHAL: Ah, no! Ah, no!

CURTAIN



SCENE XV

Naioth in Ramah. A round, pyramid-like hill, with a stair-like way to the top, where is a rude rock altar. Many PROPHETS, *young and old, wild and dressed in blue ephods without mantle, on the summit of the hill and down the slope. Some have harps, psalteries, pipes and tabrets. There is wild music and rough, ragged chanting. They are expecting something. Below,* SAMUEL *and* DAVID, *talking. Not far off a* PROPHET *in attendance.*

PROPHETS (*on hill—irregularly crying and chanting*): This is the place of the Lord! Upon us shines the Unseen! Yea, here is very God! Who dare come into the glory! O thou, filled with the Lord, sing with me on this high place. For the egg of the world is filled with God.

SAMUEL (*speaking to* DAVID): It is time thou shouldst go. As a fox with the dogs upon him, hast thou much fleeing to do.

DAVID: Must I always flee, my Father? I am already weary of flight.

SAMUEL: Yea, to flee away is thy portion. Saul cometh hither to seek thee. But surely shall he fall before the Lord. When he gets him back to his own city, enquire thou what is his will towards thee. And if it still be evil, then flee from him diligently, while he lives.

DAVID: And shall there never be peace between Saul's house and mine?

SAMUEL: Who knows the Lord utterly! If there be

not peace this time, then shall there never in life be peace between thee and him, nor thy house and his.

DAVID: Yet am I his son-in-law, in Michal my wife! And my flesh yearneth unto mine own.

SAMUEL: Is the house of Saul thine own?

DAVID: Yea, verily!

SAMUEL: Dost thou say, *Yea, verily*? Hark, now! If this time there be peace between thee and him, it should be peace. But if not, then think of naught but to flee, and save thyself, and keep on fleeing while Saul yet liveth. The Lord's choice is on thee, and thou shalt be King in thy day. As for me, I shall never see thy day.

DAVID: Would I could make my peace with Saul! Would I could return to mine own house, and to mine own wife, and to the men of my charge!

SAMUEL: My son, once the Lord chose Saul. Now hath He passed Saul over and chosen thee. Canst thou look guiltless into the face of Saul? Can he look guiltless into thy face? Can ye look into each other's faces, as men who are open and at peace with one another?

DAVID: Yet would I serve him faithfully.

SAMUEL: Yea, verily! And in thine heart, art thou King, and pullest the crown from his brow with thine eyes.

DAVID: O my Father, I would not!

SAMUEL: Wouldst thou not? Willst thou say to me here and now: *As the Lord liveth, I will not be King! But Saul and his house shall rule Israel for ever: and Jonathan my friend shall be King over me!* Wilt thou say that to me?

DAVID: Does Samuel bid me say this thing?

SAMUEL: He bids thee not. But for Saul's sake, and for Jonathan's, and for Michal's, and for peace, wilt thou say it? Answer me from thine own heart, for I know the smell of false words. Yea, I bid thee, speak!

DAVID: The Lord shall do unto me as He will.

SAMUEL: Yea, for the Lord hath anointed thee, and thou shalt rule Israel when Saul is dead, and I am dead, and the Judges of Israel are passed away. For my day is nearly over, and thine is another day. Yea, Saul has lived in my day, but thou livest in thine own day, that I know not of.

DAVID: O my lord, is there naught but wrath and sorrow between me and Saul henceforth?

SAMUEL: The Lord will show! Knowest thou not?

DAVID: I would it were peace!

SAMUEL: Wouldst thou verily? When the wind changes, will it not push the clouds its own way? Will fire leap lively in wet rain? The Lord is all things. And Saul hath seen a tall and rushing flame and hath gone mad, for the flame rushed over him. Thou seest thy God in thine own likeness, afar off, or as a brother beyond thee, who fulfils thy desire. Saul yearneth for the flame: thou for thy to-morrow's glory. The God of Saul hath no face. But thou wilt bargain with thy God. So be it! I am old, and would have done. Flee thou, flee, and flee again, and once more, flee. So shalt thou at last have the kingdom and the glory in the sight of men. I anointed thee, but I would see thee no more, for my heart is weary of its end.

DAVID: Wilt thou not bless me?

SAMUEL: Yea, I will bless thee! Yea, I will bless thee, my son. Yea, for now thy way is the way of might; yea, and even for a long space of time it shall be so. But after many days, men shall come again to the faceless flame of my Strength, and of Saul's. Yea, I will bless thee! Thou art brave, and alone, and by cunning must thou live, and by cunning shall thy house live for ever. But hath not the Lord created the fox, and the weasel that boundeth and skippeth like a snake!

DAVID: O Samuel, I have but tried to be wise! What should I do, and how should I walk in the sight of men? Tell me, my Father, and I will do it.

SAMUEL: Thou wilt not. Thou walkest wisely, and thy Lord is with thee. Yea, each man's Lord is his own, though God be but one. I know not thy Lord. Yet walk thou with Him. Yea, thou shalt bring a new day for Israel. Yea, thou shalt be great, thou shalt fight as a flower fighteth upwards, through the stones and alone with God, to flower in the sun at last. For the yearning of the Lord streameth as a sun, even upon the stones. (*A tumult above among the* PROPHETS. SAMUEL *looks up—continues abstractedly.*) Yea, and as a flower thou shalt fade. But Saul was once a burning bush, afire with God. Alas, that he saw his own image mirrored in the faces of men! (*A blare of music above.*)

SAMUEL (*to* PROPHET): What see ye?

PROPHETS (*shouting*): The sun on the arms of the King.

SAMUEL (*to* DAVID): Now shalt thou go! For I, too, will not set mine eyes upon Saul the King.

DAVID : Bless me then, O my Father !

SAMUEL : The Lord fill thy heart and thy soul ! The Lord quicken thee ! The Lord kindle thy spirit, so thou fall into no snare ! And now get thee gone ! And when Saul is returned to his own place, enquire thou secretly his will towards thee. And then act wisely, as thou knoweth.

DAVID : I go forth into the fields, as a hare when the hound gives mouth ! But if the Lord go with me . . . [*Exit.*

SAMUEL (*to* PROPHET) : Is Saul surely in sight ?

PROPHET : Verily, he is not far off. He has passed the well of Shecu.

SAMUEL : Has he company of men ?

PROPHET : Ten armed men has he.

SAMUEL : Will he still bring armed men to the high place ? Lo ! Say thou to him : Samuel hath gone before the Lord, in the hidden places of the Hill.

PROPHET : I will e'en say it.

SAMUEL : Say also to him : David, the anointed, is gone, we know not whither. And let the company of the prophets come down towards the King.

PROPHET : It shall be so. [*Exit* SAMUEL.

PROPHET (*climbing hill and calling*) : O ye Prophets of the Lord, put yourselves in array, to meet Saul the King.

2ND PROPHET (*on hill with flute—sounds flute loudly with a strong tune—shouts*) : Oh, come, all ye that know our God ! Oh, put yourselves in array, ye that know the Name. For that which is without

name is lovelier than anything named! (*Sounds the tune strongly.*)

[PROPHETS *gather in array—musicians in front; they chant slowly. As* SAUL *approaches they slowly descend.*

CHORUS OF PROPHETS: Armies there are, for the Lord our God!
Armies there are against the Lord!
Wilt thou shake spears in the face of Almighty God?
Lo! in thy face shakes the lightning. [*Bis.*
Countest thou thyself a strong man, sayest thou Ha-ha!
Lo! We are strong in the Lord! Our arrow seest thou not!
Yet with the unseen arrows of high heaven
Pierce we the wicked man's feet, pierce we his feet in the fight.
Lo! the bow of our body is strung by God.
Lo! how He taketh aim with arrow-heads of our wrath!
Prophet of God is an arrow in full flight
And he shall pierce thy shield, thou, thou Lord's enemy.
Long is the fight, yet the unseen arrows fly
Keen to a wound in the soul of the great Lord's enemy.
Slowly he bleeds, yet the red drops run away
Unseen and inwardly, as bleeds the wicked man.
Bleeding of God! Secretly of God.

SAUL (*entering with* ARMED MEN—PROPHETS *continue to chant*): Peace be with you!

PROPHET: Peace be with the King!

SAUL: Lo! ye prophets of God! Is not Samuel set over you?

PROPHET: Yea! O King!

SAUL (*beginning to come under the influence of the chant and to take the rhythm in his voice*): Is Samuel not here?

PROPHET: He hath gone up before the Lord!

SAUL: Surely the Lord is in this place! Surely the great brightness (*looks round*)—and the son of Jesse, is he among the prophets?

PROPHET: Nay, he has gone hence.

SAUL: Gone! Gone! What, has he fled from the high place! Surely he feared the glory! Yea, the brightness! So he has fled before the flame! Thus shall he flee before the flame! But gone? Whither gone?

PROPHET: We know not whither.

SAUL: Even let him go! Even let him go whither he will! Yea, even let him go! Yea! Come we forth after such as he? Let him go! Is not the Lord here? Surely the brightness is upon the hill! Surely it gleams upon this high place!

LEADER OF MEN-AT-ARMS: Tarry we here, O King? Where shall we seek the son of Jesse?

SAUL: Even where ye will.

LEADER: Tarrieth the King here?

SAUL: Yea! I will know if the Lord is verily in this place.

PROPHET: Verily He is here.

[*Company of* PROPHETS *still chant.*

SAUL (*going slowly forward*): Art Thou here, O Lord? What? Is this Thy brightness upon the hill? What? Art Thou here in Thy glory?

COMPANY OF PROPHETS: Fire within fire is the presence of the Lord!
Sun within the sun is our God! [*Bis.*
Rises the sun among the hills of thy heart
Rising to shine in thy breast? [*Bis.*

SAUL: Yea! O Prophets! Am I not King? Shall not the Sun of suns rise among the hills of my heart, and make dawn in my body? What! Shall these prophets know the glory of the Lord, and shall the son of Kish stay under a cloud? (*Sticks his spear into the ground, and unbuckles his sword-belt.*)

LEADER OF ARMED MEN: Wilt thou go up before the Lord, O King? Then camp we here, to await thy pleasure.

SAUL: I will go up. Camp an ye will.

LEADER: Even camp we here. (*They untackle.*)

SAUL: Ha! Ha! Is there a glory upon the prophets? Do their voices resound like rocks in the valley! Ha! Ha! Thou of the sudden fire! I am coming! Yea! I will come into the glory! (*Advancing, throws down his woollen mantle. The* 1ST PROPHET *takes it up.*)

CHORUS OF PROPHETS: Whiteness of wool helps thee not in the high place,
Colours on thy coat avail thee naught. [*Bis.*
Fire unto fire only speaks, and only flame
Beckons to flame of the Lord! [*Bis.*

[*The* PROPHETS *divide and make way as* SAUL *comes up.*

SAUL: Is my heart a cold hearth? Is my heart fireless unto Thee? Kindler! it shall not be so! My heart shall shine to Thee, yea, unshadow itself. Yea, the fire in me shall mount to the fire of Thee, Thou Wave of Brightness!

SOLDIER (*below—with loud and sudden shout*): The sun is in my heart. Lo! I shine forth!

SAUL (*with suddenness*): I will come up! Oh! I will come up! Dip me in the flame of brightness, Thou Bright One, call up the sun in my heart, out of the clouds of me. Lo! I have been darkened and deadened with ashes! Blow a fierce flame on me, from the middle of Thy glory, O Thou of the faceless flame. (*Goes slowly forward.*) Oh, dip me in the ceaseless flame!

[*Throws down his coat, or wide-sleeved tunic, that came below the knee and was heavily embroidered at neck and sleeves in many colours: is seen in the sleeveless shirt that comes half-way down the thigh.*

SOLDIER (*below*): Kings come and pass away, but the flame is flame for ever. The Lord is here, like a tree of white fire! Yea, and the white glory goes in my nostrils like a scent.

SAUL: Shall a soldier be more blessed than I? Lo! I am not dead, thou Almighty! My flesh is still flame, still steady flame. Flame to flame calleth, and that which is dead is cast away. (*Flings off his shirt: is seen, a dark-skinned man in leathern loin-girdle.*) Nay, I carry naught upon me, the long flame of my body leans to the flame of all glory! I am no king, save in the Glory of God. I have no kingdom, save my body and soul. I have no name.

But as a slow and dark flame leaneth to a great glory of flame, and is sipped up, naked and nameless lean I to the glory of the Lord.

CHORUS OF PROPHETS : Standeth a man upon the stem of upright knees
Openeth the navel's closed bud, unfoldeth the flower of the breast !
Lo ! Like the cup of a flower, with morning sun
Filled is thy breast with the Lord, filled is thy navel's wide flower !

SOLDIER : Oh, come ! For a little while the glory of the Lord stands upon the high place ! Oh, come ! before they build Him houses, and enclose Him within a roof ! Oh, it is good to live now, with the light of the first day's sun upon the breast. For when the seed of David have put the Lord inside a house, the glory will be gone, and men will walk with no transfiguration ! Oh, come to this high place ! Oh, come !

SAUL : Surely I feel my death upon me ! Surely the sleep of sleeps descends. (*Casts himself down.*) I cast myself down, night and day ; as in death, lie I naked before God. Ah, what is life to me ! Alas that a man must live till death visit him !—that he cannot walk away into the cloud of Sun ! Alas for my life ! For my children and my children's children, alas ! For the son of Jesse will wipe them out ! Alas for Israel ! For the fox will trap the lion of strength, and the weasel that is a virgin, and bringeth forth her young from her mouth, shall be at the throats of brave men ! Yea, by cunning shall Israel prosper, in the days of the seed of David : and by cunning and lurking in holes of the earth shall the

seed of Jesse fill the earth. Then the Lord of Glory will have drawn far off, and gods shall be pitiful, and men shall be as locusts. But I, I feel my death upon me, even in the glory of the Lord. Yea, leave me in peace before my death, let me retreat into the flame!

[*A pause.*

ANOTHER SOLDIER: Saul hath abandoned his kingdom and his men! Yea, he puts the Lord between him and his work!

PROPHET: E'en let him be! For his loss is greater than another's triumph.

SOLDIER: Yea! But wherefore shall a man leave his men leaderless—even for the Lord!

1ST SOLDIER (*prophesying*): When thou withdrawest
Thy glory, let me go with Thee, O Brightest, even into the fire of Thee!

CHORUS OF PROPHETS: Cast thyself down, that the Lord may snatch thee up.
Fall before the Lord, and fall high.
All things come forth from the flame of Almighty God,
Some things shall never return! [*Bis.*
Some have their way and their will, and pass at last
To the worm's waiting mouth. [*Bis.*
But the high Lord He leans down upon the hill,
And wraps His own in His flame,
Wraps them as whirlwind from the world,
Leaves not one sigh for the grave. . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE XVI

Late afternoon. A rocky place outside Gilgal. DAVID *is hiding near the stone Ezel.*

DAVID (*alone*): Now, if Jonathan comes not, I am lost. This is the fourth day, and evening is nigh. Lo! Saul seeketh my life. O Lord, look upon me, and hinder mine enemies! Frustrate them, make them stumble, O my God! So near am I to Gilgal, yet between me and mine own house lies the whole gap of death. Yea, Michal, thou art not far from me. Yet art thou distant even as death. I hide and have hidden. Three days have I hidden, and eaten scant bread. Lo! Is this to be the Lord's anointed! Saul will kill me, and I shall die! There! Someone moves across the field! Ah, watch! watch! Is it Jonathan? It is two men; yea, it is two men. And one walks before the other. Surely it is Jonathan and his lad! Surely he has kept his word! O Lord, save me now from mine enemies, for they compass me round. O Lord my God, put a rope round the neck of my enemy, lest he rush forward and seize me in the secret place. Yea, it is Jonathan, in a striped coat. And a man behind him carryeth the bow. Yea, now must I listen, and uncover my ears, for this is life or death. O that he may say: *Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them!* For then I can come forth and go to my house, and the King will look kindly on me. —But he comes slowly, and sadly. And he will say: *The arrows are beyond thee*—and I shall have to flee away like a hunted dog, into the desert.—It will be so! Yea! And I must hide lest that lad who follows

Jonathan should see me, and set Saul's soldiery upon me. (*Exit after a pause.*)

[*Enter* JONATHAN *with bow, and* LAD *with quiver.*

JONATHAN (*stringing his bow*): Lo! this is the stone Ezel. Seest thou the dead bush, like a camel's head? That is a mark I have shot at, and now, before the light falls, will I put an arrow through his nose. (*Takes an arrow.*) Will this fly well? (*Balancing it.*)

LAD: It is well shafted, O Jonathan.

JONATHAN: Ay! Let us shoot. (*Takes aim—shoots.*) Yea, it touched the camel's ear, but not his nose! Give me another! (*Shoots.*) Ah! Hadst thou a throat, thou camel, thou wert dead. Yet is thy nose too cheerful! Let us try again! (*Takes another arrow—shoots.*) Surely there is a scratch upon thy nose-tip! Nay, I am not myself! Give me the quiver. And run thou, take up the arrows ere the shadows come.

LAD: I will find them.

[*He runs, as he goes* JONATHAN *shoots an arrow over his head. The* LAD *runs after it—stops.*

JONATHAN: Is not the arrow beyond thee?

LAD: One is here! Here, another!

JONATHAN: The arrow is beyond thee! Make speed! Haste! Stay not!

LAD: Three have I! But the fourth——

JONATHAN: The arrow is beyond thee! Run, make haste!

LAD: I see it not! I see it not! Yea, it is there within bush. I have it, and it is whole. O master, is this all?

JONATHAN: There is one more. Behold it is beyond thee.

LAD (*running*): I see it not! I see it not! Yea, it is here!

JONATHAN: It is all. Come, then! Come! Nay, the light is fading and I cannot see. Take thou the bow and the arrows, and go home. For I will rest here awhile by the stone Ezel.

LAD: Will my master come home alone?

JONATHAN: Yea will I, with the peace of day's-end upon me. Go now, and wait me in the house. I shall soon come.

[*Exit* LAD. JONATHAN *sits down on a stone till he is gone.*

JONATHAN (*calling softly*): David! David!

[DAVID *comes forth, weeping. Falls on his face to the ground and bows himself three times before* JONATHAN. JONATHAN *raises him. They kiss one another, and weep.*

DAVID: Ah, then it is death, it is death to me from Saul?

JONATHAN: Yea, he seeks thy life, and thou must flee far hence.

DAVID (*weeping*): Ah, Jonathan! Thy servant thanks thee from his heart. But ah, Jonathan, it is bitter to go, to flee like a dog, to be houseless and homeless and wifeless, without a friend or helpmate! Oh, what have I done, what have I done! Tell me, what have I done! And slay me if I be in fault.

JONATHAN (*in tears*): Thou art not in fault. Nay, thou art not! But thou art anointed, and thou shalt be King. Hath not Samuel said it even now, in Naioth,

when he would not look upon the face of Saul! Yea, thou must flee until thy day come, and the day of the death of Saul, and the day of the death of Jonathan.

DAVID (*weeping*): Oh, I have not chosen this. This have I not taken upon myself. This is put upon me, I have not chosen it! I do not want to go! Yea, let me come to Gilgal and die, so I see thy face, and the face of Michal, and the face of the King. Let me die! Let me come to Gilgal and die! (*Flings himself on the ground in a paroxysm of grief.*)

JONATHAN: Nay! Thou shalt not die. Thou shalt flee! And till Saul be dead, thou shalt flee. But when Saul has fallen, and I have fallen with my father—for even now my life follows my father—then thou shalt be King.

DAVID: I cannot go!

JONATHAN: Yea! Thou shalt go now. For they will send forth men to meet me, ere the dark. Rise now, and be comforted. (DAVID *rises.*)

DAVID: Why shouldst thou save me! Why dost thou withhold thy hand! Slay me now!

JONATHAN: I would not slay thee, nor now nor ever. But leave me now, and go. And go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying: *The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever.*

DAVID: Yea, the covenant is between us! And I will go, and keep it.

[*They embrace in silence, and in silence* DAVID *goes out.*

JONATHAN (*alone in the twilight*): Thou goest, David! And the hope of Israel with thee! I remain, with

my father, and the star-stone falling to despair. Yet what is it to me! I would not see thy new day, David. For thy wisdom is the wisdom of the subtle, and behind thy passion lies prudence. And naked thou wilt not go into the fire. Yea, go thou forth, and let me die. For thy virtue is in thy wit, and thy shrewdness. But in Saul have I known the magnanimity of a man. Yea, thou art a smiter down of giants, with a smart stone! Great men and magnanimous, men of the faceless flame, shall fall from Strength, fall before thee, thou David, shrewd whelp of the lion of Judah! Yet my heart yearns hot over thee, as over a tender, quick child. And the heart of my father yearns, even amid its dark wrath. But thou goest forth, and knowest no depth of yearning, thou son of Jesse. Yet go! For my twilight is more to me than thy day, and my death is dearer to me than thy life! Take it! Take thou the kingdom, and the days to come. In the flames of death where Strength is, I will wait and watch till the day of David at last shall be finished, and wisdom no more be fox-faced, and the blood gets back its flame. Yea, the flame dies not, though the sun's red dies! And I must get me to the city. [*Rises and departs hastily.*

CURTAIN



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