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# THE DRONE

## A Play in Three Acts

By Rutherford Mayne

LUCE & CO.  
BOSTON

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TO  
SEVEEN

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## CHARACTERS

JOHN MURRAY, *A farmer.*  
DANIEL MURRAY, *His brother.*  
MARY MURRAY, *John's daughter.*  
ANDREW McMINN, *A farmer.*  
SARAH McMINN, *His sister.*  
DONAL MACKENZIE, *A Scotch engineer.*  
SAM BROWN, *A labourer in John Murray's employment.*  
KATE, *A servant girl in John Murray's employment.*

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# The Drone

[Pg 1]

## A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

### ACT I.

SCENE: *The farm kitchen of John Murray. It is large and spacious, with a wide open fire-place to the right. At the back is one door leading to the parlour and other rooms in the house, also a large window overlooking the yard outside. To the left of this window is the door leading into the yard, and near the door an old-fashioned grandfather's clock. Opposite to the fire-place on the left side is another door leading into Daniel Murray's workshop, and beside this door is a large dresser with crockery, &c. At the back beneath the window is a table near which KATE, the servant, a slatternly dressed girl of some thirty years of age or more, is seated. She is carefully examining some cakes of soda bread, and has a bucket beside her into which she throws the rejected pieces.*

KATE. That one's stale. It would break your teeth to eat it. *(She throws the cake into the bucket.)* And the mice have nibbled that one. And there's another as bad. *(She throws both pieces into the bucket.)*

*(BROWN, the servant man, opens the door from yard and enters. He is elderly, and with a pessimistic expression of face, relieved somewhat by the sly humour that is in his eyes. He walks slowly to the centre of the kitchen, looks at KATE, and then turns his eyes, with a disgusted shake of the head, towards the dresser as if searching for something.)*

BROWN. Well! Well! Pigs get fat and men get lean in this house.

KATE. It's you again, is it? And what are you looking now?

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BROWN. I'm looking a spanner for the boss. The feedboard to the threshing machine got jammed just when halfway through the first stack, and he is in a lamentable temper.

KATE *(uneasily)*. Is he? *(She starts hurriedly to clear up the table.)*

BROWN *(watching her slyly to see what effect his words have)*. And he's been grumbling all morning about the way things is going on in this house. Bread and things wasted and destroyed altogether.

KATE. Well, it's all Miss Mary's fault. I told her about this bread yesterday forenoon, and she never took any heed to me.

BROWN. Miss Mary? *(With a deprecatory shake of his head.)* What does a slip of a girl like that know about housekeeping and her not home a half-year yet from the boarding-school in the big town, and with no mother nor nobody to train her. *(He stares in a puzzled way at the dresser.)* I don't see that spanner at all. Did you see it, Kate?

KATE. No. I've more to do than look for spanners.

BROWN *(gazing reproachfully at her and then shaking his head)*. It's a nice house, right enough. *(Lowering his voice.)* And I suppose old Mr. Dan is never up yet. I was told by Johnny McAndless, he was terribly full last night at McArn's publichouse and talking—ach—the greatest blethers about this new invention of his.

KATE. Do you say so?

BROWN. Aye. No wonder he's taking a lie this morning. *(He peeps into the door of the workshop.)* He's not in his wee workshop?

KATE. No. Miss Mary is just after taking up his breakfast to him.

BROWN. Some people get living easy in this world. *(He gives a last look at the dresser.)* Well divil a spanner can I see. I'll tell the master that. *(He goes out again through the yard door, and as he does so, MARY MURRAY comes through the door from the inner rooms, carrying a tray with teacups, &c., on it. She is a pretty, vivacious girl about eighteen years of age.)*

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MARY. Who was that?

KATE. It's the servant man looking for a spanner for your father, Miss Mary. There's something gone wrong with the threshing machine.

MARY *(taking the tray to the table and starting to get ready to wash up the cups)*. I do believe

sometimes that Uncle Dan's a lazy man.

KATE (*assisting her at the washing and stopping as if astonished at the statement*). And is it only now you're after finding that out! Sure the whole countryside knowed it this years and years.

MARY (*sharply*). The whole countryside has no business to talk about what doesn't concern it.

KATE. Oh, well, people are bound to talk, Miss.

MARY. But then Uncle Dan is awfully clever. He's got the whole brains of the Murrays, so father says, and then, besides that, he is a grand talker.

KATE. Aye. He can talk plenty. Sure Sarah McMinn, that lives up the Cut, says its a shame the way he's going on this twenty years and more, never doing a hand's turn from morning to night, and she says she wonders your poor father stands him and his nonsense.

MARY. Who said that?

KATE. Sarah McMinn told Johnny McAndless that yesterday.

MARY. Sarah McMinn? Pooh! That hard, mean, old thing. No. I believe in Uncle Dan and so does father. He'll make a name for himself yet.

KATE. Well, it's getting near time he done it.

MARY. And that Sarah McMinn they say just keeps her brother in starvation, and she just says nasty things like that about Uncle Dan because he doesn't like her.

KATE. Aye. He never did like people as seen through him, not but she is a mean old skin-a-louse. (*The voice of DANIEL MURRAY is heard calling from within.*) He's up, Miss.

MARY. Are you up, uncle?

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(DAN MURRAY *opens the door from the inner apartments and comes into the kitchen. He is carelessly dressed and sleepy-looking as if just out of bed, wears a muffler and glasses, and appears to be some fifty years of age.*)

DANIEL. Yes. Did the *Whig* come yet?

MARY. Yes. I put it in your workshop.

DANIEL (*glancing at the clock*). Bless my heart, it's half-past one!

MARY (*reproachfully*). It is, indeed, uncle.

DANIEL. Well! Well! Time goes round, Mary. Time goes round. (*Kate picks up the bucket and goes out by the yard door.*) Where's your father? (*He crosses over to the workshop door.*)

MARY. He's out working with Sam Brown at the threshing all morning since seven o'clock.

DANIEL. Well! Well! A very industrious man is John Murray. Very. But lacking in brains, my dear—lacking in brains. Kind, good-hearted, easy-going, but—ah! well, one can't help these things. (*He goes towards the workshop.*) Where did you say the *Whig* was, Mary?

MARY. It's in your workshop. (*He crosses over to go there.*)

MARY. You were very late coming in last night, uncle.

DANIEL. Eh? (*He goes in, gets the paper, comes out again.*)

MARY. I heard you coming in, and the clock was just after striking two. (*He sits down and opens paper.*)

DANIEL. Well—I met a few friends last night. Appreciative friends I could talk to, and I was explaining that new idea of mine that I've been working at so long—that new idea for a fan-bellows. It's a great thing. Oh yes. It should be. I sat up quite a while last night, thinking it over, and I believe I've got more ideas about it—better ones.

MARY. Do you think you'll make money off it, uncle?

DANIEL. Mary—if it comes off—if I can get someone to take it up, I believe 'twill make our fortune, I do.

MARY. Oh, uncle, it would be lovely if you did, and I would just die to see that nasty McMinn woman's face when she hears about you making such a hit.

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DANIEL. McMinn? Has that woman been sneering about me again? That's one woman, Mary, I can't stand. I can never do myself justice explaining ideas in company when that woman is present.

MARY. Never mind her, uncle. (*Coming close beside him.*) Do you mind the time last time, uncle, when you went up to Belfast for a week to see about that patent for—what's this the patent was, uncle?

DANIEL (*uncomfortably*). Last time? Aye? Why?

MARY. Yes. Don't you remember you said you knew of an awfully nice boy that you met, and you were going to bring him down here.

DANIEL. Upon my soul, I had clean forgotten. Yes, yes. I think I did say something about a young fellow I met.

MARY. Was he nice, uncle?

DANIEL (*becoming absorbed in the newspaper*). Eh? I think so. Oh. He was—very nice chap.

MARY. Well, you said he was coming here to see me, and he never turned up yet.

DANIEL. Did I? Very possibly. I suppose he must have forgotten.

MARY (*walking away to the left and then back again pouting*). I'm sick of the boys here. There's only Alick McCready that's anyway passable. When will you see him again, uncle?

DANIEL. Well—possibly, when I go up to town again. Very soon, perhaps. That is if your father, Mary, can spare the money.

MARY (*thoughtfully*). I don't know, uncle. You see that would be five times now, and somehow you never seem to get anything done. That's what he said, mind you, uncle.

DANIEL (*mournfully*). Well! Well! To think of me toiling and moiling away in that workshop of mine, day after day, and week after week, and year after year—and there's all the thanks you get for it.

MARY. Uncle?

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DANIEL (*somewhat irritably as he gets engrossed reading*). Well?

MARY. Look, if you went up to Belfast again soon, won't you see that boy? I wonder what he's like. (*She gets close beside her uncle and nestles beside him.*) Is he dark or fair?

DANIEL. Yes, yes. I think so.

MARY. Dark?

DANIEL. Yes. I believe he is dark.

MARY. And tall?

DANIEL (*trying vainly to read in spite of the interruptions*). Very tall.

MARY. Oh, how nice! And uncle, is he good-looking?

DANIEL. Very. Fine looking fellow.

MARY. That's grand; and uncle, is he well to do?

DANIEL. He has every appearance of it.

MARY. Oh you dear old uncle! (*She nestles closer to him.*) But maybe he wouldn't look at me when he has a whole lot of town girls to go with.

DANIEL. My dear niece, you don't know what a very good-looking young lady you are, and besides he saw your photograph.

MARY. Which photograph?

DANIEL (*perplexed*). Which photograph? Your own of course!

MARY. The one I got taken at Lurgan?

DANIEL. Yes. I think so.

MARY. Oh uncle! That horrid thing! Why didn't you show him the one I got taken at Newcastle?

DANIEL. My mistake. Very sorry, indeed, Mary, I assure you. But I tell you what, I'll take the album with me next time. Will that do?

MARY (*laughing*). There. Now you're only joking. (*Suddenly.*) What do you do all the time you stay in Belfast, uncle?

DANIEL (*uneasily*). Um—um—Business, my dear girl, business. See engineers and all that sort of thing, and talk things over. It takes time, you know, Mary, time.

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MARY. You've been an awful long time inventing, uncle, haven't you?

DANIEL. Well, you know, Mary dear—time—it takes time. You can't rush an inventor.

MARY. Well look, uncle. You know I can just wheedle father round my wee finger, can't I?

DANIEL. You can indeed.

MARY. Well, look: if you promise to bring down this boy you are talking about, I'll get father to give you enough to have two weeks in Belfast. There. It's a bargain.

DANIEL. Um—well—he may not be there you know.

MARY (*disappointed*). O uncle!

DANIEL. You see he travels a lot and he may be away. He may be in London. In fact I think—yes. He said he would be going to London.

MARY. Then why not go to London?

DANIEL (*starting up and speaking as if struck with delight at the possibility*). Eh? I never thought of that! (*He collapses again.*) But no. Your father, Mary. He would never give me the money. No.

MARY. But you're more likely to meet people there who'd take it up, aren't you, uncle?

DANIEL. It's *the place* for an inventor to go, Mary. *The place.* (*Pauses.*) But I'm afraid when John hears about it—(*he becomes very dubious and shakes his head*).

MARY. Well, look here, uncle. Do you mind the last time when he would not give you money to go up to Belfast about your patent.

DANIEL (*sadly*). I do.

MARY. You remember you got a letter a few days after asking you to come up at once and you had to go then. Hadn't you?

DANIEL. I had.

MARY. Well, couldn't we do the same this time?

DANIEL (*looking at her uneasily*). Eh?

MARY. Couldn't we get someone to send a letter. (*Pausing and thinking, then suddenly*). Oh, the very thing! You know that silly Alick McCready that comes running after me. Well, look, I'll get him to send a letter. [Pg 8]

DANIEL. No good, my dear. I did it before—I mean letters on plain notepaper don't carry much weight. No.

MARY. What about—oh, I know! Uncle, a telegram!

DANIEL. Great idea! It is in soul!

MARY. And we'll put something on it like "come to London at once to see about the patent," or something like that. And he'd have to let you go then.

DANIEL. Mary, you're really a cleverer girl than your father thinks. (*Musingly.*) Two weeks in London.

MARY. And don't forget the nice boy, uncle, when you go.

DANIEL. I'll do my best to get hold of him.

MARY. No. I want a good definite promise. Promise, uncle.

DANIEL. Well, really you know, my dear, he—

MARY. Uncle, promise.

DANIEL. Um—well, I promise.

MARY. You're a dear old thing. You see, uncle, I don't want to marry Alick McCready or Jim McDowell or any of those boys, unless there's nobody else.

DANIEL. Quite right, my dear, quite right. Two weeks in London. Splendid! But it's time I was going into my workshop. (*He rises and takes the paper with him.*) I must really try and do something this morning. (*Exit by workshop door.*)

MARY (*calling after him*). You won't forget, uncle? Will you?

DANIEL. No, certainly not.

MARY. I do hope uncle brings that nice boy. Dark—tall—well set up—well to do.

(*KATE comes in again through the yard door, and looks at MARY, who is gazing vacantly into space.*)

KATE. Well? What notion have you got now?

MARY. Oh! just think, Kate! How would you like a boy who was dark and tall, and well set up and well to do? [Pg 9]

KATE. I'd just leap at him.

MARY (*laughing*). Agh! I don't think he'll ever come, Kate!

KATE. I think you've plenty on hand to manage. (*BROWN opens the yard door and resumes his old-position from which he stares at the dresser.*) You're back again, are you?

BROWN. Aye.

KATE. What ails you now?

BROWN. I'm looking the spanner.

MARY. The spanner?

BROWN. The spanner, Miss Mary. It's for turning the nuts like.

KATE. Have you never got it yet?

BROWN. Do you think I've got eyes in the back of my head? Underneath the seat, beside the salt-box, on the right near the wee crock in the left hand corner. (*He makes a movement to open one of the drawers of the dresser.*)

KATE. Will you get out of that, ignorance. It's not there.

BROWN (*with an appealing look at MARY*). Maybe its in the parlour?

MARY. Well, I'll take a look round. (*She goes through the door to living rooms.*)

BROWN (*mysteriously*). Did you hear the news?

KATE. No. (*Very much interested.*) What?

BROWN. Ach! You women never know anything.

KATE. What's the news? Somebody killed?

BROWN. No. More serious.

KATE (*alarmed*). God bless me! What is it?

BROWN. Andy McMinn has a sister.

KATE (*disappointed*). Ach!

BROWN. And she's trying to get a man.

KATE. Well. I knowed that this years.

BROWN. And Mr. John Murray is a widow man.

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KATE. You mean to be telling me that Mr. John has a notion of that old thing? Go long with you!

BROWN. Did you ever hear tell of a widow man that never got married again.

KATE. Plenty. Don't come in here talking blethers.

BROWN. Whist. There's more in what I'm telling you than you think. And I'll hold you to a shilling that Sarah McMinn will be Mrs. John Murray before one month.

KATE. Who told you?

BROWN. Ach. You've no more head than a yellow yorling. Where has Mr. John been going to these wheen of nights?

KATE (*thinking*). Andy McMinns!

BROWN. Aye. Do you think it is to see old Andy? And sure he's been talking to me all morning about the way the house is being kept. No hand to save the waste; bread and things destroyed; hens laying away; eggs ate up by the dozen and chickens lost and one thing and another. And hinting about what money a good saving woman would bring him. And Mr. Daniel—

KATE. Sh—he's in there working.

BROWN. Working? Ah, God save us! Him working! The last man that seen Mr. Dan working is in his grave this twenty years. (*He goes over next workshop door.*) I'll just peep in at him through the keyhole. (*He goes over and does so, and then beckons KATE over. She peeps in and grins. As they are thus occupied ALICK MCCREADY opens the door and stands gazing at them. He is a type of the young well-to-do farmer, respectably dressed and good-looking.*)

ALICK. Well! Well! Some people earn their money easy!

BROWN. Aye. In soul. Just look in there to see it. (*MCCREADY looks in and bursts into a loud hearty laugh. BROWN hurriedly goes out by the yard door and KATE by door to inner rooms.*)

DANIEL (*opening door and standing there, perplexed looking*). What's the matter?

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ALICK. Ah. I was just laughing at a wee joke, Mr. Murray.

DANIEL. It must have been very funny.

ALICK. Aye. It was. (*Coming close to DANIEL, who walks slowly to the middle of the kitchen.*) I say. Were you at McArn's publichouse last night?

DANIEL (*looking round cautiously to see that no one else can hear him*). Well, just a minute or two. Why?

ALICK. There was someone there told Andy McMinn this morning, I believe, that you'd been talking of a great invention altogether, and he was that much curious to see it that him and his sister Sarah are coming over this day to have a look at it.

DANIEL. Who? Sarah McMinn?

ALICK. Aye. She's very anxious to see it, I believe.

DANIEL. Um. Rather awkward this. She's not a woman that, plainly speaking, I care very much to talk about my ideas to.

ALICK. But have you got something struck out?

DANIEL. McCready, come here. (*ALICK goes closer to him.*) It is really a great idea. Splendid. But I've a great deal of trouble over it. In fact I've been thinking out details of a particular gear all morning.

ALICK. Aye. (*He looks at DANIEL and then endeavours to restrain unsuccessfully a burst of laughter.*)

DANIEL (*angrily*). You were always an ignorant hound anyway and be d——d to you. (*He turns to go towards his workshop.*)

ALICK. Ah, Mr. Murray, I beg your pardon. It's another thing altogether I'm thinking about. I just wanted a talk with you this morning. You have a nice wee girl for a niece, Mr. Murray.

DANIEL (*somewhat mollified*). Well?

ALICK (*bashfully*). And I was wondering if you could put in a good word for me now and again with her.

DANIEL. Now, look here, Alick. We can all work nice and comfortably together, can't we?

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ALICK. Aye.

DANIEL. Well, if you behave yourself like a man with some manners, and not like an ignorant clodhopper, I can do a great deal for you.

ALICK. Thank you, sir. You know, Mr. Murray, I have as nice a wee farm, and as good stock on it as well, as any man in the county, and if I'm lucky enough to get that niece of yours, you'll always be welcome to come and pass a day or two and have a chat.

DANIEL. I think you and I will get along all right, Alick. There's one or two little things I need badly sometimes in this house. I mean I want help often, you know, Alick, to carry my points with John; points about going to see people and that sort of thing, and it's really very hard to manage John on points like that, unless we resort to certain means to convince him they are absolutely necessary.

ALICK (*uneasily*). Yes. I sort of follow you.

DANIEL. You know what I mean. John's a little dense, you know. He can't see the point of an argument very well unless you sort of knock him down with it. Now, if a thing is fair and reasonable, and a man is so dense that he can't see it, you are quite justified—at least, I take it so—to manufacture a way—it doesn't matter how—so long as you make that dense man accept the thing, whatever it is, as right. Do you follow me?

ALICK. I'm just beginning to see a kind of way.

MARY (*appearing at door from inner rooms*). I can't see that thing anywhere. (*She suddenly sees ALICK.*) Oh Alick! You here!

ALICK. Yes. It's a nice morning, and you're looking beautiful!

MARY. Oh, bother. (*She seems to suddenly recollect something.*) Oh, I say! uncle! You remember? Uncle!

DANIEL (*somewhat perplexed*). Eh?

MARY (*motioning towards ALICK*). Telegram to come to London.

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DANIEL. Ah——Oh, yes, yes.

MARY. Let's go into your workshop and tell Alick what we want. Come on.

ALICK. I'll do anything in the world you want.

(*They all go into the workshop. As they disappear, JOHN MURRAY, sweating and angry looking, comes through from the yard followed by BROWN. JOHN is a tall, stout man, with a rather dour countenance and somewhat stolid expression. He is a year or so the elder of Dan in age. He goes to the dresser, puts his hand on the top shelf, takes down a spanner and throws it down angrily on the table.*)

JOHN. There. There you are, you stupid-looking, good for nothing, dunder-headed, Italian idiot you.

BROWN. You're something terrible cross this morning.

JOHN. (*heatedly*). Is it any wonder? Away out at once now and put her to rights and quick about it. (BROWN *meekly goes out.*) The like of servant men nowadays, I never seen in my mortal days. A concern of ignorant bauchles, every one of them.

DANIEL (*opening door of workshop and peeping out. He sees JOHN and goes over to him with a genial air*). Good morning John.

JOHN (*snappishly*). Morning.

DANIEL. John, what do you think, I believe I have just come on to a great idea about—

JOHN. Ach! You and your great ideas! Here you've been blundering and blethering and talking these fifteen years and more, and I've never seen anything come of them yet.

DANIEL (*soothingly*). I know, John, I know. But I'm handicapped you know. Bad place to work in and all the rest of it: but you've been kind to me, John. Keeping a brother and helping him after he has lost all his money isn't a common thing with many men, but John a day will come sometime, and you'll get it all back. (*Impressively*). Every penny. Aye, and twice over.

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JOHN (*softening*). Thank you, Daniel.

DANIEL. You will, John, you will. But don't cast up things like that about the time I've been. It hurts me. A thing like this takes time to mature, you know, John. The great and chief thing for an inventor is time. Look at Palissy, the great French potter, who found out how to make porcelain glaze. Why he worked for years and years at his invention. And there was the man who found out how to make steam drive engines. Look at the years those men spent—and no one begrudged them.

JOHN. I suppose that now.

DANIEL. Certainly, John, nothing surer. And look at the fortunes those men made. But the great difficulty is trying to get someone to take up your patent. You see these men had the eyes of the world fixed on them. People knew all about them, and had their hands stretched out ready to grab what they invented. (*Pathetically*). I—I'm just a poor unknown man struggling in a wee dark corner.

JOHN (*touched*). Never mind, Danny. You'll make the name of the Murray's known yet, maybe.

DANIEL. I'll do my best, John. But mind you it would take me to be pushing on this thing that I have found out and bringing it before people to notice. You see I've got it all ready now except for a few small details.

JOHN (*much interested*). Have you now? I would like you sometime to explain it to me, Daniel. I didn't quite get on to it the last time you were telling me about it.

DANIEL. Some time again. Oh yes. But John—I'll have to go to some of the towns soon to see people about it. The bigger the town the better the chance, and John (*impressively*)—London's the place.

JOHN (*aghast*). London! In all the name of the world, yon place! Would Belfast not do you?

DANIEL. No. I don't like Belfast. They're a mangy, stick-in-the-mud, follow-in-the-old-ruts crowd. Never strike out anything new. It's a case of London or nothing.

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JOHN (*dubiously*). It will be a terrible expense this London visiting.

DANIEL. It'll be worth it.

JOHN. Now, Danny, I would like to oblige you, but what do you think it would cost me?

DANIEL. Well, I could live cheap you know, John, and do without meals an odd day, and go steerage and third class, and that sort of thing. I would say about fifteen pounds roughly. That would let me stay more than a week.

JOHN. Fifteen pounds! God bless me, Daniel, would you break me? No, no, I couldn't afford to give you that much.

DANIEL. Maybe ten would do it. I could sleep out under the arches an odd night or two, and—

JOHN. No, no. I'll not have that. A Murray aye had a bed to go to and a sup to eat. (*After a contemplative pause.*) Here, I'll give you three pounds and you can go to Belfast.

DANIEL. I don't care much about Belfast. You know I have been there five times now, and I have never got anyone to look into the thing at all proper.

JOHN. You're too backward, Daniel, when it comes to the like of that. But ten pounds! No, I would like you to get on in the world right enough, Daniel, but I couldn't afford it. You know the way this house is being kept; it's lamentable. Tea and sugar and flour and things. Man, I'm just after paying off ten pounds to the McAfees for one thing and another, and it only a running account for two months. If I had a good housekeeper now, maybe things would alter for the better.

MARY (*coming out from the workshop followed by ALICK*). O Uncle Dan! He says he'll go at once and get it—(*She stops short in confusion on seeing her father.*)



ALICK. How are you, Mr. Murray?

JOHN. O! bravely. What's the news with you?

ALICK. I was just looking over some of them ideas of Daniel's, about the new fan bellows.

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JOHN. Aye. Now what do you think of it?

ALICK (*warned by DANIEL who nudges him*). They're great altogether.

JOHN. Do you think there will be any sale for it at all?

ALICK. I think so. (*He perceives DANIEL motioning assent.*) I believe there would be indeed.

JOHN. Man, I wish I had the head of some of you young fellows to understand the working of them machinery and things. (*DANIEL goes back into the workshop.*) I've the worst head in the world for understanding about them sort of things. There's Daniel, a great head on him, Daniel.

ALICK (*slyly*). He has, right enough!

JOHN (*proudly*). One of the best. When he was a wee fellow, dang the one could beat him at making boats or drawing pictures, or explaining extraordinary things to you. None. Not one. A great head on him, Daniel. He'll do something yet.

ALICK. Did you know Andy McMinn's for coming over to see you this day, Mr. Murray?

JOHN (*eagerly*). This day? When? Are you sure?

ALICK. Aye, so he said. About two o'clock or so. Someone told him about Daniel's great new idea, and he's very curious to hear about it.

MARY. He's always poking his nose into people's business.

JOHN. Whist. Andy McMinn's a very decent man. Tell me (*rather bashfully*), was Sarah to come with him?

MARY (*alarmed*). O holy prophets! I hope not.

ALICK. Aye. She's coming too. She wanted to see it as well as Andy.

JOHN. Aye. Certainly, and she's welcome too. Mary, you can get the house ready, and the table set, and a nice tea for them when they come, and I can go and get tidied up a wee bit. (*He goes off through door into inner rooms.*)

ALICK (*leaning against the table and looking across at MARY, who is sitting at the opposite end.*) You're as nice a wee girl as ever I—

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MARY. You're an awful fool. Hurry, Alick, like a decent man and get that telegram sent.

ALICK. That uncle of yours, Mary, heth he's as canny a keoghboy as I've seen. Its the queer tears he'll be taking to himself in London if I know anything.

MARY. Hold your tongue. You've no business to talk about Uncle Dan that way. He could give you tons as far as brains go anyway.

ALICK. I believe that. (*He goes to yard door, then turns back.*) I say, Mary. What name will I put on that telegram? "Come to London at once about patent. Intend purchasing." Hadn't we better have a name?

MARY. Yes. I'll just ask uncle. (*She knocks at door of workshop.*) Uncle!

DANIEL (*without*). Yes.

MARY. What name will we put to that telegram?

DANIEL (*without*). Oh, it's not particular. Wilson or Smith, or Brown, or Gregg.

ALICK. I'll put Gregg on it.

DANIEL. Do well.

ALICK. Did you see the fluster that your father got into, Mary, when he heard that Sarah McMinn was coming over?

MARY (*alarmed*). What?

ALICK.. Did you not see how he rushed off to tidy himself up when he heard Sarah McMinn was coming over?

MARY (*seating herself on chair to right of table*). Nonsense. Father wouldn't think of that woman.

ALICK. All right. But I think I know something more than you.

MARY (*anxiously*). What? Tell me.

ALICK. Come on and leave me down the loaning a pace, and I'll tell you.

MARY (*glancing at him, and then coquettishly turning her back to him as he leans against the*) [Pg 18]

table). Oh, I can't. Those people are coming over, and that McMinn woman will be looking at everything and telling you how to do things in front of father, and all the rest of it.

ALICK (*entreatingly*). Leave me down the loaning a pace till I tell you the news.

MARY (*teasingly*). No.

ALICK. Come on.

MARY. No. (ALICK *moves sadly towards the door*. MARY *looks round, and then laughingly skips past him out through the yard door, and he follows her*.)

JOHN (*coming through door from inner rooms partly dressed, with a towel in his hands, evidently making much preparation to clean himself*). Daniel! (*Loudly and crossly*.) Daniel!

DANIEL (*peeping out from workshop door*). Well!

JOHN. Tidy yourself up a wee bit, man, Andy McMinn and Sarah's coming over to see you.

DANIEL (*somewhat taken back*). Me?

JOHN. Aye. They want to see about the new invention. You can have the collar I wore last Sunday, and put on your new coat that you got in Belfast. (DANIEL *goes back into the workshop*.) I wonder what tie would be the better one? Yon green or the red one that Mary gave me last Christmas. Aye. (*Seeing no sign of DANIEL*.) D—n! Is he making no shapes to dress himself. Daniel!

DANIEL (*without*). Aye.

JOHN (*loudly*). Daniel!

DANIEL (*again appearing at door*). Well!

JOHN (*impatiently*). Come on and get on you.

DANIEL. Ach. This is always the way. Just when a man has got the whole thing worked out and the plans of the apparatus just on the point of completion he has to stop.

JOHN. Never mind, Danny. You can do it again the night or the morrow morning. I want you to look decent. Come on and get on you.

DANIEL (*beginning to regard his brother with a sudden interest and suspicion*). Who did you say [Pg 19] was coming?

JOHN (*at door to rooms*). Andy and Sarah McMinn. (He goes out.)

DANIEL (*suddenly realising the import of the preparations going on*.) McMinn. Mc—. (*He stops short, and then in a horrified voice*.) Surely to God he hasn't a notion of that woman? (*Calling tremulously*.) John! John!

JOHN (*at door*). Hurry up, man.

DANIEL (*appealingly*). John. Tell me, John. You haven't—you're not going to—you haven't a notion of that woman?

JOHN (*hesitatingly*). Well, Daniel, you see the house needs some one to look after it proper, and I thought—well—maybe—that Sarah would be just as nice and saving a woman as I could get, but I thought I would keep it a bit secret, don't you know, because I don't know yet if she'd have me or not. And she could talk to you better nor I could about machinery and things that would interest you, for she has an agency for sewing machines, and knows something about that sort of thing, and you'd get on great with each other. Now, hurry and get on you. (*He goes out by door into rooms*.)

DANIEL (*looking after him in a helpless manner, and sinking into a chair*). If—if she'd have him! O great God! If that woman comes to this house, I—I'm a ruined man.

(CURTAIN.)

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## ACT II.

*The same scene some hours later. The curtain rises to discover KATE seated near table at back enjoying a cup of tea which she has made, and is drinking with relish.*

KATE. I suppose they'll be wanting jam and sugar for the tea—aye—and some of them scones Miss Mary cooked yesterday, not but you couldn't eat them, and a pat or two of butter. (*She finishes off the remains of the tea*.) Now, that's a nice girl for you! Here's company coming till the house and tea and things a wanting, and she goes and leaves all to go strolling down the loaning with that fool of a McCready.

(BROWN *opens the yard door and comes in. He replaces the spanner on the top shelf and then turns and looks at KATE*.)

KATE. Well?

BROWN. Well, yourself?

KATE. Do you see any sign of them McMinns yet?

BROWN. Aye. I see the trap coming over the Cattle Hill. There was three in it, as far as I could make out.

KATE. Who be to be the third party I wonder? Is it their servant man?

BROWN. Do you think old Andy McMinn's servant man gets leave to drive them about of an afternoon like the clergy's? Talk sense, woman.

KATE. Maybe it's yon Scotch body I heard was stopping with them.

BROWN. Aye. Yon Mackenzie. Ach, man, but yon creature would scunder you.

KATE. Aye.

BROWN. Ach! Cracking jokes and laughing that hearty at them, and I'm danged if a bat with one eye shut could make out what he was laughing at. (*Listening.*) Here they are. I hear the wheels coming up the loaning. I'll have to go and put up the horse for them I suppose. (*He goes out by yard door.*)

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KATE. I wonder if the master seen them coming. (*She rapidly clears the table and then goes over to door into room.*) I better tell him. (*She knocks at the door.*)

JOHN (*without*). Aye. (*He comes and opens the door, dressed in his best suit of clothes.*) What's the matter?

KATE. They're just come, sir.

JOHN (*excitedly*). Are they? (*Comes into kitchen.*) Is my tie right, Kate? And my clothes—is there any dirt on the back of them?

KATE (*inspecting him critically*). You'll do grand. I never seen you looking better.

JOHN. Where's Mary? Why isn't she here?

KATE. She went out about something. She'll be back in a minute.

JOHN. Right enough, it would do her all the good in the world to have a sensible woman looking after her. She just gets her own way a deal too much in this house. (*He goes to window and looks out.*) Aye. Here they are! Tell Daniel to hurry. (*KATE goes off by door to rooms.*) Sarah's looking bravely. Man, that woman could save me thirty, aye forty, pounds a year if she was here. (*Suddenly.*) Ach! Is Daniel never ready yet? (*Calls.*) Daniel! (*Louder.*) Daniel!

DANIEL (*without*). Aye.

JOHN. Hurry, man. They've come. (*JOHN goes to yard door and goes out.*)

DANIEL (*in an exasperated voice*). Ach!

(*JOHN comes in followed by ANDREW McMINN, an elderly non-descript sort of man, followed by SARAH, a sour faced spinster of uncertain age. In the rear is DONAL MACKENZIE. He is wearing a tourist costume of Norfolk jacket and knickers, and is a keen faced, hard, angular looking personage.*)

JOHN. Yous are all welcome. Every one of you. You Andy and Sarah, and Mr. Mackenzie. The Scotch is aye welcome, Mr. Mackenzie.

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MACKENZIE. Aye. That's what I said the last time I was in Ballyannis, and was verra thirsty, and went into a beer-shop to get a dram—Black and White it was. Verra guid. (*He laughs loudly at his own joke.*)

SARAH. We brought Mr. Mackenzie along with us to see your brother, John. You see he's an engineer and knows a good deal about machinery and plans and things.

MACKENZIE. Aye. There's not much about machinery that I dinna ken, Mr. Murray, from a forty thousand horse power quadruple expansion doon to a freewheel bicycle. (*Proudly.*) I hae done spells work at all of them, you ken.

ANDY. I suppose Daniel's at home. Is he?

JOHN. Daniel? Oh aye, Daniel's at home. He's just tidying himself up a wee bit.

MACKENZIE. A wee bit paint and powder gangs a lang gait to make up defects, as you ken yourself, Miss McMinn. (*He laughs loudly.*) That's a guid one.

ANDY (*looking slyly at Sarah*). He's up out of bed then?

JOHN (*innocently*). Oh aye. He sits up late of nights working out things. (*He points to the door of workshop.*) That's his workshop.

MACKENZIE. He works then?

JOHN. Aye. He works in there. (*Andy goes over and goes into workshop.*)

MACKENZIE. Because it doesna follow always, as I have discovered in my experience, that because a man has a workshop, he works. (*He laughs, evidently much pleased at his own humour.*)

ANDY (*looking out again through door*). There's nothing much to see in this place except a lot of dirty papers.

JOHN. That's the plans of the bellows he's working at.

MACKENZIE (*going over to workshop*). Come out, Mr. McMinn, till I examine. (*Andy comes out and he passes in.*) Eh. This is the plan of the great bellows. (*He laughs loudly.*)

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ANDY. Is he making much headway with it, John?

JOHN. Indeed, now, I think he's doing bravely at it. He's keeping very close at it this day or two.

ANDY. There's a terrible amount of newspapers lying in there. Has he no other plans and drawings except what's there?

JOHN. Oh aye. He has plenty of plans and drawings somewhere, for I seen them once or twice.

MACKENZIE (*coming out*). I can't say much about that contrivance. (*He laughs.*) And, I say. Look here. He does more than draw bellows. He draws corks as well. (*He produces a bottle of whiskey almost empty.*)

JOHN. Ah, well. He's not a great transgressor either in the matter of a bottle. No, no.

ANDY. And the smell of smoke in the place!

SARAH. John, I think Daniel smokes far too much.

ANDY. He should be dressed by now.

JOHN. Aye. Oh, aye. He should right enough. He's a wee bit backward before women, you know, Sarah. (*Calls.*) Daniel! (*He goes over and opens door into rooms.*) Daniel!

DANIEL (*without*). Yes. (*He appears at the door struggling vainly with his collar.*)

JOHN. Why didn't you come long ago. What kept you?

DANIEL. Your collar. (*He looks across at ANDY and SARAH, who have seated themselves at the back.*) How do you do, Andy and Sarah? You're very welcome. (*He looks at MACKENZIE, who stares curiously at him.*)

ANDY. This is a friend of ours, Daniel, that happened to be stopping with us last summer at Newcastle in the same house, and he came over for his holidays to us this time. We brought him over to see you. They calls him Mackenzie.

DANIEL (*crossing over to the left and taking a seat near the door of the workshop.*) How do you do?

MACKENZIE (*patronisingly*). I'm glad to see you at last, Mr. Murray, for I've heard a good deal about you.

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SARAH. You see, Daniel, Mr. Mackenzie is an engineer in one of the great Scotch engineering yards. (*DANIEL'S face expresses his dismay, which he hurriedly tries to hide.*) What place was it you were in, Mr. Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE. I served six years in the engine and fitting shops with Messrs. Ferguson, Hartie & Macpherson, and was two years shop foreman afterwards to Dennison, McLachlan & Co., and now I'm senior partner with the firm of Stephenson & Mackenzie. If ever you're up in Greenock direction, and want to see how we do it, just ask for Donal Mackenzie, and they'll show you the place. (*Proudly.*) We're the sole makers of the Mackenzie piston, if ever you heard of it.

DANIEL (*uneasily*). I'm sorry to say I haven't.

MACKENZIE. And you call yourself an engineer and you don't know about Donal Mackenzie's patent reciprocating piston.

JOHN (*apologetically*). You see we be a bit out of the world here, Mr. Mackenzie.

DANIEL. Yes. Now that's one point. One great point that always tells against me. (*Getting courageous.*) It really needs a man to be continually visiting the great engineering centres—Greenock, London—

MACKENZIE (*scornfully*). London's not an engineering centre—Glasgow, Hartlepool, Newcastle—

DANIEL. Well, all those places. He could keep himself posted up in all the newest ideas then, and inventions.

MACKENZIE. But a man can keep himself to the fore if he reads the technical journals and follows their articles. What technical papers do you get? Do you ever get the Scottish Engineers' Monthly Handbook, price sixpence monthly? I'm the writer on the inventors' column. My articles are signed Ferguson McLachlan. Perhaps you've read them?

DANIEL. I think—um—I'm not quite sure that I have.

DANIEL (*looking across at JOHN, who is standing with his back to the fireplace*). I don't think I do.

JOHN. No. We don't get them sort of papers. I did buy one or two like them for Daniel, but he told me he would just as soon have the *Whig*, for there was just as much information in it.

MACKENZIE (*laughing*). O spirit of Burns! Just as much information—well, so much for that. Now, about this new patent, this new fan bellows that I hear you're working at, Mr. Murray.

DANIEL. What about it?

ANDY. We both seen the drawings in there, Daniel, but I don't think either of us made much of it. Could you not explain it to him, Daniel. Give him an idea what you mean to do with it.

JOHN. Aye. Now's your chance, Daniel. You were talking of some difficulty or other. Maybe this gentleman could help you with it.

DANIEL (*shifting uneasily, and looking appealingly at JOHN*). Well. There's no great hurry. A little later on in the evening. (*He looks at SARAH.*) I'm thinking about Miss McMinn. I don't think this conversation would be very interesting to her.

SARAH. Oh, indeed now, Mr. Murray, I just love to know about it. A good fan bellows would be the great thing for yon fireplace of ours, Andy.

ANDY. Aye. Soul, it would that.

DANIEL (*uncomfortably*). No. Not just yet, John. A bit later on. I'm shy, John, you know. A bit backward before company.

JOHN. You're a man to talk about going to see people in London.

SARAH. What? Was he going to London?

JOHN. Aye. He was talking about going to London, and I was half-minded to let him go.

ANDY (*who exchanges meaning glances with SARAH*). Boys, that would cost a wheen of pounds!

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MACKENZIE. Who wull you go to see in London?

DANIEL (*evasively*). Oh—engineers and patent agents and people that would take an interest in that sort of thing.

MACKENZIE. Have you anyone to go to in particular?

DANIEL. Oh, yes.

SARAH. It will cost a great deal of money, Daniel. Seven or eight pounds anyway. Won't it, Mr. Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE. It would, and more.

JOHN (*looking at SARAH with evident admiration*). Man, that's a saving woman. She can count the pounds. (*Suddenly*). Daniel, away out and show Andy and Mr. Mackenzie the thresher, and get used to the company, and then you can come in and explain the thing to them. I want Sarah to stay here and help me to make the tea. That fool of a Mary is away again somewhere.

ANDY (*after a sly glance at SARAH*). Aye. Come on, Daniel, and explain it to us. I hear there's a new kind of feedboard on her.

MACKENZIE. How is she driven, Mr. Murray?

DANIEL (*uncomfortably*). How is she what?

MACKENZIE. How is she worked—steam, horse, or water power, which?

JOHN (*motioning DANIEL to go, which the latter does very unwillingly*). Go on out and you can show them, Daniel. (*DANIEL, ANDY, and MACKENZIE go out through yard door.*) He's backward, you know, Sarah, oh, aye—backward; but a great head. A great head on him, Daniel.

SARAH. I suppose he is clever in his way.

JOHN (*seating himself close beside her and talking with innocent enthusiasm*). Ah, boys, Sarah, I mind when he went to serve his time with McArthurs, of Ballygrainey, he was as clever a boy as come out of the ten townlands. And then he set up for himself, you know, and lost all, and then he come here. He's doing his best, poor creature, till pay me for what kindness I showed him, by trying to invent things that he says would maybe pay off, some time or other, all he owes to me.

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SARAH (*cynically*). Poor Daniel! And he lost all his money?

JOHN. Aye. Every ha'penny; and he took a hundred pounds off me as well. And now, poor soul, he hasn't a shilling, barring an odd pound or two I give him once or twice a month.

SARAH. Well! Well! And he's been a long time this way?

JOHN. Aye. (*Reflectively*.) I suppose it's coming on now to twenty years.

SARAH. It's a wonder he wouldn't make some shapes to try and get a situation somewhere.

JOHN. Ach, well, you know, when Annie, the wife, died and left Mary a wee bit of a wain, I was lonesome, and Daniel was always a right heartsome fellow, and I never asked him about going when he came here.

SARAH. He must be rather an expense to you. Pocket money for tobacco, and whenever he goes out a night to McArn's, its a treat all round to who is in at the time. And his clothes and boots, and let alone that, his going to see people about patents and things up to Belfast three or four times in the year. If he was in a situation and doing for himself, you could save a bit of money.

JOHN (*pensively*). Aye. Heth and I never thought much of that, Sarah. I could right enough. I'll think over that now. (*He looks at her, and then begins in a bashful manner.*) You weren't at Ballyannis School fête, Sarah?

SARAH. No. But I heard you were there. Why?

JOHN (*coming still closer*). I was expecting to see you.

SARAH (*contemptuously*). I don't believe in young girls going to them things.

JOHN (*gazing at her in astonishment*). But God bless me, they wouldn't call you young! (SARAH *turns up her nose disgustedly.*) I missed you. Man, I was looking for you all roads.

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SARAH. I'm not a fool sort of young girl that you can just pass an idle hour or two with, John Murray, mind that.

JOHN. I never thought that of you, Sarah.

SARAH. Some people think that.

JOHN (*astonished*). No.

SARAH. They do. There's Andy just after warning me this morning about making a fool of myself.

JOHN (*puzzled*). But you never done that, Sarah.

SARAH. Well, he was just after giving me advice about going round flirting with Tom, Dick and Harry.

JOHN. Ah no. You never done that. Sure I knowed you this years and years, and you never had a boy to my knowing.

SARAH (*offended*). Well I had, plenty. Only I just wouldn't take them. I refused more than three offers in my time.

JOHN (*incredulously*). Well! Well! And you wouldn't have them!

SARAH. No.

JOHN. Why now?

SARAH (*looking at him meaningly*). Well—I liked somebody else better.

JOHN (*piqued*). Did he—the somebody—did he never ask you?

SARAH. He might yet, maybe.

JOHN (*hopelessly to himself*). I wonder would it be any use then me asking her.

SARAH. And I'm beginning to think he is a long time thinking about it. (*Knocking at the door.*)

JOHN (*angrily*). Ach! Who's that?

BROWN (*opening yard door and looking in*). Me, sir. Mr. Dan wants to know could you not come out a minute, and show the gentlemen what way you can stop the feedboard working.

JOHN. Don't you know yourself, you stupid headed lump you. Away back at once. (BROWN *hurriedly closes the door after an inquiring glance at the pair.*) That's them servant men for you. He knowed rightly what way it worked, only he was just curious. (*Savagely.*) He's a stupid creature, anyway.

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SARAH. I think all men is stupid. They never see things at all.

JOHN. Now, Sarah, sure women are just as bad. There's Mary. She's bright enough someways, but others—ach—

SARAH. Mary needs someone—a woman—to look after her. Somebody that knows how to manage a house and save money. She's lost running about here. Now, I had a young girl with me once was a wild useless thing when she came, and when she left me six months after, there wasn't a better trained, nor as meek a child in the whole country.

JOHN. And you can manage a house, Sarah, and well, too. Can't you?

SARAH. I ran the house for Andy there twenty years and more, and I never once had to ask him for a pound. And what's more, I put some into the bank every quarter.

JOHN. Did you now? (*He looks at her in wondering admiration.*)

SARAH. Yes. And I cleared five pounds on butter last half year.

JOHN (*with growing wonder*). Did you?

SARAH. And made a profit of ten pounds on eggs alone this year already.

JOHN (*unable to contain himself any longer*). Sarah, will you marry me?

SARAH (*cooly*). Oh, John, this is very sudden. (*Knocking at yard door.*) I will. I will. Will you tell them when they come in?

JOHN (*now that the ordeal has been passed, feeling somewhat uncomfortable*). Well, I would rather you waited a few days, and then we could let them know, canny, don't you know, Sarah. Break the news soft, so to speak. Eh?

SARAH (*disappointed*). Well, if you want it particular that way I—(*knocking*).

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JOHN (*going to door*). Aye, I'd rather you did. (*He goes to the door and opens it and MARY comes in.*)

MARY. I peeped through the window and I thought, perhaps, it would be better to knock first. It's a nice evening Miss McMinn. (*She takes off her hat and flings it carelessly on a chair.*) Where's Uncle Dan? I want to see him.

JOHN. He'll be in soon enough. He's out showing Andy and Mackenzie the thresher.

MARY (*laughing*). Uncle Dan! What does he know about—(*she stops short, remembering that SARAH is present.*) Mr. Mackenzie?

SARAH. Yes. He's a gentleman, a friend of ours, engaged in the engineering business, who has a large place of his own in Scotland, and we brought him over here to see your Uncle Dan about the invention he's working at.

JOHN. You stop here, Mary, with Sarah, and get the tea ready. You should have been in the house when company was coming. Where were you?

MARY. Oh, just down the loaning.

JOHN. Who with?

MARY. Alick McCready.

JOHN (*sternly*). Aye. You're gay fond of tralloping about with the boys.

SARAH. He's not just the sort of young man I would like to see in your company, Mary.

MARY (*impertinently*). It's none of your business whose company I was in.

JOHN (*disapprovingly*). Now, Mary, remember your manners in front of your elders, and mind you must always show Miss McMinn particular respect. (*Impressively*). Particular respect. (*Going towards yard door.*) And you can show Sarah what you have in the house, and do what she bids you. Them's my orders. (*He goes out.*)

SARAH (*looking disapprovingly at MARY*). I wonder a girl like you has no more sense than to go gallivanting about at this time of day with boys, making talk for the whole country side.

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MARY (*sharply*). I don't have to run after them to other people's houses anyway.

SARAH. And that is no way to be leaving down your hat. (*She picks it up and looks at it.*) Is that your Sunday one?

MARY (*snatching it out of her hand*). Just find out for yourself.

SARAH. Now, you should take and put it away carefully. There's no need to waste money that way, wearing things out.

MARY (*with rising temper*). Do you know it's *my* hat? Not yours. And I can do what I like with it. (*She throws it down and stamps on it.*) I can tramp on it if I want to.

SARAH (*smiling grimly*). Oh, well, tramp away. It's no wonder your father complained of waste and this sort of conduct going on.

(*KATE comes in through door from rooms.*)

MARY. Have you got the tea things ready, Kate?

KATE. Yes, Miss.

MARY. I suppose we better wet the tea.

SARAH (*looking at the fire*). Have you the kettle on?

MARY. Can't you see for yourself it's not on.

SARAH. Here, girl (*to KATE*), fill the kettle and put it on. (*KATE looks at MARY, and with a shrug of her*

*shoulders, obeys the orders.*) Where's the tea till I show you how to measure?

MARY (*in a mocking voice*). Kate, get Miss McMinn the tea cannister till she shows you how to measure. (*KATE goes to the dresser and brings the teapot and cannister over to SARAH at the table.*)

SARAH. But it's *you* I want to show. (*MARY pays no attention, but sits down idly drumming her fingers on the table.*) There now—pay particular attention to this. (*She takes the cannister from KATE, opens it and ladles out the tea with a spoon into the teapot.*) One spoonful for your father and uncle, one for my brother and Mr. Mackenzie, one for yourself and me, and half-a-one for Kate.

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MARY. Do you see that, Kate?

KATE. Yes, Miss.

MARY (*mockingly*). Now the next thing, I suppose, is to weigh out the sugar.

SARAH. No. You always ask the company first do they take sugar before you pour out the tea.

MARY. No; not in good society. You put it on the saucers.

SARAH. Put some in the bowl, Kate, and never heed her.

MARY (*almost tearfully*). You've no business to say that, Kate! Who's your mistress here?

KATE (*very promptly*). You, Miss.

MARY. Then do what I tell you. Put on the tablecloth, and lay the cups and saucers, and make everything ready, and take no orders except from me.

SARAH. Very well. I'll learn her manners when I come to this house. (*To MARY*) I want to see the china.

MARY. Well, go into the next room and look for it.

SARAH (*going towards door to rooms*). You better mind what your father told you. (*She goes in.*)

MARY (*making a face after her*). You nasty old thing. (*DANIEL appears at the door from yard. He is nervous and worried looking. He goes and sits down near the fireplace, wearily.*) Uncle Dan. (*She goes over close beside him.*) Wasn't it good of Alick? He went away to Ballyannis Post Office to get that telegram sent.

DANIEL. A very decent fellow, Alick. (*Gratefully.*) Very obliging.

MARY (*confidingly*). Do you know, uncle, when he went off to send that telegram I was nearly calling him back. I don't care so very much now whether I see that boy you were telling me about or not. Is he—do you think, uncle—is he much nicer than Alick?

DANIEL. Nicer? (*He looks at his niece, and then begins to divine the way her feelings lie.*) Well, of course we have all our opinions on these things you know, Mary, but Alick—well, after all there's many a worse fellow than Alick, isn't there? (*MARY does not answer, but puts her head close to her uncle.*) Ah, yes.

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MARY (*suddenly*). Uncle! Do you know what has happened? I heard father proposing to Miss McMinn!

DANIEL (*groaning*). Oh my! I knew it would happen! I knew it would happen! When? Where?

MARY. In here. I wanted to slip in quietly after leaving Alick down the loaning when I overheard the voices. It was father and Miss McMinn. She was telling him how she had saved five pounds on butter last half year, and ten pounds on eggs this year, and then father asked her to marry him. I knocked at the door out of divilment, and she just pitched herself at him. I—I'm not going to stay in the house with that woman. I'd sooner marry Alick McCready.

DANIEL (*despairingly*). I would myself. I daren't—I couldn't face the look of that woman in the mornings.

MARY. It's all right for you to talk, uncle. You'll be working away at your inventions, and that sort of thing, and will have nothing much to do with her, but I'd be under her thumb all the time. And I hate her, and I know she hates me. (*Tearfully.*) And then the way father talks about her being such a fine housekeeper, and about the waste that goes on in this house, it nearly makes me cry, just because I have been a bit careless maybe. But I could manage a house every bit as well as she could, and I'd show father that if I only got another chance. Couldn't I uncle?

DANIEL (*soothingly*). And far better, Mary. Far better.

MARY. And you could do far more at your invention if you only got a chance. Couldn't you, uncle?

DANIEL. No doubt about it, Mary. None. I never got much of a chance here.

MARY. I wonder could we both try to get another chance. (*Suddenly, with animation.*) Uncle!

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DANIEL. Well?



MARY. Aren't you going to explain that fan bellows thing you've been working at to them when they come in? (DANIEL *nods sadly*.) Well, look. That Scotchman—he understands things like that, and that's just the reason why that nasty woman brought him over. Just to trip you and show you up, and she thinks she'll make father see through you. But just you rise to the occasion and astonish them. Eh, uncle?

DANIEL (*uneasily*). Um—well, I don't know. That Scotchman's rather a dense sort of fellow. Very hard to get on with somehow.

MARY. Now, Uncle Dan, it's our last chance. Let us beat that woman somehow or other.

DANIEL. It's all very well, Mary, to talk that way. (*Suddenly*.) I wonder is there a book on machinery in the house?

MARY. Machinery? Let me think. Yes, I do believe KATE was reading some book yesterday about things, and there was something about machinery in it.

DANIEL. For Heaven's sake, Mary, get it.

MARY (*calling*). Kate! Are you there, Kate? (KATE *comes in from inner rooms*.) Where's that book you were reading last night, Kate?

KATE (*surprised*). For dear's sake, Miss! Yon dirty old thing? The one with the big talk between the old fellow and the son about everything in the world you could think of?

MARY. Yes, yes. Uncle Dan wants it. (KATE *fetches a tattered volume from the dresser and hands it to DANIEL*. DANIEL *opens it, and reads while the two girls peer over his shoulder*.)

DANIEL (*reading slowly*). "The Child's Educator. A series of conversations between Charles and his father regarding the natural philosophy, as revealed to us, by the Very Reverend Ezekiel Johnston."

KATE (*much interested*). Aye. Just go on till you see Mr. Dan. Its the queerest conversation between an old lad and his son ever you heard tell of. [Pg 35]

DANIEL (*reading*). Ah! "The simple forms of machines. The lever, the wedge, the inclined plane—Father—and here we come to further consider the application of this principle, my dear Charles, to what is known as the differential wheel and axle. Um Charles—Father—Charles. Father." (*He looks up despairingly at MARY*.) No good, my dear. Out of date. (*He, however, resumes reading the book carefully*.)

KATE (*nudging MARY, and pointing to door into rooms*). She's going into all the cupboards and drawers, and looking at everything. (*She turns to go back and opens the door to pass through*.) I never seen such a woman.

MARY (*raising her voice so as to let SARAH hear her*). Just keep an eye on her, Kate, and see she doesn't take anything.

DANIEL. I might get something out of this. Atmosphere. Pressure.

MARY. Uncle Dan. (*He pays no attention, but is absorbed in the book*). Uncle Dan, I'm going down the loaning a pace. Alick said he might be back, and I think—(*she sees he is not listening, and slips back to look over his shoulder*.)

DANIEL (*reading*). Charles. And now my dear father, after discussing in such clear and lucid terms the use of the barometer, and how it is constructed, could you tell me or explain the meaning of the word "pneumatic."

MARY (*going towards yard door*). Good luck, Uncle Danny. I'm away. (*She goes out*.)

DANIEL. There's not much here about bellows. (*Hopelessly*.) I wish I had made up this subject a little better. (KATE *comes in evidently much perturbed and angry*.)

KATE. The devil take her and them remarks of hers. Who gave her the right to go searching that way, I wonder? Where's the silver kept, and was it locked, and how many spoons was there, and why weren't they better polished; and part of the china broke. [Pg 36]

SARAH (*coming to door and speaking. As soon as DANIEL hears her voice he hurriedly retreats across to the workshop*.) Where do you keep the knives and forks?

KATE. You don't want forks for the tea.

SARAH. I want to count them.

Kate (*in amazement*). Oh, God save us! You'd think there was a pross on the house! (*She follows SARAH in through door MACKENZIE comes in, followed by JOHN, then ANDY*.)

MACKENZIE. And it was a great idea, you know. The steam passed through the condenser, and the exhaust was never open to the atmosphere.

JOHN (*evidently much impressed, and repeating the word in a wondering manner*) Aye. The exhaust!

MACKENZIE. Aye. The exhaust. But now I'm verra anxious to hear your brother explaining what he's

made out about the bellows. Its the small things like that you ken that a man makes a fortune of, not the big ones.

JOHN (*impressed*). Do you think that now?

MACKENZIE. You know I take a particular interest in bellows myself. I tried my hand a good while working out a new kind of bellows, and I flatter myself that I know something about the subject.

JOHN. Aye. (*Looking round.*) Where's Daniel? Daniel! Are you there, Daniel? (DANIEL *comes out and stands near the door.*) You could maybe bring them plans out you're working at and explain it to them now, Daniel. Eh? And wait, Sarah wants to hear it too. (*Calling.*) Are you there, Sarah?

DANIEL (*seating himself sadly*). Aye. She's in there somewhere taking stock.

JOHN (*going next door to rooms*). Are you there, dear? (SARAH *comes out.*) Daniel's going to explain the thing to us, and you wanted to hear about it. Didn't you?

SARAH. I'm just dying to know all about it. (*She seats herself to the right at back. ANDY sits on one side of the table and MACKENZIE at the other, expectantly, while JOHN goes over to the fireplace almost opposite his brother.*) You know, Mr. Daniel, that's one thing we want very bad in our house—a good fan bellows. [Pg 37]

DANIEL. They are very useful, very.

JOHN. Aye. They are that. (*To SARAH.*) He has a good head on him, Daniel. Eh? (*To DANIEL.*) Now go on and make it very plain so that every one can follow you. Bring out the plans and show us.

DANIEL (*uneasily*). I can explain it better without them. (*After a pause.*) Well, I suppose this subject of bellows would come under the heading of pneumatics in natural philosophy.

JOHN. Oh, now, don't be going off that way. Could you not make it plainer nor that?

DANIEL (*appealingly*). Well. Could I be much plainer, Mr. Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE (*cynically*). I'm here to discuss fan bellows, not pneumatics.

DANIEL (*sotto voce*). D—n him. (*He pulls himself together.*) Well. Then I suppose the first thing is—well—to know what is a bellows.

ANDY. Aye. Man, Daniel, you start off just the same as the clergy. That's the way they always goes on expounding things to you.

SARAH (*severely*). Don't be interrupting, Andy.

MACKENZIE (*sneeringly*). Well, I think everyone here knows what a bellows is.

DANIEL. Everyone here? Do you, John?

JOHN. Aye. I would like, Daniel, to hear right what a bellows is. I mean I can see the thing blowing up a fire when you use it, any man could see that—but its the workings of it. What's the arrangements and internal works of the bellows now, Daniel?

DANIEL. Well, you push the handles together in an ordinary bellows and—and the air—blows out. (*Seeing that this statement is received coldly.*) Now, why does it blow out?

JOHN (*disappointedly*). Because it's pushed out of course. There's no sense in asking that sort of a question. [Pg 38]

DANIEL. Well, there's a flap on the bellows—a thing that moves up and down. Well, that flap has all to do with pushing the air.

JOHN. Maybe this scientifican business is uninteresting to you, Sarah, is it?

DANIEL (*brightening up at the suggestion*). I'm sure it is. Perhaps we better stop.

SARAH (*smiling grimly*). Oh, not at all. I want to hear more.

MACKENZIE. You're wasting a lot of my time, Mr. Murray. I came here to hear about a fan bellows.

DANIEL (*confusedly*). Oh, yes. Yes. Certainly. Fan bellows. There's a difference between a fan bellows and an ordinary bellows.

MARY (*opening door from yard and coming in*). Oh, Uncle Dan, are you explaining it to them. Did I miss much of it?

MACKENZIE. I don't think it matters much what time you come in during this.

JOHN (*impatiently*). Go on, Daniel.

DANIEL. It's very hard for me to go on with these constant interruptions. Well, I was just saying there was a difference between a fan bellows and an ordinary bellows.

MACKENZIE. Now, what is a fan bellows yourself, Mr. Murray?

DANIEL (*hopelessly*). A fan bellows? Ah. Why now is it called a fan bellows?

MACKENZIE (*roughly*). Don't be asking me my own questions.

DANIEL (*with a despairing effort*). Well, now we will take it for granted it is because there must be something of the nature of a fan about a fan bellows. It is because there are fans inside the casing. And the handle being turned causes these—eh—fans to turn round too. And then the air comes out with a rush.

JOHN. Aye. It must be the fans that pushes it out.

[Pg 39]

DANIEL. Exactly. Well, now, the difficulty we find here is—(*he pauses*).

ANDY. Aye.

JOHN. Go on, Daniel.

DANIEL. You want a constant draught blowing. That's number one. Then—well—the other. You see, if we took some of these fans.

MACKENZIE. Yes.

DANIEL (*in a floundering way*). And put them in a tight-fitting case, and put more of them inside, and understood exactly what their size was, we could arrange for the way that—

JOHN (*in a puzzled way to SARAH*). I can only follow Daniel a short way too. (*Repeating slowly*.) Put them in a tight-fitting case—

BROWN (*appearing at yard door with a telegram in his hand, and speaking with suppressed excitement*). A telegram for Mr. Daniel.

DANIEL (*with a gasp of relief*). Ah! (*He tears it open and proudly reads it out aloud*.) "Come to London at once to explain patent. Want to purchase. Gregg."

(BROWN *goes out again*.)

MACKENZIE. Who? Gregg?

DANIEL. I suppose I better go, John?

JOHN. Let's see the telegram. (*He goes over to DANIEL, who hands it to him*.)

MACKENZIE. If you go to London, it'll take you to explain yourself a bit better, Mr. Murray.

JOHN (*who has resumed his place at the fire, and is looking carefully at the telegram*). That will mean how many pounds, Daniel, did you say?

DANIEL (*promptly*). Fifteen, John. (*MARY goes out by door to rooms*.)

MACKENZIE. Who is Gregg?

DANIEL. Gregg? Ah. He's a man lives in London. Engineer.

JOHN (*dubiously*). Well, I suppose you—(*he pauses, then hands the telegram to SARAH, who stretches out her hand for it*.) [Pg 40]

MARY (*at door*). Tea's ready. (*She stands aside to let the company past*.)

SARAH. We didn't hear all about the bellows.

ANDY (*contemptuously*). No, nor you never will. (*He rises and goes through the door*.)

MACKENZIE (*rising and stretching himself wearily*). Any more, Mr. Murray?

DANIEL. I refuse to discuss the matter any further in public. (*He goes off across to tea*.)

MACKENZIE (*going over to John and looking at him knowingly*). Do you know what it is, Mr. Murray? Your brother's nothing short of an impostor.

JOHN (*much offended*). Don't dare to say that of a Murray.

MACKENZIE (*shrugging his shoulders*). Well, I'm going for some tea. (*Exit*.)

SARAH. John, I've something to say to you again about Daniel, but the company's waiting. (*She goes out to the tea room*.)

JOHN (*sitting down moodily*). Aye.

MARY. Are you not coming, father?

JOHN. Aye.

MARY. Father! Surely you aren't going to marry that woman?

JOHN. Don't talk of Sarah that ways. I am!

MARY. Well, if you are, I'm going to say yes to Alick McCready. I don't want to yet awhile, but I'm not going to stay on here if that nasty woman comes. (*She kneels close beside her father and puts her arms round his neck*.) Oh, father, if you only give me another chance, I could show you I could keep house every bit as well as that woman. (*DANIEL appears at the door. He slips across to the workshop unobserved*.) Give me another chance, father. Don't marry her at all. Let me stay

with you—won't you?

JOHN. You're too late. She's trothed to me now.

MARY. Pooh. I'd think nothing of that. (DANIEL *comes out of the workshop with a bag.*) Uncle Dan! [Pg 41]  
What's the matter?

DANIEL. Mary, I can't eat and sit beside that Scotchman. (*He notices JOHN is absorbed in deep thought, and motions MARY to slip out. She does so, and he looks observingly at JOHN, and then goes to the table, and makes a noise with the bag on the table. JOHN watches him a moment or two in amazed silence.*)

JOHN. What are you doing, Daniel?

DANIEL. Just making a few preparations.

JOHN. Ah, but look here. I haven't settled about London yet, Daniel.

DANIEL. Oh, London, John. (*Deprecatingly.*) Let that pass. I won't worry you about that. (*Broken heartedly.*) I'm leaving your house, John.

JOHN (*astonished*). What?

DANIEL. You've been kind, John. Very kind. We always pulled well together, and never had much cross words with one another, but—well, circumstances are altered now.

JOHN. You mean because I'm going to marry Sarah.

DANIEL. Exactly. That puts an end to our long and pleasant sojourn here together. I'll have to go.

JOHN (*affected*). Oh easy, Daniel. Ah, now, Sarah always liked you. She thinks a deal of you, and I'm sure she'd miss you out of the house as much as myself.

DANIEL. John, I know better. She wants me out of this, and I would only be a source of unhappiness. I wouldn't like to cause you sorrow. She doesn't believe in me. She brought that Scotchman over to try and show me up. You all think he did. You think I mugged the thing. You don't believe in me now yourself. (*He puts a few articles of clothing, &c., into the bag.*)

JOHN (*awkwardly*). Aye. Well—to tell you the truth, Daniel, you did not make much of a hand at explaining, you—

DANIEL (*pathetically*). I thought so. Look here. One word. (*He draws JOHN aside.*) Do you think Mackenzie invented that patent reciprocating piston that he's so proud of? [Pg 42]

JOHN (*looking at him in amazement*). What?

DANIEL (*impressively*). Well. I know something about that. He stole it off another man, and took all the profits. I knew that. Do you think I'm going to give away the product of my brains explaining it to a man like that! No fear, John. (*He turns again to the bag.*) I'm taking details of my bellows, and my coat, and a few socks, and the pound you gave me yesterday, and I'm going to face the world alone.

JOHN (*moved*). No, no. You'll not leave me, Daniel. Ah, no. I never meant that.

DANIEL. If she's coming here I'll have to go, and may as well now.

SARAH (*without*). John Murray!

DANIEL (*retreating slowly to the workshop*). I'm going to get that other coat you gave me. It's better than this one for seeing people in. (*He goes into workshop as SARAH comes out into the kitchen. She is evidently displeased.*)

SARAH. Hurry up, John. The company's waiting on you, and I don't know what's keeping you. Unless it was that brother of yours, more shame to him.

JOHN. Aye. Daniel kept me. (*Looking at her.*) He's talking of leaving. You wouldn't have that, Sarah, would you?

SARAH (*sharply*). Leaving, is he? And a right good riddance say I. What has he done but ate up all your substance.

JOHN (*astonished*). You wouldn't put him out, Sarah?

SARAH (*snappishly*). I just wouldn't have him about the place. An idle, good for nothing, useless, old pull a cork.

JOHN. Do you not like him, Sarah? (*Somewhat disapprovingly.*) You told me you thought a good deal of him before.

SARAH. Aye. Until I seen through him. Him and his letters and telegrams. Just look at that. (*She shows him the telegram.*) It comes from Ballyannis. [Pg 43]

JOHN (*scratching his head in puzzled wonder*). I don't understand that.

SARAH. He just put up some one to send it. Young McCready or someone. You couldn't watch a man like that. No. If I come here, out he goes. You expects me to come and save you money and

the like of that old bauchle eating up the profits. (*She goes towards the door into tea room.*)  
Come into your tea at once. (*Exit.*)

JOHN. By me sang he was right. (*DANIEL comes out and starts brushing his coat loudly to attract JOHN'S attention, and then goes across towards him and holds out his hand.*)

DANIEL. I'll say good-bye, John. Maybe I'll never see you again. (*He appears much affected.*)

JOHN (*touched*). Ach. Take your time. I don't see the sense of this hurrying. Stop a week or two, man. I'll be lonesome without you. We had many a good crack in the evenings, Daniel.

DANIEL. We had, John. And I suppose now that you'll be married I'll have to go, but many a time I'll be sitting lonely and thinking of them.

JOHN. Aye. You were always the best of company, and heartsome. You were, Daniel.

DANIEL. Well, I did my best, John, to keep—(*he half breaks down*)—to keep up a good heart.

JOHN. You did. I wouldn't like to lose you, Daniel. (*He looks at the telegram in his hand.*) But Daniel. This telegram. It comes from Ballyannis.

DANIEL (*taken aback, but recovering his self possession.*) Ballyannis? Ballyannis? Ah, of course. Sure Gregg, that London man, he was to go through Ballyannis to-day. He's on a visit, you know, somewhere this way. It's him I'm going to look for now.

JOHN. Was that the way of it? (*With rising anger at the thought of the way in which his brother has been treated.*) And she was for making you out an impostor and for putting you out. I didn't like them talking of a Murray the way they done. [Pg 44]

DANIEL (*with sudden hope*). Are you engaged to that McMinn woman, John?

JOHN. Aye. I spoke the word the day.

DANIEL. Was there anybody there when you asked her?

JOHN. There was no one.

DANIEL. Did you write her letters?

JOHN. No. Not a line.

DANIEL. And did you visit and court much at the home?

JOHN. No. I always seen Andy on business and stopped to have a word or two with her.

DANIEL (*appealingly*). Then, John, John, it's not too late yet. (*Desperately.*) Give me—ah, give wee Mary another chance.

SARAH (*at door*). Come in, John, at once. Your tea's cold waiting, and it's no way to entertain company that.

JOHN (*angrily*). D——n her. Daniel! Out of this home you will not go. I'd rather have your crack of a winter night as two hundred pounds in the bank and yon woman. (*He reaches out his hand.*) I'll break the match. (*The two men shake hands.*)

(CURTAIN.)

[Pg 45]

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## ACT III

*The same scene two weeks later.* BROWN *comes in by yard door holding letters in his hand, which he examines curiously at intervals.*

BROWN (*shouting loudly*). Miss Mary! Are you there, Miss Mary?

KATE (*coming in from parlour*). Hi there. Stop that shouting. D'ye want to wake the dead?

BROWN. I want to give these letters to Miss Mary. Where is she?

KATE. Who're they for? Let's look at them.

BROWN. Not for you anyway. (*Loudly.*) Miss Mary.

KATE. Ach quit deaving me with your shouting.

MARY (*coming in*). What's the matter? Oh! Letters! Any for me, Sam?

BROWN. Aye. There's a post card for you, Miss Mary, and a registered letter for Mr. John. The posty says he'll call on the road back for the account when you sign it. (*He hands the post card to MARY and looks carefully at the letter.*) It's like the McMINN writing that. (*He looks at MARY, who is reading and re-reading the post card with a puzzled expression.*) Isn't Mr. Dan to be home to-day from Belfast, Miss Mary?

MARY. Eh?

BROWN. Isn't Mr. Dan expected home to-day from Belfast?

MARY. Yes.

BROWN. I wonder did he get the bellows sold? There was great talking about him last night in McArn's. Some said he had sold it and made a fortune. (*He breaks off abruptly on seeing that MARY pays no attention to him, and then peers over to see what she is reading.*) Post cards is interesting things. Picture post cards is.

KATE. Here. Away out and get them purtas dug for the dinner. We're tired hearing your gabble. [Pg 46]

BROWN (*retreating to door and eyeing KATE meaningly*). The master was complaining again to me yesterday evening about the dinner he got. There's no mistake he likes his meat like myself, and right enough it was bad yesterday. I was chowing haws all evening to keep off the hunger.

KATE. Go on you out of this.

BROWN. That's all the news this morning. (*He makes a grimace at KATE and goes out into the yard.*)

MARY. I can't understand this post card. (*KATE goes over and looks at it along with MARY.*)

"O wad that God the gift wad gie us,  
To see oorselves as ithers see us."

What does that mean? "How's the uncle?" It's some cheeky person anyway—"from D.M." Who could that be?

KATE. It's not McCready, Miss, is it?

MARY. No. That's not his writing.

KATE. Och, Miss Mary! Do you see the picture of the Highland man dancing, and under it—"A Mackenzie Clansman." It's thon Scotch fellow sent it.

MARY. Just like the way he would do. I met him again one night we were over at the doctor's, and he was trying to make up to me all he was able.

KATE. Aye. Any word from Mr. Dan about the boy he was to bring you?

MARY. No. I'm not going to bother any more about boys, I'm going to keep house from this on properly. But Uncle Dan said something in his last letter about a great surprise he had for all of us.

KATE. Surprise enough it will be, and he lands home with a ha'penny in his pocket. The last time he come home he borrowed a shilling of me and niver paid me back yet. Did he sell the plans of the bellows, Miss?

MARY. He didn't say. (*JOHN MURRAY comes through yard door. He has evidently been working outside and has left his work in a hurry.*) Father, there's a letter for you. (*She hands it to him.*) A registered one too. [Pg 47]

JOHN. Aye. So Brown was telling me. Maybe its from thon McAlenan fellow that owes me two pound for the heifer. (*He tears it open. MARY and KATE watch him with interest. His face changes as he reads, and an expression of dismay comes over it.*)

MARY (*coming closer to him*). What's the matter, father?

JOHN (*fidgiting uneasily*). Nothing, child. Nothing. (*He looks at the letter again.*) Well I'm—(*He stops short on remembering MARY is there.*) She's a caution.

MARY. Father. Tell me. Is it from the McMinns?

JOHN. Aye. (*Pacing up and down.*) I knowed she'd do it. I knowed she'd do it.

MARY. What?

JOHN. Sarah's taking an action against me.

MARY. An action?

JOHN. Aye. (*Consulting the letter.*) For a thousand pounds.

MARY (*awestruck*). A thousand pounds!

JOHN. Aye. Now the fat's in the fire. She says I promised to marry her and broke it off. At least, it's Andy that writes the letter, but it's her that put him up to it. I know that too well. (*Reading.*) "To Mr. John Murray. Dear Sir,—You have acted to my sister in a most ungentlemanly way, and done her much wrong, and I have put the case intil the hands of Mr. McAllen, the solicitor, who will bring it forward at the coming Assizes. If you wish, however, to avoid a scandal, we are oped to settle the matter by private arrangement for one thousand pounds. Yours truly, Andrew McMinn."

MARY. That's awful, father, isn't it?

JOHN (*going over to fireplace and standing there irresolutely*). Aye. It's a terrible mess, right enough.

MARY (*brightening up*). Sure she wouldn't get a thousand off you, father?

[Pg 48]

KATE. There's John McArdle up by Slaney Cross got a hundred pounds took off him by wee Miss Black, the school teacher.

JOHN (*uncomfortably*). Aye. Heth now, I just call that to mind. And he never got courting her at all, I believe.

KATE. It just served him right. He was always a great man for having five or six girls running after him.

JOHN. And she hadn't much of a case against him.

KATE. The school children were standing by when he asked her in a joking sort of way would she marry him, and the court took their evidence.

JOHN (*hopelessly*). Aye. Men are always terrible hard on other men where women are concerned.

KATE. And a good job it is, or half the girls would be at the church waiting, and the groom lying at home rueing his bargain. (*She goes out by yard door.*)

MARY (*going up to her father*). Father, has she a good case against you?

JOHN (*after a moment of deep thought*). No. I don't think it.

MARY. Don't worry so much then, father.

JOHN. It's the jury I'm so frightened of. They all come from the mountainy district at this Assizes, and there's not a man of them but wouldn't put a knife in me, the way I get beating them down in price at the fairs.

MARY. I don't think they'd give her fifty pounds when they see her. It's only good looking girls would get big sums like a thousand pounds.

JOHN. It's all very well, Mary, but she could dress herself to look nice enough, the same Sarah, if she liked.

MARY. She could not, indeed.

JOHN. They say, at least Brown was hinting to me, that its yon Scotch fellow, Mackenzie, has put up the McMinn's to this business. He and that connection are as thick as thieves.

MARY. He mightn't be so very fond of them. When a man sends post cards to a girl he doesn't know very well, he's got a wee bit of a liking for her. [Pg 49]

JOHN. What are you talking about? I never sent her any post cards.

MARY. Father, what are you going to do?

JOHN (*despairingly*). I'm d—d if I know.

MARY. Will you defend the case?

JOHN. I don't want to go near the court at all.

MARY. Father! (*Alarmed.*) Father! Sure you wouldn't—you couldn't think of marrying her after all that row that happened? (JOHN *remains silent.*) Wouldn't you rather lose a thousand pounds and keep me, father? (JOHN *breaks a piece of soda bread morosely and eats it.*) Wouldn't you, father.

JOHN. Ah! (*He spits out the bread.*) Heaven save us, what kind of bread's that?

MARY (*taking away the bread and putting it behind her back.*) Father! Ah please, please, don't marry her anyway. Sure you won't?

BROWN (*coming in hastily*). Here's Mr. Dan coming up the loaning, sir, that grand looking you'd hardly know him, and a big cigar in his mouth.

JOHN. Daniel back?

MARY. Oh, I must go out and meet him. (*She goes out by yard door quickly.*)

JOHN. Had he his luggage with him?

BROWN. Aye. He has yon big portmanteau of his, and a parcel of something or other.

JOHN. Away out and help him then, can't you? (BROWN *goes out.*) I wonder what kept him in Belfast all this time. I suppose he's spent most of the five pounds I gave him. Like enough. I never mind him coming back yet with a ha'penny on him. (*He sits down at the fireplace and looks again at the letter.*) A thousand pounds! And there never was a breach of promise case known where they didn't bring in a verdict for the woman. Never! (*He becomes absorbed in thought, and as he sits ruminating* MARY *opens the door, carrying a large brown paper parcel, followed by DANIEL. DANIEL is dressed fairly well, and seems to be in high spirits. BROWN follows him carrying a portmanteau.*) [Pg 50]

DANIEL (*brightly*). Home again, John.

JOHN (*morosely*). Aye. It was near time, I think.

DANIEL. Saw quite a number of people this time, John. A great number. They were all very much interested. Fine town, Belfast. Growing very rapidly. Wonderful place.

MARY. What's in the parcel? (*She looks at it with great curiosity.*)

DANIEL. Ah, that—that't the great secret. Mum's the word. All in good time, Mary.

BROWN. Will I leave your bag here, Mr. Dan?

DANIEL. Yes. Here's a sixpence for you. (*He hands it to BROWN.*)

JOHN. You're brave and free-handed with your money. Giving the like of that bauchle sixpence. (*BROWN, who is going out through yard door, stares back at his master protestingly, and then goes out.*) The Lord knows but we will be wanting every ha'penny we can scrape together, and soon enough.

MARY. I didn't tell Uncle Dan yet, father.

DANIEL (*seating himself near the workshop door*). Has anything happened?

MARY. Yes. Sarah McMinn has—

JOHN. Read that letter, Daniel. (*He goes across and hands DANIEL the letter, and goes back to the fireplace to watch him.*)

DANIEL (*taking out his glasses and solemnly perusing the letter*). Um.

JOHN. Well? What do you think of that?

DANIEL (*endeavouring to appear cheerful*). Keep up a stout heart, John. You're safe enough.

JOHN. Oh, heth, I'm not so sure of that. Sure you never heard tell of a jury yet that didn't give damages against the defendant in a breach of promise case. Did you now? [Pg 51]

DANIEL. Tuts, man. She has no case.

JOHN. Case or no case it doesn't seem to matter. What sort of case had Jennie Black against John McArdle, of Slaney Cross? None. What sort of case had Maggie McAndless against old William Boyd? None at all. I was at both of them trials and says to Pat McAleenan—"the girl has no case at all!" But for all that they brought in a verdict for one hundred pounds against McArdle, and they put two hundred against old Boyd, and nearly broke the two of them.

DANIEL. It's very awkward this.

JOHN. Did you do anything, Daniel about the bellows?

DANIEL. The bellows? Aye. (*He points at the parcel.*) A good deal, John. It's all there. But it's all not quite settled yet. A day or two more and you'll see. If all goes well I'll have a great surprise for you in a day or two.

JOHN (*disgustedly*). Ach! I suppose you spent every ha'penny of the money, too, that I gave you?

DANIEL. John. Another surprise for you! Those people I met and went to, put me up very cheap for the week. Very cheap. (*He produces some money.*) Therees one pound ten and sixpence for you.

JOHN. What?

DANIEL. I'll keep the pound to do me to the end of the month and not ask you for any more, John, after that. That is if—well—(*He looks at the parcel.*) That thing there is all right.

JOHN (*pocketing the ten and sixpence after counting it carefully*). Daniel. I'm sorry, but there's an account of some thirty shillings I owe the McArdles, and I want to pay it the night. So if you don't mind—(*He holds out his hand.*)

DANIEL (*unwillingly*). Well, I suppose it can't be helped, John. But it leaves me just with nothing. However, there you are. (*He hands the pound over to him. SAM BROWN opens the yard door and peeps in cautiously.*) [Pg 52]

JOHN (*looking at him angrily*). What ails you anyway?

BROWN. If you please sir, the posty wants the account signed for that letter.

MARY. Oh, I forgot all about that. (*She picks up the receipt for the letter from the table.*) I'll sign it for you, father. (*She goes over to BROWN, who whispers somethings. She nods.*) And I'll give it to him myself. (*She goes out following BROWN.*)

JOHN. It's a serious business, this, about the McMinns.

DANIEL. You're all right, man. Wait a day or two. Take my advice. Do nothing in a hurry. Sit down and think it over the way I do when I'm working out a new idea. Don't rush things. It will all come right in the end. Just you wait and see if it doesn't.

JOHN. Would it not be better to settle before going into the court? You know I couldn't stand being pointed out to of a Sunday morning and one and another talking—"There's the man that Sarah McMinn took the breach of promise case against." No, I couldn't stand that at all. It would be a disgrace to the Murrays for ever. I'm wondering now—(*He pauses lost in thought.*)



DANIEL (*alarmed*). John. Surely you wouldn't—you couldn't think of going back on what you said to me. Would you?

JOHN. I wonder, Daniel, would you mind so much after all if I married her?

DANIEL (*in an agonised voice*). I couldn't stand it. No, John, I couldn't stay. Any other woman but that McMinn.

MARY (*appearing at the door followed by ALICK McCREADY*). Come on in, Alick.

ALICK. Good morning, Mr. Murray. How are you, Mr. Dan? So you are back again? We're all glad to have you back.

DANIEL. Thank you, Alick.

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MARY. Father. Alick says he heard Andy McMinn talking yesterday to some one at McArdle's shop, and he was telling them all about the whole business, and blaming it all on Uncle Dan.

JOHN. And so the people are talking of me already? Now that I come to think of it, it was your Uncle Dan, and a brave ha'penny it's going to cost me. One thousand pounds.

ALICK. Never mind, Mr. Murray. Maybe Uncle Dan will do something yet. What about the bellows? (*DAN makes a horrified movement to stop ALICK talking, but too late.*)

JOHN. Aye. Here, Daniel. I'll make a bargain with you. I'll leave you to the settling of the case, and you can find the money yourself to pay for it if you want to. And if you can't find the money, I'll marry her.

MARY. Father, surely—

JOHN. What? That's enough about it. I would as soon do without the marrying if I could. I don't want the woman at all, but I'll marry her before she gets a ha'penny off me. So you can settle it among yourselves. You can take charge of that letter, Dan, and make the best you can of it. (*He goes angrily out by yard door.*)

DANIEL. This is a nice mess you put me in for, Alick. What the devil made you mention the bellows?

ALICK. I'm sorry, Mr. Dan. I wasn't thinking.

DANIEL. The sooner you start and think a bit the better. If you don't help to settle the case—(*he looks angrily at ALICK*)—well—I've a good deal of influence with somebody. (*He looks significantly at MARY, who is again examining the parcel.*)

ALICK. I'll do my best, Mr. Dan, to help you.

MARY. What will we do, Uncle Dan?

DANIEL. I suppose you've no money, Alick?

ALICK. Well, I haven't much ready money, Mr. Dan, but I could lend you up to twenty pounds at a pinch.

MARY. Twenty pounds would hardly be enough. Would it, uncle?

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ALICK. Better get hold of Andy and ask him.

DANIEL. I don't like going near that woman at all.

MARY. Alick! Could you not slip over and ask Andy to come across? You know what the McMinn's are like. He'd come over for a shilling if he thought he'd get one. Ah, yes. You will, Alick. Won't you?

ALICK. I'll go straight across now if you—if you—

MARY. What?

ALICK. If you'd leave us along the road a bit.

DANIEL. Aye. Do. Mary. Leave him down to the gate anyway. I want to stay here and think over things a wee bit. That's the good wee girl. (*He gently urges her out with ALICK, then goes over to the table, lifts the parcel, and sits down near the fireplace. Feeling the parcel.*) I'm afraid, Dan Murray, it's all U. P. this time. I'm afraid it is. (*Then an idea seems to dawn on him, and he looks at the parcel.*) Unless—unless—well—I wonder now if I—

(*KATE and BROWN enter through yard door. BROWN is carrying a bucket filled with washed potatoes.*)

KATE. There. Put it down there. You didn't know we wanted that much, did you not? You're getting as big an old liar as Mr.—(*She stops short on perceiving DANIEL.*)

BROWN (*looking up and then realising what had made her pause*). Aye. Go on. As who do you say, woman?

KATE (*recovering herself*). Just as big an old liar as Andy McMinn.

BROWN. Now, whist. The McMinn's were aye decent folk. (*He glances across at DANIEL, who*

*apparently is not listening.*) They're near people, and all that sort of thing, but once they say a thing they stick to it.

KATE. They're a lot of mean scrubs, the whole caboosh of them.

DANIEL (*to himself*). I wonder would twenty pounds be any use at all?

BROWN (*nudging KATE slyly*). I believe that once Sarah puts a price on a thing, like a pig or a sow, or a hen, the divil himself couldn't beat her down in the price of it. And Andy, they say, can beat the best dealer in the county from here to the Mourne. (DANIEL, *who has been listening uneasily, gets up and turns round to look at them.*) It's the fine cigar that you were smoking, Mr. Daniel, this morning. [Pg 55]

DANIEL. Cigar? Yes. Yes.

BROWN. Aye. A fine cigar, sir. There was a grand smell off it. I seen you coming up by the McMinns, sir, this morning on the road from the station.

DANIEL. Yes. On the road from the station.

BROWN. You didn't see them, but I noticed Andy and Sarah coming out to the gate when you had passed them and looking after you a long time.

DANIEL. Is that so?

BROWN. Aye. A long time, sir. I suppose, like myself, they smelled the cigar. (DANIEL *at once throws down the cigar in disgust.*) Mr. Andy, they say, is guy fond of a good cigar, and I understand that he'll be for getting a few boxes of them soon, for the sister, they say, is coming into a lot of money.

KATE. Ach, you and your cigars! Will you get out of this and quit tormenting people? Go on. Out you go.

BROWN (*as if out of curiosity, picks up the cigar and goes out slowly*).

DANIEL. He's a very impertinent man that. Very worrisome.

KATE. Ach, never heed him, Mr. Dan! sure no one in this house does. You'll be tired after travelling, sir. Will I make you a drop of tea?

DANIEL. It's hard to eat anything, Kate, when I'm worried. (*Despairingly.*) I don't think there's another man living that has the same worries as I have. Something awful! Where's the pen and ink, I wonder?

KATE. There's some here on the dresser, Miss Mary was using it to-day. (*She takes it over from the dresser to the table.* DANIEL *rises and goes over and sits down and begins slowly to write.*) Cheer up, Mr. Daniel. Sure you sold the plans of the bellows anyway. Didn't you, sir? They had word up at the McAleenans the other night that you got two thousand for it. [Pg 56]

DANIEL (*astonished*). Eh? They said that.

KATE. Aye. To be sure. McAndless told McArdle, and he told Smith the postman, and the postman told the McAleenans, and said he had seen letters about it. And McAleenan was up in McMinns the other night and told them, and I believe you never saw such an astonished crowd of people in all their lives.

DANIEL. He told the McMinns that?

KATE. Aye, last night I think it was.

DANIEL. Last night? (*He looks at the letter.*) Yesterday was the 14th, wasn't it? Aye. It was. I wonder did they believe McAleenan?

KATE. I don't think they know right what to make of it. And yon Scotchman was there at the time, and mind you, Mr. Dan, they say he looked quite serious when he heard it, and said such things as that happened many's a time.

DANIEL (*incredulously*). Mackenzie said that?

KATE. Aye. You know, I think it's maybe because he has a wee notion of Miss Mary, sir.

DANIEL. It's quite possible. Quite possible. A nice wee girl is Mary. Fact, too good for the half of the clodhoppers about these parts. (*He takes up the parcel, pen, and ink, and paper, and goes across into the workshop.*)

KATE (*looking after him*). Poor creature. I'm feared he's for the road again if he doesn't worry out some way for himself. And God knows he's the one best fitted for it. (MARY *enters.*) Well, did you see him off comfortably?

MARY. Who?

KATE. Alick McCready.

MARY. Kate. I with you'd mind your own business.

KATE. It's a sore time I have in this house minding my own and every other bodies' business.

MARY. Kate. He said I couldn't bake a cake to save my life. I'll just show him that I can, and you're not to help me, mind you. I'm going to do it all myself.

MARY. Where's the flour?

KATE. There's none in the house, Miss Mary.

MARY. What?

KATE. You mind it was all used up this morning on account of them cakes that nearly killed your poor ould da.

MARY. Go down to Mc Ardles, Kate, and get a quarter stone on account.

KATE. Your da told me this morning, Miss Mary, that I wasn't to get any more from Mc Ardles or any other place unless he gives me an order for it. Do you not mind?

MARY (*dejectedly*). So he did. I had forgotten.

KATE. Aye. Quite so, Miss. (*She sits down contentedly.*)

MARY. I wonder is Uncle Dan about?

KATE. Aye. He's in his workshop, Miss.

MARY (*going over and knocking at door of workshop*). Uncle Dan!

DANIEL (*appearing at door*). Well, Mary?

MARY. Uncle Dan, could you give me sixpence?

DANIEL (*jumbling in his pockets*). Sixpence? Sixpence, Mary? Bless your wee heart. Here. Here's a two shilling bit. But Mary, mum's the word. Don't tell John I gave it to you.

MARY. No. Thank you, uncle. (DANIEL *goes in again.*) There, Kate, quick as you can and don't stop to talk to anybody. Sure you won't? (*She hands KATE the money and takes up the recipe book.*)

KATE. I'm not dirty looking—am I, Miss Mary?

MARY (*absorbed in the book*). No. You'll do grand. Flour, currants.

KATE. Ach! You and your currants. Could you not tell a body was her face clean?

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MARY. It's lovely. Hurry, Kate. (KATE *shrugs her shoulders disgustedly, and goes out by yard door.*) Flour, currants—(She goes over to the workshop door and listens)—raisins—(A sound as of a blast blowing can be heard. MARY becomes intensely interested, and, throwing aside the book, kneels down and puts her head to the keyhole.) He's actually got something to work. (She peeps in.) He has, indeed. (She laughs, knocks loudly at the door, and then runs to the other side of the kitchen. DANIEL opens the door and cautiously peeps out.) Uncle Danny! Ha! Ha! Uncle Danny! (Dancing up and down in front of the fireplace.) Uncle Dan's a wonderful man! Uncle Dan's a wonderful man!

DANIEL (*amazed*). What's all this?

MARY. I'm a cleverer girl than you think, Uncle Dan! I know your great surprise. I've found it out. And you've actually got it to work! That's splendid, uncle, isn't it? Father will be awful proud when he hears about it. And you did it all yourself, uncle?

DANIEL. Well, I took those plans, Mary, to a handy chap, an acquaintance of mine, and he made it out according to my design. I'm not sure—I think it works all right.

MARY. And did you get it sold, uncle?

DANIEL. No, Mary, but I have hopes—great hopes. (He wanders up to the window apparently searching for the screw driver.)

MARY. Do you think you'd get more than one thousand pounds for it?

DANIEL (*looking out of window and seeing someone approaching*). Don't know, Mary. Don't know. Very hard to know these things. Where could that screw driver be I wonder?

MARY. I think I saw father working with it last at something in the parlour. Will I get it for you, Uncle Dan? (*Knocking at door.*)

DANIEL. No. Never mind, Mary. I'll get it myself. There's someone at the door. You better open the door, Mary. (He goes off hurriedly to parlour.) (*Knocking at yard door.*) Come in. (DONAL MACKENZIE opens the door and comes in.)

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MACKENZIE. Fine afternoon, Miss Murray.

MARY (*coldly*). Good day to you.

MACKENZIE. I'm going off to Scotland verra soon, and I thought I would call over to see you before I went off. You're no angry, are you?

MARY. No. (MACKENZIE *seats himself at the table.*)

MACKENZIE. Did you get a post card?

MARY. I got some silly thing this morning that I tore up.

MACKENZIE. I'm sorry. I'm verra fond of you, Mary.

MARY. Miss Murray, please.

MACKENZIE. A girl like you is lost here, you know. Now, if you were a Scotch lassie you would have a great time enjoying yourself. In a place like Greenock we have a theatre, and we have a music hall and a cinematograph show on Saturdays and trains to Glasgow. You could have a grand time in Scotland.

MARY. Do you really like me, Mr. Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE. Verra much. Indeed I—

MARY. Well. Look here. I would like you very, very much too, if you—

MACKENZIE. If I what, bonnie Mary?

MARY. I'd even let you call me Mary, and write to me if you wanted to, if you would do me a favour.

MACKENZIE. What's the favour?

MARY. Uncle Dan has brought home his fan bellows, and it works.

MACKENZIE (*laughs*). The fan bellows! I think he'll never make much of a fortune of his fan bellows.

MARY. Do you ever examine new inventions?

MACKENZIE. Aye. I'm a specialist on that, you know. I'm the writer of the inventions column in the Scottish—

MARY. Yes. Yes. That's all right. I know. Are all the inventions you write about good things?

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MACKENZIE. Eh? Ninety-nine per cent. rotten, lassie. Ninety-nine per cent. perfectly rotten. People don't invent a reciprocating piston that works every day in the week, or a fan bellows either.

MARY. But if you liked the inventor you could do him a good turn all the same?

MACKENZIE. Aye. I did that often.

MARY. Then could you do a good turn for Uncle Dan?

MACKENZIE. Give the bellows a boost up. No, Mary. I could nae. I don't like to grieve you, but committing perjury—No. I couldn't do it, Mary.

MARY (*coming closer*). Yes. You would. You'd do it for me. Won't you?

MACKENZIE. Eh?

MARY. Look. Uncle Dan has his new fan bellows in that workshop. Go in and look at it, and if you do like me really, you could tell the McMinn's that it was good—even if it wasn't quite perfect.

MACKENZIE (*hesitatingly*). Um. I'll consider the question.

(DANIEL *re-enters. He stops short on seeing MACKENZIE, and seems to become very uncomfortable.*)

MARY. Uncle Dan! Mr. Mackenzie's going to examine your bellows.

DANIEL. I don't allow everybody to go and look at it. No. I refuse. It's my property and no one else's.

MARY. Uncle Dan. (*She looks at him meaningly.*) Mr. Mackenzie has promised to give his opinion on it.

DANIEL. It's not protected yet by patent.

MACKENZIE. Andy McMinn is coming over, Mr. Murray. He has got orders from his sister to settle the case for her. Are you going to pay the money?

DANIEL. That is a matter of my own deciding. (MARY *goes over to her uncle and whispers to him.*)

MACKENZIE. Verra well. I may go. (To MARY.) I would have done you that good turn, Miss Murray; but there's no enmity between us. And (*lowering his voice*)—I hope you get the best of the McMinn's in the bargain. Don't give in, Mr. Murray, easy. Take my tip. I'm from the stables, you know. (*He laughs knowingly.*)

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MARY. Here's Andy now (*she looks out through the window*), and Alick's with him. (*She opens the door, ANDY McMINN and MCCREADY enter. MCCREADY glances at MARY and MACKENZIE, and goes over sulkily to the fireplace. ANDY advances awkwardly towards DANIEL.*)

DANIEL (*genially*). Good afternoon, Andy.

ANDY. Good afternoon. (*He looks at MACKENZIE, who nods curtly.*) I suppose you know I've power to settle the case.

DANIEL. Well, you wrote the letter, and so, in point of law, I think it is you who should look after all this unfortunate business. Believe me, Andy, I sympathise with you. I do indeed. (*MARY and MACKENZIE become absorbed in conversation near the table. ALICK MCCREADY stands at the fireplace looking at them and unable to conceal his jealousy, makes sundry odd noises to distract MARY's attention. She pretends not to hear him.*) I have your letter here. (*He searches in his pocket and produces it.*) Yes. One thousand pounds. Do you not think that a trifle high?

ANDY. Well. You know we could have as easily claimed two thousand, but we didn't like to break you altogether; so we just said that a thousand would come pretty near it.

MACKENZIE. Mr. Daniel, may I look at the bellows?

MARY. Uncle Dan, I'm sure you won't object. (*She makes a gesture as if asking him to assent.*)

DANIEL (*looking hard at her, and then seeming to understand what she is about*). Yes. Yes. I'll thrash out the matter here with Andy. (*MACKENZIE goes across into the workshop, followed by MARY. MCCREADY sits down disconsolately at the fireplace and begins to smoke his pipe moodily.*) A thousand pounds is impossible. Absolutely out of the question. [Pg 62]

MCCREADY (*to himself*). Ach. She only torments me.

DANIEL (*looking over wonderingly*). Eh? People behave strangely sometimes, Andy. Very strangely. (*MCCREADY makes no response, but sits with his back to the two of them.*) Just a moment, Andy. What about a wee drink. Eh, Andy?

ANDY. Aye. Well, I wouldn't mind at all, Daniel.

DANIEL. Just to show there's no ill-feeling over this unfortunate business. (*He goes to the clock, opens the panel door and takes out a bottle of whiskey, gets glasses from the dresser and pours out a small portion of whiskey into each.*) Good health, Andy.

ANDY. Good health, Daniel. (*They drink.*)

DANIEL. Now to go on with our business. I don't think, in the first case, that this was an affaire de coeur, as the Frenchmen say.

ANDY. Eh?

DANIEL. You don't understand French? Of course not. No. It wasn't a love affair, I mean. I don't think Sarah was in love with John, was she?

ANDY (*hesitatingly*). Well—indeed, now, I don't know that she was.

DANIEL. No. We're all aware of that. He was just what we'd call a likely man. That's all.

ANDY. Aye. He would have been a good match for her.

DANIEL. Yes. Quite so, Andy. He would have been a good match for her. (*He makes notes in a pocket book.*) Nothing like notes, Andy. Now, so much for the love part of the business. They never exchanged letters?

ANDY. No. No letters.

DANIEL (*writing*). No letters. Of course in a breach of promise letters are a great help. A great help. I'm very glad, however, just for your sister's sake, that she never wrote any to John. Imagine them reading out the love letters in the open court, and all the servant boys gaping and laughing. [Pg 63]

ANDY. It's not nice, right enough. It's one thing I wouldn't like.

DANIEL. No. It's one thing we would not like. Well. No love. No letters. Next thing. He never courted her?

ANDY. Well, he came over and sat in the house a few nights.

DANIEL. Yes. No doubt. But hadn't he always some message on business to transact with you? Loan of a plough or a horse, or something like that?

ANDY (*uneasily*). That's so, of course.

DANIEL. Ah, yes. That's so, of course.

ANDY. But I seen him with his arm round her the night of the social at the school house.

DANIEL. Andy. That's a wee failing of John's. I often warned him about doing that sort of thing indiscriminately. A bit of a ladies' man, John, in his way. I saw him do the same nonsense four or five times that night with other girls. John likes to think himself a bit of a gay dog, you know. It's not right—I don't think myself it's a bit proper to put your arm round a girl's waist on every occasion, but sometimes it's quite allowable. A night like a social, for instance.

ANDY. Aye. Of course a social's different.

DANIEL. Aye, Andy, a social's different. Well, now. No love, no letters, no courting, no photographs

exchanged? (*He looks at ANDY inquiringly*). No photographs exchanged? (*He notes it down.*) No ring? In fact, Andy, no nothing.

ANDY. But he proposed to her right enough.

DANIEL. Who said so?

ANDY (*astonished*). What? Do you mean to deny he didn't?

DANIEL. My dear Andy, I don't know. There was no one there but the two, I suppose, when he asked her—if he did ask her. There's only her word for it.

ANDY. He wouldn't deny it himself?

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DANIEL. Well. That depends on whether he really asked her to marry him of course. And it's likely enough that John would be inclined to deny it if his memory was at all bad—it is a bad memory he has, you know. He forgets often to return your ploughs and that sort of thing.

ANDY (*blankly*). Aye. He has a bad memory.

DANIEL. Yes. Just so. And the fact that a verdict of one thousand pounds would hang on it would hardly make it any better. Would it? You've a bad case against us, Andy. A rotten case! In fact, looking over the whole thing carefully, do you really believe you'd make even a ten pound note out of us?

ANDY (*despairingly*). I wish Sarah had come and settled the case herself.

DANIEL. Ah, no. You've a better head, Andy, for seeing the sensible side of a thing, far better. (*MARY comes out of the workshop smiling gaily.*) Well?

MARY. Uncle Dan, he's delighted with it.

ANDY. What with? The bellows?

MARY. Yes. Go in, Andy, till you see it.

ANDY. Is it true, Daniel, you were offered two thousand for it?

DANIEL. We'll just go in and have a look at it. (*ANDY and he go into workshop.*)

MARY (*looking across at ALICK*). What's the matter?

ALICK. Nothing. I'm going home. (*He goes across to the yard door.*)

MARY. Alick!

McCREADY. Goodbye.

MARY. And I was going to go to all the trouble of baking a big plum cake for you, you big ungrateful thing.

McCREADY (*stopping at the door*). I know what your plum cakes would be like. (*He opens the door and stops again before going out.*)

MARY. Well, get that big, ugly Maggie Murphy to bake them for you then.

McCREADY (*looking out through door and then coming inside again*). I say, here's Kate and your father coming and a load of flour. [Pg 65]

MARY (*in a frightened voice*). Kate and father?

McCREADY. He seems to be in a bit of a temper.

MARY (*in a frightened voice*). He's caught her with the flour!

McCREADY (*laughing*). Flour? Aye—she's carrying about three stone of it! Boys, but that would make a powerful pudding!

MARY. It was to have been the nicest one I could have baked.

McCREADY (*coming in and going over to her*). Mary.

MARY. What?

McCREADY. You wouldn't come to my house where there would be no stint of flour or raisins or anything else, and I'd eat all you cooked for me no matter if I was dying after it.

MARY. Go to your house!

ALICK. Aye. Look here, wee girl. I got this— (*He fumbles and produces a ring.*) Let me put that on your wee finger, won't you?

MARY. Oh, Alick, what a lovely wee ring. (*She allows him to put it on her finger, and is shyly kissing him when JOHN enters, followed by KATE, who is trying vainly to stop a leak in the bag of flour which she is carrying. KATE goes to the dresser and places the bag on it.*)

JOHN (*severely to MARY*). Mary. Did you send her for more flour?

MARY (*meekly*). Yes, father.

JOHN. And didn't I leave word there was no more to be got without my orders? (MARY *hangs her head*.) It's lamentable the waste in this house! I was just looking at the pass book last night, and you'd think this house was a bakery to see the amount of flour comes into it.

MARY (*submissively*). I'm sorry, father.

JOHN. When I was out on the road, I seen a trail of flour leading up our loaning, and says I to myself, Jeminy' father, are they getting some more! So I followed up the mark and just caught up on her coming through the gate. [Pg 66]

MARY (*a little defiantly*). It's paid for, Kate, anyway. Isn't it?

KATE. It is, Miss. (*She busies herself putting the flour into a box, and then slips out during the next speech.*)

JOHN. Eh? Who give you the money?

MARY (*going over to her father and whispering*). Uncle Dan is in there, father, with Andy McMinn and Mr. Mackenzie, the Scotch engineer, looking at his bellows.

JOHN (*amazed*). Eh? Andy McMinn? Is Dan settling the case?

MARY. I believe he'll do it yet.

JOHN (*admiringly*). He has a great head on him, Daniel.

MACKENZIE (*coming out of workshop and going over to MARY*). Mary, I'm sorry. That bellows is such an absolutely rotten thing—so useless and so absolutely rotten that I can't—(*He sees JOHN.*) How are you, Mr. Murray?

JOHN. Fine day.

MARY (*appealingly*). Mr. Mackenzie, what did you say to Andy about it?

MACKENZIE. What did I say? Oh, ma perjured conscience—I said it was a grand thing. (DANIEL and ANDY McMINN *come in from workshop.*)

ANDY (*nervously*). Brave day, John.

JOHN. Aye. It is.

ANDY. Sarah gave me power to settle the case.

JOHN. I'm glad to hear it.

MACKENZIE. I tell you what it is, Mr. Daniel Murray. It's a good thing that—a right good thing, and I'll make you an offer for it.

ANDY (*eagerly*). What's it worth?

MACKENZIE (*with a look at MARY*). It's worth—it's worth more than all the damages your sister will get from Mr. Murray.

DANIEL (*suddenly*). I tell you what it is, Andy, and believe me when I tell you, I'm sacrificing a great deal. I'll make a deal with you. Instead of a lump sum cash down, I'll hand over all the rights and royalties of that same bellows to you to settle the case. [Pg 67]

ANDY (*dubiously*). I—I don't know.

DANIEL. You will have all the expense of the law, the bad name that your sister will be having over the head of being in a breach of promise, and all the expenses of solicitors and lawyers. Then, after that, trying to get the money out of us, and, mind you, we will fight you to the last ditch. Won't we, John?

JOHN. Aye.

DANIEL. There now. What do you say, Mr. Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE. I tell you what it is, Mr. Murray. I'll make you an offer for—

ANDY (*hastily*). I'll take your offer, Daniel.

DANIEL. One second. I drew up a wee agreement for you to sign, and I'll fetch the bellows. (*He goes into the workshop.*)

ANDY. I don't like signing my name to agreements or things like that unless I'm quite certain they're all right, Mr. Mackenzie.

MACKENZIE (*with a sly look at MARY*). Well, if you have any compunction about signing, I'll do it myself.

MARY. I think Uncle Dan's a fool to throw away the thing that way. I do indeed. (DANIEL *comes out with the parcel and the pen, ink and paper.*)

DANIEL. Just sign your name to that, Andy. It's a sort of agreement to settle the case—you can read

it for yourself. (*He hands a sheet of paper to ANDY with the pen.*) It's to show that the whole thing is fixed up to the satisfaction of everybody. (*ANDY looks at it and then signs.*) Ah. Good! Now, Alick, and you, Mr. Mackenzie, just witness it and the date. (*They both sign.*) And now, Andy, there's your bellows. (*ANDY looks at it, and then takes it under his arm.*) And may you have the best of luck with it. (*ANDY looks wonderingly at the parcel in his arms and moves slowly towards the door.*)

MACKENZIE. Noo, my reward, Miss Murray—Mary rather. (*He goes forward and she stretches out her hand for him to shake, when he notices the ring, and stops short.*)

JOHN. I hope you're satisfied, Andy.

ANDY. I'm just wondering, Mr. Mackenzie, do you think—

MACKENZIE. I think nothing for a year. I'll—I'll—I'm for Scotland in the morning. (*He goes out morosely through the door.*)

DANIEL. There, Andy. There's company home for you, and good luck to you. It's a sad heart I'll have this night.

ANDY. I'm wondering what Sarah would say—(*He goes to the door.*) Ach! She couldn't do better herself. No courting.

DANIEL. No. No courting.

ANDY. And no love and no letters.

DANIEL. No. No love and no letters.

ANDY. And no ring nor nothing, and a thousand pound bellows.

DANIEL. Yes, Andy. And a thousand pound bellows. (*He wanders out abstractedly. DANIEL follows him to the door and shouts after him*)—Goodbye, Andy. And may you have the best of luck with it.

ANDY (*without*). Thank ye, Daniel. Goodbye. (*DANIEL closes the door after him and looks sadly but triumphantly across at JOHN. ALICK and MARY go to the window together and look out after ANDY.*)

DANIEL. Well, John?

JOHN (*with a sigh of intense relief and gratitude*). Dan, I've said it before, and I'll say it again, you've a great head on you, Daniel.

(CURTAIN.)

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DRONE \*\*\*

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