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Drama in Four Acts, by Gilbert Murray**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CARLYON SAHIB: A DRAMA IN
FOUR ACTS ***

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CARLYON SAHIB

[Pg ii]

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME
ANDROMACHE
A Play in Three Acts**

**LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
21 Bedford Street, W.C.**

[Pg iii]

CARLYON SAHIB

*A DRAMA
In Four Acts*

*By
GILBERT MURRAY*

*LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
MDCCC*

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PREFATORY NOTE

This play was written at Viareggio in 1893, and passed an eventful though not unchequered existence for six years before it was produced by Mrs. Patrick Campbell at the Princess of Wales' Theatre, Kennington, on June 19, 1899. The version here published is not exactly that which was acted, though it is much nearer to the acted version than to the original play as it stood before I had the benefit of Mrs. Campbell's vivid and helpful criticism.

I may remark here that the Play never had the ghost of a glimmer of a conscious political allusion in it; nor did it occur to me, when I put my Napoleonic hero in the surroundings which seemed to give most scope to his autocratic and unscrupulous genius, that any sane person would suppose that I wished to attack the Indian Civil Service. The plays on my bookshelves teem with villains of the most diverse professions, from kings and clergymen—chiefly, I must confess, Roman Catholics or

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Dissenters—to lawyers and journalists. I do not think I should chafe at the appearance of a villanous Professor of Greek. And on the whole I cannot help hoping that those of my critics and friends who adopted a high patriotic tone against this play, will upon reflection be inclined to agree that their imperial sensitiveness was a little overstrained.

GILBERT MURRAY.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE RIGHT HON. SIR DAVID CARLYON	} }	<i>Sometime Chief Commissioner of Rajpor, and formerly Political Agent in Bhojâl.</i>
VERA CARLYON		<i>His daughter: student of Medicine at Zurich.</i>
ELIZABETH		<i>A friend, acting as housekeeper to the Carlyons.</i>
ADENE		<i>A young writer on philological subjects.</i>
DR. RHEINHARDT		<i>A medical professor at the University of Zurich.</i>
SELIM		<i>A former servant of Sir David Carlyon.</i>
A NURSE	TRAINED	
A MANSERVANT		
A PUNKAH-BOY		

(CARLYON *is a man approaching sixty, strong, genial, eagle-eyed*; ELIZABETH, *a nice-looking though slightly haggard elderly lady, with white hair, very quiet in demeanour*; RHEINHARDT, *a short man with an excitable manner and bristly iron-grey hair.*)

The First Three Acts take place in Carlyon's country house in England.

The Fourth Act in a bungalow in the Ghautgherry Hills, India.

Carlyon is pronounced like the two words "car-lion," the accent being on the i. The Indian form Kaliena, has the i long and accented, the other syllables short.

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CARLYON SAHIB

THE FIRST ACT

SIR DAVID CARLYON'S *country house*; VERA'S *sitting-room*. *Window right, behind window a curtain on a rod projecting into the room and forming a recess. By window table strewn with books and papers. The books chiefly foreign, with paper backs. On another table a very large birdcage covered with a tablecloth. Doors in the left corner of the back wall, and in the side wall, right.*

ELIZABETH *discovered sitting in a large chair in the recess. VERA holding an ophthalmoscope.*

ELIZABETH.

Am I sitting right, dear?

VERA.

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Yes, that's it. Just the same as before. [*Drawing the curtain so as to darken the recess.*] Now, I must let the light fall full on your eye—just for a minute. Don't wink. That's all; now you can go right into the dark again, Elizabeth. [*ELIZABETH comes out rubbing her eyes.*] I'm afraid it hurt; it is so kind of you!

ELIZABETH.

Not at all, dear. And it is all right as soon as I get into the dark again.

VERA.

Should you like to see what the end of your optic nerve is like? There! [*Showing plate in a book.*]

ELIZABETH.

Dear me, Vera; is there anything wrong with me?

VERA.

Not a thing! That's a picture of a typical healthy eye. You are quite uninteresting, you and Father both!

ELIZABETH.

I don't see how *his* eyes can be uninteresting.

VERA.

[Pg 3]

From Dr. Rheinhardt's point of view, quite. Here are two abnormal ones. See how different they are from yours.

ELIZABETH.

[*Without interest.*] Yes, dear. [*Hesitating.*] I was

wondering——

VERA.

You see the depression of that line? That man died insane in two years. If ever one saw that, one would know —— [*Breaks off.*] What did you say?

ELIZABETH.

That poor bird: I wondered if I might feed him in here, where it's warm?

VERA.

[*Suspiciously.*] What are you going to feed him with?

ELIZABETH.

[*Apologetically.*] Well, you see, Vera, he is really ill. He won't eat anything at all unless it's alive.

VERA.

Then you can't feed him in my room!

ELIZABETH.

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Very well, dear. [*Goes and takes the great cage.*] Do you know, Vera, I think you are really a little unkind about my eagles.

VERA.

I can't think why father ever gave you such horrid things!

ELIZABETH.

I dare say I shouldn't care for them so much if he hadn't given them to me. But really, Vera, they are such splendid great things, with their fierce eyes——

VERA.

Oh, their looks are magnificent; it's their habits! But I must get to work again.

[*Turns to the table and opens a book; ELIZABETH is moving towards the door back, when enter*
SERVANT, U.L.

SERVANT.

If you please, ma'am, a gentleman asking for Sir David.

ELIZABETH.

Oh!

[Moving towards door R. with evident wish to escape.]

VERA.

Don't run away, Elizabeth.

[Pg 5]

ELIZABETH.

I think I must, dear.

[Exit ELIZABETH.]

VERA.

I cannot see any one till five.

[ADENE appears behind SERVANT in doorway.]

ADENE.

I beg your pardon, Miss Carlyon, I only wanted to ask—

VERA.

My father is not at home. Why, surely it isn't—? *[Rises.]*

ADENE.

Yes, it is!

VERA.

Mr. Adene! How stupid of me! But you've changed a great deal!

ADENE.

I wrote to Sir David. Didn't he tell you?

VERA.

Father has been away for three days. No doubt I forwarded your letter to him.

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ADENE.

Without recognising the handwriting? *[VERA motions him to a chair and sits.]* When will he be back?

VERA.

This afternoon.

ADENE.

I am glad. I want to ask him for some advice and some introductions. I'm going to India.

VERA.

What!

ADENE.

The fact is, I feel rather run down, and I'm going to take a holiday—with a little work to fill in spare moments.

VERA.

I know your idea of a holiday: twelve hours a day at a new subject instead of ten at an old one!

ADENE.

I'm going to Rajpoor, your father's old province: and I want specially to get up into the mountains, to the scene of his great exploits.

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VERA.

To Bhojâl! You'll find that difficult. But why in the world are you going?

ADENE.

You know I've been working for some years at Indian dialects?

VERA.

Yes; you sent us your book. Father said he couldn't imagine where you had learnt all those languages.

ADENE.

Where? Why at "Stratford-atte-Bow!" [VERA *looks inquiringly.*] More precisely at Limehouse. All nationalities come in course of time to London Docks. But Bhojâli is my last acquisition—since my book. I came across my Bhojâli by accident a year ago. And now I can talk pretty well with him.

VERA.

Then, all the more, why go to Bhojâl?

ADENE.

Well, you see, it is history rather than philology that I have in mind for the moment.

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VERA.

Not the history of Bhojâl?

ADENE.

The history of the Indian Frontier—from the native's point of view!

VERA.

Do you mean an account of the various small wars?

ADENE.

Well, chiefly all that came before the wars; the intrigues, and the motives——

VERA.

Isn't it all in the Blue Books?

ADENE.

Of course, but the point is—— *[Pauses with a smile.]*

VERA.

Don't be afraid!

ADENE.

If you take the Blue Books, the natives always seem to be in the first place treacherous criminals——

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VERA.

Which savages often are.

ADENE.

And also insanely blind to their own interests; which even savages are not! *[VERA laughs as if beaten.]* I know the English mind already; I want to get inside the Bhojâli mind.

VERA.

It is like the programme of a Baboo Protection Society. I hope the officials will like it.

ADENE.

I have thought of that. But I know too much of India to be even suspected of thinking ill of the officials. And Sir David's recommendation will soften them.

VERA.

"Please give bearer every facility for attacking the reputation of my late colleagues;" is that it?

ADENE.

[*Rising.*] I don't want to attack any one! Of course there may be cases. If I met an actual instance of foul play on our part—

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VERA.

[*Mockingly.*] "Foul play!" It is to be as bad as that?

ADENE.

I suppose even Englishmen have occasionally done wrong?

VERA.

And you go there expecting to find crimes committed by English officers?

ADENE.

In some cases, I am afraid—or if not crimes—

VERA.

How considerate of you to begin with Bhojâl!

ADENE.

[*Sitting, in amused impatience.*] Oh, let us start fair again! I begin with Bhojâl because a certain Sir David Carlyon was the Political Agent there, a gentleman who was afterwards Chief Commissioner of the province of Rajpooor.

VERA.

Don't be ironical!

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ADENE.

Everybody who has heard of India has heard of his marvellous power of governing; also, everybody knows

that if ever there was a war forced upon us against our will, it was the war of the annexation of Bhojâl.

VERA.

And then?

ADENE.

Then, I want to begin my studies with the best possible instance.

VERA.

[*After fidgeting for a moment.*] Well, it makes me somewhat impatient. Suppose you do discover that in the summer of 1820 an English major threw a bootjack at his syce?

ADENE.

Forcing an unjust war on a weak tribe is a different thing from misdirecting a bootjack.

VERA.

How are you to know the war was unjust? The people who made it had full knowledge. You come to judge them with very imperfect knowledge; and you appeal to the public, which has no knowledge at all!

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ADENE.

[*Shaking his head.*] When I write a book there is no danger of its appealing to the public.

VERA.

That is shirking! Besides, *I* am the public and it *did* appeal to me.

ADENE.

Let Sir David deal with me! He did more for the natives than I am likely to ask.

VERA.

Agreed! But it's five o'clock.

[*Goes from table to small book-case with books.*]

ADENE.

[*Rising.*] Let me help! Where does this go?

[*Touching the ophthalmoscope.*]

VERA.

That is very precious! [*Takes it and puts it down on table R.*] But I'll tell you one thing more. Father has made things harder for the ordinary officials, especially for residents. It is practically impossible to come up to his standard. A man who first conquered and then ruled the most savage and turbulent tribes in India without ever letting his lowest subordinate do an oppressive act, a man with that extraordinary power of making others obey him—

[*She is now back again at the table and does not see CARLYON, who enters at this moment.*]

CARLYON.

[*Genially.*] Who is this paragon, Vera?

VERA.

Father!

[*Goes to him.*]

CARLYON.

[*Continuing.*] Ah, Adene, you are most welcome! So you've taken my answer for granted. That's right.

ADENE.

I thought I might venture. I have so little time before starting for India. [*They shake hands.*]

CARLYON.

You must give us all you can spare of it. It must be two years since we were all at Rothesay.

ADENE.

Miss Carlyon actually did not know me.

VERA.

For the first instant!

CARLYON.

At any rate she has resumed the friendship where it was broken off. Making you tidy her books, I see, and scolding you as you do it!

[*ADENE continues putting the books away.*]

ADENE.

I interrupted her; and worse, she took me for a champion of the Baboo!

CARLYON.

She never forgives an interruption. That is why I always have the general tea in her room. By-the-bye, Vera, before I forget, you're to give away the prizes at the Y.M.C.A. Shooting Club.

VERA.

Oh, Father, when?

CARLYON.

Thursday next: eleven A.M. It'll take most of the day. But what is this about India and the black man? I heard noble sentiments as I came in.

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VERA.

Mr. Adene says that he expects to find——

ADENE.

That *if* I find a British official guilty of unfair behaviour
——

VERA.

Foul play!

ADENE.

I shall report the action.

VERA.

Attack the man.

ADENE.

You have heard us both.

VERA.

I want you to make him feel the difficulties.

ADENE.

And I claim that you for one have conquered the very worst difficulties without ever acquiescing in wrong to a native.

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CARLYON.

[*Coolly; sitting down in chair by the tea-table.*] Both of you wrong, quite wrong. I never knew any real

difficulties, and I often wrong people—natives and others. What do you call a wrong?

ADENE.

Roughly, anything you wouldn't do to an Englishman in England.

CARLYON.

Any objection to murder, for instance?

ADENE.

[*Smiling.*] Ah, but seriously, a general attitude—

CARLYON.

I have condoned murders occasionally. On the whole I am not sure we have enough of them. I have often wished to see a man knocked on the head when nobody would do it. [Turns chair facing ADENE.]

Enter SERVANT with tea, and exit again.

VERA.

[*To ADENE, laughing.*] Prepare to receive shocks!

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CARLYON.

Oh, Adene knows of old how unregenerate I am. But I've said as much as that to an interviewer!

ADENE.

There are certainly people I should like to see removed
—

CARLYON.

Well, I'll tell you. Once when I was at— I wish somebody would give me tea! Where's Elizabeth?

VERA.

[*To CARLYON, taking possession of the tea-table.*] Be patient! [*To ADENE.*] Now you've done us a service. We can never make him talk about himself.

CARLYON.

Well, I won't say where I was, it might implicate people; but there was a poor fellow, a villager, there, called Natthu, who was in the power of a money-lender. You

know the sort of man?

Enter ELIZABETH, R., with her left hand wrapped, negligently in a handkerchief. She comes first up to the tea-table, and then retires to the back of the room.

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ADENE.

The worst in the world! I admit occasional murdering may do them good. [Takes tea.]

CARLYON.

It wasn't the money-lender this time! It was a policeman. Natthu had a wife and one daughter about twelve. Well, at last the money-lender was going to carry off his standing corn.

[ELIZABETH comes forward so as to look at ADENE.
VERA beckons her to come and pour out the tea. She declines and retires back again.]

ADENE.

Sheer ruin, of course.

CARLYON.

Starvation. Natthu was in despair, when the policeman came round one night and offered to get the money-lender sent to prison if Natthu would let him have his daughter, and he gave her.

ADENE.

But he had no power to get the man imprisoned?

CARLYON.

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None in the world of course! In a few days down came the money-lender to cut the corn, and the policeman with him to see no resistance was made. Natthu reproached him; the policeman laughed, and said he could now have the girl back if he liked! Thank you!

[Receiving tea, from VERA.]

ADENE.

The brute!

CARLYON.

Next day but one the brute was found in a ditch with his head off. And I don't mind telling you I smuggled Natthu and his wife out of the country.

ADENE.

He could hardly have been hanged.

CARLYON.

Possibly not.

[VERA *offers* ELIZABETH *tea; she comes and takes it and retires again.*

ADENE.

Then why couldn't you let him take his trial?

CARLYON.

[Pg 20]

He'd have been murdered by the policeman's relations, and his wife with him. They had a shot at me as it was. Now are you going to attack me?

ADENE.

I'm not sure. Couldn't you have had him tried first and then sent him off?

CARLYON.

Too dangerous! And there were other reasons too. Anyhow I thought of it, and determined I had better not.

ADENE.

I'm not clear that you were right.

CARLYON.

Well, they'll finish your education in Rajpoor.

ADENE.

I don't mean to stay in Rajpoor, it is too English. I want to get into Upper Bhojâl among the hills.

CARLYON.

[*Looking hard at him, then turning a little towards ELIZABETH.*] Capital! Capital! My pet tribes! Yes, I wondered if you meant that in your letter.

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ELIZABETH.

[*Calmly, as though to herself and stating a fact.*] You will never be able to get there.

VERA.

Have you met my Aunt Elizabeth, Mr. Adene. [To ELIZABETH.] Or am I to say "Cousin"?

ELIZABETH.

Well, I'm only a second or third cousin at the best, dear.
[*Comes down and shakes hands with ADENE who rises.*]

ADENE.

[*To ELIZABETH.*] I have a Bhojâli acquaintance who will go with me.

CARLYON.

You realise the geography, do you? Lower Bhojâl of course, is British, and part of the province of Rajpoor.

ADENE.

Annexed by you! Yes, that is where my man comes from.

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CARLYON.

The Upper Country is almost inaccessible, and quite cut off from communication. Koreb's rebels fled there.

ADENE.

My man has relations in the Upper Country.

CARLYON.

I shouldn't depend much on that. However, if you're only well disguised and avoid speaking——

ADENE.

I must *speak*! It is information I go for!

CARLYON.

Oh, it is not the place for information. They have no writings, and no one village knows anything of another.

ADENE.

There must be local traditions, and if I question them——

CARLYON.

If you question them they will shoot you. I knew an American killed there for pressing a Bhojâli to tell his children's names.

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VERA.

[*Coming across to him.*] But, Father, you've travelled

over all that country yourself!

ADENE.

And unarmed, wasn't it?

CARLYON.

[*To VERA.*] Yes, child, but it does not follow that another man can! [*Turning to ADENE with change of manner from proud to pleasant.*] Perhaps you've not heard how they have shrines built to me there and offer sacrifices to one of my old swords.

ADENE.

Yes, I know. Like Nicholson in the Mutiny. Had you to persecute your worshippers as he did?

CARLYON.

No; froze the heresy by neglect.

ADENE.

Well, you will give me letters?

CARLYON.

[*Laughing.*] Yes, of course I will, and tokens to the tribesmen too, which will be more to the purpose.

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ADENE.

Then I will risk the rest.

CARLYON.

Oh! The recklessness of youth!

ADENE.

Well, with your letters and tokens, when they had that devotion to you——

CARLYON.

[*Turning sharply.*] Do you think it was from love they didn't touch me? The account you will get of me there is not what you'll get at Exeter Hall.

ADENE.

Surely it was at bottom because of your fairness, because

you stood by the weak?

CARLYON.

Much those savages care for that! It was not my fairness that saved me! Do you know the Bhojâli song, "Said the tiger to Carlyon?"

ELIZABETH.

[*Above table L.*] Will no one have some more tea?

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ADENE.

I know a proverb—No thank you—about you. "He has no fear and his justice is——"

CARLYON.

No, no, no! Not that absurd thing!

VERA.

You are quite right, Mr. Adene! He brought it on himself, pretending to be such a reprobate: "His justice is the justice of a god."

CARLYON.

If people took there opinion of me from you, Vera. No, my song is a very different thing: "Said the tiger to Carlyon as they hunted together: 'Let us kill no more. My hunger is dead and my limbs are weary.' And Carlyon answered the tiger: 'Out of my body I will give thee hunger and strength, for my hunger dies not and my limbs are never tired.' Said the death-snake to Carlyon——"

VERA.

[*Rising and putting her arms round his neck and her hands over his month from behind.*] That's quite enough! We don't admire your song.

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ELIZABETH.

Oh, you don't understand.

CARLYON.

It goes on to tell how the cobra had spent all its poison till I gave it of the venom of my heart, and we all went on killing together. Upon my word, it's what they believe of me!

VERA.

It was just a wild angry song of the rebels!

ELIZABETH.

Don't you see, child? The tiger was the noblest of beasts for them; there was nothing else so royal and terrible. They meant that he was nobler than the noblest!

[*She speaks with quiet emotion.*]

CARLYON.

Exactly! Exactly! And they happened to be fond of snakes, so they said I was like one! [Satirically.]

ELIZABETH.

Of course they only saw him as a deadly fighter; that was as much as they could understand! They never dreamed of the heights and depths——

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CARLYON.

You would have made me one of your invalid fowls, Elizabeth, wouldn't you? Hullo, has one of them been biting you? [*Pointing to her hand in the handkerchief.*]

VERA.

Why, Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH.

Oh, it's nothing at all.

VERA.

Let me see. [ELIZABETH *tries to put her off.*] No, I *will* see! Why, it is right to the bone both sides! That creature ought really——

ELIZABETH.

[*With mild annoyance.*] Dear me, Vera, it's really nothing at all! The chicken I put in was frightened and lay still, so the poor fellow wouldn't look at it. So I just put my hand in and was stirring the chicken up——

CARLYON.

And he swooped upon you! Go away at once, Elizabeth; and never say I'm like those eagles again!

[ADENE *opens the door for* ELIZABETH.]

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ELIZABETH.

[*To* VERA.] No, you shan't come with me, dear! I am quite ashamed, Mr. Adene, to make such a fuss!

ADENE.

My dear lady, it is the absence of fuss that strikes me! [*Exit ELIZABETH.*] Well, if I had had my hand bitten right through by a Himalayan eagle——

VERA.

It's a frightful bite!

CARLYON.

[*Carelessly.*] Oh, that's Elizabeth all over! It is true, though, in the main, what she was saying. The thing those people care for is fighting-power. They like a conqueror to enjoy his conquering, the trampling and slaughtering and all the rest of it.

ADENE.

What did they make of your hospitals and your care for the wounded?

CARLYON.

Didn't like it! Too inconsistent altogether!

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VERA.

In fact, Mr. Adene, if you want to be popular in Bhojâl, get a certificate from a clergyman stating that you are a professional robber, and have burnt alive all your female relations!

ADENE.

Well, you've rather staggered me. But I can't give up Bhojâl. It is my work.

CARLYON.

[*Rises.*] You young people and your work! I suppose I am growing decrepit. I would sooner keep a whole skin than even know about the dialects. It is to be the dialects? Or is it the history?—of Bhojâl. [*Near ADENE.*]

ADENE.

History first.

CARLYON.

Ah well, there isn't any! So even the dialects are more important. Forgive me, Adene! I am far from depreciating your work, but you're like Vera. She thinks the world would stand still if a particular medical treatise

were not ready by November, and you— Ah, I prefer to take things easily! [*Goes towards door. To VERA who follows him.*] Mr. Adene may have letters to write. You'll ring when he wants to be shown his room.

[*ADENE rises. Exit CARLYON; VERA goes with him to the door.*

VERA.

Shall I ring now? Post at six.

ADENE.

Not unless you wish to be rid of me. I suppose this is the medical treatise? [*Pointing to MS. on table.*

VERA.

That is what he meant. It is only a thesis for my degree.

ADENE.

So you're at Zurich under my old friend Rheinhardt! I saw him in London, by the way.

VERA.

Is he over in England? I wonder if he would come here?

ADENE.

Judging from what he said, he'd go to the North Pole if you asked him.

VERA.

[*With interest.*] Did he speak of me?

ADENE.

Of almost nothing else—you and his enemy Steinmetz; but he forbade me to repeat a word of it. Would you much like to know?

VERA.

Of course I should, immensely. But I'm not going to try and find out if he doesn't want me to.

ADENE.

That's what he said you would say! [*Touching the MS.*] When is it to be sent in?

VERA.

I have only a month left, and look what I have to get through! [Goes to revolving case.

ADENE.

You can't possibly read all these? [Goes to her up R.

VERA.

[Pg 32]

I just glance through them. They are reports of foreign hospitals, and I want to see if there is anything on my subjects.

ADENE.

[Handling one of the volumes.] No index?

VERA.

No such concession to weak human nature! Hardly any headings and no capital letters. It is only mechanical work, looking through them. I do it at night when I am tired.

ADENE.

What is your subject? [Picking up several volumes.] I'll do these for you.

VERA.

You, Mr. Adene! Your time is ever so much too valuable!

ADENE.

I'm having holidays now, and this is just what I like. What is your subject?

VERA.

No, I can't let you know!

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ADENE.

If you don't tell me, I shall make a table of contents all through.

VERA.

I never knew anything so kind. It will take days! [Rises.

ADENE.

I've spent many happy weeks making indexes. What did

you say the subject was?

VERA.

The relation of the brain and the optic nerve, but any brain thing may come in.

ADENE.

Diseases of the brain—very good. I'll have them all marked for you.

VERA.

Many, many thanks. [*He drops a book.*] But you need not destroy the ophthalmoscope.

ADENE.

What is it?

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VERA.

My favourite toy!

ADENE.

How do you play with it?

VERA.

I examine everybody's eyes. I've tried all the eyes in the house, nearly all in the village, and any others that would submit to be made victims of.

ADENE.

[*Rises.*] Here are two, if you will condescend to them.

VERA.

[*Goes up to window to ring bell.*] Not now, though I should like to look at you. You have read so much you ought to have something or other the matter with you. [*Laughing.*] The village children are all as normal as ninepins. Now you must go and write.

ADENE.

[*Sitting in the chair by the curtain.*] I must be paid beforehand for all these catalogues. Now!

[Pg 35]

VERA.

No, you're frivolous! Well, you've taken the right chair. I can't ever resist.

[She arranges the curtain, &c., while he talks.]

ADENE.

I begin to repent: it is so like a dentist's. Is it going to hurt? You must tell me when to grip the arms of the chair and keep myself violently still. Now what am I to do?

VERA.

Look at my finger and don't talk. *[Examines eyes. With sudden change of expression and voice.]* Now down!

[ADENE gets up as she puts the instrument down.]

ADENE.

Not the other too? I can bear it. Or wasn't I quiet enough? You seem disappointed in me. *[Rises.]*

VERA.

[With forced gaiety.] No, no! There's nothing at all to see. You're perfectly normal, ridiculously normal: not worth looking at!

[Pg 36]

ADENE.

[Coming down to the table for books.] As bad as the children—and the ninepins?

Enter SERVANT.

VERA.

Will you show Mr. Adene his room? *[Suddenly showing anxiety, and then repressing it.]* Oh, you mustn't take those books! Yes, keep them if you like.

ADENE.

[Taking the books over and laughing.] Would it be any improvement if I cultivated a squint?

[Exeunt ADENE and SERVANT R.]
[VERA stands for a moment by the table, then covers her face with her hands.]

VERA.

His eyes were like a child's eyes, and then that frightful thing! Heaven help me! What am I to do?

END OF THE FIRST ACT

THE SECOND ACT

The lawn of CARLYON'S house. Wall of house at left and back; steps in left back corner. A French window in the wall to the left. In front right centre garden-seat with bushes behind, concealing seat from main steps in the corner; to the right a garden with trees. Time. After lunch.

Enter down the big steps CARLYON, ADENE and RHEINHARDT.

CARLYON.

Yes, it would be a grand undertaking. But upon my word your recklessness is infectious. I give notice, "All recent remarks are against my better judgment."

ADENE.

I'm so grateful for your encouragement, I don't mind what has brought it about.

CARLYON.

I don't encourage you. The best I hope for is that they will only cut off your ears. Bear witness, Dr. Rheinhardt, have I encouraged him?

ADENE.

Yes, hasn't he?

RHEINHARDT.

I comprehend this way his position. Primo, you cannot get into Bhojâl; secundo, you can never come again out; tertio, there is nothing to be learned there; conclusion, you had better try it!

CARLYON.

I admit the premises.

ADENE.

And I claim the conclusion! Were you going down the garden?

CARLYON.

I must just get my hat.

ADENE.

Let me fetch it for you.

[Pg 39]

CARLYON.

Nonsense, I am not reduced to that.

[*Exit CARLYON up big steps L.*

RHEINHARDT.

Gott im Himmel! why do you offer to fetch that man's hat?

ADENE.

Fetch his hat? Oh, I'd do more than that for him! I think him a really great man, you know.

RHEINHARDT.

There it comes. Gott im Himmel, there it comes. Your great men! Sit down and do not excite yourself. You are much too excitable.

ADENE.

[*Sitting down.*] Don't you feel something in his manner yourself? He is so strong, and seems so confident that he is right in all he does; that his word—

RHEINHARDT.

[Pg 40]

Do I feel something in his manner? Yes, I feel great solid block rudeness in his manner. He is confident he is right? Yes, when he is very likely wrong!

ADENE.

But seriously, don't you feel that he is a big man, and a man who can do whatever he means to do, however difficult?

RHEINHARDT.

Bah! and however bad. I do not like your great men; I am not a world conqueror. I am just like other people, and I expect other people to be just like me. I do not overcrush my fellow creatures. A fool contradicts me, and I submit to the argumentation of that fool! [ADENE *tries to speak, but* RHEINHARDT *checks him with a gesture.*] A cow charges upon me, and I run myself away from that cow; I do not say, "I, Rheinhardt, am Almighty!" You say this Sir Carlyon is a great man; you will say Steinmetz is a great man—

ADENE.

No, I won't, I'll believe anything you like to tell me about Steinmetz.

[Pg 41]

RHEINHARDT.

You contradict me flatly when I speak! I tell you Steinmetz is an arrogant man, a rash man, an ingenious man, a clumsy man. You show me what you call his road-making experimentations! I tell you that I behold so many miserable assassinations! If he is a great man, I am a great man myself!

Re-enter CARLYON with VERA, her arm round his waist, L.

ADENE.

I am sure you are.

RHEINHARDT.

Sir, you insult me!

CARLYON.

Here I am! Will you come too, Rheinhardt?

RHEINHARDT.

No, I will not! I will talk to my pupil. Go!

*[Exeunt CARLYON and ADENE down garden right.
ELIZABETH appears on the steps, looking after
CARLYON, then withdraws again.]*

[Pg 42]

RHEINHARDT.

So you see I have come. I started so soon as I got your letter.

VERA.

I am very, very grateful to you. I do so hope I may be wrong.

RHEINHARDT.

He does not show much sign of it.

VERA.

He has such self-command.

RHEINHARDT.

Not at all! He is irritable and contradicts me much.

VERA.

I had not noticed him irritable. He is sometimes depressed.

RHEINHARDT.

I tell you he is irritable. You must be careful not to excite him, not to contradict him; bah, let little things pass!

[With a sweep of the hand.]

[Pg 43]

VERA.

Then you think from what I have told you that it really is so?

RHEINHARDT.

How can I say? The evidences are much too small. Have you examined him again?

VERA.

I managed it again yesterday. I think it's even clearer; of course I can't be sure.

RHEINHARDT.

You have watched him in daily life? Yes?

VERA.

Of course. I have a good many notes for you to see.

RHEINHARDT.

He does not suspect anything?

VERA.

Nothing. He says he is overworked; but you would never know from himself that he was at all ill.

[Pg 44]

RHEINHARDT.

That is right, of course he must not be told.

VERA.

It has no effect on a glioma, has it? For the patient to know?

RHEINHARDT.

What do *you* know about gliomas? What do you know about any tumour on the brain at all?

VERA.

I only asked.

RHEINHARDT.

Of course he must not know!— You say his knowledge does not make the glioma worse. No, but it makes the effects worse! It strikes the man down; it is a moral paralysis, when he knows he has a mortal disease. You say it does not bring death nearer? What do you call it if a man has no spirit left in him, no courage, no interest in life? You say it is not important—

VERA.

Please, I never said so.

[Pg 45]

RHEINHARDT.

You contradict me flatly when I speak! I tell you it robs a man of all that is living in him. It makes him at once half dead.

VERA.

Would even a very strong-minded man?—

RHEINHARDT.

Hut! You have been reading Steinmetz. Is a strong-minded man immortal? Will a strong-minded man stand up when I knock him with a sledging-hammer down? There is no such person as Steinmetz's strong-minded man. Take me in. [*Going to the door.*] Show me your notes! Most likely you were wrong from the beginning.

[During this speech re-enter CARLYON and ADENE from back. VERA and RHEINHARDT are by the steps L.]

ADENE.

[*To CARLYON.*] Well, I shall be in the library, and am ready whenever you are.

[Goes off by the steps at the back.]

[Pg 46]

CARLYON.

What, doctor, is she upholding your vanquished opponents? Be severe with her. She would be merciless to us for half such a crime!

VERA.

I'll be back in a moment, father.

[*Exeunt VERA and, RHEINHARDT, RHEINHARDT making impatient gestures without answering. VERA kisses her hand to CARLYON. CARLYON sits down R., but gets up again as ELIZABETH comes in from the French window*
L.

CARLYON.

Well, out with it! [ELIZABETH *looks surprised.*] You've been following me about for two days now, so I suppose there's some mystery coming.

ELIZABETH.

You sometimes speak as if I were no help to you at all!

CARLYON.

Do I? Well, I think I know what you are going to say this time.

[Pg 47]

ELIZABETH.

What?

CARLYON.

First that I was reckless the other day to talk as I did, and quote that tiger song.

ELIZABETH.

Yes.

CARLYON.

Well, I wasn't. I knew what I was doing.

ELIZABETH.

That was not the chief thing.

CARLYON.

Next, that Adene, of all men in the world, must not be sent researching in Bhojâl.

ELIZABETH.

Yes.

CARLYON.

And, thirdly, that there is a way of stopping him.

[Pg 48]

ELIZABETH.

You mean that he cares for Vera? [CARLYON *nods.*] That is just it! Do not put too much on her. She is more than half in love with him, too.

CARLYON.

[*Rather irritably.*] Oh, that's nonsense.

ELIZABETH.

Haven't you seen how she is always watching him? Her face clouds at once if you speak of him suddenly; she has grown quite pensive.

CARLYON.

Why, she'd sooner buckle my shoes than have him at her feet!

ELIZABETH.

Oh, of course. I didn't mean as much as that. But I do wish you would find some safer way.

CARLYON.

[*Ironically.*] Explain matters to the present Rajpoor Government, eh? H'm, well, now it's off your mind, Elizabeth. You must feel better?

[Pg 49]

ELIZABETH.

You *will* be careful about her?

CARLYON.

I will tell her as much as ever she can bear! However, you have been of some use this time.

[*Rises; nods kindly to her. Enter VERA by the steps; ELIZABETH moves off towards the French window.*]

VERA.

Where are you going, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH.

Just to look at my birds.

[*Exit ELIZABETH.*]

CARLYON.

Vera, I am going to confide in you. Will you help me?

VERA.

Oh, father, if you will only let me try! I have longed for you to try me; but you never seemed to have any difficulties.

[Pg 50]

CARLYON.

As a soldier, you know! Absolute obedience!

VERA.

How could I ever disobey you?

CARLYON.

It is not really that. Only I have never felt sure that you were strong enough. You have grown up in such seclusion, such entire ignorance of the world.

VERA.

I have done men's work at the University.

CARLYON.

Students' work! A student is as ignorant as a woman. I doubt still if the rude facts of life will not be too great a shock for you to face.

VERA.

Not with you, father.

CARLYON.

[Pg 51]

You know, Vera, a man's conscience and a woman's conscience are different things. A man has greater difficulties to face, and must risk doing greater wrongs, just as he is called upon to make greater sacrifices for his duty—things that a woman knows nothing of.

[Takes VERA to the seat L., and brings a chair near her.]

VERA.

Don't say a woman, say a child! I know this, and I am ready for the bigger life. It is the lesson you have always taught me.

CARLYON.

Have you learned it?

VERA.

I learned it when I learned to honour you. I always thought of you—— may I say what I thought?

CARLYON.

Go on?

VERA.

Just what I always felt about the sea. It is so deep, so great, so far beyond everything else, that though all the waste things of the world are cast upon it, it takes no stain from them, it is always pure and strong. I thought you were like that.

[Pg 52]

CARLYON.

You think in poetry, child. But I believe you know me. What I have to say is this: You must prevent young Adene from going to Bhojâl.

VERA.

But I was glad he was going! And I thought he had convinced you he would succeed.

CARLYON.

That is why he must not go. I have done things there which will never be forgotten in Bhojâl, and which must never be known in England.

VERA.

I don't understand. You can't have done anything bad?

CARLYON.

Nothing that causes me remorse. Nothing that I would not do again. But you know how these things are judged.

VERA.

I know the public might misunderstand; but Mr. Adene, he has travelled so much——

[Pg 53]

CARLYON.

Adene has the conscience of a child.

VERA.

[*As if involuntarily, with pain.*] His eyes are just like a child's eyes.

CARLYON.

[*Rises, walks away, and then turns.*] I will not have Adene in his study and the public in their arm chairs judging the desperate things I did when I was face to face with death!

VERA.

Yes, I can see that. But tell me what it was.

CARLYON.

You know how I stand. I have already more influence in India than any living man. And here—well, I am not free to speak of it yet; but if I accept what is offered me, my power here will be very great. If this is once known, good-bye to everything, here or there.

VERA.

It can be nothing that would bring you dishonour.

[Pg 54]

CARLYON.

Dishonour? Public infamy!

VERA.

I *know* that what you did was not dishonourable.

CARLYON.

I will tell you the worst at once.

[*He places the chair nearer her.*]

VERA.

[*Forcing a smile.*] I am not afraid.

CARLYON.

I believe you have enough knowledge of me, and enough courage, to see that what I did was right.

VERA.

Thank you for trusting me, father.

CARLYON.

It was when I was in Koreb's town, almost alone, just before the war. The place was full of his men; they came streaming in every day.

[Pg 55]

VERA.

It was in time of peace, was it?

CARLYON.

It was called peace, but we all knew what was coming. War would have been better. A frank declaration of war was the one thing wanted; but—[*watching her keenly*—of course it was my duty to avoid war as long as possible.

VERA.

[*Simply.*] Of course.

[CARLYON *seems about to speak angrily, but changes his mind.*

CARLYON.

I sent to Government for advice and Government advised—our waiting patiently to have our throats cut.

VERA.

[*Shuddering.*] Poor father, what did you do?

CARLYON.

[*Darkly.*] You remember the little hospital I had there?

[Pg 56]

VERA.

Yes.

CARLYON.

I utilised my infectious cases.

VERA.

[*After a moment's pause.*] What do you mean?

CARLYON.

You know the natives have no idea about infection and that sort of thing.

VERA.

Of course. You used to have such trouble to get even the

infected clothes burnt.

CARLYON.

Exactly, in ordinary times. Well, at this time I didn't take so much trouble, I took a little trouble the other way.

VERA.

But—What do you mean? What did you want?

[Pg 57]

CARLYON.

[*Harshly.*] I wanted the tribes who were crowding round us to disperse. And I knew that cholera would disperse them.

VERA.

Do you mean that you deliberately——?

CARLYON.

Don't trouble about the details. My servant Selim did most of it. There was always a case or two of cholera in Bhojâl, and it's not hard to make such things spread if you want to.

VERA.

I don't understand. What did you do?

CARLYON.

I poisoned the well. It only took ten days and the tribes began to disperse. It was a regular panic. So we took our opportunity and cut our way back to Rajpoor. I only lost two men; and Selim for a third. [*Rising, with a sigh of relief.*] Then the war broke out.

[Pg 58]

VERA.

[*Shuddering uneasily.*] Of course you were right! But there was always cholera there. It may not have come from anything you did.

CARLYON.

I don't know about that. [*Grimly.*] I think Selim understood his business.

VERA.

[*Shuddering again.*] How horrible! But of course you were right. All the women and children, too?

CARLYON.

Naturally; I couldn't isolate the non-combatants. There weren't very many. I saved my own men. [*He pauses, takes a step or two L. and breaks out.*] I deceived the Government, disobeyed the Government, and saved the whole of Rajpoor! I shut the war up in the Bhojâli country, conquered Bhojâl, annexed half of it, and drove the rebellious element beyond the frontier.

VERA.

[*Shuddering and cowed.*] It was very horrible!

[Pg 59]

CARLYON.

Horrible! And what if Koreb had been let loose upon Rajpoor? If you had ever seen the sacked villages and the torture stakes——

VERA.

Oh I know, I know. I didn't mean anything *you* did was horrible.

CARLYON.

[*With emotion.*] If some chance, some supernatural stroke had done what I did, there would be no horror at the sacrifice, there would be nothing but hymns and thanksgivings. They all prayed to God that this might come to pass! Who dares to blame me because I did the thing they prayed for?

VERA.

[*Rising, after a moment's silence.*] But how will *his* going do any harm? Surely it is known already; the others knew it?

CARLYON.

No one but old Selim and I. [*With a curious smile.*] And afterwards the chief—Koreb.

[Pg 60]

VERA.

Koreb? How did he know?

CARLYON.

There must have been a rumour among his people, but somehow he knew more.

VERA.

Didn't Koreb speak when he was taken prisoner?

CARLYON.

[*Looking at her.*] Don't you remember what happened to him? He didn't know how to write.

VERA.

Oh, they cut his tongue out—his own people! I remember. [*She shudders.*]

CARLYON.

[*Pacing the room.*] There are many nasty things to rake up in the past if we let Adene go. [VERA *silent.*] Can you stop him?

VERA.

I?

[Pg 61]

CARLYON.

You!

VERA.

I don't know. I don't see how I can. [*With horror.*] Why, yes, I could! But it would be—Oh, no, it would be too wicked!

CARLYON.

[*Coming to her.*] What is it? Wouldn't he stay if you asked him?

VERA.

No, not unless—

CARLYON.

Unless you promised to marry him! If that too much?

VERA.

Oh, no, no, no! That never entered my head. I could do that. I could do anything myself, but—

CARLYON.

Am I not first, after all?

[Pg 62]

VERA.

[*Not noticing what he says.*] I tell you *I* can do anything; but I cannot sacrifice *him*!

CARLYON.

If you care for him so much——

VERA.

[*Turning quickly.*] I care nothing for him, nothing! Of course you are first. I will do anything in the world for you—— only this is so terrible! I can't tell him.

CARLYON.

Tell him! Of course you can't!

VERA.

Oh, not that! I did not mean that!

CARLYON.

Then what can't you tell him?

VERA.

I can't tell him that he's a dying man—that he has a mortal disease of the brain.

[Pg 63]

CARLYON.

[*After a moment of silence.*] There was never any one who could really stand against me! How long do you give him?
[*He sits down with an air of relief.*]

VERA.

It may be a long time. I can't say.

CARLYON.

I must have some idea; say what you think. Afterwards we can find some one who knows.

VERA.

I think probably he will be blind in a year, and paralysed in two years, and then——

CARLYON.

Blind in a year, paralysed in two!

VERA.

But I may be utterly wrong; I know so little and I have only had a few stolen opportunities of observing him.

CARLYON.

Have you told Rheinhardt?

[Pg 64]

VERA.

Yes, that is why I asked him here—

CARLYON.

[*Observing that she is hurt.*] A dying man can be as dangerous as another. How can you stop him?

VERA.

By telling him.

CARLYON.

And he'll spend the rest of his life in getting doctored; yes. At any rate he isn't likely to go travelling in Bhojâl. I should think he was a brave man too.

VERA.

He won't be brave any more! Dr. Rheinhardt has told me all about it—it crushes a man, breaks his nerve, takes away all his spirit.

CARLYON.

[*Who has not been listening to her—pacing the room again.*] Yes, that is evidently the plan. It is as simple as daylight. Poor fellow, he had the makings of a fine man.

[Pg 65]

VERA.

Oh, don't pity him. I can't do it if you pity him.

CARLYON.

You're not going to give him his disease!

VERA.

No, but to tell him—

CARLYON.

You'll have to tell your patients things.

VERA.

If there was any hope of curing him—

CARLYON.

So there is! There *must* be—*some* hope, unless you send him off to Bhojâl in ignorance. Then I agree there is none. [VERA *looks at him with suspicion.*] It happens to be dangerous to me, certainly, but that doesn't make it prudent for him.

VERA.

[Pg 66]

Father, don't try to make little of it. I will do what you ask; but I must do it by breaking his spirit. I shall tell him suddenly, brutally—so as to crush him once for all. Oh, how I shall loathe myself! [After a pause.] Only the last few months of his life!

CARLYON.

[Coming up to her.] There speaks my brave girl again! What could he do with that crippled life? And think of the long years that lie before me—and you with me.

[He turns and walks a little way up the garden.]

VERA.

If it were any one but you!

Re-enter RHEINHARDT *down the steps; he sees VERA but not CARLYON.*

RHEINHARDT.

You were quite right, quite right! You have seen at a glance what it would take weeks and weeks—Of course it was just a piece of luck; it was not any skill—you have none. [To CARLYON.] Ah, I did not see you! I was talking of your daughter's work.

[Pg 67]

CARLYON.

[Coming down to RHEINHARDT.] Ah, Dr. Rheinhardt, I know the sad piece of work you are referring to. Is there no hope?

RHEINHARDT.

[To VERA.] Did you speak hereof to another person?

VERA.

Only my father, Dr. Rheinhardt.

RHEINHARDT.

"Only"! "Only"! And you wish to be a doctor!

CARLYON.

Come, Doctor, you mustn't be hard upon her. I extorted the facts.

RHEINHARDT.

A professional secret cannot be extorted! Miss Carlyon has only one apology: she is not yet even in name a physician, and has time to reflect before she attempts it to become.

[Pg 68]

CARLYON.

Well, I will leave her to be scolded alone. It is worse before witnesses! Unless you would care to say anything to me?

RHEINHARDT.

That is not my affair.

[*Exit CARLYON, with a sort of stern, humorous defiance, L.*]

So it was an extortion, eh? A compulsion?

VERA.

Yes.

RHEINHARDT.

And now you are sorry for what you have done? eh? and you pray forgiveness, and you will never do it again?

VERA.

No, I had to. I would always do the same.

RHEINHARDT.

Gott im Himmel! Then I blame you no more! If you can show courage to Rheinhardt!—You may have had reasons. Well, well, I trust you.

[Pg 69]

VERA.

Don't do that.

RHEINHARDT.

I will put you to a test. Your conclusions are right, if your observations are right. That is what I must see.

VERA.

Are *you* going to tell him?

RHEINHARDT.

Tell him? Am I mad? And what is more, he must not know that you have watched him. You understand?

VERA.

Oh, yes! *[She sits down, dispiritedly.]*

RHEINHARDT.

This diagnosis, you are proud of it, eh? Well, we shall say nothing about it. *[VERA nods.]* I will speak of his headaches; he will let me treat them. Then I will watch! I will watch!

[Pg 70]

VERA.

You don't think—there couldn't be any chance of an operation?

RHEINHARDT.

Not the faintest! Not the ghost! Operation? Bah! it would be criminal, it would be an assassinate! *[With a climax of contempt.]* Ugh! it is what Steinmetz would do!

VERA.

[Rising.] Would Steinmetz try it? He is coming over here for the Medical Congress.

RHEINHARDT.

Gott im Himmel! Would Steinmetz ever refuse an assassinate? He would just kill him one year sooner, that is all. He is dying fast enough for me.

VERA.

[To herself.] Is it worth while to be so long dying?

RHEINHARDT.

Are you coming in?

[Pg 71]

VERA.

No, I want to sit out in the air. [*She sits again.*]

RHEINHARDT.

Ah, then the thesis is finished: or is it given up?

VERA.

Doctor, don't be angry with me for little things, when there may come great ones. [*Shakes his hand.*] Just to show that you forgive me this time for telling father. I expect some day you will never forgive me. [RHEINHARDT *looks curiously at her, and exit.* VERA *waits motionless for an instant, then rises with a hard laugh.*] Well, the sooner the better. [*Going across to window back.*] Mr. Adene! Mr. Adene!

ADENE.

[*From inside.*] Miss Carlyon! Yes, I am coming at once.

Enter ELIZABETH hurriedly from the house.

ELIZABETH.

What is it? Why do you call him?

[Pg 72]

VERA.

I have something to say to him.

ELIZABETH.

Vera, Vera, have you thought well what you are doing?

VERA.

No, and I won't think!

ELIZABETH.

You must not betray your father! [*Holding her arm.*]

VERA.

[*Throwing her off.*] It is not my father I am betraying!

ELIZABETH.

[*Letting go.*] Thank Heaven for that! Oh, child! put all your faith in him, and, whatever you suffer, you will

never be lonely or forsaken!

*[Exit ELIZABETH, as ADENE appears on the steps,
pen in hand.*

ADENE.

I have just been writing——

[Pg 73]

VERA.

You are perfectly determined to go?

ADENE.

Of course. Why?

VERA.

Is there nothing you could think of that would turn you back?

ADENE.

No; especially now that your father approves.

VERA.

But will you go on to other places after Bhojâl?

ADENE.

Naturally. Why are you cross-examining me? I will confess everything.

VERA.

And if you find an Englishman who has done wrong ever so long ago to a native, you will expose him?

ADENE.

Certainly, if I find any.

[Pg 74]

VERA.

Take a man who has left it all behind him . . . who was serving his country in some high and difficult post?

ADENE.

I shall report anything I think ought to be known to the proper authorities. I am not a police agent nor a spy; but I am a historian, and I do not intend to hide things in order to oblige people!

VERA.

Peace and war the same?

ADENE.

Of course there is great latitude allowed in war, but—

VERA.

[*Interrupting.*] I know you will do harm! I wish you would wait and think. . . . Wait for six months.

ADENE.

Six months!!

VERA.

[Pg 75]

You are doing evil work there! You are upsetting the work of government. . . . It is all being reformed. You will be killed yourself. . . . I shall never ask anything but this of you: only wait! Wait till you can think it over!

[*Comes a little to him.*]

ADENE.

[*Mastering some impatience.*] My dear Miss Carlyon. I have thought it over long ago. You don't suppose I have worked for years towards this scheme and never asked myself whether it was right?

VERA.

It is not too late to think again.

ADENE.

I cannot understand why you are so troubled.

VERA.

I have told you why.

ADENE.

You can't want to screen any one!

VERA.

Whom could I screen? I know no one but father.

[*She moves a little away from him.*]

[Pg 76]

ADENE.

[*Goes to her.*] Is it possible that it is my life you care for?

I should never have dared to hope it. If it is really that, may I, when I come back—

VERA.

Will you go or will you stay?

ADENE.

I will take every possible care. My life never seemed so precious to me as it does now. If only when I return I may come to you—

VERA.

Will you go or will you stay?

ADENE.

You are unreasonable. [*Takes her hand.*] Surely one must take the risks—

VERA.

[*Interrupting.*] Leave go, leave go! You are mad! [*He recoils from her.*] Your life may well seem precious; you have barely a year of it left!

[Pg 77]

ADENE.

What do you mean?

VERA.

I have watched you day by day. I saw it in your eyes with that glass. There are a dozen symptoms to make it as clear as daylight. You don't feel much yet, but you're going blind, you're going paralysed, you are dying slowly under my eyes. . . . [ADENE, *incredulous but horror-struck, grasps the back of the chair.*] Dr. Rheinhardt knows it. He has seen my notes and watched you. First blind, then paralysed, then dead! Now go if you can; cross the mountains and ruin good men by raking up their old wrongdoings.

ADENE.

It can't be true! [*Calling out.*] Reinhardt, Rheinhardt! Here! Come at once!

RHEINHARDT *appears on the steps* L.

RHEINHARDT.

Why, what in this world . . .

ADENE.

Is this true? Have you seen anything in me?—

[Pg 78]

RHEINHARDT.

Woman, woman! you have not told him?

ADENE.

Then it is true. Is there no chance for me?

RHEINHARDT.

My friend, your case is somewhat serious.

ADENE.

She says there is no hope; is a true? What is it?

RHEINHARDT.

[*Slowly.*] There is much reason to fear that you may have what we call a glioma in the substance of the brain. But you need not yet be uneasy. You may live a considerable time.

ADENE.

Is there no operation possible?

RHEINHARDT.

None at all, none at all! It would be criminal at present.

[Pg 79]

ADENE.

How long shall I have the use of my faculties?

RHEINHARDT.

You may well live until some experimentation— Yes, the subject is being much attended to.

ADENE.

Oh, Rheinhardt, you are my friend. How long can I calculate upon? Two months? One month?

RHEINHARDT.

Longer than that.

ADENE.

Six months? [RHEINHARDT *assents.*] Then I must start at once. I can do most of it! [*Coming across to VERA.*] Thank you. Miss Carlyon, for letting me know. Forgive me for what I said—what I tried to say. I did not, of course, know how painful it was. I shall always—I am privileged now, am I not?—I shall always love and honour you, and be grateful for the anxiety you showed to save me from what you thought a danger. But I shall be happier when I get to work.

[Pg 80]

VERA.

But you won't go? You won't go! Is it all for nothing?

ADENE.

Will work hurt me, Rheinhardt?

RHEINHARDT.

Far better work than not—if you can.

ADENE.

Oh, I can, sure enough. Miss Carlyon, may I—

VERA.

No, no! Go away from me and forget that you ever saw me.
[*She falls on the settee, sobbing.*]

ADENE.

Good-bye, Rheinhardt. But you must have another look at me, to make certain.

RHEINHARDT.

[Pg 81]

Of course I must. [*Exit ADENE.*] Ach, Gott! What a man! But he must break down. He must break down! Oh, if Steinmetz were to be right after all? [*Passing by VERA.*] Ach! you miserable, you rotten-hearted girl!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

[Pg 82]

THE THIRD ACT

*A sitting-room in CARLYON'S house; time, 10 p.m.
Doors left and right; also in right back corner*

opening into veranda with aviary. ELIZABETH is in the aviary crooning to her Himalayan eagles; CARLYON is writing L.C.; VERA, with the British Medical Journal in her hand, watches him rather anxiously till he ceases and begins to read over his letter, then she rises and comes up to him.

VERA.

Are you busy, Father?

CARLYON.

I am only reasoning with Her Majesty's Government. There, copy that! [Gives her the draft letter.]

[Pg 83]

VERA.

There is a thing you ought perhaps to see in this paper—some experiments of Dr. Steinmetz. [Offering him the B. M. J.]

CARLYON.

[Sharply.] What paper?

VERA.

Only the *British Medical Journal*. You said I could keep it on.

CARLYON.

You have given up all the others?

VERA.

Yes. All except this. There is an article here— [Offers it to him again: he does not take it.]

CARLYON.

Do you care about this one?

VERA.

[With a sigh and a smile.] I have read it all through three times.

[Pg 84]

CARLYON.

[Rising; peremptorily.] Vera, I don't offer you my work as a *pis aller*. If you wish to go back to your medicine. . . .

VERA.

Dr. Rheinhardt has definitely forbidden me!

CARLYON.

You could win Rheinhardt round in ten minutes. The point is—do you wish it?

VERA.

[*Dispiritedly.*] Oh, no; I want only to serve you. When you first spoke of making me your secretary, it came to me like a ray of sunlight.

CARLYON.

But now you have regrets?

VERA.

No. I always felt a sort of doubt and fear of things when I depended on myself; and now that is all gone.

[Pg 85]

CARLYON.

You don't feel at home in my world yet; naturally.

VERA.

I think I do. It is so restful to have you to guide me and judge for me. Only I do enjoy this old thing—[*showing the B. M. J.*—and it takes very little time.

CARLYON.

It is not a question of time; it is a question of divided allegiance.

VERA.

I will give it up if you think right, father.

CARLYON.

No, not just yet. Here are three more letters. [*Hands them to her.*] Decline that. Agree to that. Tell the Deputation to come on the 15th at 10 A.M.

VERA.

Yes.

CARLYON.

[Pg 86]

Also write out a telegram. [*Looks at her and pauses.*]

No; that is all. Take them upstairs; I may want to dictate something.

VERA.

Yes.

[*Exit VERA. CARLYON sits again. ELIZABETH, who has approached from the veranda, looks at CARLYON questioningly.*]

CARLYON.

Well, Elizabeth? [Not looking up, absently.]

ELIZABETH.

[*Standing above him.*] Aren't you hard upon her? She did so love her medicine! And she has hardly any of her old light-heartedness left.

CARLYON.

She has got some, and I shall have to take that away. Do you know, Elizabeth, you were light-hearted once?

ELIZABETH.

But you won't make her like me?

CARLYON.

[Pg 87]

Precisely, except that she'll be cleverer. I suppose you are happy enough at the end of the process?

ELIZABETH.

Oh, *I* am happy if only I can satisfy you. But she will never quite give herself up.

CARLYON.

Oh yes, she will! Why, already she follows without question every word I speak!

ELIZABETH.

[*Coming round in front of him.*] Every spoken word, I should hope so! But what about your unspoken thoughts and feelings? Oh, you *know* she will never be like me. Can you bring *her* in from another room by wishing for her? Does *she* come in smiling if you are glad, and sad if you are angry? [CARLYON *shrugs his shoulders.*] Has there ever been any one but me like that?

CARLYON.

[*With a laugh.*] Well, Selim for one! And the late Khan of Bhojâl for another! However, since you can read my feelings, do you know what is the matter with me to-night?

[Pg 88]

ELIZABETH.

No, I know that you are troubled.

CARLYON.

I have had letters from Rajpoor; that man Adene has come back across the frontier from Bhojâl. And that's not all; read this. [*Gives her a letter.*]

ELIZABETH.

[*Reading.*] Well, when once you let him go——

CARLYON.

A sick half-dying man like that—the chances were enormous against his ever returning.

ELIZABETH.

[*Reading.*] What is all this long description of the man who has come back with him? "A huge one-armed Mahometan——"

CARLYON.

[*Repeating from memory.*] "With a fixed glazed look as though he were seeing something horrible." Bah! that's enough. [*Takes letter.*] And now he is on his way to Koreb at Travancore.

[Pg 89]

ELIZABETH.

What does it mean? I never knew what you did to Koreb.

CARLYON.

No, but *he* does!

ELIZABETH.

How can you tell?

CARLYON.

I know the man who is with him. I do not forget that look.

ELIZABETH.

Oh! why won't you let *me* help you?

CARLYON.

There is no difficulty. I'll have Adene back at once to be operated upon.

ELIZABETH.

Surely he knows that an operation is not possible?

CARLYON.

If Vera writes to him that it *is* possible, he'll come!

[Pg 90]

ELIZABETH.

Vera? Oh, do take care! She might obey you in everything else, but you'll have to deceive her about him.

CARLYON.

I shall not deceive her. If she flinches, I shall tell her a little truth.

ELIZABETH.

Truth? [*Nervously.*] Do you mean you will tell her about me, or something you have never told me? She won't bear it!

CARLYON.

Of course she won't. I should like to see her bear a thing that I mean to crush her!

ELIZABETH.

[*Suddenly throwing herself down and kissing his hand.*] Oh, do let it be me! Let me do something for you! If you would only try me—

CARLYON.

What use can I possibly make of you?

ELIZABETH.

[Pg 91]

[*Continuing.*] I have courage enough. When you were vexed with me yesterday, I went and walked in the cage there, among the eagles!

CARLYON.

To punish yourself? [*Grimly.*] Well, I suppose they were asleep!

ELIZABETH.

I woke them! Oh, you can't trust her like me; and I will do anything, anything!

CARLYON.

Come, come, Elizabeth! [*Lifts her up.*] That letter must come from Vera, and from no one else. [*A ring is heard at the front door.*] And I am not anxious. It would want a miracle to unseat me now; and I don't suppose my fortune intends to desert me all of a sudden.

Enter VERA hurriedly.

VERA.

Did you hear that bell? I am sure it is Dr. Rheinhardt; I knew his step on the gravel walk.

CARLYON.

It can't be Rheinhardt! Why, he is in Zurich. What is the matter with you?

[Pg 92]

VERA.

No. He came to Carlisle to the Medical Congress, but——

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Dr. Rheinhardt wishes to see you, sir, for a few minutes.

CARLYON.

What can he be coming here for? Show him in.

Enter RHEINHARDT. ELIZABETH goes to speak with the SERVANT, and so exit with him.

RHEINHARDT.

[*Addressing CARLYON and ignoring VERA, who looks anxiously at him and then turns away.*] I have come——

CARLYON.

Well, this is a surprise, Doctor. Where have you come from?

RHEINHARDT.

I have come merely for a few minutes, to ask if you know the address in India of Mr. Adene. I had it till he left Rajpoor; but since then a telegram has been returned to me.

CARLYON.

Adene's address? No; let me think.

VERA.

Yes; we can easily find him.

CARLYON.

[*Sharply turning.*] You are wrong, Vera. You only know that old address. [*To RHEINHARDT.*] I had one or two letters from him, but the people at Rajpoor whose address he used have lost sight of him.

RHEINHARDT.

Is there no person he has written to here?

VERA.

[*With an impulse.*] Do you mean to go to him?

[*RHEINHARDT stands stiffly, taking no notice.*]

CARLYON.

Nobody. I believe he has a sister or something at Clifton.

RHEINHARDT.

Please give me her address and also the address of the people at Rajpoor.

CARLYON.

I do not know the address at Clifton. At Rajpoor it is Stephen Bonsor, Esq.—

RHEINHARDT.

Bah! that is what I have. Have you a 'Bradshaw'? I will go to Clifton.

CARLYON.

But you can't mean to go to Clifton to-night?

RHEINHARDT.

If I can get a train!

[VERA meantime has fetched him a 'Bradshaw,'
which he puts down on the British Medical
Journal.

[*Sarcastically.*] I was not aware that Miss Carlyon any
longer professed an interest in these studies!

[*He examines 'Bradshaw'; VERA does not reply,
but joins CARLYON down centre.*

[Pg 95]

CARLYON.

[*Apart, to VERA.*] What made you think he was going
himself? He may be only going to write.

VERA.

No, I am sure he is going!

CARLYON.

Why, the operation has never been attempted?

VERA.

Yes. That was what I wanted to show you just now.
Steinmetz has done it four times, and killed the patient
each time. The *Journal* is indignant. He can hardly mean
to try it! But he won't tell us; he wouldn't even speak to
me!

CARLYON.

We'll soon see that! [*Approaching RHEINHARDT.*] By the
way, Doctor, I see that your old master, Steinmetz, has
been very successful in performing that operation on the
brain, that young Adene—

RHEINHARDT.

[Pg 96]

Steinmetz my master? Steinmetz was never my master!
You call it successful, you call it Steinmetz's section?
Very well, I do not complain! It is Steinmetz's section
because he has cut open five people and killed four—
[*Movement of VERA and of CARLYON*—and he is my master
because I have only cut open two and killed none! He is
your great man.

VERA.

[*Excitedly.*] You have done the operation yourself?

RHEINHARDT.

I only followed him; he showed the way. When have I said
anything else? And if I do not kill my people it is because
I have no originality, I am a plodder, a second-rate man!

Bah! he is a bungler!

CARLYON.

Then you *are* going to India to operate on Adene?

RHEINHARDT.

What does it matter—I am nobody—what I do? Good-night.

CARLYON.

[Pg 97]

Stop a moment. Vera has just reminded me that we have got a later address. If you are going to operate, or think it possible, we must telegraph to him to come back at once.

RHEINHARDT.

I will not telegraph. What can I promise him? "Come back and let me see if it will kill you to cut out a big bit out of your head!" I will go and find him.

VERA.

[*With a sheet of paper on which she has just been writing.*] Look, Dr. Rheinhardt, this is the right address.

[*Gives it him. CARLYON frowns, with some surprise; RHEINHARDT hesitates, then takes it ungraciously.*]

CARLYON.

I advise you to telegraph all the same. The climate of India will be very unfavourable for his recovery.

RHEINHARDT.

Climate? Bah! it has a hundred climates. I shall start tomorrow if there is a steamer. Good-night!

CARLYON.

But you will have to wait three hours for a train.

[Pg 98]

RHEINHARDT.

Well, there is a waiting-room.

[*Exit RHEINHARDT. VERA is motionless for an instant, then starts after him.*]

CARLYON.

[*Peremptorily.*] Vera!

VERA.

[*Impulsively.*] Oh, father! could I go with him?

CARLYON.

With Rheinhardt to India? Good God, girl, it may come to that yet! [*He paces the room disturbed and angry, then turns upon her.*] Then it was all wrong, what you've been telling me about those operations? You said it was impossible.

VERA.

It was, a few months ago.

CARLYON.

Do you mean that you think that Rheinhardt can do it?

[Pg 99]

VERA.

He never operates unless he is almost certain of success. Oh, how wonderful it would be!

CARLYON.

[*With fury.*] Wonderful! Are you a perfect fool, Vera? [*Pause. He continues coldly.*] You heard me speak of a telegram to be sent to-night?

VERA.

Yes.

CARLYON.

[*Watching her, taking from his pocket-book a sheet of notepaper.*] It was this—to Adene; to return at once, as the operation can be performed.

VERA.

But you did not know then—you did not think it could be performed!

CARLYON.

[*Deliberately.*] I thought it was impossible. [*Pause.*]

VERA.

I don't understand.— Oh, Father, I can't believe it! I thought you had made up your mind to face all that might come. What you did in Bhojâl was right; why are you afraid of his knowing it? Oh, you are not! You are not a man who can be afraid! You are not; or why did you never speak of him all this time? Why did you never try to stop him?

CARLYON.

I gave the Bhojâl Mountains the chance of stopping him first. And if they failed, then I had magic for him!

VERA.

Magic?

CARLYON.

The promise of a chance of life to a man slowly dying. [*Tapping the telegram.*] I had only to send this, and he was bound to come home.

VERA.

Have you been waiting for him like a beast of prey all this time?

CARLYON.

[*With passion.*] No, it is he who is waiting for me like a beast of prey. Do you think I have not felt him there all these months? Do you suppose I have not made ready to strike him as he springs?

VERA.

I would never have sent such a telegram. [*Defiant, then instantaneously submissive.*] It would be no good. He wouldn't come. He wouldn't even believe you—now!

CARLYON.

[*Coldly.*] This telegram is signed by you, not by me. [*She comes up to him and looks at the telegram.*] Are you calm enough to listen to reason?

VERA.

I can listen to anything you have got to say. But I would sooner murder him outright than this!

CARLYON.

It may very possibly come to that—especially after you have given Rheinhardt that address—against my wish!

VERA.

You spoke of giving him a later address——

[*Her manner is cowed.*]

CARLYON.

You knew I did not wish it.

[Pg 102]

VERA.

Yes, I am sorry.

CARLYON.

You preferred to disobey me; perhaps you mean to disobey me now? I make no appeal because of my danger; I can defend myself without you—or even against you. [Sits on settee.]

VERA.

[*Passionately, on her knees to him.*] How could I ever be against you? If anything happens I will die with you!

CARLYON.

There is no question of dying. And if you are ready to judge me and desert me on your first impulse, without caring to understand, it is just as well for me that there is not.

VERA.

Oh! I ought not to judge you! Father, I don't judge you. But make me understand.

CARLYON.

Did you think me right about the poisoning of the well?

[Pg 103]

VERA.

No, not at first. But I began quickly to see——

CARLYON.

Will you take that as a lesson to show you how to trust me? Vera, I am a man greater than other men. I see my way clearly. I shrink from nothing, and I strike hard. Another man cannot keep pace with me: he cannot criticise me: he must either stand out of my path, or follow me with perfect devotion.

VERA.

Yes, yes; I know. I always feel it. Only that is why I cannot hear you to be plotting. I want always to say what the Bhojâlis said: "He has no fear, and his justice is the justice of a god."

CARLYON.

[Pg 104]

Do you know what they meant by the justice of a god? That is the very thing you dare not face. A god has his great ends which men know not of, and woe to the men or the nations that block those ends! And so it is with me. So it has been with all great rulers and conquerors of men. You cannot judge them, you cannot judge me, step by step, detail by detail. You need only know that ultimately, taken all in all, what I will is good, and I have never yet failed.

VERA.

[*Moved.*] Oh, it is true; I always knew it.

CARLYON.

You want to think me purer and juster than other men? So I am. I have a high and clear standard, and never swerve from it without cause. I am merciful, because I have seldom needed to be cruel; I speak the truth, because I am seldom afraid. But, once or twice, here and there, when things were different, I have never been turned from my purpose by the mere nervous horror of a crime that most men feel; and where the first step led to a second and a third, I have gone on without flinching.

VERA.

I can understand you, father. You have broken ordinary laws, because you listened to higher laws. You have followed your own conscience.

CARLYON.

[Pg 105]

Conscience? I don't know what it means. I tell you I have seldom, very seldom, broken through what people call justice. But when I did—where other men would flinch and prevaricate, I lied and swore false oaths. Where they would connive at wrong occurring, I did the wrong with my own hands, and cleared away the evidence of it. My own people in Bhojâl knew me; they told in their songs how I could give the tiger fresh hunger and the cobra poison; but they said too, "Best to be in the hand of God, next best in the hand of Kalÿona Sahib."

VERA.

Yes, yes. I am bewildered, but I can see some great right and truth coming out through it all. You saved your own people and all Rajpoor. One man had gone mad with fear —
[*She is going over it, to convince herself.*]

CARLYON.

[*With swift contempt.*] Do you think mere danger made me poison the Bhojâli waters?

VERA.

You told me how it was. Any one who knew all would forgive you!

[Pg 106]

CARLYON.

Forgive me! I want no forgiveness! I did what I did because it was the right thing to do; not because I was afraid. [*She looks up bewildered.*] I did it to make the Bhojâlis rebel, and then to crush them.

VERA.

[*Aghast.*] To make them rebel? You poisoned the water to make them——?

CARLYON.

Yes, and all fell out exactly as I meant. They were panicstricken, paralysed, stung to fury, all at one blow. And they struck when they were weak and I was strong!

VERA.

But you said—you said—— I can't believe it!

CARLYON.

Only one thing went wrong. I had too much power over Koreb. The man loved me like a dog, and somehow couldn't fight against me.

[Pg 107]

VERA.

I know. Oh, I know! Poor Koreb!

CARLYON.

[*His hand on her shoulder.*] He fled from his own people and came to me. He was half crazy by that time, and went babbling like a fool right and left. I thought of having him shot. I thought of one thing after another. Selim was with me; and that night Selim fell upon him in his sleep, and made sure of his silence!

VERA.

[*Recoils in horror and puts her hand over her mouth.*] You never——

CARLYON.

I never spoke a word, but my thought somehow drilled its way into his brain, and when I woke in the morning the thing was done.—Rouse yourself! You are the daughter of a man born for greatness, a man who does what others dream of! You love me, and you dare not disobey! [*She raises her eyes to his in a fascinated, half-stupefied way.*] Read that letter!

[Pg 108]

VERA.

[*Utterly unnerved.*] I can't read! What is it?

CARLYON.

Adene has come back from Bhojâl. He is almost dying, but—— Do you see that?

VERA.

What is it?

CARLYON.

[*Taking the letter back and speaking in a tone of anger and fear.*] Selim is with him!

VERA.

Then Selim can defend you, not I! [*He stops her as he is trying to rise.*] Oh, let me go!

CARLYON.

Selim won't defend me! After that morning he knew too much. It was two nights later, in the jungle.—Are you listening?

VERA.

Yes. You murdered him too! What is it you want of me?

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CARLYON.

No! The wretch knew what was in my mind. He dodged my stroke, and I only cut through his arm, and he went over, wounded, to the enemy.

VERA.

And now he has come back?

CARLYON.

Now this Adene has hunted him out, and they are going to Travancore to Koreb's prison.

VERA.

And am I to murder some one? Who is it?

CARLYON.

Vera, you are sobbing like a hysterical girl. Look things in the face! There is no question of murder.

VERA.

Oh! it is all murder! [*Gets up.*] There is nothing but murder! You have done too much, and they are crowding from their graves against you. There is no escape—oh, thank God, there is no escape! Now I can forgive you everything; you have only to suffer and let them hunt you to death!

[Pg 110]

CARLYON.

[*Rising.*] No escape? Is it Adene and two half mad natives you are afraid of?

VERA.

Oh, make me see that what you did was right! I shall believe everything. Only I am weak, and I can't bear it if you leave me without help.

CARLYON.

Vera take my hands—[*She does so.*]—look me in the face. My cause was worth a war, and I made it. It claimed Koreb and Selim, and I sacrificed them. Am I now to prolong the life of one dying man that all the sacrifices of the past may be wasted? Do you see?

VERA.

Yes, I am stronger now. I don't care about the past. I will do what you bid me.

CARLYON.

Well, the first thing is to telegraph—[*He makes a slight pause: then deliberately*]—so that he shall come to England and miss Rheinhardt.

[Pg 111]

[*Throughout this scene CARLYON has fixed his eyes on VERA, controlling her with them, except for sudden outbreaks. Her manner gradually becomes submissive and dazed, as if she were answering each question in answer to the outside stimulus, without fully*

understanding what she said.

VERA.

Yes.

CARLYON.

Will that be enough?

VERA.

No! It is not safe. Other people here could operate.

CARLYON.

Then what do you advise?

VERA.

I must go with Dr. Rheinhardt to India.

CARLYON.

And then?

[Pg 112]

VERA.

[Sweeping her other hand across her brow.] I won't say it. I never thought of it myself; it is only *your* thought drilling itself into my brain!

CARLYON.

You can *help* Rheinhardt when he operates.

VERA.

They will never let me help.

CARLYON.

Don't you see, if you go to India to nurse him, Rheinhardt will think you are in love with the man?

VERA.

[Appealing for mercy.] I believe I was once—— Oh, Father! Father!

CARLYON.

[Lets her go; moving towards door.] Think of it by yourself. *[Turning to her.]* I leave you your full

freedom! [*To himself.*] I wish Elizabeth were here.

VERA.

Oh, don't leave me alone!

[Pg 113]

CARLYON.

[*Continuing, without regard to her appeal.*] Think of it quietly! [*Exit CARLYON, R.*]

[*VERA follows CARLYON towards the door, then runs to the window and puts her head out.*]

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH.

Vera, my eagle is dead! [*VERA silent.*] I felt sure it was coming, he has been so changed these last days,—he has been afraid of things!

VERA.

[*Looking round for a moment, startled, as if she did not understand.*] Oh, the eagle! [*Leans out again.*]

ELIZABETH.

Why, childie! Are you crying? What is the matter?

VERA.

Don't mind me, Elizabeth. I feel just like a child crying.

ELIZABETH.

You have been studying too much. That is it!

[Pg 114]

VERA.

No, I am only left alone.

ELIZABETH.

Why are you alone? You need not be, dear.
[*Goes up and offers VERA her hand.*]

VERA.

[*Reaching her hand back to ELIZABETH, without looking in.*] Thank you, Elizabeth. You are kind to me. But you cannot be any good to me now.

ELIZABETH.

Very well, my dear. Only you will feel better if you trust somebody. It is always so.

VERA.

Who is there to trust? I mean to betray some one who trusts me.

ELIZABETH.

My dear, I think you had better come in from that window. [*Turns.*] What can you see to keep you out there?

VERA.

[Pg 115]

Would you like to know? [ELIZABETH *shows increasing emotion during this speech of VERA'S.*] I see a sort of wide bottomless sheet of water,—it is only the spread of moonlight, you know. A great wide sheet of water—down there—and there is some one drowning in it. I can see his two eyes looking up to me from the depths of it, and there are his hands somewhere reaching out to me for help; and, do you know what, Elizabeth? I shall reach down and down until I can grip them, and then I shall hold him under the water till he is cold and dead— he is cold already. That is what I see. It isn't a cheerful thing, is it? And then,—I don't know what it will be then; but now I can only see the eyes: they are not really like a man's eyes, they are like a child's eyes full of pain, and— [*turns and looks at ELIZABETH*—so trusting and innocent, like a little child being murdered!

ELIZABETH.

[*With a shriek.*] No, no! God help me! Not a child's eyes! Not you too! Oh, say you don't see them!

VERA.

[*Coming towards her.*] Elizabeth! What is it? I have never seen you like this.

[Pg 116]

ELIZABETH.

Oh, tell me that you don't see them! It is only to try me. I know they are there. I see them always. But not you. Not a child's eyes!

VERA.

It was only fancy. It was what I seemed to see in the moonlight on the mist. It meant nothing.

ELIZABETH.

Has he told you? Why did he do it? Tell me, has he told you?

[*Turns and catches hold of* VERA.]

VERA.

Yes, he has—he has told me——

ELIZABETH.

And you are angry! You can't forgive him! Oh, Vera, you are wrong. Blame me if you like. I did love the child, but it was I who wished it. Every woman living would have wished it!

[*Sits on settee.*]

VERA.

I don't understand. Why are you like this?

[Pg 117]

ELIZABETH.

I was stupid with weeping when he came that night, and he was so brave and strong. He never feared anything in his life. He called me "Poor child." "Poor child," he said, "do you know why you are unhappy? Because you dare not do the thing that your heart is praying for." . . . Then he took the child out with him and came back alone.

VERA.

What child? Was it his own child? [*Fiercely, starting towards her.*—Tell me, or I will kill you!—and were you its mother?

ELIZABETH.

I thought he had told you.

VERA.

When was it?

ELIZABETH.

Thirty-four—thirty-five years ago; before he went to India. I loved him long before your mother did.

[Pg 118]

VERA.

You say you loved the child. Didn't you hate him for it?

ELIZABETH.

Hate him? No. I was half mad, I think. I used to watch his face. If there had been a single shadow on it, I think I should have hated him. But he never changed. He was

always untroubled, and his eyes were always true and fearless! Then I knew he could bear all my burdens, and I need fear nothing any more.

VERA.

Why did he not marry you?

ELIZABETH.

He told me from the first he would not. I don't suppose he loved me much; how could he? He was so far above me, so much stronger and wiser. I got all I wanted afterwards, when he let me come here and look after you.

VERA.

I don't understand you, Elizabeth. [*Vehemently.*] Are you mad, and is it all untrue?

[Pg 119]

ELIZABETH.

The baby's eyes haunt me; I dare not look into deep water. But it is just this that has given me peace.

VERA.

Peace!

ELIZABETH.

It is the want of trust that makes life hard. You cannot be happy without perfect courage; and you cannot have courage without perfect strength. He has both; and they are yours if you trust him.

VERA.

Is it possible to trust any one? Suppose he did what you knew was wrong?

ELIZABETH.

How should I know it was wrong? When I have found a man who stands out above other men, who shrinks from nothing, who is true to himself—

VERA.

[*Shuddering.*] But to murder a little thing like that!

[Pg 120]

ELIZABETH.

It was just the helplessness of the little thing that would

have frightened another man. It must be very hard to murder a child. But neither strength nor helplessness can frighten him!

VERA.

[*After a pause.*] And have you never doubted him?

ELIZABETH.

Vera, how could I doubt? Why, if I had doubted him then I should have hated him; if I doubted him now I should die! [VERA *shudders.*]

VERA.

Shut out that ghastly moonlight! [ELIZABETH *rises and draws the curtain. VERA goes up to her, and they sit together.*] Let me come closer to you. Tell me it all again.

ELIZABETH.

Tell what again? Poor child, I have suffered all that you have, and more.

[Pg 121]

VERA.

Say again: "Your father betrayed me, murdered my child —"

ELIZABETH.

[*Interrupting.*] No, he never betrayed me. He did an awful thing for my sake. He gave me peace.

VERA.

[*Looking at her.*] If only one could trust like that!

ELIZABETH.

You can, childie. Think of him as always with you; try to feel him looking into your heart, commanding—

VERA.

[*Half frightened.*] Will that do it? But I am always doing that! I can't help it!

ELIZABETH.

Then all this storm and suspicion will pass away, and you will be like me!

[Pg 122]

VERA.

[*Starting away from her.*] Like you! No, not like you! I can't be! [ELIZABETH *rises and comes down to her.*] Oh, how did you blind yourself? Has he sucked your heart's blood and left you dead, with no will, no conscience, no power to think? [*With fury.*] Oh, beat him back from you! Fight him! Fight him!

ELIZABETH.

Child, child! how could one fight him? You don't know what you say!

VERA.

With his own weapons. By lies, pitiless treachery! I have seen him afraid, Elizabeth! I have seen him afraid! [*Starting nervously.*] Ah! there is his step. Don't let him come! Keep him from me, just for one moment, Elizabeth! If he speaks to me now I can't think. [*Running to the window.*] Oh! here I can breathe!

[*She stays with her head out of the window as before.*]

Enter CARLYON.

CARLYON.

[*To ELIZABETH.*] Why is she there? What have you said?

[Pg 123]

ELIZABETH.

She is frightened! I thought you had told her.

CARLYON.

You told her *that!* [*Pause.*] So much the better. If she understands one thing she will understand all. [*Cross L.*] Well, Vera——

ELIZABETH.

[*Reaching across after him.*] She understands nothing! Don't trust her!

[CARLYON *utterly disregarding ELIZABETH, and walking up to VERA.*]

CARLYON.

You've had time to think. Is it to be the world or me?

VERA.

[*Turning and coming down to meet him.*] I see it all

clearly now, father, and I won't be afraid any more.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

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THE FOURTH ACT

In front of a Bungalow in the Ghautgherry Hills; the Bungalow with its veranda occupies the left half of the stage; the rest is Compound, with thick trees at the right. A door in the centre of the veranda leads into the house; another, at the left, leads to ADENE'S sick-room. In front, to the right, ADENE is reclining in a long Singapore chair with cushions. Just above him a table, covered with Bhojâlee curiosities which have just been taken from a box. At the table is RHEINHARDT seated, looking at the objects. Behind is SELIM, an old native with one arm, dusting the veranda with a feather mop.

ADENE *has a Bhojâlee belt in his hands, with empty sheath; RHEINHARDT has the knife, and is examining it closely.*

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ADENE.

The belt is said to have been Koreb's own. There is nothing particular about the knife—an ordinary Bhojâl kukri.

RHEINHARDT.

[Holding the knife up for the light to strike its edge.] Do they use poisoned knives in Bhojâl?

ADENE.

They have the secret; but I never heard of its being used in war, except in the last war, against us. *[He sits up and reaches for the knife, which RHEINHARDT gives.]* Do you see anything that looks like poison?

RHEINHARDT.

Come, come! *[Presses him down in the chair.]* If I let you come outside the veranda, you must be content to lie still.—Selim, two pegs lower. *[Holds up two fingers.]* And the cushions. *[To ADENE, as SELIM nods his understanding.]* I never know how much that man understands.

[SELIM *lowers the back of the chair, and rearranges the cushions tenderly and skilfully. A bell is heard, off.*

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ADENE.

Oh, he understands most things. [*Exit SELIM up c.*] You see, Carlyon's methods at that time had turned them into perfect fiends! [RHEINHARDT *looks sharply up.*] Well, infected them, we'll say, with the Carlyon spirit. [RHEINHARDT *continues to look disapprovingly at ADENE.*] Look here, Rheinhardt, do you think this is a delusion of mine about Carlyon?

RHEINHARDT.

No.

ADENE.

Then why do you look hurt whenever I refer to the things that I know about him?

RHEINHARDT.

Sir Carlyon may be the Devil himself; I have in him no interest. It is only the children of the Devil that I am sorry for.

ADENE.

[*With sudden constraint.*] I have never said a word affecting Miss Carlyon.

RHEINHARDT.

Nor thought a word, eh?

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ADENE.

I have no material for thinking about her, one way or the other.

Re-enter SELIM with letters.

RHEINHARDT.

I will give you material!

SELIM.

[*Interrupting and laying letters on table in front of RHEINHARDT.*] Post!

RHEINHARDT.

[*Taking the letters, while ADENE sits up and looks at them.*] No, you do not open your letters yet!

ADENE.

Goodness knows I don't want to; unless there is one from my sister—

RHEINHARDT.

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[*Reading the addresses.*] "An den Herrn Professor Rheinhardt, M.D., Ph.D." "Dr. Rheinhardt." [*Stopping and looking again.*] Ach! no. "Miss Rheinhardt." It is for my assistant. [*To SELIM.*] Here; for the Mem-sahib!

ADENE.

That is Carlyon's handwriting! [*Rises.*]

[*SELIM, who has just reached the door, turns suddenly and drops the letter with signs of fear. ADENE crosses towards him.*]

SELIM.

Kalyona Sahib! [*Stands shrinking from the letter.*]

RHEINHARDT.

What matters it to you whose letter it is? Take it!

SELIM.

[*In terror, catching ADENE'S arm.*] Ai! ai! Sahib.

[*Draws ADENE into the doorway and whispers to him.*]

ADENE.

Yes, yes, I know; but don't be afraid. [*To RHEINHARDT.*] It is no good; he won't touch that letter!

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RHEINHARDT.

Won't touch it? Very well, he shall not touch it. [*Takes a plate from among the curiosities on the table and puts letter upon it.*] There; take it on this. [*Exit SELIM with plate.*] And you, come back! [*ADENE comes down again to his chair and sits thinking. RHEINHARDT continues.*] Gott in Himmel! so long as it does not touch his skin, so long it is all right. [*Laughing.*]

ADENE.

Rheinhardt, who *is* this assistant of yours, whom I never

see?

RHEINHARDT.

Who my assistant is?—she was a pupil of mine.

ADENE.

If you would allow it, I would like to see her.

RHEINHARDT.

[*After a pause.*] Very well; I also wish you to see her. But [*deliberately*] you have at present no material for thinking about her—one way or the other. [ADENE *starts.*] I will give you some. When first I heard of Steinmetz's experimentations, and saw his mistakes, I said, "If I had the right assistant, I could save Adene." But I had him not. I wanted—ah, so many things! You will not understand: a doctor who should be also a nurse, who should know my ways—and more. There was just one person, but she was just the one person I could not ask. No. I was too angry.

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ADENE.

Then how did she come?

RHEINHARDT.

She came to me herself, suddenly, in London, just as I am starting. She was all pale, with her eyes—she had had some great struggle.

ADENE.

Her father!

RHEINHARDT.

[*Waving down the interruption.*] I know not what it was, but it was something. And when she entered at the door, I said, "Here it is come at last; he will be saved!" And he is! [*Rises.*] There is your material for thinking! And if you do not know what she is, all the time you are unconscious, all the time you are in the dark, there are others who do. [*Warming up.*] There are others who—

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ADENE.

Oh, Rheinhardt, let me see her!

RHEINHARDT.

[*Sharply.*] You do not deserve to see her. [*With resignation.*] Bah! what does it matter? I will send her to

you. [*At door.*] Old Rheinhardt has his work.

[*ADENE walks to and fro, thinking.* [*Exit RHEINHARDT, up.*

Enter SELIM, and approaches ADENE, who turns away from him, saying:

ADENE.

Not now, Selim.

[*SELIM turns back and is going off when his eye rests on the knife; he hovers over it, but draws back as ADENE turns, and exit.*

VOICE OF RHEINHARDT INSIDE THE HOUSE.

There! He is on the veranda.

[*ADENE goes up to door (c.) with hands outstretched; to him enter VERA and takes both his hands.*

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ADENE.

It is really you! [*Leads her down.*] And you have been by me all this time?

VERA.

[*With attempted lightness.*] It did seem rather absurd, didn't it? to keep me away from you, when we were such old friends.

ADENE.

Friends! [*Earnestly.*] All the way out to Bhojâl there were two thoughts with me always: "I love Vera Carlyon; I am presently going to die." I had nothing to give; only a little broken end of life. But I said, "That at least shall be hers. I will work for her these last months; I will pile up my little monument to her father's greatness, and die building it."

VERA.

Go on! You found it was the monument of his shame!

ADENE.

No, no! Not shame: greatness, but greatness so terribly dashed——

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VERA.

You can still say that? Oh, thank you, thank you!

ADENE.

Oh, Vera—when the first shock of my discoveries came, it almost maddened me. I mistrusted every one!

VERA.

I know. I have been through that.

ADENE.

Vera, I mistrusted *you*! [VERA *shrinks.*] I thought you knew the whole story and tried to screen him.

VERA.

No, not all! Not all!

[Murmuring to herself, so as scarcely to break his speech.]

ADENE.

I gnashed my teeth inwardly and raged against you. [VERA *draws back from him, shrinking.*] You can't forgive me?

VERA.

I have nothing to forgive.

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ADENE.

You see what must come! I shall try to be just to your father—to spare him; but what good will it be? I shall wound you past all healing! [*Breaking off.*] Oh, why could not this have come to some one who did not love you? Or at least to some strong man, who could bear it and go his ways? I, Heaven help me, am a broken, crippled man; I could never ask for your love as an equal, never hope to make you my wife. [*Passionately.*] But some little corner of your love I must have—

VERA.

[Kneeling down by his chair, bending slightly over him.] Oh, dearest, dearest, you are ill and talking wildly! The wound in me is past healing; but it is *he*, not you, that struck it. How could *I* ask you to spare him? I am bound up as one with him. And I claim now that we shall have our punishment! Dearest, what you thought of me in your anger was the truth! I did plot to screen him and keep you back. I tried that day to strike you with despair—to break down your spirit, to—

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ADENE.

But you didn't know what he had done! You can't have known.

VERA.

No, I didn't know that, and I didn't know your courage. It was high above our reach, and we could not break it. —*You* not a strong man! *You* to ask for a corner of my love! It is yours all, long ago. It is thrown at your feet for you to gather as you will! [*Throws herself down before him.*] The love of one who wronged you, who plotted against you, who was sent here now to— [*Breaking off with a paroxysm of self-abasement.*] Oh, *he, he, he*, who knew me, could think I would do that!

ADENE.

Sent? Did he send you to me? To do what?
[*Preparing to rise.*]

VERA.

I can't tell you. I have not done it. I have saved you from him.

[*ADENE has risen, and stands sternly thinking. VERA is huddled up at his feet, her face hidden in her hands. After a pause, he looks down at her, and changes from stern anger to tenderness.*]

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ADENE.

My poor, poor love, let us forget him! [*Sitting and raising her.*] Just for a little, forget him altogether.

VERA.

[*Startled—clutching the letter in her bosom and raising her head.*] You have nearly made me forget everything! [*Rising, smiling through her tears.*] Forget my first business! *I* can't afford to break down and let myself be comforted, like another woman!

ADENE.

Why not? [*Tries to detain her.*]

VOICE OF RHEINHARDT INSIDE THE HOUSE.

Not back yet? It is quite dark. Bring the lamps. And set the punkah going again.

VERA.

No, no; you are my patient. You mustn't comfort me. You are my sick child.

[Pg 137]

Enter RHEINHARDT.

RHEINHARDT.

[*At door.*] Hut!—Bah! [*Running forward and seizing ADENE'S pulse.*] Gott im Himmel! take him in! Take him in! He lies down flat, straight, this moment, just as he is! [*To VERA.*] No, not you! Here, Nurse! Take him in.

[*Calling.*

VERA.

[*As RHEINHARDT leads ADENE off, after a moment of thought.*] Come back to me afterwards, Doctor. I want to speak to you.

[*Exeunt RHEINHARDT and ADENE into the sick-room, the NURSE appearing at ADENE'S door.*

Enter PUNKAH BOY, and sits in corner R., working punkah.

Enter SELIM with a lamp. VERA makes room for it on the table among the curios, then begins to put the curios into their box. [*Exit SELIM.*

Re-enter RHEINHARDT.

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VERA.

[*While RHEINHARDT is still at the door.*] I have been so foolish! Have I done him any real harm?

RHEINHARDT.

Harm? No; it had to come, one way or another. So long as he sleeps!—

VERA.

I have heard from my father. He is coming here.

Re-enter SELIM with second lamp.

RHEINHARDT.

Sir Carlyon coming here? When, does he say?

[*SELIM notices and trembles.*

VERA.

[*Looking at letter.*] As far as I can judge, he might come to-night. [*SELIM, listening acutely, trembles violently, clutches the poisoned knife which is still lying on the table, and glides off rapidly into the trees.*] That is, if he rides from Johilcund, as he says he will.

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RHEINHARDT.

Ride from Johilcund! Gott in Himmel! Let me look. [*VERA gives him the letter.*] From Bombay. [*Looking at the envelope.*] Nineteenth, twentieth. Ah, yes. He ought to get here to-morrow midday.

VERA.

[*With constraint.*] Has Mr. Adene said anything to you about him?

RHEINHARDT.

[*Same manner.*] Yes. [*Their eyes meet and then avoid each other.*] There is no need for them to meet. [*Slight pause.*] And you—you have said all your say with Mr. Adene?

VERA.

Yes.

RHEINHARDT.

He is a good man. Yes, he is a brave fellow. That is settled. And old Rheinhardt will go back to Zürich, Universitätstrasse, hundert und zwölf; and will grow fat; and will write fat, fat books!

VERA.

[*Tenderly, going up to him.*] And save more people's lives, and make more pupils love him.

[Pg 140]

RHEINHARDT.

Ach! you say that? We have had a happy time here, we two; two good companions—*nicht so?* And it is over. Bah!—it will be there to think about, in the nights, when it is warm and still like this—and I smoke!

VERA.

Isn't it wonderfully still? You can hear every sound. Hark! there is some one riding on the road.

[*They listen together for a moment. Then RHEINHARDT looks at her and says abruptly:*

RHEINHARDT.

Good-night!

[*Exit RHEINHARDT, up.*

VERA.

Good-night!

[*She waits listening to the horse hoofs, which are heard more and more distinctly; then comes the sound of a man dismounting on a stone floor. VERA turns to PUNKAH BOY, who is wide awake and listening, and makes a sign to him. He runs back L., and immediately returns,*

crying, "Kalýona Sahib." Excited whispers of the name are heard, off; then CARLYON'S voice speaking to the servants in Hindustani.

Enter CARLYON, from L. back round the house.

CARLYON.

[Coming forward impulsively.] Vera, it gives me fresh life to see your face! *[Kisses her, then throws himself into the chair. She stands helpless, having stifled her first impulse to run forward and greet him.]* Great Heavens, how tired I am! I have ridden fifty miles since midday. *[Throwing himself back and stretching his arms out.]* Ah, I suppose I should not have thought much of it once!

VERA.

[Constrainedly.] Why have you come?

CARLYON.

I thought your heart might fail you. You were all alone.

VERA.

You thought I had been long?

CARLYON.

I was anxious at not hearing from you. I knew it was a heavy burden for you, and I came to help. Did you need help?

VERA.

None.

[Pause. CARLYON gets up and walks a little way, then turns.]

CARLYON.

Then why is it not done?

VERA.

It is done—almost all.

CARLYON.

It is? Oh, thank God! I was so tired! I felt this man as a terror hanging over me. I seemed like an old man just now, for the first time. *[Pause; he walks again, then looks at her closely.]* You are pale. He is not actually dead?

VERA.

No, he is not dead.

CARLYON.

[Pg 143]

You do not like to speak of it? Never mind.—Vera, you have been a good and brave daughter to me. You have given me rest, the first time in my life I have ever needed it.

VERA.

There is no rest for you here.

[She stands leaning backward slightly against the wall, and speaks with effort, throwing the lamplight full on his face.]

CARLYON.

What do you mean? *[Putting up his hand.]* Turn off that light from my eyes!

VERA.

You must face more light than this. I have not helped you. There is no rest for you here, no rest anywhere that I know of.

CARLYON.

You are not failing me after all?

VERA.

I have watched him till he is almost safe. If you want him to die now you must kill him outright—by force.

[Pg 144]

CARLYON.

Vera, you have mistrusted me.

VERA.

[Passionately.] No. I have betrayed you! Can't you ever see it? I have turned against you, and you are beaten! You have told me everything. I alone——

CARLYON.

You daren't lift your voice! I don't fear that.

VERA.

There are proofs enough without me! And witnesses;
Selim first—

CARLYON.

[*As if stung.*] Be quiet! Let me think. [*Pause.*] To think that *you* should have done it! To think of the vermin I have trusted before, and none of them ever betrayed me!

VERA.

No; *you* betrayed *them*! Oh, it is their blind faith that has made you so pitilessly false!

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CARLYON.

To trust *you*—it was like trusting myself!

VERA.

[*With a bitter laugh.*] It was! It was! It was like trusting Judas! [*A pause.*] Was I to be a Koreb, mad and heartbroken in prison? Or like Elizabeth, who has lost her very soul, and cannot see that there is any human being in the world but you?

CARLYON.

[*With a scornful laugh.*] But *you* can? Is that it? Good God! to think a wretched instinct like that should master you! To betray *me* for a chance lover!

VERA.

It was just the opposite. If I had not half-consciously loved him you could never have deluded me. I wanted to stifle my heart, and I all but stifled my conscience with it.

CARLYON.

When did you change? How long have you meant this?

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VERA.

I have not changed. I meant it ever since that night, when Elizabeth—[*breaks off*—when I saw that to trust in you was to go mad!

CARLYON.

And you have been lying to me all this time!

VERA.

Were you to come at him with your poisoned daggers,

and I not shield him with as much as a lie? [*Checking herself.*] Oh, Father, I did not mean to be like this to you! Father, he is not your enemy any more than I. He will spare you in every way—

CARLYON.

Do you mean he will not press to have me hanged? [*She shakes her head.*] You spare me that? [*With fury.*] I am not to be killed, after all your hunting? Only maimed and branded and left for stray dogs to tear? I am to "live it down," am I?—crawl on through a weary, interminable life—

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VERA.

It can be as short as you will. I will wait and bear the shame for you.

CARLYON.

Suicide, is it? [*With a short laugh.*] No, I won't do that for you. The thought of it gives me all my natural spirit again.

VERA.

Yon cannot be afraid of that too?

CARLYON.

Afraid? No. But I have not finished living. Do you think I am an old man? There is as much blood and muscle in my arms as there ever was. I feel life leaping in every limb. I won't kill myself. No! nor let another man kill me! And I won't bear that penance either. There are other places besides England and British India.

VERA.

Oh, why do you rage like this? Can you not face your hour when it comes, take your defeat, like a strong man, steadily?

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CARLYON.

Defeat? Defeat? From him and his crazy natives? Who will believe their story against mine? [*She is silent. A slight pause.*] But suppose I confess all. Suppose I stand up straight before all Englishmen and bid them judge me: "Here I am: I have broken rules and treaties; I have fought with all weapons; I have had no law nor conscience nor pity—for your enemies! I am yours to chain or unchain; I am your fighting man, your bloodhound, your leashed panther! Have you no use for me?" Do you think, among all the swarming cowards that govern us, I shall not bring a host to my side when I say

that?

VERA.

[*Grave and calm.*] This is like the madness that goes before a great fall!

CARLYON.

His fall and yours!—when you try to turn and rend me, and are crushed! [*Looking at her.*] Before Heaven, I pity you! [*Turning away.*] Give me a fresh horse.

VERA.

What are you going to do?

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CARLYON.

Do you expect another of my secrets?

VERA.

I will tell them to bring the horse. [*Exit VERA.*]

[*CARLYON crosses R., throws himself down again in the chair, in an attitude of utter weariness, his hands over his eyes. SELIM during the last words has stolen out from the trees and creeps towards CARLYON with the knife. CARLYON moves his hands from his eyes, sees SELIM'S shadow, and starts swiftly forward as SELIM springs upon the chair from behind. A brief struggle follows, SELIM shouting, CARLYON silent. CARLYON gets the knife, flings SELIM down off the stage L., pursues him for one instant to stab him finally, and returns. There is a slight red scratch on CARLYON'S forehead.*]

Re-enter VERA hurriedly.

VERA.

Father, Father! Are you hurt?

[Pg 150]

CARLYON.

[*Furious, with the knife uplifted.*] Did you mean it? Did you know he was there?

VERA.

No, no! Oh, are you safe?
[*Pause. He is trembling with excitement.*]

CARLYON.

[*Exultantly.*] Vera, Vera! Don't you see what has happened? Don't you see it? I am saved. Koreb is mad. Adene has nothing but hearsay—

VERA.

[*Shrinking back to coldness.*] What do you mean?

CARLYON.

Don't you see that I've just killed Selim, and Selim was the one fatal witness? Adene cannot hurt me now. It is only you. It is all simple for you. You needn't kill him. You needn't say one word that is untrue. Only say nothing, and I am safe. [*With increasing confidence.*] You don't answer! Think! You know in your heart you cannot conquer me. And if you could, who would be the better for it? I tell you I am a man who has never failed! [*He stops as if suddenly giddy; then continues in a weaker voice.*] I give you now the power of standing beside me. Do not wait too long. Can any one else offer you half such a life?

[Pg 151]

[*He clings for a moment to the pillar of the veranda for support.*]

VERA.

[*Alarmed.*] You are wounded!

CARLYON.

No, he never touched me. I tell you I killed him. Vera, Vera, why do you try to stand against me? You love me more than that cripple, and I hold the lives of both of you in my hand! [*Half lifting the knife.*]

VERA.

Killing us will not help you! And I do not love you more than the truth.

CARLYON.

[Pg 152]

Truth! Barren truth about past facts that can do no jot or tittle of good to any one! Is it for that you would try to blast my life?

[*He puts his hand to his brow, drops the knife, and falls into the chair.*]

VERA.

[*Kneeling beside him, and calling.*] Dr. Rheinhardt! Dr. Rheinhardt! Quickly! [*To CARLYON.*] No, stay where you are!

[*CARLYON waits motionless, recovering himself.*]

Enter RHEINHARDT.

RHEINHARDT.

[*Off.*] What is it? [*Entering.*] Your father! Wounded!

VERA.

Selim attacked him, but I can't understand why he is like this.

RHEINHARDT.

[*Hurrying up to* CARLYON.] Let me see.

CARLYON.

[*Pushing him aside and rising cautiously, he speaks wanderingly but without violence.*] A little thing like that cannot hurt a man. My horse is tired, terribly tired; you said you would give me one of yours. [*Reeling again; moaning to himself.*] You pitiful civilised crowds, I want no more of you! You haven't beaten me, but you can't understand, you can't obey!

[Pg 153]

[*Moves unsteadily away towards the trees.*]

VERA.

Where do you want to go? [*Tries to bring him back.*]

CARLYON.

[*With a full return of his old manner.*] Back beyond the frontier! To the Bhojâl Mountains where the rebels went! I will go to the men who know me and hate me, and worship my broken sword!

VERA.

[*To* RHEINHARDT, *whispering.*] What can it be?

CARLYON.

[*Swaying as he stands, his hands to his brow.*] If I could only see with this blood in my eyes! [*Breaking out with an effort.*] This time I come as their friend, with a sword that is not broken.

[Pg 154]

Enter ADENE followed by NURSE from sick-room. CARLYON points at him.

Go, marry your cripple, O you who might have been great! He is fit for a half-bribed murderess and a coward! Great God, how I despise you all! Oh, shall I kill you where you stand, or—

[*Reels and clutches the veranda post for support.*]

RHEINHARDT, who has watched closely all the

time, and looked also at the things on the table, starts forward.

RHEINHARDT.

Ach, Himmel! the poisoned knife!

CARLYON.

You lie! It is only my eyes that are filled with blood.

VERA.

[Running to him.] There is no blood in your eyes. Father! Father!

[CARLYON lifts the knife to his lips, tastes the edge, and drops it with a gesture of despair.

[Pg 155]

CARLYON.

Back! Don't touch me, and I shall not die yet!

[ADENE moves across to RHEINHARDT and speaks with him.

RHEINHARDT.

That is it! But what poison! He must be stopped!

CARLYON.

[With a flash of his old manner as he moves off.] Out of my path, sir! I am still Carlyon!

[He sweeps RHEINHARDT aside, then falls. RHEINHARDT loosens his collar.

RHEINHARDT.

Fetch my case. *[Exit NURSE to house.]* Bring that water.

[VERA brings it and supports CARLYON'S head. They put it to his lips.

VERA.

[To RHEINHARDT.] What?

NURSE *re-enters with case.*

[Pg 156]

RHEINHARDT.

Ach! *[Throws up his hands, suggesting no hope.*

[The PUNKAH BOY has during this slipped across the stage to the place where CARLYON dropped the knife. VERA and ADENE gaze at one another across

the body.

NURSE.

Ah, what is that boy doing?

ADENE.

He is kissing the knife that Carlyon threw away.

THE END.

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Transcriber's Notes

Page 30 "Pointing to MSS. on table." changed to "Pointing to MS. on table."

Page 39 "Got im Himmel, there it comes." changed to "Gott im Himmel, there it comes."

Page 81 "if Steinmitz were to be right" changed to "if Steinmetz were to be right"

Page 88 "to Korob at Travancore." changed to "to Koreb at Travancore."

Page 149 "an attitude of utter weariness," changed to "an attitude of utter weariness,"

Other than obvious full stop omissions, original spelling and punctuation retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CARLYON SAHIB: A DRAMA IN
FOUR ACTS ***

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