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Author: Langdon Elwyn Mitchell
Editor: Montrose Jonas Moses

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS: 1856-1911: THE NEW YORK IDEA ***

THE NEW YORK IDEA



Langdon Mitchell

LANGDON MITCHELL

(Born Philadelphia, Pa., February 17, 1862)

The performance of "The New York Idea" at the Lyric Theatre, New York, on November 19, 1906, was one of the rare, distinguished events in the American Theatre. It revealed the fact that at last an American playwright had written a drama comparable with the very best European models, scintillating with clear, cold brilliancy, whose dialogue carried with it an exceptional literary

style. It was a play that showed a vitality which will serve to keep it alive for many generations, which will make it welcome, however often it is revived; for there is a universal import to its satire which raises it above the local, social condition it purports to portray. And though there is nothing of an ideal character about its situations, though it seems to be all head, with a minimum of apparent heart, it none the less is universal in the sense that Restoration comedy is universal. It presents a type of vulgarity, of sporting spirit, that is common in every generation, whether in the time of Congreve and Wycherley, whether in the period of Sheridan or Oscar Wilde. Its wit is not dependent on local colour, though ostensibly it is written about New York. On its first presentment, it challenged good writing on the part of the critics. High Comedy always does that—tickles the brain and stimulates it, drives it at a pace not usually to be had in the theatre. Is it comedy or is it farce, the critics queried? Is Mr. Mitchell sincere, and does he flay the evil he so photographically portrays? Does he treat the sacred subject of matrimony too flippantly? And should the play, in order to be effective, have a moral tag, or should it be, what on the surface it appears to be, a series of realistic scenes about people whom one cannot admire and does not want to know intimately? Some of the writers found the picture not to their liking—that is the effect good satire sometimes has when it strikes home. Yet when Grace George revived "The New York Idea" in a spirit so different from Mrs. Fiske's, nine years after, on September 28, 1915, at the Playhouse, New York, the *Times* was bound to make the following confession: "A vast array of American authors have turned out plays innumerable, but not one of them has quite matched in sparkling gayety and wit this work of Langdon Mitchell's. And the passing years have left its satire still pointed. They have not dimmed its polish nor so much as scratched its smart veneer."

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The play was written expressly for Mrs. Fiske. Its hard, sharp interplay of humour was knowingly cut to suit her hard, sharp method of acting. Her interpretation was a triumph of head over heart. Grace George tried to read into *Cynthia Karlake* an element of romance which is suggested in the text, but which was somewhat over-sentimentalized by her soft portrayal. There is some element of relationship between "The New York Idea" and Henry Arthur Jones' "Mary Goes First;" there is the same free air of sporting life, so graphically set forth in "Lord and Lady Algy." But the American play is greater than these because of its impersonal strain.

In a letter to the present Editor, Mr. Mitchell has broken silence regarding the writing of "The New York Idea." Never before has he tried to analyze its evolution. He says:

The play was written for Mrs. Fiske. The choice of subject was mine. I demanded complete freedom in the treatment, and my most wise manager, Mr. Harrison Grey Fiske, accorded this. The play was produced and played as written, with the exception of one or two short scenes, which were not acceptable to Mrs. Fiske; that is, she felt, or would have felt, somewhat strained or unnatural in these scenes. Accordingly, I cut them out, or rather rewrote them. The temperament of the race-horse has to be considered—much more, that of the 'star'.

When I was writing the play, I had really no idea of satirizing divorce or a law or anything specially temperamental or local. What I wanted to satirize was a certain extreme frivolity in the American spirit and in our American life—frivolity in the deep sense—not just a girl's frivolity, but that profound, sterile, amazing frivolity which one observes and meets in our churches, in political life, in literature, in music; in short, in every department of American thought, feeling and action. The old-fashioned, high-bred family in "The New York Idea" are solemnly frivolous, and the fast, light-minded, highly intelligent hero and heroine are frivolous in their own delightful way—frivolity, of course, to be used for tragedy or comedy. Our frivolity is, I feel, on the edge of the tragic. Indeed, I think it entirely tragic, and there are lines, comedy lines, in "The New York Idea," that indicate this aspect of the thing.

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Of course, there is more than merely satire or frivolity in the play: there is the Englishman who appears to Americans to be stupid on account of his manner, but who is frightfully intelligent; and there are also the energy and life and vigor of the two men characters. There is, too, throughout the play, the conscious humour of these two characters, and of the third woman, *Vida*. The clergyman is really more frivolous often and far less conscious of his frivolity—enough, that I rather thought one of the strongest things about the play was the consciousness of their own humour, of the three important characters.

The characters were selected from that especial class, or set, in our Society, whose ancestors and traditions go back to colonial times. They are not merely *society* characters, for, of course, people in society may lack all traditions. I mention this merely because my selection of characters from such a set of people gives the play a certain mellowness and a certain air which it otherwise would not have. If *Jack* and *Cynthia* were both completely self-made, or the son and daughter of powerful, self-made people, their tone could not be the same.

The piece was played in England as a farce; and it was given without the permission of the author or American manager. It was given for a considerable number of performances in Berlin, after the Great War began. In the German translation it was called "Jonathan's Daughter."^[A] Our relations with Germany at the time were strained on account of 'certain happenings', but, notwithstanding, the play was extraordinarily well received.

When "The New York Idea" was first published by the Walter Baker Co., of Boston, it carried as an introduction a notice of the play written by William Archer, and originally published in the London *Tribune* of May 27, 1907. This critique follows the present foreword, as its use in the early edition represents Mr. Mitchell's choice.

The writing of "The New York Idea" was not Mr. Mitchell's first dramatic work for Mrs. Fiske. At the New York Fifth Avenue Theatre, on September 12, 1899, she appeared in "Becky Sharp," his successful version of Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," which held the stage for some time, and was later revived with considerable renewal of its former interest. Two years after, rival versions were presented in London, one by David Balsillie (Theatre Royal, Croydon, June 24, 1901) and the other by Robert Hichens and Cosmo Gordon Lennox (Prince of Wales's Theatre, August 27, 1901)—the latter play used during the existence of the New Theatre (New York). Most of Mr. Mitchell's attempts in play-writing have been in dramatization, first of his father's "The Adventures of François," and later of Thackeray's "Pendennis," Atlantic City, October 11, 1916. He was born February 17, 1862, at Philadelphia, the son of Silas Weir Mitchell, and received his education largely abroad. He studied law at Harvard and Columbia, and was admitted to the bar in 1882. He was married, in 1892, to Marion Lea, of London, whose name was connected with the early introduction of Ibsen to the English public; she was in the initial cast of "The New York Idea," and to her the play is dedicated.

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**MR. WILLIAM ARCHER'S NOTICE OF
"THE NEW YORK IDEA."**

... This play, too, I was unable to see, but I have read it with extraordinary interest. It is a social satire so largely conceived and so vigorously executed that it might take an honourable place in any dramatic literature. We have nothing quite like it on the latter-day English stage. In tone and treatment it reminds one of Mr. Carton; but it is far broader in conception and richer in detail than "Lord and Lady Algy" or "Lady Huntworth's Experiment." In France, it might perhaps be compared to "La Famille Benoiton" or "Le Monde ou l'on s'ennuie," or better, perhaps, to a more recent, but now almost forgotten satire of the 'nineties, "Paris Fin-de-Siècle."

I find it very hard to classify "The New York Idea" under any of the established rubrics. It is rather too extravagant to rank as a comedy; it is much too serious in its purport, too searching in its character-delineation and too thoughtful in its wit, to be treated as a mere farce. Its title—not, perhaps, a very happy one—is explained in this saying of one of the characters: "Marry for whim and leave the rest to the divorce court—that's the New York idea of marriage." And again: "The modern American marriage is like a wire fence—the woman's the wire—the posts are the husbands. One—two—three! And if you cast your eye over the future, you can count them, post after post, up hill, down dale, all the way to Dakota."

Like all the plays, from Sardou's "Divorçons" onward, which deal with a too facile system of divorce, this one shows a discontented woman, who has broken up her home for a caprice, suffering agonies of jealousy when her ex-husband proposes to make use of the freedom she has given him, and returning to him at last with the admission that their divorce was at least "premature." In this central conception there is nothing particularly original. It is the wealth of humorous invention displayed in the details both of character and situation that renders the play remarkable.

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It is interesting to note, by the way, a return on Mr. Mitchell's part to that convenient assumption of the Restoration and eighteenth century comedy writers that any one in holy orders could solemnize a legal marriage at any time or place, without the slightest formality of banns, witnesses, registration or anything of the sort. One gathers that in New York the entrance to and the exit from the holy estate of matrimony are equally prompt and easy; or that, as one of the characters puts it, "the church is a regular quick-marriage counter."

I presume there is some exaggeration in this, and that a marriage cannot actually be celebrated at midnight, over a champagne-and-lobster supper, by a clergyman who happened to drop in. But there can be no doubt that whatever the social merits or demerits of the system, facility of divorce and remarriage is an immense boon to the dramatist. It places within his reach an inexhaustible store of situations and complications which are barred to the English playwright, to whom divorce always means an ugly and painful scandal. The moralist may insist that this ought always to be the case; and indeed that is the implication which Mr. Mitchell, as a moralist, conveys to us.

He sacrifices the system of divorce for every trivial flaw of temper which prevails in the society he depicts; but he no doubt realizes that his doctrine as a satirist is hostile to his interest as a dramatist. Restrict the facilities of divorce and you at once restrict the possibilities of matrimonial comedy. Marriage becomes no longer a comic, but a tragic institution.

In order to keep his theme entirely on the comic plane, Mr. Mitchell has given no children to either of the two couples whom he puts through such a fantastic quadrille. Law or no law, the separation of its parents is always a tragedy to the

child; which is not to say, of course, that their remaining together may not in some cases be the more tragic of the two alternatives. Be this as it may, Mr. Mitchell has eluded the issue.

Nor has he thereby falsified his problem, for his characters belong to that class of society in which, as Mr. Dooley points out, the multiplication of automobiles is preferred to that of progeny. But he has not omitted to hint at the problem of the children, and, as it were, confess his deliberate avoidance of it. He does so in a touch of exquisite irony. *John* and *Cynthia Karslake* are a couple devoted, not to automobiles, but to horses. Even their common passion for racing cannot keep them together; but their divorce is so "premature," and leaves *John* so restless and dissatisfied, that he actually neglects the cares of the stable. His favourite mare, *Cynthia K*, falls ill, and when his trainer brings him the news he receives it with shocking callousness. Then the trainer meets *Cynthia* and complains to her of her ex-husband's indifference. "Ah, ma'am," he says, "when husband and wife splits, it's the horses that suffers." I know not where to look for a speech of profounder ironic implication. More superficial, but still a good specimen of Mr. Mitchell's wit, is *William Sudley's* remark as to *John Karslake*: "Oh, yes, he comes of a very respectable family, though I remember his father served a term in the Senate."

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Altogether "The New York Idea" is, from the intellectual point of view, the most remarkable piece of work I have encountered in America. It is probably too true to the details of American life to have much success in England; but the situation at the end of the third act could not fail to bring down the house even here. It would take too long to describe it in detail. Suffice it to say that just at the point where *Cynthia Karslake* dismisses her second bridegroom, to return to her first, the choir assembled for the marriage ceremony, mistaking a signal, bursts forth with irresistibly ludicrous effect into "The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden."^[B]

FOOTNOTES:

[A] At the Kammerspiel Theatre, Berlin, under the direction of Max Reinhardt, October 7, 1916. There are translations in Danish, Swedish and Hungarian.

[B] *The Editor takes the occasion to express his thanks to Mr. William Archer for his kind permission to quote this analysis of the play.*

LYRIC THEATRE

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REGINALD DeKOVEN, Proprietor
SAM S. and LEE SHUBERT (Inc.), Lessees and Managers

NINTH AND LAST WEEK.

BEGINNING MONDAY EVENING. JANUARY 14, 1907.

Matinee Saturday.

Under the Direction of HARRISON GREY FISKE

MRS. FISKE

—AND—

THE MANHATTAN COMPANY

Presenting a Play in Four Acts, Entitled

THE NEW YORK IDEA

BY LANGDON MITCHELL

Cast of Characters.

Philip Phillimore
Mrs. Phillimore, his mother
The Reverend Mathew Phillimore, his brother

Charles Harbury
Ida Vernon
Dudley Clinton

Grace Phillimore, his sister
Miss Heneage, his aunt
William Sudley, his cousin
Mrs. Vida Phillimore, his divorced wife
Brooks, her footman
Benson, her maid
Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby
John Karslake
Mrs. Cynthia Karslake, his divorced wife
Nogam, his valet
Tim Fiddler
Thomas, the Phillimore's family servant

Emily Stevens
Blanche Weaver
Dudley Digges
Marion Lea
Frederick Kerby
Belle Bohn
George Arliss
John Mason
Mrs. Fiske
James Morley
Robert V. Ferguson
Richard Clarke

ACT I—Drawing-Room in the Phillimore house. Washington Square.

Wednesday afternoon, at five o'clock.

ACT II—Mrs. Vida Phillimore's Boudoir. Fifth Avenue.

Thursday morning at eleven.

ACT III—Same as Act I.

Thursday evening, at ten.

ACT IV—John Karslake's House. Madison Avenue.

Thursday, at midnight.

Scene—New York

Time—The Present.

The production staged by Mr. and Mrs. Fiske.

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THE NEW YORK IDEA

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By LANGDON MITCHELL

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THE PEOPLE.

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PHILIP PHILLIMORE, *a Judge on the bench, age 50.*

GRACE PHILLIMORE, *his sister, age 20.*

MRS. PHILLIMORE, *his mother, age 70.*

MISS HENEAGE, *his aunt, age 60.*

MATTHEW PHILLIMORE, *his brother—a bishop, age 45.*

WILLIAM SUDLEY, *his cousin, age 50.*

MRS. VIDA PHILLIMORE, *his divorced wife, age 35.*

SIR WILFRID CATES-DARBY.

JOHN KARSLAKE, *lawyer, politician and racing-man, age 35.*

MRS. CYNTHIA KARSLAKE, *his divorced wife, age 25.*

BROOKS, MRS. PHILLIMORE'S *footman.*

TIM FIDDLER, MR. KARSLAKE'S *trainer.*

NOGAM, *his valet.*

THOMAS, *the family servant of the PHILLIMORES, age 45.*

BENSON, MRS. VIDA PHILLIMORE'S *maid, age 20.*

**The following is the Cast for the evening performance at the
Lyric Theatre, New York, Monday, November 19, 1906.**

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PHILIP PHILLIMORE

Charles Harbury.

MRS. PHILLIMORE, *his mother*

Ida Vernon.

THE REVEREND MATTHEW PHILLIMORE, *his brother*Dudley Clinton.

GRACE PHILLIMORE, <i>his sister</i>	Emily Stevens.
MISS HENEAGE, <i>his aunt</i>	Blanche Weaver.
WILLIAM SUDLEY, <i>his cousin</i>	William B. Mack.
MRS. VIDA PHILLIMORE, <i>his divorced wife</i>	Marion Lea.
BROOKS, <i>her footman</i>	George Harcourt.
BENSON, <i>her maid</i>	Belle Bohn.
SIR WILFRID CATES-DARBY	George Arliss.
JOHN KARSLAKE	John Mason.
MRS. CYNTHIA KARSLAKE, <i>his divorced wife</i>	Mrs. Fiske.
NOGAM, <i>his valet</i>	Dudley Digges.
TIM FIDDLER	Robert V. Ferguson.
THOMAS, THE PHILLIMORE'S <i>family servant</i>	Richard Clarke.
Scene—New York.	Time—The Present.

**Revived in New York at The Playhouse, Tuesday Evening,
September 28, 1915, with the following Cast.**

PHILIP PHILLIMORE	Lumsden Hare.
GRACE PHILLIMORE	Norah Lamison.
MRS. PHILLIMORE	Eugenie Woodward.
MISS HENEAGE	Josephine Lovett.
MATTHEW PHILLIMORE	Albert Reed.
WILLIAM SUDLEY	John Cromwell.
MRS. VIDA PHILLIMORE	Mary Nash.
SIR WILFRID CATES-DARBY	Ernest Lawford.
JOHN KARSLAKE	Conway Tearle.
MRS. CYNTHIA KARSLAKE	Grace George.
BROOKS	Selwyn Joyce.
TIM FIDDLER	Tracy Barrow.
NOGAM	G. Guthrie McClintic.
THOMAS	Richard Clarke.
BENSON	Anita Wood.

To Marion Lea

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THE NEW YORK IDEA

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ACT I.

SCENE. *Living-room in the house of PHILIP PHILLIMORE. Five P. M. of an afternoon of May. The general air and appearance of the room is that of an old-fashioned, decorous, comfortable interior. There are no electric lights and no electric bells. Two bell ropes as in old-fashioned houses. The room is in dark tones inclining to sombre and of old-fashioned elegance.*

Seated in the room are MISS HENEAGE, MRS. PHILLIMORE and THOMAS. MISS HENEAGE is a solidly built, narrow-minded woman in her sixties. She makes no effort to look younger than she is, and is expensively but quietly dressed, with heavy elegance. She commands her household and her family connection, and on the strength of a large and steady income feels that her opinion has its value. MRS. PHILLIMORE is a semi-professional invalid, refined and unintelligent. Her movements are weak and fatigued. Her voice is habitually plaintive and she is entirely a lady without a trace of being a woman of fashion. THOMAS is an easy-mannered, but respectful family servant, un-English both in style and appearance. He has no deportment worthy of being so called, and takes an evident interest in the affairs of the family he serves.

MISS HENEAGE is seated at the tea-table, facing the footlights. MRS. PHILLIMORE is seated at the table on the right. THOMAS stands near by. Tea things on table. Decanter of sherry in coaster. Bread and butter on plate. Vase with flowers. Silver match-box. Large old-fashioned tea urn. Guard for flame. "The Evening Post" on tea-table. MISS HENEAGE and MRS. PHILLIMORE both have cups of tea. MISS HENEAGE sits up very straight, and pours tea for GRACE, who enters from door. She is a pretty and fashionably dressed girl of twenty. She speaks superciliously, coolly, and not too fast. She sits on the sofa gracefully and without lounging. She wears a gown suitable for spring visiting, hat, parasol, and gloves.

GRACE. [*As she moves to the sofa.*] I never in my life walked so far and found so few people at home. [*Pauses. Takes off gloves. Somewhat querulously.*] The fact is the nineteenth of May is ridiculously late to be in town. [Pg 614]

MISS HENEAGE. Thomas, Mr. Phillimore's sherry?

THOMAS. [*Indicating the particular table.*] The sherry, ma'am.

MISS HENEAGE. Mr. Phillimore's *Post*?

THOMAS. [*Pointing to "The Evening Post" on the tea-table.*] The *Post*, ma'am.

MISS HENEAGE. [*Indicating cup.*] Miss Phillimore.

THOMAS *takes cup of tea to GRACE. Silence. They all sip tea. THOMAS goes back, fills sherry glass, remaining round and about the tea-table. They all drink tea during their entire conversation.*

GRACE. The Dudleys were at home. They wished to know when my brother Philip was to be married, and where and how?

MISS HENEAGE. If the Dudleys were persons of breeding, they'd not intrude their curiosity upon you.

GRACE. I like Lena Dudley.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Speaking slowly and gently.*] Do I know Miss Dudley?

GRACE. She knows Philip. She expects an announcement of the wedding.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. I trust you told her that my son, my sister and myself are all of the opinion that those who have been divorced should remarry with modesty and without parade.

GRACE. I told the Dudleys Philip's wedding was here, to-morrow.

MISS HENEAGE. [*To MRS. PHILLIMORE, picking up a sheet of paper from the table.*] I have spent the afternoon, Mary, in arranging and listing the wedding gifts, and in writing out the announcements of the wedding. I think I have attained a proper form of announcement. [*Taking the sheet of note-paper and giving it to THOMAS.*] Of course the announcement Philip himself made was quite out of the question. [*GRACE smiles.*] However, there is mine. [*She points to the paper. THOMAS gives the list to MRS. PHILLIMORE and moves away.*

GRACE. I hope you'll send an announcement to the Dudleys.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Prepared to make the best of things, plaintively reads.*] "Mr. Philip Phillimore and Mrs. Cynthia Dean Karslake announce their marriage, May twentieth, at three o'clock, Nineteen A, Washington Square, New York." [*Replacing the paper on THOMAS'S salver.*] It sounds very nice. [Pg 615]

[*THOMAS returns the paper to MISS HENEAGE.*

MISS HENEAGE. In my opinion it barely escapes sounding nasty. However, it is correct. The only remaining question is—to whom the announcement should not be sent. [*THOMAS goes out.*] I consider an announcement of the wedding of two divorced persons to be in the nature of an intimate communication. It not only announces the wedding—it also announces the divorce. [*Returning to her teacup.*] The person I shall ask counsel of is cousin William Sudley. He promised to drop in this afternoon.

GRACE. Oh! We shall hear all about Cairo.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. William is judicious. [*THOMAS returns.*

MISS HENEAGE. [*With finality.*] Cousin William will disapprove of the match unless a winter in Cairo has altered his moral tone.

THOMAS. [*Announcing.*] Mr. Sudley.

He ushers in WILLIAM SUDLEY, a little oldish gentleman. He is and appears thoroughly insignificant. But his opinion of the place he occupies in the world is enormous. His manners, voice, presence, are all those of a man of breeding and self-importance.

MRS. PHILLIMORE and MISS HENEAGE. [*Rising and greeting SUDLEY; a little tremulously.*] My dear William!

[*THOMAS withdraws.*

SUDLEY. [*Shakes hands with MRS. PHILLIMORE, soberly glad to see them.*] How d'ye do, Mary? [*Greeting MISS HENEAGE.*] A very warm May you're having, Sarah.

GRACE. [*Coming forward to welcome him.*] Dear Cousin William!

MISS HENEAGE. Wasn't it warm in Cairo when you left?

She will have the strict truth, or nothing; still, on account of SUDLEY'S impeccable respectability, she treats him with more than usual leniency.

SUDLEY. [*Sitting down.*] We left Cairo six weeks ago, Grace, so I've had no news since you wrote in February that Philip was engaged. [*After a pause.*] I need not to say I consider Philip's engagement excessively regrettable. He is a judge upon the Supreme Court bench with a divorced wife—and such a divorced wife!

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GRACE. Oh, but Philip has succeeded in keeping everything as quiet as possible.

SUDLEY. [*Acidly.*] No, my dear! He has not succeeded in keeping his former wife as quiet as possible. We had not been in Cairo a week when who should turn up but Vida Phillimore. She went everywhere and did everything no woman should!

GRACE. [*With unfeigned interest.*] Oh, what did she do?

SUDLEY. She "did" Cleopatra at the tableaux at Lord Errington's! She "did" Cleopatra, and she did it robed only in some diaphanous material of a nature so transparent that—in fact she appeared to be draped in moonshine. [*MISS HENEAGE indicates the presence of GRACE and rises.*] That was only the beginning. As soon as she heard of Philip's engagement, she gave a dinner in honour of it! Only divorcées were asked! And she had a dummy—yes, my dear, a dummy!—at the head of the table. He stood for Philip—that is he sat for Philip!

[*Rising and moving to the table.*]

MISS HENEAGE. [*Irritated and disgusted.*] Ah!

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*With dismay and pain.*] Dear me!

MISS HENEAGE. [*Confident of the value of her opinion.*] I disapprove of Mrs. Phillimore.

SUDLEY. [*Taking a cigarette.*] Of course you do, but has Philip taken to Egyptian cigarettes in order to celebrate my winter at Cairo?

GRACE. Those are Cynthia's.

SUDLEY. [*Thinking that no one is worth knowing whom he does not know.*] Who is "Cynthia?"

GRACE. Mrs. Karslake—She's staying here, Cousin William. She'll be down in a minute.

SUDLEY. [*Shocked.*] You don't mean to tell me—?—!

MISS HENEAGE. Yes, William, Cynthia is Mrs. Karslake—Mrs. Karslake has no New York house. I disliked the publicity of a hotel in the circumstances, and, accordingly, when she became engaged to Philip, I invited her here.

SUDLEY. [*Suspicious and distrustful.*] And may I ask *who* Mrs. Karslake is?

MISS HENEAGE. [*With confidence.*] She was a Deane.

SUDLEY. [*Walking about the room, sorry to be obliged to concede good birth to any but his own blood.*] Oh, oh—well, the Deanes are extremely nice people. [*Approaching the table.*] Was her father J. William Deane?

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MISS HENEAGE. [*Nodding, still more secure.*] Yes.

SUDLEY. [*Giving in with difficulty.*] The family is an old one. J. William Deane's daughter? Surely he left a very considerable—

MISS HENEAGE. Oh, fifteen or twenty millions.

SUDLEY. [*Determined not to be dazzled.*] If I remember rightly she was brought up abroad.

MISS HENEAGE. In France and England—and I fancy brought up with a very gay set in very gay places. In fact she is what is called a "sporty" woman.

SUDLEY. [*Always ready to think the worst.*] We might put up with that. But you don't mean to tell me Philip has the—the—assurance to marry a woman who has been divorced by—

MISS HENEAGE. Not at all. Cynthia Karslake divorced her husband.

SUDLEY. [*Gloomily, since he has less fault to find than he expected.*] She divorced him! Ah!

[*He seeks the consolation of his tea.*]

MISS HENEAGE. The suit went by default. And, my dear William, there are many palliating circumstances. Cynthia was married to Karslake only seven months. There are no— [*Glancing at GRACE*] no hostages to Fortune! Ahem!

SUDLEY. [*Still unwilling to be pleased.*] Ah! What sort of a young woman is she?

GRACE. [*With the superiority of one who is not too popular.*] Men admire her.

MISS HENEAGE. She's not conventional.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Showing a faint sense of justice.*] I am bound to say she has behaved discreetly ever since she arrived in this house.

MISS HENEAGE. Yes, Mary—but I sometimes suspect that she exercises a degree of self-control—

SUDLEY. [*Glad to have something against some one.*] She claps on the lid, eh? And you think that perhaps some day she'll boil over? Well, of course fifteen or twenty millions—but who's Karslake?

GRACE. [*Very superciliously.*] He owns Cynthia K. She's the famous mare.

MISS HENEAGE. He's Henry Karslake's son.

SUDLEY. [*Beginning to make the best of fifteen millions-in-law.*] Oh!—Henry!—Very respectable family. Although I remember his father served a term in the Senate. And so the wedding is to be to-morrow? [Pg 618]

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Assenting.*] To-morrow.

SUDLEY. [*Rising, his respectability to the front when he thinks of the ceremony. GRACE rises.*] To-morrow. Well, my dear Sarah, a respectable family with some means. We must accept her. But on the whole, I think it will be best for me not to see the young woman. My disapprobation would make itself apparent.

GRACE. [*Whispering to SUDLEY.*] Cynthia's coming.

[*He doesn't hear.*

CYNTHIA *comes in, absorbed in reading a newspaper. She is a young creature in her twenties, small and high-bred, full of the love of excitement and sport. Her manner is wide-awake and keen, and she is evidently in no fear of the opinion of others. Her dress is exceedingly elegant, but with the elegance of a woman whose chief interests lie in life out of doors. There is nothing hard or masculine in her style, and her expression is youthful and ingenuous.*

SUDLEY. [*Sententious and determinately epigrammatic.*] The uncouth modern young woman, eight feet high, with a skin like a rhinoceros and manners like a cave-dweller—an habitué of the race-track and the divorce court—

GRACE. [*Aside to SUDLEY.*] Cousin William!

SUDLEY. Eh, oh!

CYNTHIA. [*Reading her newspaper, advances into the room, immersed, excited, trembling. She lowers paper to catch the light.*] "Belmont favourite—six to one—Rockaway—Rosebud, and Flying Cloud. Slow track—raw wind—h'm, h'm, h'm—At the half, Rockaway forged ahead, when Rosebud under the lash made a bold bid for victory—neck by neck—for a quarter—when Flying Cloud slipped by the pair and won on the post by a nose in one forty nine!" [*Speaking with the enthusiasm of a sport.*] Oh, I wish I'd seen the dear thing do it. Oh, it's Mr. Sudley! You must think me very rude. How do you do, Mr. Sudley?

[*Going over to SUDLEY.*

SUDLEY. [*Bowing without cordiality.*] Mrs. Karslake.

[*CYNTHIA pauses, feeling he should say something. As he says nothing, she speaks again.*

CYNTHIA. I hope Cairo was delightful? Did you have a smooth voyage? [Pg 619]

SUDLEY. [*Pompously.*] You must permit me, Mrs. Karslake—

CYNTHIA. [*With good temper, somewhat embarrassed, and talking herself into ease.*] Oh, please don't welcome me to the family. All that formal part is over, if you don't mind. I'm one of the tribe now! You're coming to our wedding to-morrow?

SUDLEY. My dear Mrs. Karslake, I think it might be wiser—

CYNTHIA. [*Still with cordial good temper.*] Oh, but you must come! I mean to be a perfect wife to Philip and all his relations! That sounds rather miscellaneous, but you know what I mean.

SUDLEY. [*Very sententious.*] I am afraid—

CYNTHIA. [*Gay and still covering her embarrassment.*] If you don't come, it'll look as if you were not standing by Philip when he's in trouble! You'll come, won't you—but of course you will.

SUDLEY. [*After a self-important pause.*] I will come, Mrs. Karslake. [*Pausing.*] Good-afternoon. [*In a tone of sorrow and light compassion.*] Good-bye, Mary. Good-afternoon, Sarah. [*Sighing.*] Grace, dear. [*To MISS HENEAGE.*] At what hour did you say the alimony commences?

MISS HENEAGE. [*Quickly and commandingly to cover his slip.*] The ceremony is at three P. M., William.

[*SUDLEY walks toward the door.*

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*With fatigued voice and manner as she rises.*] I am going to my room to rest awhile.

[*She trails slowly from the room.*

MISS HENEAGE. [*To SUDLEY.*] Oh, William, one moment—I entirely forgot! I've a most important social question to ask you! [*She accompanies him slowly to the door.*] in regard to the

announcements of the wedding—who they shall be sent to and who not. For instance—the Dudleys— [*Deep in their talk, SUDLEY and MISS HENEAGE pass out together.*]

CYNTHIA. [*From the sofa.*] So that's Cousin William?

GRACE. [*From the tea-table.*] Don't you like him?

CYNTHIA. [*Calmly sarcastic.*] Like him? I love him. He's so generous. He couldn't have received me with more warmth if I'd been a mulatto.

THOMAS *comes in, preceded by PHILLIMORE. PHILIP PHILLIMORE is a self-centered, short-tempered, imperious member of the respectable fashionables of New York. He is well and solidly dressed, and in manner and speech evidently a man of family. He is accustomed to being listened to in his home circle and from the bench, and it is practically impossible for him to believe that he can make a mistake.*

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GRACE. [*Outraged.*] Really you know— [*CYNTHIA moves to the table.*] Philip!

PHILIP *nods to GRACE absent-mindedly. He is in his working suit and looks tired. He walks into the room silently; goes over to the tea-table, bends over and kisses CYNTHIA on the forehead. Goes to his chair, which THOMAS has moved to suit him. He sits, and sighs with satisfaction.*

PHILIP. [*As if exhausted by brain work.*] Ah, Grace! [*GRACE immediately sails out of the room.*] Well, my dear, I thought I should never extricate myself from the court-room. You look very debonnaire!

CYNTHIA. The tea's making. You'll have your glass of sherry?

PHILIP. [*The strain of the day evidently having been severe.*] Thanks! [*Taking it from THOMAS and sighing.*] Ah!

CYNTHIA. I can see it's been a tiring day with you.

PHILIP. [*His great tussle with the world leaving him unworsted but utterly spent.*] H'm! [*He gratefully sips his tea.*]

CYNTHIA. Were the lawyers very long-winded?

PHILIP. [*Almost too tired for speech.*] Prolix to the point of somnolence. It might be affirmed without inexactitude that the prolixity of counsel is the somnolence of the judiciary. I am fatigued, ah! [*A little suddenly, awaking to the fact that his orders have not been carried out to the letter.*] Thomas! My *Post* is not in its usual place!

CYNTHIA. It's here, Philip. [*THOMAS gets it.*]

PHILIP. Thanks, my dear. [*Opening "The Post."*] Ah! This hour with you—is—is really the—the— [*Absently.*] the one vivid moment of the day. [*Reading.*] H'm—shocking attack by the President on vested interests. H'm—too bad—but it's to be expected. The people insisted on electing a desperado to the presidential office—they must take the hold-up that follows. [*After a pause, he reads.*] H'm! His English is lacking in idiom, his spelling in conservatism, his mind in balance, and his character in repose.

CYNTHIA. [*Amiable but not very sympathetic.*] You seem more fatigued than usual. Another glass of sherry, Philip?

PHILIP. Oh, I ought not to—

CYNTHIA. I think you seem a little more tired than usual.

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PHILIP. Perhaps I am. [*She pours out sherry. PHILIP takes glass but does not sip.*] Ah, this hour is truly a grateful form of restful excitement. [*After an inspired interval.*] You, too, find it—eh? [*He looks at CYNTHIA.*]

CYNTHIA. [*With veiled sarcasm.*] Decidedly.

PHILIP. Decidedly what, my dear?

CYNTHIA. [*Her sarcasm still veiled.*] Restful.

PHILIP. H'm! Perhaps I need the calm more than you do. Over the case to-day I actually—eh— [*Sipping his tea.*] slumbered. I heard myself do it. That's how I know. A dressmaker sued on seven counts. [*Reading his newspaper.*] Really, the insanity of the United States Senate—you seem restless, my dear. Ah—um—have you seen the evening paper? I see there has been a lightning change in the style or size of hats which ladies—

[*Sweeping a descriptive motion with his hand, he gives the paper to CYNTHIA, then moves his glass, reads, and sips.*]

CYNTHIA. The lamp, Thomas.

THOMAS *blows out the alcohol lamp on the tea-table with difficulty. Blows twice. Movement of PHILIP each time. Blows again.*

PHILIP. [*Irritably.*] Confound it, Thomas! What are you puffing and blowing at—?

THOMAS. It's out, ma'am—yes, sir.

PHILIP. You're excessively noisy, Thomas!

THOMAS. [*In a fluster.*] Yes, sir—I am.

CYNTHIA. [*Soothing THOMAS's wounded feelings.*] We don't need you, Thomas.

THOMAS. Yes, ma'am.

PHILIP. Puffing and blowing and shaking and quaking like an automobile in an ecstasy! [THOMAS *meekly withdraws.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Not unsympathetically.*] Too bad, Philip! I hope my presence isn't too agitating?

PHILIP. Ah—it's just because I value this hour with you, Cynthia—this hour of tea and toast and tranquillity. It's quite as if we were married—happily married—already.

CYNTHIA. [*Admitting that married life is a blank, begins to look through paper.*] Yes, I feel as if we were married already.

PHILIP. [*Not recognizing her tone.*] Ah! It's the calm, you see.

CYNTHIA. [*Without warmth.*] The calm? Yes—yes, it's—it's the calm.

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PHILIP. [*Sighs.*] Yes, the calm—the Halcyon calm of—of second choice. H'm! [*He reads and turns over the leaves of the paper. CYNTHIA reads. There is a silence.*] After all, my dear—the feeling which I have for you—is—is—eh—the market is in a shocking condition of plethora! H'm—h'm—and what are you reading?

CYNTHIA. [*Embarrassed.*] Oh, eh—well—I—eh—I'm just running over the sporting news.

PHILIP. Oh! [*He looks thoughtful.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Beginning to forget PHILIP and to remember more interesting matters.*] I fancied Hermes would come in an easy winner. He came in nowhere. Nonpareil was ridden by Henslow—he's a rotten bad rider. He gets nervous.

PHILIP. [*Still interested in his newspaper.*] Does he? H'm! I suppose you do retain an interest in horses and races. H'm—I trust some day the—ah—law will attract—Oh [*Turning a page.*], here's the report of my opinion in that dressmaker's case—Haggerty vs. Phillimore.

CYNTHIA. [*Puzzled.*] Was the case brought against you?

PHILIP. Oh—no. The suit was brought by Haggerty, Miss Haggerty, a dressmaker, against the—in fact, my dear, against the former Mrs. Phillimore. [*After a pause, he returns to his reading.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Curious about the matter.*] How did you decide it?

PHILIP. I was obliged to decide in Mrs. Phillimore's favour. Haggerty's plea was preposterous.

CYNTHIA. Did you—did you meet the—the—former—?

PHILIP. No.

CYNTHIA. I often see her at afternoon teas.

PHILIP. How did you recognize—

CYNTHIA. Why— [*Opening the paper.*] because Mrs. Vida Phillimore's picture appears in every other issue of most of the evening papers. And I must confess I was curious. But, I'm sure you find it very painful to meet her again.

PHILIP. [*Slowly, considering.*] No,—would you find it so impossible to meet Mr.—

CYNTHIA. [*Much excited and aroused.*] Philip! Don't speak of him. He's nothing. He's a thing of the past. I never think of him. I forget him!

PHILIP. [*Somewhat sarcastic.*] That's extraordinarily original of you to forget him.

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CYNTHIA. [*Gently, and wishing to drop the subject.*] We each of us have something to forget, Philip—and John Karlake is to me—Well, he's dead!

PHILIP. As a matter of fact, my dear, he *is* dead, or the next thing to it—for he's bankrupt.

CYNTHIA. [*After a pause.*] Bankrupt? [*Excited and moved.*] Let's not speak of him. I mean never to see him or think about him or even hear of him! [*He assents. She reads her paper. He sips his tea and reads his paper. She turns a page, starts and cries out.*]

PHILIP. God bless me!

CYNTHIA. It's a picture of—of—

PHILIP. John Karlake?

CYNTHIA. Picture of him, and one of me, and in the middle between us "Cynthia K!"

PHILIP. "Cynthia K!"

CYNTHIA. [*Excited.*] My pet riding mare! The best horse he has! She's an angel even in a photograph! Oh! [*Reading.*] "John Karslake drops a fortune at Saratoga." [*Rises and walks up and down excitedly.* PHILIP *takes the paper and reads.*

PHILIP. [*Unconcerned, as the matter hardly touches him.*] Hem—ah—Advertises country place for sale—stables, famous mare "Cynthia K"—favourite riding-mare of former Mrs. Karslake, who is once again to enter the arena of matrimony with the well-known and highly respected judge of—

CYNTHIA. [*Sensitive and much disturbed.*] Don't! Don't, Philip, please don't!

PHILIP. My dear Cynthia—take another paper—here's my *Post*! You'll find nothing disagreeable in *The Post*.

[CYNTHIA *takes paper.*

CYNTHIA. [*After reading, near the table.*] It's much worse in *The Post*. "John Karslake sells the former Mrs. Karslake's jewels—the famous necklace now at Tiffany's, and the sporty ex-husband sells his wife's portrait by Sargent!" Philip, I can't stand this. [*Puts paper on the table.*

PHILIP. Really, my dear, Mr. Karslake is bound to appear occasionally in print—or even you may have to meet him.

[Thomas *comes in.*

CYNTHIA. [*Determined and distressed.*] I won't meet him! I won't meet him. Every time I hear his name or "Cynthia K's" I'm so depressed.

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THOMAS. [*Announcing with something like reluctance.*] Sir, Mr. Fiddler. Mr. Karslake's trainer.

FIDDLER *walks in. He is an English horse trainer, a wide-awake, stocky, well-groomed little cockney. He knows his own mind and sees life altogether through a stable door. Well-dressed for his station, and not too young.*

CYNTHIA. [*Excited and disturbed.*] Fiddler? Tim Fiddler? His coming is outrageous!

FIDDLER. A note for you, sir.

CYNTHIA. [*Impulsively.*] Oh, Fiddler—is that you?

FIDDLER. Yes'm!

CYNTHIA. [*In a half whisper, still speaking on impulse.*] How is she! Cynthia K? How's Planet II and the colt and Golden Rod? How's the whole stable? Are they well?

FIDDLER. No'm—we're all on the bum. [*Aside.*] Ever since you kicked us over!

CYNTHIA. [*Reproving him, though pleased.*] Fiddler!

FIDDLER. The horses is just simply gone to Egypt since you left, and so's the guv'nor.

CYNTHIA. [*Putting an end to FIDDLER.*] That will do, Fiddler.

FIDDLER. I'm waiting for an answer, sir.

CYNTHIA. What is it, Philip?

PHILIP. [*Uncomfortable.*] A mere matter of business. [*Aside to FIDDLER.*] The answer is, Mr. Karslake can come. The—the coast will be clear. [*FIDDLER goes out.*

CYNTHIA. [*Amazed; rising.*] You're not going to see him?

PHILIP. But Karslake, my dear, is an old acquaintance of mine. He argues cases before me. I will see that you do not have to meet him.

[CYNTHIA *walks the length of the room in excited dejection.*

MATTHEW *comes in. He is a High-church clergyman to a highly fashionable congregation. His success is partly due to his social position and partly to his elegance of speech, but chiefly to his inherent amiability, which leaves the sinner in happy peace and smiles on the just and unjust alike.*

MATTHEW. [*Most amiably.*] Ah, my dear brother!

PHILIP. [*Greeting him.*] Matthew.

MATTHEW. [*Nodding to PHILIP.*] Good afternoon, my dear Cynthia. How charming you look! [*CYNTHIA sits down at the tea-table. To CYNTHIA.*] Ah, why weren't you in your pew yesterday? I preached a most original sermon.

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[*He lays his hat and cane on the divan.*

THOMAS. [*Aside to PHILIP.*] Sir, Mrs. Vida Phillimore's maid called you up on the telephone, and you're to expect Mrs. Phillimore on a matter of business.

PHILIP. [*Astonished and disgusted.*] Here, impossible! [*To CYNTHIA.*] Excuse me, my dear! [*PHILIP,*

much embarrassed, goes out, followed by THOMAS.

MATTHEW. [*Approaching CYNTHIA'S chair, happily and pleasantly self-important.*] No, really, it was a wonderful sermon, my dear. My text was from Paul—"It is better to marry than to burn." It was a strictly logical sermon. I argued—that, as the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth,—there is nothing final in Nature; not even Death! And, as there is nothing final in Nature, not even Death;—so then if Death is not final—why should marriage be final? [*Gently.*] And so the necessity of—eh—divorce! You see? It was an exquisite sermon! All New York was there! And all New York went away happy! Even the sinners—if there were any! I don't often meet sinners—do you?

CYNTHIA. [*Indulgently, in spite of his folly, because he is kind.*] You're such a dear, delightful Pagan! Here's your tea!

MATTHEW. [*Taking the tea.*] Why, my dear—you have a very sad expression!

CYNTHIA. [*A little bitterly.*] Why not?

MATTHEW. [*With sentimental sweetness.*] I feel as if I were of no use in the world when I see sadness on a young face. Only sinners should feel sad. You have committed no sin!

CYNTHIA. [*Impulsively.*] Yes, I have!

MATTHEW. Eh?

CYNTHIA. I committed the unpardonable sin—whe—when I married for love!

MATTHEW. One must not marry for anything else, my dear!

CYNTHIA. Why am I marrying your brother?

MATTHEW. I often wonder why? I wonder why you didn't choose to remain a free woman.

CYNTHIA. [*Going over the ground she has often argued with herself.*] I meant to; but a divorcée has no place in society. I felt horribly lonely! I wanted a friend. Philip was ideal as a friend—for months. Isn't it nice to bind a friend to you?

MATTHEW. [*Setting down his teacup.*] Yes—yes!

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CYNTHIA. [*Growing more and more excited and moved as she speaks.*] To marry a friend—to marry on prudent, sensible grounds—a man—like Philip? That's what I should have done first, instead of rushing into marriage—because I had a wild, mad, sensitive, sympathetic—passion and pain and fury—of, I don't know what—that almost strangled me with happiness!

MATTHEW. [*Amiable and reminiscent.*] Ah—ah—in my youth—I,—I too!

CYNTHIA. [*Coming back to her manner of every day.*] And besides—the day Philip asked me I was in the dumps! And now—how about marrying only for love? [*PHILIP comes back.*]

MATTHEW. Ah, my dear, love is not the only thing in the world!

PHILIP. [*Half aside.*] I got there too late, she'd hung up.

CYNTHIA. Who, Philip?

PHILIP. Eh—a lady—eh—

[*THOMAS, flurried, comes in with a card on a salver.*]

THOMAS. A card for you, sir. Ahem—ahem—Mrs. Phillimore—that was, sir.

PHILIP. Eh?

THOMAS. She's on the stairs, sir. [*He nods backward, only to find VIDA at his side. He announces her as being the best way of meeting the difficulty.*] Mrs. Vida Phillimore!

VIDA comes in slowly, with the air of a spoiled beauty. She stops just inside the door and speaks in a very casual manner. Her voice is languorous and caressing. She is dressed in the excess of the French fashion and carries a daring parasol. She smiles and comes in, undulating, to the middle of the room. Tableau. THOMAS withdraws.

VIDA. How do you do, Philip. [*After a pause.*] Don't tell me I'm a surprise! I had you called up on the 'phone and I sent up my card—and, besides, Philip dear, when you have the—the—habit of the house, as unfortunately I have, you can't treat yourself like a stranger in a strange land. At least, I can't—so here I am. My reason for coming was to ask you about that B. & O. stock we hold in common. [*To MATTHEW, condescendingly, the clergy being a class of unfortunates debarred by profession from the pleasures of the world.*] How do you do? [*Pause. She then goes to the real reason of her visit.*] Do be polite and present me to your wife-to-be.

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PHILIP. [*Awkwardly.*] Cynthia—

CYNTHIA. [*Cheerfully, with dash, putting the table between VIDA and herself.*] We're delighted to see you, Mrs. Phillimore. I needn't ask you to make yourself at home, but will you have a cup of tea? [*MATTHEW sits near the little table.*]

VIDA. [*To PHILIP.*] My dear, she's not in the least what I expected. I heard she was a dove! She's a very dashing kind of a dove! [*To CYNTHIA, who moves to the tea-table.*] My dear, I'm paying you compliments. Five lumps and quantities of cream. I find single life very thinning. [*To PHILIP, calm and ready to be agreeable to any man.*] And how well you're looking! It must be the absence of matrimonial cares—or is it a new angel in the house?

CYNTHIA. [*Outraged at VIDA's intrusion, but polite though delicately sarcastic.*] It's most amusing to sit in your place. And how at home you must feel here in this house where you have made so much trouble—I mean tea. [*Rises.*] Do you know it would be in much better taste if you would take the place you're accustomed to?

VIDA. [*As calm as before.*] My dear, I'm an intruder only for a moment; I sha'n't give you a chance to score off me again! But I must thank you, dear Philip, for rendering that decision in my favour

PHILIP. I assure you—

Vida. [*Unable to resist a thrust.*] Of course, you would like to have rendered it against me. It was your wonderful sense of justice, and that's why I'm so grateful—if not to you, to your Maker!

PHILIP. [*Feels that this is no place for his future wife. Rises quickly. To CYNTHIA.*] Cynthia, I would prefer that you left us.

[MATTHEW *moves to the sofa and sits down.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Determined not to leave the field first, remains seated.*] Certainly, Philip!

PHILIP. I expect another visitor who—

VIDA. [*With flattering insistence, to CYNTHIA.*] Oh, my dear—don't go! The truth is—I came to see you! I feel most cordially towards you—and really, you know, people in our position should meet on cordial terms.

CYNTHIA. [*Taking it with apparent calm, but pointing her remarks.*] Naturally. If people in our position couldn't meet, New York society would soon come to an end. [*THOMAS comes in.*]

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VIDA. [*Calm, but getting her knife in too.*] Precisely. Society's no bigger than a band-box. Why, it's only a moment ago I saw Mr. Karslake walking—

CYNTHIA. Ah!

THOMAS. [*Announcing clearly. Everyone changes place, in consternation, amusement or surprise. CYNTHIA moves to leave the room, but stops for fear of attracting KARSLAKE'S attention.*] Mr. John Karslake!

Enter KARSLAKE. He is a powerful, generous personality, a man of affairs, breezy, gay and careless. He gives the impression of being game for any fate in store for him. His clothes indicate sporting propensities and his taste in waistcoats and ties is brilliant. KARSLAKE sees first PHILIP and then MATTHEW. THOMAS goes out.

PHILIP. How do you do?

JOHN. [*Very gay and no respecter of persons.*] Good-afternoon, Mr. Phillimore. Hello—here's the church! [*Crossing to MATTHEW and shaking hands. He slaps him on the back.*] I hadn't the least idea—how are you? By George, your reverence, that was a racy sermon of yours on Divorce! What was your text? [*Sees VIDA and bows, very politely.*] Galatians 4:2, "The more the merrier," or "Who next?" [*Smiles.*] As the whale said after Jonah! [*CYNTHIA makes a sudden movement, upsetting her tea-cup. JOHN faces about quickly and they face each other. JOHN gives a frank start. A pause holds them.*]

JOHN. [*Astounded, in a low voice.*] Mrs. Karslake— [*Bowing.*] I was not aware of the pleasure in store for me. I understood you were in the country. [*Recovering and moving to her chair.*] Perhaps you'll be good enough to make me a cup of tea?—that is if the teapot wasn't lost in the scrimmage. [*There is another pause. CYNTHIA, determined to equal him in coolness, returns to the tea-tray.*] Mr. Phillimore, I came to get your signature in that matter of Cox vs. Keely.

PHILIP. I shall be at your service, but pray be seated.

[*He indicates a chair by the tea-table.*]

JOHN. [*Sitting beyond but not far from the tea-table.*] And I also understood you to say you wanted a saddle-horse.

PHILIP. You have a mare called—eh—"Cynthia K?"

JOHN. [*Promptly.*] Yes—she's not for sale.

PHILIP. Oh, but she's just the mare I had set my mind on.

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JOHN. [*With a touch of humour.*] You want her for yourself?

PHILIP. [*A little flustered.*] I—eh—I sometimes ride.

JOHN. [*Now sure of himself.*] She's rather lively for you, Judge. Mrs. Karslake used to ride her.

PHILIP. You don't care to sell her to me?

JOHN. She's a dangerous mare, Judge, and she's as delicate and changeable as a girl. I'd hate to leave her in your charge!

CYNTHIA. [*Eagerly but in a low voice.*] Leave her in mine, Mr. Karslake!

JOHN. [*After a slight pause.*] Mrs. Karslake knows all about a horse, but— [*Turning to CYNTHIA.*] Cynthia K's got rather tricky of late.

CYNTHIA. [*Haughtily.*] You mean to say you think she'd chuck me?

JOHN. [*With polite solicitude and still humorous. To PHILIP.*] I'd hate to have a mare of mine deprive you of a wife, Judge. [*Rises. CYNTHIA shows anger.*] She goes to Saratoga next week, C. W.

VIDA. [*Who has been sitting and talking to MATTHEW for lack of a better man, comes to talk to KARSLAKE.*] C. W.?

JOHN. [*Rising as she rises.*] Creditors willing.

VIDA. [*Changing her seat for one near the tea-table.*] I'm sure your creditors are willing.

JOHN. Oh, they're a breezy lot, my creditors. They're giving me a dinner this evening.

VIDA. [*More than usually anxious to please.*] I regret I'm not a breezy creditor, but I do think you owe it to me to let me see your Cynthia K! Can't you lead her around to my house?

JOHN. At what hour, Mrs. Phillimore?

VIDA. Say eleven? And you, too, might have a leading in my direction—771 Fifth Avenue.

[JOHN bows. CYNTHIA hears and notes this.]

CYNTHIA. Your cup of tea, Mr. Karslake.

JOHN. Thanks. [*Taking his tea and sipping it.*] I beg your pardon—you have forgotten, Mrs. Karslake—very naturally, it has slipped your memory, but I don't take sugar. [*CYNTHIA, furious with him and herself. He hands the cup back. She makes a second cup.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Cheerfully; in a rage.*] Sorry!

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JOHN. [*Also apparently cheerful.*] Yes, gout. It gives me a twinge even to sit in the shadow of a sugar-maple! First you riot, and then you diet!

VIDA. [*Calm and amused; aside to MATTHEW.*] My dear Matthew, he's a darling! But I feel as if we were all taking tea on the slope of a volcano! [*MATTHEW sits down.*]

PHILIP. It occurred to me, Mr. Karslake, you might be glad to find a purchaser for your portrait by Sargent?

JOHN. It's not *my* portrait. It's a portrait of Mrs. Karslake, and to tell you the truth—Sargent's a good fellow—I've made up my mind to keep it—to remember the artist by.

[CYNTHIA is wounded by this.]

PHILIP. H'm!

[CYNTHIA hands a second cup to JOHN.]

CYNTHIA. [*With careful politeness.*] Your cup of tea, Mr. Karslake.

JOHN. [*Rising and taking the tea with courteous indifference.*] Thanks—sorry to trouble you.

[*He drinks the cup of tea standing by the tea-table.*]

PHILIP. [*To make conversation.*] You're selling your country place?

JOHN. If I was long of hair—I'd sell that.

CYNTHIA. [*Excited. Taken out of herself by the news.*] You're not really selling your stable?

JOHN. [*Finishes his tea, places the empty cup on the tea-table, and reseats himself.*] Every gelding I've got—seven foals and a donkey! I don't mean the owner.

CYNTHIA. [*Still interested and forgetting the discomfort of the situation.*] How did you ever manage to come such a cropper?

JOHN. Streak of blue luck!

CYNTHIA. [*Quickly.*] I don't see how it's possible—

JOHN. You would if you'd been there. You remember the head man? [*Sitting down.*] Bloke?

CYNTHIA. Of course!

JOHN. Well, his wife divorced him for beating her over the head with a bottle of Fowler's Solution, and it seemed to prey on his mind. He sold me—

CYNTHIA. [*Horrified.*] Sold a race?

JOHN. About ten races, I guess.

CYNTHIA. [*Incredulous.*] Just because he'd beaten his wife?

JOHN. No. Because she divorced him.

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CYNTHIA. Well, I can't see why that should prey on his mind!

[*Suddenly remembers.*]

JOHN. Well, I have known men that it stroked the wrong way. But he cost me eighty thousand. And then Urbanity ran third in the thousand-dollar stakes for two-year-olds at Belmont.

CYNTHIA. [*Throws this remark in.*] I never had faith in that horse.

JOHN. And, of course, it never rains monkeys but it pours gorillas! So when I was down at St. Louis on the fifth, I laid seven to three on Fraternity—

CYNTHIA. Crazy! Crazy!

JOHN. [*Ready to take the opposite view.*] I don't see it. With her record she ought to have romped it an easy winner.

CYNTHIA. [*Her sporting instinct asserting itself.*] She hasn't the stamina! Look at her barrel!

JOHN. Well, anyhow, Geranium finished me!

CYNTHIA. You didn't lay odds on Geranium!

JOHN. Why not? She's my own mare—

CYNTHIA. Oh!

JOHN. Streak o' bad luck—

CYNTHIA. [*Plainly anxious to say "I told you so."*] Streak of poor judgment! Do you remember the day you rode Billy at a six-foot stone wall, and he stopped and you didn't, and there was a hornet's nest [MATTHEW rises.] on the other side, and I remember you were hot just because I said you showed poor judgment? [*She laughs at the memory. A general movement of disapproval. She remembers the situation.*] I beg your pardon.

MATTHEW. [*Rises to meet VIDA. Hastily.*] It seems to me that horses are like the fourth gospel. Any conversation about them becomes animated almost beyond the limits of the urbane! [VIDA, disgusted by such plainness of speech, rises and goes to PHILIP who waves her to a chair.

PHILIP. [*Formally.*] I regret that you have endured such reverses, Mr. Karslake. [JOHN quietly bows.

CYNTHIA. [*Concealing her interest and speaking casually.*] You haven't mentioned your new English horse—Pantomime. What did he do at St. Louis?

JOHN. [*Sitting down.*] Fell away and ran fifth.

CYNTHIA. Too bad. Was he fully acclimated? Ah, well—

JOHN. We always differed—you remember—on the time needed—

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MATTHEW. [*Coming over to CYNTHIA, and speaking to carry off the situation as well as to get a tip.*] Isn't there a—eh—a race to-morrow at Belmont Park?

JOHN. Yes. I'm going down in my auto.

CYNTHIA. [*Evidently wishing she might be going too.*] Oh!

MATTHEW. And what animal shall you prefer?

[*Covering his personal interest with amiable altruism.*]

JOHN. I'm backing Carmencita.

CYNTHIA. [*With a gesture of despair.*] Carmencita! Carmencita!

[MATTHEW returns to VIDA's side.

JOHN. You may remember we always differed on Carmencita.

CYNTHIA. [*Disgusted at JOHN's dunderheadedness.*] But there's no room for difference. She's a wild, headstrong, dissatisfied, foolish little filly. The deuce couldn't ride her—she'd shy at her own shadow—"Carmencita." Oh, very well then, I'll wager you—and I'll give you odds too—"Decorum" will come in first, and I'll lay three to one he'll beat Carmencita by five lengths! How's that for fair?

JOHN. [*Never forgetting the situation.*] Sorry I'm not flush enough to take you.

CYNTHIA. [*Impetuously.*] Philip, dear, you lend John enough for the wager.

MATTHEW. [*As nearly horrified as so soft a soul can be.*] Ahem! Really—

JOHN. It's a sporty idea, Mrs. Karslake, but perhaps in the circumstances—

CYNTHIA. [*Her mind on her wager.*] In what circumstances?

PHILIP. [*With a nervous laugh.*] It does seem to me there is a certain impropriety—

CYNTHIA. [*Remembering the conventions, which, for a moment, had actually escaped her.*] Oh, I forgot. When horses are in the air—

MATTHEW. [*Pouring oil on troubled waters. Moving, he speaks to VIDA from the back of her armchair.*] It's the fourth gospel, you see. [*THOMAS comes in with a letter on a salver, which he hands to PHILIP.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Meekly.*] You are quite right, Philip. [*PHILIP goes up.*] The fact is, seeing Mr. Karslake again [*Laying on her indifference with a trowel.*] he seems to me as much a stranger as if I were meeting him for the first time.

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MATTHEW. [*Aside to VIDA.*] We are indeed taking tea on the slope of a volcano.

VIDA. [*About to go, but thinking she will have a last word with JOHN.*] I'm sorry your fortunes are so depressed, Mr. Karslake.

PHILIP. [*Looking at the card that THOMAS has just brought in.*] Who in the world is Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby?

[*There is a general stir.*]

JOHN. Oh—eh—Cates-Darby? [*PHILIP opens the letter which THOMAS has brought with the card.*] That's the English chap I bought Pantomime of.

PHILIP. [*To THOMAS.*] Show Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby in.

THOMAS goes out. The prospect of an Englishman with a handle to his name changes VIDA's plans and, instead of leaving the house, she goes to sofa, and poses there.

JOHN. He's a good fellow, Judge. Place near Epsom. Breeder. Over here to take a shy at our races.

THOMAS. [*Opening the door and announcing.*] Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby.

Enter SIR WILFRID CATES-DARBY. He is a high-bred, sporting Englishman. His manner, his dress and his diction are the perfection of English elegance. His movements are quick and graceful. He talks lightly and with ease. He is full of life and unsmiling good temper.

PHILIP. [*To SIR WILFRID and referring to the letter of introduction in his hand.*] I am Mr. Phillimore. I am grateful to Stanhope for giving me the opportunity of knowing you, Sir Wilfrid. I fear you find it warm?

SIR WILFRID. [*Delicately mopping his forehead.*] Ah, well—ah—warm, no—hot, yes! Deuced extraordinary climate yours, you know, Mr. Phillimore.

PHILIP. [*Conventionally.*] Permit me to present you to— [*The unconventional situation pulls him up short. It takes him a moment to decide how to meet it. He makes up his mind to pretend that everything is as usual, and presents CYNTHIA first.*] Mrs. Karslake.

[*SIR WILFRID bows, surprised and doubtful.*]

CYNTHIA. How do you do?

PHILIP. And to Mrs. Phillimore. [*VIDA bows nonchalantly, but with a view to catching SIR WILFRID'S attention. SIR WILFRID bows, and looks from her to PHILIP.*] My brother—and Mr. Karslake you know.

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SIR WILFRID. How do, my boy. [*Half aside, to JOHN.*] No idea you had such a charming little wife—What?—Eh? [*KARSLAKE moves to speak to MATTHEW and PHILIP in the further room.*]

CYNTHIA. You'll have a cup of tea, Sir Wilfrid?

SIR WILFRID. [*At the table.*] Thanks, awfully. [*Very cheerfully.*] I'd no idea old John had a wife! The rascal never told me!

CYNTHIA. [*Pouring tea and facing the facts.*] I'm not Mr. Karslake's wife!

SIR WILFRID. Oh!—Eh?—I see—

[*He is evidently trying to think this out.*]

VIDA. [*Who has been ready for some time to speak to him.*] Sir Wilfrid, I'm sure no one has asked you how you like our country?

SIR WILFRID. [*Going to VIDA and standing by her at the sofa.*] Oh, well, as to climate and horses, I say nothing. But I like your American humour. I'm acquiring it for home purposes.

VIDA. [*Getting down to love as the basis of conversation.*] Aren't you going to acquire an American girl for home purposes?

SIR WILFRID. The more narrowly I look the agreeable project in the face, the more I like it. Oughtn't to say that in the presence of your husband. [*He casts a look at PHILIP, who has gone into the next room.*]

VIDA. [*Cheerful and unconstrained.*] He's not my husband!

SIR WILFRID. [*Completely confused.*] Oh—eh?—my brain must be boiled. You are—Mrs.—eh—ah—of course, now I see! I got the wrong names! I thought you were Mrs. Phillimore. [*Sitting down by her.*] And that nice girl, Mrs. Karslake! You're deucedly lucky to be Mrs. Karslake. John's a prime sort. I say, have you and he got any kids? How many?

VIDA. [*Horrified at being suspected of maternity, but speaking very sweetly.*] He's not my husband.

SIR WILFRID. [*His good spirits all gone, but determined to clear things up.*] Phew! Awfully hot in here! Who the deuce is John's wife?

VIDA. He hasn't any.

SIR WILFRID. Who's Phillimore's wife?

VIDA. He hasn't any.

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SIR WILFRID. Thanks, fearfully! [*To MATTHEW, whom he approaches; suspecting himself of having lost his wits.*] Would you excuse me, my dear and Reverend Sir—you're a churchman and all that—would you mind straightening me out?

MATTHEW. [*Most graciously.*] Certainly, Sir Wilfrid. Is it a matter of doctrine?

SIR WILFRID. Oh, damme—beg your pardon,—no, it's not words, it's women.

MATTHEW. [*Ready to be outraged.*] Women!

SIR WILFRID. It's divorce. Now, the lady on the sofa—

MATTHEW. *Was* my brother's wife; he divorced her—incompatibility—Rhode Island. The lady at the tea-table *was* Mr. Karslake's wife; she divorced him—desertion—Sioux Falls. One moment—she is about to marry my brother.

SIR WILFRID. [*Cheerful again.*] I'm out! Thought I never would be! Thanks! [VIDA *laughs.*]

VIDA. [*Not a whit discountenanced and ready to please.*] Have you got me straightened out yet?

SIR WILFRID. Straight as a die! I say, you had lots of fun, didn't you? [*Returning to his position by the sofa.*] And so *she's* Mrs. John Karslake?

VIDA. [*Calm, but secretly disappointed.*] Do you like her?

SIR WILFRID. My word!

VIDA. [*Fully expecting personal flattery.*] Eh?

SIR WILFRID. She's a box o' ginger!

VIDA. You haven't seen many American women!

SIR WILFRID. Oh, haven't I?

VIDA. If you'll pay me a visit to-morrow—at twelve, you shall meet a most charming young woman, who has seen you once, and who admires you—ah!

SIR WILFRID. I'm there—what!

VIDA. Seven hundred and seventy-one Fifth Avenue.

SIR WILFRID. Seven seventy-one Fifth Avenue—at twelve.

VIDA. At twelve.

SIR WILFRID. Thanks! [*Indicating CYNTHIA.*] She's a thoroughbred—you can see that with one eye shut. Twelve. [*Shaking hands.*] Awfully good of you to ask me. [*He joins JOHN.*] I say, my boy, your former's an absolute certainty. [*To CYNTHIA.*] I hear you're about to marry Mr. Phillimore, Mrs. Karslake?

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KARSLAKE *crosses to VIDA and together they move to the sofa and sit down.*

CYNTHIA. To-morrow, 3 P. M., Sir Wilfrid.

SIR WILFRID. [*Much taken with CYNTHIA.*] Afraid I've run into a sort of family party, eh? [*Indicating VIDA.*] The Past and the Future—awfully chic way you Americans have of asking your divorced husbands and wives to drop in, you know—celebrate a christenin', or the new bride, or—

CYNTHIA. Do you like your tea strong?

SIR WILFRID. Middlin'.

CYNTHIA. Sugar?

SIR WILFRID. One!

CYNTHIA. Lemon?

SIR WILFRID. Just torture a lemon over it. [*He makes a gesture as of twisting a lemon peel. She hands him his tea.*] Thanks! So you do it to-morrow at three?

CYNTHIA. At three, Sir Wilfrid.

SIR WILFRID. Sorry!

CYNTHIA. Why are you sorry?

SIR WILFRID. Hate to see a pretty woman married. Might marry her myself.

CYNTHIA. Oh, but I'm sure you don't admire American women.

SIR WILFRID. Admire you, Mrs. Karslake—

CYNTHIA. Not enough to marry me, I hope.

SIR WILFRID. Marry you in a minute! Say the word. Marry you now—here.

CYNTHIA. You don't think you ought to know me a little before—

SIR WILFRID. Know you? Do know you.

CYNTHIA. [*Covering her hair with her handkerchief.*] What colour is my hair?

SIR WILFRID. Pshaw!

CYNTHIA. You see! You don't know whether I'm a chestnut or a strawberry roan! In the States we think a few months of friendship is quite necessary.

SIR WILFRID. Few months of moonshine! Never was a friend to a woman—thank God, in all my life.

CYNTHIA. Oh—oh, oh!

SIR WILFRID. Might as well talk about being a friend to a whiskey-and-soda.

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CYNTHIA. A woman has a soul, Sir Wilfrid.

SIR WILFRID. Well, good whiskey is spirits—dozens o' souls!

CYNTHIA. You are so gross!

SIR WILFRID. [*Changing his seat for one at the tea-table.*] Gross? Not a bit! Friendship between the sexes is all fudge! I'm no friend to a rose in my garden. I don't call it friendship—eh—eh—a warm, starry night, moonbeams and ilex trees, "and a spirit who knows how" and all that—eh— [*Getting closer to her.*] You make me feel awfully poetical, you know— [*PHILIP comes toward them, glances nervously at CYNTHIA and SIR WILFRID, and walks away again.*] What's the matter? But, I say—poetry aside—do you, eh— [*Looking around to place PHILIP.*] Does he—y'know—is he—does he go to the head?

CYNTHIA. Sir Wilfrid, Mr. Phillimore is my sober second choice.

SIR WILFRID. Did you ever kiss him? I'll bet he fined you for contempt of court. Look here, Mrs. Karslake, if you're marryin' a man you don't care about—

CYNTHIA. [*Amused and excusing his audacity as a foreigner's eccentricity.*] Really!

SIR WILFRID. Well, I don't offer myself—

CYNTHIA. Oh!

SIR WILFRID. Not this instant—

CYNTHIA. Ah!

SIR WILFRID. But let me drop in to-morrow at ten.

CYNTHIA. What country and state of affairs do you think you have landed in?

SIR WILFRID. New York, by Jove! Been to school, too. New York is bounded on the North, South, East and West by the state of Divorce! Come, come, Mrs. Karslake, I like your country. You've no fear and no respect—no cant and lots of can. Here you all are, you see—your former husband, and your new husband's former wife—sounds like Ollendoff! Eh? So there you are, you see! But, jokin' apart—why do you marry him? Oh, well, marry him if you must! You can run around the corner and get a divorce afterwards—

CYNTHIA. I believe you think they throw one in with an ice-cream soda!

SIR WILFRID. [*Rising.*] Damme, my dear lady, a marriage in your country is no more than a—eh—eh—what do you call 'em? A thank you, ma'am. That's what an American marriage is—a thank you, ma'am. Bump—bump—you're over it and on to the next.

[Pg 638]

CYNTHIA. You're an odd fish! What? I believe I like you!

SIR WILFRID. 'Course you do! You'll see me when I call to-morrow—at ten? We'll run down to Belmont Park, eh?

CYNTHIA. Don't be absurd!

VIDA. [*Has finished her talk with JOHN, and breaks in on SIR WILFRID, who has hung about CYNTHIA too long to suit her.*] To-morrow at twelve, Sir Wilfrid!

SIR WILFRID. Twelve!

VIDA. [*Shaking hands with JOHN.*] Don't forget, Mr. Karslake—eleven o'clock to-morrow.

JOHN. [*Bowing assent.*] I won't!

VIDA. [*Coming over to CYNTHIA.*] Oh, Mrs. Karslake, I've ordered Tiffany to send you something. It's a sugar-bowl to sweeten the matrimonial lot! I suppose nothing would induce you to call?

CYNTHIA. [*Distantly and careless of offending.*] Thanks, no—that is, is "Cynthia K" really to be there at eleven? I'd give a gold mine to see her again.

VIDA. Do come!

CYNTHIA. If Mr. Karslake will accommodate me by his absence.

VIDA. Dear Mr. Karslake, you'll have to change your hour.

JOHN. Sorry, I'm not able to.

CYNTHIA. I can't come later for I'm to be married.

JOHN. It's not as bad as that with me, but I am to be sold up—Sheriff, you know. Can't come later than eleven.

VIDA. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Any hour but eleven, dear.

CYNTHIA. [*Perfectly regardless of VIDA, and ready to vex JOHN if possible.*] Mrs. Phillimore, I shall call on you at eleven—to see Cynthia K. I thank you for the invitation. Good-afternoon.

VIDA. [*Aside to JOHN, crossing to speak quietly to him.*] It's mere bravado; she won't come.

JOHN. You don't know her.

There is a pause and general embarrassment. SIR WILFRID uses his eye-glass. JOHN angry. CYNTHIA triumphant. MATTHEW embarrassed. VIDA irritated. PHILIP puzzled. Everybody is at odds.

SIR WILFRID. [*For the first time a witness to the pretty complications of divorce. To MATTHEW.*] Do you have it as warm as this ordinarily? [Pg 639]

MATTHEW. [*For whom these moments are more than usually painful, and wiping his brow.*] It's not so much the heat as the humidity.

JOHN. [*Looks at watch and, relieved, glad to be off.*] I shall be late for my creditors' dinner.

SIR WILFRID. [*Interested and walking toward JOHN.*] Creditors' dinner.

JOHN. [*Reading the note.*] Fifteen of my sporting creditors have arranged to give me a blow-out at Sherry's, and I'm expected right away or sooner. And, by the way, I was to bring my friends—if I had any. So now's the time to stand by me! Mrs. Phillimore?

VIDA. Of course!

JOHN. [*Ready to embarrass CYNTHIA, if possible, and speaking as if he had quite forgotten their former relations.*] Mrs. Karslake—I beg your pardon. Judge? [*PHILIP declines.*] No? Sir Wilfrid?

SIR WILFRID. I'm with you!

JOHN. [*To MATTHEW.*] Your Grace?

MATTHEW. I regret—

SIR WILFRID. Is it the custom for creditors—

JOHN. Come on, Sir Wilfrid! [*THOMAS opens door.*] Good-night, Judge—Your Grace—

SIR WILFRID. Is it the custom—

JOHN. Hang the custom! Come on—I'll show you a gang of creditors worth having!

SIR WILFRID and JOHN go out, arm in arm, preceded by VIDA. MATTHEW crosses the room, smiling, as if pleased, in a Christian way, with this display of generous gaiety. He stops short suddenly and looks at his watch.

MATTHEW. Good gracious! I had no idea the hour was so late. I've been asked to a meeting with Maryland and Iowa, to talk over the divorce situation. [*He leaves the room quickly and his voice is heard in the hall.*] Good-afternoon! Good-afternoon!

CYNTHIA *is evidently much excited. The outer door slams. PHILIP comes down slowly. CYNTHIA stands, her eyes wide, her breathing visible, until PHILIP speaks, when she seems suddenly to realize her position. There is a long pause.*

PHILIP. [*With a superior air.*] I have seldom witnessed a more amazing cataclysm of jocundity! Of course, my dear, this has all been most disagreeable for you. [Pg 640]

CYNTHIA. [*Excitedly.*] Yes, yes, yes!

PHILIP. I saw how much it shocked your delicacy.

CYNTHIA. [*Distressed and moved.*] Outrageous.

[PHILIP *sits down.*

PHILIP. Do be seated, Cynthia. [*Taking up the paper. Quietly.*] Very odd sort of an Englishman—that Cates-Darby!

CYNTHIA. Sir Wilfrid?—Oh, yes! [PHILIP *settles down to the paper. To herself.*] Outrageous! I've a great mind to go at eleven—just as I said I would!

PHILIP. Do sit down, Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. What? What?

PHILIP. You make me so nervous—

CYNTHIA. Sorry—sorry. [*She sits down and, seeing the paper, takes it, looking at the picture of JOHN KARSLAKE.*

PHILIP. [*Sighing with content.*] Ah! now that I see him, I don't wonder you couldn't stand him. There's a kind of—ah—spontaneous inebriety about him. He is incomprehensible! If I might with reverence cross-question the Creator, I would say to him: "Sir, to what end or purpose did you create Mr. John Karstake?" I believe I should obtain no adequate answer! However, [*Sighs.*] at last we have peace—and *The Post!* [PHILIP, *settling himself, reads his paper; CYNTHIA, glancing at her paper, occasionally looks across at PHILIP.*] Forget the dust of the arena—the prolixity of counsel—the involuntary fatuity of things in general. [*After a pause, he goes on with his reading.*] Compose yourself!

MISS HENEAGE, MRS. PHILLIMORE *and* GRACE *come in. CYNTHIA sighs without letting her sigh be heard. She tries to compose herself. She glances at the paper and then, hearing MISS HENEAGE, starts slightly. MISS HENEAGE and MRS. PHILLIMORE stop at the table.*

MISS HENEAGE. [*Carrying a sheet of paper.*] There, my dear Mary, is the announcement as I have now reworded it. I took William's suggestion. [MRS. PHILLIMORE *takes and casually reads it.*] I also put the case to him, and he was of the opinion that the announcement should be sent *only* to those people who are really *in* society. [*She sits near the table. CYNTHIA braces herself to bear the PHILLIMORE conversation.*] [Pg 641]

GRACE. I wish you'd make an exception of the Dudleys.

[CYNTHIA *rises and moves to the chair by the table.*

MISS HENEAGE. And, of course, that excludes the Oppenheims—the Vance-Browns.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. It's just as well to be exclusive.

GRACE. I do wish you'd make an exception of Lena Dudley.

MISS HENEAGE. We might, of course, include those new Girardos, and possibly—possibly the Paddingtons.

GRACE. I do wish you would take in Lena Dudley.

[*They are now sitting.*

MRS. PHILLIMORE. The mother Dudley is as common as a charwoman, and not nearly as clean.

PHILIP. [*Sighing, his own feelings, as usual, to the fore.*] Ah! I certainly am fatigued!

CYNTHIA *begins to slowly crush the newspaper she has been reading with both hands, as if the effort of self-repression were too much for her.*

MISS HENEAGE. [*Making the best of a gloomy future.*] We shall have to ask the Dudleys sooner or later to dine, Mary—because of the elder girl's marriage to that dissolute French Marquis.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Plaintively.*] I don't like common people any more than I like common cats, and of course in my time—

MISS HENEAGE. I think I shall include the Dudleys.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. You think you'll include the Dudleys?

MISS HENEAGE. Yes, I think I will include the Dudleys!

Here CYNTHIA'S control breaks down. Driven desperate by their chatter, she has slowly rolled her newspaper into a ball, and at this point tosses it violently to the floor and bursts into hysterical laughter.

MRS. PHILLIMORE. Why, my dear Cynthia—Compose yourself.

PHILIP. [*Hastily.*] What is the matter, Cynthia?

[*They speak together.*]

MISS HENEAGE. Why, Mrs. Karslake, what is the matter?

GRACE. [*Coming quickly forward.*] Mrs. Karslake!

CURTAIN.

[Pg 642]

ACT II.

SCENE. MRS. VIDA PHILLIMORE'S *boudoir*. *The room is furnished to please an empty-headed, pleasure-loving and fashionable woman. The furniture, the ornaments, what pictures there are, all witness to taste up-to-date. Two French windows open on to a balcony, from which the trees of Central Park can be seen. There is a table between them; a mirror, a scent bottle, &c., upon it. On the right, up stage, is a door; on the right, down stage, another door. A lady's writing-table stands between the two, nearer centre of stage. There is another door up stage; below it, an open fireplace, filled with potted plants, andirons, &c., not in use. Over it is a tall mirror; on the mantel-piece are a French clock, candelabra, vases, &c. On a line with the fireplace is a lounge, gay with silk pillows. A florist's box, large and long, filled with American Beauty roses, rests on a low table near the head of the lounge. Small tables and light chairs where needed.*

BENSON, *alone in the room, is looking critically about her. She is a neat and pretty little English lady's maid in black silk and a thin apron. Still surveying the room, she moves here and there, and, her eyes lighting on the box of flowers, she goes to the door of VIDA'S room and speaks to her.*

BENSON. Yes, ma'am, the flowers have come.

She holds open the door through which VIDA, in a morning gown, comes in slowly. She is smoking a cigarette in as æsthetic a manner as she can, and is evidently turned out in her best style for conquest.

VIDA. [*Faces the balcony as she speaks, and is, as always, even and civil, but a bit disdainful toward her servant.*] Terribly garish light, Benson. Pull down the— [BENSON, *obeying, partly pulls down the shade.*] Lower still—that will do. [*As she speaks she goes about the room, giving the tables a push here and the chairs a jerk there, and generally arranging the vases and ornaments.*] Men hate a clutter of chairs and tables. [*Stopping and taking up a hand mirror from the table, she faces the windows.*] I really think I'm too pale for this light.

BENSON. [*Quickly, understanding what is implied.*] Yes, ma'am. [BENSON *goes out for the rouge, and VIDA seats herself at the table. There is a knock at the door.*] Come! [BROOKS *comes in.*

[Pg 643]

BROOKS. [*An ultra-English footman, in plush and calves.*] Any horders, m'lady?

VIDA. [*Incapable of remembering the last man, or of considering the new one.*] Oh,—of course! You're the new—

BROOKS. Footman, m'lady.

VIDA. [*As a matter of form.*] Your name?

BROOKS. Brooks, m'lady. [BENSON *returns with the rouge.*

VIDA. [*Carefully giving instructions while she keeps her eyes on the glass and is rouged by BENSON.*] Brooks, I am at home to Mr. Karslake at eleven; not to any one else till twelve, when I expect Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby.

[BROOKS, *watching BENSON, is inattentive.*

BROOKS. Yes, m'lady.

VIDA. [*Calm, but wearied by the ignorance of the lower classes.*] And I regret to inform you, Brooks, that in America there are no ladies, except salesladies!

BROOKS. [*Without a trace of comprehension.*] Yes, m'lady.

VIDA. I am at home to no one but the two names I have mentioned. [BROOKS *bows and exits. She dabs on rouge while BENSON holds glass.*] Is the men's club-room in order?

BENSON. Perfectly, ma'am.

VIDA. Whiskey and soda?

BENSON. Yes, ma'am, and the ticker's been mended. The British sporting papers arrived this morning.

VIDA. [*Looking at her watch which lies on the dressing-table.*] My watch has stopped.

BENSON. [*Glancing at the French clock on the chimney-piece.*] Five to eleven, ma'am.

VIDA. [*Getting promptly to work.*] H'm, h'm, I shall be caught. [*Rising.*] The box of roses, Benson! [*BENSON brings the box of roses, uncovers the flowers and places them at VIDA'S side.*] My gloves—the clippers, and the vase! [*Each of these things BENSON places in turn within VIDA'S range where she sits on the sofa. She has the long box of roses at her side on a small table, a vase of water on the floor by her side. She cuts the stems and places the roses in the vase. When she feels that she has reached a picturesque position, in which any onlooker would see in her a creature filled with the love of flowers and of her fellow man, she says:*] There! [*The door opens and BROOKS comes in; VIDA nods to BENSON.*

BROOKS. [*Announcing stolidly.*] Sir John Karslake.

[Pg 644]

JOHN, *dressed in very nobby riding togs, comes in gaily and forcibly.* BENSON *withdraws as he enters, and is followed by BROOKS.* VIDA, *from this moment on, is busied with her roses.*

VIDA. [*Languorously, but with a faint suggestion of humour.*] Is that really you, Sir John?

JOHN. [*Lively and far from being impressed by VIDA.*] I see now where we Americans are going to get our titles. Good-morning! You look as fresh as paint. [*He lays his gloves and riding crop on the table, and takes a chair.*

VIDA. [*Facing the insinuation with gentle pain.*] I hope you don't mean that? I never flattered myself for a moment you'd come. You're riding Cynthia K?

JOHN. Fiddler's going to lead her round here in ten minutes!

VIDA. Cigars and cigarettes! Scotch?

[*Indicating a small table.*

JOHN. Scotch! [*Goes up quickly to table and helps himself to Scotch and seltzer.*

VIDA. And now *do* tell me all about *her*! [*Putting in her last roses; she keeps one rosebud in her hand, of a size suitable for a man's buttonhole.*

JOHN. [*As he drinks.*] Oh, she's an adorable creature—delicate, high-bred, sweet-tempered—

VIDA. [*Showing her claws for a moment.*] Sweet-tempered? Oh, you're describing the horse! By "her," I meant—

JOHN. [*Irritated by the remembrance of his wife.*] Cynthia Karslake? I'd rather talk about the last Tornado.

[*He drops moodily into a chair.*

VIDA. [*With artful soothing.*] There is only one thing I want to talk about, and that is, *you*! Why were you unhappy?

JOHN. [*Still cross.*] Why does a dollar last such a short time?

VIDA. [*Curious.*] Why did you part?

JOHN. Did you ever see a schooner towed by a tug? Well, I parted from Cynthia for the same reason that the hawser parts from the tug—I couldn't stand the tug.

VIDA. [*Sympathizing.*] Ah!

JOHN. [*After a pause, and still cross.*] Awful cheerful morning chat.

VIDA. [*Excusing her curiosity and coming back to love as the only subject for serious conversation.*] I must hear the story, for I'm anxious to know why I've taken such a fancy to you!

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JOHN. [*Very nonchalantly.*] Why do *I* like you?

VIDA. [*Doing her best to charm.*] I won't tell you—it would flatter you too much.

JOHN. [*Not a bit impressed by VIDA, but humanly ready to flirt.*] Tell me!

VIDA. There's a rose for you.

[*Giving him the one she has in her hand.*

JOHN. [*Saying what is plainly expected of him.*] I want more than a rose—

VIDA. [*Passing over this insinuation.*] You refuse to tell me—?

JOHN. [*Once more reminded of CYNTHIA, speaks with sudden feeling.*] There's nothing to tell. We met, we loved, we married, we parted; or at least we wrangled and jangled. [*Sighs.*] Ha! Why

weren't we happy? Don't ask me, why! It may have been *partly* my fault!

VIDA. [*With tenderness.*] Never!

JOHN. [*His mind on CYNTHIA.*] But I believe it's all in the way a girl's brought up. Our girls are brought up to be ignorant of life—they're ignorant of life. Life is a joke, and marriage is a picnic, and a man is a shawl-strap— 'Pon my soul, Cynthia Deane—no, I can't tell you! [*In great irritation, he rises abruptly, and strides up and down the room.*]

VIDA. [*Gently.*] Please tell me!

JOHN. Well, she was an heiress, an American heiress—and she'd been taught to think marriage meant burnt almonds and moonshine and a yacht and three automobiles, and she thought—I don't know what she thought, but I tell you, Mrs. Phillimore, marriage is three parts love and seven parts forgiveness of sins. [*He continues restlessly to pace the floor as he speaks of CYNTHIA.*]

VIDA. [*Flattering him as a matter of second nature.*] She never loved you.

JOHN. [*On whom she has made no impression at all.*] Yes, she did. For six or seven months there was not a shadow between us. It was perfect, and then one day she went off like a pistol-shot! I had a piece of law work and couldn't take her to see Flashlight race the Maryland mare. The case meant a big fee, big Kudos, and in sails Cynthia, Flashlight-mad! And will I put on my hat and take her? No—and bang she goes off like a stick o' dynamite—what did I marry her for?—and words—pretty high words, until she got mad, when she threw over a chair, and said, oh, well,—marriage was a failure, or it was with me, so I said she'd better try somebody else. She said she would, and marched out of the room.

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VIDA. [*Gently sarcastic.*] But she came back!

JOHN. She came back, but not as you mean. She stood at the door and said, "Jack, I shall divorce you." Then she came over to my study-table, dropped her wedding ring on my law papers, and went out. The door shut, I laughed; the front door slammed, I damned. [*After a silence, moving abruptly to the window.*] She never came back. [*He turns away and then, recovering, moves toward VIDA, who catches his hands.*]

VIDA. [*Hoping for a contradiction.*] She's broken your heart.

JOHN. [*Taking a chair by the lounge.*] Oh, no!

VIDA. [*Encouraged, begins to play the game again.*] You'll never love again!

JOHN. [*Speaking to her from the foot of the sofa.*] Try me! Try me! Ah, no, Mrs. Phillimore, I shall laugh, live, love and make money again! And let me tell you one thing—I'm going to rap her one over the knuckles. She had a stick of a Connecticut lawyer, and he—well, to cut a legal story short, since Mrs. Karslake's been in Europe, I have been quietly testing the validity of the decree of divorce. Perhaps you don't understand?

VIDA. [*Displaying her innate shrewdness.*] Oh, about a divorce, everything!

JOHN. I shall hear by this evening whether the divorce will stand or not.

VIDA. But it's to-day at three she marries—you won't let her commit bigamy?

JOHN. [*Shaking his head.*] I don't suppose I'd go as far as that. It may be the divorce will hold, but anyway I hope never to see her again.

[He sits down beside her so that their faces are now directly opposite. Taking advantage of the close range, her eyes, without loss of time, open a direct fire.]

VIDA. Ah, my poor boy, she has broken your heart. [*Believing that this is her psychological moment, she lays her hand on his arm, but draws it back as soon as he attempts to take it.*] Now don't make love to me.

JOHN. [*Bold and amused, but never taken in.*] Why not?

VIDA. [*With immense gentleness.*] Because I like you too much! [*More gaily.*] I might give in, and take a notion to like you still more!

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JOHN. Please do!

VIDA. [*With gush, and determined to be womanly at all hazards.*] Jack, I believe you'd be a lovely lover!

JOHN. [*Immensely diverted.*] Try me!

VIDA. [*Not hoping much from his tone.*] You charming, tempting, delightful fellow, I could love you without the least effort in the world,—but, no!

JOHN. [*Playing the game.*] Ah, well, now *seriously!* Between two people who have *suffered* and made their own mistakes—

VIDA. [*Playing the game too, but not playing it well.*] But you see, you don't *really* love me!

JOHN. [*Still ready to say what is expected.*] Cynthia—Vida, no man can sit beside you and look into your eyes without feeling—

VIDA. [*Speaking the truth as she sees it, seeing that her methods don't succeed.*] Oh! That's not love! That's simply—well, my dear Jack, it's beginning at the wrong end. And the truth is you hate Cynthia Karlake with such a whole-hearted hate, that you haven't a moment to think of any other woman.

JOHN. [*With sudden anger.*] I hate her!

VIDA. [*Very softly and most sweetly.*] Jack—Jack, I could be as foolish about you as—oh, as foolish as anything, my dear! And perhaps some day—perhaps some day you'll come to me and say, Vida, I am totally indifferent to Cynthia—and then—

JOHN. And then?

VIDA. [*The ideal woman in mind.*] Then, perhaps, you and I may join hands and stroll together into the Garden of Eden. It takes two to find the Garden of Eden, you know—and once we're on the inside, we'll lock the gate.

JOHN. [*Gaily, and seeing straight through her veneer.*] And lose the key under a rose-bush!

VIDA. [*Agreeing very softly.*] Under a rose-bush! [*There is a very soft knock at which JOHN starts up quickly.*] Come! [*BROOKS comes in, with BENSON close at his heels.*]

BROOKS. [*Stolid, announces.*] My lady—Sir Wilf— [*BENSON stops him with a sharp movement and turns toward VIDA.*]

BENSON. [*With intention.*] Your dressmaker, ma'am. [*BENSON waves BROOKS to go and BROOKS very haughtily complies.*]

VIDA. [*Wonderingly.*] My dressmaker, Benson? [*With quick intelligence.*] Oh, of course, show her up. Mr. Karlake, you won't mind for a few minutes using my men's club-room? Benson will show you! You'll find cigars and the ticker, sporting papers, whiskey; and, if you want anything special, just 'phone down to my "chef."

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JOHN. [*Looking at his watch.*] How long?

VIDA. [*Very anxious to please.*] Half a cigar! Benson will call you.

JOHN. [*Practically-minded.*] Don't make it too long. You see, there's my sheriff's sale on at twelve, and those races this afternoon. Fiddler will be here in ten minutes, remember!

[*The door opens.*]

VIDA. [*To JOHN.*] Run along! [*JOHN leaves and VIDA, instantly practical, makes a broad gesture to BENSON.*] Everything just as it was, Benson! [*BENSON whisks the roses out of the vase and replaces them in the box. She gives VIDA scissors and empty vases, and, when VIDA finds herself in precisely the same position which preceded JOHN's entrance, she says:*]

[*BROOKS comes in as VIDA takes a rose from basket.*]

BROOKS. [*With characteristic stolidness.*] Your ladyship's dressmaker! M'lady! [*Enter SIR WILFRID in morning suit, boutonnière, &c.*]

VIDA. [*With tender surprise and busy with the roses.*] Is that really you, Sir Wilfrid! I never flattered myself for an instant that you'd remember to come.

SIR WILFRID. [*Moving to the head of the sofa.*] Come? 'Course I come! Keen to come see you. By Jove, you know, you look as pink and white as a huntin' mornin'.

VIDA. [*Ready to make any man as happy as possible.*] You'll smoke?

SIR WILFRID. Thanks! [*He watches her as she trims and arranges the flowers.*] Awfully long fingers you have! Wish I was a rose, or a ring, or a pair of shears! I say, d'you ever notice what a devil of a fellow I am for originality, what? [*Unlike JOHN, is evidently impressed by her.*] You've got a delicate little den up here! Not so much low livin' and high thinkin', as low lights and no thinkin' at all, I hope—eh?

[*By this time, VIDA has filled a vase with roses and rises to sweep by him and, if possible, make another charming picture to his eyes.*]

VIDA. [*Gliding gracefully past him.*] You don't mind my moving about?

SIR WILFRID. [*Impressed.*] Not if you don't mind my watchin'. [*Sitting down on the sofa.*] And sayin' how wel you do it.

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VIDA. It's most original of you to come here this morning. I don't quite see why you did.

[*She places the roses here and there, as if to see their effect, and leaves them on a small table near the door through which her visitors entered.*]

SIR WILFRID. Admiration.

VIDA. [*Sauntering slowly toward the mirror as she speaks.*] Oh, I saw that you admired her! And of course, she did say she was coming here at eleven! But that was only bravado! She won't come, and besides, I've given orders to admit no one!

SIR WILFRID. [*Attempting to dam the stream of her talk which flows gently but steadily on.*] May I ask you—

VIDA. And, indeed, if she came now, Mr. Karslake has gone, and her sole object in coming was to make him uncomfortable. [*She moves toward the table, stopping a half minute at the mirror to see that she looks as she wishes to look.*] Very dangerous symptom, too, that passionate desire to make one's former husband unhappy! But, I can't believe that your admiration for Cynthia Karslake is so warm that it led you to pay me this visit a half hour too early in the hope of seeing—

SIR WILFRID. [*Rising; most civil, but speaking his mind like a Briton.*] I say, would you mind stopping a moment! [*She smiles.*] I'm not an American, you know; I was brought up not to interrupt. But you Americans, it's different with you! If somebody didn't interrupt you, you'd go on forever.

VIDA. [*Passing him to tantalize.*] My point is you come to see Cynthia—

SIR WILFRID. [*Believing she means it.*] I came hopin' to see—

VIDA. [*Provokingly.*] Cynthia!

SIR WILFRID. [*Perfectly single-minded and entirely taken in.*] But I would have come even if I'd known—

VIDA. [*Evading him, while he follows.*] I don't believe it!

SIR WILFRID. [*Protesting whole-heartedly.*] Give you my word I—

VIDA. [*Leading him on.*] You're here to see *her*! And of course—

SIR WILFRID. [*Determined to be heard because, after all, he's a man.*] May I have the—eh—the floor? [VIDA *sits down in a chair.*] I was jolly well bowled over with Mrs. Karslake, I admit that, and I hoped to see her here, but—

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VIDA. [*Talking nonsense and knowing it.*] You had another object in coming. In fact, you came to see Cynthia, and you came to see me! What I really long to know is, why you wanted to see *me*! For, of course, Cynthia's to be married at three! And, if she wasn't she wouldn't have you!

SIR WILFRID. [*Not intending to wound; merely speaking the flat truth.*] Well, I mean to jolly well ask her.

VIDA. [*Indignant.*] To be your wife?

SIR WILFRID. Why not?

VIDA. [*Still indignant.*] And you came here, to my house—in order to ask her—

SIR WILFRID. [*Truthful even on a subtle point.*] Oh, but that's only my first reason for coming, you know.

VIDA. [*Concealing her hopes.*] Well, now I *am* curious—what is the second?

SIR WILFRID. [*Simply.*] Are you feelin' pretty robust?

VIDA. I don't know!

SIR WILFRID. [*Crosses to the buffet.*] Will you have something, and then I'll tell you!

VIDA. [*Gaily.*] Can't I support the news without—

SIR WILFRID. [*Trying to explain his state of mind, a feat which he has never been able to accomplish.*] Mrs. Phillimore, you see it's this way. Whenever you're lucky, you're too lucky. Now, Mrs. Karslake is a nipper and no mistake, but as I told you, the very same evenin' and house where I saw her—

[*He attempts to take her hand.*]

VIDA. [*Gently rising and affecting a tender surprise.*] What!

SIR WILFRID. [*Rising with her.*] That's it!—You're over! [*He suggests with his right hand the movement of a horse taking a hurdle.*]

VIDA. [*Very sweetly.*] You don't really mean—

SIR WILFRID. [*Carried away for the moment by so much true womanliness.*] I mean, I stayed awake for an hour last night, thinkin' about you.

VIDA. [*Speaking to be contradicted.*] But, you've just told me—that Cynthia—

SIR WILFRID. [*Admitting the fact.*] Well, she did—she did bowl my wicket, but so did you—

VIDA. [*Taking him very gently to task.*] Don't you think there's a limit to— [*She sits down.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Roused by so much loveliness of soul.*] Now, see here, Mrs. Phillimore! You and I are not bottle babies, eh, are we? You've been married and—I—I've knocked about, and we both know there's a lot of stuff talked about—eh, eh, well, you know:—the one and only—that a fellow

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can't be awfully well smashed by two at the same time, don't you know! All rubbish! You know it, and the proof of the puddin's in the eatin', I am!

VIDA. [*With gentle reproach.*] May I ask where I come in?

SIR WILFRID. Well, now, Mrs. Phillimore, I'll be frank with you, Cynthia's my favourite, but you're runnin' her a close second in the popular esteem!

VIDA. [*Laughing, determined not to take offense.*] What a delightful, original, fantastic person you are!

SIR WILFRID. [*Frankly happy that he has explained everything so neatly.*] I knew you'd take it that way!

VIDA. And what next, pray?

SIR WILFRID. Oh, just the usual,—eh,—thing,—the—eh—the same old question, don't you know. Will you have me if she don't?

VIDA. [*A shade piqued, but determined not to risk showing it.*] And you call that the same old usual question?

SIR WILFRID. Yes, I know, but—but will you? I sail in a week; we can take the same boat. And—eh—eh—my dear Mrs.—mayn't I say Vida, I'd like to see you at the head of my table.

VIDA. [*With velvet irony.*] With Cynthia at the foot?

SIR WILFRID. [*Practical, as before.*] Never mind Mrs. Karslake,—I admire her—she's—but you have your own points! And you're here, and so'm I!—damme I offer myself, and my affections, and I'm no icicle, my dear, tell you that for a fact, and,—and in fact what's your answer!— [VIDA *sighs and shakes her head.*] Make it, yes! I say, you know, my dear Vida—

[*He catches her hands.*]

VIDA. [*Drawing them from his.*] Unhand me, dear villain! And sit further away from your second choice! What can I say? I'd rather have *you* for a lover than any man I know! You must be a lovely lover!

SIR WILFRID. I am!

[*He makes a second effort to catch her fingers.*]

VIDA. Will you kindly go further away and be good!

SIR WILFRID. [*Quite forgetting CYNTHIA.*] Look here, if you say yes, we'll be married—

VIDA. In a month!

SIR WILFRID. Oh, no—this evening!

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VIDA. [*Incapable of leaving a situation unadorned.*] This evening! And sail in the same boat with *you*? And shall we sail to the Garden of Eden and stroll into it and lock the gate on the inside and then lose the key—under a rose-bush?

SIR WILFRID. [*After a pause and some consideration.*] Yes; yes, I say—that's too clever for me! [*He draws nearer to her to bring the understanding to a crisis.*]

VIDA. [*Interrupted by a soft knock.*] My maid—come!

SIR WILFRID. [*Swinging out of his chair and moving to the sofa.*] Eh?

BENSON. [*Coming in and approaching VIDA.*] The new footman, ma'am—he's made a mistake. He's told the lady you're at home.

VIDA. What lady?

BENSON. Mrs. Karslake; and she's on the stairs, ma'am.

VIDA. Show her in.

SIR WILFRID *has been turning over the roses. On hearing this, he faces about with a long stemmed one in his hand. He subsequently uses it to point his remarks.*

SIR WILFRID. [*To BENSON, who stops.*] One moment! [*To VIDA.*] I say, eh—I'd rather not see her!

VIDA. [*Very innocently.*] But you came here to see her.

SIR WILFRID. [*A little flustered.*] I'd rather not. Eh,—I fancied I'd find you and her together—but her— [*Coming a step nearer.*] findin' me with you looks so dooced intimate,—no one else, d'ye see, I believe she'd—draw conclusions—

BENSON. Pardon me, ma'am—but I hear Brooks coming!

SIR WILFRID. [*To BENSON.*] Hold the door!

VIDA. So you don't want her to know—?

SIR WILFRID. [*To VIDA.*] Be a good girl now—run me off somewhere!

VIDA. [*To BENSON.*] Show Sir Wilfrid the men's room.

[*BROOKS comes in.*

SIR WILFRID. The men's room! Ah! Oh! Eh!

VIDA. [*Beckoning him to go at once.*] Sir Wil— [*He hesitates; then as BROOKS advances, he flings off with BENSON.*

BROOKS. Lady Karslake, milady!

VIDA. Anything more inopportune! I never dreamed she'd come— [*CYNTHIA comes in veiled. As she walks quickly into the room, VIDA greets her languorously.*] My dear Cynthia, you don't mean to say—

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CYNTHIA. [*Rather short, and visibly agitated.*] Yes, I've come.

VIDA. [*Polite, but not urgent.*] Do take off your veil.

CYNTHIA. [*Complying.*] Is no one here?

VIDA. [*As before.*] Won't you sit down?

CYNTHIA. [*Agitated and suspicious.*] Thanks, no—That is, yes, thanks. Yes! You haven't answered my question?

[*CYNTHIA waves her hand through the haze; glances suspiciously at the smoke, and looks about for the cigarette.*

VIDA. [*Playing innocence in the first degree.*] My dear, what makes you imagine that any one's here!

CYNTHIA. You've been smoking.

VIDA. Oh, puffing away! [*CYNTHIA sees the glasses.*

CYNTHIA. And drinking—a pair of drinks? [*Her eyes lighting on JOHN'S gloves on the table at her elbow.*] Do they fit you, dear? [*VIDA smiles; CYNTHIA picks up the crop and looks at it and reads her own name.*] "Jack, from Cynthia."

VIDA. [*Without taking the trouble to double for a mere woman.*] Yes, dear; it's Mr. Karslake's crop, but I'm happy to say he left me a few minutes ago.

CYNTHIA. He left the house? [*VIDA smiles.*] I wanted to see him.

VIDA. [*With a shade of insolence.*] To quarrel?

CYNTHIA. [*Frank and curt.*] I wanted to see him.

VIDA. [*Determined to put CYNTHIA in the wrong.*] And I sent him away because I didn't want you to repeat the scene of last night in my house.

CYNTHIA. [*Looks at crop and is silent.*] Well, I can't stay. I'm to be married at three, and I had to play truant to get here!

[*BENSON comes in.*

BENSON. [*To VIDA.*] There's a person, ma'am, on the sidewalk.

VIDA. What person, Benson?

BENSON. A person, ma'am, with a horse.

CYNTHIA. [*Happily agitated.*] It's Fiddler with Cynthia K!

[*She walks rapidly to the window and looks out.*

VIDA. [*To BENSON.*] Tell the man I'll be down in five minutes.

CYNTHIA. [*Looking down from the balcony with delight.*] Oh, there she is!

VIDA. [*Aside to BENSON.*] Go to the club-room, Benson, and say to the two gentlemen I can't see them at present—I'll send for them when—

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BENSON. [*Listening.*] I hear some one coming.

VIDA. Quick! [*BENSON leaves the door which opens and JOHN comes in slowly, carelessly. VIDA whispers to BENSON.*

BENSON. [*Moving close to JOHN and whispering.*] Beg par—

VIDA. [*Under her breath.*] Go back!

JOHN. [*Not understanding.*] I beg pardon!

VIDA. [*Scarcely above a whisper.*] Go back!

JOHN. [*Dense.*] Can't! I've a date! With the sheriff!

VIDA. [*A little cross.*] Please use your eyes.

JOHN. [*Laughing and flattering* VIDA.] I am using my eyes.

VIDA. [*Fretted.*] Don't you see there's a lovely creature in the room?

JOHN. [*Not knowing what it is all about, but taking a wicked delight in seeing her customary calm ruffled.*] Of course there is.

VIDA. Hush!

JOHN. [*Teasingly.*] But what I want to know is—

VIDA. Hush!

JOHN. [*Enjoying his fun.*] —is when we're to stroll in the Garden of Eden—

VIDA. Hush!

JOHN. —and lose the key. [*To put a stop to this, she lightly tosses her handkerchief into his face.*] By George, talk about attar of roses!

CYNTHIA. [*At window, excited and moved at seeing her mare once more.*] Oh, she's a darling! [*Turning.*] A perfect darling! [JOHN starts up; he sees CYNTHIA at the same instant that she sees him.] Oh! I didn't know you were here. [*After a pause, with "take-it-or-leave-it" frankness.*] I came to see you! [JOHN looks extremely dark and angry; VIDA rises.

VIDA. [*To CYNTHIA, most gently, and seeing there's nothing to be gained of* JOHN.] Oh, pray feel at home, Cynthia, dear! [*Stopping by the door to her bedroom; to* JOHN.] When I've a nice street frock on, I'll ask you to present me to Cynthia K. [VIDA opens the door and goes out. CYNTHIA and JOHN involuntarily exchange glances.

CYNTHIA. [*Agitated and frank.*] Of course, I told you yesterday I was coming here.

JOHN. [*Irritated.*] And I was to deny myself the privilege of being here?

CYNTHIA. [*Curt and agitated.*] Yes.

JOHN. [*Ready to fight.*] And you guessed I would do that?

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CYNTHIA. No.

JOHN. What?

CYNTHIA. [*Speaks with agitation, frankness and good will.*] Jack—I mean, Mr. Karlake,—no, I mean, Jack! I came because—well, you see, it's my wedding day!—and—and—I—I—was rude to you last evening. I'd like to apologize and make peace with you before I go—

JOHN. [*Determined to be disagreeable.*] Before you go to your last, long home!

CYNTHIA. I came to apologize.

JOHN. But you'll remain to quarrel!

CYNTHIA. [*Still frank and kind.*] I will not quarrel. No!—and I'm only here for a moment. I'm to be married at three, and just look at the clock! Besides, I told Philip I was going to Louise's shop, and I did—on the way here; but, you see, if I stay too long he'll telephone Louise and find I'm not there, and he might guess I was here. So you see I'm risking a scandal. And now, Jack, see here, I lay my hand on the table, I'm here on the square, and,—what I want to say is, why—Jack, even if we have made a mess of our married life, let's put by anger and pride. It's all over now and can't be helped. So let's be human, let's be reasonable, and let's be kind to each other! Won't you give me your hand? [JOHN refuses.] I wish you every happiness!

JOHN. [*Turning away, the past rankling.*] I had a client once, a murderer; he told me he murdered the man, and he told me, too, that he never felt so kindly to anybody as he did to that man after he'd killed him!

CYNTHIA. Jack!

JOHN. [*Unforgiving.*] You murdered my happiness!

CYNTHIA. I won't recriminate!

JOHN. And now I must put by anger and pride! I do! But not self-respect, not a just indignation—not the facts and my clear memory of them!

CYNTHIA. Jack!

JOHN. No!

CYNTHIA. [*With growing emotion, and holding out her hand.*] I give you one more chance! Yes, I'm determined to be generous. I forgive everything you ever did to me. I'm ready to be friends. I wish you every happiness and every—every—horse in the world! I can't do more than that! [*She offers it again.*] You refuse?

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JOHN. [*Moved but surly.*] I like wildcats and I like Christians, but I don't like Christian wildcats! Now I'm close hauled, trot out your tornado! Let the Tiger loose! It's the tamer, the man in the cage that has to look lively and use the red hot crowbar! But, by Jove, I'm out of the cage! I'm a mere spectator of the married circus! [*He puffs vigorously.*]

CYNTHIA. Be a game sport then! Our marriage was a wager; you wagered you could live with me. You lost; you paid with a divorce; and now is the time to show your sporting blood. Come on, shake hands and part friends.

JOHN. Not in this world! Friends with you, no! I have a proper pride. I don't propose to put my pride in my pocket.

CYNTHIA. [*Jealous and plain spoken.*] Oh, I wouldn't ask you to put your pride in your pocket while Vida's handkerchief is there. [JOHN *looks angered.*] Pretty little bijou of a handkerchief! [*Pulling out the handkerchief.*] And she is charming, and divorced, and reasonably well made up.

JOHN. Oh, well, Vida is a woman. [*Toying with the handkerchief.*] I'm a man, a handkerchief is a handkerchief, and, as some old Aristotle or other said, whatever concerns a woman, concerns me!

CYNTHIA. [*Not oblivious of him, but in a low voice.*] Insufferable! Well, yes. [*She sits down. She is too much wounded to make any further appeal.*] You're perfectly right. There's no possible harmony between divorced people! I withdraw my hand and all good feeling. No wonder I couldn't stand you. Eh? However, that's pleasantly past! But at least, my dear Karlake, let us have some sort of beauty behaviour! If we cannot be decent, let us endeavour to be graceful. If we can't be moral, at least we can avoid being vulgar.

JOHN. Well—

CYNTHIA. If there's to be no more marriage in the world—

JOHN. [*Cynically.*] Oh, but that's not it; there's to be more and more and more!

CYNTHIA. [*With a touch of bitterness.*] Very well! I repeat then, if there's to be nothing but marriage and divorce, and re-marriage, and re-divorce, at least, at least, those who *are* divorced can avoid the vulgarity of meeting each other here, there, and everywhere!

JOHN. Oh, that's where you come out!

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CYNTHIA. I thought so yesterday, and to-day I know it. It's an insufferable thing to a woman of any delicacy of feeling to find her husband—

JOHN. Ahem—former!

CYNTHIA. *Once* a husband always—

JOHN. [*In the same cynical tone.*] Oh, no! Oh, dear, no.

CYNTHIA. To find her—to find the man she has once lived with—in the house of—making love to—to find you here! [JOHN *smiles and rises.*] You smile,—but I say, it should be a social axiom, no woman should have to meet her former husband.

JOHN. [*Cynical and cutting.*] Oh, I don't know; after I've served my term I don't mind meeting my jailor.

CYNTHIA. [*As JOHN takes chair near her.*] It's indecent—at the horse-show, the opera, at races and balls, to meet the man who once—It's not civilized! It's fantastic! It's half baked! Oh, I never should have come here! [*He sympathizes, and she grows irrational and furious.*] But it's entirely your fault!

JOHN. My fault?

CYNTHIA. [*Working herself into a rage.*] Of course. What business have you to be about—to be at large. To be at all!

JOHN. Gosh!

CYNTHIA. [*Her rage increasing.*] To be where I am! Yes, it's just as horrible for you to turn up in my life as it would be for a dead person to insist on coming back to life and dinner and bridge!

JOHN. Horrid idea!

CYNTHIA. Yes, but it's *you* who behave just as if you were not dead, just as if I'd not spent a fortune on your funeral. You do; you prepare to bob up at afternoon teas,—and dinners—and embarrass me to death with your extinct personality!

JOHN. Well, of course we *were* married, but it didn't quite kill me.

CYNTHIA. [*Angry and plain spoken.*] You killed yourself for me—I divorced you. I buried you out of my life. If any human soul was ever dead, you are! And there's nothing I so hate as a gibbering ghost.

JOHN. Oh, I say!

CYNTHIA. [*With hot anger.*] Go gibber and squeak where gibbering and squeaking are the fashion!

JOHN. [*Laughing and pretending to a coldness he does not feel.*] And so, my dear child, I'm to abate myself as a nuisance! Well, as far as seeing you is concerned, for my part it's just like seeing a horse who's chucked you once. The bruises are O. K., and you see him with a sort of easy curiosity. Of course, you know, he'll jolly well chuck the next man!—Permit me! [*JOHN picks up her gloves, handkerchief and parasol, and gives her these as she drops them one by one in her agitation.*] There's pleasure in the thought.

CYNTHIA. Oh!

JOHN. And now, may I ask you a very simple question? Mere curiosity on my part, but, why did you come here this morning?

CYNTHIA. I have already explained that to you.

JOHN. Not your real motive. Permit me!

CYNTHIA. Oh!

JOHN. But I believe I have guessed your real—permit me—your real motive!

CYNTHIA. Oh!

JOHN. [*With mock sympathy.*] Cynthia, I am sorry for you.

CYNTHIA. H'm?

JOHN. Of course we had a pretty lively case of the fever—the mutual attraction fever, and we *were* married a very short time. And I conclude that's what's the matter with *you*! You see, my dear, seven months of married life is too short a time to cure a bad case of the fancies.

CYNTHIA. [*In angry surprise.*] What?

JOHN. [*Calm and triumphant.*] That's my diagnosis.

CYNTHIA. [*Slowly and gathering herself together.*] I don't think I understand.

JOHN. Oh, yes, you do; yes, you do.

CYNTHIA. [*With blazing eyes.*] What do you mean?

JOHN. Would you mind not breaking my crop! Thank you! I mean [*With polite impertinence.*] that ours was a case of premature divorce, and, ahem, you're in love with me still.

He pauses. CYNTHIA has one moment of fury, then she realizes at what a disadvantage this places her. She makes an immense effort, recovers her calm, thinks hard for a moment more, and then, has suddenly an inspiration.

CYNTHIA. Jack, some day you'll get the blind staggers from conceit. No, I'm not in love with you, Mr. Karlake, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if she were. She's just your sort, you know. She's a man-eating shark, and you'll be a toothsome mouthful. Oh, come now, Jack, what a silly you are! Oh, yes, you are, to get off a joke like that; me—in love with—

[*She looks at him.*]

JOHN. Why are you here? [*She laughs and begins to play her game.*] Why are you here?

CYNTHIA. Guess! [*She laughs.*]

JOHN. Why are you—

CYNTHIA. [*Quickly.*] Why am I here! I'll tell you. I'm going to be married. I had a longing, an irresistible longing to see you make an ass of yourself just once more! It happened!

JOHN. [*Uncertain and discomfited.*] I know better!

CYNTHIA. But I came for a serious purpose, too. I came, my dear fellow, to make an experiment on myself. I've been with you thirty minutes; and— [*She sighs with content.*] It's all right!

JOHN. What's all right?

CYNTHIA. [*Calm and apparently at peace with the world.*] I'm immune.

JOHN. Immune?

CYNTHIA. You're not catching any more! Yes, you see, I said to myself, if I fly into a temper—

JOHN. You did!

CYNTHIA. If I fly into a temper when I see him, well, that shows I'm not yet so entirely convalescent that I can afford to have Jack Karlake at my house. If I remain calm I shall ask him to dinner.

JOHN. [*Routed.*] Ask me if you dare! [*He rises.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Getting the whip hand for good.*] Ask you to dinner? Oh, my dear fellow. [*JOHN rises.*] I'm going to do much more than that. [*She rises.*] We must be friends, old man! We must meet, we must meet often, we must show New York the way the thing should be done, and, to show you I

mean it—I want you to be my best man, and give me away when I'm married this afternoon.

JOHN. [*Incredulous and impatient.*] You don't mean that!

[*He pushes back his chair.*]

CYNTHIA. There you are! Always suspicious!

JOHN. You don't mean that!

CYNTHIA. [*Hiding her emotion under a sportswoman's manner.*] Don't I? I ask you, come! And come as you are! And I'll lay my wedding gown to Cynthia K that you won't be there! If you're there, you get the gown, and if you're not, I get Cynthia K!— [Pg 660]

JOHN. [*Determined not to be worsted.*] I take it!

CYNTHIA. Done! Now, then, we'll see which of us two is the real sporting goods! Shake! [*They shake hands on it.*] Would you mind letting me have a plain soda? [JOHN *goes to the table, and, as he is rattled and does not regard what he is about, he fills the glass three-fourths full with whiskey. He gives this to CYNTHIA who looks him in the eye with an air of triumph.*] Thanks. [*Maliciously, as VIDA enters.*] Your hand is a bit shaky. I think *you* need a little King William. [JOHN *shrugs his shoulders, and, as VIDA immediately speaks, CYNTHIA defers drinking.*]

VIDA. [*To CYNTHIA.*] My dear, I'm sorry to tell you your husband—I mean, my husband—I mean Philip—he's asking for you over the 'phone. You must have said you were coming here. Of course, I told him you were not here, and hung up.

BENSON. [*Entering hurriedly and at once moving to VIDA.*] Ma'am, the new footman's been talking with Mr. Phillimore on the wire. [VIDA, *gesture of regret.*] He told Mr. Phillimore that his lady was here, and, if I can believe my ears, ma'am, he's got Sir Wilfrid on the 'phone now!

SIR WILFRID. [*Making his appearance, perplexed and annoyed.*] I say, y' know—extraordinary country; that old chap, Phillimore, he's been damned impertinent over the wire! Says I've run off with Mrs. Karslake—talks about "Louise!" Now, who the dooce is Louise? He's comin' round here, too—I said Mrs. Karslake wasn't here— [*Seeing CYNTHIA.*] Hello! Good job! What a liar I am!

BENSON. [*Coming to the door. To VIDA.*] Mr. Fiddler, ma'am, says the mare is gettin' very restive.

[JOHN *hears this and moves at once. BENSON withdraws.*]

JOHN. [*To VIDA.*] If that mare's restive, she'll break out in a rash.

VIDA. [*To JOHN.*] Will you take me?

JOHN. Of course. [*They go to the door.*]

CYNTHIA. [*To JOHN.*] Tata, old man! Meet you at the altar! If I don't, the mare's mine!

[SIR WILFRID *looks at her amazed.*]

VIDA. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Do the honours, dear, in my absence! [Pg 661]

JOHN. Come along, come along, never mind them! A horse is a horse!

JOHN and VIDA *go out gaily and in haste. At the same moment CYNTHIA drinks what she supposes to be her glass of plain soda. As it is whiskey straight, she is seized with astonishment and a fit of coughing. SIR WILFRID relieves her of the glass.*

SIR WILFRID. [*Indicating the contents of the glass.*] I say, do you ordinarily take it as high up—as seven fingers and two thumbs.

CYNTHIA. [*Coughing.*] Jack poured it out. Just shows how groggy he was! And now, Sir Wilfrid—

[*She gets her things to go.*]

SIR WILFRID. Oh, you can't go!

[BROOKS *appears at the door.*]

CYNTHIA. I am to be married at three.

SIR WILFRID. Let him wait. [*Aside to BROOKS, whom he meets near the door.*] If Mr. Phillimore comes, bring his card up.

BROOKS. [*Going.*] Yes, Sir Wilfrid.

SIR WILFRID. To me! [*Tipping him.*]

BROOKS. [*Bowing.*] To you, Sir Wilfrid. [BROOKS *goes.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Returning to CYNTHIA.*] I've got to have my innings, y' know! [*Looking at her more closely.*] I say, you've been crying!—

CYNTHIA. King William!

SIR WILFRID. You *are* crying! Poor little gal!

CYNTHIA. [*Tears in her eyes.*] I feel all shaken and cold.

[BROOKS *returns with a card.*

SIR WILFRID. [*Astonished and sympathetic.*] Poor little gal.

CYNTHIA. [*Her eyes wet.*] I didn't sleep a wink last night. [*With disgust.*] Oh, what is the matter with me?

SIR WILFRID. Why, it's as plain as a pikestaff! You— [BROOKS *has carried in the card to SIR WILFRED, who picks it up and says aside, to BROOKS:*] Phillimore? [BROOKS *assents. Aloud to CYNTHIA, calmly deceitful.*] Who's Waldorf Smith? [CYNTHIA *shakes her head. To BROOKS, returning card to salver.*] Tell the gentleman Mrs. Karlake is not here! [BROOKS *leaves the room.*

CYNTHIA. [*Aware that she has no business where she is.*] I thought it was Philip!

SIR WILFRID. [*Telling the truth as if it were a lie.*] So did I! [*With cheerful confidence.*] And now, Mrs. Karlake, I'll tell you why you're cryin'. [*Sitting down beside her.*] You're marryin' the wrong man! I'm sorry for you, but you're such a goose. Here you are, marryin' this legal luminary. What for? You don't know! He don't know! But I do! You pretend you're marryin' him because it's the sensible thing; not a bit of it. You're marryin' Mr. Phillimore because of all the other men you ever saw he's the least like Jack Karlake. [Pg 662]

CYNTHIA. That's a very good reason.

SIR WILFRID. There's only one good reason for marrying, and that is because you'll die if you don't!

CYNTHIA. Oh, I've tried that!

SIR WILFRID. The Scripture says: "Try! try! again!" I tell you, there's nothing like a w'im!

CYNTHIA. What's that? W'im? Oh, you mean a *whim*! Do please try and say *Whim*!

SIR WILFRID. [*For the first time emphasizing his H in the word.*] *Whim*. You must have a w'im—w'im for the chappie you marry.

CYNTHIA. I had—for Jack.

SIR WILFRID. Your w'im wasn't wimmy enough, my dear! If you'd had more of it, and tougher, it would ha' stood, y'know! Now, I'm not proposin'!

CYNTHIA. [*Diverted at last from her own distress.*] I hope not!

SIR WILFRID. Oh, I will later! It's not time yet! As I was saying—

CYNTHIA. And pray, Sir Wilfrid, when will it be time?

SIR WILFRID. As soon as I see you have a w'im for me! [*Rising, looks at his watch.*] And now, I'll tell you what we'll do! We've got just an hour to get there in, my motor's on the corner, and in fifty minutes we'll be at Belmont Park.

CYNTHIA. [*Her sporting blood fired.*] Belmont Park!

SIR WILFRID. We'll do the races, and dine at Martin's—

CYNTHIA. [*Tempted.*] Oh, if I only could! I can't! I've got to be married! You're awfully nice; I've almost got a "w'im" for you already.

SIR WILFRID. [*Delighted.*] There you are! I'll send a telegram! [*She shakes her head. He sits and writes at the table.*

CYNTHIA. No, no, no!

SIR WILFRID. [*Reading what he has written.*] "Off with Cates-Darby to Races. Please postpone ceremony till seven-thirty."

CYNTHIA. Oh, no, it's impossible! [Pg 663]

SIR WILFRID. [*Accustomed to have things go his way.*] No more than breathin'! You can't get a w'im for me, you know, unless we're together, so together we'll be! [JOHN KARSLAKE *opens the door, and, unnoticed, walks into the room.*] And to-morrow you'll wake up with a jolly little w'im—, [*Reading.*] "Postpone ceremony till seven-thirty." There. [*He puts on her cloak and turning, sees JOHN.*] Hello!

JOHN. [*Surly.*] Hello! Sorry to disturb you.

SIR WILFRID. [*Cheerful as possible.*] Just the man! [*Giving him the telegraph form.*] Just step round and send it, my boy. Thanks! [JOHN *reads it.*

CYNTHIA. No, no, I can't go!

SIR WILFRID. Cockety-coo-coo-can't. I say, you must!

CYNTHIA. [*Positively.*] *No!*

JOHN. [*Astounded.*] Do you mean you're going—

SIR WILFRID. [*Very gay.*] Off to the races, my boy!

JOHN. [*Angry and outraged.*] Mrs. Karslake can't go with you there!

CYNTHIA *starts, amazed at his assumption of marital authority, and delighted that she will have an opportunity of outraging his sensibilities.*

SIR WILFRID. Oho!

JOHN. An hour before her wedding!

SIR WILFRID. [*Gay and not angry.*] May I know if it's the custom—

JOHN. [*Jealous and disgusted.*] It's worse than eloping—

SIR WILFRID. Custom, y' know, for the husband, that was, to dictate—

JOHN. [*Thoroughly vexed.*] By George, there's a limit!

CYNTHIA. What? What? What? [*Gathering up her things.*] What did I hear you say?

SIR WILFRID. Ah!

JOHN. [*Angry.*] I say there's a limit—

CYNTHIA. [*More and more determined to arouse and excite JOHN.*] Oh, there's a limit, is there?

JOHN. There is! I bar the way! It means reputation—it means—

CYNTHIA. [*Enjoying her opportunity.*] We shall see what it means!

SIR WILFRID. Aha!

JOHN. [*To CYNTHIA.*] I'm here to protect your reputation—

SIR WILFRID. [*To CYNTHIA.*] We've got to make haste, you know.

CYNTHIA. Now, I'm ready—

JOHN. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Be sensible. You're breaking off the match—

CYNTHIA. [*Excitedly.*] What's that to you?

SIR WILFRID. It's boots and saddles!

JOHN. [*Taking his stand between them and the door.*] No thoroughfare!

SIR WILFRID. Look here, my boy—!

CYNTHIA. [*Catching at the opportunity of putting JOHN in an impossible position.*] Wait a moment, Sir Wilfrid! Give me the wire! [*Facing him.*] Thanks! [*Taking the telegraph form from him and tearing it up.*] There! Too rude to chuck him by wire! But you, Jack, you've taken on yourself to look after my interests, so I'll just ask you, old man, to run down to the Supreme Court and tell Philip—nicely, you know—I'm off with Sir Wilfrid and where! Say I'll be back by seven, if I'm not later! And make it clear, Jack, I'll marry him by eight-thirty or nine at the latest! And mind *you're* there, dear! And now, Sir Wilfrid, we're off.

JOHN. [*Staggered and furious, giving way as they pass him.*] I'm not the man to—to carry—

CYNTHIA. [*Quick and dashing.*] Oh, yes, you are.

JOHN. —a message from you.

CYNTHIA. [*Triumphant.*] Oh, yes, you are; you're just exactly the man! [*CYNTHIA and SIR WILFRID whirl out.*]

JOHN. Great miracles of Moses!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE. *The same as that of Act I, but the room has been cleared of superfluous furniture, and arranged for a wedding ceremony. MRS. PHILLIMORE is reclining on the sofa at the right of the table, MISS HENEAGE at its left. SUDLEY is seated at the right of the table. GRACE is seated on the sofa. There is a wedding-bell of roses, an arch of orange blossoms, and, girdled by a ribbon of white, an altar of calla lilies. There are cushions of flowers, alcoves of flowers, vases of flowers—in short, flowers everywhere and in profusion and variety. Before the altar are two cushions for the couple to kneel on and, on pedestals, at each side of the arch, are twin candelabra. The hangings are pink and white.*

The room, first of all, and its emblems, holds the undivided attention; then slowly

engaging it, and in contrast to their gay surroundings, the occupants. About each and everyone of them, hangs a deadly atmosphere of suppressed irritation.

SUDLEY. [*Impatiently.*] All very well, my dear Sarah. But you see the hour. Twenty to ten! We have been here since half-past two.

MISS HENEAGE. You had dinner?

SUDLEY. I did not come here at two to have dinner at eight, and be kept waiting until ten! And, my dear Sarah, when I ask where the bride is—

MISS HENEAGE. [*With forced composure.*] I have told you all I know. Mr. John Karslake came to the house at lunch time, spoke to Philip, and they left the house together.

GRACE. Where is Philip?

MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Feebly, irritated.*] I don't wish to be censorious or to express an actual opinion, but I must say it's a bold bride who keeps her future mother-in-law waiting for eight hours. However, I will not venture to— [MRS. PHILLIMORE *reclines again and fades away into silence.*]

GRACE. [*Sharply and decisively.*] I do! I'm sorry I went to the expense of a silver ice-pitcher.

MRS. PHILLIMORE *sighs.* MISS HENEAGE *keeps her temper with an effort which is obvious.* THOMAS *opens the door.*

SUDLEY. [*To MRS. PHILLIMORE.*] For my part, I don't believe Mrs. Karslake means to return here or to marry Philip at all!

THOMAS. [*Coming in, and approaching MISS HENEAGE.*] Two telegrams for you, ma'am! The choir boys have had their supper. [*A slight movement ripples the ominous calm of all. THOMAS steps back.*]

SUDLEY. [*Rising.*] At last we shall know!

MISS HENEAGE. From the lady! Probably!

MISS HENEAGE *opens the first telegram and reads it at a glance, laying it on the salver again with a look at SUDLEY.* THOMAS *passes the salver to SUDLEY, who takes the telegram.*

GRACE. There's a toot now.

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MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Feebly, confused.*] I don't wish to intrude, but really I cannot imagine Philip marrying at midnight. [*As SUDLEY reads, MISS HENEAGE opens the second telegram, but does not read it.*]

SUDLEY. [*Reading.*] "Accident, auto struck"—something! "Gasoline"—did something—illegible, ah! [*Reads.*] "Home by nine forty-five! Hold the church!"

[*A general movement sets in.*]

MISS HENEAGE. [*Profoundly shocked.*] "Hold the church!" William, she still means to marry Philip! and to-night, too!

SUDLEY. It's from Belmont Park.

GRACE. [*Making a great discovery.*] She went to the races!

MISS HENEAGE. This is from Philip! [*Reading the second telegram.*] "I arrive at ten o'clock. Have dinner ready." [MISS HENEAGE *motions to Thomas, who, obeying, retires. Looking at her watch.*] They are both due now. [*Movement.*] What's to be done? [*She rises and SUDLEY shrugs his shoulders.*]

SUDLEY. [*Rising.*] After a young woman has spent her wedding day at the races? Why, I consider that she has broken the engagement,—and when she comes, tell her so.

MISS HENEAGE. I'll telephone Matthew. The choir boys can go home—her maid can pack her belongings—and when the lady arrives—

Impudently, the very distant toot of an auto-horn breaks in upon her words, producing, in proportion to its growing nearness, an increasing pitch of excitement and indignation. GRACE flies to the door and looks out. MRS. PHILLIMORE, helpless, does not know what to do or where to go or what to say. SUDLEY moves about excitedly. MISS HENEAGE stands ready to make herself disagreeable.

GRACE. [*Speaking rapidly and with excitement.*] I hear a man's voice. Cates-Darby and brother Matthew.

A loud and brazenly insistent toot outrages afresh. Laughter and voices outside are heard faintly. GRACE looks out of the door, and, as quickly withdraws.

MISS HENEAGE. Outrageous!

SUDLEY. Disgraceful!

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MRS. PHILLIMORE. Shocking! [*Partly rising as the voices and horn are heard.*] I shall not take any part at all, in the—eh—

[*She fades away.*]

MISS HENEAGE. [*Interrupting her.*] Don't trouble yourself.

Through the growing noise of voices and laughter, CYNTHIA'S voice is heard. SIR WILFRID is seen in the outer hall. He is burdened with wraps, not to mention a newspaper and parasol, which in no wise check his flow of gay remarks to CYNTHIA, who is still outside. CYNTHIA'S voice, and now MATTHEW'S, reach those inside, and, at last, both join SIR WILFRID, who has turned at the door to wait for them. As she reaches the door, CYNTHIA turns and speaks to MATTHEW, who immediately follows her. She is in automobile attire, wearing goggles, a veil, and an exquisite duster of latest Paris style. They come in with a subdued bustle and noise. As their eyes light on CYNTHIA, SUDLEY and MISS HENEAGE exclaim, and there is a general movement.

SUDLEY. 'Pon my word!

GRACE. Hah!

MISS HENEAGE. [*Bristling up to her feet, her sensibilities outraged.*] Shocking!

GRACE remains standing above sofa. SUDLEY moves toward her, MISS HENEAGE sitting down again. MRS. PHILLIMORE reclines on sofa. CYNTHIA begins to speak as soon as she appears and speaks fluently to the end.

CYNTHIA. No! I never was so surprised in my life, as when I strolled into the paddock and they gave me a rousing reception—old Jimmy Withers, Debt Gollup, Jack Deal, Monty Spiffles, the Governor and Buckeye. All of my old admirers! They simply fell on my neck, and, dear Matthew, what do you think I did? I turned on the water main! [*There are movements and murmurs of disapprobation from the family. MATTHEW indicates a desire to go.*] Oh, but you can't go!

MATTHEW. I'll return in no time!

CYNTHIA. I'm all ready to be married. Are they ready? [*MATTHEW waves a pious, polite gesture of recognition to the family.*] I beg everybody's pardon! [*Taking off her wrap and putting it on the back of a chair.*] My goggles are so dusty, I can't see who's who! [*To SIR WILFRID.*] Thanks! You have carried it well! [*She takes the parasol from SIR WILFRID.*

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SIR WILFRID. [*Aside to CYNTHIA.*] When may I—?

CYNTHIA. See you next Goodwood!

SIR WILFRID. [*Imperturbably.*] Oh, I'm coming back!

CYNTHIA. [*Advancing a bit toward the family.*] Not a bit of use in coming back! I shall be married before you get here! Ta! Ta! Goodwood!

SIR WILFRID. [*Not in the least affected.*] I'm coming back. [*He goes out quickly. There are more murmurs of disapprobation from the family. There is a slight pause.*

CYNTHIA. [*Beginning to take off her goggles, and moving nearer "the family."*] I do awfully apologize for being so late!

MISS HENEAGE. [*Importantly.*] Mrs. Karslake—

SUDLEY. [*Importantly.*] Ahem! [*CYNTHIA lays down goggles, and sees their severity.*

CYNTHIA. Dear me! [*Surveying the flowers and for a moment speechless.*] Oh, good heavens! Why, it looks like a smart funeral!

MISS HENEAGE moves; then speaks in a perfectly ordinary natural tone, but her expression is severe. CYNTHIA immediately realizes the state of affairs in its fullness.

MISS HENEAGE. [*To CYNTHIA.*] After what has occurred, Mrs. Karslake—

CYNTHIA. [*Glances quietly toward the table, and then sits down at it, composed and good-tempered.*] I see you got my wire—so you know where I have been.

MISS HENEAGE. To the race-course!

SUDLEY. With a rowdy Englishman. [*CYNTHIA glances at SUDLEY, uncertain whether he means to be disagreeable, or whether he is only naturally so.*

MISS HENEAGE. We concluded you desired to break the engagement!

CYNTHIA. [*Indifferently.*] No! No! Oh! No!

MISS HENEAGE. Do you intend, despite of our opinion of you—

CYNTHIA. The only opinion that would have any weight with me would be Mrs. Phillimore's.

[*She turns expectantly to MRS. PHILLIMORE.*

MRS. PHILLIMORE. I am generally asleep at this hour, and, accordingly, I will not venture to express

MISS HENEAGE. [*Coldly.*] You smile. We simply inform you that as regards *us*, the alliance is not grateful.

CYNTHIA. [*Affecting gaiety and unconcern.*] And all this because the gasoline gave out.

SUDLEY. My patience has given out!

GRACE. So has mine. I'm going.

[*She makes good her word.*

SUDLEY. [*Vexed beyond civility. To CYNTHIA.*] My dear young lady: You come here, to this sacred—eh—eh—spot—altar!— [*Gesture.*] odoriferous of the paddock!—speaking of Spiffles and Buckeye, —having practically eloped!—having created a scandal, and disgraced our family!

CYNTHIA. [*Affecting surprise at this attitude.*] How does it disgrace you? Because I like to see a high-bred, clean, nervy, sweet little four-legged gee play the antelope over a hurdle!

MISS HENEAGE. Sister, it is high time that you—

[*She turns to CYNTHIA with a gesture.*

CYNTHIA. [*With quiet irony.*] Mrs. Phillimore is generally asleep at this hour, and accordingly she will not venture to express—

SUDLEY. [*Spluttering with irritation.*] Enough, madam—I *venture* to—to—to—to say, you are leading a fast life.

CYNTHIA. [*With powerful intention.*] Not in this house! For six heavy weeks have I been laid away in the grave, and I've found it very slow indeed trying to keep pace with the dead!

SUDLEY. [*Despairingly.*] This comes of horses!

CYNTHIA. [*Indignant.*] Of what?

SUDLEY. C-c-caring for horses!

MISS HENEAGE. [*With sublime morality.*] What Mrs. Karslake cares for is—men.

CYNTHIA. [*Angry and gay.*] What would you have me care for? The Ornithorhyncus Paradoxus? or Pithacanthropus Erectus? Oh, I refuse to take you seriously. [*SUDLEY begins to prepare to leave; he buttons himself into respectability and his coat.*

SUDLEY. My dear madam, I take myself seriously—and madam, I—I retract what I have brought with me [*Feeling in his waistcoat pocket.*] as a graceful gift,—an Egyptian scarab—a—a—sacred beetle, which once ornamented the person of a—eh—mummy.

CYNTHIA. [*Scoring in return.*] It should never be absent from your pocket, Mr. Sudley! [*SUDLEY walks away in a rage.*

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MISS HENEAGE. [*Rising, to SUDLEY.*] I've a vast mind to withdraw my— [*CYNTHIA moves.*

CYNTHIA. [*Interrupts; maliciously.*] Your wedding present? The little bronze cat!

MISS HENEAGE. [*Moves, angrily.*] Oh! [*Even Mrs. PHILLIMORE comes momentarily to life, and expresses silent indignation.*

SUDLEY. [*Loftily.*] Sarah, I'm going.

GRACE, who has met PHILIP, takes occasion to accompany him into the room. PHILIP looks dusty and grim. As they come in, GRACE speaks to him, and PHILIP shakes his head. They pause near the door.

CYNTHIA. [*Emotionally.*] I shall go to my room! However, all I ask is that you repeat to Philip— [*As she moves toward the door, she comes suddenly upon PHILIP, and speaks to him in a low voice.*

SUDLEY. [*To MISS HENEAGE, determined to win.*] As I go out, I shall do myself the pleasure of calling a hansom for Mrs. Karslake— [*PHILIP moves slightly from the door.*

PHILIP. As you go out, Sudley, have a hansom called, and when it comes, get into it.

SUDLEY. [*Furious.*] Eh,—eh,—my dear sir, I leave you to your fate. [*PHILIP angrily points him the door and SUDLEY leaves in great haste.*

MISS HENEAGE. [*With weight.*] Philip, you've not heard—

PHILIP. [*Interrupting.*] Everything—from Grace! My sister has repeated your words to me—and her own! I've told her what I think of *her*. [*PHILIP looks witheringly at GRACE.*

GRACE. I shan't wait to hear any more.

[*She flounces out of the room.*

PHILIP. Don't make it necessary for me to tell you what I think of you. [*PHILIP moves to the right, toward his mother, to whom he gives his arm. MISS HENEAGE immediately seeks the opposite side.*

Mother, with your permission, I desire to be alone. I expect both you and Grace, Sarah, to be dressed and ready for the ceremony a half hour from now. [As PHILIP and MRS. PHILLIMORE are about to go out, MISS HENEAGE speaks.]

MISS HENEAGE. I shall come or not as I see fit. And let me add, my dear brother, that a fool at forty is a fool indeed. [MISS HENEAGE, *high and mighty, goes out, much pleased with her quotation.*

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MRS. PHILLIMORE. [*Stupid and weary as usual, to PHILIP, as he leads her to the door.*] My dear son—I won't venture to express— [CYNTHIA, *in irritation, moves to the table.*

PHILIP. [*Soothing a silly mother.*] No, mother, don't! But I shall expect you, of course, at the ceremony. [MRS. PHILLIMORE *languidly retires.* PHILIP *strides to the centre of the room, taking the tone, and assuming the attitude of, the injured husband.*] It is proper for me to tell you that I followed you to Belmont. I am aware—I know with whom—in fact, *I know all!* [*He punctuates his words with pauses, and indicates the whole censorious universe.*] And now let me assure you—I am the last man in the world to be jilted on the very eve of—of—everything with you. I won't be jilted. [CYNTHIA *is silent.*] You understand? I propose to marry you. I won't be made ridiculous.

CYNTHIA. [*Glancing at PHILIP.*] Philip, I didn't mean to make you—

PHILIP. Why, then, did you run off to Belmont Park with that fellow?

CYNTHIA. Philip, I—eh—

PHILIP. [*Sitting down at the table.*] What motive? What reason? On our wedding day? Why did you do it?

CYNTHIA. I'll tell you the truth. I was bored.

PHILIP. [*Staggered.*] Bored? In my company?

CYNTHIA. I was bored, and then—and besides, Sir Wilfrid asked me to go.

PHILIP. Exactly, and that was why you went. Cynthia, when you promised to marry me, you told me you had forever done with love. You agreed that marriage was the rational coming together of two people.

CYNTHIA. I know, I know!

PHILIP. Do you believe that now?

CYNTHIA. I don't know what I believe. My brain is in a whirl! But, Philip, I am beginning to be—I'm afraid—yes, I am afraid that one can't just select a great and good man [*Indicating him.*] and say: I will be happy with him.

PHILIP. [*With complacent dignity.*] I don't see why not. You must assuredly do one or the other: You must either let your heart choose or your head select.

CYNTHIA. [*Gravely.*] No, there's a third scheme: Sir Wilfrid explained the theory to me. A woman should marry whenever she has a whim for the man, and then leave the rest to the man. Do you see?

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PHILIP. [*Furious.*] Do I see? Have I ever seen any thing else? Marry for whim! That's the New York idea of marriage.

CYNTHIA. [*Observing cynically.*] New York ought to know.

PHILIP. Marry for whim and leave the rest to the divorce court! Marry for whim and leave the rest to the man. That was the former Mrs. Phillimore's idea. Only she spelled "whim" differently; she omitted the "w." [*He rises in his anger.*] And now you—you take up with this preposterous— [CYNTHIA *moves uneasily.*] But, nonsense! It's impossible! A woman of your mental calibre—No. Some obscure, primitive, female *feeling* is at work corrupting your better judgment! What is it you *feel*?

CYNTHIA. Philip, you never felt like a fool, did you?

PHILIP. No, never.

CYNTHIA. [*Politely.*] I thought not.

PHILIP. No, but whatever your feelings, I conclude you are ready to marry me.

CYNTHIA. [*Uneasy.*] Of course, I came back. I am here, am I not?

PHILIP. You are ready to marry me?

CYNTHIA. [*Twisting in the coils.*] But you haven't had your dinner.

PHILIP. Do I understand you refuse?

CYNTHIA. Couldn't we defer—?

PHILIP. You refuse?

CYNTHIA. [*Desperately thinking of an escape from her promise, and finding none.*] No, I said I'd marry you. I'm a woman of my word. I will.

PHILIP. [*Triumphant.*] Ah! Very good, then. Run to your room. [CYNTHIA *turns to* PHILIP.] Throw something over you. In a half hour I'll expect you here! And Cynthia, my dear, remember! I cannot cuculate like a wood-pigeon, but—I esteem you!

CYNTHIA. [*Hopelessly.*] I think I'll go, Philip.

PHILIP. I may not be fitted to play the love-bird, but—

CYNTHIA. [*Spiritlessly.*] I think I'll go, Philip.

PHILIP. I'll expect you,—in half an hour.

CYNTHIA. [*With leaden despair.*] Yes.

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PHILIP. And, Cynthia, don't think any more about that fellow, Cates-Darby.

CYNTHIA. [*Amazed and disgusted by his misapprehension.*] No. [*As CYNTHIA leaves, THOMAS comes in from the opposite door.*]

PHILIP. [*Not seeing THOMAS, and clumsily defiant.*] And if I had that fellow, Cates-Darby, in the dock—!

THOMAS. Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby.

PHILIP. Sir what—what—wh—who? [SIR WILFRID *enters in evening dress. PHILIP looks SIR WILFRID in the face and speaks to THOMAS.*] Tell Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby I am not at home to him. [THOMAS *is embarrassed.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Undaunted.*] My dear Lord Eldon—

PHILIP. [*Again addressing THOMAS.*] Show the gentleman the door. [*There is a pause. SIR WILFRID, with a significant gesture, glances at the door.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Moving to the door, he examines it and returns to PHILIP.*] Eh,—I admire the door, my boy! Fine, old carved mahogany panel; but don't ask me to leave by it, for Mrs. Karslake made me promise I'd come, and that's why I'm here.

[THOMAS *does not wait for further orders.*]

PHILIP. Sir, you are—impudent—!

SIR WILFRID. [*Interrupting.*] Ah, you put it all in a nutshell, don't you?

PHILIP. To show your face here, after practically eloping with my wife!

SIR WILFRID. [*Affecting ignorance.*] When were you married?

PHILIP. We are as good as married.

SIR WILFRID. Oh, pooh, pooh! You can't tell me that grace before soup is as good as a dinner! [*He takes out his cigar-case and, in the absence of a match, enjoys a smokeless smoke.*]

PHILIP. Sir—I—demand—

SIR WILFRID. [*Calmly carrying the situation.*] Mrs. Karslake is *not* married. *That's* why I'm here. I am here for the same purpose *you* are; to ask Mrs. Karslake to be my wife.

PHILIP. Are you in your senses?

SIR WILFRID. [*Pricking his American cousin's pet vanity.*] Come, come, Judge—you Americans have no sense of humour. [*Taking a small jewel-case from his pocket.*] There's my regards for the lady—and [*Reasonably.*], if I must go, I will. Of course, I would like to see her, but—if it isn't your American custom—

THOMAS. [*Opens the door and announces.*] Mr. Karslake.

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SIR WILFRID. Oh, well, I say; if he can come, I can!

JOHN KARSLAKE, *in evening dress, comes in quickly, carrying a large and very smart bride's bouquet, which he hands to PHILIP, who stands transfixed. Because it never occurs to him to refuse it or chuck it away, PHILIP accepts the bouquet gingerly, but frees himself of it at the first available moment. JOHN walks to the centre of the room. Deep down he is feeling wounded and unhappy. But, as he knows his coming to the ceremony on whatever pretext is a social outrage, he carries it off by assuming an air of its being the most natural thing in the world. He controls the expression of his deeper emotion, but the pressure of this keeps his face grave, and he speaks with effort.*

JOHN. My compliments to the bride, Judge.

PHILIP. [*Angry.*] And you, too, have the effrontery?

SIR WILFRID. There you are!

JOHN. [*Pretending ease.*] Oh, call it friendship—

[THOMAS *leaves.*

PHILIP. [*Puts bouquet on table. Ironically.*] I suppose Mrs. Karslake—

JOHN. She wagered me I wouldn't give her away, and of course—

Throughout his stay JOHN hides the emotions he will not show behind a daring irony. Under its effects, PHILIP, on his right, walks about in a fury. SIR WILFRID, sitting down on the edge of the table, is gay and undisturbed.

PHILIP. [*Taking a step toward JOHN.*] You will oblige me—both of you—by immediately leaving—

JOHN. [*Smiling and going to PHILIP.*] Oh, come, come, Judge—suppose I *am* here? Who has a better right to attend his wife's obsequies! Certainly, I come as a mourner—for *you!*

SIR WILFRID. I say, is it the custom?

JOHN. No, no—of course it's not the custom, no. But we'll make it the custom. After all,—what's a divorced wife among friends?

PHILIP. Sir, your humour is strained!

JOHN. Humour,—Judge?

PHILIP. It is, sir, and I'll not be bantered! Your both being here is—it is—gentlemen, there is a decorum which the stars in their courses do not violate.

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JOHN. Now, Judge, never you mind what the stars do in their divorces! Get down to earth of the present day. Rufus Choate and Daniel Webster are dead. You must be modern. You must let peroration and poetry alone! Come along now. Why shouldn't I give the lady away?

SIR WILFRID. Hear! Hear! Oh, I beg your pardon!

JOHN. And why shouldn't we both be here? American marriage is a new thing. We've got to strike the pace, and the only trouble is, Judge, that the judiciary have so messed the thing up that a man can't be sure he *is* married until he's divorced. It's a sort of marry-go-round, to be sure! But let it go at that! Here we all are, and we're ready to marry my wife to you, and start her on her way to him!

PHILIP. [*Brought to a standstill.*] Good Lord! Sir, you cannot trifle with monogamy!

JOHN. Now, now, Judge, monogamy is just as extinct as knee-breeches. The new woman has a new idea, and the new idea is—well, it's just the opposite of the old Mormon one. Their idea is one man, ten wives and a hundred children. Our idea is one woman, a hundred husbands and one child.

PHILIP. Sir, this is polyandry.

JOHN. Polyandry? A hundred to one it's polyandry; and that's it, Judge! Uncle Sam has established consecutive polyandry,—but there's got to be an interval between husbands! The fact is, Judge, the modern American marriage is like a wire fence. The woman's the wire—the posts are the husbands. [*He indicates himself, and then SIR WILFRID and PHILIP.*] One—two—three! And if you cast your eye over the future you can count them, post after post, up hill, down dale, all the way to Dakota!

PHILIP. All very amusing, sir, but the fact remains—

JOHN. [*Going to PHILIP who at once moves away.*] Now, now, Judge, I like you. But you're asleep; you're living in the dark ages. You want to call up Central. "Hello, Central! Give me the present time, 1906, New York!"

SIR WILFRID. Of course you do, and—there you are!

PHILIP. [*Heavily.*] There I am not, sir! And— [*To JOHN.*] as for Mr. Karslake's ill-timed jocosity,—sir, in the future—

SIR WILFRID. Oh, hang the future!

PHILIP. I begin to hope, Sir Wilfrid, that in the future I shall have the pleasure of hanging you! [*To JOHN.*] And as to you, sir, your insensate idea of giving away your own—your former—my—your—oh! Good Lord! This is a nightmare! [*He turns to go in despair. MATTHEW, coming in, meets him, and stops him at the door.*

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MATTHEW. [*To PHILIP.*] My dear brother, Aunt Sarah Heneage refuses to give Mrs. Karslake away, unless you yourself,—eh—

PHILIP. [*As he goes out.*] No more! I'll attend to the matter! [*The CHOIR BOYS are heard practising in the next room.*

MATTHEW. [*Mopping his brow.*] How do you both do? My aunt has made me very warm. [*Ringing the bell.*] You hear our choir practising—sweet angel boys! H'm! H'm! Some of the family will not be present. I am very fond of you, Mr. Karslake, and I think it admirably Christian of you to have waived your—eh—your—eh—that is, now that I look at it more narrowly, let me say, that in the excitement of pleasurable anticipation, I forgot, Karslake, that your presence might occasion

remark— [THOMAS *responds to his ring.*] Thomas! I left, in the hall, a small hand-bag or satchel containing my surplice.

THOMAS. Yes, sir. Ahem!

MATTHEW. You must really find the hand-bag at once.

[THOMAS *turns to go, when he stops startled.*

THOMAS. Yes, sir. [Announcing in consternation.] Mrs. Vida Phillimore. [VIDA PHILLIMORE, in full evening dress, steps gently up to MATTHEW.

MATTHEW. [Always piously serene.] Ah, my dear child! Now this is just as it should be! That is, eh— [He walks to the centre of the room with her, VIDA, the while, pointedly disregarding SIR WILFRID.] That is, when I come to think of it—your presence might be deemed inauspicious.

VIDA. But, my dear Matthew,—I had to come. [Aside to him.] I have a reason for being here.

[THOMAS, who has left the room, again appears.

MATTHEW. [With a helpless gesture.] But, my dear child—

THOMAS. [With sympathetic intention.] Sir, Mr. Phillimore wishes to have your assistance, sir—with Miss Heneage *immediately!*

MATTHEW. Ah! [To VIDA.] One moment! I'll return. [To THOMAS.] Have you found the bag with my surplice?

He goes out with THOMAS, speaking. SIR WILFRID moves at once to VIDA. JOHN, moving to a better position, watches the door.

SIR WILFRID. [To VIDA.] You're just the person I most want to see!

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VIDA. [With affected iciness.] Oh, no, Sir Wilfrid, Cynthia isn't here yet! [She moves to the table, and JOHN, his eyes on the door, coming toward her, she speaks to him with obvious sweetness.] Jack, dear, I never was so ravished to see any one.

SIR WILFRID. [Taken aback.] By Jove!

VIDA. [Very sweet.] I knew I should find you here!

JOHN. [Annoyed but civil.] Now don't do that!

VIDA. [Sweeter than ever.] Jack! [They sit down.

JOHN. [Civil but plain spoken.] Don't do it!

VIDA. [In a voice dripping with honey.] Do what, Jack?

JOHN. Touch me with your voice! I have troubles enough of my own. [He sits not far from her; the table between them.

VIDA. And I know who your troubles are! Cynthia!

[From this moment VIDA abandons JOHN as an object of the chase and works him into her other game.

JOHN. I hate her. I don't know why I came.

VIDA. You came, dear, because you couldn't stay away—you're in love with her.

JOHN. All right, Vida, what I feel may be *love*—but all I can say is, if I could get even with Cynthia Karlake—

VIDA. You can, dear—it's as easy as powdering one's face; all you have to do is to be too nice to me!

JOHN. [Looking at her inquiringly.] Eh!

VIDA. Don't you realize she's jealous of you? Why did she come to my house this morning? She's jealous—and all you have to do—

JOHN. If I can make her wince, I'll make love to you till the Heavenly cows come home!

VIDA. Well, you see, my dear, if you make love to me it will [Delicately indicating SIR WILFRID.] cut both ways at once!

JOHN. Eh,—what! Not Cates-Darby? [Starting.] Is that Cynthia?

VIDA. Now don't get rattled and forget to make love to me.

JOHN. I've got the jumps. [Trying to follow her instructions.] Vida, I adore you.

VIDA. Oh, you must be more convincing; that won't do at all.

JOHN. [Listening.] Is that she now?

[MATTHEW comes in and passes to the inner room.

VIDA. It's Matthew. And, Jack, dear, you'd best get the hang of it before Cynthia comes. You might tell me all about your divorce. That's a sympathetic subject. Were you able to undermine it? [Pg 678]

JOHN. No. I've got a wire from my lawyer this morning. The divorce holds. She's a free woman. She can marry whom she likes. [*The organ is heard, very softly played.*] Is that Cynthia? [*He rises quickly.*]

VIDA. It's the organ!

JOHN. [*Overwhelmingly excited.*] By George! I should never have come! I think I'll go.

[*He makes a movement toward the door.*]

VIDA. [*Rises and follows him remonstratingly.*] When I need you?

JOHN. I can't stand it.

VIDA. Oh, but, Jack—

JOHN. Good-night!

VIDA. I feel quite ill. [*Seeing that she must play her last card to keep him, pretends to faintness; sways and falls into his arms.*] Oh!

JOHN. [*In a rage, but beaten.*] I believe you're putting up a fake.

The organ swells as CYNTHIA enters sweepingly, dressed in full evening dress for the wedding ceremony. JOHN, not knowing what to do, keeps his arms about VIDA as a horrid necessity.

CYNTHIA. [*Speaking as she comes in, to MATTHEW.*] Here I am. Ridiculous to make it a conventional thing, you know. Come in on the swell of the music, and all that, just as if I'd never been married before. Where's Philip? [*She looks for PHILIP and sees JOHN with VIDA in his arms. She stops short.*]

JOHN. [*Uneasy and embarrassed.*] A glass of water! I beg your pardon, Mrs. Karslake— [*The organ plays on.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Ironical and calm.*] Vida!

JOHN. She has fainted.

CYNTHIA. [*Cynically.*] Fainted? [*Without pausing.*] Dear, dear, dear, terrible! So she has. [*SIR WILFRID takes the flowers from a vase and prepares to sprinkle VIDA's forehead with the water it contains.*] No, no, not her forehead, Sir Wilfrid, her frock! Sprinkle her best Paquin! If it's a real faint, she will not come to!

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VIDA. [*Coming quickly to her senses as her Paris importation is about to suffer.*] I almost fainted.

CYNTHIA. Almost!

VIDA. [*Using the stock phrase as a matter of course, and reviving rapidly.*] Where am I? [*JOHN glances at CYNTHIA sharply.*] Oh, the bride! I beg every one's pardon. Cynthia, at a crisis like this, I simply couldn't stay away from Philip!

CYNTHIA. Stay away from Philip? [*JOHN and CYNTHIA exchange glances.*]

VIDA. Your arm, Jack; and lead me where there is air.

JOHN and VIDA go into the further room. The organ stops. SIR WILFRID and CYNTHIA are practically alone in the room. JOHN and VIDA are barely within sight. He is first seen to take her fan and give her air; then to pick up a book and read to her.

SIR WILFRID. I've come back.

CYNTHIA. [*To SIR WILFRID.*] Asks for air and goes to the greenhouse. [*CYNTHIA crosses the room and SIR WILFRID offers her a seat.*] I know why you are here. It's that intoxicating little whim you suppose me to have for you. My regrets! But the whim's gone flat! Yes, yes, my gasoline days are over. I'm going to be garaged for good. However, I'm glad you're here; you take the edge off—

SIR WILFRID. Mr. Phillimore?

CYNTHIA. [*Sharply.*] No, Karslake. I'm just waiting to say the words [*THOMAS comes in unnoticed.*] "love, honour and obey" to Phillimore— [*Looking back.*] and at Karslake! [*Seeing THOMAS.*] What is it? Mr. Phillimore?

THOMAS. Mr. Phillimore will be down in a few minutes, ma'am. He's very sorry, ma'am [*Lowering his voice and coming nearer to CYNTHIA, mindful of the respectabilities*], but there's a button off his waistcoat.

CYNTHIA. [*Rising. With irony.*] Button off his waistcoat!

[*THOMAS goes out.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Delightedly.*] Ah! So much the better for me. [*CYNTHIA looks into the other room.*] Now, then, never mind those two! [*CYNTHIA moves restlessly.*] Sit down.

CYNTHIA. I can't.

SIR WILFRID. You're as nervous as—

CYNTHIA. Nervous! Of course I'm nervous! So would you be nervous if you'd had a runaway and smash up, and you were going to try it again. [*She is unable to take her eyes from VIDA and JOHN, and SIR WILFRID, noting this, grows uneasy.*] And if some one doesn't do away with those calla lilies—the odor makes me faint! [*SIR WILFRID moves.*] No, it's not the lilies! It's the orange blossoms!

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SIR WILFRID. Orange blossoms.

CYNTHIA. The flowers that grow on the tree that hangs over the abyss! [*SIR WILFRID promptly confiscates the vase of orange blossoms.*] They smell of six o'clock in the evening. When Philip's fallen asleep, and little boys are crying the winners outside, and I'm crying inside, and dying inside and outside and everywhere.

SIR WILFRID. [*Returning to her side.*] Sorry to disappoint you. They're artificial. [*CYNTHIA shrugs her shoulders.*] That's it! They're emblematic of artificial domesticity! And I'm here to help you balk it. [*He sits down and CYNTHIA half rises and looks toward JOHN and VIDA.*] Keep still now, I've a lot to say to you. Stop looking—

CYNTHIA. Do you think I can listen to you make love to me when the man who—who—whom I most despise in all the world, is reading poetry to the woman who—who got me into the fix I'm in!

SIR WILFRID. [*Leaning over her chair.*] What do you want to look at 'em for? [*CYNTHIA moves.*] Let 'em be and listen to me! Sit down; for damme, I'm determined.

CYNTHIA. [*Now at the table and half to herself.*] I won't look at them! I won't think of them. Beasts! [*SIR WILFRID interposes between her and her view of JOHN. THOMAS opens the door and walks in.*]

SIR WILFRID. Now, then— [*He sits down.*]

CYNTHIA. Those two *here!* It's just as if Adam and Eve should invite the snake to their golden wedding. [*Seeing THOMAS.*] What is it, what's the matter?

THOMAS. Mr. Phillimore's excuses, ma'am. In a very short time— [*THOMAS goes out.*]

SIR WILFRID. I'm on to you! You hoped for more buttons!

CYNTHIA. I'm dying of the heat; fan me.

[*SIR WILFRID fans CYNTHIA.*]

SIR WILFRID. Heat! No! You're dying because you're ignorin' nature. Certainly you are! You're marryin' Phillimore! [*CYNTHIA appears faint.*] Can't ignore nature, Mrs. Karlake. Yes, you are; you're forcin' your feelin's. [*CYNTHIA glances at him.*] And what you want to do is to let yourself go a bit—up anchor and sit tight! I'm no seaman, but that's the idea! [*CYNTHIA moves and shakes her head.*] So just throw the reins on nature's neck, jump this fellow Phillimore and marry me!

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[*He leans toward CYNTHIA.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Naturally, but with irritation.*] You propose to me here, at a moment like this? When I'm on the last lap—just in sight of the goal—the gallows—the halter—the altar, I don't know what its name is! No, I won't have you! [*Looking toward KARSLAKE and VIDA.*] And I won't have you stand near me! I won't have you talking to me in a low tone! [*Her eyes glued on JOHN and VIDA.*] Stand over there—stand where you are.

SIR WILFRID. I say—

CYNTHIA. I can hear you—I'm listening!

SIR WILFRID. Well, don't look so hurried and worried. You've got buttons and buttons of time. And now my offer. You haven't yet said you would—

CYNTHIA. Marry you? I don't even know you!

SIR WILFRID. [*Feeling sure of being accepted.*] Oh,—tell you all about myself. I'm no duke in a pickle o' debts, d'ye see? I can marry where I like. Some o' my countrymen are rotters, ye know. They'd marry a monkey, if poppa-up-the-tree had a corner in cocoanuts! And they do marry some queer ones, y' know. [*CYNTHIA looks beyond him, exclaims and turns. SIR WILFRID turns.*]

CYNTHIA. Do they?

SIR WILFRID. Oh, rather. That's what's giving your heiresses such a bad name lately. If a fellah's in debt he can't pick and choose, and then he swears that American gals are awfully fine lookers, but they're no good when it comes to continuin' the race! Fair dolls in the drawin'-room, but no good in the nursery.

CYNTHIA. [*Thinking of JOHN and VIDA and nothing else.*] I can see Vida in the nursery.

SIR WILFRID. You understand when you want a brood mare, you don't choose a Kentucky mule.

CYNTHIA. I think I see one.

SIR WILFRID. Well, that's what they're saying over there. They say your gals run to talk [*He plainly remembers VIDA's volubility.*] and I have seen gals here that would chat life into a wooden Indian! That's what you Americans call being clever.—All brains and no stuffin'! In fact, some of your American gals are the nicest boys I ever met.

CYNTHIA. So that's what you think?

SIR WILFRID. Not a bit what *I* think—what my countrymen think!

CYNTHIA. Why are you telling me?

SIR WILFRID. Oh, just explaining my character. I'm the sort that can pick and choose—and what I want is heart.

CYNTHIA. [*VIDA and JOHN ever in mind.*] No more heart than a dragon-fly! [*The organ begins to play softly.*]

SIR WILFRID. That's it, dragon-fly. Cold as stone and never stops buzzing about and showin' off her colours. It's that American dragon-fly girl that I'm afraid of, because, d'ye see, I don't know what an American expects when he marries; yes, but you're not listening!

CYNTHIA. I am listening. I am!

SIR WILFRID. [*Speaking directly to her.*] An Englishman, ye see, when he marries expects three things: love, obedience, and five children.

CYNTHIA. Three things! I make it seven!

SIR WILFRID. Yes, my dear, but the point is, will you be mistress of Traynham?

CYNTHIA. [*Who has only half listened to him.*] No, Sir Wilfrid, thank you, I won't. [*She turns to see JOHN walk across the drawing-room with VIDA, and apparently absorbed in what she is saying.*] It's outrageous!

SIR WILFRID. Eh? Why you're cryin'?

CYNTHIA. [*Almost sobbing.*] I am not.

SIR WILFRID. You're not crying because you're in love with me?

CYNTHIA. I'm not crying—or if I am, I'm crying because I love my country. It's a disgrace to America—cast-off husbands and wives getting together in a parlour and playing tag under a palm-tree. [*JOHN, with intention and determined to stab CYNTHIA, kisses VIDA's hand.*]

SIR WILFRID. Eh! Oh! I'm damned! [*To CYNTHIA.*] What do you think that means?

CYNTHIA. I don't doubt it means a wedding here, at once—after mine! [*VIDA and JOHN leave the drawing-room and walk slowly toward them.*]

VIDA. [*Affecting an impossible intimacy to wound CYNTHIA and tantalize SIR WILFRID.*] Hush, Jack—I'd much rather no one should know anything about it until it's all over!

CYNTHIA. [*Starting and looking at SIR WILFRID.*] What did I tell you?

VIDA. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Oh, my dear, he's asked me to champagne and lobster at *your* house—his house! Matthew is coming! [*CYNTHIA starts, but controls herself.*] And you're to come, Sir Wilfrid. [*Intending to convey the idea of a sudden marriage ceremony.*] Of course, my dear, I would like to wait for your wedding, but something rather—rather important to me is to take place, and I know you'll excuse me. [*The organ stops.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*Piqued at being forgotten.*] All very neat, but you haven't given me a chance, even.

VIDA. Chance? You're not serious?

SIR WILFRID. I am!

VIDA. [*Striking while the iron is hot.*] I'll give you a minute to offer yourself.

SIR WILFRID. Eh?

VIDA. Sixty seconds from now.

SIR WILFRID. [*Uncertain.*] There's such a thing as bein' silly.

VIDA. [*Calm and determined.*] Fifty seconds left.

SIR WILFRID. I take you—count fair. [*He hands her his watch and goes to where CYNTHIA stands.*] I say, Mrs. Karslake—

CYNTHIA. [*Overwhelmed with grief and emotion.*] They're engaged; they're going to be married tonight, over champagne and lobster at my house!

SIR WILFRID. Will you consider your—

CYNTHIA. [*Hastily, to get rid of him.*] No, no, no, no! Thank you, Sir Wilfrid, I will not.

SIR WILFRID. [*Calm, and not to be laid low.*] Thanks awfully. [*CYNTHIA walks away. Returning to*

VIDA.] Mrs. Phillimore—

VIDA. [*Returning his watch.*] Too late! [*To KARSLAKE.*] Jack, dear, we must be off.

SIR WILFRID. [*Standing and making a general appeal for information.*] I say, is it the custom for American girls—that sixty seconds or too late? Look here! Not a bit too late. I'll take you around to Jack Karslake's, and I'm going to ask you the same old question again, you know. [*To VIDA.*] By Jove, you know in your country it's the pace that kills.

[SIR WILFRID *follows VIDA out the door.*

JOHN. [*Gravely to CYNTHIA, who has walked away.*] Good-night, Mrs. Karslake, I'm going; I'm sorry I came.

CYNTHIA. Sorry? Why are you sorry? [JOHN *looks at her; she winces a little.*] You've got what you wanted. [*After a pause.*] I wouldn't mind your marrying Vida—

JOHN. [*Gravely.*] Oh, wouldn't you?

CYNTHIA. But I don't think you showed good taste in engaging yourselves *here*.

JOHN. Of course, I should have preferred a garden of roses and plenty of twilight.

CYNTHIA. [*Rushing into speech.*] I'll tell you what you *have* done—you've thrown yourself away! A woman like that! No head, no heart! All languor and loose—loose frocks—she's the typical, worst thing America can do! She's the regular American marriage worm!

JOHN. I have known others—

CYNTHIA. [*Quickly.*] Not me. I'm not a patch on that woman. Do you know anything about her life? Do you know the things she did to Philip? Kept him up every night of his life—forty days out of every thirty—and then, without his knowing it, put brandy in his coffee to make him lively at breakfast.

JOHN. [*Banteringly.*] I begin to think she is just the woman—

CYNTHIA. [*Unable to quiet her jealousy.*] She is *not* the woman for *you*! A man with your bad temper—your airs of authority—your assumption of—of—everything. What you need is a good, old-fashioned, bread-poultice woman!

[CYNTHIA *comes to a full stop and faces him.*

JOHN. [*Sharply.*] Can't say I've had any experience of the good old-fashioned bread-poultice.

CYNTHIA. I don't care what you say! If you marry Vida Phillimore—you sha'n't do it. [*Tears of rage choking her.*] No, I liked your father and, for *his* sake, I'll see that his son doesn't make a donkey of himself a second time.

JOHN. [*Too angry to be amused.*] Oh, I thought I was divorced. I begin to feel as if I had you on my hands still.

CYNTHIA. You have! You shall have! If you attempt to marry her, I'll follow you—and I'll find her—I'll tell Vida— [*He turns to her.*] I will. I'll tell Vida just what sort of a dance you led me.

JOHN. [*Quickly on her last word but speaking gravely.*] Indeed! Will you? And why do you care what happens to me?

CYNTHIA. [*Startled by his tone.*] I—I—ah—

JOHN. [*Insistently and with a faint hope.*] *Why do you care?*

CYNTHIA. I don't. Not in your sense—

JOHN. How dare you then pretend—

CYNTHIA. I don't pretend.

JOHN. [*Interrupting her; proud, serious and strong.*] How dare you look me in the face with the eyes that I once kissed, and pretend the least regard for me? [CYNTHIA *recoils and looks away. Her own feelings are revealed to her clearly for the first time.*] I begin to understand our American women now. Fire-flies—and the fire they gleam with is so cold that a midge couldn't warm his heart at it, let alone a man. You're not of the same race as a man! You married me for nothing, divorced me for nothing, because you *are* nothing!

CYNTHIA. [*Wounded to the heart.*] Jack! What are you saying?

JOHN. [*With unrestrained emotion.*] What,—you feigning an interest in me, feigning a lie—and in five minutes— [*With a gesture, indicating the altar.*] Oh, you've taught me the trick of your sex—you're the woman who's not a woman!

CYNTHIA. [*Weakly.*] You're saying terrible things to me.

JOHN. [*Low and with intensity.*] You haven't been divorced from me long enough to forget—what you should be ashamed to remember.

CYNTHIA. [*Unable to face him and pretending not to understand him.*] I don't know what you

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mean?

JOHN. [*More forcibly and with manly emotion.*] You're not able to forget me! You know you're not able to forget me; ask yourself if you are able to forget me, and when your heart, such as it is, answers "no," then— [*The organ is plainly heard.*] Well, then, prance gaily up to the altar and marry that, if you can!

He abruptly quits the room and CYNTHIA, moving to an armchair, sinks into it, trembling. MATTHEW comes in and is joined by MISS HENEAGE and PHILIP. They do not see CYNTHIA buried deeply in her chair. Accordingly, MISS HENEAGE moves over to the sofa and waits. They are all dressed for an evening reception and PHILIP is in the traditional bridegroom's rig.

MATTHEW. [*As he enters.*] I am sure you will do your part, Sarah—in a spirit of Christian decorum. [*To PHILIP.*] It was impossible to find my surplice, Philip, but the more informal the better. [Pg 686]

PHILIP. [*With pompous responsibility.*] Where's Cynthia?

[*MATTHEW gives a glance around the room.*

MATTHEW. Ah, here's the choir! [*He moves forward to meet it. CHOIR BOYS come in very orderly; divide and take their places, an even number on each side of the altar of flowers. MATTHEW vaguely superintends. PHILIP gets in the way of the bell and moves out of the way. THOMAS comes in.*] Thomas, I directed you—One moment, if you please. [*He indicates the tables and chairs which THOMAS hastens to push against the wall.*

PHILIP. [*Walking forward and looking around him.*] Where's Cynthia? [*CYNTHIA rises, and, at the movement, PHILIP sees her and moves toward her. The organ grows suddenly silent.*

CYNTHIA. [*Faintly.*] Here I am.

[*MATTHEW comes down. Organ plays softly.*

MATTHEW. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Ah, my very dear Cynthia, I knew there was something. Let me tell you the words of the hymn I have chosen:

"Enduring love; sweet end of strife!
Oh, bless this happy man and wife!"

I'm afraid you feel—eh—eh!

CYNTHIA. [*Desperately calm.*] I feel awfully queer—I think I need a scotch.

Organ stops. PHILIP remains uneasily at a little distance. MRS. PHILLIMORE and GRACE enter back slowly, as cheerfully as if they were going to hear the funeral service read. They remain near the doorway.

MATTHEW. Really, my dear, in the pomp and vanity—I mean—ceremony of this—this unique occasion, there should be sufficient exhilaration.

CYNTHIA. [*With extraordinary control.*] But there isn't!

[*Feeling weak, she sits down.*

MATTHEW. I don't think my Bishop would approve of—eh—anything *before!*

CYNTHIA. [*Too agitated to know how much she is moved.*] I feel very queer. [Pg 687]

MATTHEW. [*Piously sure that everything is for the best.*] My dear child—

CYNTHIA. However, I suppose there's nothing for it—now—but—to—to—

MATTHEW. Courage!

CYNTHIA. [*Desperate and with a sudden explosion.*] Oh, don't speak to me. I feel as if I'd been eating gunpowder, and the very first word of the wedding service would set it off!

MATTHEW. My dear, your indisposition is the voice of nature. [*CYNTHIA speaks more rapidly and with growing excitement. MATTHEW makes a movement toward the CHOIR BOYS.*

CYNTHIA. Ah,—that's it—nature! [*MATTHEW shakes his head.*] I've a great mind to throw the reins on nature's neck.

PHILIP. Matthew! [*He moves to take his stand for the ceremony.*

MATTHEW. [*Looks at PHILIP. To CYNTHIA.*] Philip is ready. [*PHILIP comes forward and the organ plays the wedding march.*

CYNTHIA. [*To herself, as if at bay.*] Ready? Ready? Ready?

MATTHEW. Cynthia, you will take Miss Heneage's arm. [*MISS HENEAGE moves stiffly nearer to the table.*] Sarah! [*He waves MISS HENEAGE in the direction of CYNTHIA, at which she advances a joyless step or two. MATTHEW goes over to give the choir a low direction.*] Now please don't forget, my boys. When I raise my hands so, you begin, "Enduring love, sweet end of strife," etc. [*CYNTHIA has risen. On the table by which she stands is her long lace cloak. MATTHEW assumes sacerdotal*

importance and takes his position inside the altar of flowers.] Ahem! Philip! [*He signs to PHILIP to take his position.*] Sarah! [*CYNTHIA breathes fast, and supports herself against the table. MISS HENEAGE, with the silent air of a martyr, goes toward her and stands for a moment looking at her.*] The ceremony will now begin.

The organ plays Mendelssohn's wedding march. CYNTHIA turns and faces MISS HENEAGE. MISS HENEAGE slowly reaches CYNTHIA and extends her hand in her readiness to lead the bride to the altar.

MISS HENEAGE. Mrs. Karslake!

PHILIP. Ahem! [*MATTHEW walks forward two or three steps. CYNTHIA stands as if turned to stone.*]

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MATTHEW. My dear Cynthia. I request you—to take your place. [*CYNTHIA moves one or two steps as if to go up to the altar. She takes MISS HENEAGE'S hand and slowly they walk toward MATTHEW.*] Your husband to be—is ready, the ring is in my pocket. I have only to ask you the—eh—necessary questions,—and—eh—all will be blissfully over in a moment.

[*The organ grows louder.*]

CYNTHIA. [*At this moment, just as she reaches PHILIP, stops, faces round, looks him, MATTHEW, and the rest in the face, and cries out in despair.*] Thomas! Call a hansom! [*THOMAS goes out, leaving the door open. MISS HENEAGE crosses the room quickly; MRS. PHILLIMORE, shocked into action, rises. CYNTHIA catches up her cloak from the table. PHILIP turns and CYNTHIA comes forward and stops.*] I can't, Philip—I can't. [*Whistle of hansom is heard off; the organ stops.*] It is simply a case of throwing the reins on nature's neck—up anchor—and sit tight! [*MATTHEW moves to CYNTHIA.*] Matthew, don't come near me! Yes, yes, I distrust you. It's your business, and you'd marry me if you could.

PHILIP. [*Watching her in dismay as she throws on her cloak.*] Where are you going?

CYNTHIA. I'm going to Jack.

PHILIP. What for?

CYNTHIA. To stop his marrying Vida. I'm blowing a hurricane inside, a horrible, happy hurricane! I know myself—I know what's the matter with me. If I married you and Miss Heneage—what's the use of talking about it—he mustn't marry that woman. He sha'n't. [*CYNTHIA has now all her wraps on and walks toward the door rapidly. To PHILIP.*] Sorry! So long! Good-night and see you later.

Reaching the door, she goes out in blind haste and without further ceremony. MATTHEW, in absolute amazement, throws up his arms. PHILIP is rigid. MRS. PHILLIMORE sinks into a chair. MISS HENEAGE stands supercilious and unmoved. GRACE, the same. The choir, at MATTHEW'S gesture, mistakes it for the concerted signal, and bursts lustily into the Epithalamis:

"Enduring love—sweet end of strife!
Oh, bless this happy man and wife!"

CURTAIN.

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ACT IV.

SCENE. *The scene is laid in JOHN KARSLAKE'S study and smoking-room. There is a bay window on the left. A door on the left leads to stairs and the front of the house, while a door at the back leads to the dining-room. A fireplace and a mantel are on the right. A bookcase contains law and sporting books. On the wall is a full-length portrait of CYNTHIA. Nothing of this portrait is seen by audience except the gilt frame and a space of canvas. A large table with writing materials is littered over with law books, sporting books, papers, pipes, crops, a pair of spurs, &c. A wedding ring lies on it. There are three very low easy-chairs. The general appearance of the room is extremely gay and garish in colour. It has the easy confusion of a man's room. There is a small table on which, lying open, is a woman's sewing-basket, and, beside it, a piece of rich fancy work, as if a lady had just risen from sewing. Laid on the further end of it are a lady's gloves. On a chair-back is a lady's hat. It is a half hour later than the close of Act III. Curtains are drawn over the window. A lamp on the table is lighted, as are, too, the various electric lights. One chair is conspicuously standing on its head.*

NOGAM *is busy at the larger table. The door into the dining-room is half open.*

SIR WILFRID. [*Coming in from the dining-room.*] Eh—what did you say your name was?

NOGAM. Nogam, sir.

SIR WILFRID. Nogam? I've been here thirty minutes. Where are the cigars? [*NOGAM motions to a small table near the entrance door.*] Thank you. Nogam, Mr. Karslake was to have followed us

here, immediately. [*He lights a cigar.*]

NOGAM. Mr. Karslake just now 'phoned from his club [SIR WILFRID *walks toward the front of the room.*], and he's on his way home, sir.

SIR WILFRID. Nogam, why is that chair upside down?

NOGAM. Our orders, sir.

VIDA. [*Speaking as she comes in.*] Oh, Wilfrid! [SIR WILFRID *turns. VIDA coming slowly toward him.*] I can't be left longer alone with the lobster! He reminds me too much of Phillimore!

SIR WILFRID. Karslake's coming; stopped at his club on the way! [*To NOGAM.*] You haven't heard anything of Mrs. Karslake—?

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NOGAM. [*Surprised.*] No, sir!

SIR WILFRID. [*In an aside to VIDA, as they move right to appear to be out of NOGAM's hearing.*] Deucedly odd, ye know—for the Reverend Matthew declared she left Phillimore's house before *he* did,—and she told them she was coming here!

[NOGAM *evidently takes this in.*]

VIDA. Oh, she'll turn up.

SIR WILFRID. Yes, but I don't see how the Reverend Phillimore had the time to get here and make us man and wife, don't y' know—

VIDA. Oh, Matthew had a fast horse and Cynthia a slow one—or she's a woman and changed her mind! Perhaps she's gone back and married Phillimore. And besides, dear, Matthew wasn't in the house four minutes and a half; only just long enough to hoop the hoop. [*She twirls her new wedding ring gently about her finger.*] Wasn't it lucky he had a ring in his pocket?

SIR WILFRID. Rather.

VIDA. And are you aware, dear, that Phillimore bought and intended it for Cynthia? Do come [*Going toward the door through which she has just entered.*], I'm desperately hungry! Whenever I'm married that's the effect it has! [VIDA *goes out and SIR WILFRID, following, stops to talk to NOGAM.*]

SIR WILFRID. We'll give Mr. Karslake ten minutes, Nogam. If he does not come then, you might serve supper.

[*He joins VIDA.*]

NOGAM. [*To SIR WILFRID.*] Yes, sir. [*The outside door opens and FIDDLER walks in.*]

FIDDLER. [*Easy and business-like.*] Hello, Nogam, where's the guv'nor? That mare's off her oats, and I've got to see him.

NOGAM. He'll soon be here.

FIDDLER. Who was the parson I met leaving the house?

NOGAM. [*Whispering.*] Sir Wilfrid and Mrs. Phillimore have a date with the guv'nor in the dining-room, and the reverend gentleman— [*He makes a gesture as of giving an ecclesiastical blessing.*]

FIDDLER. [*Amazed.*] He hasn't spliced them? [NOGAM *assents.*] He has? They're married? Never saw a parson could resist it!

NOGAM. Yes, but I've got another piece of news for you. Who do you think the Rev. Phillimore expected to find *here*?

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FIDDLER. [*Proud of having the knowledge.*] Mrs. Karslake? I saw her headed this way in a hansom with a balky horse only a minute ago. If she hoped to be in at the finish—

[*Fiddler is about to set the chair on its legs.*]

NOGAM. [*Quickly.*] Mr. Fiddler, sir, please to let it alone.

FIDDLER. [*Putting the chair down in surprise.*] Does it live on its blooming head?

NOGAM. Don't you remember? *She* threw it on its head when she left here, and he won't have it up. Ah, that's it—hat, sewing-basket and all,—the whole rig is to remain as it was when she handed him his knock-out. [*A bell rings outside.*]

FIDDLER. There's the guv'nor—I hear him!

NOGAM. I'll serve the supper. [*Taking a letter from his pocket and putting it on the mantel.*] Mr. Fiddler, would you mind giving this to the guv'nor? It's from his lawyer—his lawyer couldn't find him and left it with me. He said it was very important. [*The bell rings again. Speaking from the door to SIR WILFRID.*] I'm coming, sir!

NOGAM *goes out, shutting the door. JOHN KARSLAKE comes in. His hat is pushed over his eyes; his hands are buried in his pockets, and his appearance generally is one of weariness and utter discouragement. He walks into the room slowly and heavily.*

He sees FIDDLER, who salutes, forgetting the letter. JOHN slowly sinks into the arm-chair near his study table.

JOHN. [*As he walks to his chair.*] Hello, Fiddler! [*After a pause, JOHN throws himself into a chair, keeping his hat on. He throws down his gloves, sighing.*

FIDDLER. Came in to see you, sir, about Cynthia K.

JOHN. [*Drearily.*] Damn Cynthia K!—

FIDDLER. Couldn't have a word with you?

JOHN. [*Grumpy.*] No!

FIDDLER. Yes, sir.

JOHN. Fiddler.

FIDDLER. Yes, sir.

JOHN. Mrs. Karlake— [FIDDLER *nods.*] You used to say she was our mascot?

FIDDLER. Yes, sir.

JOHN. Well, she's just married herself to a—a sort of a man—

FIDDLER. Sorry to hear it, sir.

JOHN. Well, Fiddler, between you and me, we're a pair of idiots.

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FIDDLER. Yes, sir!

JOHN. And now it's too late!

FIDDLER. Yes, sir—oh, beg your pardon, sir—your lawyer left a letter. [JOHN *takes letter; opens it and reads it, indifferently at first.*

JOHN. [*As he opens the letter.*] What's he got to say, more than what his wire said?—Eh— [*Dumbfounded as he reads.*] what?—Will explain.—Error in wording of telegram.—Call me up.— [*Turning quickly to the telephone.*] The man can't mean that she's still—Hello! Hello! [JOHN *listens.*

FIDDLER. Would like to have a word with you, sir—

JOHN. Hello, Central!

FIDDLER. That mare—

JOHN. [*Consulting the letter, and speaking into the 'phone.*] 33246a 38! Did you get it?

FIDDLER. That mare, sir, she's got a touch of malaria—

JOHN. [*At the 'phone.*] Hello, Central—33246a—38!—Clayton Osgood—yes, yes, and say, Central—get a move on you!

FIDDLER. If you think well of it, sir, I'll give her a tonic—

JOHN. [*Still at the 'phone.*] Hello! Yes—yes—Jack Karlake. Is that you, Clayton? Yes—yes—well—

FIDDLER. Or if you like, sir, I'll give her—

JOHN. [*Turning on FIDDLER.*] Shut up! [*To 'phone.*] What was that? Not you—not you—a technical error? You mean to say that Mrs. Karlake is still—my—Hold the wire, Central—get off the wire! Get off the wire! Is that you, Clayton? Yes, yes—she and I are still—I got it! Good-bye! [*He hangs up the receiver; falls back into a chair. For a moment he is overcome. He takes up telephone book.*

FIDDLER. All very well, Mr. Karlake, but I must know if I'm to give her—

JOHN. [*Turning over the leaves of the telephone book in hot haste.*] What's Phillimore's number?

FIDDLER. If you've no objections, I think I'll give her a—

JOHN. L—M—N—O—P—It's too late! She's married by this! Married!—and—my God—I—I am the cause. Phillimore—

FIDDLER. I'll give her—

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JOHN. Give her wheatina!—give her grape-nuts—give her away! [FIDDLER, *biding his time, walks toward the window.*] Only be quiet! Phillimore!

[SIR WILFRID *comes in.*

SIR WILFRID. Hello! We'd almost given you up!

JOHN. [*In his agitation unable to find Phillimore's number.*] Just a moment! I'm trying to get Phillimore on the 'phone to—to tell Mrs. Karlake—

SIR WILFRID. No good, my boy—she's on her way here! [JOHN *drops the book and looks up dumbfounded.*] The Reverend Matthew was here, y' see—and he said—

JOHN. [*Rising, turns.*] Mrs. Karslake is coming here? [SIR WILFRID *nods.*] To this house? Here?

SIR WILFRID. That's right.

JOHN. Coming here? You're sure? [SIR WILFRID *nods assent.*] Fiddler, I want you to stay here, and if Mrs. Karslake comes, don't fail to let me know! Now then, for heaven's sake, what did Matthew say to you?

SIR WILFRID. Come along in and I'll tell you.

JOHN. On your life now, Fiddler, don't fail to let me—

[SIR WILFRID *carries JOHN off with him.*

VIDA. [*From the dining-room.*] Ah, here you are!

FIDDLER. Phew!

A moment's pause, and CYNTHIA opens the front door, and comes in very quietly, almost shyly, as if she were uncertain of her welcome.

CYNTHIA. Fiddler! Where is he? Has he come? Is he here? Has he gone?

FIDDLER. [*Rattled.*] Nobody's gone, ma'am, except the Reverend Matthew Phillimore.

CYNTHIA. Matthew? He's been here and gone? [FIDDLER *nods assent.*] You don't mean I'm too late? He's married them already?

FIDDLER. Nogam says he married them!

CYNTHIA. He's married them! Married! Married before I could get here! [*Sinking into an armchair.*] Married in less time than it takes to pray for rain! Oh, well, the church—the church is a regular quick marriage counter. [VIDA and JOHN *are heard in light-hearted laughter.*] Oh!

FIDDLER. I'll tell Mr. Karslake—

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CYNTHIA. [*Rising and going to the dining-room door, turns the key in the lock and takes it out.*] No—I wouldn't see him for the world! [*Moving to the work-table with the key.*] If I'm too late, I'm too late! and that's the end of it! [*Laying the key on the table, she remains standing near it.*] I've come, and now I'll go! [*There is a long pause during which CYNTHIA looks slowly about the room, then sighs and changes her tone.*] Well, Fiddler, it's all a good deal as it used to be in my day.

FIDDLER. No, ma'am—everything changed, even the horses.

CYNTHIA. [*Absent-mindedly.*] Horses—how are the horses?

[*Throughout her talk with Fiddler she gives the idea that she is saying good-bye to her life with JOHN.*

FIDDLER. Ah, when husband and wife splits, ma'am, it's the horses that suffer. Oh, yes, ma'am, we're all changed since you give us the go-by,—even the guv'nor.

CYNTHIA. How's he changed?

FIDDLER. Lost his sharp for horses, and ladies, ma'am—gives 'em both the boiled eye.

CYNTHIA. I can't say I see any change; there's my portrait—I suppose he sits and pulls faces at me.

FIDDLER. Yes, ma'am, I think I'd better tell him of your bein' here.

CYNTHIA. [*Gently but decidedly.*] No, Fiddler, no! [*Again looking about her.*] The room's in a terrible state of disorder. However, your new mistress will attend to that. [*Pause.*] Why, that's not her hat!

FIDDLER. Yours, ma'am.

CYNTHIA. Mine? [*Walking to the table to look at it.*] Is that my work-basket? [*After a pause.*] My gloves? [FIDDLER *assents.*] And I suppose— [*Hurriedly going to the writing-table.*] My—yes, there it is: my wedding ring!—just where I dropped it! Oh, oh, oh, he keeps it like this—hat, gloves, basket and ring, everything just as it was that crazy, mad day when I— [*She glances at FIDDLER and breaks off.*] But for heaven's sake, Fiddler, set that chair on its feet!

FIDDLER. Against orders, ma'am.

CYNTHIA. Against orders?

FIDDLER. You kicked it over, ma'am, the day you left us.

CYNTHIA. No wonder he hates me with the chair in that state! He nurses his wrath to keep it warm. So, after all, Fiddler, everything *is* changed, and that chair is the proof of it. I suppose Cynthia K is the only thing in the world that cares a whinney whether I'm alive or dead. [*She breaks down and sobs.*] How is she, Fiddler?

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FIDDLER. Off her oats, ma'am, this evening.

CYNTHIA. Off her oats! Well, she loves me, so I suppose she will die, or change, or—or something. Oh, she'll die, there's no doubt about that—she'll die. [FIDDLER, *who has been watching his chance, takes the key off the table while she is sobbing, tiptoes up stage, unlocks the door and goes out. After he has done so, CYNTHIA rises and dries her eyes.*] There—I'm a fool—I must go—before—before—he—

[*As she speaks her last word, JOHN comes in swiftly.*]

JOHN. Mrs. Karslake!

CYNTHIA. [*Confused.*] I—I—I just heard Cynthia K was ill— [JOHN *assents.* CYNTHIA *tries to put on a cheerful and indifferent manner.*] I—I ran round—I—and—and— [*Pausing, she turns and takes a few steps.*] Well, I understand it's all over.

JOHN. [*Cheerfully.*] Yes, it's all over.

CYNTHIA. How is the bride?

JOHN. Oh, she's a wonder.

CYNTHIA. Indeed! Did she paw the ground like the war-horse in the Bible? I'm sure when Vida sees a wedding ring she smells the battle afar off. As for you, my dear Karslake, I should have thought once bitten, twice shy! But, you know best.

VIDA, *unable to keep her finger long out of a pie, saunters in.*

VIDA. Oh, Cynthia, I've just been through it again, and I feel as if I were eighteen. There's no use talking about it, my dear, with a woman it's never the second time! And how nice you were, Jack,—he never even laughed at us! [SIR WILFRID *follows her with hat and cane. VIDA kisses JOHN.*] That's the wages of virtue!

SIR WILFRID. [*In time to see her kiss JOHN.*] I say, is it the custom? Every time she does that, my boy, you owe me a thousand pounds. [*Seeing CYNTHIA, who approaches them, he looks at her and JOHN in turn.*] Mrs. Karslake. [*To JOHN.*] And then you say it's not an extraordinary country!

[*CYNTHIA is more and more puzzled.*]

VIDA. [*To JOHN.*] See you next Derby, Jack! [*Walking to the door. To SIR WILFRID.*] Come along, Wilfrid! We really ought to be going. [*To CYNTHIA.*] I hope, dear, you haven't married him! Phillimore's a tomb! Good-bye, Cynthia—I'm so happy! [*As she goes.*] Just think of the silly people, dear, that only have this sensation once in a lifetime!

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[*JOHN follows VIDA out the door.*]

SIR WILFRID. [*To CYNTHIA.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Karslake. And I say, ye know, if you have married that dull old Phillimore fellah, why, when you've divorced him, come over and stay at Traynham! I mean, of course, ye know, bring your new husband. There'll be lots o' horses to show you, and a whole covey of jolly little Cates-Darbys. Mind you come! [*With real delicacy of feeling and forgetting his wife.*] Never liked a woman as much in my life as I did you!

VIDA. [*Outside; calling him.*] Wilfrid, dear!

SIR WILFRID. [*Loyal to the woman who has caught him.*]—except the one that's calling me!

JOHN *returns, and SIR WILFRID, nodding to him, goes out. JOHN shuts the door and crosses the room. There is a pause.*

CYNTHIA. So you're not married?

JOHN. No. But I know that you imagined I was.

CYNTHIA. [*After a pause.*] I suppose you think a woman has no right to divorce a man—and still continue to feel a keen interest in his affairs?

JOHN. Well, I'm not so sure about that, but I don't quite see how—

CYNTHIA. A woman can be divorced—and still— [JOHN *assents; she hides her embarrassment.*] Well, my dear Karslake, you've a long life before you, in which to learn how such a state of mind is possible! So I won't stop to explain. Will you be kind enough to get me a cab? [*She moves to the door.*]

JOHN. Certainly. I was going to say I am not surprised at your feeling an interest in me. I'm only astonished that, having actually married Phillimore, you come here—

CYNTHIA. [*Indignantly.*] I'm not married to him!

JOHN. [*Silent for a moment.*] I left you on the brink—made me feel a little uncertain.

CYNTHIA. [*In a matter of course tone.*] I changed my mind—that's all.

JOHN. [*Taking his tone from her.*] Of course. [*After an interval.*] Are you going to marry him?

CYNTHIA. I don't know.

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JOHN. Does he know you—

CYNTHIA. I told him I was coming here.

JOHN. Oh! He'll turn up here, then—eh? [CYNTHIA *is silent.*] And you'll go back with him, I suppose?

CYNTHIA. [*Talking at random.*] Oh—yes—I suppose so. I—I haven't thought much about it.

JOHN. [*Changing his tone.*] Well, sit down; do. Till he comes—talk it over. [*He places the armchair more comfortably for her.*] This is a more comfortable chair!

CYNTHIA. [*Shamefacedly.*] You never liked me to sit in that one!

JOHN. Oh, well—it's different now. [CYNTHIA *moves and sits down, near the upset chair. There is a long pause, during which JOHN thoughtfully paces the room.*] You don't mind if I smoke?

CYNTHIA. [*Shaking her head.*] No.

JOHN. [*Lighting his pipe and sitting down on the arm of a chair.*] Of course, if you find my presence painful, I'll—skiddoo.

He indicates the door. CYNTHIA shakes her head. JOHN smokes his pipe and remains seated.

CYNTHIA. [*Suddenly and quickly.*] It's just simply a fact, Karslake, and that's all there is to it—if a woman has once been married—that is, the first man she marries—then—she may quarrel, she may hate him—she may despise him—but she'll always be jealous of him with other women. Always! [JOHN *takes this as if he were simply glad to have the information.*]

JOHN. Oh—H'm! ah—yes—yes.

CYNTHIA. [*After a pause.*] You probably felt jealous of Phillimore.

JOHN. [*Reasonably, sweetly, and in doubt.*] N-o! [*Apologetically.*] I felt simply: Let him take his medicine.

CYNTHIA. Oh!

JOHN. I beg your pardon—I meant—

CYNTHIA. You meant what you said!

JOHN. [*Moving a step toward her.*] Mrs. Karslake; I apologize—I won't do it again. But it's too late for you to be out alone—Philip will be here in a moment—and of course, then—

CYNTHIA. It isn't what you *say*—it's—it's—it's everything. It's the entire situation. Suppose by any chance I don't marry Phillimore! And suppose I were seen at two or three in the morning leaving my former husband's house! It's all wrong. I have no business to be here! I'm going! You're perfectly horrid to me, you know—and—the whole place—it's so familiar, and so—so associated with—with—

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JOHN. Discord and misery—I know—

CYNTHIA. Not at all with discord and misery! With harmony and happiness—with—with first love, and infinite hope—and—and—Jack Karslake,—if you don't set that chair on its legs, I think I'll explode. [JOHN *crosses the room rapidly, and sets the chair on its legs. His tone changes.*]

JOHN. [*While setting chair on its legs.*] There! I beg your pardon.

CYNTHIA. [*Nervously.*] I believe I hear Philip. [*She rises.*]

JOHN. [*Going up to the window.*] N-o! That's the policeman trying the front door! And now, see here, Mrs. Karslake,—you're only here for a short minute, because you can't help yourself, but I want you to understand that I'm not trying to be disagreeable—I don't want to revive all the old unhappy—

CYNTHIA. Very well, if you don't—give me my hat. [JOHN *does so.*] And my sewing! And my gloves, please! [*She indicates the several articles which lie on the small table.*] Thanks! [CYNTHIA *throws the lot into the fireplace, and returns to the place she has left near table.*] There! I feel better! And now—all I ask is—

JOHN. [*Laughing.*] My stars, what a pleasure it is!

CYNTHIA. What is?

JOHN. Seeing you in a whirlwind!

CYNTHIA. [*Wounded by his seeming indifference.*] Oh!

JOHN. No, but I mean, a real pleasure! Why not? Time's passed since you and I were together—and—eh—

CYNTHIA. And you've forgotten what a vile temper I had!

JOHN. [*Reflectively.*] Well, you did kick the stuffing out of the matrimonial buggy—

CYNTHIA. [*Pointedly but with good temper.*] It wasn't a buggy; it was a break cart— [*She stands back of the arm-chair.*] It's all very well to blame me! But when you married me, I'd never had a bit in my mouth!

JOHN. Well, I guess I had a pretty hard hand. Do you remember the time you threw both your slippers out of the window?

CYNTHIA. Yes, and do you remember the time you took my fan from me by force?

JOHN. After you slapped my face with it!

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CYNTHIA. Oh, oh! I hardly touched your face! And do you remember the day you held my wrists?

JOHN. You were going to bite me!

CYNTHIA. Jack! I never! I showed my teeth at you! And I *said* I would bite you!

JOHN. Cynthia, I never knew you to break your word! [*He laughs. Casually.*] And anyhow—they were awfully pretty teeth! [*CYNTHIA, though bolt upright, has ceased to seem pained.*] And I say—do you remember, Cyn—

[*He leans over her armchair to talk.*]

CYNTHIA. [*After a pause.*] You oughtn't to call me "Cyn"—it's not nice of you. It's sort of cruel. I'm not—Cyn to you now.

JOHN. Awfully sorry; didn't mean to be beastly, Cyn. [*CYNTHIA turns quickly. JOHN stamps his foot.*] Cynthia! Sorry. I'll make it a commandment: thou shalt not Cyn!!

[*CYNTHIA laughs and wipes her eyes.*]

CYNTHIA. How can you, Jack? How can you?

JOHN. Well, hang it, my dear child, I—I'm sorry, but you know I always got foolish with you. Your laugh'd make a horse laugh. Why, don't you remember that morning in the park before breakfast—when you laughed so hard your horse ran away with you!

CYNTHIA. I do, I do! [*Both laugh. The door opens and NOGAM comes in, unnoticed by either.*] But what was it started me laughing? [*Laughing, she sits down and laughs again.*] That morning. Wasn't it somebody we met? [*Laughing afresh.*] Wasn't it a man on a horse? [*As her memory pieces the picture, she again goes off into laughter.*]

JOHN. [*Laughing too.*] Of course! You didn't know him in those days! But I did! And he looked a sight in the saddle!

[*NOGAM, trying to catch their attention, moves toward the table.*]

CYNTHIA. Who was it?

JOHN. Phillimore!

CYNTHIA. He's no laughing matter now. [*Seeing NOGAM.*] Jack, he's here!

JOHN. Eh? Oh, Nogam?

NOGAM. Mr. Phillimore, sir—

JOHN. In the house?

NOGAM. On the street in a hansom, sir—and he requests Mrs. Karslake—

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JOHN. That'll do, Nogam. [*NOGAM goes out and there is a pause. JOHN, on his way to the window, looks at CYNTHIA, who has slowly risen and turned her back to him.*] Well, Cynthia?

[*He speaks almost gravely and with finality.*]

CYNTHIA. [*Trembling.*] Well?

JOHN. It's the hour of decision; are you going to marry him? [*Pause.*] Speak up!

CYNTHIA. Jack,—I—I—

JOHN. There he is—you can join him. [*He points to the street.*]

CYNTHIA. Join Phillimore—and go home—with him—to his house, and Miss Heneage and—

JOHN. The door's open. [*He points to the door.*]

CYNTHIA. No, no! It's mean of you to suggest it!

JOHN. You won't marry—

CYNTHIA. Phillimore—no; never. [*Running to the window.*] No; never, never, Jack.

JOHN. [*Opening the window and calling out.*] It's all right, Judge. You needn't wait.

[*There is a pause. JOHN leaves the window and bursts into laughter. He moves toward the door and closes it. CYNTHIA looks dazed.*]

CYNTHIA. Jack! [JOHN *laughs.*] Yes, but I'm here, Jack.

JOHN. Why not?

CYNTHIA. You'll have to take me round to the Holland House!

JOHN. Of course, I will! But, I say, Cynthia, there's no hurry.

CYNTHIA. Why, I—I—can't stay here.

JOHN. No, of course you can't stay here. But you can have a bite, though. [CYNTHIA *shakes her head.* JOHN *places the small chair, which was upset, next to the table, and the armchair close by.*] Oh, I insist. Just look at yourself—you're as pale as a sheet and—here, here. Sit right down. I insist! By George, you must do it! [CYNTHIA *moves to the chair drawn up to the table, and sits down.*

CYNTHIA. [*Faintly.*] I *am* hungry.

JOHN. Just wait a moment.

[JOHN *rushes out, leaving the door open.*

CYNTHIA. I don't want more than a nibble! [*After a pause.*] I am sorry to give you so much trouble.

JOHN. No trouble at all. [*From the dining-room comes the cheerful noise of glasses and silver.*] A hansom, of course, to take you round to your hotel? [*Speaking as he returns with a tray.*

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CYNTHIA. [*To herself.*] I wonder how I ever dreamed I could marry that man.

JOHN. [*Now by the table.*] Can't imagine! There!

CYNTHIA. I am hungry. Don't forget the hansom.

[*She eats; he waits on her, setting this and that before her.*

JOHN. [*Goes to the door, opens it and calls.*] Nogam, a hansom at once.

NOGAM. [*From without.*] Yes, sir.

JOHN. [*Again at the table, shows, and from now on continues to show, his true feelings for her.*] How does it go?

CYNTHIA. [*Faintly.*] It goes all right. Thanks!

[*Hardly eating at all.*

JOHN. You always used to like anchovy. [CYNTHIA *nods and eats.*] Claret? [CYNTHIA *shakes her head.*] Oh, but you must!

CYNTHIA. [*Tremulously.*] Ever so little. [*He fills her glass and then his.*] Thanks!

JOHN. Here's to old times! [*Raising his glass.*

CYNTHIA. [*Very tremulous.*] Please not!

JOHN. Well, here's to your next husband.

CYNTHIA. [*Very tenderly.*] Don't!

JOHN. Oh, well, then, what shall the toast be?

CYNTHIA. I'll tell you— [*After a pause.*] you can drink to the relation I am to you!

JOHN. [*Laughing.*] Well—what relation are you?

CYNTHIA. I'm your first wife once removed!

JOHN. [*Laughing, drinks.*] I say, you're feeling better.

CYNTHIA. Lots.

JOHN. [*Reminiscent.*] It's a good deal like those mornings after the races—isn't it?

CYNTHIA. [*Nods.*] Yes. [*Half-rising.*] Is that the hansom?

JOHN. [*Going up to the window.*] No.

CYNTHIA. [*Sitting down again.*] What is that sound?

JOHN. Don't you remember?

CYNTHIA. No.

JOHN. That's the rumbling of the early milk wagons.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Jack.

JOHN. Do you recognize it now?

CYNTHIA. Do I? We used to hear that—just at the hour, didn't we—when we came back from

awfully jolly late suppers and things!

JOHN. H'm!

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CYNTHIA. It must be fearfully late. I must go.

She rises and moves to the chair where she has left her cloak. She sees that JOHN will not help her and puts it on herself.

JOHN. Oh, don't go—why go?

CYNTHIA. [*Embarrassed and agitated.*] All good things come to an end, you know.

JOHN. They don't need to.

CYNTHIA. Oh, you don't mean that! And, you know, Jack, if I were caught—seen at this hour, leaving this house, you know—it's the most scandalous thing any one ever did, my being here at all. Good-bye, Jack! [*After a pause and almost in tears.*] I'd like to say, I—I—I—well, I sha'n't be bitter about you hereafter, and— [*Halting.*] Thank you awfully, old man, for the fodder and all that! [*She turns to go out.*]

JOHN. Mrs. Karslake—wait—

CYNTHIA. [*Stopping to hear.*] Well?

JOHN. [*Serious.*] I've rather an ugly bit of news for you.

CYNTHIA. Yes?

JOHN. I don't believe you know that I have been testing the validity of the decree of divorce which you procured.

CYNTHIA. Oh, have you?

JOHN. Yes; you know I felt pretty warmly about it.

CYNTHIA. Well?

JOHN. Well, I've been successful. [*After a pause.*] The decree's been declared invalid. Understand?

CYNTHIA. [*Looking at him for a moment; then speaking.*] Not—precisely.

JOHN. [*After a moment's silence.*] I'm awfully sorry—I'm awfully sorry, Cynthia, but, you're my wife still.

[There is a pause.]

CYNTHIA. [*With rapture.*] Honour bright?

[She sinks into the armchair.]

JOHN. [*Nods. Half laughingly.*] Crazy country, isn't it?

CYNTHIA. [*Nods. After an interval.*] Well, Jack—what's to be done?

JOHN. [*Gently.*] Whatever you say.

[He moves a few steps toward her.]

NOGAM. [*Quietly coming in.*] Hansom, sir.

[He goes out and CYNTHIA rises.]

JOHN. Why don't you finish your supper?

[CYNTHIA hesitates.]

CYNTHIA. The—the—hansom—

JOHN. Why go to the Holland? After all—you know, Cyn, you're at home here.

CYNTHIA. No, Jack, I'm not—I'm not at home here—unless—unless—

JOHN. Out with it!

CYNTHIA. [*Bursting into tears.*] Unless I—unless I'm at home in your heart, Jack!

JOHN. What do you think?

CYNTHIA. I don't believe you want me to stay.

JOHN. Don't you?

CYNTHIA. No, no, you hate me still. You never can forgive me. I know you can't. For I can never forgive myself. Never, Jack, never, never!

[She sobs and he takes her in his arms.]

JOHN. [*Very tenderly.*] Cyn! I love you! [*Strongly.*] And you've got to stay! And hereafter you can

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chuck chairs around till all's blue! Not a word now.

[He draws her gently to a chair.]

CYNTHIA. *[Wiping her tears.]* Oh, Jack! Jack!

JOHN. I'm as hungry as a shark. We'll nibble together.

CYNTHIA. Well, all I can say is, I feel that of all the improprieties I ever committed this—this—

JOHN. This takes the claret, eh? Oh, Lord, how happy I am!

CYNTHIA. Now don't say that! You'll make me cry more.

She wipes her eyes. JOHN takes out the wedding ring from his pocket; he lifts a wine-glass, drops the ring into it and offers her the glass.

JOHN. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. *[Looking at it and wiping her eyes.]* What is it?

JOHN. Benedictine!

CYNTHIA. Why, you know I never take it.

JOHN. Take this one for my sake.

CYNTHIA. That's not benedictine. *[With gentle curiosity.]* What is it?

JOHN. *[Slides the ring out of the glass and puts his arm about CYNTHIA. He slips the ring on to her finger and, as he kisses her hand, says:]* Your wedding ring!

CURTAIN.

Transcriber's Notes

Page 614: Phillmore changed to Phillimore.

(MISS HENEAGE. Thomas, Mr. Phillmore's sherry?)

(THOMAS *gives the list to* MRS. PHILLMORE *and moves away.*)

Page 654: *entremely* changed to *extremely*.

(*[JOHN looks extremely dark and angry;]*)

Page 679: *nad* changed to *and*.

(*WILFRID nad CYNTHIA are practically alone*)

Page 685: *tradional* changed to *traditional*.

(*in the tradional bridegroom's rig.*)

Page 691: *couldn'* changed to *couldn't*

(*his lawyer couldn'. find him*)

Page 691: *importantt* changed to *important*.

(*He said it was very importantt*)

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