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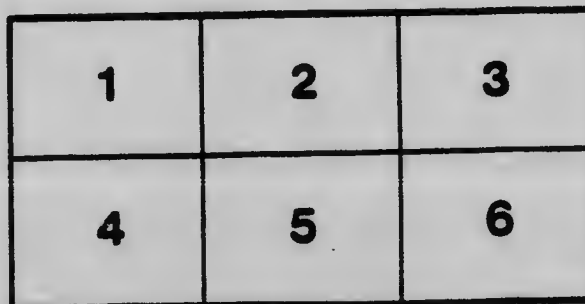
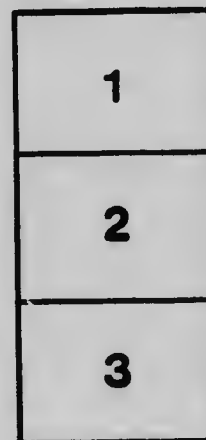
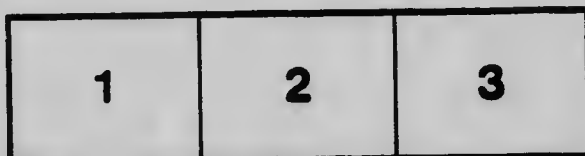
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**SOCIAL
IDOLATRY**



**A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS
BY GEORGE W. PACAUD**

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80 ST. FRANCOIS-XAVIER STREET
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To the memory of my Grandmother's Cook, whose descendants, God bless them, are amongst us.

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PREFACE

The frequency with which impoverished peers from Europe invade American cities, solely for the purpose of rehabilitating themselves by contracting rich marriages, is too well known to be denied.

The young heiress, cultured and refined though she may be, yet bred of "nouveau riche" stock, is, by reason of her parent's social ambitions, a most likely victim, and often sacrificed on the altar of "Social Idolatry."

The sequel to these "mesalliance" marriages is a young life cast on a sea of unhappiness, there to flounder and drift about until, perhaps, in an effort to free herself from the chains that bind her, My Lady steers her course straight through the portals of the divorce court.

It is, therefore, I may say, the question of this parvenu aspiration in social ambition that has guided my pen in writing this comedy.

The interwoven plot was suggested by a bit of scandal in high life, dating back some ten or twelve years, but no doubt still fresh in the minds of those who, at that time, rejoiced with characteristic heartlessness over the downfall of their friends.

The story is true to life, and I have cast it into my frame for the purpose of adding strength, color and interest to the picture. It is, however, not sufficiently important to detract from the real purpose of the "play," which aims as its objects mildly to satirize society, its foibles and its teachings in America.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

Honore, Duc de Beaumont.
Armand de Courcy.
Willis Cleghorn.
Captain Gordon Ellis.
Professor Craven.
Lieut. Jack Wilberforce.
Heartington Hobbs.
Gilbert.
Harris.
Mrs. Wilberforce.
Florence Wilberforce.
Clara Dryden.
Nancy Ridout.
Lucy Brown.

THE FIRST ACT.

At Mrs. Wilberforce's Summer Mansion, Newport, R.I.,
Monday.

THE SECOND ACT.

At the Duc de Beaumont's Cottage, Newport,
Tuesday.

THE THIRD ACT.

Another Room in Mrs. Wilberforce's Mansion,
Wednesday.

SOCIAL IDOLATRY

ACT I.

SCENE:—Represents one of the sitting rooms in a millionaire's mansion, at Newport, on the night of a dance. In the rear and separated by a row of fine Corinthian columns, resting on a plinth, about eighteen inches high, is the reception hall, with large French windows, through which can be seen the gardens beyond, illuminated by numerous incandescent lamps; jardinières, with natural plants serve to decorate the wall and are placed in the spaces between the windows, which are thrown wide open. To the Left is a handsome mantel on which is placed a clock and other ornaments; a fan and some loose American Beauty roses, tied with a ribbon, have also been thrown carelessly upon it. There is a large entrance Centre, one at Right, and another Left, a fancy divan and a chair Left Centre, and other chairs Right and Right Centre. The room is magnificently furnished; everything being suggestive of great wealth and luxury. Clusters of electric branches are disposed about, and the apartment is brilliantly lighted.

A smart "one-step" is heard from without Right, which continues till after the curtain is up. As music ceases, clapping of hands is also heard from without Right.

DISCOVERED.—GORDON ELLIS, a tall, handsome, intellectual man of twenty-eight, with clear cut features, is standing, leaning on the arm of a large easy chair, opposite door Right, watching the dancers in the ball-room beyond.

GORDON. (As clapping of hands ceases.) They can't get enough of it. (Music.) They're off again.

(WILLIS CLEGHORN, a jovial, good-natured, but shrewd looking man of about fifty years, with gray hair and a florid complexion is seen in hall, coming from Right.)

CLEGHORN. (*Stopping at Centre Entrance as he perceives Gordon; aside.*) Brooding, eh? Poor fellow. (*Advancing.*) All alone, Gordon?

GORDON. (*Turning.*) Yes, the ball-room is so full of chatter that I thought I would come in here and listen to the music.

CLEGHORN. Still, you mustn't be selfish.

GORDON. Selfish!

CLEGHORN. My dear Gordon, I know at least a dozen damsels who are, this very minute, dying to be introduced to you.

GORDON. O, I say.

CLEGHORN. You should hear them. (*Imitating.*) Mr. Cleghorn, do please introduce me to your handsome nephew, he's such a hero. (*Gordon laughs.*) O, but you are, at least the papers have said so. Having recently returned from France, decked with all sorts of bars and crosses, what else can you expect?

GORDON. My dear Uncle, it is not I who am the popular idol here to-night.

CLEGHORN. (*Enquiringly.*) No. (*Taking a chair; with changed expression.*) Perhaps not.

GORDON. That's right, let's sit down. Do you know, we haven't had a chance to speak a dozen words to each other since I returned. (*Voice heard from without, announcing.*) Honore Duc de Beaumont.

GORDON. (*With sudden change of voice and expression; his eyes flashing.*) There is your popular idol.

CLEGHORN. (*Calmly.*) Allow me to introduce you . . . birth, title, debts.

GORDON. A fortune hunter. (*Looking Right.*) I declare some of the girls have actually stopped dancing to admire him. (*Seizing Cleghorn's arm.*) See! He is with Florence now.

CLEGHORN. (*Looking intently beyond.*) Quite so.

GORDON. Oh! it makes my blood boil. You remember when I sailed with my regiment, Uncle—it is only eighteen months ago—she was considered merely a school girl, too young to become engaged to any man.

CLEGHORN. (*Appeasingly.*) Calm yourself, there is nothing official yet, you know.

GORDON. Not yet—no, but I understand Mrs. Wilberforce intends giving it to the papers next week.

CLEGHORN. O, not quite so soon as that.

GORDON. She's giving this reception in his honour.

CLEGHORN. Well, what of it?

GORDON. I don't believe Florence cares (*snapping his fingers*) that much for him.

CLEGHORN. I agree with you, but what difference does that make (*Gordon looks at Cleghorn in surprise; continuing*) to Mrs. Wilberforce? You know her ambition. "My children must marry better than anybody else's children;" that is her motto. (*Seating himself.*) O, it's the same old story, Gordon.

GORDON. (*Seriously.*) But you, Uncle—(*His voice gradually sinking to a lower pitch*)—as her legal adviser and the administrator of her affairs, surely, (*Cleghorn shakes his head negatively*) surely—

CLEGHORN. My dear boy, realizing how badly you would feel, I have already, on more than one occasion, expressed my views to Mrs. Wilberforce in terms not calculated, I assure you, to promote harmony between us.

GORDON. (*Dolefully.*) Then I am done for.

CLEGHORN. If there is a single subject on which Mrs. Wilberforce will brook no interference it is this one affecting her social ambitions.

GORDON. But this man is a spendthrift—his estates are hypothecated.

CLEGHORN. Certainly, he wouldn't be here if they weren't.

GORDON. Exactly, and Florence is chosen for his victim.

CLEGHORN. (*With comic humor.*) You mean his Duchess.

GORDON. O, Duchess be hanged.

CLEGHORN. But he is a Duke, isn't he?

GORDON. Duke! A perfumed old dandy you mean, with a record that would make any pure girl blush if she but knew the story of his past.

CLEGHORN. Disillusionize yourself my dear boy. Girls now-a-days don't blush at such trifles; it is positively bad form; besides, who in Paris, London, New York or H—ll can throw stones? (*A pause. Gordon looks at Cleghorn with a bewildered expression.*)

GORDON. (*Proudly.*) I live in Boston.

CLEGHORN. *I'm* sorry! I'll call it *that* next time.

GORDON. Uncle!

CLEGHORN. My boy, scandal when conducted on a scientific basis is an art.

GORDON. You think so?

CLEGHORN. A rare accomplishment, and—if the aristocratic dandy—with, or without perfume—succeeds in running the gauntlet of social criticism and emerges unscathed, he is a hero.

GORDON. Oh! he is, eh; how do you make that out?

CLEGHORN. Because, having religiously observed the eleventh commandment, he breaks no rule.

GORDON. I must confess, I don't quite understand you. What is the Eleventh Commandment?

CLEGHORN. Thou shalt not be found out.

GORDON. Humph! then I am glad to be able to say that I am not one of society's co-religionists.

CLEGHORN. Seriously, neither am I, but, remember, we are not discussing ourselves. It is society and its teachings that we have to do with.

GORDON. How about Florence?

CLEGHORN. Florence is about as cognizant of the funny-fussy little episodes in the Duke's past as you are yourself.

GORDON. You mean to say—

CLEGHORN. Certainly, have I not given her my impressions?

GORDON. You, Uncle?

CLEGHORN. For your sake, I have. I thought it might influence her, but it didn't—and she's right.

GORDON. (*Inquiringly.*) Did you tell her—

CLEGHORN. (*Interposing.*) About the girl he didn't marry? And the nine days talk—and all such rot? I did.

GORDON. What did she say?

CLEGHORN. Oh! ah—she suggested that being an old bachelor, myself, I must have had a similar experience.

GORDON. (*Looking a bit surprised.*) Good gracious!

CLEGHORN. (*Continuing.*) Yes, or I wouldn't repeat petty scandal.

GORDON. Petty!

CLEGHORN. She hinted, also, that having lately participated in the killing of a few Germans, you were eligible now, to fight your own battles. (*Gordon stiffens up*) Called me an old gossip.

GORDON. Gossip!

CLEGHORN. She's quite right, my boy.

GORDON. I don't agree with you, Uncle.

CLEGHORN. No? Well, what is gossip?

GORDON. I should say, an old maid's pastime.

CLEGHORN. Rather everybody's pastime. We all, more or less, hunger for it. It is that particular food on which society thrives and grows fat; for it tickles the senses, and whets the appetite for more scandal, and more is always forthcoming. Do you follow me?

GORDON. Not to the extent of admitting, Uncle, that society's gluttonous desire to get fat on scandal has anything to do with my love for Florence.

CLEGHORN. (*Suddenly growing serious.*) Your love! A pure and simple love, without any backbone to it; it's a devilishly poor asset my boy—

GORDON. (*With feeling.*) You say that, Uncle, because you hate women.

CLEGHORN. Hate women! I adore them; but I fear them for all that; and ministers too; it's a combination you can't beat with anything less effective than a bludgeon. But we're getting out of our subject. Now let me tell you something. I'll put it in a nutshell. The best groomed and most highly cultured people, in every land, bow to the Duc de Beaumont, don't they?

GORDON. Quite so, and briefly, that is the answer, eh?

CLEGHORN. Briefly, it is—Social Idolatry. (*There is a pause. Gordon rises and laughs in a low strained and unnatural tone. He crosses the stage and returns. Watching him closely.*) Jack, her only son, is no better off than you are.

GORDON. (*Calmly, with a cynical smile.*) What, has she got him mated too?

CLEGHORN. She has.

GORDON. And Jack will submit to it?

CLEGHORN. That remains to be seen. He is of age now, you know: came into his money last week.

GORDON. Did he?

CLEGHORN. Sit down, I'll tell you a secret—it may help you. (*Gordon seats himself*). You remember the pretty little English girl that Mrs. Wilberforce engaged?

GORDON. Lucy Brown, the children's French teacher? Why yes.

CLEGHORN. Florence, you know, treats her like a sister.

GORDON. I know it.

CLEGHORN. And as for Jack—he's in love with her.

GORDON (*Surprised*). In love?

CLEGHORN. Head and ears.

GORDON. But—but Mrs. Wilberforce?

CLEGHORN. Ah, that's the point. *She doesn't know.* Nobody knows, but Florence, and I—and you. I even doubt whether Jack has spoken freely to Lucy yet. He has taken no chances, you see, but waited till he attained his majority; now he can do as he pleases: marry—go to the devil—anything.

GORDON. (*Warmly.*) Jack is certainly a trump, and as for Lucy—

CLEGHORN. (*Interrupting.*) Ah, but she's not a Duchess, nor has she fifty million dollars, like Nancy Ridout, who is, let me tell you, Mrs. Wilberforce's choice for her son.

GORDON. Great Cæsar! There'll be the devil to pay. (*His enthusiasm increasing as the conversation progresses.*)

Do you know, Uncle, this little piece of news rather comforts me.

CLEGHORN. Well, you're certainly in good company.

GORDON. Will Jack stick to his guns?

CLEGHORN. He has told me that he would.

GORDON. God bless him. O, if Florence were only more like him; if she had but half her brother's pluck.

CLEGHORN. (*Rising; speaking in a firm and convincing tone.*) She has; perhaps as much; even more; but she is younger than Jack; inexperienced, and topped with a superficial training—that's what's the matter.

GORDON. (*Rising.*) You're right, Uncle.

CLEGHORN. (*His eyes fixed upon him.*) Well, but, man, what are you going to do about it? (*Music ceases.*)

GORDON. (*Clinching his fists.*) Fight for her.

CLEGHORN. A-h, then you have a backbone, eh?

GORDON. (*His teeth set.*) Backbone—

CLEGHORN. And you'll put up a fight—a real fight?

GORDON. Fight! Damn it, watch me.

CLEGHORN. Yes I will (*clasping his hand*) and if you win, damn it! I'll decorate you with a million dollars.

(*Two or three couples appear in Hall from Right, arm-in-arm, chatting, and exit Left. Enter MRS. WILBERFORCE, Right. She is a handsome, well-preserved and highly educated woman of fifty, with fine attainments, but withal a true type of the ambitious parvenu. Having recently been elevated by the power of colossal wealth to the best and most exclusive ranks of American aristocracy, she is always eager, if possible, to soar still higher and attained new triumphs.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Are you not dancing, Gordon?

GORDON. I may later on in the evening, Mrs. Wilberforce.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Let me introduce you to somebody very charming;—let me see—Ah! a young widow, perhaps.

GORDON. (*A little at a loss what to say.*) Widow—(*Glancing at Cleghorn.*) Give Uncle a chance.

(JACK and NANCY appear in Hall, arm-in-arm, coming from Right. NANCY is a pretty, impulsive little society butterfly, aged nineteen; JACK is a handsome, athletic young college graduate of twenty-one.)

CLEGHORN. (*Assuming a matter-of-fact tone of voice.*) Thanks, but I've a few that I should like to dispose of, myself.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. You misunderstood me, Willis—I said young widow.

NANCY. (*Looking in, at Centre Entrance.*) How do you do, Gordon. (*Gordon turns.*)

GORDON. Why, Nancy! (*Politely to Mrs. Wilberforce.*) Pardon me. (*Going to Nancy.*) I am delighted to see you. (*They shake hands.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Calling out.*) Enjoying yourself, Jack?

JACK. (*Looking over his shoulder.*) Thanks, mother, I'm endeavouring to.

(JACK, NANCY and GORDON continue along the passage to Left, and exit.)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Seating herself Right.*) I suppose he would like football better.

CLEGHORN. (*With sarcasm.*) Or somebody else, perhaps.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Calmly.*) No, not somebody else. By the way, what's happened to Gordon?

CLEGHORN. That remark is rather unkind, I think.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I mean, why doesn't he make himself agreeable?

CLEGHORN. The boy isn't obliged to dance if he doesn't feel like it. I'm not dancing.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Condescendingly, with sarcasm.*) We all appreciate that, Willis. (*Cleghorn coughs uneasily.*) Perhaps he would have shown better taste by remaining away altogether.

CLEGHORN. How so?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. O, because—under the circumstances—

CLEGHORN. (*Seating himself.*) Does Florence object?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I never consult my children. In matters concerning their future welfare, especially, I consider my judgment perfectly correct.

CLEGHORN. I think I have already been taught that lesson.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I wish then, that you would give him a hint about it. The less he is seen in her company, the better.

CLEGHORN. Take care; some day you may wake up and find yourself entangled in your own net.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Is that a threat?

CLEGHORN. No, its an opinion.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Quite unsolicited, I'm sure.

CLEGHORN. Possibly; still, the old custom which parents have of choosing husbands and wives for their children, may work very beautifully in France, but in this country— (*He stops and makes a gesture with his hands to emphasize his meaning.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Well!

CLEGHORN. Well, I hope for your sake, that you may be as successful in managing Jack as you have been with Florence; that's all.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. O, I know that you don't approve of my choice for him either.

CLEGHORN. Nancy Ridout! Jack doesn't care a fig for her.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Fixing her eyes on him.*) Has he told you so?

CLEGHORN. Oh! No—no—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Do you know of any body else, Willis?

CLEGHORN. I know that that half witted young gentleman, Heartington Hobbs, is in love with her.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Heartington Hobbs doesn't interest me. I asked you about Jack. Does he care for anybody else?

CLEGHORN. (*Boldly.*) I think he does.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Snappishly.*) Who is it?

CLEGHORN. (*Tantalizingly.*) Guess.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Rising, with an exclamation of impatience.*) Ugh! (*A new thought suddenly coming to her.*) You cannot mean Lucy, surely? She is a dependent here. (*Cleghorn's expression quickly changes.*)

CLEGHORN. (*Eyeing her suspiciously.*) What makes you think of Lucy?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I allowed her to attend the dance to-night—at Jack's request.

CLEGHORN. No harm in that.

(*JACK and NANCY appear in Hall at Left.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Harm! Lucy's duties are well defined. Would she dare! (*In cold and measured tones.*) I think not. (*Relaxing.*) Come, take me back to the drawing-room, it's insufferably warm here.

CLEGHORN. (*Proffering his arm.*) Sort of ruffles one a bit, doesn't it?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Seeing Jack and Nancy, who are about to enter, Centre; with a pleased expression.*) Willis, you're an alarmist, and positively a bad prophet.

CLEGHORN. You invariably tell me that when rejecting my good counsels.

(*Exit CLEGHORN and MRS. WILBERFORCE, Right.*)

NANCY. (*Disengaging her arm and crossing to chair, Left.*) Gracious! Isn't it hot. (*She seats herself. Jack remains at Centre Entrance, and looks up passage to Right, as though he expected some one to appear. Languidly, without looking at him.*) Come and fan me, Jack. (*A pause.*) Jack! (*He pays no attention to her. Turning in her seat.*) Jack!

JACK. Eh!

NANCY. Why don't you answer.

JACK. I didn't hear you. What is it?

NANCY. (*Holding out her fan.*) Fan me.

JACK. (*In an absent-minded tone.*) Fan you—O, yes—(*Looking Right, again.*) Just wait a moment, will you, Nancy.

NANCY. Who are you gaping at? (*Jack's expression suddenly brightens and he makes a sign with his hand.*) Are you making signs to anybody? (*Impatiently.*) Gracious!

JACK. (*Coming forward.*) I was trying to attract Miss Brown's attention.

NANCY. (*Stiffening up.*) Miss Brown. (*Pretending to suddenly remember.*) O, you mean Lucy? (*Jack takes her fan.*)

JACK. (*Fanning her.*) Charming girl, isn't she?

NANCY. I thought Mrs. Wilberforce didn't allow her in society.

JACK. Her mother has evidently changed her mind.

NANCY. And Florence has lent her one of her prettiest gowns, I see.

JACK. O, you have noticed that.

NANCY. It's not a bit becoming tho'.

JACK. No!

NANCY. She carries it so oddly; not a bit like us girls.

JACK. Ah, there I agree with you.

NANCY. But it's not to be wondered at, is it?

JACK. True, she is as different from you and the other girls as night is from day.

NANCY. Why, then, are you so much interested in her? (*Jack stops fanning.*)

JACK. (*Fixing his eyes on her.*) Because I love the sunshine.

NANCY. (*Looking puzzled.*) The sunshine—

JACK. The sunshine. (*A pause.*)

NANCY. (*His meaning gradually dawning upon her.*) Oh! Then you mean, I suppose—that she—is—

JACK. The sunshine, yes. (*Fanning her again.*)
Night and day, Nancy,—night and day. (*There is another pause.*)

NANCY. (*Sneeringly.*) Oh! Gracious! (*Unfastening a stick-pin from her corsage.*) Perhaps you would like your clover leaf back. (*Craven is seen coming along the hall from Right.*)

JACK. You still wear it?

NANCY. (*Presenting the pin to him.*) Not any more, thank you; stick it in the sunshine.

JACK. That ugly pin. I'll stick it in the dark—see. (*Sticks pin in the lapel of his coat.*)

NANCY. Give me my fan.

JACK. (*Politely handing the fan to her.*) Certainly.

(*Craven enters, Right. He is a clean shaven, very humble looking, but well-preserved little man of about fifty years of age. He carries an ear trumpet and is dressed in ill-fitting evening clothes and wears a black cravat. The placid meekness of his expression which seldom changes, and the originality of his manner, makes him, at once, a character study.*)

NANCY. (*Speaking in an undertone as she spies Craven.*) Who, on earth, is that?

JACK. (*Turning.*) Ah! Our latest European novelty.

NANCY. I think you might, at least, be polite.

JACK. O, don't be alarmed; he's as deaf as an Egyptian mummy.

NANCY. (*Looking at Craven with suspicion.*) What's his name?

JACK. Professor Craven.

NANCY. Gracious!

JACK. An English Scientist. Writes on animal life. His latest book "Beetles and Bugs" created a profound sensation. (*Extending his hand in the direction of Craven.*) Will you have some?

Craven. (*Advancing and presenting his ear-trumpet to Jack.*) Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet?

NANCY. What a strange voice. Is he celebrated?

JACK. Celebrated! Barring a title, Aunt Clara says that he's the best "pick up" of the season—bound to make a hit.

NANCY. Didn't she meet him abroad, last year?

JACK. Yes, and she attended some of his lectures. Got quite "cut up" over him too.

NANCY. Gracious!

JACK. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Allow me to introduce you to—

NANCY. (*Interrupting him.*) No, no—don't.

JACK. (*Disconcertedly dropping his end of the trumpet and turning slightly away.*) Oh!

NANCY. (*Looking curiously at Craven.*) I'm afraid he's too technical for me.

CRAVEN. (*Turning to Nancy.*) Dear me! I didn't catch your name, unfortunately.

NANCY. O, botheration!

CRAVEN. (*Presenting trumpet.*) Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet.

NANCY. (*Seizing trumpet.*) What shall I say?

JACK. Tell him your name.

NANCY. (*Nervously; in a loud voice, speaking in the trumpet.*) Hello!

CRAVEN. (*Starting.*) Ouch! (*Craven drops his end, leaving the trumpet in Nancy's hand.*)

NANCY. Gracious! I was thinking of the telephone. (*Nancy unconsciously drops the trumpet to the floor; Jack contains himself with difficulty.*)

CRAVEN. (*Glancing first at trumpet, then at Nancy.*) Dear me!

NANCY. (*Crossing to Right.*) I wonder if he's offended. (*Craven picks up his trumpet, crosses to Left, and seats himself.*)

(HOBBS enters Right. He is an exceedingly good-natured and harmless young coxcomb, who essays to fashion his manner and his speech, after the English dandy of outre tastes and ideas.)

HOBBS. (*At Right Entrance, speaking to Nancy.*) O, I say, look heah. I've been looking evahy wheah foah you.

NANCY. Well, aren't you glad, now, that you've found me?

HOBBS. (*Languidly, affecting a fashionable patois.*) Yeahs, yeahs—delighted. May I have the pleasuah of a dawnce?

NANCY. (*Her gaze fixed on Jack.*) You may have as many as you like, Heartington.

HOBBS. (*Elated; greatly surprised.*) By jove!

JACK. (*Aside.*) That's for my benefit. (*Jack moves slowly to Centre Entrance.*)

HOBBS. You ah moah than kind. I—I weally cawn't think just what to say.

NANCY. It will come to you in a moment, Heartington. *Hobbs looks over at Jack and bursts into a silly, nervous spasmodic little laugh. Nancy glances intermittently at Jack as he moves away, her expression indicating disappointment at his apparent indifference.*

JACK. (*Aside.*) He thinks it's all his doing.

(*JACK goes along Hall Right, and exit.*)

HOBBS. (*To Nancy; adjusting his monocle.*) What say you to the next; It's a Fox—

NANCY. (*With nonchalance.*) O, very well.

HOBBS. (*Taking a pencil from his pocket and pulling down his left cuff.*) And the next.

NANCY. Perhaps!

HOBBS. And the next?

(*LUCY appears at door, Left. She is a lovely refined girl of twenty, whose simple, but attractive and unaffected manner has not been spoiled by contact with the artful ways of social customs. She hesitates at the door, apparently undecided whether she should retrace her steps or not, then, advances a little. Nancy assumes an air of superiority towards Lucy when she sees her.*)

NANCY. (*Impatiently.*) Don't spoil your cuff, goose. Come, let us take a stroll in the gardens, my cheeks are burning.

HOBBS. (*Proffering his arm.*) Yeahs, yeahs, we will count the stars, bah jove.

(NANCY and HOBBS pass through Centre Entrance. They go along the Hall to Left, and exit.)

CRAVEN. (*Rising and crossing to Lucy, Left.*) Seeking something, or somebody? Perhaps I can help you. (*Presenting trumpet.*) Will you allow me?

LUCY. (*Nervously.*) Thank you—no I—(*Glancing in the direction of Nancy's exit.*) just didn't want to disturb anybody, that's all.

CRAVEN. Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet.

LUCY. O, I'm so sorry. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) I wasn't looking for anybody in particular, thank you.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Permit me to introduce myself. Professor Craven, at your service.

LUCY. O, I have so often heard about you.

Craven. Through Miss Dryden, no doubt.

LUCY. Yes.

CRAVEN. She has been very kind to me since we met again, two weeks ago. May I offer you a chair?

LUCY. (*Moving to divan, Left Centre.*) Thank you.

CRAVEN. (*Following her.*) The drawing-room is scarcely the proper place in which one may exercise the privileges of a traveller, (*Lucy seats herself on divan*) yet, custom knows no law, and, since it has been my habit, for years, to talk to people without the formality of an introduction, (*Seating himself in chair, close beside her*) I hope that you will be indulgent with me, and forgive my unconventional manner. (*Presents trumpet.*)

LUCY. (*Disconcerted, but endeavoring to appear natural.*) O, Sir, you not only have the right to the privileges of a traveller, but, likewise I should say, the privileges conferred upon one—(*Aside.*) O, pshaw! what am I saying.

CRAVEN. Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet.

LUCY. (*Nervously.*) I—I was thinking of—of your genius and personality.

CRAVEN. Who says I'm a genius?

LUCY. Miss Dryden.

CRAVEN. Anybody else?

LUCY. (*Hesitatingly.*) Ah—really—I—you see, I haven't much of a chance to meet people.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Not out yet.

LUCY. Not in the sense you mean. I'm a teacher.

CRAVEN. Teacher! Of what?

LUCY. Principally French.

CRAVEN. You have pupils?

LUCY. The children here, Genevieve and Dorothy, are my pupils.

CRAVEN. Dear me! You're not an American?

LUCY. No, my home was in Littlehampton.

CRAVEN. England?

LUCY. Yes, but I met Mrs. Wilberforce in London. I had a letter of recommendation to her.

CRAVEN. And she engaged you on the spot, I suppose?

LUCY. Well, not exactly; I was too young she said. (*Her countenance brightening.*) But Miss Wilberforce came to the rescue. Dear Florence: she liked me, and took pity on me.

CRAVEN. O, I see, a real fairy-queen, eh?

LUCY. I owe a great deal to Florence.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Perhaps your parents may join you—later?

LUCY. (*Shaking her head sadly.*) I am quite alone in the world.

CRAVEN. (*Becoming interested.*) Alone?

LUCY. (*Slowly nodding assent.*) Yes.

CRAVEN. That is strange, and at your age too. Tell me your story, dear.

LUCY. (*Looking suspiciously at Craven; recoiling slightly from him.*) I have no story.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Really Miss—you haven't told me your name, have you—Miss—

LUCY. Brown.

CRAVEN. (*Glancing sharply at her, and speaking in a low tone.*) Brown? (*Recovering himself instantly.*) And your home was in Littlehampton, you say? You were born there?

LUCY. (*Looking perplexed.*) Yes, you seem interested.

CRAVEN. I knew the Rev. Dr. Brown.

LUCY. (*Astonished.*) Daddy!

CRAVEN. (*Eyeing her intently.*) Your father, you say?

LUCY. (*Meeting his gaze for a moment.*) Why—yes. Why do you ask?

CRAVEN. Because I was under the impression that Dr. Brown had no children.

LUCY. (*Ill at ease.*) You must be thinking of somebody else. We have never met before?

CRAVEN. No, and it is seventeen years since I last saw—your father.

LUCY. He died two years ago—very suddenly.

CRAVEN. Dear me! And your mother? (*There is a pause; Lucy is startled at the question and stares at him blankly.*) How old are you?

LUCY. (*Gradually drawing away from the trumpet and finally dropping it.*) O, really sir, if you don't mind, I would prefer to change the subject.

CRAVEN. Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet.

(*Enter JACK, Right.*)

JACK. (*Crossing to Craven and Lucy.*) Ah, there you are. (*Lucy rises; Craven follows suit a moment later.*) I've been looking everywhere for you. Have you been here long?

LUCY. (*Glancing at Craven.*) About five minutes.

JACK. Then I must have missed you and—(*Looking at*

Craven.) O, Lord! Don't tell me that you have been flirting with the Professor.

LUCY. I never flirt with anybody, Mr. Wilberforce.

JACK. Why not?

LUCY. Perhaps, I don't know how.

JACK. Let me teach you.

LUCY. To be insincere.

JACK. (*Suddenly becoming serious.*) You are right, flirting is insincerity. (*Looking at her intently and speaking in a low tone.*) Then how could I teach you. I should fail, Lucy, even though my life were at stake. (*A pause; she draws away slightly from him.*) Let us go into the library. (*Proffering his arm.*) I'm dying for a chat. (*Lucy turns her head slightly and glances at Craven.*) Worrying over the old codger? I'm sure he must have bored you—he's so inquisitive.

LUCY. (*Kindly.*) Perhaps it's only his way.

JACK. (*With a knowing wink; speaking in a confidential tone.*) A mischief maker.

LUCY. (*Mildly protesting.*) O, surely not.

JACK. Digs into everybody's business; and when he gets back home, he'll publish his impressions, I suppose, and we'll pay a dollar for the book to read about ourselves—that's the way it always ends. (*They turn to watch Craven, who stands in a humble-like attitude watching them.*) He's thinking it over—let's leave 'em. (*Turning on his heel.*) Pardon me. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) This is my dance with Miss Brown; you won't mind if I claim it, will you? (*Lucy glances at Craven.*)

CRAVEN. (*Looking across at Lucy.*) Dear me—no.

JACK. (*Turning from him.*) Thanks awfully. (*Proffering his arm.*) He's, at least, accommodating. (*Lucy nods pleasantly to Craven as she accepts Jack's arm; he bows in acknowledgment.*)

LUCY. (*Turning with Jack to leave.*) Really, I should feel easier if he chaperoned us.

JACK. (*In a tone of comic severity.*) Not in a million years.

LUCY. Mrs. Wilberforce may not like it.

JACK. (*Smiling reassuringly as he leads her off.*) O, nonsense.

LUCY. I am so afraid of displeasing her.

JACK. (*Inclining his head close to hers.*) Do as I say. (*Craven watches them closely.*)

(*Exit JACK and LUCY, Left.*)

(*There is a pause.*)

Craven. (*Still looking in the direction of their exit.*) She fears to speak about her mother. Very interesting, that.

(*Enter CLARA, Right. She is a tall, spare old maid, forty years old, with angular features and long arms. Her manner and her speech, when conversing with gentlemen especially, are noticeably affected. She carries a fan.*)

CLARA. (*Stopping near Right Entrance; admiringly.*) What a perfectly divine expression. Thinking of me, perhaps. (*She advances.*)

Craven. (*Smiling as he perceives her.*) Ah, Miss Dryden. (*Advancing to meet her.*) I was just wondering where you were.

CLARA. (*Aside; much flattered.*) I thought so. (*Motioning him to a chair.*) Sit down. (*She seats herself, Right Centre.*)

Craven. (*Seating himself beside her.*) Delighted. (*Clara glances about her.*)

CLARA. (*Speaking in trumpet; coquettishly.*) We are all alone.

Craven. I don't mind, do you?

CLARA. Indeed, I rather enjoy a tete-a-tete.

Craven. Especially when congeniality exists.

CLARA. As in the present case, for instance.

Craven. I fear the pleasure is all on my side.

CLARA. (*Aside.*) O, you fascinating little Professor, if you only knew.

Craven. Pardon me, but would you mind—

CLARA. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) I said, if you only knew.

CRAVEN. Knew?

CLARA. The pleasure it gives me to converse with you.

CRAVEN. Dear me!

CLARA. I have a little surprise in store for you. To-morrow, I've arranged with my photographer to take your picture.

CRAVEN. (*Surprised.*) My picture?

CLARA. Certainly. You shall have half a page in the social columns, next Sunday.

CRAVEN. (*Mildly protesting.*) But—

CLARA. O, you mustn't let your modesty interfere. Genius and personality is not so common now-a-days that we can afford to cheat ourselves of the knowledge of its existence when it suddenly appears amongst us.

CRAVEN. Dear me!

CLARA. You must take society into your confidence.

CRAVEN. How shall I begin?

CLARA. A reporter will interview you, after luncheon, at three o'clock to-morrow.

CRAVEN. Won't that be nice.

CLARA. Then, I shall take you for a stroll on the beach.

CRAVEN. How delightful.

CLARA. Next week, if you feel equal to it, you may give us a lecture—for the benefit of the war babies.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Then you'll take me for a stroll again—on the beach?

CLARA. You rebellious man—certainly. Don't you like to meet people?

CRAVEN. Not as a rule, but—a—the American people are so captivating—(*with a lingering glance*)—especially the ladies—(*She casts a sheepish glance at him and laughs sillily.*)

CLARA. I adore Englishmen—anything foreign, you know.

CRAVEN. It is to the foreigners' advantage to know you, Miss Dryden.

CLARA. Do you think so?

CRAVEN. It is a one-sided, I assure you.

CLARA. Lucky we met again, wasn't it?

CRAVEN. Most lucky for me.

CLARA. It is, already, two weeks yesterday.

CRAVEN. Precisely.

CLARA. Do you remember what you told me in London, last year?

CRAVEN. A—something complimentary, I'm sure.

CLARA. Indeed no, you were perfectly horrid, I thought.

CRAVEN. Really, I—

CLARA. You said America was a sordid country.

CRAVEN. Dear me! I was mistaken; I am here, you see, to tell you differently.

CLARA. (*Aside.*) Lovely.

CRAVEN. And you will forgive a poor sinner for the sake of his conscience, won't you?

CLARA. Now, if you persist in calling yourself names.

CRAVEN. Still, I fear I have no right to be here.

CLARA. No right?

CRAVEN. I fear I'm a trespasser.

CLARA. Trespasser! O, I beg of you—please.

CRAVEN. Still—

CLARA. How seriously you take things. I was only joking—really.

CRAVEN. Then, you will forgive me?

CLARA. I forgive you now.

CRAVEN. For all I have done?

CLARA. Everything.

CRAVEN. For everything I may do?

CLARA. Professor!

CRAVEN. I'm a bit eccentric they say.

CLARA. (*Aside; gleefully.*) Something is going to happen. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Would it please you if I made such a promise?

CRAVEN. I think it would fortify me.

CLARA. (*Aside; skittishly.*) Oh! (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Very well, Professor, I promise.

CRAVEN. You promise? (*Clara nods assent; touching her hand.*) Thank you, so much.

CLARA. (*Coquettishly withdrawing her hand.*) Now be good.

CRAVEN. Dear me! What a deal of good you unconsciously do in this cruel world, Miss Dryden.

CLARA. O, Professor.

CRAVEN. Take the case of Miss Brown, for instance.

CLARA. (*Stiffening up.*) Lucy?

CRAVEN. Yes, since meeting her this evening, I've become quite interested.

CLARA. Indeed!

CRAVEN. I knew the Doctor.

CLARA. (*Surprised.*) Her father?

CRAVEN. Dr. Brown.

CLARA. And did you know Lucy?

CRAVEN. No, you see, it is some years since I met the Doctor, and a—by the by! how old is Miss Brown?

CLARA. Twenty. Why do you ask?

CRAVEN. I was thinking of her mother.

CLARA. Lucy never speaks of her mother; tell me about her.

CRAVEN. I'm afraid I can't. Dear me! I never knew her

CLARA. (*Looking puzzled.*) O, I see.

CRAVEN. Do you? I wish I did.

CLARA. What do you mean?

CRAVEN. O, nothing. I like Miss Brown; she's out of the ordinary, isn't she?

CLARA. Out, or in?

CRAVEN. Quite out, I should say. Almost interesting enough to write about.

CLARA. What makes you say that—I hope you're not contemplating writing a novel?

CRAVEN. Dear me, no.

CLARA. I hate novels; besides, insects, I should think, are more interesting than human beings to write about.

CRAVEN. Insects?

CLARA. Yes, since reading your book, I adore them.

CRAVEN. Insects, indeed, are very interesting little specks of life.

CLARA. And so cute and intelligent. Really, I can't get over it, that certain species of them, have wings.

CRAVEN. Beetles?

CLARA. No—bugs. Tell me about them, Professor.

CRAVEN. I think you have in mind the sub-order of the species Heteroptera, or perhaps Hemiptera, or Rhyncota. They are more or less beautiful; and their wings are colored and transparent, but they have the same unpleasant smell which emanates from the bed-bug—

CLARA. O, Professor!

CRAVEN. (*Grinning.*) Yes! That is the common kind, you know. They have no wings at all, but—they get there, just the same. (*Clara covers her face with her fan.*)

DUKE. (*Heard from without, Right.*) Ah, but I protest, I protest.

CLARA. (*Quickly looking Right.*) Here comes the Duke.

(*Enter the DUKE, Right with FLORENCE on his arm. They are closely followed by CLEGHORN and MRS. WILBERFORCE. CLARA and CRAVEN rise. The DUKE is a distinguished looking man of middle age. He is of medium height and possesses a peculiarly nervous disposition, which, however, he generally succeeds in keeping well under control. He is by virtue of birth, and instinct also, the true personification of a gentleman. Possessing the graceful manners of a Chesterfield, his conversation, always witty and original, is given colour, and perhaps rendered more interesting on account of a slight foreign accent in his speech. FLORENCE, who is scarcely out of her teens, is a beautiful debutante, possessing a fine figure and a stately carriage. She has a true and loving disposition, and besides being a staunch and devoted friend to those she is interested in, her proud and independent mien, and her perfect knowledge of "savoir faire" gives one the impression, at first, that she is older than she really is.*)

DUKE. (*As they enter.*) I am accused of idle flattery, Mrs. Wilberforce.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Joining Duke and Florence at Centre.*) Impossible. (*Cleghorn crosses to Left.*)

DUKE. Mademoiselle regards my compliments as containing an element of hypocrisy.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. She is only joking.

DUKE. Em—m—je ne sais pas.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Aren't you, Florence?

FLORENCE. The Duke is quite right. I don't deserve his pretty compliments; and even if I did, I am not so vain as to believe him, since it seems a part of a French gentleman's education to pay them.

DUKE. Still, I assure you, we are bound to tell the truth, sometimes.

FLORENCE. Sometimes?

DUKE. In particular cases, always.

(*Enter JACK and GORDON, Left. CLEGHORN joins them.*)

CLARA. Vieille ecole—bonne ecole.

DUKE. Mademoiselle, nous partageons les memes opinions, et maintenant permettez moi de vous dire ceci—

CLARA. But in English, Duke, in English if you please.

DUKE. A thousand pardons, for the moment, I was dreaming of Paris.

CLARA. A very delicate way to put it, but we are bound to learn some day.

DUKE. Nay, you need but a little practice.

JACK. Miss Brown speaks beautiful French.

DUKE. (*Looking bewildered.*) Indeed! (*Enquiringly.*) Miss Brown?

FLORENCE. Why yes, I've already spoken to you about her.

CLARA. (*Arrogantly.*) The Duke, dear, doubtless knows her only by the name of Lucy.

DUKE. (*Turning to Clara, his memory still at fault.*) Lucy—Oh! It is a very pretty name, I think.

JACK. (*Left Centre.*) O, not a very grand one, but then, (*Looking at Clara.*) she is so young and talented, and re-

lined and—(*Gordon crosses to Florence, Centre. The Duke follows Mrs. Wilberforce, who has edged close to Jack, Left Centre.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Interrupting him; aside, pained and with a look of reprimand.*) Jack! can't it be possible? (*Jack goes to the Centre Entrance where Cleghorn is now watching Gordon and Florence. Cleghorn by way of proving his approbation, and unobserved by the others, seizes Jack's hand and taps him on the shoulder.*)

(*JACK exit Centre, going along hall out, Left. CLARA and CRAVEN also exit, Centre, but go along hall to Right.*)

(*Cleghorn continues to watch Florence and Gordon, who seem deeply interested in each other. Mrs. Wilberforce, now and again, glances in their direction also, her anxiety seemingly increasing.*)

DUKE. Your son appears to admire the young lady.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Merely a passing fancy, a bit of nonsense, which I shall immediately put a stop to.

DUKE. Love, Mrs. Wilberforce, is not so easily curbed.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. But, there can be no question of such a thing. Jack, I am sure, is too proud and sensible a boy to be influenced by the simple charms of a girl (disdainfully) so far beneath him. (*Cleghorn joins Mrs. Wilberforce and the Duke.*)

DUKE. Undoubtedly, still it is well to guard against Cupid, sometimes. His golden arrows are often poisoned and cause more pain than happiness. Am I not right, Mr. Cleghorn?

CLEGHORN. I don't know the little gentleman, Duke, thank goodness.

DUKE. Then you have never known what it is to feel your heart beat.

CLEGHORN. Well—a—I was once chased by a bull-terrier. (*Florence takes Gordon's arm.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Disdainfully.*) O, how dreadfully absurd. (*Seeing Florence and Gordon, who have started for Right Entrance.*) Florence, dear.

FLORENCE. (*Turning 'round; her voice lacking confidence.*) I have promised the next dance, Mother—to Gordon.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. O, but you mustn't run away with him like that, dear. (*Florence reluctantly withdraws her arm.*) Pardon me. (*Going to them.*) I have promised to introduce Gordon to somebody very charming—(*Fixing her eyes on Gordon.*) Haven't I?

GORDON. (*To Florence, with deep regret.*) I am so sorry.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Your arm, Gordon. (*Gordon complies.*)

GORDON. I shan't be long.

FLORENCE. Then I'll wait for you here.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Taken by surprise; speaking under her breath.*) But, my dear!

GORDON. Thank you.

(*GORDON immediately turns, leading MRS. WILBERFORCE out through Right Entrance.*)

DUKE. Who is that young gentleman?

CLEGHORN. My nephew, Captain Ellis.

DUKE. (*Surprised, pointing to his chest.*) O-h! Croix-de-guerre. (*The Duke joins Florence.*)

CLEGHORN. (*Aside crossing to Right*) The fight is on—(*Turning for a moment, at Right Entrance, to look at the Duke and Florence.*) Democracy versus autocracy.

(*Exit CLEGHORN, Right.*)

DUKE. Shall we furnish a little poesy to the music of the next dance?

FLORENCE. Poesy! You mean hopping.

DUKE. (*Courteously.*) Hopping, then let us venture by all means. My lack of grace will the better accentuate the beauty and charm of your dancing, mademoiselle.

FLORENCE. I'm sorry, but I'm engaged for the next dance.

DUKE. Oh! Shall we chat in the conservatory "en attendant"?

FLORENCE. No, I think I prefer to wait here. (*She crosses to divan, Left Centre.*)

DUKE. (*Following her.*) I thought you were fond of flowers?

FLORENCE. So I am; anywhere but in a conservatory, where the light is too dim to see them. (*She seats herself.*)

DUKE. Don't you find it warm here?

FLORENCE. (*Fanning herself.*) Very.

DUKE. Then what say you to the gardens?

FLORENCE. And catch pneumonia? Thanks, I prefer to die in an oven.

DUKE. (*Laughing lightly as he seats himself beside her.*) Then we shall both die together.

FLORENCE. (*Smiling.*) I should prefer to take turns.

DUKE. And dispatch me first?

FLORENCE. If you wish.

DUKE. Ha, ha, ha, you might forget to follow me.

FLORENCE. You think so?

DUKE. Suppose you did forget, would you miss me much?

FLORENCE. (*Looking surprised.*) Miss you?

DUKE. (*Still looking at her.*) Yes.

FLORENCE. Really! Don't you think your question a bit singular, considering the encouragement you receive?

DUKE. True, yet I wish that it were ten fold greater.

FLORENCE. Indeed, why?

DUKE. Because, then, I should be sure that you cared for me more than anybody else living.

¹²FLORENCE. O, you are still a little skeptical on that point, I see.

DUKE. Say that you love me—a tiny bit.

FLORENCE. No, I can't do that, my social training doesn't permit me.

DUKE. (*Looking surprised.*) Your social training.

FLORENCE. My social training.

DUKE. Then it's a matter of education?

FLORENCE. It is with us who inherit nothing but money. (*The Duke's expression indicates that he is slightly piqued by the remark.*)

DUKE. Really—

FLORENCE. I've been taught that, in the twentieth century, love must be regarded as very bad form.

DUKE. Must we then live destitute of heart and die without a soul?

FLORENCE. I shouldn't wonder. They say, that happy marriages are only made in heaven.

DUKE. That is an old maid's maxim, invented centuries ago by some disappointed spinster, who could induce no man to take her.

FLORENCE. Then you believe that in matters of love, the heart should be the ruling spirit and govern the mind accordingly?

DUKE. Generally speaking, yes.

FLORENCE. A girl, then commits a grievous wrong in marrying a man she does not love.

DUKE. Not always. It depends entirely on the man she weds. If his love is cold, indifferent and of a selfish kind, the union must surely prove calamitous. But if his love is tempered with unceasing strength, made powerful by an impassioned soul—pure and noble—yielding to every wish that his heart's desire may crave, then I say she will be very happy.

FLORENCE. You draw a pretty picture, but it is all visionary. No man is capable of such devotion.

DUKE. Then call it madness. It is perhaps a better word for men, who in their wild delirium, have committed suicide, lost an army, sometimes a kingdom, and other little things, for a woman's cruel caprice.

FLORENCE. It is well that my humor is not decked with whims.

DUKE. You would challenge me?

FLORENCE. Well, suppose I did challenge you?

DUKE. Allons!

FLORENCE. What would you do, brave a lion? Those days are past; besides, were you to be eaten up, I know

somebody who would die of disappointment, (*Rising.*) and I—

DUKE. (*Rising.*) And you?

FLORENCE. O, I should feel dreadfully sorry that you had sacrificed your life in an attempt to prove the sincerity of a declaration that I know to be fabulous.

DUKE. (*Courteously.*) Mademoiselle, I bow to the philosophy of your reason. Your modern education is more practical than is mine, of the old school. It is, I think, better suited to our hopes and ambitions. If by it our minds be shorn of all things beautiful and poetic, it is gratifying to know, that we are true to ourselves and our friends, at least,—whom we respect.

FLORENCE. (*Simply.*) I think, I like you better that way.

(*LUCY appears in passage, coming from the Right.*)

DUKE. Without the flower of exaggeration in my speech? It shall be as you wish. Henceforth, I shall endeavour to couch my sentiments in the vocabulary of the modern school.

FLORENCE. Do, you'll find it less fatiguing in this hot weather Duke—really. (*Florence turns; Lucy is near Centre Entrance; as she sees her.*) O, hello, Lucy! I want to introduce you to somebody. (*Lucy advances; turning to the Duke.*) This is our little French scholar. (*Introducing.*) The Duc de Beaumont—Miss Brown.

DUKE. (*Bowing courteously.*) Mademoiselle, je suis enchanté.

LUCY. Vous etes reellement trop bon, M. le Duc. J'aime a parler francais, mais n'ai guere l'occasion de le faire maintenant.

DUKE. Oh! Mais c'est merveilleux. (*To Florence.*) Mademoiselle speaks French like a native.

FLORENCE. Of course, she does.

DUKE. (*To Lucy.*) Il nous faudra causer ensemble n'est-ce pas, Mademoiselle?

FLORENCE. Where have you been keeping yourself all evening, dear?

LUCY. O, I—I have been a little in every room, I think.

FLORENCE. (*To Duke, placing her arm affectionately about Lucy's waist.*) We're great chums, (*turning her head again*) aren't we, Lucy?

LUCY. Yes, but I fear you're spoiling me.

FLORENCE. Spoiling you! What do you think, Duke?

DUKE. I am sure, I think precisely as you do—that there are some people whom we can never do too much for, because they appreciate our efforts to please them.

FLORENCE. (*To Lucy.*) You see.

LUCY. It is very kind of His Grace to say that.

FLORENCE. My dear, we couldn't do without you. (*Drawing Lucy closer to her; aside.*) Jack and I. (*Lucy unconsciously drops her glove; the Duke quickly picks it up.*)

DUKE. (*Presenting the glove to her.*) Allow me.

LUCY. (*Extending her hand.*) O, thank you.

FLORENCE. (*Noticing the handkerchief wound round Lucy's finger.*) What have you done to your hand?

LUCY. O, nothing much. I was sharpening a pencil for the children, and the knife slipped—

FLORENCE. O, Lucy!

DUKE. Have you done anything for it?

LUCY. This handkerchief—

DUKE. O, but that is not sufficient. I have a bit of court-plaster in my pocket—will you permit me?

LUCY. (*Timidly, with gratitude.*) Thank you. (*In a jiffy the Duke has removed his gloves. He takes from his pocket the court-plaster and a pen-knife, attached to which is a tiny pair of scissors. The palm of Lucy's hand is turned upwards.*)

FLORENCE. Does it pain you dear?

LUCY. O, not at all.

DUKE. Ah! About a quarter of an inch. (*He cuts a small piece of the plaster and dexterously applies it to the wound.*)

LUCY. (*Withdrawing her hand.*) Thank you ever so much.

DUKE. Ah, but that is not all. What about the other side?

LUCY. (*Turning her hand, disconcertedly.*) The other side.

DUKE. (*Touching the tips of her fingers.*) The seal of our friendship, mademoiselle, may it never be broken. (*He gallantly kisses her hand.*)

FLORENCE. That's the fee he usually charges for his services. (*A pause. The Duke looks intently at Lucy's hand.*) Are you going to do it again?

DUKE. (*Laughing lightly as he releases her.*) Pardon me. (*To Florence.*) No, but Mademoiselle has a hand that would attract the eye of an artist. I have seen only one like it before.

FLORENCE. (*With irony.*) A very dear friend of yours, I suppose?

DUKE. O, I shall never forget her.

FLORENCE. How romantic. (*Turning to Lucy, who is crimson in the face and looking ill at ease.*) Don't blush dear, it's only his way. (*Waltz music heard from without, Right, which continues till the curtain is down. A pause.*) Ah, that's the next number. (*She listens.*) (*Two or three couples pass at short intervals, in hall, from Left to Right and disappear. A young man comes quickly from the Right and meeting another couple from the opposite direction, claims his dance. The lady accepts the arm of her new partner and exit with him, Right. The gentleman who has been relieved, consults his cuff, continues on slowly, and also exit, Right.*)

DUKE. You are dancing it with somebody, I think you told me?

FLORENCE. (*Glancing about with an anxious and uncertain expression.*) Yes, I believe I am.

DUKE. And you, mademoiselle? (*Lucy appears nervous and at a loss what to say.*)

FLORENCE. You're not engaged for this dance, dear? (*Turning to the Duke.*) Of course, she's not.

DUKE. Then I may have the pleasure, I hope.

LUCY. O, Your Grace, it is very kind of you to ask me, but I fear—

FLORENCE. (*Interrupting her.*) O, don't be alarmed, dear; Mother won't be annoyed; the Duke will see to that.

(*Enter GORDON, Right.*)

DUKE. (*Smiling.*) There! In the face of so brilliant a recommendation—

GORDON. I managed to get away, you see.

FLORENCE. (*Her face wreathed in smiles.*) O, and it's a waltz too.

GORDON. Still, I wish you would sit it out with me. (*He turns slightly and directs his gaze for a moment to the Duke.*)

FLORENCE. (*Pleasantly.*) O, very well.

GORDON. (*Proffering his arm.*) I want to tell you of a certain experience I had (*leading her to Centre Entrance*) in No-Man's-Land. How *astonishing* I was (*looking intently at her*) for somebody. (*Gordon and Florence go along Hall and out Left. The Duke who has been watching them with apparent interest, turns to Lucy.*)

DUKE. (*Proffering his arm.*) Mademoiselle, nous allons causer maintenant. (*Lucy takes the Duke's arm and he leads her off, Right.*)

THE END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The scene represents an artistically decorated, and prettily furnished room, in a cottage at Newport. There are three entrances; one at Centre, which leads to the passage, and the others at Left and Upper Right; all are provided with portieres. There is a mantel Right, and a settee, and chair close by. A davenport, and a small fancy chess-table, with the pieces placed in position ready for play, and two gilt chairs, Right. A hunting crop, and a case filled with golf clubs, stand on the floor near the davenport. On the walls are hung a few small-sized paintings and some old engravings depicting military scenes, also a large plaque on which are crossed a lot of foils, a mask, and several pistols of different sizes and calibre. A suit of armour stands in the left-hand corner, and there is a table and great chair, Left Centre. No lavish display of wealth is to be seen here, but everything is in the best taste possible.*

DISCOVERED.—*ARMAND DE COURCY is seated at the davenport Left, writing. He is rather a handsome, middle-aged man, with distinctively foreign features, and his moustache and imperial are carefully waxed. He is dressed in a morning coat of light coloured cloth; trousers of the same material; a fancy waistcoat, patent-leather shoes and white spats.*

(Enter GILBERT, Centre, with letters on a salver. And old and devoted servant of seventy-five, with long bushy white hair. He is wrinkled and bent with age, but in spite of his years, he is still able to get around freely and with some degree of smartness. He is dressed in a full-dress livery coat of dark material; knee-breeches to match, black stockings, and low buckle shoes.)

GILBERT. Pardon me, Mr. de Courcy, but the landlord has been here again.

ARMAND. What! After having entertained the vulgar brute and his son, for a whole hour last evening, he has the impudence to call again?

GILBERT. He said you promised him a cheque, sir.

ARMAND. O. but he took a cigar; and drank our good sherry; and I allowed him to talk to me—so long, that I missed my engagement at the Wilberforces. Is that not sufficient, Gilbert?

GILBERT. It is very disconcerting, but we're in America, sir, and I fear that the people, here, don't understand our ways.

ARMAND. They will, some day. As for this odious landlord, don't let me see, or hear of him, again, for, at least, another month.

GILBERT. (*Courtesying*) The Duke's mail, sir.

ARMAND. Let's see. (*Takes letters from salver and smells each separately; replacing first one on salver.*) Invitation. (*Ditto the second*) Invitation. (*Ditto the third*) Invitation. (*Having carefully smelt the fourth missive, he looks curiously at Gilbert; tossing letter on desk.*) Bill.

GILBERT. Yes, sir. (*The fifth is a perfumed note and receives special attention.*)

ARMAND. (*Replacing it on salver.*) Correspondence. (*Gilbert deposits letters on table Left Centre, and fidgets about.* Armand opens envelope containing bill; scanning it over.) American Beauties. Violets: Two hundred and fifty dollars. Tiddle-dee-dum-dee-dee. (*Noticing Gilbert's restlessness.*) Gilbert.

GILBERT. (*Respectfully*) Yes, sir.

ARMAND. You wished to consult me about an hour ago concerning His Grace. I was busy then, but now—

GILBERT. (*Advancing eagerly*) Yes sir, yes sir.

ARMAND. Is it anything important?

GILBERT. Oh yes sir, it is sir.

ARMAND. Because, yesterday, I remember you entertained me for ten minutes gossiping on the subject of cold feet, and the number of times His Grace had yawned and sneezed and snored the night previous.

GILBERT. Ah! but sir, this last night has been an exceptionally bad one.

ARMAND. What time did His Grace retire?

GILBERT. Three o'clock, sir.

ARMAND. Precisely. Ate copiously, retired late, had an indigestion—result, cold feet.

GILBERT. (*Timidly*) Excuse me, sir, but I think his feet were all right.

ARMAND. (*With comic seriousness.*) Are you sure?

GILBERT. (*Earnestly*) Yes, sir, but—he had bad dreams, going from one back into another, and sir—(*Glances about the room; confidentially.*) it was all about her.

ARMAND. Her?

GILBERT. The lady of his youth, sir.

ARMAND. Oh! (*Becoming suddenly interested though feigning indifference, he glances over his shoulder and speaks in a low voice.*) He hasn't had many of these bad dreams lately, has he?

GILBERT. Not since a year, sir, and they were never so bad as last night, sir.

ARMAND. Indeed!

GILBERT. \ This time he spoke about the child, sir.

ARMAND. Did he?

GILBERT. I thought you would surely hear him, sir.

ARMAND. Did he say anything about it this morning?

GILBERT. Oh, yes sir.

ARMAND. What?

GILBERT. May it please you, sir, I didn't understand everything, my heart became so sick, and I felt so bad myself that my brain, you see, sir—

ARMAND. Never mind about your brain, Gilbert. Tell me as near as you can remember what His Grace said.

GILBERT. (*Casting an anxious glance about as before.*) He said that he fancied himself being chased by the Evil One, sir, but that an angel had appeared and saved him. The angel, he said, was she, sir. (*Slightly raising his voice.*) She, sir.

ARMAND. (*Raising his hand as a sign of caution.*) I understand.

GILBERT. And he—he said that he would surely go to Heaven, sir, because he had loved her better than anybody else, sir, and that if he had only had the courage to

marry her, in spite of the wishes of his father, sir—he—he—

ARMAND. (*Interrupting him*) Modulate your voice, Gilbert.

GILBERT. I—I'm excited, sir.

ARMAND. Well, calm yourself. Now tell me quietly. When His Grace returned from Mrs. Wilberforce's last night, did you notice anything unusual? That's the point I want to get at.

GILBERT. (*Speaking in subdued tones.*) He insisted upon taking off his boots, alone and unaided, sir.

ARMAND. Anything else?

GILBERT. I—I think that is all, sir.

ARMAND. (*Directing his attention again to the letters.*) No harm has been done then.

GILBERT. (*Mournfully*) Oh, but I fear, sir.

ARMAND. Tut, tut, you're getting old, Gilbert. How many years, by the by, have you served the Duke's family?

GILBERT. This is the third generation, sir.

ARMAND. And I—(*Stopping for a moment to think*) let me see. The Duke and I were class-mates at college in '99: that's 21 years ago, isn't it?

GILBERT. Ah, but you are still strong and brave and young, sir.

ARMAND. Forty-two, Gilbert.

GILBERT. That is not on the brink whereon I stand, sir, with all my sins to answer for.

ARMAND. (*Lightly; turning his attention, once more, to the Duke's mail.*) Go to confession and get absolution.

GILBERT. (*Gravely*) I have been to confession, sir.

ARMAND. (*Leaning forward again; astonished.*) You!

GILBERT. I hadn't been for fifty years.

ARMAND. You old reprobate. That accounts for my trousers not being properly pressed last night. When did you go—yesterday?

GILBERT. As soon as I had read the article, sir.

ARMAND. (*With a puzzled expression.*) Article?

GILBERT. (*Gradually becoming agitated again.*) The good father told me to make a clean breast of everything, but I still hesitated—hesitated, sir. This morning though, after His Grace had spoken, I felt so weak and—and faint, sir, and—and—

ARMAND. Not so fast. Take it easy. Have you done anything wrong, Gilbert?

GILBERT. (*Producing a newspaper from his pocket and handing it to Armand.*) Read, sir.

ARMAND. This is a London paper and it's addressed to the Duke. Hello! There's a paragraph marked off.

GILBERT. Read, sir. (*Armand unfolds part of the paper.*)

ARMAND. (*Reading.*) "Gossip. It is rumoured on good authority that an old time adventure which promised, many years ago, to furnish society with the conventional nine days' talk, but which was, at the time, mysteriously hushed up, is likely to be revived by the father of the girl with whom a certain young French nobleman eloped. It appears that detectives have been engaged to search for the child, whom the aforesaid father of the girl believes is still living." (*Slapping his knee with the paper.*) Oh! This is an outrageous trick played by some jealous enemy here, in the hope of discrediting the Duke.

GILBERT. (*Meekly.*) O, you don't understand, sir.

ARMAND. Possibly! Still, it looks very much like it, Gilbert. His Grace has not seen this paper?

GILBERT. No, sir. I—I intercepted it, sir.

ARMAND. You did perfectly right, but how did you know?

GILBERT. The pen marks attracted my attention, sir.

ARMAND. Yes, yes, I see. You shall be rewarded, Gilbert.

GILBERT. (*Plaintively.*) May it please you, sir, suppose it were true?

ARMAND. True?

GILBERT. The article, sir.

ARMAND. (*Looking at him curiously.*) How can it be?

GILBERT. If the child were living, sir.

ARMAND. (*Suspiciously.*) Living! What do you mean? You saw it buried—(*His expression turning to one of anxiety.*) Didn't you?

GILBERT. No, sir.

ARMAND. (*In a low voice.*) What!

GILBERT. That story was all made up, sir.

ARMAND. (*Reproachfully.*) Gilbert! You deceived His Grace.

GILBERT. I had no choice in the matter, sir. The Duke's father made me do it; he obliged me; he made me an accomplice, sir; he—he—

ARMAND. (*Placing his fingers to his lips.*) S-h-h!

GILBERT. Ah, sir, it has been on my conscience these twenty years.

ARMAND. Tell me what happened, why this deception. (*Gilbert again looks about the room anxiously.*) Speak low and nobody will hear you.

GILBERT. The elder Duke, sir, knew that his son had become attached to the child, and foreseeing trouble in the future, he made up his mind to get rid of it.

ARMAND. Get rid of it—how?

GILBERT. He sent the young Marquis on a trip—this time to Switzerland—you remember, sir, you accompanied him.

ARMAND. Well?

GILBERT. And during his absence, arranged that the child should be disposed of and reported dead.

ARMAND. But how, how?

GILBERT. O, sir, I was ordered to pay the nurse a sum of money to go to London.

ARMAND. With the child?

GILBERT. Yes, sir.

ARMAND. What became of it then, and the Nurse?

GILBERT. The Nurse died in Paris, two months ago—before we sailed, sir.

ARMAND. How do you know?

GILBERT. She sent for me, sir.

ARMAND. She sent for you—well? You went, I suppose? What about the child, is it alive?

GILBERT. That I am unable to say, sir. For many years the nurse had lost track of it, but may it please you, sir, she told me that she had written to the wealthy old gentleman; he is over eighty, sir, and when he learned of the deception—that the child, his granddaughter, sir, had not died as reported—

ARMAND. S—S—S—S—

GILBERT. He swore that he would spend his last shilling to find her, in partial atonement for having disowned his only daughter, sir.

ARMAND. Hush, man.

GILBERT. (*Speaking almost in a whisper.*) The whole of Scotland Yard is looking for her, sir. (*A pause.*)

ARMAND. (*In a low voice; pondering with evident satisfaction at the thought.*) Still, they have not found her.

DUKE. (*Calling from without R.*) Gilbert!

ARMAND. (*Quickly putting the paper in his pocket.*) Not a word of this to the Duke, remember. He must not know.

GILBERT. (*Crossing to Right.*) I understand, sir.

(*Enter the DUKE, Right, robed in a rich dressing-gown.*)

DUKE. Give me a cachou.

GILBERT. Yes, your Grace. (*Gilbert hastens to table, Left Centre, for cachou-box. Armand rises and consults his watch.*)

DUKE. Good morning, Armand.

ARMAND. Good afternoon.

DUKE. Is it late?

ARMAND. Four o'clock.

DUKE. O-h! (*Takes a cachou and goes to mantel Left, where he looks at himself in the mirror.*)

(*GILBERT retires up stage.*)

ARMAND. You're not looking very spruce to-day.

DUKE. (*Massaging his forehead.*) No, and the worst of it is, I've manufactured for myself a new wrinkle, during the early hours of the morning.

ARMAND. Was your sleep not refreshing?

DUKE. (*Pitching his voice in a key higher than usual.*) Refreshing! (*Turning round; in a confidential tone.*) I saw the Devil three times. (*Turning to the looking-glass again.*) Rather unlucky number, isn't it?

ARMAND. (*Eyeing him closely.*) Too bad that somebody from higher up didn't come and chase him.

DUKE. Somebody did come. (*Turning round again.*) His Satanic Majesty was told that he had made a mistake.

ARMAND. Ah!

DUKE. (*Crossing to table, Left Centre.*) Still I had a bad night of it for all that.

ARMAND. What was the trouble?

DUKE. My dear man, I went to bed thinking, and I fell asleep thinking—of my college days—you remember, Armand; those happy days, when a fellow is denied the right to repair the wrong he does—others. Happy days! The remembrance of it all goads a man's conscience into *peri nighimare*—at least, that is my case.

ARMAND. Your case, is the case of every man who, at some time or other, in the spring time of his life, takes a fling at nature. (*The Duke's expression instantly changes to one of pain.*) Your Governor used to say "forget the past." Let me add to that, now, it's bad for your liver.

DUKE. Indeed.

ARMAND. First thing you know, your brow'll be covered with wrinkles—and wrinkles are not particularly welcome just now.

DUKE. (*Reproachfully.*) Possibly! Still you mustn't jest at the memories I cherish, Armand. If I choose to dwell in the remembrance of that single year of my youth—let me. (*With deep feeling.*) The privilege, let me tell you, is craved by one whose soul escaped with *hers*—when she died. (*His voice trembling with emotion.*) Died in the flower and in the innocence and chasteness of her young life, ah—(*Armand's expression has slowly changed to one of deep concern as he closely observes the Duke.*)

ARMAND. *That is your sorrow. (The Duke slowly turns his head to look at Armand.)*

DUKE. *(Gravely.)* God willed it so.

ARMAND. Then bear it with fortitude—like a man.

DUKE. *(Resolutely.)* It is because I *am* a man that, sometimes, I grieve for her. *(Calmly.)* Armand, I would give my life to say in truth that I had married her.

ARMAND. Marriage was impossible

DUKE. Aye, but even in spite of a cruel and relentless parent.

ARMAND. You had both agreed to wait.

DUKE. I know it, but we made a mistake nevertheless—a fatal mistake, Armand.

ARMAND. Your Governor would have disinherited you: you would have lost everything.

DUKE. Everything except happiness.

ARMAND. But happiness and poverty do not travel well together.

DUKE. O, yes they do—sometimes.

ARMAND. Well—a—not between meals, at all events; and as you would have had little to eat for days at a time—

DUKE. *(Interrupting him.)* Please don't jest about it.

ARMAND. *(With comic severity.)* Indeed, I am not jesting, but trying to bring you to a realization of the fact that without money—

DUKE. *(Interrupting him again.)* Money! O, I know what you would say; but did the money I inherited make me happy?

ARMAND. *(Composedly.)* Don't be so selfish, old chap.

DUKE. *(His expression suddenly changing; calmly.)* Oh! For the moment I had forgotten about you. *(He half turns on his heel; facing Armand again.)* Money is so easily spent; and as for your happiness, well! Seeing that our exchequer is well nigh bankrupt, Armand—

ARMAND. *(Interrupting.)* O, but in the meantime—prospects are good.

DUKE. *(Reflectively.)* I wonder.

ARMAND. Well, I am jolly well satisfied.

DUKE. (*In a lighter vein.*) Because you have me here—my bones and my flesh—amongst the fashionable buyers of crowns and escutcheons?

ARMAND. (*Protesting.*) Don't put it that way—please.

DUKE. (*With sarcasm.*) Will they buy me, old dear?

ARMAND. You mean, is the lady worthy the honor.

DUKE. I should think that you would judge so. I am in the middle-age class, and she's twenty; cordially hates me, and—a—I respect her. Everybody else, though, is getting on my nerves. I am weary of this country.

ARMAND. Old friend, buck up. You have had a bad night of it, I can see that; and you're a little despondent but—you will cheer up, won't you?

DUKE. (*Reminiscently.*) Perhaps, if I had something to live for.

ARMAND. Soon you will have—(*Watching him closely.*) Through this marriage—millions to live for.

DUKE. I don't mean that.

ARMAND. (*Looking suspiciously at him.*) No.

DUKE. Think of what a blessing it would have been if God had but spared me the little one. The anti-type of her mother, perhaps; I should have loved her—lived for her. To have made her happy would have put joy in my own heart and made life—worth living.

ARMAND. Why lament?

DUKE. We should have escaped this trip to America, Armand.

ARMAND. O, nonsense! Come, buck up, I say—you've got to—for my sake; that means for your own sake too, for are we not inseparable friends? We always have been; and now, because you've lost your grip for a minute, don't expect me to let go.

DUKE. I wish you would let go.

ARMAND. (*Astonished.*) Eh!

DUKE. If only to pick me up again, Armand. (*Armand laughs.*)

ARMAND. Smile, smile. (*Duke smiles.*) That's it! I predict that, some day, you will actually become attached to this blessed country.

DUKE. You think so?

ARMAND. Well, I hate to think of what would have become of you—and me—if I hadn't induced you to come to America.

DUKE. I've already said that the exchequer was well nigh bankrupt.

ARMAND. Certainly, and I am to blame.

DUKE. (*Protesting.*) No, no, no.

ARMAND. Very largely. You have always paid my debts—since we were boys at college, old friend.

DUKE. I wish you wouldn't talk about these things.

ARMAND. Why not? If we talked more about these things, perhaps you'd recover your lost soul.

DUKE. (*Affecting an injured air.*) Armand!

ARMAND. And you'd become a bit more practical too. Your fagged out conscience would take a nap; and as for periodical nightmares, they would so well adhere to the rarebits you eat, that the organs of your digestion would become the masters of your dreams.

DUKE. *Goodness!* Whatever are you driving at?

ARMAND. Well, the truth of the matter is, I don't like these little fits of despondency. This is the second attack in a year, and the worst of the lot.

DUKE. We don't discuss it, old chap.

ARMAND. But I want you to help yourself a little more. Just so as to make things easier for me, don't you see.

DUKE. In what way?

ARMAND. Why, in assisting your august person to a bed of roses, of course—American Beauties.

DUKE. O, I see.

ARMAND. Dear old friend; you'll soon get married, won't you?

DUKE. It shall be just as you say, Armand. You have begun this campaign—finish it.

ARMAND. Ah! Reason hath spoken. Now, stick to it, man, and I'll finish it, rest assured about that. Let's

look over your mail. We have received but one bill to-day.

DUKE. What does it matter?

ARMAND. True, one or a dozen; our credit is good. *(Glancing at invitation card.)* A reception at Mrs. Huntingdon Peabody's. *(Tosses card on table; opens second envelope.)* Immensely wealthy people, but no girls in the family. *(Glancing at card.)* Dance at the Houghtelings. *(Tosses second card on table; opening the third.)* Old Houghteling began life as a pick-miner in California. *(Glancing at invitation.)* Another reception. *(Tossing missive on table)* at the De Smith's.

DUKE. *(Inquiringly.)* De Smith's?

ARMAND. *(Opening the fourth.)* She's a widow with an only daughter and a crest of her own invention. *(Taking the letter from the envelope.)* This is a letter, shall I—

DUKE. Please.

ARMAND. *(Turning page over.)* From Mrs. Wakem de Pulsivar. *(Reading)* "My dear Duke. My niece, Miss Potter—

DUKE. *(Interrupting.)* Potter! Potter!

ARMAND. I remember her. She's noted in my memorandum book. *(Handing Duke the letter.)* One moment and we'll see. *(Armand goes to davenport, Left Centre, for book. The Duke adjusts his monocle.)*

DUKE. *(Reading.)* "My niece, Miss Potter, of whom you have already heard me speak, is spending a few days with me, and is anxious to meet you." O, dear! O, dear! *(Glancing again at the letter; to Armand.)* She invites me to dine with her.

ARMAND. Mrs. de Pulsivar is one of those funny persons you met at the charity bazaar, shortly after your arrival. *(Reading from index of memorandum book.)* "Peters, Purdy, Prattle, Pentland, Potter." Ah, Evangeline, page sixty-two. *(Turns pages over.)* *(The aversion the Duke feels at the hearing of such a record is plainly seen in his expression. During the recital of the above, he involuntarily gives forth little spasmodic twitches as each name is spoken.)* *(Reading.)* "Miss Evangeline Potter, heiress. Not less than a million dollars; brunette, under

thirty. Plain looking. Pimples." (*The Duke involuntarily starts again, his antipathy increasing.*) "Weight, about one hundred and forty; height, about five feet two. Only daughter of a Texan bullock trader. (*Another start.*) "Introduction promised by—

DUKE. (*Interrupting him.*) Oh! Armand, I beg of you. If you have really thought it expedient to keep such a record, at least spare me the pain of listening to it.

ARMAND. (*Innocently.*) Every well-regulated establishment keeps books.

DUKE. But they don't post them as often as you do. (*Bell rings; starting.*) What's that?

ARMAND. (*Calmly.*) Why, the door bell. (*Gilbert goes to answer bell.*)

DUKE. What time is it?

ARMAND. (*Consulting his watch.*) Half past four.

DUKE. (*Quickly.*) Gilbert!

GILBERT. Your Grace!

DUKE. Not vet, wait a moment. (*To Armand.*) It must be Miss Wilberforce and her mother, and Miss Brown, and the rest of them. I invited about a dozen, I think, to see my pictures and bric-a-brac. Fetch my coat, Gilbert, quick.

GILBERT. Yes, Your Grace.

(*GILBERT hastens off and exit Right. Duke slips off dressing-gown.*)

ARMAND. (*Clearing table of letters.*) We've nothing ready, I'm afraid.

DUKE. Then we shall have to make the best of it. (*Arranging his cravat.*) How do I look?

ARMAND. Tip-top.

DUKE. What about that wrinkle?

ARMAND. (*Making a comic pass before the Duke's eyes.*) Gone, by jove!

(*Re-enter GILBERT, Right, with a black cut-away and a large atomizer.*)

DUKE. (*Seeing Gilbert.*) Ah! (*Gilbert places coat on chair Left Centre and proceeds to perfume the Duke from head to toe. He, then, assists him with his coat and again uses the atomizer unsparingly.*)

ARMAND. (*Crossing to Right*) Order tea and lemonade—and some cake, Gilbert,—in a hurry. (*Armand seats himself at the chess-table, Right, and busies himself arranging the pieces.*)

GILBERT. Yes, sir.

ARMAND. And serve it in the Art Room.

GILBERT. Yes, sir. (*Gilbert turns to leave.*)

ARMAND. And Gilbert, don't forget the decanters.

GILBERT. No, sir.

(*Exit Gilbert Right.*)

DUKE. What are you going to do now, pray?

ARMAND. I am going to play you a game of chess.

DUKE. (*Surprised.*) Chess! Our guests have arrived.

ARMAND. Certainly—that's the point; I want them to catch you at it.

DUKE. (*Reluctantly.*) Oh, but what nonsense.

ARMAND. There is nothing like playing to the gallery sometimes. These American people, I assure you, love to be humbugged.

DUKE. (*Reprovingly.*) Armand, Armand.

ARMAND. I only want to impress them with the fact that you play well—that's all. (*Gilbert passes in hall from Right to Left.*)

DUKE. (*Seating himself.*) Still, I am not in sympathy with anything spurious or counterfeit, you know that, Armand.

ARMAND. Tut, tut! How difficult it is to get you to do anything. (*Playing his first piece; continuing.*) There! Let us try the Giuoco Piano opening; that, I'm sure is quite legitimate. (*Duke makes a movement as if to turn; quickly.*) Don't turn, I can hear them coming. (*Gilbert enters, Centre, followed by Craven.*) S-s-s-sh! (*With full*

voice for effect.) You're a great chess-player, sir. You have actually checkmated me in six moves.

GILBERT. (*Announcing.*) Professor Craven.

(*Exit GILBERT Centre. He turns to Left.*)

DUKE. (*Rising and looking at Craven with aversion.*) Shades of my ancestors! (*A pause. To Armand.*) Checkmated you in six moves, eh? Oh, what rot, Armand.

ARMAND. I'm sorry, but I never thought that he would be invited. (*Armand rises.*)

DUKE. I had to invite him—Miss Dryden suggested it. What else could I do. (*A pause; Armand looks suspiciously at Craven.*)

ARMAND. I don't quite understand this fellow. Who is he?

DUKE. A bit of a scientist, hooked on to an old maid's petticoat.

ARMAND. A bit of a sneak, I should say. Look at 'im.

CRAVEN. Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet.

DUKE. (*Abruptly; speaking in trumpet.*) Welcome.

CRAVEN. (*Glancing about.*) You have a charming home, Duke.

DUKE. (*Dryly.*) I am not particularly fond of it.

CRAVEN. Dear me! I have visited worse.

DUKE. Bedlam, perhaps.

CRAVEN. No, St. Margaret's Foundling Hospital. (*Armand starts.*)

DUKE. (*Turning from him.*) What does he mean, Armand?

ARMAND. Leave him to me. (*Bell rings.*)

ARMAND. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Well, sir, what about St. Margaret's?

CRAVEN. Dear me!

ARMAND. Is it scientific research that bids you enter that public institution?

CRAVEN. Dear me!

ARMAND. Or is it that your visits there are inspired by the dictates of a throbbing conscience?

CRAVEN. Neither, but I'm going to write a book about the place some day, and I'll send you a copy. (*Turning to the Duke.*) Will you read it, Duke?

DUKE. (*Turning from him.*) O, go to the devil.

CRAVEN. You have a very singular humour, sir.

(*Re-enter GILBERT, Centre, followed by MRS. WILBERFORCE, FLORENCE, CLARA and NANCY. ARMAND leaves CRAVEN.*)

(*Exit GILBERT, Centre.*)

DUKE. (*With Chesterfieldian courtesy.*) Ah, Mrs. Wilberforce, I am delighted to see you. (*Shaking hands.*) Charmed. (*Shaking hands with Florence.*) Mademoiselle, my present happiness is too deep for utterance. (*Shaking hands with Nancy.*) Welcome, Miss Nancy. (*Crossing to Clara.*) Youth, beauty and intellect are rays of sunshine in a bachelor's asylum. (*Shaking hands.*) N'est-ce-pas, Madame?

CLARA. (*Laughing sillily.*) Oui—oui—Duke. (*Armand, also, cordially greets the visitors. Florence crosses to Nancy; Clara joins Craven.*)

(*Enter HOBBS Centre.*)

HOBBS. (*Extending his hand at an exaggerated height; indolently.*) How-de-do?

DUKE. (*Rising to the occasion; politely.*) How do you do, sir. (*Aside to Hobbs.*) You will find the lemonade and the decanters in the Art Room.

HOBBS. Yehas, yehas. (*Hobbs shakes hands with Nancy and Florence; they move to Right, while Lucy's absence is being discussed. Craven fixes his eyes alternately on the Duke, Mrs. Wilberforce and Florence. Armand listens attentively.*)

DUKE. (*Glancing about.*) But where is our little friend to-day?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Arrogantly.*) O, I never take Lucy visiting with me.

FLORENCE. (*Turning to Mrs. Wilberforce.*) But she's coming, Mamma. The Duke invited her specially, last night.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Coldly.*) Indeed.

FLORENCE. Yes, but there was no place in our car, so Jack is accompanying her.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Shocked.*) Jack, my dear. O, what will the people say? (*Florence turns rather abruptly from Mrs. Wilberforce to Nancy and Hobbs; the latter speaks to Armand and all four prepare to go out. Turning to the Duke.*) Our social position.

DUKE. It is so secure in its power and affluence, Mrs. Wilberforce, that you can afford to be generous.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. The trouble is, I have been too generous. Lucy has been allowed extraordinary privileges. She's being spoilt—unfitted for the work she is paid to do. Florence pampers and pets her—treats her as an equal and Jack—(*with bitter feeling*) encourages her.

DUKE. (*In a mild conciliating tone.*) Still, if she is worthy—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*With wounded pride.*) Worthy—O, Duke, surely—

DUKE. Really, I cannot help myself. The moment I was introduced to her last evening, I capitulated. We sat out two dances together, and it would be unmanly of me if I did not tell you, now, that I enjoyed myself. She is accomplished; has knowledge, and—a—speaks beautiful French.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. O, I admit that. Indeed, I'm inclined to think that I should like her better if she spoke more French and less English. (*The Duke courteously bows his head in submissive acknowledgment of the statement; turning to Armand.*) I was so disappointed, Mr. de Courcy, at not seeing you last evening.

ARMAND. I must apologize. A couple of Ambassadors Extraordinary called unexpectedly, and I was obliged to entertain them.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Why didn't you invite them to come with you? (*Armand shakes his head negatively.*) You might, at least, have telephoned me.

ARMAND. No, Mrs. Wilberforce, they weren't the right sort—really. (*The Duke's expression throughout this conversation is a study.*)

(*Exit FLORENCE and NANCY Right, arm-in-arm, chatting. ARMAND follows them to the door, but waits there for HOBBS.*)

HOBBS. We are going with Mr. de Courcy to see your collection of curios, Duke.

DUKE. Capital! (*Turning to Mrs. Wilberforce.*) Suppose we all go.

(*Exit HOBBS Right, followed by ARMAND.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. By all means.

DUKE. (*Proffering his arm.*) Permit me.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Looking over her shoulder.*) Come Clara, we're going to visit the Duke's gallery.

CLARA. Oh, how lovely! (*Clara speaks a few words to Craven and both cross to Right. Bell rings.*)

DUKE. Is the Professor a tea-drinker, Miss Dryden?

CLARA. I think not. He has no small vices, Duke.

DUKE. Then he is sure to enjoy my cognac.

(*Exit MRS. WILBERFORCE and DUKE, followed by CLARA and CRAVEN.*)

(*GILBERT appears at Centre Entrance.*)

GILBERT. This way, sir.

(*Enter JACK and LUCY, Centre.*)

JACK. Don't disturb the Duke; announce us simply to Mr. de Courcy. (*Exit Gilbert Centre.*) At last. Isn't the street noisy? Now, we can finish our talk in peace, I hope.

LUCY. (*Earnestly.*) I thought you were through.

JACK. (*Meeting her gaze.*) I am sorry to disappoint you, but—the worst is yet to come. Sit down, won't you? (*She seats herself on settee, Right.*)

LUCY. (*Looking up at him.*) Mr. Wilberforce—

JACK. (*Feigning surprise.*) Mister! I thought you promised to call me Jack.

LUCY. I'm afraid I shall never be able to speak that name.

JACK. (*Leaning over her.*) Is it so very difficult?

LUCY. (*Modestly.*) Yes, especially when you are so near and—looking at me.

JACK. (*Slowly raising himself.*) You are afraid of me, then? (*Standing erect; with comic humor.*) Shall I retire to another room and let you practice a bit?

LUCY. I should be all the more embarrassed then.

JACK. I'll teach you an easy way. Imagine yourself, for a moment, speaking to a faithful old dog. (*He drops into the seat beside her.*)

LUCY. (*Suddenly, without thought.*) Oh, Jack!

JACK. (*Quickly.*) You see.

LUCY. (*With embarrassment.*) I didn't mean that—I was thinking of you, really.

JACK. Any you spoke my name unconsciously.

LUCY. I couldn't help myself.

JACK. Very well then, we shall dismiss the dog.

LUCY. *Ja—*(*She involuntarily checks herself.*)

JACK. (*Smiling graciously.*) Is it still so very difficult? (*She raises her eyes slowly and meets his gaze. Looking tenderly at her.*) Now, say Jack.

LUCY. Jack!

JACK. Easy, isn't it?

LUCY. Yes, but I must never give in to you again.

JACK. Oh, but you must. (*Gently taking her hand.*) Unless you wish to make me unhappy.

LUCY. (*Thoughtfully.*) Unhappy?

JACK. (*With seriousness and feeling.*) Yes, very unhappy.

LUCY. (*Withdrawing her hand—sadly.*) Oh, don't.

JACK. You do not believe me guilty of insincerity, I hope.

LUCY. (*Earnestly.*) No. Oh, I didn't mean that.

JACK. What then?

LUCY. Even if you are sincere—

JACK. Well?

LUCY. Why tell me that—

JACK. (*Ardently.*) That I love you, Lucy.

LUCY. (*Meeting his gaze.*) Love me? What good will it ever do you? (*Lowering her eyes; mournfully.*) And me.

JACK. None whatever, unless you care a little for me also.

LUCY. (*Earnestly—forgetting all restraint.*) You know I do. (*Checking herself.*) Are we not the best of friends?

JACK. (*Fervently.*) More than that—say more than that.

LUCY. (*Looking into his eyes; with emotion.*) More than that? (*Turning her eyes from him.*) No, no, it is all too useless.

JACK. (*Passionately.*) Useless, when I love you, Lucy, with all the power and passion of my soul?

LUCY. (*Much affected; her voice trembling with emotion.*) Oh, don't say that; I have no right to listen to you.

JACK. No right?

LUCY. (*Calmly.*) You must know me better, Jack.

JACK. (*Looking curiously at her.*) Better!

LUCY. (*Slowly.*) Besides, Mrs. Wilberforce—

JACK. (*Interrupting her.*) Oh, I am perfectly independent of everybody now.

LUCY. Still—

JACK. (*Continuing.*) Of course, you know that I've come into my inheritance?

LUCY. (*Sadly; with a touch of reproach.*) O, I wasn't thinking of that.

JACK. Then there can be nothing else, Lucy—at least—

LUCY. (*Interposing; with deep feeling.*) The reproaches of your family, alone, would be an incentive to remorse; you would soon repent of your folly, and both of us would suffer.

JACK. (*Bitterly.*) Love, then, is not quite so blind as some people would have us believe.

LUCY. Oh, don't be cruel. Can't you see that I am fighting against my own happiness.

JACK. (*With fervor.*) Then you do love me!

LUCY. (*Much moved.*) I—

JACK. (*Placing his arm around her; passionately.*) Tell me; Lucy tell me—say that you love me.

LUCY. (*Looking lovingly into his eyes.*) Oh, Jack, I—

JACK. (*Drawing her closer to him.*) Say yes. (*A pause.*)

LUCY. (*Her voice trembling with deep emotion.*) Yes. (*Her head sinks upon his shoulder. A pause. Raising her head slowly and meeting his gaze.*) Now, are you satisfied?

JACK. (*Releasing her gently, and looking tenderly at her.*) Lucy, you have made this the happiest moment of my life. (*Joyously.*) From this minute we are engaged. Wealth, position, liberty, independence—all shall be yours and O, I shall make you so happy. (*She covers her face with her hands.*) (*A pause. Gently seizing one of her wrists.*) Lucy! (*She uncovers her face and looks at him.*) Why, there are tears in your eyes. Are you not happy?

LUCY. (*Much moved.*) Yes—but, I have something to tell you, Jack—to-night.

JACK. (*A little surprised.*) To-night. (*A pause; lightly.*) Oh, very well. (*Making a move as if to embrace her.*) In the meantime, my dear.

LUCY. (*Shrinking away.*) No, wait—wait until after I have told you—my secret.

JACK. (*Astonished at the seriousness of her voice.*) Your secret. (*Lucy lowers her eyes.*) Is it anything so dreadfully important?

LUCY. (*Bowing assent; in a voice almost inaudible.*)
Yes.

JACK. Why then must you wait till to-night?

LUCY. Because, were you to turn from me now—

JACK. (*Greatly surprised; looking at her with anxiety.*)
Turn from you? Why, Lucy, whatever do you mean?

LUCY. Do not question me, I implore you. (*Looking tenderly at him.*) To-night, Jack.

JACK. (*Gravely.*) You are serious. (*A pause.*)
Well, what of it? Nothing can separate us now. (*Looking at her intently.*) Nothing, eh Lucy?

LUCY. It will all depend on you, Jack.

(*Enter CRAVEN, Right.*)

CRAVEN. (*Meekly.*) Do I intrude? (*Jack and Lucy start.*)

JACK. (*Rising.*) Confound it, sir, you are always in the way. (*Lucy rises also.*)

CRAVEN. Pardon me, but would you mind repeating in the trumpet. (*Lucy closely observes Craven.*)

JACK. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Has Mrs. Wilberforce arrived?

CRAVEN. Yes, you will find her in the Art Room with the other guests viewing the Duke's curios. (*Craven, likewise, closely observes Lucy.*)

LUCY. (*To Jack.*) Had you not better join them?

JACK. We shall both go.

LUCY. No, I prefer to follow you later—please.

JACK. O, very well, dear.

LUCY. (*Walking slowly with Jack to Right Entrance.*)
Do you suppose your mother is angry with me?

JACK. Why should she be?

LUCY. I have a presentiment, Jack.

JACK. Come now, don't bother your head about presentiments. Trust everything to me—and mind now, don't forget your little secret to-night.

LUCY. I mean to tell you everything, Jack.

(*Exit JACK, Right.*)

CRAVEN. Now, suppose we have a little chat, eh?
(Lucy casts a glance about the room and moves quickly towards Craven.)

LUCY. Yes, yes, I want to speak to you.

CRAVEN. *(Coming forward to meet her and presenting the trumpet.)* Pardon me—*(Lucy seizes the trumpet.)*

LUCY. *(Repeating in the trumpet.)* I want to speak to you.

(ARMAND appears at Centre Entrance, unobserved. As he crosses the threshold, a sudden inspiration seizes him. He stops, then retreats, noiselessly, concealing himself in the draperies, and listens.)

CRAVEN. Confidentially?

LUCY. Yes.

CRAVEN. So do I.

LUCY. Perhaps you can help me.

CRAVEN. I hope so. Trust me.

LUCY. You told me last night, that you knew Dr. Brown.

CRAVEN. Your father?

LUCY. Dr. Brown was not my father.

CRAVEN. Ah!

LUCY. He adopted me.

CRAVEN. Seventeen years ago.

LUCY. *(Suddenly; with heightened interest.)* You know me then?

CRAVEN. *(Calmly.)* I—a—know about a certain young lady; and since our unexpected meeting last night, I have come to the conclusion that it must be you.

LUCY. I half suspected it.

CRAVEN. This young lady spent the first three years of her life in a public institution.

LUCY. St. Margarets?

CRAVEN. Precisely. Did the Doctor ever tell you—anything, about yourself?

LUCY. Once, when I insisted, he told me that I had been brought to the Home by an old nurse. My mother, she said, had died, and my father—

CRAVEN. Yes?

LUCY. Was living in a chateau, near Paris.

CRAVEN. Anything else?

LUCY. (*Shaking her head sadly.*) Daddy said, I must be content with that.

CRAVEN. (*Kindly.*) And so you must.

LUCY. (*Smiling sadly.*) I didn't care so much about myself yesterday, (*with deep feeling*) but to-day—

CRAVEN. To-day?

LUCY. O, it is different to-day. A few minutes ago the thought struck me that if you knew about me, there might be some hope; so I decided to speak to you at once. Well—it is over. To-night—I must tell him—

CRAVEN. (*Fastening his gaze upon her.*) Tell him—who?

LUCY. (*Dropping her eyes; hesitating.*) Why—

CRAVEN. Jack has proposed to you?

LUCY. (*Embarrassed.*) How do you know that he—

CRAVEN. That he has asked you to marry him? Dear me! The light in your eyes tells me that.

LUCY. (*Much affected; raising her hand to her eyes.*) O-h!

CRAVEN. And so you mean to tell Jack your story, eh?

LUCY. I must.

CRAVEN. Impossible child—don't do it.

LUCY. Not tell Jack? You would not have me deceive him, surely?

CRAVEN. N-o, yet—if you tell him your story, it is difficult to say what effect it will have on him, isn't it? Better marry him first, then—(*Lucy suddenly drops her end of the trumpet, her eyes fixed on Craven with an expression of awe and astonishment; there is a pause.*) Your happiness is at stake, remember—and his also.

LUCY. (*Shrinking from him.*) O, how you pain me.

CRAVEN. Let me speak to him.

LUCY. I would die first.

CRAVEN. (*Drawing close to her again, and presenting trumpet.*) Pardon me, but would you mind—

LUCY. (*Seizing trumpet and speaking into it.*) I said, I would die first. (*The whole of Armand's face peering through the draperies, and part of his form also, can now plainly be seen.*)

CrAVEN. Dear me! Then won't you put it off—until to-morrow? It is all so sudden—so unexpected. Your betrothal, too, has quite upset me—really.

LUCY. Then, I am sorry I troubled you.

CrAVEN. O, but I have taken an interest in you; I want to see you made happy; and I think I may prove to be of service to you; but you must wait—wait till to-morrow.

LUCY. Why wait—till to-morrow?

CrAVEN. I have my reasons—wait, I say.

LUCY. No, I have given my word to Jack and cannot go back on it.

(*Enter GILBERT, Right; ARMAND retires again, slightly.*)

GILBERT. Excuse me, Miss, but Mrs. Wilberforce is upstairs, and would like you to join her.)

(*ARMAND now boldly enters the room, coughing slightly as he does so. Lucy starts as she hears him, and turns quickly, standing timidly before him.*)

ARMAND. (*Bowing politely before Lucy.*) Miss Brown, I believe. I am Mr. de Courcy. Mrs. Wilberforce, I see, is getting anxious for you.

LUCY. Yes, may I join her?

ARMAND. By all means. (*Turning to Craven.*) Pardon me. (*Speaking in trumpet.*) Will you kindly conduct Miss Brown to the Art Room?

CrAVEN. Certainly. (*Proffering his arm.*) Allow me. (*As they go.*) The Duke has some pretty pieces, and most of them are genuine, I believe.

(*Exit CrAVEN and LUCY, Right.*)

ARMAND. (*Crossing to Gilbert; speaking with agitation, in a low voice and with deep concern and anxiety.*) Gilbert! When you visited the old nurse, did she tell you

in whose care she had given the child, or where she had left it?

GILBERT. May it please you, sir, she—she said that she had lost track of it.

ARMAND. You have already told me that; but what did she do with it?

GILBERT. (*Disconcerted.*) She—

ARMAND. Where did she take it? Think—

GILBERT. She—

ARMAND. O, can't you remember? She must have told you—surely.

GILBERT. She kept it two and a half years, I think, sir, then—

ARMAND. Yes, yes.

GILBERT. Then her money gave out, and she took it to—to—O, let me think, sir. Excitement, sometimes, gets my brain foggy, sir.

ARMAND. (*Recovering his composure and speaking calmly.*) You are right. Take it calmly. I am a trifle upset myself. Think quietly. Recollect, if you can, just one thing. You say that her money gave out?

GILBERT. Yes, sir.

ARMAND. Very well. Now, can you remember what she did with the child when her money gave out? (*A pause. Gilbert lapses into a moment's reflection.*)

GILBERT. (*His countenance suddenly clearing.*) Yes, sir. She took it to an institution—Saint—Saint—

ARMAND. (*Finishing the name for him.*) Margarets?

GILBERT. (*With enlightened expression.*) That's it, sir, St. Margarets.

ARMAND. (*Putting his hand to his brow; speaking calmly; but in a voice of mental distress.*) O, God!

GILBERT. (*Deeply concerned.*) What is it, sir?

ARMAND. (*Slowly recovering his composure and glancing about the room.*) I know I can trust you, Gilbert.

GILBERT. (*Staring blankly at Armand.*) Yes, sir.

ARMAND. I may need your assistance. Prepare to be shocked. I am going to tell you something—a bit of news. (*Glancing about the room as before; raising his finger to*

his lips and speaking in a low tone.) Not a sound, remember.

GILBERT. (*Speaking in a whisper.*) No, sir.

ARMAND. I have discovered the Duke's daughter. (*Gilbert involuntarily retreats a step, his mouth open as if to speak; making a sign of caution.*) S-s-s— The young lady has just quit the room, and at this moment may be talking to her father.

GILBERT. (*Placing his hand to his heart.*) O, conscience—my conscience.

ARMAND. Never mind about your conscience. We must act.

GILBERT. (*Plaintively.*) Does he know, sir?

ARMAND. Of course not—nobody knows. Nobody must know—not a soul.

GILBERT. (*Mechanically repeating; his voice almost inaudible.*) Not a soul.

ARMAND. Otherwise, it would lead to ruin and disaster. She must not be permitted to speak about herself to anybody; you understand, Gilbert?

GILBERT. (*Thoroughly frightened.*) Scotland Yard, sir.

ARMAND. (*Pointedly.*) It might get to Scotland Yard by way of Mr. Wilberforce, or Professor Craven.

GILBERT. The gentleman with the ear trumpet.

ARMAND. The gentleman with the ear trumpet seems to be conversant with everybody's affairs.

GILBERT. Entertain him, sir.

ARMAND. I mean to—confidentially—to-morrow. As for Mr. Wilberforce, it is imperative that she should not speak to him.

GILBERT. Not speak to him?

ARMAND. Not a single word. In the meantime; while they are in the house, watch them closely—don't leave them alone.

GILBERT. Had I not better go to them now, sir?

ARMAND. Yes!

(*Enter MRS. WILBERFORCE, Centre.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Did you deliver my message, Gilbert?

GILBERT. Yes, Mrs. Wilberforce.

ARMAND. Miss Brown left the room with Professor Craven to join you, not two minutes ago.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Then I must have come through the second hall and missed her. (*To Gilbert.*) Gilbert, ask Miss Brown to come down again.

(GILBERT bows and exit Right.)

ARMAND. Before you see Miss Brown permit me to tell you something, Mrs. Wilberforce. Pardon my presumption, but knowing how jealously you guard your social preeminence, and having the Duke's best interests at heart, I consider it my duty to warn you.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Indeed, I am very grateful to you, Mr. de Courcy. Nothing serious has happened, I hope?

ARMAND. Nothing as yet, Mrs. Wilberforce. It pains me to tell you, nevertheless, that your son—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*With sudden interest.*) Yes?

ARMAND. This is strictly entre-nous, of course.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Anxiously.*) Certainly, certainly. Where is he?

ARMAND. A—probably with Miss Brown.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Oh, I think I understand you. Indeed, it was on this subject that I wished to speak to Lucy.

ARMAND. But you do not know, of course, that she is engaged to your son?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Greatly surprised; arrogantly.*) To my son?

ARMAND. It seems incredible, I know, but—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. It is impossible, Mr. de Courcy.

ARMAND. I regret to say that it is only too true—on my word as a gentleman, Mrs. Wilberforce.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Placing her hand to heart and sighing with indignation.*) Oh, I shall dismiss her instantly.

ARMAND. (*With tact.*) Pardon me, but if you will allow me to make a suggestion—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. A suggestion—

ARMAND. I think, really, that by dismissing Miss Brown you will not accomplish the cure that you hope for.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Earnestly, with feeling.*) But Jack will see his error, surely.

ARMAND. I doubt it. He is already too much infatuated.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Oh, can it be possible?

ARMAND. I assure you.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I'll appeal to her conscience, if she has one, and as for Jack—(*Her voice softening.*) Well—

ARMAND. Mr. Wilberforce has arranged to meet her this evening. (*She utters an exclamation of mingled pain and disgust; a pause.*) Suppose Miss Brown were to write him a note, Mrs. Wilberforce?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. A note?

ARMAND. You might even dictate it yourself.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Yes.

ARMAND. That, I think, would settle the matter.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. I think so too. It is an excellent idea, and so expedient.

(*Enter CRAVEN and LUCY, Right.*)

CRAVEN. (*As they enter.*) Miss Brown was afraid that you might leave without her.

LUCY. (*Coming forward.*) Have I kept you waiting, Mrs. Wilberforce?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. It doesn't matter, are you ready?

LUCY. (*Gently.*) Yes, Mrs. Wilberforce.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Come along then.

CRAVEN. Dear me!

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*To Armand.*) I owe the Duke an apology for hurrying away in this manner, but I

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shall explain the matter to him when he calls with you, to-morrow.

(Exit MRS. WILBERFORCE, Right, followed by LUCY.)

(Craven watches them closely, as they retire. Armand breathes a sigh of relief and seats himself in chair near Centre Entrance.)

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The scene represents another room in the Wilberforce mansion, and shows from the high glass doors, which are at the back and to the extreme right of the apartment, the foliage and flowers in the gardens beyond. The doors, which are thrown wide open, give on to a spacious veranda, on the sides of which, ivy is trained. To the left, and about ten feet above the floor level, is a door, access to which is gained by a broad flight of steps with a handsome balustrade, reaching into the room above. The staircase is built with a single turn; the first landing being about thirty inches from the bottom. One end of the large reception hall, a good view of which is had in the first act, connects with the room at the upper left hand corner, and one of the lofty French windows, also shown in the first act, is seen under the staircase; jardinières with natural plants stand on either side of it. To the right, is another door, and two chairs and a table close by; a settee and more chairs to the left, and a divan well up centre near the wall, the furniture and decorations being rich and expensive. The time is midday, and from the open doors, the rays of a bright sun can be seen streaming through the foliage in the gardens, at the back.*

DISCOVERED.—CLEGHORN, seated near table, Right, reading a book. *His back is partly turned towards the staircase, and he has his glasses on.*

(Enter FLORENCE from balcony, Upper Right. She has a dejected appearance.)

FLORENCE. Good morning, Mr. Cleghorn.

CLEGHORN. *(Looking up.)* Ah, good morning. Is this your first appearance? You don't look very spruce.

FLORENCE. I've been reading.

CLEGHORN. So have I, a most interesting little book.

FLORENCE. Whom is it by?

CLEGHORN. *(Scrutinizing the book.)* I don't know. The title is, "A Self-made Man," and it says, simply, "By

an American." (*Placing the book on the table.*) I found the book hidden in a corner, at the bottom of one of the library cases, covered with dust and cobwebs.

FLORENCE. I remember it.

CLEGHORN. Have you read it?

FLORENCE. No, but Dad used to read it to us, years ago, when we were children.

CLEGHORN. Undoubtedly, your dear old father used to swear by the book. He called it his business bible, and used to say that every family man should teach it to his children; you must remember that too. (*Florence doesn't seem to relish the subject. Her features are set and have an expression of sadness.*)

FLORENCE. Yes.

CLEGHORN. (*Looking at her over his glasses.*) What's on your mind?

FLORENCE. (*With sudden change of expression; forcing a smile.*) Nothing in particular.

CLEGHORN. (*Looking curiously at her.*) E-m-m- (*Harris appears at the top of the stairs and descends, carrying a dress-suit case and a portmanteau. Florence moves towards Centre. Removing glasses.*) I'm afraid, I've put my foot into it. (*Rising and seeing Harris, who has reached the bottom of the stairs.*) Hello! Anybody going away?

HARRIS. Mr. Wilberforce, sir.

CLEGHORN. (*Enquiringly.*) Jack, Florence?

(*Exit HARRIS by hall, Left.*)

FLORENCE. Yes, haven't you heard?

CLEGHORN. No!

FLORENCE. He intends putting up at the club, I think.

CLEGHORN. Well!

FLORENCE. Lucy is going away also.

CLEGHORN. For Heavens sake! Has the crash come already? Tell me about it.

FLORENCE. They have been separated.

CLEGHORN. (*Greatly surprised.*) Jack has given her up? (*Florence lowers her eyes.*) O, shame! (*Rising.*)

I am thoroughly disappointed in the boy. Of course, it's none of my business whom you people marry. Marriage is a failure anyway, but there is such a thing as *love*; it is, or it should be, the best part of a woman's nature, for all else goes with it. A girl's whole life is centered in the man who succeeds in winning her affections, and if he abandons her, he is a coward.

FLORENCE. But Jack seemed so determined.

CLEGHORN. Pshaw! He stole the girl's heart when his mama wasn't looking. But I'll tell him what I think of his conduct, and your mother, too. Where is Jack?

FLORENCE. I haven't seen him since yesterday.

CLEGHORN. Poor little Lucy. Too bad that she ever listened to him, isn't it?

FLORENCE. She wouldn't at first but—

CLEGHORN. But he finally got the best of her—naturally.

FLORENCE. Because I encouraged her.

CLEGHORN. (*Looking at her in surprise.*) You?

FLORENCE. O, I know what you'll think of me now, but—Jack said that he loved her and—(*This reference to Jack, and the encouragement and support which she has extended, chiefly on account of his love for Lucy, would indicate to anybody unfamiliar with the real facts that her own conduct, towards Gordon, was actuated by other more worldly motives. Florence is deeply sensitive as regards this, and noticing Cleghorn's peculiar expression, is scarcely able to continue.*)

CLEGHORN. (*Quietly, with a cynical smile.*) I wonder that you took any notice of such sentiment. (*A pause. Her features contract and she remains staring into vacancy.*) I've a good mind to try and make a match of it with Gordon. (*Florence's expression instantly changes and her eyes sparkle with a peculiar light as she directs her gaze to him.*) I believe they're just suited to one another. Now, why didn't I think of that last night. I'll give him a good hint on the subject when he calls. (*Consulting his watch.*) He should be here in a moment.

FLORENCE. Here?

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CLEGHORN. Yes, I have an appointment with him, and the time is past due now. I wish he'd hurry.

(Re-enter HARRIS by Hall, left. He proceeds to the staircase and ascends.)

FLORENCE. Telephone him.

CLEGHORN. Telephone—

FLORENCE. Harris will do it for you. *(Harris has reached the first landing and halts.)*

CLEGHORN. *(His gaze fixed upon her.)* E-m-m-

FLORENCE. Harris, telephone Capt. Ellis.

HARRIS. *(Coming down.)* What shall I say, Miss?

FLORENCE. See if he's in.

CLEGHORN. Say that I wish to speak to him.

FLORENCE. Here at the house, Harris.

CLEGHORN. Yes, Miss.

(Exit HARRIS by hall, Left.)

CLEGHORN. *(Still watching her, with keen interest.)* You seem a bit interested, yourself, in Gordon, this morning.

FLORENCE. *(Slightly ruffled at the remark, she abruptly turns up towards Upper Right Entrance.)* Do I?

NANCY. *(From without, Upper Right.)* Hold your tongue!

CLEGHORN. *(Starting and looking in the direction of the voice.)* What's that?

(NANCY and HOBBS appear on Veranda, Upper Right.)

HOBBS. *(To Nancy.)* O, but I say, look heah. *(Hobbs and Nancy argue in dumb show.)*

CLEGHORN. *(Seeing them.)* O, Lord! Where is your mother, Florence?

FLORENCE. In the library, I think.

(Exit CLEGHORN, Right.)

NANCY. *(Entering the room.)* Catch me going motor-ing with you again. *(Hobbs follows.)*

FLORENCE. What happened, dear?

NANCY. The power gave out, and I had to walk.

HOBBS. Two blocks.

NANCY. (*Snappishly.*) Three blocks.

FLORENCE. Make it four. What difference does it make anyway; and tell me, why do you pick these little quarrels. Is it because you imagine there is too much sunshine in your lives? (*With a touch of sadness.*) Happiness, you know, is a very perishable commodity; we may possess it to-day, and be deprived of it to-morrow. (*Jack appears at entrance under staircase; he is unobserved, and listens.*)

HOBBS. You ah quite right, especially when two people are engaged, you know.

FLORENCE. (*Surprised.*) Engaged?

NANCY. I did it out of spite, to give Jack a lesson. (*Heartington's pride is piqued by the remark. Florence suddenly observes Jack; continuing.*) Is he in? (*Jack shakes his head negatively and otherwise motions Florence to be silent.*)

FLORENCE. N-o. (*Jack withdraws.*)

NANCY. Mother'l be furious I know, when she hears of it, but I don't care. I'm determined to marry whomever I please.

HOBBS. (*Looking pleased again.*) Heah, heah.

NANCY. (*Turning to Hobbs; quietly.*) I haven't mentioned any names yet.

HOBBS. (*His smile fading away.*) O-h!

NANCY. (*Turning again to Florence.*) What do you think about it, Florence?

FLORENCE. I agree with you. Indeed, I envy your lot.

NANCY. (*Looking surprised.*) O, but—envy my lot?

HOBBS. Yeahs, yeahs.

NANCY. Now, you are laughing at me.

FLORENCE. (*Sadly, her face partly turned away.*) No, Nancy.

NANCY. But gracious! You don't seem to realize the extent of your own good fortune. All the girls are envying your lot, my dear. (*Florence sighs.*) Look at Pennie

Bunton, hasn't she postponed her wedding another year, on account of you—and why pray? Simply, because she doesn't wish to suffer by comparison, of course—nobody does—I know, I don't. (*Florence goes to the stairs and leans wearily against the balustrade post.*)

HOBBS. O, by Jove! I say, look heah, Nancy, I am devilishly sensitive, you know.

NANCY. Fiddlesticks! There is no harm in telling the truth, I'm sure—. Can't you see the difference. A Duke, think of it, a real Duke. The Duchess de Beaumont and Mrs. Hobbs, plain Hobbs—Oh, Heartington, why weren't you born with blue blood in your veins? I do so adore Kings, and Dukes, and Lords, and things.

HOBBS. Yeahs, but what is the use of making such a fuss ovah it. Titles ahe not haweditawy in this country, or I should have been bohan a Colonel, you know.

NANCY. (*With contempt.*) Who cares for a Colonel?

FLORENCE. (*Proudly; with spirit.*) I do. A man who rises to the rank of Colonel, at least does *something* to deserve the honor.

HOBBS. (*Elated.*) Aha, aha—

NANCY. (*Turning on Hobbs; sharply.*) Shut up! You're not even a private.

FLORENCE. As regards myself, I should like the privilege, first, of announcing my engagement before being discussed, my dear.

NANCY. (*Disconcerted.*) O-h! Nothing serious has happened, I hope. Now, I see you look terribly depressed. Have I offended you?

FLORENCE. Not in the least, dear. Won't you sit down?

NANCY. Thanks, awfully, but I've a dozen new hats to try on. So sorry that the car broke down; I'm sure we disturbed you. Come in and have tea to-day, will you?

FLORENCE. I can't to-day, Nancy.

NANCY. Then some other time. Good-bye, dear.

FLORENCE. Don't go, Nancy.

NANCY. Really, I must—good-bye.

FLORENCE. Good-bye.

HOBBS. So sorry,—see you again. Au revoir.

(Exit NANCY and HOBBS, Upper Right Entrance.)

(JACK re-appears at entrance, under staircase.)

JACK. (Looking in the direction of their exit.) At last. (Crossing to Florence.) Well, what news to-day—anybody dead?

FLORENCE. Lucy is going away.

JACK. (Deeply interested.) Going, where?

FLORENCE. Back to England.

JACK. (Surprised.) England!

FLORENCE. Yes, mother has arranged it all.

JACK. Tell me about it.

FLORENCE. She leaves for New York this afternoon, and sails day after to-morrow.

JACK. So soon. (Slowly paces the floor. Stopping suddenly.) You have seen her, of course?

FLORENCE. Certainly.

JACK. And she has told you?

FLORENCE. Everything. (A pause. His muscles relax, and with a sigh, he stands for a moment, motionless, apparently buried in thought.) You would scarcely know her to-day, Jack—she is so altered.

JACK. (Looking up at her.) Still, you do not blame me, Florence?

FLORENCE. How can I blame you, Jack. Your sin has been my sin; my path is now your path; we are both guilty.

JACK. (Looking at her in surprise.) I!

FLORENCE. (In an enquiring tone.) Don't you despise yourself?

JACK. (Resolutely.) I do not.

FLORENCE. Well, you will some day.

JACK. (With a puzzled expression.) Despise myself.

FLORENCE. More than I despise myself, because you have made me an accomplice to your own work.

JACK. (Still unable to understand her.) What do you mean?

FLORENCE. The undoing of Lucy's happiness. If I had judged you by myself, Jack, instead of believing in you as I did, the sunshine in her life, at least, might not have been so easily taken from her.

JACK. She has told you that?

FLORENCE. No, she blames nobody but herself.

JACK. And you blame me. (*A pause. She turns slightly from him. Jack produces letter.*)

FLORENCE. (*Seeing the letter.*) She told me that she had written to you.

JACK. (*Handing her the letter.*) Why?

FLORENCE. Because mother obliged her.

JACK. O, is that all? (*Florence meets his gaze for a moment, then lowers her eyes to the letter*) Read it out.

FLORENCE. (*Reading.*) "Dear Mr. Wilberforce. After carefully deliberating on all that you told me to-day, I still feel that, even in spite of your blind generosity, marriage between us, is so thoroughly hopeless and impossible as to be beyond any further argument whatsoever. Were you able properly to realize our respective positions, you would, I know, think as I do now. It is better, therefore, that we should not meet to-night, as agreed."

JACK. That's the point.

FLORENCE. (*Continuing.*) "I value your friendship more than I do your love, because I know that so long as we remain apart, I may count upon it."

JACK. She feared, you see, that had she met me last night, and told me her secret, not only my love for her, but my friendship, also, would have been forfeited.

FLORENCE. What do you mean by her secret?

JACK. Has she not told you?

FLORENCE. Told me what?

JACK. That which she dare not tell me.

FLORENCE. (*Shocked.*) Jack!

JACK. I had an appointment with her for last evening, when she promised to make a clean breast of everything.

FLORENCE. (*Horrified.*) Oh-h!

JACK. You see; judge me now, and *her*. Am I the guilty one, or is she—ask her.

FLORENCE. O, but Jack, there *must* be some mistake, I know there is.

JACK. Ask her, my dear sister, ask her.

....(Enter HARRIS from hall Left.)

HARRIS. Mr. Ellis is in, Miss, and will be here directly.

FLORENCE. Thank you. (*A pause. Harris starts for Right Entrance.*) Harris, tell Miss Brown that I wish to speak to her.

HARRIS. Yes, Miss. (*There is another pause.*)

(HARRIS turns and ascends the staircase, disappearing through the entrance above.)

FLORENCE. Now, I think you had better leave me.

JACK. What do you intend doing?

FLORENCE. Doing! Why I am going to *ask her*, of course.

LUCY. (*Calling from above, Left.*) Florence.

FLORENCE. (*Quickly.*) There she is. Go on the veranda.

(Exit JACK, Upper Right Entrance.)

(LUCY appears at the top of the stairs. She is pale and careworn.)

LUCY. (*From the top of the stairs.*) Ah, there you are. (*Jack peeps, but withdraws again almost instantly. Descending.*) You wish to see me?

FLORENCE. Yes.

LUCY. (*Leaning over the balustrade, at the first landing.*) What is it, dear?

FLORENCE. I have just seen Jack.

LUCY. (*Starting and placing her hand to her bosom.*) Jack! (*Jack peeps again.*)

FLORENCE. And he showed me your letter. (*Turning round.*) Come and sit down. (*She goes to divan, Upper*

Centre; Lucy follows her. Showing the letter, unfolded.)
There it is.

LUCY. Yes, I wrote it.

FLORENCE. Why, Lucy?

LUCY. Because—I thought it my duty. *(Florence seats herself.)*

FLORENCE. Would it not have been better, under the circumstances, to see Jack? The appointment you made for last evening was an important one, he tells me.

LUCY. Yes, but Mrs. Wilberforce wouldn't allow it. I pledged her my word of honour not to see Jack.

FLORENCE. *(Surprised.)* You. *(Another peep, and this time, a longer one.)*

LUCY. More than that, Florence, I have promised never to speak to him again.

FLORENCE. *(Rising.)* But your letter, Lucy. Jack says it has a double meaning. *(Deep concern and intense interest in the conversation has impelled Jack forward, till now almost his entire form is visible.)*

LUCY. A double meaning.

FLORENCE. Did you not admit to him, yesterday, that there was something in your life—a secret?

LUCY. O, yes, and I meant to have told him all that same evening—we had agreed upon that—but Mrs. Wilberforce insisted on my writing. *(Her voice almost failing her.)* She—she dictated the letter to me, Florence.

FLORENCE. Mother!

LUCY. Yes! *(A pause. Florence partly turns her head and crushes the letter in her hand.)*

(Enter CRAVEN, Right. He seats himself at the table, and taking up a book proceeds to turn the pages slowly over, occasionally glancing at Florence and Lucy. It is apparent, also, that though still quiet and unassuming, his mannerisms have disappeared and given place to an expression of shrewd business-like seriousness.)

FLORENCE. Tell me, dear, suppose you had met Jack last evening, and—had confided in him, what would he

have said? How would he have taken it? (*Jack slowly withdraws again, partly concealing himself.*)

LUCY. I don't know, Florence, it depends.

FLORENCE. Was it anything that he could forgive?

LUCY. If he would take me as I am, for myself alone—yes.

FLORENCE. (*Looking at her with a puzzled expression.*) I don't understand you, Lucy.

LUCY. Ask me who I am—my name. (*A pause.*) I have no father or mother, Florence.

FLORENCE. (*Looking at her with the same puzzled expression.*) They are dead?

LUCY. (*With emotion.*) I—I have never known them.

FLORENCE. You have never known them? (*The truth dawning upon her.*) Oh! Then you are—

LUCY. (*Sadly.*) Yes! (*Bowing her head.*) That is my secret.

(*JACK emerges and enters the apartment. He is seen only by Craven, who, having left his trumpet on the table, immediately joins him, unobserved by Florence or Lucy. Craven presents his card. Jack looks at him for a moment in surprise, then casts his eye on the writing; as he does so, Craven quickly raises his finger, as a sign of caution, and taking Jack—who holds the card in full view of the audience, and is scrutinizing it—by the arm, leads him out on the balcony where both of them disappear.*)

FLORENCE. (*Kindly.*) Lucy

LUCY. You do not despise me?

FLORENCE. No, a thousand times no. You are as good as any one.

LUCY. (*Deeply affected.*) O, thank you, thank you.

FLORENCE. Sit down, dear. (*They both seat themselves.*) If I had only known, and Jack. (*Affectionately.*) Don't sob, dear.

LUCY. (*Drying her tears.*) I—I shan't any more. (*Putting her hand to her heart with a sigh.*) I feel better now.

FLORENCE. Come to my room.

LUCY. No, no, wait. I have something more to tell you. (*Glancing about.*) Where is Professor Craven?

FLORENCE. (*Also glancing around; surprised.*) O, he has gone. What about him, dear?

LUCY. He knows about St. Margaret's.

FLORENCE. (*Looking puzzled.*) St. Margaret's?

LUCY. It is a Home for little children who—

FLORENCE. Never mind, dear, I understand.

LUCY. But I want to tell you, Florence. (*Florence affectionately takes her hand.*) I was given shelter there, when I was a baby. Three years after, the Rev. Dr. Brown came—dear old Daddy; he had business at the Home, and when he saw me, that day, he took a fancy to me—so—I changed my boarding house.

FLORENCE. Why didn't you tell me all this before, dear?

LUCY. I only met Professor Craven the night before last; he introduced himself to me and—and he questioned me. When I spoke about—Daddy—he said that he knew him, but thought that Dr. Brown had no children.

FLORENCE. The unfeeling wretch.

LUCY. You see, I concluded then, that he must know about me; and having promised, yesterday, to tell Jack, I thought, perhaps, that if I spoke to him again he might be able to tell me something to my advantage.

FLORENCE. And so you spoke to him again?

LUCY. (*Nodding assent.*) Yesterday.

FLORENCE. At the Duc de Beaumont's?

LUCY. Yes, but it was all in vain, Florence. I am only just what I told you I was.

FLORENCE. (*Affectionately, putting her arm about Lucy's waist and drawing closer to her.*) My dearest and best friend. (*Voices heard from without, Upper Right, which gradually grow louder as the people approach. Both look around.*)

LUCY. (*Suddenly, as she recognizes Jack's voice.*) Florence! Do you hear?

FLORENCE. That's Jack's voice.

LUCY. (*Rising.*) Yes, I must go.

FLORENCE. (*Rising.*) No, stay, stay. (*She again places her arm about Lucy's waist, and both listen.*)

JACK. (*Speaking from without.*) All the same, I wish that you hadn't gone quite so far. (*Jack and Craven appear on the veranda. Jack has the card in his hand.*)

CRAVEN. In my profession, sir, the end justifies the means.

JACK. A nice maxim that. (*Looking at the card.*) O, well, come along in and I'll introduce you.

CRAVEN. (*Aside, to Jack, as they enter.*) Make your peace with her first. (*Jack advances a few feet and stops. He puts the card in his pocket. Craven remains at the back.*)

JACK. Lucy. (*A pause. She remains with her eyes downcast. Florence releases her.*) I want you to forgive me. While you and Florence were talking to each other a moment ago, I was on the veranda and overheard everything. (*Lucy remains silent.*) I overheard everything, I say. O, I forgot, you have pledged your word of honor never to speak to me again. (*Putting on a long face and speaking in a sad tone.*) Very well. (*A pause.*) Is that your last word? (*He turns his back, and going to table Right, takes the ear trumpet, in full view of the audience—but unobserved by either Florence or Lucy—and dexterously twists it into a shape to resemble a pistol.*)

FLORENCE. (*Aside to Lucy.*) Speak to him, Lucy.

LUCY. (*Clinging to Florence.*) No, no—get me out of here—please. Your mother, Florence.

JACK. (*Facing them again and speaking in a doleful voice.*) There is nothing left for me to live for. I am going to commit suicide.

FLORENCE. (*Horrified.*) What! (*Lucy stands rooted, as it were, by fright.*)

JACK. (*Showing the trumpet, curled up with the acoustic end sticking straight out like the barrel of a pistol.*) With this pistol. (*Raising it to his right temple.*) Good-bye!

LUCY. (*Suddenly bounding towards him and speaking in a voice of great distress.*) Jack! (*Seizing his arm which*

he has raised high above his head.) Don't, for mercy's sake!

JACK. (*Lowering the instrument again to a dangerous angle.*) For mercy's sake, or for your sake?

LUCY. (*Much frightened, and looking lovingly into his eyes.*) For my sake.

JACK. (*Placing his right arm about her.*) Darling. (*Florence who is standing but a few feet away sees the instrument which Jack holds in his hand, behind Lucy's back. She approaches still closer, and getting a better view of it, instantly discovers the trick he has played on them.*)

FLORENCE. (*Disgusted, but intensely relieved.*) Oh-h! (*Lucy disengages herself.*) It wasn't a pistol at all, Lucy. Look! (*Jack allows the instrument suddenly to unwind, exposing it at it's full length.*)

LUCY. (*Surprised.*) Professor Craven's ear trumpet.

JACK. My own, this gentleman is not Professor Craven at all, but his twin brother, who has been impersonating the illustrious Professor for our benefit—(*Throwing the trumpet on the table*), trumpet and all.

FLORENCE. (*Looking at Jack curiously, with a puzzled expression.*) What are you talking about, Jack?

JACK. (*Taking the card from his pocket and referring to it.*) One moment and you'll see. Allow me. Mr. John Augustus Craven—Scotland Yard.

CRAVEN. (*Bowing.*) Ladies. (*Lucy goes to Florence; both draw back astounded.*)

JACK. There you are. Mr. John Augustus revealed his identity to me not five minutes ago. His mission to this country is a very important one; we are all interested, particularly Lucy—and I, so we are bound, under the circumstances, to forgive him, I suppose, for having imposed himself and his sneaking methods upon us.

CRAVEN. (*Affecting a dignified air.*) If it affords you any consolation, sir, I may tell you, that, my twin brother highly approves of my sneaking methods, especially when I exercise them to promote joy and happiness.

JACK. (*In a more conciliatory tone.*) O, I'm sure we're all very grateful.

CRAVEN. Thank you so much; and in my brother's name, permit me, also, to thank you for your kind hospitality—which he will enjoy—when I tell him about it.

JACK. O, really! What about yourself?

CRAVEN. I have had a whale of a time.

JACK. (*With a knowing wink.*) I know you have. (*To Florence and Lucy.*) He's his brother's double, and, you know, Aunt Clara met the real one in London.

CRAVEN. The real one?

JACK. (*Turning to Craven.*) I mean she met the real Professor in London.

CRAVEN. Yes, I know.

JACK. (*To Florence and Lucy.*) The other twin. (*To Craven.*) I pity you when Aunt Clara hears about this.

CRAVEN. Dear me!

FLORENCE. What does all this mean, Jack?

JACK. Can't you guess. I said that Lucy and I were particularly interested. What is this man here for; who is he looking for?

LUCY. (*Looking distressed.*) Me, Florence.

JACK. Why, of course. Who would be bothered looking for anybody else. Are you not the only precious thing living?

CRAVEN. I think, I might have endorsed those sentiments yesterday, sir, because I was satisfied then, that Miss Brown was the lady I was looking for.

JACK. Why didn't you?

CRAVEN. But fearing a scandal if I spoke that might be the means of turning you from her—

JACK. (*Sharply.*) Eh!

CRAVEN. I decided to wait. (*Turning to Lucy.*) Hoping the while, Miss, that you would take my advice not to tell your story to Mr. Wilberforce.

JACK. Why not?

CRAVEN. (*Facing Jack again.*) Because, yesterday, I rated you, sir, as I do the average young society tail-coat.

JACK. Oh!

CRAVEN. I thought that your love wouldn't stand the test.

JACK. Indeed!

CRAVEN. I was of the opinion that you would turn from her, and destroy her happiness.

JACK. Really!

CRAVEN. The fact of the matter is, until a few minutes ago when Miss Brown gave the whole thing away, I hadn't yet made up my mind just how to act. *(To Lucy.)* I was on the point of taking you into my confidence, Miss.

LUCY. I think, you have told me all that I care to know. My cross is a real one, and I must bear it, but I have no desire to be told of those who have put its weight upon me.

CRAVEN. Your parents were not so much to blame as you think. Shall I tell you why—a few words will suffice? A man cannot always marry the woman he loves when he wants to—perhaps you know that.

JACK. Why not?

CRAVEN. Because, unlike you, sir, he may not have attained his majority, nor yet inherited the estates of his father who exercises a coercive influence over him. A boy of twenty, in this position, whose heart is given to one who reciprocates *his* love; one to whose beauty and charms he has, contrary to the wishes of a proud and unjust parent, dedicated the best that there is in him—his soul and his honour—is bound to take the fatal leap some day. It is, nevertheless, a just and holy pact. He swears to remedy the fault, the day his youthful years have reached the goal of law and justice; and so, that single year, they live—for themselves alone. Then his star sets, and hers too. The offspring of a pure but ill-fated love, seems even to intensify the unrelenting spirit of her own father; he will not forgive her; and when, on the third day, she dies, *(His eyes fixed on Lucy.)* your father is left alone—grief-stricken—his oath to marry her—unredeemed.

LUCY. *(Shrinking back, close to Florence.)* Oh!

CRAVEN. One would think, now, the man was sufficiently crushed, but no—he must suffer more.

LUCY. (*Her voice almost inaudible.*) More?

CRAVEN. They sent him away, and in his absence, you were spirited away; when he returned, they told him that you, also, had died.

LUCY. (*Staring blankly at him.*) Died?

CRAVEN. Yes, and to this day he believes it.

LUCY. (*Greatly affected, clinging to Florence.*) Florence.

CRAVEN. That was your father's crowning sorrow.

LUCY. (*Suddenly recovering herself; still clinging to Florence's arm.*) Tell me his name.

(*The DUKE appears on veranda Upper Left Centre. There is a pause. He stands near the railing, for a few moments, bowing courteously to friends whom he recognizes in the gardens. Craven sees him, and for a moment looks in his direction, collecting his thoughts.*)

LUCY. (*Her voice failing her again.*) Tell me.

CRAVEN. (*Quietly turning to address her.*) Not now. (*Lucy stands speechless, staring at him for a moment, then turns again to Florence and bursts into smothered sobs. Florence comforts her.*)

JACK. Surely, you cannot refuse—

CRAVEN. (*Interrupting; in a calm voice.*) I don't refuse. You shall know all in due time—everything—but not—just immediately; it might create a scene.

JACK. How do you make that out?

CRAVEN. By my experience, which you, sir, of all others here, should be the first to acknowledge and appreciate. (*A pause.*)

JACK. (*His manner suddenly changing; resolutely, as he extends his hand which Craven takes.*) By Gad, I do! You've got me mystified, but I believe in you; you're a wonder, sir.

CRAVEN. Thanks.

DUKE. (*At the door, removing his hat.*) Good-day to everybody. (*He enters, and with a courteous wave of the hand to Jack, deposits his hat and gloves on table, Right. Lucy turns her face slightly and dries her eyes with her*

handkerchief. Craven watches her and the Duke closely. To Florence, gallantly raising the tips of her fingers to his lips.) Mademoiselle, I kiss obedience.

FLORENCE. (Sarcastically.) Don't you tire of that sort of thing?

DUKE. (Pleasantly.) If you would but smile a bit (Turning to Lucy.) a soupçon. And how is our little protegee this very warm afternoon?

LUCY. (With a forced effort to appear calm.) Thank you, I am feeling well enough—but—I—

DUKE. (His eyes fixed upon her; deeply concerned.) You are ill; the heat has affected you. Does your head ache?

FLORENCE. (Calmly.) Now, don't alarm yourself, please. It's only her finger.

DUKE. Oh! (To Lucy.) The one you showed me two nights ago? (Lucy casts a lingering glance at Florence before replying.)

LUCY. (Reluctantly.) Y-es!

DUKE. Is the plaster off? Let me see it. (Florence utters a sigh of impatience and retires from them slightly. Examining the cut.) O, it's a great deal better. Does it really pain you much?

LUCY. (At a loss just what to say.) A—sometimes—when I press on it.

DUKE. O, but you mustn't press on it. (Lightly.) Why inflict pain on one's self when so many others are ready to save us the trouble, eh? Is it an act of penance you seek; if so, I have a capital suggestion.

JACK. (Drawing closer to them.) I should like to hear it.

DUKE. I would have Mademoiselle sit to some great artist for her hands. (Lucy withdraws her hand.)

JACK. How very utterly—utter—

DUKE. I'm not joking. Bouguereau, you know, confessed many years ago that in all his experience he had seen but one perfect hand.

JACK. A lady's?

DUKE. Most assuredly.

FLORENCE. Did you know her, Duke? (*A short pause. The Duke seems a little struck with the question.*)

DUKE. (*Frankly.*) Yes, I did. Why do you ask?

FLORENCE. O, I was thinking of that very dear friend of yours, whom Lucy continually seems to remind you of. (*The Duke's features involuntarily set.*)

DUKE. Her hands, I admit, but—how did you know?

FLORENCE. (*Coldly.*) I guessed it. (*She turns from him.*) Jack.

JACK. Yes! (*Jack goes to her. The Duke and Lucy continue their conversation in dumb show.*)

FLORENCE. Do you know what I think?

JACK. What?

FLORENCE. (*Lowering her voice.*) I believe that Lucy is talking to her father, now.

JACK. (*Starting.*) Eh!

FLORENCE. Not so loud. You haven't forgotten the story Mr. Cleghorn told us?

JACK. No, but Mr. Cleghorn admitted that the Duke's child died.

FLORENCE. The detective says it didn't.

JACK. It didn't, because the detective was probably talking about somebody else's child.

FLORENCE. Then, why was he afraid, when the Duke came in, to mention names. It might create a scene he said. Of course, it would! And this model, too, with hands like Lucy's. He has been talking about hands ever since he met Lucy. Don't you think it strange?

JACK. Good Lord, I don't know what to think. Suppose, Florence, it were true.

FLORENCE. I hope it is. O, Jack, if it could only be true.

JACK. Well, it's easy enough to find out. (*Jack goes to Craven and as their conversation progresses, Florence is able to conclude that her suspicions are well founded. Enter Harris, Right.*)

HARRIS. (*To Florence.*) Capt. Ellis is here, and wishes to see Mr. Cleghorn.

FLORENCE. (*With agitation; occasionally glancing in the direction of Jack and Craven.*) Oh! Tell Capt. Ellis to wait for a few moments. (*Harris turns.*) And, Harris, you needn't mind looking for Mr. Cleghorn; I shall see him myself.

(HARRIS exit, Right.)

(*Florence hastily crosses to Jack and Craven.*)

JACK. (*Speaking in a low voice.*) You were right, Florence. It's true, quite true.

FLORENCE. (*Clasping her hands in an ecstasy of delight.*) O, I am so glad. I've a good excuse now, haven't I?

JACK. What are you going to do?

FLORENCE. What am I going to do? Why, Gordon is here. I am going to follow your example, Jack. (*With sudden change of voice and expression.*) If it is not too late. O, I have tried so hard to be untrue—(*Placing her hand to her heart.*) My heart is nearly broken. (*Suddenly covers her face with both her hands, and speaking between smothered sobs of joy, crosses to Right Entrance.*) Oh!—I'm—so—happy. (*The Duke looks surprised.*)

DUKE. (*To Lucy.*) Pardon me. (*Crossing to Florence.*) Miss Wilberforce. (*Florence suddenly halts as she hears the Duke's voice; continuing, as she slowly turns to face him.*) May I ask if there is anything the matter. (*A pause; approaching, closer to her, with extended arm.*) Why you're trembling like an aspen leaf. Will you not permit me to—

FLORENCE. (*Drawing herself to her full height and looking fixedly at him; speaking with agitation, in a tone of imperious command.*) Don't touch me. (*The Duke stands for a moment astounded.*)

DUKE. (*Slowly retreating a step.*) I apologize—most humbly.

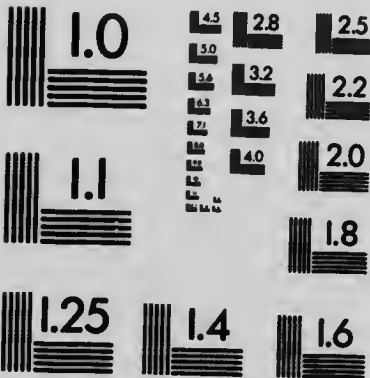
(FLORENCE turns and exit, Right.)

(*The Duke stands amazed, looking after her.*)



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CRAVEN. (*Aside, to Jack.*) Pretty hot shot that.

JACK. I think we had better tell him, don't you. Now's the time.

DUKE. What have I done, gentlemen?

JACK. Well, by the look of things, I should judge, that you'll have to content yourself, now, with being my father-in-law. (*The Duke looks at Jack in bewilderment. Lucy's expression changes to one of doubt, as though she anticipated the truth.*)

CRAVEN. (*Aside to Jack.*) O, Lord! that's brutal.

DUKE. (*To Jack.*) Really, I don't—understand you.

CRAVEN. (*Advancing.*) Allow me.

DUKE. (*As Craven quietly takes him by the arm.*) You, sir.

JACK. (*Persuasively.*) Go with him, Duke; he can explain the situation to you a great deal better than I can.

DUKE. (*As they go.*) The situation—where?

CRAVEN. Only on the veranda.

DUKE. (*Surprised.*) Did you hear me then?

CRAVEN. Perfectly.

DUKE. But yesterday you were deaf, sir.

CRAVEN. (*As they go through the balcony entrance and disappear.*) O, that's something else I must explain. (*Jack directs his attention to Lucy who is staring into vacancy and wears a peculiar expression.*)

JACK. (*Going to her.*) You look as though you suspected the truth, Lucy. I'll tell you all about it, if you promise to give me a kiss.

LUCY. Don't jest with me now, Jack.

JACK. Then, my dear, I'll tell you for the asking. You understood what I said to the Duke a few moments ago. Something about having to content himself with being my father-in-law—(*She keeps her eyes fixed upon him.*) My father-in-law, Lucy. Don't you understand? Florence guessed it. Of course, when I say father-in-law, I rely on your word, on your promise, on the vow you made yesterday—(*Softly*) to marry me; you remember? It would all depend on me, you said, well! I love you, to-day, more

than I did yesterday; more than words can ever tell you, Lucy—*(Her pent up emotion has almost completely overcome her. She is weak from the strain and keeps staring at him with tears in her eyes. Suddenly clasping her in his arms.)* Lucy! *(The Duke and Craven appear at balcony entrance. The former is about to enter when the latter quietly motions him back. Jack with his arm about Lucy, assists her to the divan, Upper Centre, where he seats her in a reclining position. The Duke now enters the room, closely followed by Craven.)*

CRAVEN. Now don't get excited.

DUKE. *(Stopping and turning to answer; politely.)* Do you take me for an old woman, sir?

CRAVEN. *(Aside, as the Duke turns his back.)* On the gallery, I took you for one. *(The Duke goes to Lucy. Kneeling beside the divan, he takes her hand in both of his and kisses it affectionately. His back, which is turned to the audience, screens her face from view: Craven crosses to Left Centre. Jack joins him.)*

(CLARA appears at the top of the stairs. She carries a fan.)

JACK. *(Spying her.)* Great Caesar! *(To Craven.)* I say, don't you think you had better make yourself scarce?

CRAVEN. *(As he sees her.)* Dear me!

CLARA. *(Descending.)* I've just had a little nap. Has Professor Craven been waiting long, Jack?

JACK. Professor Craven is in England, Aunt Clara. This gentleman is his twin brother—a detective.

CLARA. *(Looking at Jack with a puzzled expression and with disdain.)* Now, what is the matter with you to-day? *(She turns to speak to Craven.)*

CRAVEN. Mr. Wilberorce is quite right, Miss Dryden. I am a detective, from Scotland Yard.

CLARA. *(Retreating a step in amazement.)* Scotland Yard? *(Looking at him with a puzzled expression.)* Impossible—*(Her countenance clearing; with a faint smile, conveying the impression that she thinks, after all, it is only a joke.)* We met in London.

CRAVEN. I'm afraid not. 'Twas my brother you met in London, the deaf gentleman. (*As this proof is thrust upon Clara, her countenance suddenly falls and she utters an exclamation of suppressed anger and righteous indignation.*) We met—on the beach. (*Another stifled exclamation.*) Permit me to explain.

CLARA. (*With set teeth.*) Trespasser!

CRAVEN. I know it. I told you I had no right here. (*At this juncture Clara speaks to Craven without anger, but in a manner calculated to indicate her outraged feelings.*)

CLARA. You ought to be arrested, sir.

CRAVEN. Dear me! Perhaps, if you knew the object of my mission to America; of the good I have done here. If you knew that 'twas our chance-meeting that sunny morning, when you mistook me for my brother, that has led me to success; that without your help and generosity I should have failed in the biggest case of my career, then, perhaps, you would forgive me.

CLARA. Never! (*Turning to Jack.*) What's all this mystery about, Jack?

JACK. Mystery! Oh! Lucy and I are going to be married.

CLARA. What!

JACK. So is Florence and Gordon. (*Clara stands speechless in amazement; turning from her with a wink at Craven.*) Ask the—Professor—he's done it all. (*The Duke assists Lucy to rise; Jack joins them.*)

CRAVEN. I regret to say that in my profession, Miss Dryden—

CLARA. Sir!

CRAVEN. I was about to remark—

CLARA. How dare you speak to me.

CRAVEN. Dear me! I thought you had already forgiven me—(*Clara proudly tosses her head back and looks defiantly at him; meekly.*) for all I have done—and for everything I may do.

CLARA. (*Muttering.*) Beetles and Bugs.

CrAVEN. (*In a sing-song tone of voice.*) Some have no wings at all, but they get there, just the same.

(*Enter CLEGHORN and MRS. WILBERFORCE, Right, immediately followed by GORDON and FLORENCE, and ARMAND.*)

CLARA. (*Turning from him.*) You're an old rogue. (*The Duke moves back a pace, and Armand crosses quickly to him.*)

CLEGHORN. (*Overhearing the remark.*) Eh! What's that?

CrAVEN. Dear me!

ARMAND. (*Aside, to the Duke.*) Don't worry—the old Dame is reconciled.

DUKE. Damn the old Dame. I haven't been so happy these twenty years.

CLARA. (*Crossing to Right and glancing at Craven.*) Sister, do you know what we have amongst us?

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*With dignity.*) Florence has just told me. (*Fixing her gaze on Armand.*) So has Mr. de Courcy.

CLARA. (*Glancing again at Craven.*) But, why is he here?

CLEGHORN. (*To Clara.*) Permit me to enlighten you. (*Cleghorn enlightens Clara concerning the events about which he, himself, has just been told. Florence takes a rose from her corsage and fastens it to the lapel of Gordon's coat.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Crossing to the Duke.*) I am crushed with humiliation, Duke. (*The Duke turns quickly as he hears her voice, and advances to meet her; Armand follows.*)

DUKE. I am sure your daughter does not agree with you, Mrs. Wilberforce.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*Turning to look at Florence.*) I shall never give my consent.

DUKE. (*Persuasively.*) Not even for the sake of peace and harmony? (*Armand glances in the direction of Jack and Lucy.*)

ARMAND. As I explained a few minutes ago, Mrs. Wilberforce, the two houses are bound to be united any way, it seems.

DUKE. (*Aside; dryly as he turns away.*) Thank God! (*The Duke crosses to Lucy and Jack, and joins them in conversation. He takes Lucy's hand, and after looking at it intently a moment, affectionately kisses it.*)

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*In a milder tone.*) O, but the scandal of it all.

ARMAND. My dear Mrs. Wilberforce, no family is complete without its skeleton. It is one of the necessary adjuncts to a peerage.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Then I should even be grateful, I suppose?

ARMAND. O, I think you're entitled to the inheritance.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. (*In a confidential tone.*) The skeleton?

ARMAND. We have two in our family.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. And I deserve this one, you think?

ARMAND. Well—a—if it be true that ambition has its own reward, Mrs. Wilberforce—

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Then I am rewarded. (*Armand shrugs his shoulders.*) O, what will society say?

ARMAND. Madam, there are state secrets that if known would overthrow governments, but those to whose keeping they have been confided are too wise to gossip about them.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. Which means—

ARMAND. That if everybody, here, will do likewise, society must, for once, be deprived of a little small talk.

MRS. WILBERFORCE. But suppose. (*Looking suspiciously at Craven.*) this person—

ARMAND. Mr. Craven is discreet beyond question—besides, (*Looking at Craven.*) he has a mission to fulfil.

CRAVEN. Pardon me, sir, Mr. Craven's mission has been fulfilled. (*Glancing in the direction of Clara.*) And he sails for England to-morrow. (*Clara's expression instantly betrays her surprise and the disappointment she feels. Craven turns his head, for a moment, from her.*)

CLARA. (*Aside.*) So soon. (*He looks at her again—and smiles. As their eyes meet she, also, smiles. Her old manner involuntarily manifests itself, and opening her fan with a convulsive little jerk, she coquettishly screens her profile.*)

THE END OF THE THIRD ACT.

