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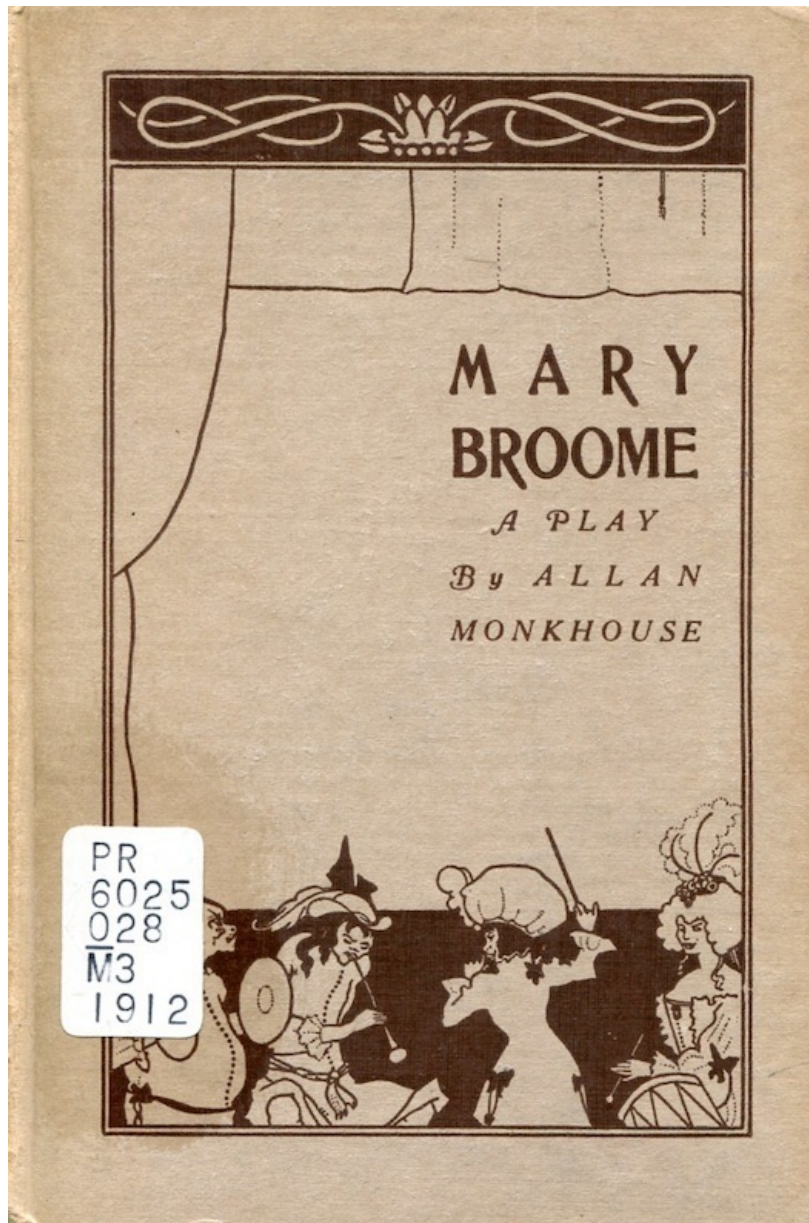
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY BROOME: A COMEDY, IN FOUR ACTS ***



MARY BROOME

CHARACTERS

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

ACT IV.

Transcriber's Note

**MARY BROOME: A COMEDY, IN
FOUR ACTS, BY ALLAN MONKHOUSE**

**BOSTON: JOHN W. LUCE & COMPANY
LONDON: SIDGWICK & JACKSON, LTD.
3 ADAM STREET, ADELPHI MCMXIII**

First Impression, June, 1912
Second Impression, January, 1913

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“Mary Broome” was first produced by Miss Horniman’s Company at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, on October 9th, 1911, with the following cast:—

SHEILA RAY	EDYTH GOODALL
ADA TIMBRELL	HILDA BRUCE POTTER
EDGAR TIMBRELL	HERBERT LOMAS
MARY BROOME	IRENE ROOKE
LEONARD TIMBRELL	MILTON ROSMER
MRS. TIMBRELL	ADA KING
EDWARD TIMBRELL	CHARLES BIBBY
MAID	DORIS BATEMAN
MR. PENDLETON	CECIL BROOKING
MRS. PENDLETON	LOUISE HOLBROOK
MRS. GREAVES	HILDA DAVIES
JOHN BROOME	EDWARD LANDOR
MRS. BROOME	MURIEL PRATT

The Play produced by STANLEY DREWITT

CHARACTERS

EDWARD TIMBRELL

MRS. TIMBRELL

EDGAR TIMBRELL

LEONARD TIMBRELL

ADA TIMBRELL

SHEILA RAY (*afterwards Mrs. Edgar Timbrell*)

MARY BROOME (*afterwards Mrs. Leonard Timbrell*)

JOHN BROOME

MRS. BROOME

MR. PENDLETON

MRS. PENDLETON

MRS. GREAVES

A MAID

ACT I.

[*The Drawing-room in a biggish suburban villa—The furniture, &c., are in middling taste. EDGAR TIMBRELL, an ordinary young man of nearly thirty in neat tweeds is sprawling self-consciously on the sofa. ADA and SHEILA are opening a parcel. They are the ordinary middle-class young women who might develop in all manner of unexpected ways and usually do not.*]

SHEILA. Come and look, Edgar.

ADA. He's only pretending not to care.

SHEILA. Lend me your knife. [*She takes it from him and cuts the string.*] I brought this over without opening it just to let you see it too.

EDGAR. For Heaven's sake remember who sent them all.

SHEILA. It's all right. Ada's keeping a list.

EDGAR. Well, get all the fun out of it you can. You won't often have the chance of being married.

SHEILA. [*Opening the parcel.*] Oh! how nice! What do you mean, Edgar? I've had lots of chances.

EDGAR. You can't go on having them now, though.

ADA. Let me see, Sheila.

SHEILA. No, that's why I want everything to be nice. Instead of all those chances I want one delightful reality. A sweet little tea caddy; that's two; the other was bigger. One delightful reality, Edgar. You've got to see to that.

EDGAR. Oh! I'll make a jolly good husband.

SHEILA. I wasn't thinking of that. I was only thinking of the wedding. One thing at a time. I want to have the prettiest wedding that ever was. Something that I can look back to. No hitches and stupidities and uglinesses.

ADA. Some people like Indian tea. You could have Indian tea in that one.

[*Enter MARY BROOME, the housemaid. She is a comely young woman in the housemaid's usual afternoon dress and with the housemaid's usual self-possession.*]

MARY. A parcel for you, sir.

EDGAR. Thank you. Will you put it down—anywhere.

ADA. Another present! No.

EDGAR. Only my new silk hat.

SHEILA. Hurrah! That's right.

[*MARY puts the box on a chair and is going out when EDGAR speaks.*]

EDGAR. Er—is Mr. Leonard in, do you know?

MARY. I think he went upstairs, sir.

ADA. What do you want with him?

SHEILA. Let's see you in the new hat.

EDGAR. It's just a notion I had. I'm afraid of forgetting. I wonder if he's done anything about clothes and things; he's fearfully casual.

MARY. Must I—? Do you want me, sir?

EDGAR. No, I think not, thank you.

[*She goes out.*]

SHEILA. The new hat. The new hat. How jolly!

[*She begins to open the box.*]

ADA. You'd better speak to him while you think about it.

EDGAR. He's no good at ceremonial clothes. I believe he's only got a frock coat.

SHEILA. Oh! don't let us have a frock coat. I should never forget it.

ADA. I'll go for him. I'll fetch him.

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SHEILA. Yes, do, Ada. No time like the present. [ADA *goes out.*] Edgar, I wish Leonard wasn't coming to the wedding.

EDGAR. But, my dear girl—

SHEILA. Oh! I know. I know. Of course he *must* be best man. It would be all wrong if he wasn't but somehow he's so queer and different and I don't feel safe with him and I don't know what he'll do or say. Of course he can be charming. I think he's a flirt. You always know when he's in the room.

EDGAR. Of course these artist people are very self-conscious and assertive and—

SHEILA. But he's not assertive. He's—he's seductive. And he makes fun of things.

EDGAR. No harm in that.

SHEILA. Yes, there is. He makes fun of the wrong things. Why do you call him an artist, Edgar? He's not one.

EDGAR. Oh! he's artistic—literary and so on—It's all the same.

SHEILA. But he's a barrister, isn't he?

EDGAR. Oh! yes, of sorts. He never had a brief.

SHEILA. Then how does he—I mean how does he get an income? Why doesn't he go into the business, too?

EDGAR. Oh! ho! Leonard in the business! No. The old Pater prefers to pay him a handsome allowance to keep out. Besides, Leonard makes about five shillings a month by literature.

SHEILA. How horrid to be quite dependent like that! Why do you let him?

EDGAR. Bless you! I don't want him in the business. It suits me well enough. Hullo! He's coming.

[*Enter ADA and LEONARD.*] [LEONARD *is rather younger than EDGAR; a handsome young man with an air of detachment. His manners are rather pleasantly impudent and now disguise some harassment. He is rather carefully dressed in what appears to be a careless way.*]

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LEONARD. I'm wanted? Very much honoured I'm sure. My dear Sheila, I kiss your hands.

SHEILA. You may shake one if you like.

[*He tries to kiss it and she snatches it away.*]

LEONARD. What a pity.

SHEILA. Don't be so stupid.

LEONARD. You keep disappointing me. We should have done it very well.

ADA. Don't be absurd, Leonard.

EDGAR. He will play the fool.

LEONARD. Well, well. Now to business. About this wedding. Does the best man kiss the bride?

SHEILA. } Of course not. Those vulgarities are out of date.

EDGAR. } [*Together.*]

EDGAR. } Deuce take it, Leonard!

LEONARD. I only want to know. I want to play my part like an English gentleman. Kissing in public—except the hand—is an atrocity, but if it has to be done it should be done firmly. No hesitations, no scimmages. In fact there should always be a rehearsal. Very well. No kissing. Now about gloves—

EDGAR. Yes, what are you going to wear, Leonard?

LEONARD. I shall wear a grey morning coat, trousers of about the same colour but exquisitely striped, white waistcoat, grey hat with narrow black band, an orchid—the best that money can buy—if anyone will lend me the money—

EDGAR. Here, I say—

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LEONARD. I know what you are going to say—that I ought just to dress up to you.

SHEILA. Oh! he won't be sensible. I hope you won't go and spoil things.

LEONARD. Spoil things? [*He reflects for a moment.*] Confess that you would like me to go away and telegraph that I can't come to the wedding.

SHEILA. Oh! No. But I want everything to be nice.

EDGAR. Do the thing properly, Leonard.

LEONARD. Properly! I want to do things more than properly. I meant to write an ode on the marriage morning. I'm afraid I shan't have time for more than a sonnet. I've made a start. I've got a first line:

'The jocund sun has tinged the mountain tops'—

Good word 'jocund'. The difficulty is to get three good rhymes to tops. Of course it might be crest—mountain crest—but I don't like it. It's poetical. That's the worst of poetry now-a-days; you mustn't use poetical words.

EDGAR. There's no getting any sense out of you, but look here: Sheila and I want you to be decent over this affair. Just get the right sort of thing and a new hat, won't you? I'll tell you what to get if you like.

LEONARD. My dear fellow I have the sense of clothes.

SHEILA. He knows well enough, Edgar.

EDGAR. Come on then. Is mother downstairs?

ADA. I think so. Leonard, you might open the window; the room's close.

LEONARD. Now, Ada, you know it's not my business to open the window. I always leave this kind of thing to experts.

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ADA. Well, ring for Mary.

LEONARD. Oh! no. I'll do it. [*He goes rather hastily to open the window. The others go out. He stands looking out of the window. MARY BROOME enters dubiously. She looks round the room and presently sees him. She advances quickly towards him and he turns round.*]

LEONARD. Oh! I say!

MARY. You're packing a bag. What for? You can't be going away?

LEONARD. Now you mustn't stop here. Anyone may come in.

MARY. After what I told you, you're going away? You couldn't do that.

LEONARD. And, look here! My mother's talking about having missed a photograph—my photograph. You've never, surely—

MARY. Yes, I took it.

LEONARD. Oh! but that's madness.

MARY. I thought I had a right to it.

LEONARD. Well, get away, that's a good girl. We'll talk about things again.

MARY. How can you go away? Why are you packing your bag?

LEONARD. You've been spying in my room.

MARY. You know I have to go into your room.

LEONARD. Of course. I beg your pardon. Yes, I am going away for two days.

MARY. There were ten shirts laid out.

LEONARD. I'm lying. Yes. We can't talk here. Who's this? Take care. [*As MRS. TIMBRELL enters he continues:*] Well, I shall be much obliged if you will. The brown boots—Yes. More polish—I've really been quite ashamed of them. Well, Mother? [*He turns from MARY with an air of dismissal. MARY moves away but stops as MRS. TIMBRELL occupies the doorway. MRS. TIMBRELL is startled rather than surprised. She holds a small framed photograph in her hand.*]

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MRS. TIMBRELL. [*To LEONARD.*] I've found your photograph.

MARY. You have no right in my room.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Greatly agitated.*] Leonard, I can't believe—Leonard—

[*She has advanced into the room having closed the door. It opens and MR. TIMBRELL enters gaily with SHEILA on his arm. He is a rather precise man condescending to geniality, obviously righteous according to his lights and obstinately trustful of them. MRS. TIMBRELL'S general attitude to him is a rather tired acquiescence which sometimes stops short of submission. ADA and EDGAR follow closely.*]

TIMBRELL. Let's see the latest, then. Where's the sweetly pretty tea-caddy? [*To MRS. TIMBRELL.*] Have you seen it, my dear? [*His speech peters out as he sees his wife's face and the attitudes of the group of whom LEONARD alone attempts to maintain an ordinary appearance.*] Why! What's the matter?

LEONARD. You'd better let Mary go, Mother. You can't scold her in public like this. Besides it was only a trifle.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I must know.

TIMBRELL. What! What! A scolding? What have you been doing, Mary? Come, come. Never mind. Run away. Run away. I'll speak up for you, Mary.

MARY. [*To LEONARD.*] Must I go?

LEONARD. I suppose so. Certainly.

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MARY. Will you speak up for me?

TIMBRELL. What's this? What's this? [*MARY makes for the door, SHEILA standing aside hastily.*] Stop a bit. Stop a bit. [*There is a pause and TIMBRELL looks at LEONARD and then at his wife.*] What's that in your hand? [*MRS. TIMBRELL hesitates, but as her husband waits she turns the photograph towards him.*] Leonard's photograph? The one you lost? Well, where was it?

LEONARD. I think you might allow Mary to go.

TIMBRELL. Where was it? [*He speaks to his wife but she is silent. He looks at MARY.*]

MARY. It was in my room.

EDGAR. [*To ADA.*] You and Sheila had better go.

TIMBRELL. [*Half turning to EDGAR.*] Silence. Why was it in your room? [*SHEILA and ADA have moved toward the door. They remain, possessed with a natural and intense curiosity.*]

MARY. I had the right to it if anyone had.

TIMBRELL. You took it from his Mother's room?

MARY. [*After a very short pause.*] Well, I shall be a Mother soon.

[*TIMBRELL sits down and sinks back in the chair. SHEILA and ADA go out quietly.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*To MARY.*] Sit down, my dear.

[*EDGAR gives MARY a chair. She sits down.*]

MARY. Thank you, ma'am.

LEONARD. [*To himself or the world.*] Beautiful. Beautiful.

TIMBRELL. [*Starting.*] What!

LEONARD. I said it was beautiful.

TIMBRELL. What's beautiful?

LEONARD. Mary and my Mother; and you, if you like. The whole thing.

TIMBRELL. What does he mean?

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EDGAR. Is your share in it beautiful, too?

LEONARD. That doesn't matter. I see it all.

TIMBRELL. [*To MARY.*] What are you stopping here for? Have you no sense of shame? [*MARY stands up.*] I don't want to be hard on you. I daresay you're less to blame than he is. I don't know. It's a disgraceful affair. Disgraceful. Now, be off. Be off. Please go.

MARY. But I want to hear what he says.

TIMBRELL. Yes. So do I.

LEONARD. The devil of it is that I say anything. If you get me into a fix I just want to get out of it.

TIMBRELL. That's your character, is it?

LEONARD. From your point of view, sir, I'm afraid I'm a bad lot.

TIMBRELL. What good are you to anybody? Why were you born?

LEONARD. That's your concern, sir.

TIMBRELL. Don't bandy words with me. You should be down on your knees asking pardon of this poor girl, of your Mother, of your God. What are such things to you?

LEONARD. I'm extremely sorry. Of course I've no defence. I should have to go back to some kind of first principles and even then it'd be a bit shaky I daresay. Mother, it's horrible for you. I see that.

TIMBRELL. But have you nothing to say? Do you think this is adequate? What are you going to do? What's your way out?

LEONARD. You have a better head than I have, sir, for these practical matters.

TIMBRELL. You are a callous and impudent fellow. [*To MARY.*] What have you got to say?

MARY. I can't make out how much he cares.

LEONARD. [*To MARY.*] I don't know what to say to you. I can't talk to you in public. This is a new aspect of the thing entirely. What's the use of telling you I'm sorry?

MARY. Are you sorry?

LEONARD. Well, yes.

EDGAR. Is the beauty of the scene waning?

LEONARD. [*To EDGAR.*] You'll want another best man. Well, Sheila didn't want me.

EDGAR. Don't speak of Sheila here.

LEONARD. Why not?

EDGAR. Your own sense of decency might tell you.

LEONARD. [*Passionately.*] In all my life I never said anything as bad as that. Never anything as unkind, as evil, as abominable.

EDGAR. Why, what do you mean?

LEONARD. To insult her now!

EDGAR. You're a fine fellow to talk of—

TIMBRELL. Silence. This is no time for such bickering. [*To MARY.*] Just leave the room.

LEONARD. Don't speak to her like that.

TIMBRELL. Are you addressing me?

LEONARD. Yes. You must treat her well.

TIMBRELL. Treat her!—What are you to talk of treating her well? Besides, I am treating her well. I think she will agree that I have shown the greatest forbearance. A fellow who has an intrigue with a servant and then—

LEONARD. A servant!

TIMBRELL. What is she?

LEONARD. You make these distinctions.

TIMBRELL. What does the fellow mean?

LEONARD. You'd hardly believe it but I feel a kind of moral exaltation. [*EDGAR laughs.*] Oh! yes, Edgar, I know your vast superiority but in this you're despicable through and through—all of you. No, Mother was beautifully kind for a moment just now. She asked Mary to sit down. [*Impetuously.*] Do you like staying here, Mary? Why don't you go?

MARY. I want to hear what you say.

LEONARD. I've wronged you, as the saying is, but I don't wrong you with every instinct, at every hour of the day. After all, I'm the only member of this family that's achieved any kind of human relationship with you. To me you're not a servant. Listen to this—listen to Shakespeare: [*He declaims.*]

'Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands. You will answer,
The slaves are ours.'

I suppose that practically I'm as bad as any of you. It's just the idea.

MARY. I don't understand what he's talking about.

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TIMBRELL. Nor anybody else.

LEONARD. Mary lives in the kitchen and the attic; Mary lives on poorer food than ours when it isn't our leavings; the sheets on Mary's bed are coarser than ours—

TIMBRELL. Silence, sir!

EDGAR. Shameful!

MRS. TIMBRELL. What would you have us do?

MARY. I'm making no complaint, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Not of him?

MARY. I was as bad as him.

LEONARD. She is not bad. She can't be bad. Anyone can see that who looks at her.

MARY. Yes, I've acted bad. I couldn't face—I could never face—[*Her voice catches.* MRS. TIMBRELL *crosses over to her.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come with me. You've been here long enough.

LEONARD. Go with my mother, Mary.

MARY. I can't make you out. You talk so fine and yet—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come.

MARY. [*Going, turns and says to LEONARD.*] Why were you going away?

TIMBRELL. Going away?

MARY. He was packing his things.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Why, Leonard?

LEONARD. What a brute I am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You were going away?

LEONARD. That's the kind of beast I am.

TIMBRELL. I don't quite understand this. You were going away? Where? Why?

LEONARD. Where doesn't matter.

TIMBRELL. Why were you going?

LEONARD. I wanted to get out of it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You didn't know. You didn't understand.

LEONARD. Yes, I did. She told me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. But, Leonard—

TIMBRELL. What! What! You were running away? You knew—you knew everything?

LEONARD. Yes, I did.

TIMBRELL. Shameful! Monstrous!

LEONARD. I thought it the most sensible thing to do. I know it looks bad.

TIMBRELL. He amazes me. I can't grasp it. What a coward! What an infamous coward! Had you no thought at all for this unfortunate girl? You never thought of any kind of reparation, I suppose? Reparation! By Heaven!—[*He stops for a moment, considering and then goes on but with something working in his mind.*] Had you no consideration for your Mother—for any of us? Don't you see—don't you understand?

LEONARD. I think I see a bit clearer than you do. As to Mary, I didn't see how I could help her. Frankly, I didn't. I knew you'd be as decent to her as anyone could. I've not a penny. I can't earn a penny. I'd have written to my mother to explain. It wouldn't have been pleasant, but less disagreeable for her than this, I think.

EDGAR. How would you go away without a penny?

LEONARD. Never mind. Yes. You shall know. I meant to take some of mother's housekeeping money. I know where she keeps it.

EDGAR. You'd have stolen it?

LEONARD. I should have written to explain—and to ask for some more.

EDGAR. You're the limit.

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LEONARD. You're damned small-minded. Don't bother us. [*To his father.*] I quite understand your point of view, sir.

TIMBRELL. Oh! do you? You understand me very thoroughly, don't you?

LEONARD. You see I have far more faith in your practical wisdom than in my own. I'm in a mess. You'll say I ought to stop and face the music. My point is that it does no good. And then there was that infernal wedding of Edgar's; I had to get out of that. They didn't want me any how. Oh! I know I cut a very poor figure. From your point of view. And I quite understand it, mind you. I'm very much with you now. And when I look at you, Mary, I feel rather horrible.

MARY. I didn't think you'd have run away.

LEONARD. No, that's bad, isn't it?

EDGAR. The fellow's a Comedian.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come, Mary.

TIMBRELL. Stop. Mary, would you marry him?

MARY. What, sir?

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TIMBRELL. Would you condescend to marry him? Would you be such a fool?

MARY. He wouldn't marry me.

TIMBRELL. So much the worse for him, then. [*To LEONARD.*] You've lived here hitherto at my expense. I turn you out. You're old enough to earn a living. Go.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward—

TIMBRELL. My mind's made up. There's only one alternative.

LEONARD. And what's that, sir?

TIMBRELL. That you do reparation. That you do the honest, manly thing. It hasn't occurred to you, it seems.

LEONARD. You mean?—

TIMBRELL. I can hardly advise her to do it. Mary, if you marry him I'll give him £300 a year so long as he behaves himself; if he doesn't you shan't suffer.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward. Don't be hasty, don't decide too quickly. I'm thinking of you, Mary, as well as of him.

MARY. I knew you'd be kind to me, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward, I pray that we may do right.

TIMBRELL. Come, sir. You had better go down on your knees and woo your bride.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! Edward; don't speak like that.

TIMBRELL. He's not worthy of consideration.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I was thinking of her.

TIMBRELL. [*To LEONARD.*] What's your answer?

LEONARD. Mother, will you take Mary away and I will talk to my father.

TIMBRELL. You will talk now and in Mary's presence.

LEONARD. You care nothing about her. It's simply that you're vexed with me. If you were doing it for her I could have some respect for you.

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TIMBRELL. Your answer to my proposal.

LEONARD. What's Edgar doing here? Surely we can do without him.

TIMBRELL. [*To EDGAR.*] Stay where you are.

LEONARD. Mary, you know it's impossible.

MARY. Yes, Mr. Leonard.

LEONARD. Mary refuses.

TIMBRELL. So much the worse for you.

LEONARD. But if she refuses—

TIMBRELL. Out you go into the street.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That can't be.

TIMBRELL. That shall be.

LEONARD. Oh! This is all very absurd. We are not being practical at all. Mary, I'm sorry. It's no good you and me marrying. Now is it?

MARY. I suppose not, Mr. Leonard. I don't know what I'm going to do, though.

LEONARD. My father can give you a bit of that £300 a year he talks about. And then—Oh! of course, I don't know. I should like to act handsomely but what can I do? This talk of marriage—frankly—is a bit of antiquated Puritanism. Mary, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You're a good girl. I'm all to blame. [*He turns to his father who sits grimly silent, then to his mother.*] Mother, you settle it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I don't know how.

LEONARD. You parents are in a middle stage. Once you'd just have been brutal to the girl. I don't mean you, but parents generally. Presently we may have more sense. I'm a selfish brute but I've got some sense. But I'm powerless. [*To his father.*] Haven't you any imagination? It's all very fine to make a scene here and put down your foot and coerce me into your beastly righteousness but think of the years to come. Do you see us married? Do you see our married life? Forgive me, Mary.

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TIMBRELL. You shall make an honest woman of her.

LEONARD. A fine old phrase, that.

TIMBRELL. I'm not ashamed of it.

LEONARD. Why shouldn't she be a happy mother without fear and without shame? Mary, don't make that ridiculous mistake of thinking yourself disgraced.

MARY. But I am disgraced.

LEONARD. You are not—Not in the eyes of any reasonable human being.

MARY. Then the people I know aren't reasonable.

LEONARD. Have you a father and mother?

MARY. Yes.

LEONARD. And they would—they are—

MARY. They are very respectable.

LEONARD. I see, I see. Yes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Didn't you tell me you were 'keeping company' with someone?

MARY. I was walking out, ma'am. I wasn't keeping company.

LEONARD. I'm afraid I don't appreciate the difference.

MARY. There is a difference.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Have you seen him lately?

MARY. Yes, ma'am.

LEONARD. [*Very quietly.*] Would he marry you now? [TIMBRELL *starts in his chair, but does not speak.* MARY *gives a gasp that is almost a sob.*] I know I'm a brute. Would he marry you, Mary?

MRS. TIMBRELL. No, no, no, no.

MARY. George Truefit's a good man. I wouldn't ask him to marry me now.

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LEONARD. But if he cares for you he ought to want to marry you now.

MARY. You think you understand things but you don't.

TIMBRELL. Mary, will you marry my son?

MARY. He'd hate me.

TIMBRELL. Nonsense, will you marry him?

MARY. I'd like to marry someone. I've got to face my father. He'll be nasty.

LEONARD. May I point out to you, sir—

TIMBRELL. Silence. You will do what you are told. You are not one of us. You never have been. A useless dilettante. Here's a chance for you. Don't you see that? A chance. If you can't take it, it shall be forced on you. Will you marry him Mary, or let him go out into the street?

MARY. If he's like as you say, it's no great catch.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary!

LEONARD. She's right. I'm no great catch. She's the sensible person in this conference. Let's end it. Let's do something else.

TIMBRELL. We'll finish this now. Edgar, fetch me the Bible—the Family Bible. You know where it is—in the dining-room.

EDGAR. But—what—

TIMBRELL. [*Loudly.*] At once. [EDGAR *goes.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. My dear—[TIMBRELL *holds up his hand and she stops.*]

LEONARD. The Family Bible! It's like bringing out an obsolete instrument of torture. I'd forgotten that we had a Family Bible.

TIMBRELL. The names of my father's children and their wives and children are recorded there.

LEONARD. And a very nice old custom, too.

TIMBRELL. Your ribaldry is ill-timed, sir.

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LEONARD. Ribaldry! I can't make a remark that suits you unless I'm hypocritical. I think it is a nice custom.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward, let us think over this a little more. Let us try to see things more clearly.

TIMBRELL. Where is Edgar? What's he doing?

MARY. Oh! send me away and be done. I don't want to make trouble.

TIMBRELL. [*Loudly.*] Edgar! Where is Edgar? [*Voices are heard outside. EDGAR enters with the Bible.*]

TIMBRELL. What's that? Who's there? What have you been doing?

EDGAR. It's Ada and—it's Ada.

LEONARD. Better stop up the keyhole, sir, if you wish these rites to be secret.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! be quiet, Leonard.

LEONARD. I must keep up my spirits somehow, Mother.

TIMBRELL. [*Loudly.*] Ada! And is Sheila there? Come in. [*They enter immediately.*]

LEONARD. I told you so.

ADA. What is it, father? What's going to happen?

TIMBRELL. Put that Bible down here. [*Pointing to table.*] Pen and ink. [EDGAR *brings pen and ink.*]

ADA. Father, what are you going to do?

TIMBRELL. Sheila, I thought your name would be the next to be entered in this Book, but another is before you.

ADA. Father, I don't want to be hard on Mary, but really—I do think—

SHEILA. I'm sorry for her but I think I ought to be considered. My wedding's spoilt.

LEONARD. Inadequate, inadequate. My dear Sheila, you're bringing us down to a lower level than we've reached yet.

[Pg 23]

MARY. I won't stay. I thank you for your kindness ma'am. I give you a month's notice, but if I may I'll go now without wages.

LEONARD. Just listen to her, Sheila. It may do you good.

TIMBRELL. Listen to this. [*He strikes the Bible with his fist.*] I swear by this Book that unless my son, Leonard, marries that woman, Mary—What is your name?

MARY. My name is Mary Broome.

TIMBRELL. Mary Broome, he leaves this house—to-day—and never again receives support in money or aught else from me. [*This is spoken standing. He sits down heavily. A short pause.*] It is now between my son Leonard and Mary Broome. [*He opens the Bible at the blank pages before the title page and, putting on his spectacles, looks fixedly and inscrutably at the names inscribed there.*]

SHEILA. [*To EDGAR.*] I think you ought to interfere.

TIMBRELL. [*Without looking up.*] If Sheila is not satisfied with her sister-in-law she need not marry into this family.

SHEILA. She would be my brother-in-law's wife not my sister-in-law.

LEONARD. You are saved.

TIMBRELL. I want to know whether I must write Mary Broome's name here.

EDGAR. It's after marriage you'd do that—not before.

TIMBRELL. This time it's before.

LEONARD. There's a sort of grandeur about a man with a fixed idea.

EDGAR. I know you're an obstinate—a determined man, sir, but I'll ask you for once to consider—

TIMBRELL. Silence.

EDGAR. Mother—

MRS. TIMBRELL. It's no use. I've never stood up against him. I've let him have his own way all these years. It didn't seem to matter.

TIMBRELL. I am the head of this house.

[*His implacability daunts them. There are whisperings between ADA, SHEILA and EDGAR. MRS. TIMBRELL is a little apart quiet and sad. In the grouping MARY has come to the front. LEONARD moves a step or two nearer to her and the others are in a rough ring about them.*]

LEONARD. Mary.

MARY. Well?

LEONARD. I've done you a frightful wrong. There's no getting away from that. Don't let it worry you too much. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't your fault at all. But it's not such a wrong as this—as this would be. May I say that I've been admiring you greatly to-day. I think you're a beautiful creature. Good-bye. [*He holds out his hand.*]

MARY. But—

MRS. TIMBRELL. My dear boy—

TIMBRELL. Your cunning won't do. You're full of shams and tricks.

LEONARD. I was never more sincere.

TIMBRELL. How long do your sincerities last?

LEONARD. I know. I know. It's gusts and moods with me. Mary, you'll believe me now. [*He looks at his watch.*] At what o'clock does this house cease to be my home?

TIMBRELL. The sooner the better.

MARY. But what are you going to do?

LEONARD. I don't know. I shall sponge on my pals for a time, I suppose. I shall dun my mother. I might get down to Ada. Edgar, I think you're safe. By-the-bye, Sheila, can you lend me half-a-crown? [*He turns suddenly to his father.*] Do you see the folly of it yet? Are you going to budge? What about my mother? Is it fair to her?

TIMBRELL. You begin to think of your mother too late.

LEONARD. Oh! I know I'm as selfish as they're made. You're well out of it, Mary. There's no relenting, then?

TIMBRELL. None. [*LEONARD pauses for a moment and then walks towards the door.*]

MARY. Stop. [*He stops and looks round.*] Come here, please. [*He returns to her.*] I'll—I'll do as you like.

LEONARD. You mean you'd marry me?

MARY. If you like.

LEONARD. [*Looking intently at her.*] I wonder if it's possible.

MARY. You needn't unless you like.

LEONARD. Do you want it? Is it for me you'd do it?

MARY. It'd make me unhappy for you to go away like that.

LEONARD. Mary, I think I like you enough to marry you. But you mustn't unless you want to marry me.

MARY. I want to marry somebody.

LEONARD. Oh! thank you. You're beautifully frank.

MARY. It's only that I don't quite understand you. You were going away. You were packing your—

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LEONARD. I have the honour to ask you to be my wife.

MARY. Yes, I will.

TIMBRELL. [*Writing.*] Mary Broom. B-R-O-O-M?

MARY. E, sir. B-R-O-O-M-E. My father told us we must always stick to the E. It's more genteel.

TIMBRELL. Yes. By-the-bye, what is your father, Mary? What's his occupation?

MARY. He's a cabman, sir.

TIMBRELL. Quite so. Quite so.

MARY. [*After a short pause.*] It's rather late ma'am. Shall I bring in tea?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You are very good, Mary. If you will, please.

[*Curtain.*]

[Pg 27]

ACT II.

[*The same place. Nearly a year later. Christmas Eve. The room is decorated with evergreens, &c. TIMBRELL and EDGAR discovered. They are in jackets and black ties, &c.*]

TIMBRELL. [*Surveying EDGAR.*] Yes, that's right—black tie—You told Sheila to put on some half and half affair? Not full evening dress, you know. Of course I didn't like to say anything to Leonard, but his wife's a sensible girl—in some ways. She'll manage to be—er—neat, you know. Bit of an ordeal for her, but I'm sure you and Sheila will do all you can to make it—er—pass off pleasantly.

EDGAR. Certainly, certainly.

[MRS. TIMBRELL *enters. She wears the kind of afternoon gown that some ladies of the middle class wear in the evenings when they have not company. TIMBRELL scrutinises each lady as she enters with more or less approval.*]

TIMBRELL. [*Surveying his wife.*] Yes, yes. By-the-bye, Edgar, you will take Mrs. Leonard in. I must take in Mrs. Pendleton of course. Pendleton, your Mother. Let's see?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oughtn't you to take in Mary?

TIMBRELL. What's that?

[ADA and SHEILA *enter. They are not in evening dress but in a kind of compromise with which they are not content.*]

ADA. [*To her father.*] I hope this will satisfy you.

TIMBRELL. [*Surveying them.*] Quite right. Very good. [*To his wife.*] What were you saying?

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MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought that perhaps you ought to take Mary in.

TIMBRELL. Mary? Why?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Well, she's the bride, I suppose. Of course, Sheila had her turn long ago.

TIMBRELL. The bride! [*He is staggered but doesn't know what to say.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. This little party is really in her honour.

TIMBRELL. In her honour. [*He repeats it helplessly.*]

ADA. Really, Mother, I think this is rather unnecessary.

SHEILA. Mrs. Pendleton would hardly expect to go after Mary.

[*Enter maidservant.*]

SERVANT. Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton.

[*They enter—salutations, &c. MR. PENDLETON wears a swallow-tail, black tie, &c. MRS. PENDLETON, a ponderous compromise. They are a respectable middle-class couple.*]

TIMBRELL. Well, well. How are you, Pendleton? Mrs. Pendleton, draw up to the fire. These young people are not here yet. Leonard never took much account of time. It's very good of you to have come.

PENDLETON. Very happy indeed, I'm sure.

TIMBRELL. You see, Mrs. Pendleton, we thought—I'm sure you'll understand—Christmas Eve, you know—and you and Pendleton such old friends. Of course we might have had just the family but they'll take it as a bit of a compliment to meet you. You know how it is—I needn't explain—They haven't been here yet. You'll quite understand.

MRS. PENDLETON. Don't say any more about it, Mr. Timbrell. I'm sure you're behaving very well and we're very glad—very glad. [Pg 29]

TIMBRELL. Yes, and do you know, I believe the marriage is not going to turn out so badly after all. She'll make a man of him. I was very firm about it. However, we won't go into that now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you know my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Pendleton?

MRS. PENDLETON. [*Turning to SHEILA.*] Oh, yes, I've had the pleasure—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I didn't mean Sheila; I meant Mary—Mrs. Leonard.

MRS. PENDLETON. Oh! well—know her? I—that is—

MRS. TIMBRELL. She was the best housemaid I ever had.

TIMBRELL. Well, well, I think it's turning frosty again. What are you paying for coals now, Pendleton?

[*Enter maidservant.*]

SERVANT. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Timbrell.

[*LEONARD and MARY enter. He is in evening dress with a white waistcoat and white tie. MARY wears a low dress, not a very elaborate one but quite simple and pretty. The others look at them in some consternation.*]

TIMBRELL. Tut! tut! Oh! this is all wrong.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Laughing a little as she goes forward to MARY.*] Well, Mary, you are a swell.

MARY. I didn't want to be like this. [*She turns rather distressfully to her husband who looks round at the company. General, rather stiff greetings.*]

LEONARD. We seem to have committed a slight error of judgment. I have, I mean. Mary, you have a sound social instinct. I can never tell what these bourgeois people will do. And mind you [*holding out his hand deprecatingly.*—I use the word simply and inoffensively. You understand that, Mrs. Pendleton. I'm an outsider. [Pg 30]

EDGAR. You mean a bounder?

LEONARD. Quite good, Edgar, if you could only get a pleasant tone into your voice. As you say it it's so bad socially. And how are you, Sheila?

SHEILA. I'm quite well, thank you.

LEONARD. Chilly, chilly. Mother, you've got an awkward job this evening.

TIMBRELL. Don't be absurd, sir.

[*MRS. TIMBRELL and MARY retire up the stage and sit down together. ADA and SHEILA also converse together in whispers with MRS. PENDLETON. The four men are to the front.*]

PENDLETON. And what are you doing with yourself now, Leonard?

LEONARD. Still at the old game, sir; still at the old game.

PENDLETON. Indeed! What's that?

LEONARD. Well, do you know I had to fill up my census paper the other day and I was rather bothered to describe myself. Of course I'm a literary man but that hardly seems to cover the ground. I'm really a kind of sponge but that doesn't rank as a regular trade.

TIMBRELL. You'll make nothing of him, Pendleton, when he's in this humour.

EDGAR. Why can't you talk simply instead of spouting all this rot?

LEONARD. You are always baffled when I tell the truth.

EDGAR. It somehow ceases to be the truth when you tell it.

LEONARD. Good. You see how my family is prejudiced against me, Mr. Pendleton. My virtues are not virtues, my white is black. My only chance is to put myself right by committing a crime. Then I should command sympathy, my family would begin to understand me. Mr. Pendleton, won't you consider these preliminaries over and give me a little assistance? I want something to do. Give me a place in your office.

[Pg 31]

PENDLETON. [*Rather alarmed.*] But, my dear boy, I'm afraid—I hardly think—

LEONARD. [*Burlesque so slight as to be hardly perceptible to* PENDLETON.] Give me a chance, sir. I've a wife and family.

PENDLETON. [*Laughing uneasily.*] You're clever enough, I believe.

TIMBRELL. He wouldn't do for an office boy.

LEONARD. That's perfectly true. Most of the business men I have met would do for it very well.

EDGAR. You'd better try the music-hall stage.

LEONARD. Now that's quite a helpful suggestion. That's an idea, Edgar. Humbugs like myself make good actors.

TIMBRELL.—You are not serious, sir.

LEONARD. Hardly. No.

PENDLETON. I've heard that Harry Lauder got—how much a week was it—when he—? something astonishing. Why, sir, there are very few merchants in the city of London who make as much.

LEONARD. [*Reflecting.*] The music-halls. Mary! [*Deep in talk with* MRS. TIMBRELL *she doesn't hear.*] No matter.

PENDLETON. They've something better to talk about.

LEONARD. When I see two women talking like that I always think it must be about the servant question.

EDGAR. I say! What infernally bad taste!

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TIMBRELL. [*Breaking impatiently away.*] My dear, isn't dinner ready?

LEONARD. Where's the fatted calf?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! dear! Ring the bell, somebody. [*Somebody rings the bell.*] Mrs. Pendleton, I'm very remiss but this is a family party, you know. Mary was telling me about the baby.

MRS. PENDLETON. You must let me come and see it, my dear. [*To* ADA.] Is it a boy or a girl?

ADA. It's a—it's a— [*She looks at* SHEILA.]

SHEILA. } { Boy.

MRS. TIMBRELL. } [*Together.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. } { Girl.

LEONARD. It's a very remarkable baby.

MRS. PENDLETON. [*To* MRS. TIMBRELL.] A boy. How very nice. And what have you called him?

MARY. Leonard.

MRS. PENDLETON. Right, my dear. I think the eldest son ought always to be called after his father.

LEONARD. Confusing for the historian.

[*Enter maidservant.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! Beryl, isn't dinner ready.

MAID. If you please, ma'am, there's been rather a little accident in the dining-room.

MRS. TIMBRELL. } { Oh! dear! What's that?

ADA. } [*Together.*]

ADA. } { An accident!

MAID. Well, the soot came down the chimney just now and it's made such a mess. We're just clearing it away but it's a job. We'll have to change the tablecloth.

MARY. [*Who has taken a great interest in this.*] That damper wants a bit of coaxing but I expect it's the coals. [*To TIMBRELL, reproachfully.*] You've not gone back to those cheap coals again, sir? They do make such a lot of soot.

TIMBRELL. Well—er—

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MRS. TIMBRELL. You would do it, you know. [*To MRS. PENDLETON.*] Does your husband come and shew you how to save money in the house?

MRS. PENDLETON. I'd like to see him try.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'm afraid I don't stand up against him. I'm very weak. Well, get things straight as soon as you can, Beryl.

MAID. Yes, ma'am. It'll be a little time yet. I'm afraid. [*She goes out.*]

MRS. PENDLETON. What did you call her?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Beryl.

MRS. PENDLETON. Well, I never.

MRS. TIMBRELL. She said that was her name.

TIMBRELL. I told you, my dear, that it was quite unsuitable.

MRS. TIMBRELL. She seemed to like the name.

TIMBRELL. I suggested Jane.

LEONARD. Ah! you may interfere about coals but not in things that matter like this. Of course Beryl is abominable but when you know that Mother let the poor girl stick to it—why! then it's charming.

EDGAR. Well, we've a little time to put in, it seems. Mrs. Pendleton, you haven't seen the album that Sheila and I made up when we were honeymooning. We took a lot and bought some. [*He gets out album and shows photographs. SHEILA and ADA hover about.*]

TIMBRELL. [*Looking at his watch.*] Very annoying.

PENDLETON. Don't you bother.

TIMBRELL. [*With an effort at geniality.*] Well, Mary, my girl. It's a shame to keep you waiting.

MARY. It doesn't matter a bit, sir.

TIMBRELL. [*Testily.*] Don't call me Sir.

MARY. No, sir—I mean No, Mr. Timbrell.

LEONARD. Call him Daddy. She calls me Sir sometimes. I rather like it. It feeds my vanity. What I like about Mary is that she has none of that absurd pretence that woman is the equal of man.

[Pg 34]

ADA. What nonsense!

SHEILA. He always does talk nonsense.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I expect Mary keeps you in good order at home. Do you Mary? Is he behaving nicely?

MARY. I think so sometimes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Now what does that mean?

MARY. I find it so hard to understand him.

LEONARD. She's simple. I'm ironical. I can't get out of the habit.

MARY. I'm stupid and I can only judge by what he does.

LEONARD. Ay, ay. That's the devil. It's explanations I'm good at—not doing things.

MARY. But I don't understand the explanations.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Poor Mary.

MARY. Did you understand him?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He thinks I didn't. But I'm afraid all this will not interest our friends. We don't let Mr. Pendleton have a word.

PENDLETON. Oh! don't mind me, ma'am. I'm all right.

LEONARD. And Mrs. Pendleton's all right, I'm sure. She's got her eye on us. Of course, you know, Mrs. Pendleton, that Mary and I are—well—we're rather on show here. This is a social experiment. Now, why not go deeper into it? Mary's manners are quite nice. Anybody can see that. The housemaid's manners are always better than those of the daughter of the house. Now, father, keep quiet. My manners are what they always have been. You see my point is that the question whether we shall behave nicely on pleasant little family occasions isn't interesting. If you are really interested in Mary and me let's try to go a little deeper into things.

[Pg 35]

TIMBRELL. Perfect rubbish!

LEONARD. It's your weak point, sir. If I haven't pointed it out before I ought to have done—you will meet everything with exclamations and interjections. Conversation can't be carried on like that. There must be some reasonable way of looking at me. I may be an extraordinary specimen, but you ought to get used to me.

PENDLETON. Never mind, Leonard, my boy, I was a bit eccentric myself when I was young. I wanted to go on the stage.

LEONARD. I never wanted to go on the stage. I'm ready if they'll give me Harry Lauder's salary.

PENDLETON. Do you know what my old father did? He gave me a good hiding and I've been all the better for it.

LEONARD. How do you know?

PENDLETON. [*With a shrug that is half exhibition.*] Well—

LEONARD. I can hardly blame fathers. They are in an impossible position. They pretend to teach and they ought to learn.

TIMBRELL. Who makes the position impossible? You and Edgar were treated alike—up to a certain point. I never allowed any favouritism; what one got the other got. There was never the slightest difference—

LEONARD. But why should you treat us alike when we were totally different?

TIMBRELL. Up to a point, I said.

LEONARD. [*Surveying his brother.*] And this is the success. I might have been like this if I'd tried.

TIMBRELL. I was always ready to take a reasonable and a liberal point of view.

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LEONARD. Ah! You Liberals. It's feeling that you're so jolly liberal that confirms you in your wickedness.

TIMBRELL. Wickedness!

LEONARD. A rhetorical term of course.

TIMBRELL. [*With real dejection.*] I do my best but I can't understand your language. You puzzle me, my boy.

LEONARD. Don't mind me, sir. I'm a rotter.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You want your dinner, Leonard.

LEONARD. Well, well, little mother. I'd like to know what you think about it all.

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's a wild boy, Mary.

MARY. He can be very sensible if he likes.

LEONARD. Don't deny me my wildness. Don't make me out a sham.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Wild, wild.

LEONARD. And where does it come from? How do I get it? Mr. Pendleton, who are the wild people here?

PENDLETON. Nay, my boy. I'm not up to your tricks and turns.

LEONARD. I'll tell you. Mary and my mother—they're very much alike.

TIMBRELL. I think we'll leave this subject.

EDGAR. You won't get him away from himself.

LEONARD. Brother, brother, I'll be silent if you've anything worth saying.

MARY. You shouldn't say I'm like your Mother.

LEONARD. But you are.

MARY. You make me unhappy.

LEONARD. Then I shouldn't say it. But you are.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'd be glad to think that I'm like you, Mary.

MARY. It's all unhappy for me. I spoil everything.

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ADA. It isn't your fault.

MARY. [*To ADA.*] You want to blame it all on him. That's no use. It isn't all him.

SHEILA. We want to be kind to you.

MARY. It doesn't matter about me. I'd rather you were down on me and kind to him. This is his family. And I'm not comfortable ma'am and it's partly this dress and I wonder if you would mind if I went home and you'd all get on better together. I spoil everything.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You silly girl; you spoil nothing and you're as good as gold and we all like you.

ADA. You mustn't go, and the dress looks very nice.

SHEILA. Very nice, indeed.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And you shall have a little shawl over your shoulders if you like.

TIMBRELL. All we want is our dinner.

MARY. I'm sure you're all very kind—but—

LEONARD. We're getting on fine now.

EDGAR. You see, you've been out of the conversation for about two minutes.

LEONARD. Is that it, brother?

EDGAR. What's this trick of calling me brother?

LEONARD. I'm tasting the relationship. There's a certain piquancy in calling you brother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Leonard, you won't quarrel with your brother.

LEONARD. No. And yet he's one of the men I could quarrel with. Once or twice I've been angry with Edgar. I've had the true intoxication of anger. [*To EDGAR.*] Do you know it? It's a delirious joy. Your brain streams out like a scarlet banner.

EDGAR. You quarrelled over trifles.

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LEONARD. Yes, they would do. Our differences were deep.

TIMBRELL. Well, Pendleton. I hope you're having a pleasant evening.

MRS. PENDLETON. Oh! we don't count this little bit of time before dinner.

PENDLETON. I don't like brothers to quarrel, though. I hope you young fellows will make it up before the evening's out.

MRS. PENDLETON. Well, you've got two very different sons, Mrs. Timbrell.

PENDLETON. Leave that, Maria.

LEONARD. Which favours the mother, Mrs. Pendleton?

MRS. PENDLETON. Why, Mr. Edgar.

LEONARD. No—no. You wouldn't say that, Mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I've not said it. I've never said it.

LEONARD. [*Takes his Mother by the shoulders.*] You've borne two sons little mother. How did you manage to make them so different? By God! You're nearer to me; you're more like me. And like Mary; I tell you, you're like Mary. A strain of wildness. Yes. Where does my wildness come from? It comes from you. [*He shakes her gently.*] I know you. Oh! you're demure. I know you. I wonder what you were before you became a respectable married woman. Ah! you cunning little one. You've doubled and turned in your time; you've—

TIMBRELL. Stop, stop.

EDGAR. Monstrous.

PENDLETON. By Jove! this is too much.

[LEONARD *turns to regard them. He and his Mother are surrounded by indignant, half-menacing figures.*]

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TIMBRELL. Take your hands from her.

EDGAR. Turn the blackguard out.

TIMBRELL. I can't believe—I can't understand—this fellow is too much for me.

PENDLETON. He's too much for any of us.

LEONARD. [*He looks again at his mother. She is very still and droops a little.*] Mother! What did I say? Have I made a mistake? Have I hurt you? I wouldn't do that. [*He allows her to sink into a chair.*]

MARY. How could you say such things?

LEONARD. What did I say?

MARY. You made her out—no better than me.

MRS. PENDLETON. Hush! Hush!

TIMBRELL. I wouldn't have said it but since she has—You dare to suggest that your mother is no better than your wife?

PENDLETON. Now, come, Timbrell; that's not the way to put it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary is good enough for me.

TIMBRELL. That isn't the point. Don't you yourself resent—didn't you hear what he said?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought he was a little cruel.

LEONARD. But who cares for you in this family as I do.

ADA. Who cares less? Who would treat her so abominably?

EDGAR. My mother is to me an immaculate saint. To you—

LEONARD. What do I care for immaculate saints? What good are they to me? My mother's a strange woman. She has all kinds of curious reserves and she lives among you quite like one of yourselves.

MARY. I will say this. He has always spoken beautifully about her.

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LEONARD. Bravo! Mary. Stand up for me.

TIMBRELL. I don't wish to act hastily—I have tried hard to control myself—

LEONARD. Oh! be natural, sir. Be natural.

TIMBRELL. Go down on your knees, sir, and beg your Mother's pardon.

LEONARD. Certainly, if she wishes it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I do not wish it.

TIMBRELL. Do you realise what he said about you?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's very clever. No doubt there's some truth in it.

TIMBRELL. Some truth? Some truth? Do you mean to say—I don't understand you. I don't like to ask you what you mean—I—

PENDLETON. Now, Timbrell, I think we'd better leave it here. [*To MRS. PENDLETON.*] Don't you think so, Maria?

MRS. PENDLETON. I should want to carry it a little further in her place.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Having quite recovered.*] Would anybody like to ask me any questions?

PENDLETON. [*Shocked.*] Questions?

MRS. TIMBRELL. About my early life. [*She gives a sad little laugh.*]

PENDLETON. Questions! My dear madam—

TIMBRELL. This is painful. This is quite impossible. [*To his wife.*] I cannot understand you. I suppose you are trying to screen him.

MARY. He always speaks of his mother beautifully.

LEONARD. And why shouldn't I when I admire her immensely? Why can't you people be natural and let me be natural? I say there's a strange, mysterious, incalculable being behind her placid mask and you want to make out I mean something beastly. How have you stood it all these years, mother? And they never seem to have found you out.

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MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you think I've found myself out?

LEONARD. You've found the other people out and that's very much the same thing. I tell you what—you ought to come and live with me and Mary.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Nonsense.

LEONARD. It would be tremendously fine if you did that. After all these years—it would be magnificent.

EDGAR. Is this to go on?

TIMBRELL. No. I'm exceedingly sorry, Pendleton, that you and Mrs. Pendleton should be in such a scene. [*To* LEONARD.] I'll ask you to leave the house. Mary may stay if she pleases.

LEONARD. But I want my dinner.

TIMBRELL. You can get your dinner at home.

LEONARD. Mary?

MARY. There's not much. I'll go with you.

PENDLETON. Now look here, Timbrell—

TIMBRELL. Not a word. [*To* LEONARD.] And I've something to say to you before you go.

LEONARD. I'm afraid it's something nasty.

TIMBRELL. Yes, sir. It's something nasty. I've been making you an allowance at the rate of three hundred a year. It will stop at once.

LEONARD. [*Alarmed.*] Here! You can't do that.

TIMBRELL. Can't I? I will.

LEONARD. But it wouldn't be cricket. You couldn't possibly do that. How are we to live without it?

TIMBRELL. That's your business.

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LEONARD. You made me marry Mary. It was the condition—the condition was implied—

TIMBRELL. Silence! You forget we are not alone.

LEONARD. Oh! What's the use of these disguises? They know all about it. Let us accept what's past. Mrs. Pendleton, I needn't make any apologies. All this must be frightfully interesting to you. Mr. Pendleton, I shall want your help. I put it to you as an honest business man—but you're joking, sir; you're joking. [LEONARD *has become more serious than he has been.*]

TIMBRELL. You'll see whether I'm joking.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you intend to punish Mary, too?

TIMBRELL. I shall allow her—[*considering*] I shall allow her two pounds a week and see that it is paid to her.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What you propose is unfair. You can't do it.

TIMBRELL. Perhaps you would like to go and live with them as he proposes?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I've no income. You've never paid my wages.

TIMBRELL. Wages!

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, there's something in what these suffrage people say. I'm at your mercy I suppose. So is Leonard, so is Ada. I suppose Edgar is getting out of your clutches.

TIMBRELL. Do you think to gain your point by talk like this?

MRS. TIMBRELL. No. This is for my own satisfaction. I'm vexed with you.

TIMBRELL. You didn't think that I gave any credence to that boy's abominable suggestions?

LEONARD. Please don't talk about that now. There's something more serious to consider.

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MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't talk about it now, either.

LEONARD. I don't see how we can talk about anything else. We must have an income. Mr. Pendleton, I appeal to you—

PENDLETON. Nay, let him calm down.

TIMBRELL. I shall not calm down. I am perfectly calm. The fellow shall suffer. It will do him good.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And Mary and the child must suffer.

MRS. PENDLETON. Ah! now, Mr. Timbrell—your grandchild.

MARY. He hasn't seen him.

MRS. PENDLETON. Not seen him! Ah! Mr. Timbrell, you're the one that's to blame.

TIMBRELL. Really, madam, I can't discuss the matter with you. I've said what I mean to do.

EDGAR. It's about time this dinner was ready, isn't it?

LEONARD. And to think that all this bother is through a confounded chimney! We might have been comfortably at table, with incomes secure. What do you think of the Governor's proposal, Edgar—as a business man?

EDGAR. Don't talk to me.

LEONARD. No, brother.

TIMBRELL. [*Bouncing from the chair on which he had seated himself.*] I tell you I will not stand—

[*Enter maidservant.*]

MAID. Dinner is served.

[*Those who are seated rise hesitatingly. TIMBRELL glares about him and then offers his arm to MRS. PENDLETON who accompanies him out of the room. SHEILA and ADA follow. EDGAR offers his arm to MARY, who shakes her head. PENDLETON offers his arm to MRS. TIMBRELL.*]

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MRS. TIMBRELL. Excuse me for a moment. [*She turns to MARY and LEONARD.*] What are you going to do?

LEONARD. Well, we don't seem to be wanted here.

PENDLETON. Better all come.

MARY. I want to go home.

LEONARD. Yes, it's all right for you when you get to your baby.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'll follow you Mr. Pendleton.

PENDLETON. Well, I'll just see what Timbrell's up to now. [*He goes out.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. I think you had better not stay.

MARY. No, let us go.

LEONARD. I've made a mess of it, mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Never mind that.

LEONARD. No. That doesn't matter. But I've hurt you. I've shaken you. You look pale and queer now. I've no reverence. I'm selfish. But I can sympathise. Do you see that? I understand you better than anyone does, mother. I know you better, I like you more. You don't properly exist without me. Did I say some horrible things about you? I really don't know what I meant. It was a kind of inspiration. Oh! yes. I know the proper things to say about one's mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. But I'm a mother like the rest.

MARY. He doesn't understand that. He wants to see all sorts of things in you.

MRS. TIMBRELL. We're just mothers, aren't we, Mary?

MARY. That's the best.

LEONARD. Yes, Mary's a mother. But what of you, poor thing? Look at us. Look at Edgar and me and Ada. Look at the finished product. What's the good of it? What's the good of being a mother when one's children are grown up? I can understand Mary. I've watched her with the baby. There's been something suppressed and killed in you.

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MARY. Don't say these things to her.

LEONARD. Failure is written on her face.

MARY. Don't, don't.

LEONARD. I'm at my best in saying such things.

MARY. But they hurt her. You only care for yourself.

LEONARD. She must be hurt. We've let her alone all these years. She ought to have revolted. She ought to be alive now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I remember you all as babies, as children. I've got the past.

LEONARD. Was I always your favourite, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I won't say that. [*She listens for a moment to a distant sound.*]
Perhaps you'd better go.

[EDGAR *enters.*]

EDGAR. Aren't you coming, mother? It's most awkward. There'll be an awful row.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes. Edgar, is it any use their coming? Mr. Pendleton was going to see whether—

EDGAR. I don't think it's the slightest use. He's boiling over.

MARY. Oh! let us go.

LEONARD. Come on. But look here. It's no use our going home. Edgar, lend us a sovereign.

EDGAR. You'd condescend to borrow from me, then?

LEONARD. My dear fellow you don't seem to understand that I'm magnanimous. [EDGAR *laughs.*] You think that's a joke. You never see my jokes.

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EDGAR. I can't stay.

LEONARD. Have you any money about you, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*To EDGAR.*] Give it to him.

LEONARD. Mother will repay you out of the housekeeping. [EDGAR *fumbles in his pocket.*] Look here. Make it two pounds. Mary and I don't often have a treat together. It's a special occasion. We may as well do it handsome for once. What about the Savoy and a music-hall, Mary? You look the part fine. [*His spirits are obviously rising.*]

MARY. I wonder if I'd not better go home.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Go and enjoy yourself, my dear.

[EDGAR *hands money to LEONARD who looks at it.*]

LEONARD. Well, I'm damned. One pound ten.

EDGAR. Quite enough, too.

LEONARD. It's not that I'm thinking of. It's the extraordinary meanness of your character.

[*Enter ADA.*]

ADA. Mother, do come. He says I'm to bring you or else the Family Bible.

LEONARD. The devil!

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'll come.

[*Curtain falls.*]

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ACT III.

[*Rather poor lodgings. MARY, neatly but very plainly dressed, is sewing at a child's garment. LEONARD sprawls on the sofa smoking cheap cigarettes. He is carelessly dressed to the point of slovenliness and a little anxiety begins to shew through his calmness which is generally maintained. It is afternoon. Two or three months have elapsed.*]

LEONARD. I don't think it's that the old man's mean. He's got on the high horse and doesn't know how to get down.

MARY. We oughtn't to take the money from your mother. It's very hard for her.

LEONARD. Oh! but it only means that she gives them rice pudding instead of gooseberry tart. It'll do them good. I expect the old man sees the difference and pretends he doesn't. And Edgar will be furious.

MARY. If little Leonard had a brother and they were like you and your brother—I couldn't bear that.

LEONARD. It's a long way off, old lady.

MARY. Thing's aren't a long way off if you think they might come.

LEONARD. Don't worry, now. Don't worry.

MARY. I'm a great deal happier than you. I've got him.

LEONARD. Well, haven't I?

MARY. No, you haven't. Not like me.

LEONARD. You don't think I'm such a bad father, do you?

MARY. I don't know. You're funny with him and I like to see you together but—

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LEONARD. Well?

MARY. You keep spending the money.

LEONARD. But, Mary, you don't know how much more I could spend if I had it.

MARY. And, so clever as you are, you don't make any—I mean don't make much.

LEONARD. You see, in my trade, the better you are the more wretchedly you get paid.

MARY. You keep telling me that.

LEONARD. And you don't believe it?

MARY. Yes, I do. I think you mean it. I don't think it can be quite true. I think you could get more money if you tried. You're clever enough to write the way they want.

LEONARD. What do you care for most in the world—barring the baby?

MARY. [*Considering.*] I don't think there's anything. Oh! I beg your pardon. Of course there's you.

LEONARD. Never mind me. Could you believe that I care more about writing my own way than for anything?

MARY. I suppose it's good to care for something but that seems selfish.

LEONARD. You're beginning to feel a bit of resentment. You don't hate me yet, do you?

MARY. No, of course not.

LEONARD. I shouldn't blame you. You're a wonderfully even-tempered person. I sometimes wonder whether I'm right about that streak of wildness in you. Do you think you could do strange things—what shall I say—wicked things?

MARY. I've done one wicked thing.

LEONARD. Does it trouble you, Mary? Does it still trouble you? Would you alter it?

MARY. Then I shouldn't have little Leonard. I can never understand. If I'd known of him—if I'd thought of little Leonard—then it couldn't be wrong. But how could I think of him when he wasn't born? It was wicked. It wasn't like me.

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LEONARD. You did think of him, Mary. No, you didn't think. It's not thought. It was nature—something bigger than you—forcing you—forcing you to bring little Leonard into the world. Now, take comfort in that, my girl; there is some comfort in it.

MARY. I can't see what it's got to do with *him*. It's not children I care for; it's him. Well, he's here now. I've got him now.

LEONARD. Quite right, my dear.

MARY. But I think he ought to have Lubbock's food regularly and we *must* have a perambulator.

LEONARD. Well, this must go. [*Taking out his watch.*]

MARY. Would you? Will you?

LEONARD. [*Looking ruefully at the watch.*] You'd better take me at my word. My generous moods don't last.

MARY. Shall I take it?

[*He is slowly unhooking the watch when there is a knock at the door and MRS. GREAVES, the landlady, comes in. He puts the watch in his pocket.*]

MRS. GREAVES. I should like a word, sir.

LEONARD. A whole history if you like, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. Sir?

LEONARD. I was only quoting Shakespeare, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I know nothing about him, sir.

LEONARD. He's the man that writes the plays.

MRS. GREAVES. There's some people too fond of plays and such things.

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LEONARD. Now I hope you're not going to attack Shakespeare, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I'm attacking nothing, sir, but I should like a word and perhaps it would be more pleasant if Mrs.—the lady wasn't here.

LEONARD. Why mustn't Mrs. the lady be here?

MRS. GREAVES. It's as you like.

LEONARD. Fire away.

MRS. GREAVES. I must tell you, perfectly frank, that there's been some talk about you. I know that lady that comes here to see you is your mother and that I don't understand. But I've heard tell of carryings on with a housemaid and it is said as you're not married. I know mothers 'll do a good deal for their sons but I must say—

LEONARD. Who says this?

MRS. GREAVES. It's not only one. There's Mr. Whales, the milkman, and he does a good round and hears a lot—

LEONARD. We shall have no more dealings with Mr. Whales.

MRS. GREAVES. You wouldn't, anyhow, till he got paid.

MARY. No more milk?

MRS. GREAVES. No, and it's not only milk.

LEONARD. Mrs. Greaves, this lady is my wife and anyone who says she isn't is telling an abominable lie. I'm surprised that you should listen to such stuff.

MRS. GREAVES. Of course I know she's got on a ring and all that but that's what they do and I can't afford to be out of my money; I really can't. I don't want to be hard but my account must be settled.

LEONARD. Now first of all, Mrs. Greaves, you will apologise to my wife. Then we'll settle the other matter.

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MRS. GREAVES. I'm sure I'm sorry if there's been a mistake. I've no call to make mischief. I'll ask your pardon ma'am very willing, but Mr. Whales, he said—and he's only saying what others—

LEONARD. No more of that, now, if you want to have your bill paid.

MRS. GREAVES. You can be made to pay.

LEONARD. And so can you be made to pay. Do you know what you've done?

MRS. GREAVES. Done? I know I've been done.

LEONARD. Good, Mrs. Greaves—very good—I'm glad you can joke about it. It may be no joke for you.

MRS. GREAVES. What do you mean?

LEONARD. It's slander. They give very heavy damages now for slander.

MRS. GREAVES. I've only mentioned what I've been told.

LEONARD. Yes, that's slander. It's sometimes called defamation of character. Same thing.

MRS. GREAVES. I'm sure I'd no intention at all of saying anything—I've been very lenient, too.

LEONARD. Perhaps you'll give me the name of your Solicitor, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. What for? I haven't got a solicitor. I don't understand what you want.

MARY. I think he's joking, Mrs. Greaves.

LEONARD. [*With mock vexation.*] Tut! tut!

MRS. GREAVES. [*Doubtfully.*] I know slander's a nasty law but I can't see as I've

said anything.

LEONARD. It's not all a joke, Mary. You may tell your Whales and people that if I hear another word about it I go straight to a Solicitor.

MRS. GREAVES. I'll tell him, sir.

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LEONARD. Very well. You may go, Mrs. Greaves.

MARY. Solicitors like to be paid, too.

MRS. GREAVES. [*Turning at the door.*] And what about my bill, sir?

LEONARD. It shall be attended to.

MRS. GREAVES. I've heard that very often.

LEONARD. It is a bit stale, isn't it? I apologise for the old wheeze. Well, you see, there's the perambulator first.

MRS. GREAVES. The what, sir?

LEONARD. The first money we get is for a perambulator—no. The first is for a pint or a peck, or whatever it is, of what's-his-name's food for the baby. Second, the perambulator. You're only third, Mrs. Greaves. Rather a bad third, but your turn will come.

MARY. It's not fair to her. She ought to be paid.

LEONARD. Of course she ought. We ought all to be paid. I'm in favour of handsome incomes all round and I hope Lloyd George will take it up. But, look here, Mrs. Greaves, we're all in the same boat. Now is there anything *you'd* like to pawn? I'm treating you as a friend.

MARY. There's your watch.

LEONARD. There's my watch. My wife suggests my watch. A nuisance to me, of course. As a friend, Mrs. Greaves, what do you say to that?

MRS. GREAVES. I should be sorry, sir, but I must have my money.

LEONARD. You shall have it with compound interest at 5 per cent. Do you know what that means?

MRS. GREAVES. I think so.

LEONARD. It's more than you can get safely elsewhere so it means that the longer we keep you out of your money the more it will be to your advantage.

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MRS. GREAVES. I think you're a funny gentleman.

LEONARD. [*To MARY.*] She's found me out.

MARY. Mrs. Greaves, we've got some money coming in a day or two. At least I think so. But I'm anxious about the baby and I must have some for it. I will pay you. I will.

MRS. GREAVES. Can you give me a little?

MARY. Yes, you shall have something to-morrow.

MRS. GREAVES. I think I know of an old perambulator.

MARY. Do you? Could we borrow it. We'd pay when we could.

MRS. GREAVES. I'll see.

MARY. Thank you, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I don't want to be hard.

MARY. You've been very kind.

MRS. GREAVES. P'raps there'd be no harm in letting the doctor have a look at the baby.

MARY. Do you think so? Do you think he's—

MRS. GREAVES. He looks a little bit peaked.

MARY. You know about babies, too, don't you?

MRS. GREAVES. I should do. I've had seven of my own.

MARY. We'll have the doctor. And thank you, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I've been a bit soft, I know that.

[*She goes out.*]

MARY. Will you sell your watch, then, or pawn it?

LEONARD. Oh!

MARY. And will you bring the doctor first?

LEONARD. Now, is that necessary?

MARY. And we must have some money for her to-morrow.

LEONARD. You choked her off very well. I can't keep serious enough.

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MARY. She must have it.

LEONARD. Where's all this money to come from?

MARY. There's your watch. I've not many things. Some of my clothes could go. I can't lose my wedding-ring.

[*She moves towards the door.*]

LEONARD. Where are you going?

MARY. I'm going to look at him.

LEONARD. Wait a moment. This is getting serious. I'll write to my mother again. I'll ask her to come. It's absurd. He thinks he's teaching me a lesson. I suppose he is. Mary, do you remember exactly what he said that day—I mean about the three hundred pounds? The old man's very particular about keeping his word. That sort of people always are.

MARY. Aren't you?

LEONARD. Shall I explain to you what a promise is?

MARY. I know.

LEONARD. Ah! Yes. It would spoil you to understand these things; and I'm losing all my lightness of touch. I was rather stupid just now with Mrs. Greaves. I didn't handle it well.

MARY. You must go to your father and tell him how we are. It's different now I'm frightened about little Leonard. I'll go if you don't. I can get milk. I don't want to do it but if I must I will.

LEONARD. Milk!

MARY. You heard her say that Mr. Whales wouldn't let us have any more. George Truefit will let me have some.

LEONARD. George Truefit?

MARY. Yes, I shall be ashamed to go to him but I'll do it.

LEONARD. I had forgotten about George Truefit.

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MARY. I hadn't.

LEONARD. My rival, the milkman, isn't he?

MARY. Yes, he's a milkman.

LEONARD. There's something rather piquant in this. I wonder whether George Truefit would appreciate it. I suppose he wouldn't poison the milk?

MARY. Poison the milk!

LEONARD. No, I *am* getting a bit heavy-handed. That's stupid. What is he like? What's George like?

MARY. He's—he's—you know where you've got him.

LEONARD. A fine fellow, is he?

MARY. You can trust him.

LEONARD. That's something, isn't it?

MARY. A good deal.

LEONARD. [*Sharply.*] Now, now, now. You're contrasting him with me. You're thinking that I can't be trusted. You mustn't do that. Weren't you, now?

MARY. I was thinking of you both.

LEONARD. You're married to me, Mary.

MARY. I'm not complaining.

LEONARD. Do you love me, Mary?

MARY. [*After a short pause.*] Sometimes I think I do.

LEONARD. Do you think I love you?

MARY. Do you?

LEONARD. Sometimes *I* think I do. I'm a bit afraid of you, though?

MARY. Of me? Afraid?

LEONARD. I'm afraid of the truth. I'm afraid of the hardness at the back of things. I like ideas and changes and poses and all the rest of it. You make me uneasy.

MARY. I shall never understand you.

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LEONARD. I think you understand me very well. It's only the things I say you don't understand. Poor girl. I bewilder you. You're quite right. I'm what you see. You keep thinking you don't understand and that I may be better than that. You're a brave, humble person. By God! There's no one like you. I wish I was different. I wish I was like George Truefit.

MARY. Only a little bit like him. Yourself, too.

LEONARD. What must I do to be saved?

MARY. Now, you're talking queer again.

LEONARD. What is it you want? I see you watching me anxiously sometimes. I can't make myself into another person but I'd like to please you. What do you want me to do?

MARY. I suppose it's a lot of little things.

LEONARD. Yes, yes. Can you tell me some of them?

MARY. While we're talking here you might have gone for the doctor.

LEONARD. The doctor?

MARY. You forget him. You often forget all about little Leonard. [*Rising.*] I must go to him.

LEONARD. Ah! Yes. Mrs. Greaves said he was peaked. Peaked! Good word isn't it? Shakespeare has it, you know: "Shall he dwindle, peak and pine"—

MARY. But you don't think he's pining, do you?

LEONARD. No, no. I'm only quoting the poet.

MARY. Why do you say things like that—just to amuse yourself—and you might know they frighten me? That's it. You don't think of other people—except now and then when you seem to get interested.

LEONARD. I'll go for the doctor.

MARY. Yes. Thank you.

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LEONARD. Anything else I can do?

MARY. Would they trust us for Lubbock's food?

LEONARD. I'll pawn my watch.

MARY. Wait. We'll see what the doctor says.

LEONARD. Well, I won't be five minutes.

MARY. Thank you very much indeed.

LEONARD. No, my dear girl, don't put it like that. [*There is a ring at the front door bell.*] Anyone for us I wonder.

MARY. Oh! I must tell you. My mother might come. My father will come too, but he couldn't get off now.

LEONARD. Of course you've got parents, too, haven't you.

MARY. Don't you ever think of that?

LEONARD. But where have they been all this time?

MARY. They didn't know where I lived.

LEONARD. They could have got the address from my mother.

MARY. I wrote and told them I'd gone to Canada. I felt I couldn't face them then.

LEONARD. And now?

MARY. My mother knows a lot about babies. I want to see her. You won't like

them, I'm afraid. I think someone's coming in.

LEONARD. Oh! I'm sure I shall find them quite amusing. No, I don't mean that. I mean interesting. Interesting; that's what I mean when I say amusing. They're coming up.

MARY. That's my father's voice.

LEONARD. Let's see—what does he do?

MARY. He's a cabman.

LEONARD. Heavens! Are there such things still! A growler or what?

[*The door opens and MRS. GREAVES ushers in MR. AND MRS. BROOME. He is dingily arrayed but confronts misfortunes with a slightly defiant air. She is a rather sharp, quiet woman, shabbily dressed. She does not display much tenderness to her daughter but regards her with some solicitude. MRS. GREAVES watches the greetings curiously before retiring.*]

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MARY. [*After kisses from father and mother.*] This is my husband.

[*There is some rather stiff hand shaking.*]

MARY. Sit down, mother.

LEONARD. Sit down, Mr. Broome.

MARY. Baby's not very well as I told you, mother, and he's just off for the doctor. [*To LEONARD.*] Will you go?

LEONARD. Yes, certainly.

BROOME. Is he coming back?

LEONARD. Good, Mr. Broome, good. You read my thoughts.

BROOME. What?

LEONARD. I was just wondering whether I was coming back. How soon, I mean.

BROOME. Well, it'd only be polite—and you've nothing to do, it seems? You're out of a job too?

MARY. Are you, father?

MRS. BROOME. [*Bitterly.*] Ay, they've chucked him at last.

MARY. When?

MRS. BROOME. Only yesterday.

BROOME. [*With gloomy joviality to LEONARD.*] So there's two on us at a loose end.

LEONARD. [*Politely.*] Yes, we ought to see something of one another, Mr. Broome. But I'm not exactly out of a job. I've never been in one.

BROOME. Oh! A gentleman of means.

LEONARD. Without means, Mr. Broome, without means.

BROOME. Then you've got someone to keep you.

LEONARD. No, Mr. Broome. No.

BROOME. Then how are you going to get along?

LEONARD. That's just what's been bothering us.

BROOME. You're a cool customer.

LEONARD. And how do you propose to get along, Mr. Broome?

BROOME. It's them bloomin' taxis that's done for me.

MARY. Can't you drive one, father?

BROOME. They wouldn't give me a try if I wanted. And I don't want. I wouldn't touch the things.

LEONARD. You've had the bad luck to be attached to a decaying industry.

BROOME. Decaying my eye! There's no call for it to decay.

LEONARD. You don't hold with modern notions—progress and things, Mr. Broome?

BROOME. I don't hold with taxis. They'll find out their mistake.

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BROOME. What I want to know is—Are you married?

MARY. Yes, I am.

BROOME. Prove it.

MARY. My word's good enough.

MRS. BROOME. Have you gone to Canada?

MARY. That's different.

MRS. BROOME. One lie's very like another.

MARY. There's my ring. [*Showing it.*]

MRS. BROOME. Anyone can get a ring. Have you got your marriage lines?

BROOME. Ay, let's see the marriage lines.

MARY. I think you ought to take my word.

MRS. BROOME. Let's see them.

MARY. I wouldn't but that I told you that lie about Canada. It's the first I've ever told you, mother.

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MRS. BROOME. That's what frightens me.

BROOME. Where are they?

MARY. They're in my purse. [*She goes to drawer and brings out the purse.*] There's nothing else in it.

MRS. BROOME. They're better than money.

MARY. Here then. [*She gives them the paper which they scrutinise together.*]

MRS. BROOME. That's all right, John?

BROOME. Ay, that seems all right. [*MRS. BROOME takes the paper from him and gives it to MARY.*]

MRS. BROOME. Put it away.

BROOME. Here, let's have another look at it.

MRS. BROOME. Put it away. She's shown it us all right.

BROOME. When was that baby born?

MRS. BROOME. Never mind that.

BROOME. How old is it?

MRS. BROOME. What do you call him, Mary?

MARY. Leonard, like his father.

MRS. BROOME. Is his father kind to you?

MARY. Yes.

BROOME. Of course she'd say that. I'll have a talk with that young man. I never thought a daughter of mine—

MRS. BROOME. Now shut up.

BROOME. Oh! yes. Take his part. Never mind me. Never mind my feelings. Do you mean to say this young toff's got no money, really?

MARY. He's been brought up not to work and his father won't give him any now.

BROOME. Ah! I see—I see. Vexed about this was he? And the young chap did the right thing. Well—a good-hearted lad, I see.

MARY. I won't talk about it. I've been miserable not to come to see you, mother, but I couldn't at first, and time went on and I didn't like to. And I didn't know what to do.

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MRS. BROOME. Never mind that now.

[*A ring at the doorbell is heard.*]

MARY. That can't be the doctor yet.

MRS. BROOME. You don't have a many visitors, I s'pose.

MARY. I don't have any—except sometimes Mrs. Timbrell.

MRS. BROOME. P'raps it's her.

MARY. I'd like you to see her.

MRS. BROOME. Someone's coming up.

MARY. I think it must be.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Outside.*] I know the way, thank you.

[*She enters carrying a little bunch of flowers.*]

MARY. Here's my mother and father.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! how d'ye do. [*She shakes hands.*] I don't know why we've never met before.

BROOME. We've never been here before.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Haven't you? I've not been many times. We must come oftener. [*She smiles embarrassments away.*]

BROOME. Of course. I see ma'am that you're not like to think as your son and my daughter's a fair match but I tell you—

MRS. BROOME. Now, John.

MRS. TIMBRELL. It's a very good match for him.

BROOME. Eh?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's lucky to marry such a girl as Mary.

BROOME. He's not up to much himself, isn't he?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I didn't say that.

BROOME. He seems to be kep' rather short of brass.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Sees the flowers in her hands.*] Oh! I brought you these, Mary.

[Pg 64]

MARY. [*Takes them.*] Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Mrs. Timbrell.

BROOME. [*Rather truculantly.*] That baby'll get a fat lot o' good out o' them.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Is the baby ill, Mary?

MARY. I keep fancying he's not so well. His father's gone for the doctor.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Have you seen him, Mrs. Broome?

MRS. BROOME. Not yet. Will you take me, Mary? We must be going directly.

MARY. Come on, then. [*Looking at the others.*] Would you like?—

BROOME. Not me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, I'd like to see him.

BROOME. I thought, p'raps, you'd just like a word with me ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! well—Presently, Mary, I'll just talk to Mr. Broome.

[*MARY and MRS. BROOME go out.*]

Well, Mr. Broome and what have you got to say?

BROOME. What 'ave I got to say?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You look like a man who has something to say.

BROOME. I've a good deal to say if it's any good saying it. What's it all mean?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, that's the point. Is it any good saying it? That's just what I feel more and more Mr. Broome. I used to want to say things and now I say to myself. Is it any good? I believe we think very much alike about it.

BROOME. But a man has his feelings and so he's got somethin' to say.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That's exactly what I think, Mr. Broome. I want to talk to relieve my feelings, not that I think it will do any good. Least said, soonest mended, I suppose. I agree with you.

[Pg 65]

BROOME. [*Flattered.*] I've no wish to make myself onpleasant only—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I was sure you hadn't.

BROOME. Only—I want to know how your son—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Hark! Is that somebody coming in? I wonder if he's got the doctor.

BROOME. I'm not one as interferes where there's no call for it but—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Anyone can see that Mr. Broome.

BROOME. But—I mean to say—what I'm sayin' is—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I believe it is the doctor.

BROOME. I'm on'y a poor cabman. You're too clever for me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't worry your daughter. Don't be always asking her to explain things. Your wife sees that.

BROOME. I'm her father. I think there's something due to me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That's where we parents make the mistake.

BROOME. Well, I can see a bit and I think the young man has acted fair.

[LEONARD *enters.*]

LEONARD. Your wife's going, Mr. Broome.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What does the doctor say?

LEONARD. He's just looking at the kid—nothing serious, I think.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary's with him, I suppose? [*She goes out slowly.*]

BROOME. Now, sir, I thought I'd just like to have a word with you.

LEONARD. Very natural, very proper Mr. Broome, I am sure, but you know—

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BROOME. I'm only a cabman but I have my feelin's. I'm a father, sir.

LEONARD. Yes, it's a curious sensation, isn't it?

BROOME. Sir?

LEONARD. It's big. Mr. Broome; it's big, undeniably.

BROOME. What's big?

LEONARD. There's something in these primal relations, you know.

BROOME. I dunno what y're talkin' about.

LEONARD. I beg your pardon.

BROOME. It seems you're my son-in-law.

LEONARD. Yes, of course. Very jolly isn't it?

BROOME. That doesn't mean as I'm goin' to take liberties. I've had a talk with your mother and we come to an agreement that least said soonest mended so don't look for no pryin' from me nor my wife. There's a thing or two I don't understand but I do say this. Whatever mistakes you've made you've come out at the finish like a man.

LEONARD. It's very handsome of you to say so, I'm sure but—

BROOME. I know a man when I see one and there's my hand on it. [*He offers his hand which LEONARD takes rather hesitatingly.*] You've done the fair thing and I honour you for it.

LEONARD. It's very charming of you I'm sure and your commendation is very—very cheering but, really—

BROOME. I ask no questions but I can see a thing or two. Why, sir, it's as plain to me as if I'd been told that your father's cut up rough about this.

LEONARD. You're quite right.

BROOME. He wouldn't have you marry my gel and like an hon'rabl young feller in love—in love mindyer—you ups and you sez: I'll marry her so's 'ow. It's as plain as mud—

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LEONARD. It does look like that, doesn't it?

BROOME. It's on'y the other day I was readin' a bit of a novelette in the paper—just to pass the time—and there was a young feller who did just like that and the father says it's a cut off of a shillin. I said there's a bit of human natur' there but I didn't expect to see it in my own family so soon.

LEONARD. You're a reader, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. I've read a fairish bit, sittin in my keb. Sir, let me tell you—the father in that there novelette come round.

LEONARD. That's encouraging, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. [*Listening.*] Is that your mother coming? Give us your hand again. [*He hastily takes LEONARD'S hand and poses as MRS. TIMBRELL, MRS. BROOME and MARY enter. He speaks loudly for MRS. TIMBRELL'S benefit.*] I accept you, sir, in my family and I honour you for your handsome conduct and hoping the old gentleman will soon come round though, mind you, I ask no questions.

LEONARD. [*Retreating.*] Very good of you.

MRS. BROOME. We're going now.

[*Farewells. BROOME is hearty again with LEONARD, confidential with MRS. TIMBRELL and perfunctory with MARY. MRS. BROOME, subdued and a little anxious, passes before LEONARD and says:—*]

You needn't be afraid that we shall come often.

LEONARD. Come as often as you like.

MRS. BROOME. No, we'll give you your chance.

BROOME. What are you talkin' about? [*To MRS. TIMBRELL.*] All right. I'll explain how things are to her, ma'am. I'm glad I come to-day. I think I've cleared up things a bit. Come along, old lady. [*BROOME and MRS. BROOME go.*]

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LEONARD. You're like me, Mary; you're your mother's child. You're not a bit like your father.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What had you been telling him? Something about your father?

LEONARD. Not a word. He seemed to have got it from you. And *is* the Governor coming round?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! He will come round.

LEONARD. Bravo! That's better. We've been deucedly pinched, you know.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Perhaps it'll do you good. I don't mean you, Mary. Who's that?

[*MRS. GREAVES enters with a letter which she gives to LEONARD and retires.*]

LEONARD. [*Opening the letter.*] Hullo! This is from Cochrane.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Aside to MARY.*] I brought you this. [*She gives her money.*]

MARY. I can't refuse it now. [*She looks over at LEONARD gravely.*]

MARY. He never asked about little Leonard.

LEONARD. I say—look here. Cochrane wants me to go there. Just the thing. Just what I want.

MARY. Where?

LEONARD. His place down in Norfolk. Fishing. Of course the fishing's not much but he's got some rather good men there. By Jove! I see myself talking again. I mean really talking. Just the thing.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Does he ask Mary?

LEONARD. Mary! Well, no. But there's no nonsense of that kind about Mary.

MARY. I've got little Leonard.

LEONARD. [*Glancing at her.*] By-the-bye, what did that chap say about little Leonard?

MARY. He's coming in again. He wasn't very sure.

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LEONARD. Then you may be sure there's nothing the matter. Good. Things are looking better. [*To his mother.*] Do you think the Governor would let me have twenty pounds? Is he far enough round for that?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You'd soon have him back again if you tried.

LEONARD. It's awkward. I must get some things. And I've no fishing rod. I might say I'd lost it on the way down. I must lose a bag, if necessary, and borrow. Rather thin, though. Did Edgar leave his rod at home? Could you manage ten pounds? What did you give Mary?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Is there any hope for him, Mary?

LEONARD. What? Oh! the baby—I keep forgetting about that blessed baby. But he's not ill. I'm sure he's not ill. Look here! I must get away. I shall hate you, Mary,

if you stop me. I want a change, as the doctors say. I want to talk to these chaps. They're men you can talk to. I must go. I must go. I'm a flower turning to the light, I'm a prisoner breaking from his dungeon, I'm a spirit winging upwards. Don't stop me.

MARY. Why should I stop you? You want to be there. I want to be here.

LEONARD. Ah! yes. And if the child *is* ill you've got a beautiful time before you. A mother with her child ill is lovely, lovely. I could come home to see it. Especially if those fellows get rather dull. Cochrane doesn't mention a time. I wonder how long he'll have me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. If anyone could change you, Mary would, but you don't change.

LEONARD. Don't change! I'm always changing. I'm a perfect Kaleidoscope.

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MRS. TIMBRELL. Always a Kaleidoscope.

LEONARD. [*Taking his mother by the shoulders.*] You just go and get me some money, will you? Tell the old boy I'm a new man, a reformed character. Put in a good word for Mary. Tell him she's done it. Then see if you can't get fifty pounds out of him.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You'd kill the goose with the golden eggs, before it laid any. Mary, we'd better let him go.

MARY. Oh! yes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You must have some money? What's the least you can manage with?

LEONARD. The least? Well, I should say the least is the most I can get.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Fingering her rings.*] Have you started with pawnshops yet?

LEONARD. Oh! yes. I'm not afraid of pawnshops.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'm too old to begin. [*She takes off a ring and gives it to him.*] Take that.

MARY. No, no. He can't do that.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I think he can.

LEONARD. Of course I can. I thought you would understand, Mary. A mother's sacrifice for her son is one of the most beautiful things—just think what you would do for little Leonard.

MARY. Yes, if there's need.

LEONARD. Need? There is need. But wouldn't like to deprive her of the pleasure. The pleasure! It's a sacred joy. Isn't it mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You're a humbug.

LEONARD. I suppose I am. But I'm your son all the same. You can't be less than a mother because I've got a bit of humbug about me. I wonder if I should do better to sell it out and out to a jeweller. You don't mind, mother?

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MRS. TIMBRELL. You couldn't redeem it. You couldn't give it me back.

LEONARD. Do you want it back?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought it might be a sacred joy to give it back to me.

LEONARD. Good. Very good. You're a damned fine woman, you know. Isn't she, Mary? I suppose a lot of mothers do the kind of things that she does for their sons but she does them lightly. She can be witty over it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good-bye, Mary. I'll come again soon.

MARY. Good-bye. [MRS. TIMBRELL *goes*. LEONARD *goes out with her for a moment and returns. He capers up to MARY, seizes her waist and waltzes her round. She yields and laughs for a moment, then stiffens and struggles.*]

MARY. Hark! There's little Leonard.

LEONARD. Bother little Leonard!

[*She breaks away and runs out. He does a pas seul as the curtain falls.*]

[Pg 72]

ACT IV.

[Two months later. The TIMBRELL'S drawing-room again. Afternoon. ADA. To her enters SHEILA in out-door things.]

ADA. Hullo! Sheila.

SHEILA. All alone?

ADA. Mother's somewhere about. Take your things off.

SHEILA. I don't think I'll stop. Ada—

ADA. Well?

SHEILA. Has Leonard come home? Have you heard from him?

ADA. He's coming, I think. Mother's sent him three telegrams.

SHEILA. What good is it now with the child dead and buried?

ADA. He's dreadful, isn't he?

SHEILA. I want to do something for that girl. I want to be different to her. I'm frightened, Ada. I'm frightened of having a child.

ADA. What's she got to do with it?

SHEILA. You must have your conscience clear when you're going to have a child.

ADA. I daresay—only—

SHEILA. We've not been very nice to her, now, have we?

ADA. Well, how could we be?

SHEILA. Yes, we couldn't be expected to receive her with open arms, could we?

ADA. Of course not.

SHEILA. I suppose she is to blame.

ADA. Why, of course she is. She's not as bad as he is, though.

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SHEILA. I don't understand things a bit. I don't know right from wrong. Only I ought to have been more kind. It's stupid, Ada, but I'm afraid of its bringing me bad luck.

ADA. What's made you so superstitious?

SHEILA. Perhaps you'll understand better some day. Well, I'm going to ask her to tea.

ADA. Oh! That's all right.

SHEILA. Will you come, too?

ADA. I don't mind. Yes.

SHEILA. I think Leonard wants whipping.

ADA. It was rather decent of Edgar to go to the funeral.

SHEILA. It was scoring against Leonard, too.

ADA. Well, that's not very nice to your husband.

SHEILA. Oh! I wish I didn't keep saying things and thinking things against him. He's my child's father; he's not only my husband.

ADA. Who's coming?

[The maid shows in MARY who stands near the door for a moment. SHEILA goes to her rapidly and kisses her. MARY is a little startled and discomposed by this.]

MARY. [To ADA.] Is your mother in?

ADA. [Rather graciously.] How d'y do, Mary? [They shake hands.] Yes, she's somewhere about. Sit down, won't you? Er—won't you take your things off?

MARY. No, thank you. I can't stay long.

ADA. Here's mother, I think. [MRS. TIMBRELL enters. She and MARY greet one another affectionately.]

MRS. TIMBRELL. Has he come?

MARY. He hadn't when I left. He's coming. I got a telegram.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What time does he arrive?

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MARY. He should be there now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And you are out? Well, perhaps it's a good idea. Mary, you mustn't judge him by other people. He's queer and different.

MARY. What must I judge him by?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Well, I think you'd better not judge him at all.

MARY. No. It's too late for that now. I've just come to say good-bye.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good-bye?

SHEILA. Where are you going? [TIMBRELL *enters*.]

TIMBRELL. Ah! Mary. [*They shake hands*.] Glad to see you. You've had a trying time. Where's Leonard? Home yet?

MARY. He's coming.

TIMBRELL. Yes. Well, Sheila, how are you? Yes. I wanted to have a word with you, Mary. I've heard from Leonard. I've had quite a long letter from him. And a very proper letter in the circumstances. Of course he did very wrong. He acknowledges that. Undoubtedly he ought to have been there. He does make certain explanations and apologies. He expresses himself to me in a suitable manner. Now, Mary, I have been talking to Mrs. Timbrell and we wish you to understand that we are pleased with you. We think that as far as you can—according to your lights—you have made him a good wife. You've had rather a hard time. Well, I thought it right that there should be what I may call an ordeal—a period of ordeal. I hope we may consider that over and that things may be made a little easier for you. I think after the letter I have received from Leonard that I may say—I think I may say—

MARY. He's very good at writing letters.

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TIMBRELL. Yes, yes.

MARY. When little Leonard died he wrote me a beautiful letter.

MRS. TIMBRELL. A beautiful letter!

MARY. It was beautifully expressed.

SHEILA. He's a literary man.

TIMBRELL. Well, well. That's all over.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Here's Leonard.

[LEONARD *enters and looks around him. Then he walks up to MARY and stands before her*.]

LEONARD. I've come to abase myself, Mary.

MARY. You've been a long time in coming.

LEONARD. You don't want a lot of apologies. You know what I am.

MARY. No. I don't want any apologies.

TIMBRELL. Now I think you are wrong there, Mary. He ought to make very ample apologies to you. Of course he has explained to me the exceptional circumstances of the delay but still—

MRS. TIMBRELL. The circumstances of the delay! You begin to excuse him now!

LEONARD. Oh! I know. I've been a brute and there's an end of it.

MARY. Yes, there's an end of it.

TIMBRELL. Of course, Mary, we must all recognise that Leonard is quite an eccentric person. I am reluctant to suggest the possibility of—of two—or more—moral standards but allowance must be made for exceptional temperament.

LEONARD. Very liberal, sir. Very liberal and enlightened. [*Turning to MARY, again*.] There are some things I hate. All that undertaking business. Black clothes and dark rooms and nodding plumes. Remember that. They're horrible to me.

MARY. There are things that I hate, too.

LEONARD. If I could have come in time to see the little lad it would have been different. But I like to think of him as alive and happy. I've all sorts of charming memories of him—of him with you, Mary.

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MARY. Yes. You said so in your letter.

LEONARD. I've thought about you a great deal.

MARY. I find it hard to believe that.

LEONARD. I'm a curious kind of brute. I'm rotten with egoism. It startles me to come back to you and find you so steady and calm. I'd nearly forgotten what you are like.—I wish you'd denounce me or curse me or something.

MARY. It's no use doing that now.

LEONARD. And how are we all getting on together? All a happy family? I believe it's you that will unite us yet, Mary.

TIMBRELL. I've got to talk with you about a few arrangements. And I should like to say before you Leonard that your Mother and I have come to the conclusion that you owe a great deal to your wife and that her influence is a beneficent one. We are pleased—very much pleased—

LEONARD. What is it you're thinking about, Mary. There's something inscrutable in you. It seems to me that we're just as uncomfortable as ever. Mother, let's have a little motherliness or something. I don't know how it is but I want cheering up. I came from the station most penitentially in a growler—an ancient fourwheeler. It made me think of your father, Mary. How is that good man? Got a job all right? By-the-bye, there's an extraordinary upset at our place. I wanted to ask you about that. A lot of tin trunks with cords round them and things. Are we leaving? Are we going away?

MARY. I'm going away.

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LEONARD.	}	{ You are!
TIMBRELL.	}	{ <i>Together.</i> } { Going away!
MRS. TIMBRELL.	}	{ Mary!

MARY. I'm going to call for the boxes and things when I leave here.

LEONARD. Mary, where are you going?

MARY. [*Looking steadily at him.*] To Canada.

LEONARD. Alone?

MARY. No.

TIMBRELL. What? What's that?

MARY. [*Still looking at LEONARD.*] I'm going with George Truefit.

LEONARD. Don't do that, Mary. Don't do that.

TIMBRELL. What do you mean? George Truefit?

LEONARD. You are leaving me to go with George Truefit?

MARY. Yes.

LEONARD. Can you do that? Can you really do that?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't be hasty, Mary. Think about this.

TIMBRELL. Do you mean to say—Who is George Truefit?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He was our milkman. He gave us notice a few weeks ago that he was going out of the business.

LEONARD. In order to elope with Mary? Did he mention that?

TIMBRELL. Do you mean that you are leaving your husband and going away with this person?

MARY. Yes.

TIMBRELL. I can't believe it. I can't understand it.

LEONARD. Mary, I'd like to talk to you about this.

MARY. I'll hear what you have to say.

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LEONARD. Not here. Not now. I want you alone.

MARY. It's only reasons I want. You can give those here.

LEONARD. Mother, talk to her.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You've startled me, Mary. It seems very dreadful.

MARY. I'm sorry Ma'am.

TIMBRELL. [*To LEONARD.*] Confound you, sir, are you going to let your wife go like this?

LEONARD. [*He knows in his heart that MARY will not be shaken and his efforts to*

retain her seem perfunctory.] What do I do? What's the right thing? Must I call out Truefit? Or assassinate him? Is there such a person? He sounds to me like a myth or a symbol or something. Mary, will you swear that there is a George Truefit?

MARY. I'll swear that.

LEONARD. This is the strangest thing that has ever happened to me.

MARY. I thought it would surprise you.

LEONARD. But Mary, you're my wife.

MARY. Yes. That's what I don't like about it.

LEONARD. I did wrong to stay away from you. I acknowledge it. I feel it. I'm going to be good. I'll try. I'm going to be a good husband. I don't want you to go. It was dreadful of me to stay away when the little kiddie died. I'm not like that. I'm not like the things I do.

MARY. After all, you wrote a beautiful letter.

LEONARD. [*Despairingly, to the Universe.*] She's taking to irony now.

SHEILA. [*She has approached MARY rather timidly and stands beside her.*] Don't go, Mary.

MARY. Oh! Miss Sheila!

SHEILA. I want you to stay. I do. And I'm so sorry about everything.

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MARY. Oh! I must. Thank you—thank you. I must.

SHEILA. [*To MRS. TIMBRELL.*] Won't you stop her?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I don't know how.

TIMBRELL. Perhaps I may have a few words with this young woman. I think I am entitled to a few words. Now, I don't wish to be harsh with you. Far from it. I had formed—I was forming a high opinion of your character—of some phases of it. I was prepared, as I think I have said, to accept you—to have overlooked the deplorable incident which—I will say no more about that. My son has been rather unfeeling, perhaps. I don't defend him. He is anxious to make amends. I must remind you that at a time when—that I insisted on his making reparation. It was an unusual course. I conceived it to be my duty. Later I found it necessary in certain painful circumstances to impose what I may call an ordeal. It is over. I am willing to be lenient. I should propose, if your husband remains reasonably—what shall I say?—steady, to make your pecuniary position a much easier one. Now, my good girl, I hope we shall have no more of this nonsense. I can overlook a slip—an error due to—an error of—of youth, but not a deliberate infringement of—are you listening to what I say?

MARY. I beg your pardon, sir. I was thinking it was time I was off.

TIMBRELL. Oh! This is abominable.

MARY. It's no good your talking, sir. I've made up my mind.

TIMBRELL. And does he—this person—this Truefit know the whole of the extraordinary circumstances?

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MARY. I've told him everything.

TIMBRELL. Where is he? I'll see him.

MARY. You won't move George Truefit.

LEONARD. I should like to see him. I don't mean to talk and argue and all that. And I don't want to break his head. But I should like to have a look at him through a keyhole or something.

TIMBRELL. Manly talk.

LEONARD. Mary, do you like him better than me?

MARY. It's not the same thing.

LEONARD. It's deuced interesting if one weren't so close to it. As it is I feel rather uncomfortable. Unmanly. Yes, I suppose so. I suppose things are easy for these manly people. They just go to work with an axe. But how do I know that she isn't right? Mary, I'm horribly uncomfortable. I'm unhappy. I seem to be losing something. Yes, really losing something. Are you quite sure about George Truefit?

MARY. Yes, I'm sure about him.

LEONARD. And yourself? Do you think you'll never want to come back? To me, you know?

TIMBRELL. To you or to fifty others.

MRS. TIMBRELL. No—no.

LEONARD. Oh! he doesn't understand.

TIMBRELL. Understand! I understand that this is an abandoned woman. You are well rid of her. I've been mistaken. Yes, I made a mistake. She has been treated with some magnanimity. [*Snappishly to LEONARD.*] Not by you. Let her go, then, to her life of infamy.

MRS. TIMBRELL. For shame!

TIMBRELL. Silence!

MARY. It's no good my talking here but I'd like you to understand ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I do understand.

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SHEILA. Don't go.

LEONARD. No. Don't go.

MARY. I must go. I can't throw over George Truefit.

LEONARD. You are throwing me over.

MARY. That doesn't matter. That's another thing.

LEONARD. Oh! Is it? Why?

MARY. It was all wrong from the beginning. I brought it on myself. I'm sorrier for my mother than anyone. She told me there were men like you. I wouldn't have gone if little Leonard had lived. Not if I'd had to leave him. But now George Truefit and I have talked it over and we think we see what's right. It can't be right but it's not so wrong as other things.

LEONARD. Mary, do you love George Truefit?

MARY. Now, that's what I've said to myself sometimes. And people talk of love and stories are full of it. I can't make out rightly what it is. Did you love me when first—They talk about a mother loving. Well—little Leonard—are they the same? If that's love I don't love George. But I want to be sure of things. I want things to last. I want to feel that I'm faithful and true. It's strange for me to be running away from my husband for that. I'm not one of the kind that does it. It's funny that I'm leaving you because I want to be a proper wife. P'raps I'm all wrong. It's hard for a girl like me, not very clever, to make out things. It's all been very unusual. I may be wrong but I can't help it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You are not wrong, Mary.

TIMBRELL. This is madness. Are you going to justify her now?

LEONARD. Ah! You don't understand this, sir. It's a little out of your line.

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TIMBRELL. I hope it is out of my line, sir. I trust it is.

MRS. TIMBRELL. When are you going, Mary?

MARY. We sail to-morrow.

LEONARD. I suppose the magnanimous thing would be for me to see you off.

MARY. No. I'll say good-bye here. [*To MRS. TIMBRELL.*] I'm sorry to leave you ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good luck, Mary.

MARY. There'll be no questions asked there. I shall leave it all behind. I should be ashamed here. I've felt so all the time. Why! Mrs. Greaves thought I wasn't married. And I never felt as if I was, properly. Of course it's wrong, but I can't be right now whatever I do. It isn't as if I'd been straight all the time. Somehow that does make me feel a bit freer now. If I'm wrong it's the best I can do.

TIMBRELL. [*Angrily to LEONARD.*] Do you mean to tell me that you're going to submit to this?

LEONARD. I don't see that a scrap with George Truefit would help much. I've lost Mary. That's plain.

TIMBRELL. Well, well. I've no more to say.

LEONARD. It has been an extraordinarily interesting episode. The most stimulating thing that ever happened to me. I must thank you for that, Mary.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Turning suddenly on LEONARD.*] Doesn't it hurt you. Can you get outside it like that?

LEONARD. Oh! Yes. It hurts me splendidly.

TIMBRELL. Your conduct is despicable, sir. The man who allows his wife to leave him is not a man.

LEONARD. [*Snappishly.*] Oh! Don't talk rubbish. Your wife left you long ago. She never came to you. You've never had a wife.

[Pg 83]

TIMBRELL. I don't understand you. I don't want to understand you. I pray that I may never understand you.

LEONARD. Of course you don't want to understand. That's just it. I think sometimes that people like you are just as intelligent as we are but you're timid, you daren't let your thoughts stray, you have secrets from yourselves. Well, mother, I shall have to look to you now Mary's gone.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I can do nothing for you. You've ceased to be a child.

LEONARD. To him—to my father—Yes. Not to you.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes. You know too much. You can only pretend to be my child.

LEONARD. I'm to be alone, then. Mary, I shall be quite alone.

MARY. I daresay you'll pick up somebody.

LEONARD. You've no sentiment at all.

MARY. I must go. Good-bye, ma'am.

[MARY and MRS. TIMBRELL embrace. MARY moves toward the door. The others, with the exception of TIMBRELL, follow her, LEONARD slowly and wistfully. They go out, meeting EDGAR who stares at them in some astonishment but without greeting and advances to his father.]

EDGAR. What's this?

TIMBRELL. [*Testily.*] What's what?

EDGAR. Some sort of family reconciliation?

TIMBRELL. Just the reverse.

EDGAR. They seemed to be saying good-bye to her.

TIMBRELL. She's gone.

EDGAR. Gone?

[Pg 84]

TIMBRELL. Take care Sheila doesn't go.

EDGAR. Sheila?

TIMBRELL. Perhaps she's gone already.

EDGAR. What do you mean?

TIMBRELL. I've been listening to the ravings of lunacy and they've affected my brain. I'm getting old. Do you ever have any doubt about yourself, Edgar? Do you ever think you're a fool?

EDGAR. No, I don't think I'm a fool.

TIMBRELL. Neither am I.

EDGAR. But what is it? What's been going on?

[*The Curtain falls.*]

TURNBULL AND SPEARS, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH

Transcriber's Note

This transcription is based on scans of a copy made available by the California State University East Bay Libraries. These images have been posted with the Internet Archive at:

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In general, the grammar and spelling in the source text have not been changed. For example, variant spellings (such as "disgraceful" and "truculantly") and spellings used to suggest an accent (such as "druv" and "perfeccion") have been retained. A few changes were

made for the sake of consistency.

The following changes were noted:

- p. 25: What about my mother? Is it fair to her?—Changed second “is” to “it”.
- p. 29: MRS. PENDLETON. [*Turning to Sheila.*] Oh, yes, I’ve had the pleasure. . .— Changed “*Sheila*” to all capital letters.
- p. 29: I meant Mary—Mrs Leonard.—Inserted a period after “Mrs”.
- p. 29: MRS. TIMBRELL. [*Laughing a little as she goes forward to Mary.*] Well, Mary. . .— Changed “*Mary*” in stage direction to all capital letters.
- p. 37: And I’m not comfortable ma’m and its partly this dress. . .—Changed “ma’m” to “ma’am” and “its” to “it’s”.
- p. 39: TIMBRELL I can’t believe—I can’t understand. . .—Inserted period after “TIMBRELL”.
- p. 44: EDGAR *offers his arm to MARY. who shakes her head.*—Changed the period after “MARY” to a comma.
- p. 46: Its a special occasion.—Changed “Its” to “It’s”.
- p. 53: MRS. GRAVES. He looks a little bit peaked.—Changed “MRS. GRAVES” to “MRS. GREAVES”.
- p. 73: I’m afraid of it’s bringing me bad luck.—Changed “it’s” to “its”.
- p. 75: [*Turning to Mary, again.*]—Changed “*Mary*” to all capital letters.
- p. 80: MARY Yes, I’m sure about him.—Added a period after “MARY”.
- p. 82: LEONARD. It has been an extraordinarily interesting episode.—Changed “extraordinarily” to “extraordinary”.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY BROOME: A COMEDY, IN
FOUR ACTS ***

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