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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LADY HUNTWORTH'S EXPERIMENT: AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS ***

LADY HUNTWORTH'S EXPERIMENT

An Original Comedy in Three Acts

BY

R. C. CARTON

AUTHOR OF "LIBERTY HALL," ETC., ETC., ETC.

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LADY HUNTWORTH'S EXPERIMENT.

Produced at the Criterion Theatre, London, 26th April, 1900.

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN DORVASTON (late Bengal Cavalry)
 REV. AUDLEY PILLENGER (Vicar of Stillford, in the parish of Droneborough)
 REV. HENRY THORSBY (his Curate)
 GANDY (Man-servant at the Vicarage)
 NEWSPAPER BOY
 MR. CRAYLL
 MISS HANNAH PILLENGER (Rev. Audley's sister)
 LUCY PILLENGER (their Niece)
 KEZIAH (Servant at the Vicarage)
 CAROLINE RAYWARD (Cook at the Vicarage)

Mr. Arthur Bouchier.
 Mr. Eric Lewis.
 Mr. A. E. Matthews.
 Mr. Ernest Hendrie.
 Master R. Denny.
 Mr. Dion Boucicault.
 Miss Fanny Coleman.
 Miss Gertrude Elliot.
 Miss Polly Emery.
 Miss Compton.

ACT I.

THE VICARAGE GARDEN.—Morning.

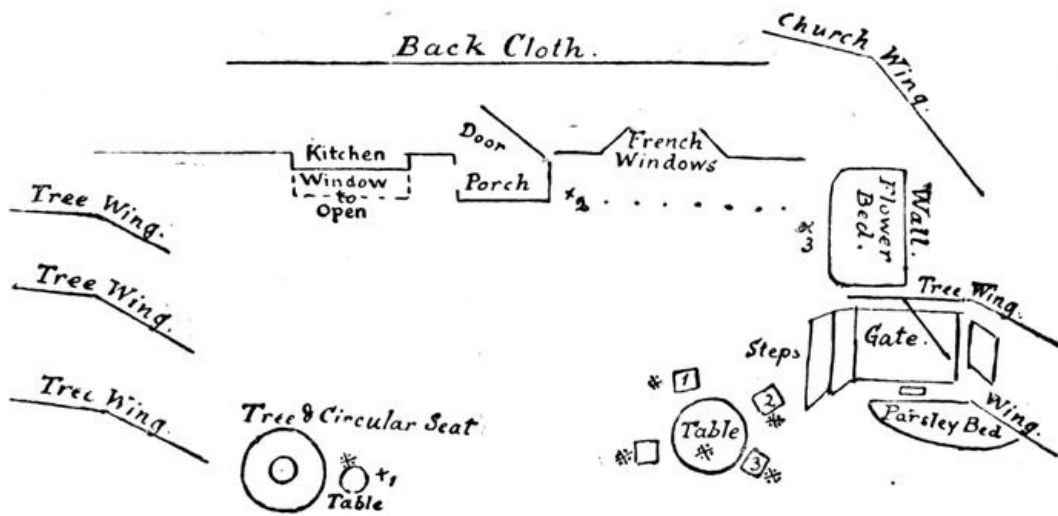
ACT II.

THE VICARAGE KITCHEN.—The same evening.

ACT III.

THE VICARAGE LIBRARY.—Next morning.

Act I. Scene Plot.



Scene—Back of Vicarage with Garden.

PLAN OF BREAKFAST TABLE.—ACT I.



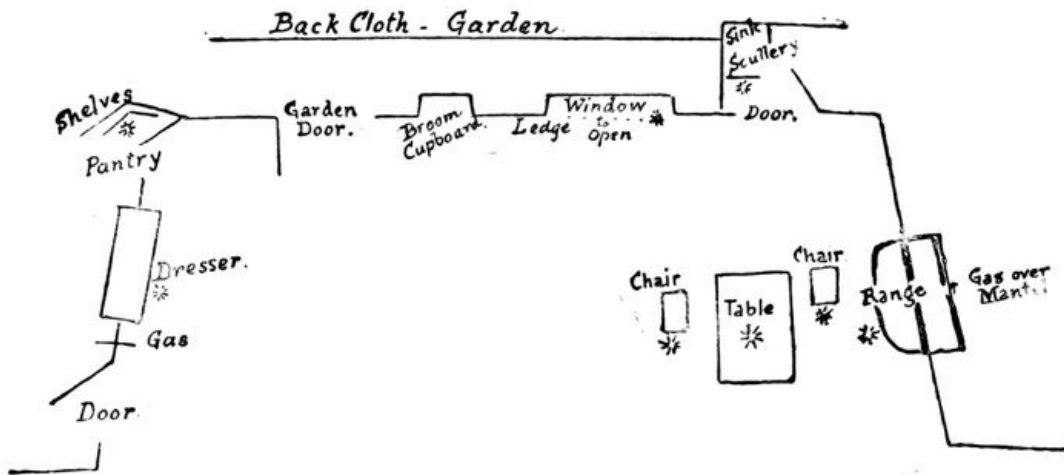
FACING DOWN STAGE.

Note 1.—Those articles *not* marked with an asterisk are discovered.

Note 2.—Those articles marked with an asterisk are brought on.

Note 3.—Great care must be used in setting the table.

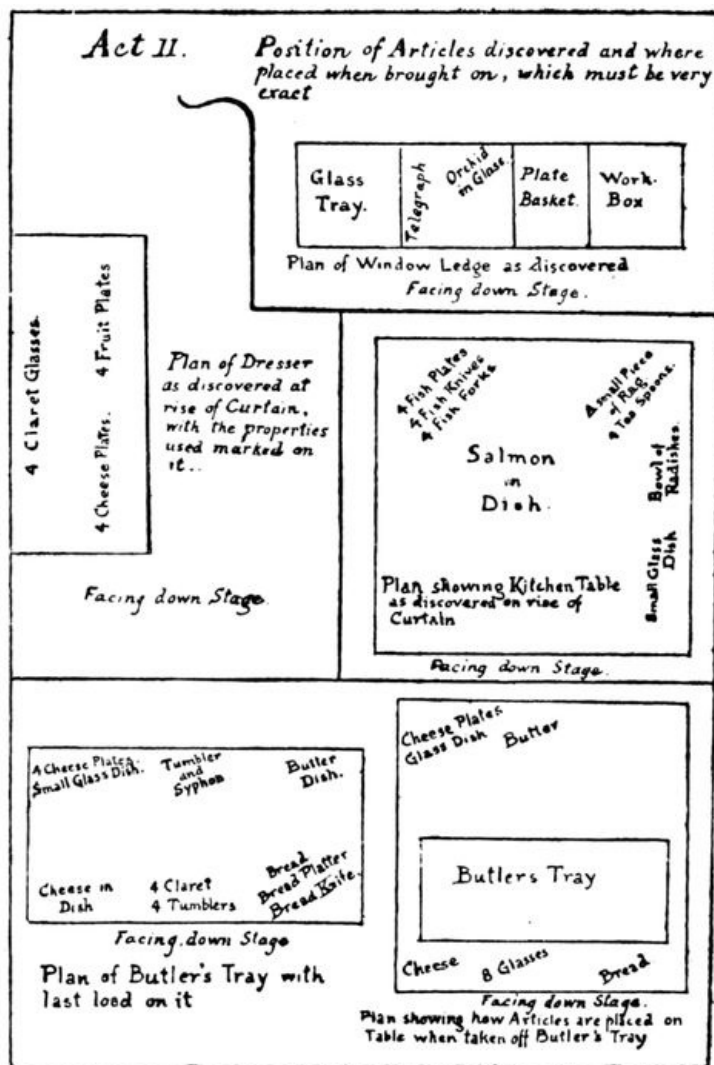
Act II. Scene Plot.



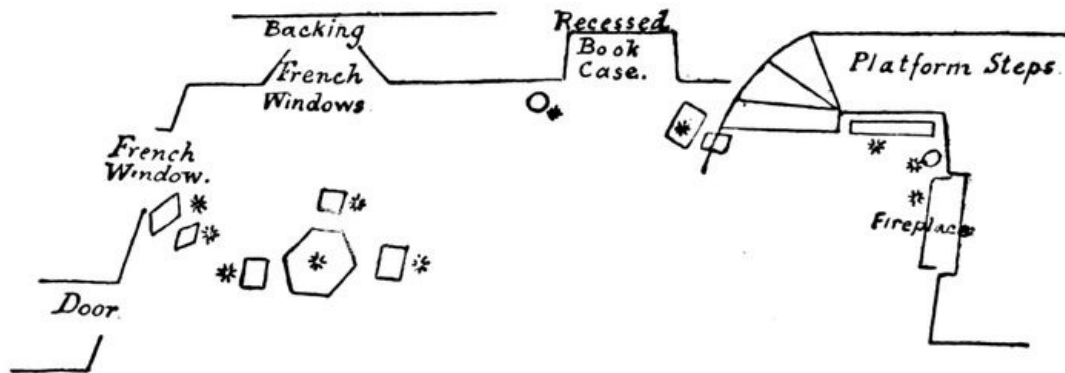
Scene—Vicar's Kitchen.

Act II.

Position of Articles discovered and where placed when brought on, which must be very exact



Act III. Scene Plot.



Scene—Vicar's Study.

ACT I.

- Circular Table, L.C.
- Seat round Tree, R.C.
- Small Rustic Table, L. of Tree R.C.
- Table Cloth
- 4 Napkins in Rings
- 4 Large Plates
- 4 Small Plates
- 4 Cups, Saucers, and Spoons
- 4 Large Knives and Forks
- 4 Small Knives
- Large Fork and Spoon
- 1 Cruet
- Slop Basin
- Milk in Jug
- Sugar in Basin with Tongs
- Butter in Dish with Knife
- Jam in Dish with Spoon

PROPERTY PLOT.

- 4 Rustic Chairs, Round Table, L.C.
- Parsley-bed, L.I.E.
- Bench in front of Window.

Discovered set on Breakfast Table on Butler's Tray L.C.

Toast in Toast-rack
Kidneys in Entrée Dish
Tea in Tea-pot (4 people)
Large Oval Salver
Large Circular Salver
Small Card Salver
3 Eggs in stand and Spoons
2 White Pudding Basins
Fork
White China Dish
2 Eggs in Basin
Bottle Salad Oil
Medium-sized Salver
Syphon of Potash
Whiskey in Decanter
2 Tumblers.

All off L.O.E. for GANDY.

All off L.U.E. for CAROLINE.

Door Bell to Ring in Kitchen.

Letters in Tree R.C., *Discovered.*

Letters for Thorsby, L.

"Standard" with par.

"Sporting Life"

In American cloth Wrapper for Boy off L.

6 various papers

Flowers in Bowl for Lucy *off L.U.E.*

Five Letters for Gandy *off R.U.E.*

Tobacco Pouch

Pipe

Matches and Match-box

Marriage Settlement

Orchid for DORVASTON *off R. "2" E.*

Cigars in case for CRAYLL.

For DORVASTON.

ACT II.

Chimes *off L.U.E.*

PROPERTY PLOT.

Kitchen Table, L.C.

Kettle on Stove.

Kitchen Fender and Fire-irons.

Clock

Tin Jelly Moulds

Candlesticks

Jelly Moulds on Walls above Mantel.

Candle in Stand and Matches on Bracket above
Fireplace.

Meal-sack above Fireplace.

Plates in Rack above Sink

Warm Water in Bowl on Sink

Work-box containing Pudding Cloth, Needle, &c.

Glass Tray

Newspaper ("Standard")

Plate Basket

1 Meat Cover on Wall over Meat-Jack.

Almanac on Wall.

Looking-glass on Flat between Garden-door and
Larder.

Mat outside Garden-door.

Cheese Dish

Large Butter Dish

Fruit Salad

4 Cheese Plates

4 Fruit Plates

1 Wine Glass

Dresser Furnished.

2 Glass Cloths

"Family Herald"

Orchid in Specimen-glass in Window.

Ham on Dish for Keziah.

Salmon on Dish

4 Plates

4 Fish Knives and Forks

4 Teaspoons

Piece of Rag

Radishes in Water in Bowl

On Mantelpiece.

Towel on Roller above Meat-Jack.

In Scullery.

All in Window.

Brooms and Pail in Cupboard.

In Larder.

On Dresser.

In Kitchen Table Drawer.

Stuffed Fish in Cases.

Canary in Cage, hanging in Window.

Discovered on Table.

Radishes in Dish
 2 Chickens on Dish
 Salad Bowl
 4 Plates
 4 Knives and Forks
 Fruit Salad
 4 Plates, Forks, and Spoons
 Whiskey Syphon and Glass
 4 Tumblers, 4 Claret Glasses
 Bread Platter and Knife
 Cheese Dish and Butter Dish
 Radish Dish, 4 Knives, and 4 Plates

1st Load on Butler's Tray.

2nd Load.

3rd Load.

HAND PROPERTIES.

Hand-bag for GANDY
 Music Case for DORVASTON
 Cigars in Case
 Pins for CAROLINE.

Off R.I.E.

Letter in Letter-case for CRAYLL.

ACT III.

PROPERTY PLOT.

Oak Table R.C. and Cover.
 Davenport R. Oak Chair at Davenport.
 Library Steps Alcove R.
 Fender and Fire-irons.
 Stair Carpet and Rods on Stairs.
 "Bradshaw"
 Box of Safety Matches
 Electric Push below Fireplace.
 2 pairs Green Plush Curtains and 1 single ditto.
 2 Spring Blinds fitted to Window.

3 Oak Chairs R.L. and Top of Table.
 Armchair in Alcove L.
 Settle above Fireplace.
 2 Large Rugs.
 Pictures on Walls.

On Mantelpiece dt.

Books in Bookcase.

HAND PROPERTIES.

2 Coffee Cups (coloured)
 Milk in Milk-jug
 Sugar in Basin and Tongs
 Bread and Butter on Plate
 Lady's shoe
 Sprig of Syringa
 Cigarettes in Case for DORVASTON.
 Wedding Ring for THORSBY.
 Lawyer's Letter for CAROLINE.
 Papers:—
 "Standard," "Sporting Life."
 "Church Times" for GANDY, R.

All on Japanese Tray for CAROLINE, L.

For CAROLINE, L.

NOTE.—Properties are marked with a small asterisk showing their position.

The crosses with numbers in Act I. show where the chairs are moved to; the C. one is not moved at all.

All doors want proper locks on. The gate in Act I. wants a latch and spring to make it spring to.

Inside Broom Cupboard must have small bolt for DORVASTON to bolt when inside.

The down-stage oven must open to receive cake in tin. It should have iron fixings on to make realistic noise.

LADY HUNTWORTH'S EXPERIMENT.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Vicarage Garden, according to plan.*

TIME.—*Early morning.*

(*After the curtain rises THORSBY enters at gate L. I. E., looks at French window, crosses and looks at kitchen window, goes over cautiously to the tree R.; he mounts on the seat and extracts a letter from the cavity in the tree, replacing it with one of his own; he then stands leaning against the tree, while he opens, kisses, and begins to read the letter; while he is doing this, GANDY comes out of the house with toast in rack and jam on dish on salver; he catches sight of THORSBY; crosses to top of table L.*)

GAN. Good morning, Mr. Thorsby!

THOR. (*startled, squashes letter into his pocket*) Eh! Oh, good morning! I was—I—wanted to see Mr. Pillenger.

GAN. Mr. Pillenger ain't much in the 'abit of climbin' trees before breakfast. (*puts jam on table*)

THOR. No, of course not. (*he jumps down*) I thought I saw a bird's nest, (*looks*) I was mistaken; but feeling (*Boy heard whistling the A.M.B.*) rather warm after my walk, I fancied it would be cooler under the branches. My object, in fact, was—

GAN. Shady! (*crosses down L. of table*)

THOR. What?

GAN. I was sayin' it's shady under the h'oak. (*puts toast on table*)

THOR. Exactly.

(*NEWSBOY enters at gate, crosses to C. and calls towards kitchen window.*)

BOY. Papiers!

GAN. Late again! (*crosses in front of table*)

BOY. No, I ain't. (*turns and faces GANDY*)

GAN. Yes, you h'are. (*looks at silver watch*) Four minutes and a half late. (*THORSBY sits R. and reads letter*) Your prospects of a Christmas-box are darkenin' week by week.

BOY. Well, but I say, Gandy! (*crosses down C.*)

GAN. Mr. Gandy! A leetle more respect might assist your grandmother's next h'application to the coal and blanket fund. Now, is this to-day's "Standard?"

BOY. Yus! (*giving it*)

GAN. Very good. And the other papers?

BOY. "Sportin' Life!" (*gives it*)

THOR. "Sporting Life!" (*Boy sees jam, and works round to top of table*) That's rather an innovation, isn't it?

GAN. (*crosses to THORSBY C.*) It's for Captain Dorvaston. We deplore it, but we're 'elpless. (*places papers on table R. C., startles Boy and comes towards him. Boy backs towards gate. To Boy*) Go along with you, and, mind me, if there's any more tip-cat down our road, I call at the police station.

BOY. All right. Keep your 'air on. (*goes off, singing the chorus of A.M.B.*)

(*LUCY comes out of house with bowl of flowers.*)

LUCY. Good morning, Mr. Thorsby! (C.)

THOR. Good morning! (*rises*)

LUCY. You're an early visitor. (*puts bowl on table*)

THOR. Yes, I—I was—

GAN. (*has crossed and turns at porch*) Bird's nestin'! (*he goes in through porch*)

LUCY. (*they both watch him off, LUCY goes up a little and down again*) What does he mean?

THOR. He caught me standing up on that seat. I had just found your letter, (*she hushes him*) and I had to give some explanation.

LUCY. And couldn't you rise to anything better than that? My dear Harry, what an idiot you are.

THOR. You see, I greatly dislike any deviation from the truth.

LUCY. Truth is a luxury very few of us can afford. When you and I are married—

THOR. (*advancing*) Darling! (*rushes to embrace her, she waves him off*)

LUCY. Stay where you are! All the back windows have eyes to them. Muslin curtains don't count. When we are married— (*crosses L.*)

THOR. In fact, after to-morrow—

LUCY. Oh, Harry, do shut up a minute. You object to shams, how is a properly organised household to be carried on without 'em? (*sits R. of breakfast table*) Suppose I'm up to my neck in something important—putting finishing touches to a new ball-dress, we'll say—and some female horror calls—mustn't I be out because I happen to be at home? Deviation from the truth! My dear boy, I should deviate for all I was worth. So you got my letter?

THOR. Yes.

LUCY. And your answer?

THOR. I posted it in our usual letter box. (*going to tree*)

LUCY. All right, I'll get it directly. Does it give full directions?

THOR. I think so. (*comes C.*)

LUCY. Got the special license?

THOR. Yes. (*makes to embrace her, she puts him off and points to windows*)

LUCY. You've arranged with old Bristowe?

THOR. Yes.

LUCY. And we bike over to Ingledene Church—what time? Early of course?

THOR. I said nine.

LUCY. Very well. (*rises*) Now you'd better go. (*he objects*) They'll be coming out to breakfast.

THOR. (*again advancing*) Darling!

LUCY. (*motions him off again*) Back windows! (*crosses up C. to house to see if they have been seen*)

THOR. (*turning towards her*) I was going to say that I can't help regretting the way we are treating Captain Dorvaston.

LUCY. You mind your own business. (*she crosses down R. and leans on rustic table*) Captain Dorvaston is in my department.

THOR. I never fully understood how you came to be engaged. (*crosses to her*)

LUCY. Simple enough. My father was a colonel who did some rather big things on the Indian frontier, and in a dust up with one of the native Princes got himself into rather a tight corner. Jack Dorvaston—he was only a subaltern then—pulled him out of it, and in fact saved his life; so when the governor died a year or two later, he left a strong wish behind that the Captain should marry me.

THOR. I understand.

LUCY. (*crosses round and sits on tree seat R.*) It was a queer way of showing his gratitude, seeing that I was then a particularly unattractive child, all elbows and knees.

THOR. Lucy!

LUCY. It's all right, don't be nervous; time has softened them down. (*beckons him nearer*) I have a notion that Jack has always funk'd the thing, but his colonel had given his orders, (*he sits on table*) don't you see? And that was enough for *him*. I don't regard discipline—military or parental—with the same amount of respect. British freedom means the right to make a fool of one's self in one's own way. You're my way, and that's enough for *you*. (*he tries to take her hand, she draws it away*) Back windows!

THOR. I suppose no one guesses that we—?

LUCY. Mean business! No, with the exception possibly of Cook.

THOR. Cook! (*he looks at her in surprise*)

LUCY. Somehow I've a notion she's tumbled to it.

THOR. Would it matter? Would she—?

LUCY. Prattle about it? No, I think she rather likes me—tolerates would be a better word.

THOR. Tolerates? A woman of that class?

LUCY. Cook is a very great personage; she rules the vicarage. Auntie made a show of resistance at first, but Uncle and Jack have been abject slaves from the start.

THOR. Really?

LUCY. Oh yes; when a woman is striking in appearance, evidently has a past history, and can make an omelette, I don't see what's going to stop her.

THOR. What's her history?

LUCY. How should I know? She was recommended to us by the Duchess of Sturton at the time she opened the bazaar—you remember. Local philanthropic?

THOR. Then you've nothing tangible to go on?

LUCY. Not from a masculine standpoint. (*rises*) Cook doesn't give herself away, but, like Achilles, she has one vulnerable point, and in the same locality.

THOR. How is that? (*rising with Lucy*)

LUCY. She wears the neatest, quietest shoes imaginable, only I happened to notice they have Louis heels. (*he looks in wonder*) That tells you nothing—the inference is too subtle; but it's quite enough for me. (GANDY *appears with butter on tray, he comes right of table*) Make a dignified clerical exit—here comes Gandy.

THOR. (*takes hat and backs to C.*) I think I won't wait, Miss LUCY. (GANDY *coughs, THORSBY turns nervously, and looks at him*) So will you kindly give my message to Mr. Pillenger?

LUCY. Certainly!

THOR. Thank you. (*crosses to gate L.*) Good morning!

LUCY. Good morning. (*he looks towards LUCY—catches GANDY'S eye and exits through gate. LUCY is applauding his exit when GANDY turns and hides her action. LUCY sits on garden chair and opens the "Standard"*) Gandy! what is there for breakfast? (GANDY *has crossed to top of table and placed butter on it*)

GAN. H'eggs!

LUCY. Poached?

GAN. Biled.

LUCY. Auntie said poached.

GAN. Cook said biled.

LUCY. Oh! There's some fish, isn't there?

GAN. Kidneys.

LUCY. But Auntie particularly mentioned fish.

GAN. Cook thought kidneys would be *preferable*.

LUCY. Oh! (*she reads paper*)

(MR. PILLENGER *comes out C. looking at his watch.*)

PIL. Ah, Lucy! breakfast not ready? (LUCY *rises and crosses to C.*)

LUCY. Breakfast is late—as usual.

PIL. As usual? What do you mean by as usual?

LUCY. I mean—as usual. (*returns to seat*)

PIL. Cook is most punctual. If some trivial hitch has occurred this morning, I daresay a perfectly reasonable explanation will be forthcoming. (*takes "Sporting Life" off table*)

GAN. Kidneys was late! (*at table*)

PIL. Kidneys was late! (*to LUCY*)—er—were late. I knew it! That man Skeggs' meat—which I more than suspect of being colonial—is never delivered in time. (*to GANDY*) Explain to Cook that the delay is of no consequence, and beg her not to hurry.

GAN. (*speaking as he goes*) She won't hurry! (*he goes into the house; PIL. and LUCY look at each other; PIL. then opens paper and sees his mistake.*)

PIL. (*takes "Standard" from LUCY*) If I shall not be depriving you of the "Standard"—?

LUCY. Not at all! (*she picks up "Sporting Life"*) I'll have a look at Jack's "Sporting Life."

PIL. (*crossing to table, turn to her*) By the way, during the—I trust—brief interval of time that must elapse before your marriage with Captain Dorvaston, you might hint to him that the newspaper he favours is at variance with the general tone of a pious household.

LUCY. I'll mention it.

PIL. I am obliged to you. (*crosses and sits L.*)

(MISS PILLENGER *comes out through French window.*)

MISS P. Good morning, Audley!

PIL. Good morning. (LUCY *rises, crosses and kisses MISS PILLENGER and returns R.*)

MISS P. Well, Lucy!

LUCY. Good morning, Auntie.

MISS P. Is breakfast not ready? (*looking at table through glasses*)

PIL. No, it isn't ready—not quite ready. I have no doubt it's *nearly* ready.

MISS P. I shall really have to speak sharply to Cook. (*moves towards kitchen*)

PIL. I see no necessity for any—er—drastic step of that description. The delay is due to that man Skeggs.

MISS P. Skeggs? (*returns to C.*)

PIL. Skeggs. It is also traceable, in a minor degree to yourself—your injudicious selection of kidneys.

MISS P. Kidneys?

PIL. Yes; you are aware of my preference for fish, and therefore I consider the substitution of

kidneys—

MISS P. I ordered fish—and I did *not* order kidneys. Cook is entirely responsible for the change, and I shall certainly— (*moves towards kitchen again*)

PIL. Hannah! Hannah! If Cook understood your order, which is by no means obvious (Miss PILLENGER *crosses round and sits L.*), she was doubtless influenced by—er—by Lucy's partiality for kidneys.

LUCY. I never touch them.

PIL. Well, she couldn't know that. Really I think this discussion has been sufficiently prolonged.

(GANDY *comes out with breakfast. He places large salver with tea in tea-pot, dish of kidneys, and eggs in stand on chair at top R. of table. MR. PILLENGER hands him the "Standard," which he puts on back of chair. He then places eggs and dish of kidneys on table, takes tea-pot and tray up, and crosses to L. to place it in position; he then removes cover of kidney dish, and slowly exits through porch.*)

PIL. Here is the breakfast. Let us endeavor to approach it in a seemly spirit. Where is Captain Dorvaston? (LUCY *crosses to L.*) Upon my word, Lucy, considering the ties that will unite you, I hope *very* shortly, to Captain Dorvaston, I think he might conform to my rules.

LUCY. Jack was late last night. (*sits and takes napkin out of ring*)

PIL. He *was*. Creaking boots after midnight are a serious infliction.

LUCY. I'll call up to him if you like.

PIL. I should be indebted. (LUCY *rises and goes up C.* MR. PILLENGER *takes napkin out of ring and puts it inside his collar*)

LUCY. (*goes up stage*) Jack! Jack! (CAPTAIN DORVASTON *opens window, he is in his shirt sleeves*)

DOR. Hulloa!

LUCY. Breakfast!

DOR. What say, little woman?

LUCY. Breakfast! Kidneys! Devilled! (MR. PILLENGER, MISS PILLENGER *and GANDY all start*)

PIL. Tut! tut! Broiled—broiled!

DOR. Right-O! down in a minute! (*he shuts the window. LUCY returns to the table*)

MISS P. What are your plans for to-day, Audley? (MISS PILLENGER *has undone napkin and is pouring out tea*)

PIL. I expect to be rather busy.

LUCY. It's sermon day, isn't it? (*hands toast to MR. PILLENGER, and takes an egg and toast herself*)

PIL. It *is*. So I trust your piano practice will be reduced to a minimum.

LUCY. I'm going down to the village. I suppose you'll have broken the back of it by lunch time.

PIL. Possibly—probably!

(DORVASTON *comes out from French window; takes LUCY's hand between both his caressingly.*)

DOR. 'Fraid I'm a bit late. How are you, sir? (*bowing to MR. PILLENGER and MISS PILLENGER*)

PIL. In my ordinary health, I am obliged to you.

DOR. You look astonishing fit. (*sits*) Now d'you know, I feel as jumpy as a flea.

MISS P. Captain Dorvaston!

DOR. Fact, ma'am! (*takes his napkin out of ring*) How are *you* this morning?

MISS P. Without being actually indisposed, I feel— (*hands tea to LUCY*)

DOR. Chippy—I know; same here. Where are those kidneys you were shouting about, Lucy? (MR. PILLENGER *hands them*) Thanks! (MR. PILLENGER *passes kidneys to DORVASTON, which he serves himself*)

LUCY. You kept it up again last night, Jack?

DOR. I had a gentle flutter at the Plough and Rainbow. There was a little pool, so of course I went in.

MISS P. I hope you changed your things, (DORVASTON *and LUCY laugh*) Captain Dorvaston. Damp clothing is so very dangerous.

LUCY. Pool is a kind of billiards, Auntie.

MISS P. Oh, I misunderstood! Your tea, Captain Dorvaston. (*she hands tea to DORVASTON*)

DOR. Thank you, ma'am. (PILLENGER *hands salt, etc.*)

LUCY. How did you do over it? (*hands toast to DORVASTON*)

DOR. So so. I took a few lives at the finish.

MISS P. Dear me! It sounds rather a bloodthirsty pastime.

DOR. There was a man there named Crayll—nailing good player! Potted 'em just as he liked. He seemed to be a thirsty little beggar. I should say he took a bit of knowing.

LUCY. Who's that, Jack?

DOR. This fellah Crayll. He's stopping at the Plough and Thingummy—we're going to try a horse together.

LUCY. To-day?

DOR. Yes. Said he'd call round some time this morning. (*pause*)

PIL. Hannah, we must dine earlier this evening, in view of the Penny Reading.

DOR. Another of those festive gatherings! Hope you don't expect me to tip 'em anything this time?

PIL. No, Captain Dorvaston; your contribution on the last occasion may have been well intentioned—I judge no man, and will hope so—

DOR. Thought it was just the thing to wake 'em up after that Shakespearian bit of yours—The Ball of Worsted.

PIL. The Fall of Wolsey!

MISS P. I was not present last time. What did Captain Dorvaston read?

DOR. It was an account of the last American glove fight, don't you know?

MISS P. Oh!

PIL. Described with a wealth of technical detail. (*hands his cup to MISS PILLENGER*) The whole occurrence was most regrettable. I was observing, Hannah, we shall have to dine earlier—

MISS P. I had some idea of making it a cold meal.

PIL. Cold meal! A most unpleasant suggestion. Cold food, especially in the evening, has a tendency to lie heavy on the stom—er—that is, I see nothing feasible in the notion.

DOR. Oh no, hang it all, ma'am! Cold stuff ain't the kind of thing to do a Penny Reading on.

MISS P. I thought under the circumstances it might be easier for Cook.

PIL. Eh?

DOR. What? (*long pause, the men look at her*)

MISS P. But as you both object—

DOR. Hold on, ma'am!

PIL. One moment, Hannah!

MISS P. I will explain to Cook.

PIL. Hannah! Hannah! You're so hasty.

DOR. Hannah—ma'am—pity to be hasty.

PIL. If you will permit me to explain myself, Captain Dorvaston? I have no wish, Hannah, to add weight to Cook's very arduous duties.

DOR. Hear, hear! (*slaps the table*)

PIL. (*raising his voice*) And therefore it seems to me—er—unmanly to lay stress upon possible digestive difficulties which fortitude and a little pepsin should enable us to face with calmness. Let the meal be a cold one. (*LUCY has folded up napkin again, and taken "Standard" from back of chair, and is reading it*)

DOR. Point of fact, it makes a pleasant change.

MISS P. But, Audley!

PIL. The question is decided. We will not pursue the subject. (*pause*)

DOR. (*to LUCY*) Anything in the paper?

LUCY. There's something about the Huntworth Divorce case.

PIL. We have no wish to hear any news relating to such a matter.

DOR. But it's an old business, ain't it? When I was at Malta last year, the chaps used to chat about it at mess.

LUCY. Lord Huntworth brought the divorce, didn't he?

PIL. Yes, Lord Huntworth was the petitioner. It was a sad case.

DOR. I know Bob Carruthers.

LUCY. Who's he? (*rises and crosses up to DORVASTON—still reading the paper*)

DOR. The co—

PIL. Tut! tut!

DOR. Bob was an extraordinary good chap!

PIL. How can any individual be described as good who has occupied the position of—er—a co-respondent?

DOR. Bob managed it.

PIL. You seem to ignore poor Lord Huntworth.

DOR. Didn't know Huntworth—did know Bob. He once lent me a monkey when I wanted it badly—lent it when *he* wanted it badly. Devilish good chap!

PIL. Tut! tut!

DOR. Beg pardon, sir—slipped out.

LUCY. Did you know *Lady* Huntworth, Jack? (*crosses to R. and sits under tree*)

DOR. No. Heard she was a nice woman.

PIL. Nice?

DOR. So fellahs who met her used to say.

MISS P. But I always understood the suit was undefended.

PIL. Entirely undefended.

DOR. Matrimonial thimblorig is a confusing game to watch.

PIL. Thimblorig?

DOR. Three thimbles, don't you know? Husband—wife—and the other chap. (MR. PILLENGER *looks up*) Well, what I meant to say was, it ain't easy for the looker-on to say which thimble the fault is under. By-the-bye, I saw something in the paper about Lady Huntworth the other day.

PIL. Surely the whole affair is uninteresting and unsavory?

DOR. Noosance to forget a thing! What was the bit you were reading, Lucy?

LUCY. That yesterday the rule was made absolute. What does that mean?

DOR. Only that the time was up. They keep 'em in blinkers for six months after the verdict. (DORVASTON *draws napkin through the ring*) But that wasn't what I read? What the devil was it now?

PIL. Tut! Really! Really! I think we've all finished, haven't we? (GANDY *appears with letters, three of which MR. PILLENGER takes, and two MISS PILLENGER*) Hannah, you will probably wish to interview Cook. (DORVASTON *rises, takes chair R., sits and begins to load his pipe*)

MISS P. I will see her in your presence. (GANDY *has come back to top of table*) Gandy, will you ask Cook to come to me? I wish to give her my orders.

GAN. H'orders? (DORVASTON *fills pipe and lights it*)

MISS P. Orders.

GAN. I'll name it to her. (*slowly exits through porch*)

PIL. (*opening letter, which he holds during the whole scene with COOK*) Hannah, I would suggest that whatever you have to say to Cook may be said calmly and without undue severity.

MISS P. (*opening letters which she holds during the whole scene with COOK*) That should be left to my discretion; a stand must be made somewhere.

(CAROLINE *has come out of kitchen during this; she advances to the table.*)

CAR. You wished to speak to me? (*the men turn and face her*)

MISS P. Yes, Cook. I want to give you the orders for to-day's dinner.

CAR. Certainly! What do you fancy? What would you all like? (*she glances round, both men beam at her*)

MISS P. Before we speak of that I have a word to say with regard to the breakfast.

CAR. To-morrow's breakfast?

MISS P. No, to-day's. I am very much astonished and annoyed.

PIL. Tut, tut!

CAR. What was wrong with the breakfast? When I sent it out it looked all right.

MISS P. Why were my directions disregarded? I ordered the eggs to be poached—you boiled them; I mentioned fried bacon—none came to table; I requested you to procure fish—you gave us kidneys. Now what have you to say?

CAR. I'm afraid I forgot about the eggs? I haven't any other excuse to offer.

PIL. A most reasonable explanation!

DOR. Things do slip one's memory. (MISS PILLENGER *glares at DORVASTON*)

CAR. I didn't cook any bacon; it had got rather low, and I didn't think the result would please you.

PIL. Impossible to cut rashers from bacon that is—er—practically non-existent.

DOR. Thing no fellah could do! (MISS PILLENGER *glares at him*)

CAR. I remember you did mention fish, but you've had a good deal of fish lately, so I thought I'd try you with kidneys. But if there has been any inconvenience, I'm sorry.

PIL. There has been no inconvenience.

DOR. None at all. (MISS PILLENGER *glares at* DORVASTON)

PIL. Hannah, I think we may pass (as they say in the House of Commons) to the orders of the day.

DOR. Hear, hear! (PILLENGER *looks at him*)

MISS P. Well, Cook, since you express your regret (DORVASTON *and* LUCY *laugh*) I will say no more. Now as to this evening, you will be in sole charge of the house, (*both men look up*) as I have given Keziah permission to go to the Penny Reading—so I think we will make it a cold meal, as that will entail less washing up.

CAR. Just as you like.

MISS P. We will begin with salmon.

CAR. (*reflectively*) Salmon? Yes, you might have salmon.

MISS P. Pickled salmon.

CAR. Oh, no, not pickled! (*both men shake their heads*) That would be a pity! I'll make you a mayonnaise.

PIL. Delightful!

DOR. Rippin'!

CAR. I shall want some lettuces. I'll tell Gandy.

MISS P. After that we will have two cold ducklings.

CAR. Ducklings? It's late for ducklings.

PIL. Maturity in poultry is to be deprecated.

DOR. Leathery beasts at this time of the year. (MISS PILLENGER *glares at* DORVASTON)

MISS P. Then why not a gosling?

CAR. It's early for geese.

DOR. Deuced early!

PIL. Entirely premature.

MISS P. When I mentioned a goose I was thinking of Mr. Pillenger. (DORVASTON *and* LUCY *laugh*)

PIL. Tut, tut! Hannah!

DOR. Hope, ma'am, when you mentioned a duck, you were thinking of *me*.

MISS P. I fail to understand you. My brother is exceedingly partial to goose.

CAR. There's a ham in cut, so I think we'd better fall back on fowls. It isn't easy to do anything very novel with cold fowls, but if I stuff and glaze them, I've no doubt they'll pass muster.

MISS P. But, Cook, I—

CAR. You like sweets, of course?

MISS P. Certainly, you had better make us—

CAR. Will you leave the sweets to me? I want to try a new kind of fruit salad; it's my first attempt, but you'll find it will be all right—and perhaps I might throw in a shape of jelly—we'll see.

MISS P. But—

CAR. What time will you dine?—at least it isn't dinner—what time will you sup?

MISS P. At seven to-night, instead of half-past.

CAR. Seven! I shall be ready. Is there anything else you wish to say to me?

MISS P. No, Cook; I don't suppose anything will be gained by my saying any more. (*turns away and reads letters*)

CAR. Very good! (*takes kidney dish off table, MR. PILLENGER assisting her; she crosses C.*)

DOR. (*speaking eagerly*) Ah! here's that bit about Lady Huntworth. (CAROLINE *looks round at him in a startled manner*) It's in the Agony column. (*reads*) "Will Lady Huntworth communicate with Messrs. Brampton and Stokes, Capel Court, on a matter of considerable importance?"

PIL. Why should we resume the discussion of that disgraceful woman? (CAROLINE *turns and looks at him*)

MISS P. Why, indeed? (CAROLINE *looks at her*)

DOR. (*to LUCY*) When we were talking just now, couldn't remember where I'd read that. Hate to forget a thing.

MISS P. Cook! (CAROLINE *stands thinking quietly*) Cook!

CAR. I—beg your pardon!

MISS P. We needn't keep you, if you quite understand about the supper.

CAR. Oh, quite, thanks! (*exit into kitchen; DORVASTON rises, looks after her* U. B.)

MISS P. Don't you think that woman has a very singular manner?

PIL. Singular! No, she is certainly superior—very superior.

MISS P. (*rises, crosses C.*) She is *so* superior that she seems above taking my orders.

(GANDY *comes out during this and continues clearing away. He places MR. PILLENGER'S chair up B. C. and MISS PILLENGER'S chair up L. above gate. Folds cloth over tray, and takes it into the kitchen. Then comes back, folds up table and takes it away into house before cue, "This is July."*)

DOR. I wouldn't say that, (*crosses to C.*), ma'am; she met you half way over the salmon. (*returns to window. MISS PILLENGER goes up with dignity and enters house through French window*)

PIL. (*rises, crosses C.*) Thorsby is late. I expected him to call.

LUCY. He came early this morning, but he wouldn't wait.

PIL. Tut, tut! He knows I wished to see him. I have two christenings at one-thirty, and an interment at three. However, Lucy and—er—Captain Dorvaston (*crosses and brings DORVASTON down*) as you are together for once—I will avail myself of the opportunity to say a few serious words to you both. (*DORVASTON and LUCY look at each other nervously*)

DOR. Peg away, sir! (*LUCY stands near table R. DORVASTON stands centre*)

PIL. I have no wish to appear unduly inquisitive on a subject with which I have merely an indirect concern (*sits R. of table*) but may I enquire if you have fixed the time that will make you both—that will make us all happy? (*puts arm on table and leans back. LUCY and DORVASTON again look at each other*) Has a date been arrived at?

LUCY. Not precisely.

DOR. Not to a day or so.

PIL. Have you settled on the week or the month?

DOR. No, we haven't got as far as that. But something was said about the autumn.

LUCY. The late autumn.

PIL. (*has been leaning his arm on the table—now sits up and faces them*) The late autumn! (*sits up*) But last autumn something was said about the early spring; the question was then relegated to the late summer. This is July, and where are we? (*he leans back and is about to rest his arm on table, but GANDY has just removed it, with the result that he loses his balance and comes on his hand. DORVASTON goes to his assistance*)

DOR. Allow me, sir!

PIL. Thank you. I was unaware that Gandy had removed the table. But, to resume what I was saying—can you give me any definite information?

DOR. You see, sir, I haven't worried Lucy, because I know girls are apt to be a bit—a bit—

PIL. Well?

DOR. Noosance! I've lost a word. Girls are apt to be a bit—

LUCY. Coy.

DOR. That's it! Thanks, little woman—a bit coy. (*comes to PILLENGER*)

PIL. Coy! (*rises, comes C.*) Well, the expression hardly seems to me to convey Lucy's habitual demeanour; but in any case she is of age. (*to LUCY*) You were twenty-one last week I think?

LUCY. Yes, I was.

PIL. Your small fortune is carefully tied up.

DOR. Quite right, sir, so it ought to be.

PIL. Captain Dorvaston (*patting him on the shoulder*) is in a firm financial position.

DOR. Pretty fair as things go.

PIL. Then why any further delay? Why not August? Nice seaside month. My own thoughts are turning towards Eastbourne.

DOR. I had an offer from a fella I know to go halves in a shoot this August, (*going to LUCY*) but I wouldn't let that stand in the way, not for a moment.

LUCY. Thanks, Jack, (*crosses down R. a little*)

PIL. Take my advice, let no trivial obstacle intervene between you. Let there be no postponement or interruption.

DOR. There shan't be, sir. (*CAROLINE comes out from porch*)

PIL. That's well! (*they shake hands*) That's well!

CAR. Gandy! (*both men turn round to her without releasing hands*)

PIL. Do you want anything, Cook? (*crosses up to her L.*)

DOR. Anything I could do? (*they both go up, DORVASTON on her R.*)

CAR. I wanted Gandy for a second.

PIL. Certainly. He was here just now.

DOR. Saw him a minute ago.

PIL. I'll call him. (*goes L.*) Gandy!

DOR. Fancy he went this way. (*goes R.*) Gandy!

PIL. Sorry to detain you! Gandy!

DOR. Noosance having to wait! Gandy!

CAR. Pray don't bother about it; I only wanted him to pick me some parsley.

PIL. No trouble at all. Where *is* Gandy?

DOR. What's happened to the beggar? Could I—er—take on the job?

PIL. Tut, tut! absurd! How should you know the proper way to—er—pick parsley?

DOR. Never too old to learn, sir. (*to CAROLINE*) Where should I be likely to drop across it?

CAR. There's a small parsley bed over there (*she points left*)

DOR. Right-O! (*crosses L., kneels*)

CAR. But it's really too bad to trouble you. (*crosses C. MR. PILLENGER goes with CAROLINE on her L.*)

DOR. Not a bit! To oblige you I'd pick oakum! (*he kneels and picks parsley*)

PIL. I—er—regret—that—er—the absence of Gandy—as to which I shall require some explanation, should have caused you all this inconvenience.

CAR. It doesn't signify. Captain Dorvaston is doing the work very nicely.

DOR. Fact is I've broken out in a new place. Where shall I put the pieces? (*holding up parsley*)

CAR. In this dish. (*MR. PILLENGER takes dish from her, and DORVASTON snatches it from him—puts parsley in it, and holds it out*)

DOR. It's very easy when you get into the swing of it. Will that be enough?

CAR. Plenty, thanks.

DOR. There! (*rises, crosses to hand her bowl; PILLENGER trying to get hold of it*)

CAR. I'm much obliged.

DOR. Don't you think I should make a good gardener?

CAR. Capital, I should say. (*crosses to porch*)

PIL. Tut! tut! (*she goes up stage*)

DOR. Cook! Cook! (*she turns round*) If I try for the situation will you give me a character?

CAR. I'm afraid I haven't one to spare! (*he laughs; she returns to the kitchen*)

DOR. (*going up to window, then turns to PILLENGER*) By George she's a devilish—er—

PIL. Tut! tut! (*up L. C.; LUCY knocks on the table two or three times to draw their attention*)

DOR. Just so, sir; but I mean she *is*—don't you know—*isn't* she?

PIL. (*crosses down L. C.*) She is undoubtedly possessed of great refinement for anyone in her present sphere.

DOR. Refinement! (*crosses down R. C.*)

PIL. We gathered from the Duchess of Sturton that Cook had seen better days. Her Grace is somewhat vague conversationally; but we understood as much as that.

DOR. (*confidentially, he hides LUCY from PILLENGER'S view*) Funny thing a woman like that should be running loose. Odd she hasn't married some fellah.

PIL. It is singular—in fact remarkable. For a certain type of man she would make—I should say—an admirable wife.

DOR. Just the wife for a soldier man!

PIL. Pardon me, I disagree with you. No—she has a quietude, a dignified reserve—that would fit her to preside over the household of a staid medical man—or a barrister in fair practice—who was no longer young—or even—a—a— (*catches DORVASTON'S eye*) But we're wasting the morning. (*crosses L.*)

LUCY. Don't say that, uncle. (*they both stare at her*)

PIL. Lucy! (*crosses to top of chair R.*)

DOR. Hulloa, little woman! Still there?

LUCY. Yes, I'm still here.

DOR. By George, sir, (*crosses and sits on chair facing the others*) weren't we all chatting over something?

PIL. I—er—think I was urging you both—to—er—

LUCY. You were urging us to name the day—and to avoid any kind of trivial interruption. (*the men look at each other*)

PIL. I—believe that is so.

LUCY. And Jack agreed.

DOR. Yes.

LUCY. And I chimed in with the general sentiment. But of course—at the time—it was impossible to foresee the parsley, (*the two men exchange glances—she rises*) I'm going down to the village. I punctured a tire yesterday, and I've got to fetch my bike.

PIL. I must get to work. I'm late as it is. (*crosses C. looking at watch*)

DOR. Make it a ten minutes' sermon, sir, weather's extr'ordinary hot.

PIL. I beg, Captain Dorvaston, you will spare me any such irreverent suggestions; and I trust that if you must sleep in a sacred edifice, you will render your slumber less aggressive. (*moves to French window*)

LUCY. You do snore, Jack—you nearly drowned the second lesson last Sunday.

PIL. (*turning to LUCY*) You are not blameless. As his future wife, it is your duty—and—er—privilege—to nudge him. For what purpose has Heaven given you elbows? (*he goes into house. Slight pause. DORVASTON puts pipe away. LUCY crosses up, turns to chair R.*)

LUCY. Jack!

DOR. Yes, little woman?

LUCY. Do you care for me?

DOR. 'Course I do!

LUCY. How much? (*crosses to chair and kneels on it*)

DOR. How much? (*rises, crosses C.*) Well, I'm a bad hand at explaining things.

LUCY. For instance, would you give up a big thing for my sake?

DOR. What sort of big thing?

LUCY. An Empire?

DOR. Oh, yes.

LUCY. A peerage?

DOR. Oh, Lord, yes!

LUCY. Would you give up—a dish of parsley?

DOR. (*long puzzled look*) What do you mean? I—don't understand.

LUCY. You're a humbug!

DOR. Sorry you think that.

LUCY. Well, do something to please me.

DOR. Anything I can.

LUCY. Fetch me an orchid, (*he looks surprised*) to wear this evening—there are lots in the orchid house—will you?

DOR. 'Course I will.

LUCY. Thanks. (*DORVASTON crosses up R. LUCY crosses L. C., and DORVASTON crosses down to her*)

DOR. (*places hands upon LUCY's shoulder and speaking over her shoulder*) Little woman! Ever since the time when your dear old dad first gave us the word of command, I've always had a pretty clear notion where the word duty came in; so when once you've pulled yourself together, and named the day, I mean to pull myself together and do my level damndest to make you happy. D'you see? (*turns her round*)

LUCY. (*facing him*) Yes, I see. (*puts hand on his shoulder*) I'm quite sure you mean all you say, and it's nice of you to say it, and to mean it. The only thing is, you seem to be entering upon a matrimonial campaign without any transports.

DOR. I don't follow.

LUCY. (*takes him by the lapels of coat*) When I said you were a humbug, I meant there is one person you are always trying to deceive.

DOR. Who's that?

LUCY. Jack Dorvaston! (*he looks bewildered*) Don't you mind what I say; go and fetch my orchid. (*turns him round and pushes him away. He pauses, rubs his head reflectively, and at last strolls off R. LUCY goes over to the tree and sits for a moment in thought. She suddenly remembers the letter in tree, and jumps on seat to get it. CAROLINE has come out, bringing with her two pudding basins which she places on the seat under the garden window; she comes down to table R. to take up the newspaper, she catches sight of LUCY who is trying to get the letter out of cavity*)

CAR. (*coming C.*) Shall I do that?

LUCY. Oh, Cook, is that you? (*turning quickly*) You startled me.

CAR. Did I? I'm sorry.

LUCY. What was it you said?

CAR. I offered to get your letter for you. I have a longer reach.

LUCY. What letter? (*jumps down*)

CAR. The latest one from Mr. Thorsby.

LUCY. Cook! How dare you?

CAR. I'm not naturally timid.

LUCY. You are excessively impertinent.

CAR. Am I? Very likely. But as that is your opinion, I'll chance a rather rude question—When are you going to bolt with Mr. Thorsby?

LUCY. What do you mean? I'm foolish to listen to you at all. I shall go to my uncle and aunt and tell them what you've just said. (*comes close to Cook, then wavers and takes a step back*)

CAR. (*pause*) If I am mistaken about you and Mr. Thorsby, you would be quite right to tell them. Am I mistaken? (*Lucy tries to brave her, but her head droops*) Quite so! Then I think I would get the compromising letter out of the tree and say no more about it—unless you'll let *me* do it. (*makes a movement to get letter*)

LUCY. Oh, no! (*she jumps hastily on seat and gets letter*) There! I don't care if you *do* know. Anybody may know after to-morrow.

CAR. So it's to be to-morrow?

LUCY. (*jumps down*) Yes, it is. I am bound to trust you—I can't help myself; so if you choose to give the whole thing away, you can.

CAR. I shan't do that. On the contrary, I should like to do any little thing I could to help you. (*Lucy looks in wonder*)

LUCY. Thank you. (*slight pause; sits*) How did you find out—about—us? (*looking at Cook*)

CAR. (*goes up a step*) Two or three Sundays ago—I was coming home about ten in the evening—it was my Sunday out—and as I came round the corner, you and Mr. Thorsby were outside the gate.

LUCY. Oh! (*her eyes drop*)

CAR. You were supposed to be spending the evening with your friend Mrs. Bronson, if you remember?

LUCY. Yes.

CAR. You didn't hear me coming and Mr. Thorsby said good-night to you.

LUCY. Oh!

CAR. He said it—very thoroughly.

LUCY. Yes—I believe he did.

CAR. That was how I found out.

LUCY. (*after slight pause*) How funny it seems to be talking to you about it all. What did you think—when you saw—what you saw?

CAR. I was rather amused.

LUCY. What did you think of *me*?

CAR. Need we go into that?

LUCY. I should like you to say.

CAR. Well, to tell you the truth, I thought you weren't going quite straight.

LUCY. Because of Captain Dorvaston?

CAR. Yes.

LUCY. I don't care for Captain Dorvaston—and I do care for Mr. Thorsby. Surely it's better to marry the man you love?

CAR. I daresay it would be. I have nothing to say against Mr. Thorsby—he seems a very pleasant young fellow. I shouldn't think he would take to drink (*Lucy looks in surprise*) or turn out badly to any special extent. Of course, one can't tell beforehand.

LUCY. Cook! (*surprised*)

CAR. It would be all right if you weren't engaged to another man.

LUCY. But Jack isn't in love with *me*! (*rises*)

CAR. You think not?

LUCY. He likes me, and he wouldn't admit to anybody—certainly not to himself—that I wasn't all the world to him, and a bit over; but in the way of *real* love he doesn't care a rap for *me*. He doesn't care—a sprig of parsley! (*they look at each other, Cook smiles, and then Lucy takes it up*)

CAR. Ah! that makes a difference. (*slight pause*) Well, I must see to the mayonnaise. (*she turns and goes up to the seat under the kitchen window, she begins to break eggs into the basin. Lucy goes up to porch and sits on it, leaning her head against the pillar*)

LUCY. Do you know, I think you've been trying to be very kind to me?

CAR. Not at all.

LUCY. I was wondering—if you would tell me a little—about yourself.

CAR. Tell you what?

LUCY. Tell me—about—your life.

CAR. My life! No. It's waste of time to discuss failures.

LUCY. You are a riddle—because you are—pardon me—a lady.

CAR. Well?

LUCY. And yet—yet—(*looking away*) Who are you? What are you?

CAR. The Vicar's cook. (*their eyes meet*) You will do me a favor, Miss Pillenger, if you will leave it at that.

LUCY. Oh, certainly! I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be inquisitive.

(*Church clock chimes the half-hour.*)

CAR. I'm sure you didn't.

LUCY. I ought to go down to the village. (*crosses to French window*)

CAR. (*takes up fork and begins to stir eggs*) Don't let me make you late for any appointment. (*Cook puts bowl on window; LUCY tries to laugh, and exits through French window*)

(*DORVASTON enters with large orchid.*)

DOR. Here you are, little woman,. (*looks for LUCY*)

CAR. She has gone down to the village.

DOR. Hulloo! Are you there, Cook? (*goes to her*)

CAR. Yes.

DOR. Doing a bit of al fresco cooking?

CAR. I'm mixing the mayonnaise.

DOR. Are you, by George! That's devilish interesting. I suppose, now, the kitchen's a bit hot for things that go off color.

CAR. Yes.

DOR. Eggs, for instance. (*sits R. of COOK*) I suppose you start with eggs as a ground plan—and then—and then you beat 'em. I often thought I should like to beat eggs. (*seriously*)

CAR. (*rising*) You can beat these; at least, you can stir them, if you've a fancy that way. I want to baste my two fowls.

DOR. Oh! (*disappointed, stops stirring*)

CAR. (*she gives him the basin; pause; rises and turns to porch*) Don't leave off stirring till I come back.

DOR. (*beginning to stir*) Not for worlds. (*COOK turns*) But basting now, basting must be an unusual engrossing branch of the science. Couldn't I come and watch you baste?

CAR. (*standing at entrance to porch*) No; go on with the eggs please. That orchid seems rather in your way.

DOR. Got it for Lucy to wear to-night.

CAR. Give it me.

DOR. Thanks! (*gives it to her*)

CAR. Tell her I'm taking care of it. (*going*)

DOR. I say, Cook!

CAR. (*pausing*) Yes.

DOR. I want awfully to have a chat with you. (*edging to end of bench*)

CAR. You're chatting now. (*leans against post and faces DORVASTON*)

DOR. Can't talk here—people about—and there's the basting.

CAR. That's true.

DOR. You'll be all alone this evening. Don't fancy I shall want much of the Penny Reading—a ha'porth will be plenty. Thought I'd stroll back—and *then*, don't you understand?

CAR. I think I understand *you*, but I'm doubtful if you quite understand me. I've an idea that what you want to say wouldn't interest me at all.

DOR. (*rises*) You're wrong. I don't mean an atom of harm—swear I don't. What I want to say I would say before anybody—only I'd rather talk it over quietly. May I come?

CAR. If you like.

DOR. Then you believe in me?

CAR. (*pauses*) Yes, I think I do. What time are you likely to be back?

DOR. Round about nine thirty.

CAR. Nine thirty! All right! Don't forget to stir the eggs (*he begins eagerly*) Very gently. (*enters porch and then kitchen.* DORVASTON *watches her off and is looking through window, still stirring, when PILLENGER comes out of French window*)

PIL. Captain Dorvaston! Captain Dorvaston! Captain Dorvaston! (DORVASTON *turns to him*) If you are at leisure I should be glad if— (*seeing basin and pointing to it*) What is that?

DOR. Fancy they call it a pudden basin.

PIL. What are you—? why should you—?

DOR. I'm stirring the eggs for the mayonnaise. Cook asked me to.

PIL. Tut, tut! I have received a letter from the lawyers, respecting the draught copy of your marriage settlement. I gave it to you. May I ask you to fetch it!

DOR. Just now, sir?

PIL. Naturally. Why not?

DOR. Promised I wouldn't leave off stirring. Look here, sir, if I fetch the paper, will you go on with the eggs? (*gives him basin—they both stir—so as not to stop*)

PIL. Well, rather than cause—er—domestic inconvenience (*takes basin*) but have the goodness to make haste. The position is not without embarrassment.

DOR. I'll look sharp, sir. (*crosses up back*) Don't forget to stir very gently.

PIL. The caution is quite superfluous. (*crosses to back of chair R.*)

(MISS PILLENGER *comes out followed by LUCY; both dressed for walking.*)

DOR. Hulloa, ma'am! Going for a prow!?

MISS P. Fowl? (*crosses C.*)

PIL. Tut, tut! (*conceals the basin behind him*)

MISS P. (*crossing to him*) You here, Audley? I am accompanying Lucy to the village. I imagined you were writing your sermon.

PIL. I have been delayed by—er—unforeseen interruptions (DORVASTON *tells LUCY about basin; she goes up behind PILLENGER and taps it*) You are yourself wasting the freshness of the morning.

MISS P. I thought the moment was opportune for the purchase of your new socks.

PIL. Tut, tut!

MISS P. But you have given me no instructions as to pattern or texture.

PIL. Both are indifferent to me. I rely on your taste and judgment.

MISS P. I will go then. (*she moves L.; DORVASTON opens gate and stands talking to her; LUCY laughs*)

PIL. What is amusing you, Lucy?

LUCY. I was laughing because—

PIL. I have no wish to hear. I object to frivolity.

LUCY. Do you, uncle? (*crosses L.*) Wait for me, Auntie. (*turns to DORVASTON*) Jack, where's my orchid?

DOR. Cook is taking care of it.

LUCY. (*looking at PILLENGER*) What a treasure Cook is. (*looking at DORVASTON*) I wonder what any of us would do without her? (*exit. The two men face each other for a second*)

DOR. (*laughs*) Sorry I let you in, sir, (*coming C.*) but Lucy won't say anything. I'll be back directly—and, I say, you won't forget to stir very gently? (*exit off*)

PIL. (*angrily*) No, I won't! No, I won't! No, I won't! (*crosses; sits R. of table, stirs violently for a moment, then remembers and slows down; COOK comes out*)

CAR. Captain Dorvaston! (*sees PILLENGER*) Is Captain Dorvaston— (*he turns round*) Oh, you've got it! (*comes to top of table*)

PIL. The basin? Yes. I was compelled to interrupt Captain Dorvaston, so I was endeavoring to supply his place; I fear with poor results. (*puts paper on seat*)

CAR. Let me look? (*takes basin, crosses a little C.*) Thanks. (*she looks at it*) Oh, no—it's all right.

PIL. I am relieved to hear it. Still, it probably needs the—er—hum—the final touch of the artist. (*she turns to go*) You don't care for—er—compliments?

CAR. (*looking round*) No! (*coming C.*)

PIL. Rather an unkind restriction.

CAR. A bird of some experience is apt to change its first opinion of bird-lime.

PIL. Yes, very true. But compliments that are the expression of honest and—er—respectful appreciation—what of them?

CAR. I don't know. I've never met that kind of compliment. If you'll excuse me, I'll go back to the fowls. (*going up*)

PIL. (*he follows her between tree and table to porch*) I have no right to detain you from more congenial society. (*door bell heard*) But I have something I particularly wish to say to you. (*she looks at him*) Something I wish to explain.

CAR. Certainly! What is it?

PIL. My explanation might—in fact, would occupy some time. (*door bell heard more violently*) The present moment is obviously ill-chosen for the purpose. You will be the sole occupant of the house this evening.

CAR. Shall I?

PIL. *Everybody*—Keziah included—is going to the Penny Reading—even Gandy has asked permission to visit his aged mother.

CAR. Has he an aged mother? I didn't know.

PIL. He doesn't lay much stress on her—she suffers from spasms, and is a Nonconformist.

CAR. Well?

PIL. I thought if I came back early from the Parish room, I could explain what I—er—wish to explain. (*very violent ring at bell without interruption*)

CAR. You would discuss this all-important matter in the kitchen?

PIL. If you—er—see no objection.

CAR. It's your kitchen, and your responsibility; but if I were you I wouldn't explain.

PIL. Do you prohibit me from doing so?

CAR. No, come if you like. What time am I to expect you?

PIL. About nine o'clock. It's a quiet hour, and usually free from callers.

CAR. We'll hope it will prove so. Very well—till nine o'clock then. (*she goes into kitchen—he crosses up to French window at COOK'S exit, still looking after her, buried in thought. CRAYLL comes through gateway, stands at steps, sees PILLENGER and speaks*)

CRAY. Mornin'! (*PILLENGER does not hear, so CRAYLL prods him in back with stick*) Mornin'.

PIL. Eh! Oh, good morning! (*comes C.*)

CRAY. What time's the funeral?

PILL. Funeral?

CRAY. Ain't anybody dead? I rang your beastly front door bell till my arm ached; so I turned it up and came round to the back.

PIL. My butler—er—my male servant—is rather remiss. But to the best of my knowledge, he is still alive.

CRAY. Damn sorry for it.

PIL. Tut, tut!

CRAY. What's the matter?

PIL. I cannot countenance such language. My sacred calling—

CRAY. (*looking at him more attentively*) Oh, I see! Didn't know you were a magpie. Come to think of it, s'pose I passed your place of business a little way up the road, (*pointing up L.*)

PIL. Er—hum—yes.

CRAY. Oh, well then, I take back the damn. After all, it don't do to open one's front door too quick. S'pose you thought I was the Water Rate. (*puts foot on chair, pulls out handkerchief, and dusts boot*)

PIL. No, sir.

CRAY. Gas?

PIL. Certainly not.

CRAY. Then what the devil did you think? (*dusts other boot*)

PIL. I had no theory on the subject; and as to your language—I really must beg—

CRAY. Beg? Yes, that's your trade. Same time I'll take back the devil. We don't often part company. Talking of the devil, did you ever have D.T.?

PIL. D.T.? D.T.? If you refer to the "Daily Telegraph," I usually read the "Standard."

CRAY. No, no! D.T. Jim-jams!

PIL. Jim-jams?

CRAY. Delirium tremens—ever had 'em?

PIL. Eh? What? Never, sir, never!

CRAY. Lucky beast! Well, when you *do* have 'em, you'll know 'em again. I've had 'em twice.

PIL. Really!

CRAY. The last bout was a blazer. A man generally sees snakes, or rats, or spiders. It was spiders

with me. (*makes movement of spider on PILLENGER'S chest*)

PIL. Was it indeed?

CRAY. Yes—fat brutes with as many legs to 'em as an Empire ballet—all over the walls by day—all over the bed at night. If you lit a candle you saw 'em—if you didn't you felt 'em. Pah! filthy devils! (*sits exhausted*) Could I have a whiskey and soda?

PIL. You haven't mentioned the object of your visit.

CRAY. Man named Dorvaston hangs out here, don't he?

PIL. Captain Dorvaston is my guest at present.

CRAY. Thought so. Promised to look him up. We're goin' to price a horse—a nailer—risin' thirteen—and well up to Dorvaston's weight—which is sayin' somethin'.

PIL. Captain Dorvaston's physique is substantial.

CRAY. If he stood on your foot, I expect you'd ask him to move.

PIL. Probably!

CRAY. He's goin' to be somethin' to you by marriage, ain't he?

PIL. He is affianced to my niece.

CRAY. Hope he'll like it. (*takes cigar out of case*)

PIL. Why should he not, sir?

CRAY. I daresay you stick up for marriage—double blessedness and all that kind of muck. (*biting end of cigar*)

PIL. I regard the married state as best calculated to confer the greatest happiness that—er—the

CRAY. Have you ever bin married? (*looking up at him*)

PIL. No.

CRAY. (*lights cigar*) I thought not. You beggars are always jawin' about what you don't understand. You've never had D.T., but that wouldn't stop you preaching about drink. You've never bin married, and yet you get up in the pulpit and talk about Hell as if you knew the country.

PIL. May I ask, Mr.—er—

CRAY. Crayll.

PIL. May I enquire, Mr. Crayll, if *you* are married?

CRAY. (*blows out light and smiles*) Not at present.

(DORVASTON *comes out.*)

PIL. Ah! Here is Captain Dorvaston.

DOR. (*coming to PILLENGER C.*) There's the paper you wanted, sir. It took a bit of finding. Keziah cleaned my room out yesterday. (*gives it to him*) Hulloo, Crayll! (*slaps him on back and crosses L.*)

CRAY. Hulloo! (*rises*)

PIL. (*to DORVASTON*) Now you have come, I will ask Mr. Crayll to excuse me.

CRAY. Don't name it. (*crosses to L.*) Dorvaston will see to me. I daresay he knows where the whiskey's kept. (DORVASTON *laughs and goes up a step or two with PILLENGER*)

PIL. (*aside*) Surely a most offensive person. (*crosses up*)

DOR. He's all right, sir. He takes a bit of knowing. (PILLENGER *goes into the house*)

CRAY. Now, for the Lord's sake get me a drop of whiskey to wash the parson out of my mouth.

DOR. (C.) Whiskey it is! Take potash with it?

CRAY. A little potash. (*crosses R.*)

DOR. Right-O! Have a look at "Sporting Life"?

CRAY. What d'ye fancy for the Leger?

DOR. Centipede! It's a dead snip. You should have a bit on it.

CRAY. No, thank ye. Don't like the name—it's too spidery. (DORVASTON *goes up to kitchen window unseen by CRAYLL. CRAYLL crosses behind chair, gets "Sporting Life," comes round L. of table, puts hat on ground, stick behind him, and starts to read paper*)

DOR. Cook! Cook! (*at window COOK appears*)

CAR. Yes?

DOR. Fact is, friend of mine has just turned up, and he's unusual thirsty. Would you bring him out a whiskey and potash?

CAR. Certainly.

DOR. Very kind of you—extr'ordinary kind.

CAR. Not at all. (*she disappears from window. DORVASTON goes back to CRAYLL*)

DOR. Look here, I'll run up and put another coat on, and then we'll start.

CRAY. How about the whiskey?

DOR. It'll be here directly. (*exits through French window*)

CRAY. Thank ye. (*he resumes the newspaper; COOK comes to table R. with small tray containing whiskey, etc.; she brings it down to small table, and speaks before putting the tray down*)

CAR. Whiskey and potash!

CRAY. All right! (*he puts down cigar on tray and turns slowly, the paper falls. They face each other in mutual astonishment*)

CRAY. Goodness a'mighty! (*slight pause*) Is that you? (*she is silent*) Is that you? (*speaking louder*)

CAR. Yes—what then?

CRAY. Phew! (*wipes his forehead*) When I saw you standin' there, dressed like that, I thought I'd got 'em again. Damned if I didn't.

CAR. Why?

CRAY. Why, who'd expect to see Lady Huntworth masqueradin' as a cook.

CAR. I'm not Lady Huntworth any longer. Surely Lord Huntworth is the last person who should need the reminder.

CRAY. I'm not Lord Huntworth down here. My name's Crayll for the present.

CAR. Really?

CRAY. I'm keepin' out of the way—for—reasons.

CAR. The local police don't strike me as being very shrewd.

CRAY. Police! What d'you mean? It's duns I'm hidin' from.

CAR. Duns!

CRAY. It's debt—it ain't crime.

CAR. Ah! not yet. Well, good-day, Mr. Crayll. I must go back to my cooking. (*crosses up*)

CRAY. Here, hold on. Damn it, don't be in such a hurry. (*crosses down C.*) I want to talk to you.

CAR. I have to baste the fowls.

CRAY. Curse the beastly fowls. I must see you alone for half-an-hour, d'you hear?

CAR. I hear.

CRAY. It's infernal important. Will you meet me to-night?

CAR. No.

CRAY. Why not? What are you afraid of?

CAR. I'm not afraid of *you*. I think you know that.

CRAY. That long fool will be back in a minute. You'll see me somehow to-night, because—you've damned well got to—d'you understand?

CAR. I haven't the smallest notion why you want to see me, but since fate has played me a final dirty trick by throwing us together again, perhaps we *had* better understand each other. So you can come here this evening for half-an-hour. I shall be alone. You had better tap at the window.

CRAY. That'll do—I'll come.

CAR. What time shall I have the honor?

CRAY. I'll get here about nine.

CAR. (*smiling*) Nine! You must make it earlier than that. I expect I shall be rather busy about nine.

CRAY. Eight-thirty then.

CAR. Yes, that would suit me. (*crosses to porch and then stops*)

CRAY. (*turns and sees she is in hesitation*) Is there anything else?

CAR. (*crosses down C. to him*) As you seem to want to talk about something important you might break through a rule for once—and turn up in a possible condition.

CRAY. Not come drunk—is that what you mean?

CAR. No, I don't want to be unreasonable. At that time in the evening you are certain to be drunk, —but try not to be *too* drunk to be coherent. I'll expect you at eight-thirty. (*she goes up stage, stands at kitchen window; after she has gone CRAYLL picks up cigar from tray and draws at it, finding it out he throws it down violently and swears. He then pours out whiskey and drinks. DORVASTON comes out dressed for walking*)

DOR. Ready, old chap? (*CRAYLL half chokes*)

CRAY. In half-a-minute. (*drinks more whiskey*)

DOR. (*speaking across to COOK*) Ah! Cook! friend and I are going for a stroll.

CAR. It's a pleasant day for walking.

DOR. How is our mayonnaise coming on? (CRAYLL *looks up on hearing this*)

CAR. Very well, I think.

DOR. That's all right! (*to CRAYLL, who has been listening vacantly*) Shall we get along?

CRAY. Yes. (DORVASTON *goes out at the gate; CRAYLL puts hat on, takes stick, rises, crosses L. C., and looks back. As he does so, COOK turns and looks at him*) Goodness A'mighty. (*he then goes out at gate*)

(*After he has gone COOK comes down to the rustic table and takes up "Standard."*)

CAR. (*reads*) "Will Lady Huntworth communicate with Brampton and Stokes, Capel-Court, on a matter of considerable importance?" (*she stands in thought for a moment, then turns and goes up, reading the paper as she goes*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Vicarage kitchen, according to plan.*

TIME.—*Evening.*

(As curtain rises COOK takes salmon to larder R. U. E. and returns to table down L. with fruit salad; GANDY enters with butler's tray; crosses to R. of table; KEZIAH enters and takes ham to larder and returns to dresser.)

GAN. Sweets, Cook!

CAR. Quite ready! *(clearing tray of chicken dish and plates)* They seem to have taken very kindly to the stuffed fowls.

GAN. Oh, horful! There's 'ardly a gizzard left for hus to make a supper of. Dorvaston's the worst.

KEZ. *(at dresser)* Oh, and master too. *(takes plates)* I thought he'd 'ave bust 'imself—I did reelly. *(crosses to top of GANDY, places plates on butler's tray)*

GAN. They told me to look sharp. It's wonderful they don't want a rest. *(CAROLINE holds up dish of fruit salad; GANDY takes dish in both hands admiringly; then lets COOK put it on tray)* So that's it, Cook? It looks lovely.

CAR. Glad you like it.

GAN. *(takes up tray)* It ain't no good *me* likin' it, I shan't get none—they'll see to that. *(moves to R. KEZIAH moves to follow him)* Keziah, don't you come. You'll never wait at table—your mind can't rise above 'anding bread when nobody wants it. *(she returns to top of table; he carries tray to door R., then pauses)* It *do* look lovely. Let's pray to 'eaven they don't eat it all. *(he goes out; COOK crosses to larder with chicken and back round top down to L.)*

KEZ. *(at top of table clearing)* Gandy's a bit narked to-night. *(rubs knives with a piece of rag)* When there's a bit of anythink extra for supper, 'e does grodge it to 'em, don't 'e? Now with me it's, as you may say, different. If any trifle takes me fancy—such as a breast of chicken—or what not—while it's bein' carved I simply turn me 'ead away.

CAR. *(L. of table arranging plates)* Take these plates into the scullery.

KEZ. Yus, Cook. Not as it always answers. *(COOK crosses to larder with salad dish)* I wes 'anding that sauce stuff—I forgot what you call it, Cook—

CAR. Mayonnaise. *(at larder; crosses back to L. of table and begins to put radishes in bowl into glass dish)*

KEZ. Yus, Cook, that was it—in a butter boat. Well, I was 'anding it to old Madam as the Captain cut himself off—oh, such a slice of 'am—I dote on 'am, I do, reelly. Well, I had to shet me eyes, and just then Gandy hustled me with 'is elbow, and me wrist turned, as you may say, sudden like, and I upset the myanneasy on to milady's gown. She did talk to me a treat. *(takes fish plates to scullery; GANDY enters hastily, stands C.)*

GAN. Now then, Keziah, one claret glass short. That's your silly fault. *(KEZIAH crosses to dresser, gets glass and hands it to GANDY R.; then returns to dresser for plates)*

CAR. Do they seem to fancy the fruit salad?

GAN. Fancy it! Dorvaston and the governor are both in their second 'elpings. It's 'ideous to see 'em—'ideaous!

KEZ. *(at dresser)* I shall be awful late with me washin' up. *(crosses to window with plates)* I shall miss a good 'alf of it.

CAR. *(crosses to larder for cheese)* I'll wash the glass and silver for you.

KEZ. *(crosses to top of table and takes chicken plates to scullery, leaving four forks on table)* That's wonderful good of you, Cook; it is reelly. D'you know I'm in two minds which 'at to wear.

CAR. Are you? *(crosses from larder to table R. with cheese, places it at top of table)*

KEZ. *(fingering top of chair L.)* The straw's tasty; but the large 'at with the flowers is more dressy like.

CAR. I wouldn't wear the large one with the flowers. *(returning to larder for butter)*

KEZ. Wouldn't you now?

CAR. *(stops on her way to larder C.)* It might have been made in the Old Kent Road.

KEZ. Might it, now? Is that in London? *(sits L.)*

CAR. Yes. *(crosses to R. of table with butter, and stands at the head)*

KEZ. At the shop where I bought it, they told me as it was copied from a London pattern, so I dessay you're right, Cook. Well, I could wear the straw, but—*(GANDY enters with tray—KEZIAH rises, crosses to window ledge for cheese plates)*

GAN. *(speaking sadly)* Now then, cheese—cheese. *(COOK is at top of table clearing butler's tray)*

CAR. I see they've finished the fruit salad.

GAN. Finished it! Of course they've finished it. It's 'eartbreakin'. Put the dish away, and let me try to forget it.

KEZ. (*comes down to table L.*) 'As the Governor still bin goin' it? (*putting cheese plates on butler's tray; COOK places cheese and butter on butler's tray*)

GAN. I should think 'e 'ad. Ah! and it will pay 'im out. This night's work'll lie 'eavy on 'im. I know 'is constitooshon. Ready, Cook! A bit of that cheddar all round ought to just settle 'em. (*COOK takes fruit dish to larder, KEZIAH crosses to top of table, and puts radishes on butler's tray. GANDY hurries out.*)

KEZ. As I was sayin', Cook, (*calls*) as I was sayin' I could wear the straw, only I'm wishful to look me best, cos the young gentleman as I'm walkin' out with at present'll be there.

CAR. Oh! (*crosses to R. of table, takes cloth out of drawer, and back to C.*)

KEZ. We shan't be able to sit together, cos of old Madam—"I don't allow no followers," she said when I come after the place—"I don't allow no followers"—You know 'er sniffy way? (*KEZIAH takes plates to scullery, leaving spoons on table*)

CAR. (*puts cloth on table, crosses to mantel and gets matches off bracket*) What does your young gentleman do when he isn't following?

KEZ. Didn't I tell you? (*comes back to table*) 'E's at Bilkins, (*sits on table R.*) the pork butchers. You remember that pound of sausages that came from me aunt at Cambridge? (*COOK nods*) That was 'im—'e began with sausages—(*COOK lights gas over stove L.*) next comes along a photograph frame, last week *pig's feet* and a *shell pin-cushion*. 'E's free 'anded, as you may say.

CAR. He must be. (*crosses to R.*)

KEZ. Won't you be feelin' lonesome (*COOK lights gas R. and leaves match-box on dresser*) this evenin'? All of us out—and Gandy goin' to see 'is mother. She lives two stations down the line and used to take in washin'.

CAR. No, I don't fancy I shall feel lonesome.

KEZ. I'll (*jumps off table, comes round and sits on chair R. and gets book out of drawer*) lend you my girl's "Special Monthly Journal." There's a most *interestin'* tale in this number. It's in 'ere. There's an '*url*' and 'e goes ridin' through a wood and 'e's all dressed up in armour, you know—just like the dish covers. (*COOK crosses to window, gets knife basket and comes down to top of table*) I say, Cook, when you lived in London did *you* ever see any 'urls?

CAR. One or two.

KEZ. And do they dress themselves up like that?

CAR. Not as a rule. (*cleaning spoons and putting them in basket*)

KEZ. My word, I wish I'd bin born a toff! They must find life come easy.

CAR. (*at top of table*) Not always. Trouble is like a postman—sooner or later he knocks at *every* door.

KEZ. Why, they can eat and drink just what they like.

CAR. No. After a time their doctors have a word to say.

KEZ. And they can wear just what suits 'em.

CAR. They wear whatever their dressmakers and tailors tell them to wear—whether it suits them or not. It generally doesn't.

KEZ. Any'ow they don't 'ave to pay for their breakages.

CAR. In the long run they pay just as heavily for their breakages as you do for yours. (*crosses and replaces basket on window ledge and comes down L.*)

KEZ. My word! Think of that now! (*GANDY enters and puts down tray on table; KEZIAH jumps up and crosses to head of table*)

GAN. That's over. (*sits*) I'm fair sick of it. The governor is rushin' on to 'is fate. (*COOK takes off the bread, cheese and glasses and puts them on lower end of table; KEZIAH takes up cheese plates, knives, butter and radish dish, leaving the syphon, decanter of whiskey and one glass till the last*) Took radishes with 'is cheese. (*KEZIAH looks horrified*) Keziah, I have brought out the Captain's whiskey and syphon—I shan't be 'ere to-night, so you must take 'em up to 'is room the last thing, d'ye 'ear?

KEZ. I 'ear. (*she takes whiskey, soda, and glass to window ledge*)

GAN. I've done most of the clearin' away. (*COOK takes cheese to larder*)

CAR. (*to KEZIAH*) Bring me the bowl, Keziah, and then you can put your things on. (*KEZIAH crosses to table, takes butler's tray and places it against wall above meat jack, then goes to scullery for bowl. To GANDY, coming out of larder and crossing L.*) Will you have your supper now? (*KEZIAH brings hot water to top of table; then takes glass radish dish and butter dish into larder*)

GAN. No, thank'ee. They've put me off it. I shall try to pick a bit by and bye when I get to mother's.

CAR. (*to GANDY*) Is your mother a good cook? (*L. of table*)

GAN. No, she ain't; far from it! 'Er jints are flabby, and 'er pie crust is h'ashfelt.

KEZ. (*coming out of larder*) Is there anything more, Cook, as I can do?

CAR. No, thanks. (*COOK takes plates into scullery*)

KEZ. Good night, Gandy. (*crosses to door R.*)

GAN. Not so much Gandy! *Mr. Gandy* would do you more credit, and might lead to a cap ribbon at Christmas. (*COOK comes out of scullery, takes large radish bowl and re-enters scullery*) It's 'ard on a respectable man to mix with such riff-raff.

KEZ. Riff-raff your own self. Why, for two pins—I'd—

CAR. Keziah! (*at scullery door, crosses L. again*)

KEZ. (*meekly*) Yus, Cook! (C.)

CAR. Go and dress.

KEZ. Yus, Cook; I'm sorry as I spoke hasty before you.

CAR. Very well, go along; you'll be late.

KEZ. Yus, Cook. (*she goes quietly to door R., then turns and speaks very respectfully*) Good-night, Mr. Gandy. (*she then goes out*)

GAN. (*COOK takes bread to larder top way and returns round top L.*) That's the worst of domestic service—one 'as to put up with the cheek of h'underlings. It ain't a fit life for such as h'us—we're a good many cuts above it. (*he rises*) Well, Cook, I shall 'ave to change my coat, so if you will excuse me—

CAR. Certainly! (*washing glasses*)

GAN. But before I go to-night, I should like 'alf a word with you about a little matter which 'as bin floatin' on the top of my mind for this month past.

CAR. Won't it keep?

GAN. No, it won't—not if you was to put it in the refrigerator.

CAR. People change their minds sometimes.

GAN. I shan't change my mind.

CAR. Well, change your coat, or you'll miss your train. (*he moves towards the door, as he does so LUCY enters dressed for the evening, but with cloak on*)

LUCY. Cook! I've come for my orchid. (*crosses to C.*)

CAR. I'll fetch it. (*crosses to window; LUCY crosses to chair R. of table*)

LUCY. Gandy, I thought you were going to see your mother to-night.

GAN. So I h'am, miss—I am just h'off. (*goes out R.*)

CAR. Here it is. (*crosses down R. of LUCY*)

LUCY. Thanks!

CAR. Shall I pin it in?

LUCY. Thanks! (*COOK arranges the flower*)

CAR. What time to-morrow do you take the plunge?

LUCY. Oh, quite early in the morning, before anybody is up. Mr. Thorsby will fetch me.

CAR. I see.

LUCY. Why did you want to know?

CAR. So that I should think of you and wish you luck.

LUCY. I don't see what reason you have to wish me luck.

CAR. You're a nice child—and I was always fond of children.

(*DORVASTON comes in—he is in evening dress with light overcoat and carries a small music-case—he doesn't see LUCY at first.*)

DOR. I say, Cook, I—ah! (*COOK backs and he sees LUCY*) I—hulloa, Lucy!

LUCY. Well, Jack, what do you want? (*COOK retires round top of table down L. and resumes her glass-washing*)

DOR. I—ah—I—wanted—to—er—(*seeing orchid*) Of course, I came to fetch your orchid.

LUCY. You needn't have troubled. (*looks at COOK*) I fetched it myself.

DOR. Didn't know, don't you know!

LUCY. Have you got my music?

DOR. Got it here. (*showing music-case*)

LUCY. That's right. Is Auntie ready?

DOR. Fancy she's waiting in the hall. (*crosses to R.*)

LUCY. Oh! then I must go. (*crosses to R.*) Good-night, Cook. Thanks for taking care of the flower.

CAR. Not at all! Good-night!

LUCY. (*turning at door*) Are you coming, Jack?

DOR. In a second. Thought perhaps Cook would give me a light. (*takes out cigar case*)

LUCY. Very well, we'll go on. You can catch us up. You needn't hurry. (*she goes out door R.*)

DOR. (*holding cigar*) May I?

CAR. There's a box of matches on the dresser. (DORVASTON *crosses to dresser for matches, lights his cigar. She washes glass and silver*)

DOR. (*crosses to top of table*) This is a devilish snug kitchen. D'you know, I'd much rather stop here—and watch you doing—whatever you are doing—what *are* you doing?

CAR. Washing up. (*washing glasses*)

DOR. Are you, by George? Washing up, now. How is that generally done? (*at top of table*)

CAR. With water and a tea-cloth.

DOR. It must be an awful fag. When it comes to work, seems to me you women beat us hollow.

CAR. You have your drill—and parade—and fighting, too, in these days.

DOR. Fighting ain't work—it's fun.

CAR. Each to his trade! I prefer cooking and washing up. (*they both laugh*) Oughtn't you to go?

DOR. Yes, I'll get along. I say, you haven't forgotten—nine-thirty?

CAR. No, but I was hoping you had.

DOR. Upon my soul, what I want to say won't take ten minutes. Hulloo! cigar's out. I'll just light up again, you don't mind? (*he goes to dresser for matches. PILLENGER looks in at window*)

PIL. Cook!

CAR. Yes!

PIL. I just wished to say one word. (*he comes in at the back door*) I wish (*closes door, takes off hat, and sees DORVASTON, who has turned at the moment*) Tut!—dear me!

DOR. Hulloo, sir!

PIL. I imagined you had accompanied my sister and Lucy. They have started.

DOR. Came in here to fetch the orchid!

PIL. What orchid?

DOR. The orchid—and I hadn't a match—and Lucy had got it already, don't you see—so Cook gave me one—and—that's how it was, don't you know.

PIL. Cook gave you an orchid?

DOR. No, a light.

PIL. Then why allude to an orchid? However, it is quite immaterial.

CAR. You said you wished to speak to me, Mr. Pillenger!

PIL. (*coming a little to her*) I desired to express my approval—my warm approval—of the excellent meal you gave us this evening; but I fear I have not sufficient time to do justice to the theme.

DOR. (R.) By George, sir, you did justice to the fruit salad?

PIL. Very possibly, Captain Dorvaston, but I may remind you that your own appreciation assumed a very practical form.

CAR. Won't you both be rather late? (*they both look at each other and then go up to the door*)

PIL. (*turning at garden door*) I fear we shall. I may have to return early—I am conscious of the approach of a headache.

DOR. Deuced odd thing! I feel a bit off colour—doubt if I shall manage to see it through.

PIL. Tut, tut! you look singularly well! Merely fancy, I'm sure. (*opens door*) Good-night, Cook!

CAR. Good-night! (PILLENGER *goes out at back door*)

DOR. (*following*) Good-night, Cook!

CAR. Good-night!

DOR. (*turning at door and speaking in whisper*) Nine-thirty! (COOK *nods—he goes out. After a second MR. PILLENGER puts his head in at the window*)

PIL. Cook! you remember our appointment? Nine o'clock.

DOR. (*in the distance*) Are you coming, sir?

PIL. (*to DORVASTON*) Yes—in one moment! (*to COOK*) Nine! you quite understand?

CAR. (*calmly*) Quite!

PIL. Thank you. I thought I would just recall it to your memory. I'm coming, Captain Dorvaston! (*he goes; COOK continues her work; GANDY enters R., is crossing to door, stops, comes to top of table R.; he has changed his dress and carries a small hand-bag; he puts this down and his hat,*

and hastily consults silver watch)

GAN. Cook, I'm a leetle pressed for time—but I find I've just got three minutes and a 'alf to waste.

CAR. Well, what is it? (*washing glasses L.*)

GAN. I'll come straight to the pint. I've saved money—I'm sick of service, and I want to settle down. I know of a eatin' 'ouse to be 'ad—good situation—terms moderate—part cash down—remainder in monthly instalments. Will you marry me and take over the kitchen department?

CAR. No.

GAN. (*COOK crosses to oven and kneels and opens it*) Don't be 'asty now. We should crush all local competition. Think it over careful. (*looks at his watch again*) I can give you a minute and a 'alf. I'm a staid respectable man, and I want a staid respectable wife.

CAR. (*kneeling at oven L., looks over her shoulder*) And do I strike you in that light?

GAN. You do.

CAR. That is a very unexpected compliment. (*rises, places cake on table L.*)

GAN. (*comes down to chair R.*) Yes, Cook; since I met you I've come to see there's things in life as I didn't suspect. (*COOK stops work*) You've showed me the superiority of braized beef over biled beef—you've revealed the difference between 'aricot and 'ash—before you came apple fritters was to me a mere flash in the frying pan. (*suddenly stopping and looking at his watch*) Now I wouldn't 'urry you, but time's on the move. 'Ow's it to be?

CAR. It's to be no!

GAN. Oh!

CAR. I wish the eating-house every success, but I don't intend to marry.

GAN. But couldn't you—?

CAR. No, I couldn't. Don't miss your train.

GAN. Well, (*takes up bag and hat*) it's a disappointment, but if you say it's to be like that—

CAR. It's to be like that. (*she resumes her work*) Good-night.

GAN. (*goes slowly up stage, pauses, turns—is about to speak, thinks better of it*) Good-night. (*he goes out at back door. COOK takes cake to larder, and then crosses back to window, brings glass tray down to top of table and puts glasses on it. KEZIAH rushes in after a slight pause, hastily dressed for walking, with large hat trimmed lavishly with flowers*)

KEZ. Ready at last, Cook! I'm always a cow's tail, ain't I? Thought I should never get into this dress. Miss Fletcher sent it 'ome so tight, I can't 'ardly bear myself, and no 'ook and eye at the neck, if you please. (*crosses to COOK*) Lend us a pin, there's a dear! (*COOK gives her one, and stands watching her*) Thanks! (*crosses to looking-glass on wall, R. U. E., and fastens her collar with pin.*) I'll talk to me lady when I pay 'er. (*turning sees COOK looking at her*) You're looking at the 'at? Yus, I 'ad to wear the big one, the straw didn't go with this dress, (*comes C.*) It made me look almost common like. Well, I must step it. (*goes up*)

CAR. You've forgotten your gloves.

KEZ. Got 'em in my pocket—can't put 'em on yet—me hands is too 'ot. Am I all right at the back? This skirt seems to kick up. (*turns her back to COOK, and kicks her foot up at the same time at back, looking over shoulder*)

CAR. Not more than it does in front.

KEZ. That's a blessing. (*opens door*) 'Arry war! (*she goes, leaving back door open. COOK takes glass tray to window, crosses and shuts door R.; crosses and takes bowl to scullery, pours out water and wipes her hands, gets plate basket (chimes strike three-quarters) comes down L., puts spoons in basket, crosses to R. and exit. There is a slight pause, then CRAYLL looks in at window, he taps twice, then whistles softly—there is another slight pause, then COOK comes back and crosses C.*)

CRAY. (*at window*) Oh! there you are! Anybody about?

CAR. No. Come in, the door is open. (*crosses to L., he enters*)

CRAY. Well, I've got here. (*he stands leaning against the door*)

CAR. So I see.

CRAY. There's a beast of a dog somewhere on the premises, ain't there?

CAR. Yes, but he's chained up, and he's rather particular about his food; you needn't be nervous. (*CRAYLL slams door and crosses C.*)

CRAY. (*looking round kitchen*) And these are your quarters, are they? You've brought your pigs to a nice market. (*she is silent*) Well?

CAR. Well?

CRAY. Why don't you speak?

CAR. I was waiting for you to begin.

CRAY. Don't you feel the damned degradation of your position?

CAR. No. You seem to forget I was your wife for nearly ten years.

CRAY. Ah! Have you any whiskey?

CAR. No!

CRAY. (*seeing decanter on slab in window*) Why, what's this?

CAR. That belongs to Captain Dorvaston.

CRAY. That's all right. (*crosses to window*) He knows me. He won't mind. (*COOK sits L. CRAY stands at window with whiskey, syphon, and glass in hand*) A cook! That's what beats me. Why a cook?

CAR. It was an experiment.

CRAY. If you were broke (*comes to top of table and pours out whiskey*) why didn't you try the stage? The divorce would have given you a leg up.

CAR. How did you find me out?

CRAY. Accident! (*takes a drink and crosses C.*) I came down here because I thought your pal the Duchess might give me the straight tip as to your whereabouts. My spottin' you was a bit of luck.

CAR. You must be very hard up?

CRAY. Oh! it's bin a rotten season! Nothin's paid me. Had some big stable information for Doncaster week—that didn't pay me, couldn't even win place money. Tried the Stock Exchange; damned if that paid me—jumped in at the top of the market, crawled out at the bottom. (*crosses to chair*) Then there was the trial—

CAR. Ah! I suppose the law expenses were heavy?

CRAY. Oh, devilish!

CAR. Bribing the servants must have been rather a serious item!

CRAY. What d'ye mean?

CAR. That was a most elaborate story my maid Thompson told the jury—Thompson was not very intelligent. It must have involved a great deal of careful rehearsal.

CRAY. We needn't go into all that. (*puts glass on table*)

CAR. You are astonished to find me here. What did you think I should do?

CRAY. Thought you were with Carruthers.

CAR. No, you didn't. (*he looks at her, tries to brave it out, but his eyes fall*) You had been dangling your title before the eyes of a certain rich widow, but I see by the papers (*he pours out whiskey*) she has slipped through those shaking fingers of yours and is going to marry another man.

CRAY. (*taking up glass nervously and drinking*) Yes; women are damned shifty.

CAR. Your notion didn't come off, but that was why you trumped up your case against me, knowing it was all a lie.

CRAY. You didn't deny it?

CAR. No.

CRAY. Neither did he?

CAR. No. Bob is a good fellow—and a good friend. He helped me.

CRAY. Helped you to cheat the law!

CAR. Helped me to cheat the law that ties a woman to such a man as you.

CRAY. That was the game, was it?

CAR. Why did you want to find me out? By the way, (*crosses to window and brings down "Standard" to top of table*), has that anything to do with it?

CRAY. How do you mean?

CAR. (*watching him closely*) To-day's "Standard." There's a little advertisement in the agony column.

CRAY. I—can't see—light's bad. Read it out!

CAR. (*crosses to gas L., takes paper and reads*) "Will Lady Huntworth communicate with Messrs. Brampton and Stokes, Capel-Court, on a matter of considerable importance?" (*crosses to L. of table and throws paper down*) Did you know of that?

CRAY. No. Who are Brampton and Stokes? Never heard of 'em.

CAR. (*leaning over table with one hand on it for support*) Then why have you been hunting me up? I hadn't a shilling—you saw to that.

CRAY. (*after slight pause, makes to touch her hand*) I wanted you to—come—back.

CAR. What?

CRAY. I'm willin'—to bury the past. (*COOK looks at him*) Well, I tell you, I want to bury the past.

CAR. (*pause, she puts hand on chair*) Before we talk of burying the past, I should like you to look down into the still open grave—

CRAY. (*shudders*) Filthy way of talkin'!

CAR. (*sits L.*) When I married you I was thirty—quite old enough to know better! but I'd spent my youth in nursing my father. When he died I inherited a fortune—and my freedom—without much notion what to do with either. That was a bad year for me. I lost my father and I found you. (CRAYLL *scowls at her*) I don't know what crime I had committed that fate should sentence me to ten years' penal servitude. But my father had wished it and so did your mother. You had been a little wild, they said, but all you needed was gentle guidance. I believed them, but my gentle guidance that was to work miracles generally took the shape of helping you up to bed in the small hours, when the difficulty of adjusting the latchkey had been overcome.

CRAY. Look here, it 'pears to me you're trying to be 'fensive.

CAR. That was my life for ten years. The dregs of your fortune and the whole of mine gradually melted away—in cards—(*he pours out drink*) racing, drink—and a few extra establishments.

CRAY. You never grumbled about th' extra 'stablishments.

CAR. (*rises in disgust*) Oh, no! I only mention them now—to fill up the picture of our home life. With regard to your gambling and drunkenness I was sorry for myself, but in the matter of your infidelities I was sorry for the other women.

CRAY. Your language's 'fensive—damned 'fensive!

CAR. At the finish we had a pleasant little chat; you hadn't a sixpence left—or a friend either—except Bob Carruthers. He had lent you more than he could afford and he was sick of it. You tried to get me to ask him again. I wouldn't. It was on that occasion you reached up and tried to strike me. (*touches him on shoulder*) Do you remember?

CRAY. Momentary irritation—regretted it d'rectly!

CAR. (*returns paper to window*) We parted that night. The place was sold up, and I didn't hear of you again till you commenced proceedings for our divorce. (*he moves chair and faces her*) Then I went to Bob. He offered to see me through—engage counsel and all that. It would have been easy to smash your case, (*crosses and stands over him*) but that would have left me tied to you; so I asked him if he would join me in making no defence. He pointed out what society would think of me. I said I knew enough of society to care nothing for its bad opinion. He did as I wished, so you got your decree nisi and the sympathy of the public. (*crosses to top of table again*)

CRAY. All this is beastly 'fensive. (*leans limply over back of chair*)

CAR. My only problem was how to live. I couldn't teach or make dresses or typewrite. There was only one thing I could do properly—I could cook. It was always a fad of mine. I used often to prepare little dishes for my father—in the old days—and while I was trying to see my way, I met Millicent Sturton. I told her everything, and asked her to help me. She had influence with these good people—so I resumed my own name and became the vicar's cook. (*pause; COOK has gradually crossed L. again. CRAYLL moves chair back to table and drinks*) Now you understand everything! I'll say good-bye. I'm likely to be rather busy this evening.

CRAY. Don't say goo'bye. I wan' you to come back. My 'ntentions are disin'ersted. Won't you come back?

CAR. (*stands with hands behind her back*) Not while there's a crossing to be swept—or a box of matches to be sold.

CRAY. (*rising unsteadily—leaning over table*) S'pose I was to—give th' show away—d'you think they'd keep a woman like you—a woman who was n'torious?

CAR. No!

CRAY. Very well, then I can squash you. Word from me'd sweep you into the gutter—an' if you don' come back—I'll do it. I'll show you what comes of r'fusin' disin'ested offer. (*she laughs and shrugs her shoulders*) Don' laugh at me, you fool! I'll do it! I'll drag you off your damned high horse, I'll—I'll—(*raises his arm to strike her*)

CAR. No, you won't! (*pauses; his arm slowly falls and he sways about limply*) you're too anxious to keep your own identity secret just now to say anything about mine. Isn't that so—Mr. Crayll?

CRAY. (*swaying about*) Tha's true, tha's true! Le's be frien's—shall we? Don' le's be touchy. If you'll come back, I'll do the right thing—marry you again—marry you anywhere you like—St. Paul's Cathedral, if you like. Come back and be a comfort to ailin' man. (*sinks into chair*) Le's have 'nother honeymoon. Shall we? Le's kiss an' be friends; but first le's have a little more whiskey. (*taking whiskey*) Shall we?

CAR. (*removing the tumbler, etc.*) No, we won't have any more whiskey—in fact, I think we had better go now. (*she takes whiskey syphon and glass to window, and looks out*)

CRAY. (*who is now maudlin*) Not friendly! No r'sumption of former 'fectionate footin', same time—no desire to remain—where not wanted. (*puts cap on*) Where's cigar case? Want cigar—smoke going home. (*he very sleepily takes out letter case from his outside pocket*) Oh, here 'tish! (*as he holds it, he begins to doze, his arm falls its full length, and a letter falls out of case—his head falls right back, and he breathes heavily. He falls gradually into a deep sleep. She watches him quietly, then comes round to the right of him*)

CAR. (*pause*) Wake up! (*shakes him*) You mustn't sleep here.

CRAY. (*muttering*) Want cigar!

CAR. Want a cigar? But this is your letter case. (*she takes it from him, and puts it into his outside pocket* R. *She then sees the fallen letter*) And you've dropped something. (*she picks it up—he snores*) Looks like a writ. (*she glances at it*) Messrs. Brampton and Stokes (*she pauses and looks at him*) Ah! my first idea was right (*crosses to gas with letter round to fireplace and reads it under the gas*) "Messrs. Brampton and Stokes present their compliments to Lord Huntworth, and would be greatly obliged if he could place them in communication with the lady who was till very recently his wife. The reason for the application is urgent, as information has been received from an Australian firm of solicitors that Lady Huntworth has succeeded to a considerable fortune through the death of an uncle. (*she again turns and looks at him*) Messrs. Brampton and Stokes would greatly appreciate an early reply. Capel Court. May 9th." More than two months ago! Ah! (*slight pause, crosses to top of table, and leans over it*) Lord Huntworth, you will do me the favour to wake up. (*he snores*) I thought I had said everything I had to say, but I find I was wrong. (*she stops and listens, then puts letter hurriedly inside her dress*) What's that? Did I hear the gate go? (*crosses to window, then crosses to CRAYLL and shakes him and pulls him up*) Wake up—you mustn't be found here. (*she pulls him up*)

CRAY. Wha's matter?

CAR. I must put you somewhere; you wouldn't be easy to explain away. (*she half-supports, half-carries him up and into scullery; when there she allows him to droop into a sitting position against the sink; she then shuts the scullery door*) Quite like old times! (*looks out of window—brings work-box down, goes up to door and listens. MR. PILLENGER enters*)

PIL. Hum! Cook! (*at door*)

CAR. Yes?

PIL. May I come in?

CAR. Certainly! (*crosses to chair R. and sits, takes out pudding cloth and starts to hem it*)

(MR. PILLENGER enters at back door.)

PIL. I—er—explained to Miss Pillenger that I thought it advisable to return home early—as I was feeling somewhat indisposed.

CAR. (*looks up at him*) Then you would like to go to bed? I'll let Miss Pillenger in. (*looks at door L.*)

PIL. That is not necessary, I gave her my latchkey. I fear I must admit my illness has no—er—tangible existence.

CAR. Oh!

PIL. I trust I am not interrupting any—er—domestic occupation?

CAR. I have to hem some pudding cloths, but I can listen while I work. What do you want to say to me? (*she begins sewing; PILLENGER crosses to top of table, puts hat down; as he crosses COOK looks at door L.*)

PIL. I—er—find some difficulty in approaching the subject. It is one with which I have been hitherto—quite unfamiliar.

CAR. Perhaps if you sat down it might be easier.

PIL. Er—thank you. (*crosses to fire and stands with back to it*) The suggestion is very considerate. (*he makes several efforts to begin, but baulks himself*) During the few months you have been with us—you must have noticed that you had roused—in me—a strong feeling—(*she looks up at him*) of—er—of interest?

CAR. I saw it—I didn't notice it.

PIL. Exactly! (*moves to back of chair L.*) You would not—care—perhaps, to give me a somewhat larger measure of your—er—confidence—touching the—er—the past.

CAR. (*stops work for a moment*) No; I think we'll leave the past alone.

PIL. I may possibly persuade you to be less reticent—when I have submitted my—er—my proposal to you.

CAR. Proposal? (*resumes work*)

PIL. Yes. After such reasonable hesitation as should precede the taking of any important step, I have decided to offer you an alternative to your present life, the nature of which you may have already guessed.

CAR. (*smiling back*) I suppose *you* are the alternative?

PIL. (*moves to top of table near her*) Precisely. I ask you to be—er—to be my wife.

CAR. (*smiles*) Thanks! (*stops work*)

PIL. I am no longer young, but my health is good, with the exception of a little periodic gout. My temper, if not invariably equable, is what a long succession of curates has made it; and as to worldly considerations, without being a rich man, my position is an independent one.

CAR. It ought to be.

PIL. I beg your pardon?

CAR. You say you don't speak without consideration. Have you considered what your sister would say?

PIL. (*moves round to L.*) It is a point to which I have devoted very exhaustive attention. At first she might not welcome the idea with—er—absolute enthusiasm. (*sits L.*)

CAR. No, she might not. Have you also considered what the world would say?

PIL. The world?

CAR. It's rather a tolerant world where a man is concerned, but it holds special views about clergymen, and it wouldn't stand the notion of a vicar marrying his cook.

PIL. The social disparity between us is far more apparent than real. Your present vocation must be the outcome of caprice—or temporary necessity.

CAR. Take it at that. (*puts work in box*) What do you know of me? I may be an adventuress—in fact, most of the evidence points that way. At any rate I have no intention of marrying. (*smiles*) I have said the same thing once before this evening in reply to a similar proposition from Gandy. (*rises and crosses back of her chair and leans on chair*)

PIL. Gandy? Did he dare?

CAR. He did. (*smiling*) This seems to be rather a susceptible household. (*crosses to window and looks out*)

PIL. (*rising*) You haven't given me a conclusive answer?

CAR. (*hearing footsteps*) Haven't I? I thought I had.

PIL. (*crosses to C.*) You may require a little time for final reflection.

CAR. I think not. (*looking out of window*)

PIL. Nevertheless, if you will spare me your attention.

CAR. One moment! I thought I heard a step on the path. (*she looks out of window*) Yes, it's Captain Dorvaston.

PIL. (*crosses to door and looks out, returns and takes hat from table*) You don't say so? That is highly inconvenient. What had I better do?

CAR. I think you had better go to bed.

PIL. An opportunity like the present is so difficult to obtain. He will merely pass through to his room. I'll wait in the scullery. (*makes for it*)

CAR. (*puts hand on door*) The scullery is rather in confusion. (*goes back to window and looks out*)

PIL. Then the larder is probably available. (*goes towards it*)

CAR. I really wouldn't wait if I were you.

PIL. (*speaking from entrance to larder*) I do so on my own initiative. There are several arguments I wish to—

CAR. (*at window*) He's coming.

PIL. Oh! (*hastily goes in and closes larder door*)

(DORVASTON *simultaneously enters at garden door*)

DOR. Well, Cook, I've got back. May I come in?

CAR. If you like. (*drops down L.* DORVASTON *enters and locks door after him*) You needn't have locked the door.

DOR. Don't you keep it locked?

CAR. I do generally—it doesn't matter. (*sits L.*)

DOR. The governor was seedy and left early.

CAR. Yes, he came back.

DOR. Gone to bed, I s'pose? (*she is silent and has resumed her work*) I tried to think of something a bit more novel, but I couldn't, so I had to tell the old lady I wasn't feeling fit myself.

CAR. Why did you trouble?

DOR. (*crosses to top of table and puts hat down*) Oh, well, don't you know, I wanted to say something to you.

CAR. Yes. (*stops work*)

DOR. I'm a bad hand at getting my notions into words. P'raps if you go on doing—whatever you're doing—I may manage to make a start. (*she resumes work*) That ought to look exceptional pretty when it's finished.

CAR. Do you think so?

DOR. Yes! What—is it?

CAR. A pudding cloth.

DOR. Jove! You don't say so? (*laughs*) I say, you mustn't think me an awful ass!

CAR. It doesn't matter what I think.

DOR. It matters to me.

CAR. It oughtn't to matter. (*pause—he takes up the weekly journal*)

DOR. Been doing a bit of reading? (*sits on table R. corner*)

CAR. No. That belongs to Keziah.

DOR. This sounds promising. (*reads*) "The belted Earl entered the lists with lance in rest. His shield bore for device a bar sinister with Fleur de Lys rampant." That ain't heraldry!

CAR. Yes, it is, (*looking up*) "Family Heraldry." (*he laughs*) I don't want to hurry you, but it's getting late.

DOR. (*rises*) Well, I—I hope you haven't misunderstood my—object in—bothering you?

CAR. I should like to think I had.

DOR. I don't follow.

CAR. Members of your profession don't generally make an appointment with cook in order to assure her of their respect.

DOR. Some of us may be a bit rackety, but we know a lady when we see one, and we shouldn't treat her any different because she chose to pretend to be a cook.

CAR. Pretend?

DOR. (*crosses C. and gets gradually to chair R. of table*) Why, any duffer could see—I can see you were never meant to be what you are. These things generally come about through loss of coin—for instance, a woman's father speculates, and the home goes biff. He shuts up in his stride, and she takes up the running. Now what that woman wants is a friend to give her the lead over the fences—a friend who don't want anything from her—will you keep your eye on that?—who don't want anything from her, but who would like awfully to do her a turn, if she'd let him. I think that goes into the four corners of what I wanted to say. (*sits*)

CAR. (*rising*) Do you know you're a wonderfully good fellow?

DOR. Oh, rot! Well, may I be—a little use to somebody for once?

CAR. I won't borrow money of you, if you meant that.

DOR. False pride!

CAR. No, that isn't it.

DOR. It's a devilish odd thing that every good woman is a bit of a coward, and she's always afraid of what people will say, especially if it isn't true.

CAR. That description fits me less than any woman in the world.

DOR. You won't let me be of use to you, because I happen to be a man, and you happen to be a woman—ain't that so? (*rises*) I see how it is. I've made an ass of myself. You won't have my help or my friendship.

CAR. (*rises*) I don't need the help, but I'll take the friendship.

DOR. Thanks!

CAR. (*shuts work-box*) What I thought about you was wrong. I beg your pardon.

DOR. Oh, that's all right!

CAR. (*leans on box*) Now, will you do me a little favour?

DOR. Anything! (*leans over table*)

CAR. Will you go to bed? (*he backs with surprise*) They mustn't come back and find you here.

DOR. Of course not, I'll go at once; and if at any time you should want a pal, you'll let me—

CAR. Hush! (*crosses to door and opens it*) I fancy I heard the key in the front door. (*she listens*) Yes, it is them. Miss Pillenger is saying she wants to speak to me.

DOR. (*takes up hat*) By George! I'd better nip into the scullery. (*crosses to scullery*)

CAR. No!

DOR. The larder? (*crosses to it*)

CAR. No. Go into the garden.

DOR. Of course! Stupid of me! (*he tries the door*)

CAR. Make haste.

DOR. Can't get the beastly door open. Something's wrong with the key.

CAR. You'll be too late! (*advances towards him*)

DOR. Here! (*opens door*) What's this? Ah, the broom cupboard, any port in a storm! (*goes in; Cook shuts door and stands there for a moment*)

(MISS PILLENGER *enters*.)

MISS P. Cook, I remembered I hadn't ordered to-morrow's breakfast. (*crosses and sits R. of table*)

CAR. No. What would you like? (*crosses to top of table*)

MISS P. (*sitting R. of table*) Has Keziah returned?

CAR. Not yet.

MISS P. Both my brother and Captain Dorvaston were too unwell to remain with us. They have doubtless gone to bed, so I will ask you to go upstairs very quietly.

CAR. Certainly! I think I hear Keziah. (*she goes to back-door*)

MISS P. She is very late. (*pause*) Why don't you open the door?

CAR. The key sticks a little.

MISS P. It should be oiled. (*COOK opens the door and admits KEZIAH, who doesn't see MISS PILLENGER*)

KEZ. Oh, Cook, I did enjoy myself a treat! 'E was there—and when I come out—— (*comes C. and sees MISS PILLENGER*) Oh lor!

MISS P. Keziah!

KEZ. Yes, mum.

MISS P. Why are you so late?

KEZ. I dunno, mum.

MISS P. Who is the person you spoke of when you came in?

KEZ. What person, mum?

MISS P. You said distinctly *he* was there.

KEZ. Oh, that was me sister's 'usband's brother, mum. (*winks at COOK*) 'E's a plumber, and Church of England.

MISS P. You are aware I don't allow followers?

KEZ. 'E don't follow *me*, mum. I did give 'im good evenin', bein', as you may say, relations, and 'e told me as my sister 'as just 'ad 'er *seventh*, and both doin' well, and——

MISS P. That will do. I hope you are telling the truth.

KEZ. Oh yes, mum, it's gorspel, it is reely!

MISS P. Mind you go upstairs quietly; your master is unwell.

KEZ. Yes, mum. (*goes to door again, winks at COOK*) Good night, mum.

MISS P. Good night! (*KEZIAH goes out*) I'm afraid, Cook, you must have had a rather dull evening.

CAR. No, I haven't been dull. (*puts box on window-ledge and returns*) You were going to speak about the breakfast.

MISS P. Yes. Let me see, we shall have fish. (*noise in cupboard*) What was that? I heard a noise in that cupboard.

CAR. It may have been a mouse.

MISS P. I didn't know we had any mice. You had better set a trap to-morrow.

CAR. You mentioned fish? Will you have it grilled?

MISS P. No, fried with egg and breadcrumbs. (*noise in cupboard is repeated more loudly*) That can't be a mouse. The cat must have got shut up in there.

CAR. The cat is in the scullery.

MISS P. Then it must be a strange cat. (*rises and crosses to R. C.*)

CAR. (*going to cupboard, her hand on knob*) Strange cats sometimes fly at you. If you'll go, I'll see to it. I'm not nervous.

MISS P. (*advances to cupboard*) Neither am I. I prefer to see for myself. (*waves COOK back*) How this door sticks. (*she pulls at the handle of the door, which at last opens, discovering DORVASTON*) Captain Dorvaston! (*he comes out sheepishly; pause*) May I ask you to explain this? (*DORVASTON looks first at MISS P. then at COOK—takes his hat off*)

DOR. Well, ma'am, it ain't exactly easy to make the thing clear.

MISS P. I see. (*speaking at COOK*) The explanation is only too obvious. My niece has gone to her room, so I shall not disturb her to-night, but to-morrow it will be my painful duty to tell her everything. (*moves a step to the door*)

DOR. I say, ma'am, just a moment.

MISS P. (*moves toward COOK and stops*) As to you, Cook, I will—or, rather, Mr. Pillenger—will speak to you in the morning.

CAR. (*smiling*) Very well! (*at top of table. MISS PILLENGER moves to go—DORVASTON intercepts her*)

DOR. Look here, ma'am—upon my soul you must listen. I wanted to say something to Cook. It was nothing—anybody might have heard it.

MISS P. Then why conceal yourself in the broom cupboard?

DOR. I know the broom cupboard ain't easy to get out of. I could explain better, only I feel in such an awful hat——

MISS P. You are not wearing your hat!

DOR. No, but—really, you know, I simply wanted—

CAR. Captain Dorvaston, don't trouble; whatever you may say Miss Pillenger won't believe you.

MISS P. That is true. There are things that cannot be explained away. The broom cupboard is one of them. (*going*)

DOR. But I say, ma'am! (*moves again*)

MISS P. (*motions him away*) Good-night, Captain Dorvaston. (*he opens door, she goes out. DORVASTON and COOK look at each other, she smiles*)

DOR. (*after pause*) I've made a nice mess of it.

CAR. You have rather. (*closes cupboard door, returns L.*)

DOR. If nature allowed a fella to kick himself, I'd do it with the greatest pleasure. (*comes to R. and puts hat down on table*) To drag you into such a beastly muddle! And I did so want to do you a turn.

CAR. I know you did. You meant kindly, and I'm very grateful. Go to bed and forget all about it.

DOR. There'll be an awful row to-morrow. I'm not thinking of myself, I'm thinking about you.

CAR. You needn't worry about me. Oddly enough, I've had news to-night that makes this affair very unimportant. Now I must really ask you to go.

DOR. All right, I'll be off. But, I say—you do forgive me?

CAR. Of course I forgive you.

DOR. Thanks. Good-night!

CAR. Good-night! (*he goes to door R., then returns to table for his hat. As he does so PILLENGER cautiously emerges from the larder. The two men face each other*)

PIL. Hum! Tut, tut! (*COOK turns and sits L.*)

DOR. Hulloa, sir! Were you in there?

PIL. Yes—I—er—was.

DOR. What, all the time?

PIL. I had an important reason for desiring a few minutes' conversation with—er—Cook.

CAR. Mr. Pillenger shared your wish that I should better myself.

DOR. That's devilish lucky, because, as you were a witness, you can clean the slate for us, and back up what I say.

PIL. You fail to perceive that my perfectly innocent sojourn in the larder would be as difficult of plausible explanation as your own regrettable occupancy of the broom cupboard.

DOR. Jove, yes, that's true! What had we better do?

CAR. The first step—especially as you are both invalids (*the men look at each other*) is for you to go to bed.

PIL. The suggestion is most judicious. (*they both start for the door; PILLENGER stops Dorvaston*) I think, Captain Dorvaston, I will precede you by a few minutes. The stairs have a tendency to creak, and would certainly do so under our combined weight. Good-night.

DOR. Good-night, sir.

PIL. (*is going but pauses*) With your permission I will remove my boots. (*he does so*) It would not be fair to disturb the household. Good-night! (*he goes out with a boot in each hand, and his hat under his arm*)

DOR. (*crosses and sits R.*) By George! then the governor was there all the time.

CAR. Yes, I was well provided with chaperonage. (*turns to mantel and puts gas out, takes candlestick from bracket and crosses to window*)

DOR. It don't get you out of the mess, that's the worst of it.

CAR. (*shutting the window and then crossing to larder*) You needn't mind me.

DOR. I'm bound to mind you. Are you sure there's nothing I could do to help you—in any sort of way?

CAR. No. (*shuts door; her eye goes to scullery*) Well, there is one thing you could do for me—if you really mean what you say.

DOR. I swear I do! (*rises*)

CAR. (*crosses C.*) What I should want you to do would be rather a nuisance. Are you sure you wouldn't mind?

DOR. Try me.

CAR. Well, there's a man in the scullery.

DOR. Another man!

CAR. Yes. I fancy you'll find he is asleep against the sink.

DOR. Is he, by George?

CAR. Might I trouble you to fetch him out? (*crosses to dresser and lights candle*)

DOR. Eh? What? Oh, certainly! (*he goes to scullery, opens door and discovers CRAYLL asleep in a sitting position; DORVASTON picks him up, places him in a chair R. of table*) There you are! (*COOK crosses with candle, and light falls on CRAYLL'S face*) Why, it's Crayll! (*looks at COOK*)

CAR. Yes.

DOR. He's as drunk as a fiddler.

CAR. Yes. He called on me this evening, rather to my inconvenience.

DOR. Did he?

CAR. Might I ask you—to put him somewhere for me? (*DORVASTON looks at her wonderingly*) There's a dry ditch—at the end of the garden—that would do.

DOR. Anything you wish, of course.

CAR. Thanks! (*turns B. gas out*)

DOR. Then you know Crayll?

CAR. Yes. (*turning to DORVASTON*) He was my husband at one time. (*turns out gas*)

DOR. (*in an amazed whisper*) What!

CAR. Good-night! (*she goes out quietly at door R.*)

The stage is now dark except the moonlight which streams in at door. DORVASTON stands transfixed with astonishment—then he puts on his hat—goes up and opens the back door—returns—picks up CRAYLL and carries him up stage. As he does so the

CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Vicarage Library (according to plan).*

TIME.—*Early next morning.*

(*When the Act opens the stage is dark, but the morning sun shines in through the chinks of the shutters; LUCY enters in white biking costume; she steals downstairs, puts jacket on chair R., crosses to O.P. windows, opens shutters, and draws curtains—crosses to back and does the same; then waves handkerchief to THORSBY, and runs up stairs again; stands looking off, to see no one has heard; after a moment THORSBY enters; steals to balustrade and kisses LUCY's hand, which is on the balustrade.*)

THOR. Darling!

LUCY. Hush!

THOR. Mustn't I?—on our wedding day?

LUCY. No!

THOR. Oh!

LUCY. At least—whatever you wish to convey to me must be done in dumb show.

THOR. I see. (*he kisses her*)

LUCY. Mind my hat. (*looks off*) When we have been married a few years you'll realize that my hats must be treated very respectfully.

THOR. I suppose the household is still in bed?

LUCY. Yes. (*crosses to settle and sits on R. end*) I crept downstairs feeling like a burglar. I had one awful moment—I stumbled over Auntie's shoes—they were outside her door.

THOR. My dearest—that was rather careless. (*leans on post*)

LUCY. Careless! Auntie's shoes aren't easy to avoid in a narrow passage. It was all right. Uncle and Aunt were still asleep—I could hear them—

THOR. And Captain Dorvaston?

LUCY. Oh! I expect Jack was asleep, too, not dreaming the hour of his emancipation was at hand. Poor old Jack! I wish he was coming with us.

THOR. Hum! Do you?

LUCY. I wish he could have given me away.

THOR. I—hardly share that feeling.

LUCY. You don't know him; he'd have done it in a minute if I'd asked him. I'd have told him all about it, only he's such a clumsy old duffer; he might have given me away in a different sense.

THOR. You seem to place great reliance on his affection for you.

LUCY. He has tons of affection for me—tons—but not love—at least, not the business article you and I deal in. (*THORSBY goes to embrace her, she waves him off*) By the way, Harry, (*she is putting on her gloves*) there are one or two points we have never properly settled.

THOR. What are they?

LUCY. I mean to be a clinking parson's wife.

THOR. Darling! (*moves to her, she waves him off as before*)

LUCY. Hold on! I mean to be a clinking parson's wife, but I have my limitations. Church on Sunday—how many times?

THOR. (*hesitatingly*) Three?

LUCY. Oh, no! Mornings generally, evenings sometimes, afternoons never.

THOR. Never?

LUCY. Never! (*THORSBY moves to C.; LUCY rises and follows*) Now you're shocked—your face has grown a couple of inches longer. Well, if I'm not orthodox enough for you it's off, and I'll go back to bed again. (*moves to go*)

THOR. Lucy dear, (*catches her arm*) in answer to what you said, I shall merely exact one promise.

LUCY. Which is?

THOR. That in all things—and in all seasons—you will do—or not do—whatever you please. Do you promise?

LUCY. (*after slight pause. She puts left hand on shoulder*) Harry, I do promise; it shall be exactly as you say. Indeed, indeed, I'll keep my word. Now then, fasten my glove, and we'll go and get it over. (*he proceeds to fasten her glove, as CAROLINE enters, carrying a small tray with coffee, bread and butter, etc.; she also carries a large shoe under her arm*)

CAR. (*at top of stairs*) I beg your pardon. (*LUCY and THORSBY are much startled. THORSBY moves away*)

towards table R.C.)

LUCY. Cook!

THOR. Dear me!

CAR. I hope I didn't startle you?

LUCY. Oh, no!

THOR. Not at all!

CAR. (*comes down, and stands at bottom of stairs*) I thought you might like a cup of coffee (*smiling*) to help you face the ordeal.

LUCY. Was that why you wanted to know last night what time I meant to start?

CAR. No. I told you I wanted to think of you, and wish you luck. The coffee was an afterthought.

LUCY. I see.

CAR. Won't you both sit down and have it comfortably?

LUCY. Is it safe to wait? (*crosses up C. and looks off—anxiously*)

CAR. Quite.

LUCY. Keziah?

CAR. Keziah is not awake—I wrapped the alarum in a blanket. (*LUCY crosses to top; THORSBY to R.; COOK crosses to top of chair and puts tray on table and shoe on chair L.; LUCY and THORSBY then sit*)

LUCY. It has probably dawned on you, Harry, that Cook is a good friend of ours?

THOR. It has, indeed! (*he rises, bows—sits again*)

CAR. Cook was once young herself—it was some years ago—but she hasn't forgotten the circumstances. (*to LUCY*) Milk and sugar?

LUCY. Thanks. (*she holds cup to her*)

CAR. Mr. Thorsby?

THOR. If you please—two lumps. (*she hands cup to him*)

CAR. Bread and butter? (*they both take some*) It isn't up to much—yesterday's loaf—but it was the best I could do. And how do you both feel? Nervous?

LUCY. Beastly nervous! (*eating*)

THOR. (*eating*) The moment is naturally a solemn one. I feel anxious, but not nervous. (*takes up cup and drinks*)

LUCY. Oh, it's all right for you; you've tied up such a lot of poor misguided people, that you know the words backwards. It's different with me—I know I shall bungle it.

CAR. There are only three words that really signify.

LUCY. Which three?

CAR. Love, honor, and obey.

LUCY. I think I can manage the first two, but I mean to slur the third, (*THORSBY drops cup in saucer*) cough, or sneeze or something.

THOR. (*to CAROLINE, smiling*) That sounds rather an alarming prospect. Don't you pity me?

CAR. (*glancing at LUCY, and also smiling*) No, I don't think I do. (*crosses C.*) How do you go to Church?

LUCY. (*rising*) We are going to bike there. By-the-bye, would you tell somebody—Auntie or Jack—anybody will do—that I've run over to see my friend, Jenny Thornton, and they're not to wait breakfast?

THOR. (*rising*) My dear Lucy, ought we to involve a third person in our deception?

CAR. The third person hasn't a very tender conscience in such matters. (*to LUCY*) I'll tell your little fib for you with pleasure.

LUCY. (*leans over chair, sees shoe*) There, Harry, I knew she would. Thank you, Cook. (*taking up the shoe which COOK has placed on a chair*) What's this?

CAR. (*C.*) I wanted to throw a shoe after you, and that was the only one I could find. It's one of your Aunt's—she put it outside her door to be cleaned.

THOR. Dear me! It looks rather formidable.

CAR. It *is* large! We'll hope that the luck it brings will be proportionate. Now, I should say it was time for you to go.

THOR. (*going up to window*) Yes, I don't think we ought to delay.

LUCY. (*puts shoe down again, crosses up to window, and down to below table C.*) All right, come along. Stop a second though. I say, Harry, have you got everything?

THOR. (*returns from R.*) Got everything? (*COOK crosses to back of table, and puts things on tray*)

LUCY. Everybody's fee. I should like to do the thing well.

THOR. Yes.

LUCY. How about the ring?

THOR. Eh? Oh, yes, I—(*searching his pockets*) I bought it yesterday. (*still searching*)

LUCY. Very likely, but have you got it with you to-day?

THOR. I certainly think so. I have a distinct recollection of putting it in my waistcoat pocket. (*still searching*)

LUCY. You've lost it. (*to COOK*) There's a pretty mess!

THOR. Ah! here it is. (*COOK crosses to C.*) There is a hole in the pocket, and it had slipped down into the lining.

LUCY. (*to COOK*) Thank goodness! That would have been a nice thing, wouldn't it?

CAR. (*to LUCY*) Will you wear this? It's only syringa, but it looks like orange blossom. (*LUCY and THORSBY exchange glances*) I picked it for you this morning.

LUCY. (*fixing it*) You *have* been kind to me, and I've no means of thanking you. Will you stoop down and let me kiss you? (*COOK does so*) I'm afraid that's all I can do.

CAR. I'm quite repaid. I fancy Mr. Thorsby agrees with me. (*LUCY crosses up to window*)

THOR. (*goes up R. a little; takes LUCY's coat with him*) Good-bye! May I add my thanks also?

CAR. Not at all. Good-bye.

LUCY. (*crosses down again to COOK*) It isn't good-bye—we're coming back as soon as it's over; and we mean to tell everything to everybody. So we shall see you again.

CAR. One never knows what may happen. I think we'll make it good-bye. (*puts hand on LUCY's shoulder*) Now, go along and get married, and live happy ever after, as they do in the fairy tales. (*THORSBY goes out of the window; LUCY follows, but turns and kisses her hand. They go*)

(*COOK follows them to the verandah, and throws shoe as she returns for tray.*
DORVASTON enters from O. P. door.)

DOR. Hulloo! Good-morning!

CAR. (*at top of table*) Good morning. Rather a close shave.

DOR. I beg your pardon?

CAR. Nothing! (*is taking up tray*)

DOR. (*at top of table R. of COOK*) Look here, don't go. I want to have half a word with you.

CAR. Well?

DOR. I—saw to that little job.

CAR. Yes?

DOR. I—put him in the ditch.

CAR. Thanks. Did he say anything?

DOR. (*top of table*) He muttered something about another whiskey, and that he would like to be called about nine. Now would you mind telling me a little about it all? Give you my word it ain't mere curiosity, it's interest in you and everything that concerns you.

CAR. (*at back of chair L.*) I told you the chief thing last night. Mr. Crayll was my husband at one time.

DOR. You say he was your husband.

CAR. Yes. We are divorced.

DOR. Oh, that was it! (*pause*) I haven't known your—er—I haven't known Crayll more than a day or two, but I can see he's an awful little swine. I suppose he treated you anyhow?

CAR. Yes. Is there anything else you would like me to tell you?

DOR. It's extraordinary good of you to give me your confidence.

CAR. You've earned it. (*takes tray, and turns*)

DOR. (*crosses behind her, to her L.*) Well then, I say, what are you going to do now?

CAR. See to the breakfast.

DOR. No, no! I mean about—Miss Pillenger—and—the broom cupboard. There'll be an infernal row, and I'm afraid you'll get beans.

CAR. (*smiles*) I'm used to handling all kinds of vegetables. (*DORVASTON laughs too*) As I told you last night, it doesn't matter.

DOR. (*sits L. of table*) But, by George, it *does* matter! When I asked you then to let me be of use to you, I put it to you as a favor, now I ask it as a right. I got you into this mess, simply through my beastly clumsiness, and you've got to let me see you through it somehow.

CAR. (*back of table*) News has reached me, in rather a roundabout way, that I have come into some money; so you see I'm independent—of Miss Pillenger—and the broom cupboard.

DOR. Really?

CAR. Really!

DOR. You're not—pulling my leg?

CAR. (*smiling*) No!

DOR. Then I'm devilish glad for your sake, and devilish sorry for my own. I thought at last I saw my way—to doing you a turn.

CAR. (*places her hand on chair at back of DORVASTON*) My life hasn't been a very pleasant one, but in one respect I've been lucky, I have known two men who honestly tried to befriend a woman.

DOR. Who was the other chap?

CAR. His name is Carruthers.

DOR. Not old Bob? (*rises and backs C.*)

CAR. (*affirmatively*) Old Bob.

DOR. Why, he's a dear pal of mine!

CAR. Is he?

DOR. And did he try to be a pal to *you*?

CAR. I was thinking of his kindness to Lady Huntworth.

DOR. Ah, how about Lady Huntworth? Did you know her?

CAR. Yes! (*smiling*) We are rather intimate—like myself she was unfortunate in her choice of a husband.

DOR. Huntworth brought the divorce, didn't he?

CAR. Yes. Thinking he saw his way to marrying another woman, with another fortune, he brought his suit against his wife and your friend.

DOR. Damn him! Pardon! couldn't help it. (*crosses and kneels on chair L. of table*)

CAR. The whole thing was utterly untrue and I know she asked Bob to join her in making no defence rather than remain Lady Huntworth.

DOR. The only thing that rather fogs me is, when the verdict was once given, why didn't Bob marry her?

CAR. He did suggest it.

DOR. Well?

CAR. She said no.

DOR. Why did she do that?

CAR. She knew he didn't care for *her*, nor she for *him*—at least not in that way.

DOR. (*rises, crosses C.*) Still, it was game of her to refuse! There ain't many women placed as she was who'd have done it. (*goes up and leans on balustrade, thinking*)

CAR. Perhaps not. (*pause—takes up tray and crosses C.; as she moves C. DORVASTON turns and places hand on tray*) I must go now.

DOR. No, wait one minute. I'm going on duty directly. My duty is to make Lucy a happy little woman and I mean to do it. But you seem to be going down rather a lonely road and I want you to remember that somewhere or other there is an old duffer lumbering about the world who will never forget you—will you remember?

CAR. I shall remember. (*pulls tray away*) Now I really can't stay any longer. (*crosses to first step*)

DOR. (*holding out his hand*) I say! (*she turns—places tray on balustrade*) Will you?

CAR. Of course! Why not? (*they shake hands*)

DOR. Supposing I'd been a free man, do you think you—could—

CAR. Oh! (*draws hand away and takes up tray, moves to second step*) That opens out a very large question. I haven't time to answer that.

DOR. (*touches her on shoulder, she turns*) I wonder if we shall ever come across each other in the future?

CAR. (*looking at him*) More unlikely things have happened. (*mounts third step, turns to him*) Good-bye! (*exit*)

(DORVASTON *sinks into big chair lost in thought, takes out cigarette case. GANDY enters, door R., and is crossing the stage.*)

DOR. Good morning! (GANDY *crosses from O.P. to steps*)

GAN. Mornin'. (C.)

DOR. Got a match about you?

GAN. No. (*crosses to mantel*) There should be a box 'ere. (*goes to mantel*) There is! (*he brings them to DORVASTON*)

DOR. (*taking them, rises*) Thanks! I suppose the papers haven't come yet?

GAN. They 'aven't.

DOR. You seem a trifle down. Not quite your own bright self, are you? (*lights cigarette*)

GAN. I ain't!

DOR. You went to see your mother, didn't you?

GAN. Yes.

DOR. Hope you found her feeling fit?

GAN. She's fit enough! It's me.

DOR. What's the matter? (*hands back matches*)

GAN. Weal cutlet for supper—that's wot's the matter! (DORVASTON *crosses up back to window*. GANDY *puts matches on mantelpiece*) I've always done my dooty by mother, so I picked a bit, and then I went to bed and dreamt I was superintendin' my own funeral. Weal cutlet! (*crosses up steps*) Mother gets above herself.

DOR. (*at window*) Have you tried a drop of brandy?

GAN. I 'ave. (*first step*)

DOR. I should try another.

GAN. (*second step*) I mean to. (DORVASTON *strolls out through the window and off R*. MISS PILLENGER *enters L*., GANDY *giving way*)

MISS P. Gandy, can you tell me what has happened to my shoes?

GAN. No.

MISS P. I put them outside my door last night, but this morning I find one of them still uncleaned and the other has disappeared. You haven't seen it, I suppose?

GAN. I 'aven't.

MISS P. Very singular! (*crosses to window up back*. GANDY *goes up stairs*) Have you seen Miss Lucy? She is not in her room!

GAN. No.

(MR. PILLENGER *enters L*. GANDY *gives way*. *He has cut his cheek while shaving and is wearing a piece of black sticking plaster.*)

PIL. Good morning!

MISS P. Good morning, Audley.

PIL. (*to GANDY*) Has the post come?

GAN. No, it ain't. (*he goes off L*.)

MISS P. You appear to have had an accident.

PIL. Accident!

MISS P. In completing your toilette.

PIL. Eh? Hum—yes. The razor slipped. My nervous system is slightly disorganized.

MISS P. The result of last night.

PIL. (*startled*) Last night? I—er—fail to understand you.

MISS P. I was referring to your indisposition.

PIL. Oh!—Ah!—exactly. (*crosses to window*)

MISS P. Are you going out?

PIL. I thought the fresh morning air might be beneficial.

MISS P. I must ask you to remain. I have a most painful subject to talk over with you. (*sits R*.)

PIL. Need we deal with it now? Painful subjects should never be discussed on an empty—before breakfast.

MISS P. It does not admit of delay. We may have to face a serious scandal.

PIL. (*crosses to chair L*.) Scandal! I trust, Hannah, you are weighing your words very carefully.

MISS P. I am not in the habit of speaking heedlessly. What I have to tell you refers to Cook—(DORVASTON *appears at the window—he has MISS PILLENGER'S shoe in his hand*)—and to Captain Dorvaston.

(DORVASTON *enters smoking*.)

PIL. Ah! here—is—er—Captain Dorvaston. (*he crosses to L and indicates to DORVASTON that MISS PILLENGER is in the room*. DORVASTON *throws cigarette away and comes to top of chair R*. C.)

DOR. Good morning, sir. Good morning, ma'am! (MISS PILLENGER *bows frigidly*. DORVASTON *crosses to chair*)

PIL. Hannah was just—er—mentioning, as you entered, that—you—

DOR. (*quietly beating the back of chair with shoe*) Yes, I fancied I caught my name. What were you saying, ma'am?

MISS P. I was saying, Captain Dorvaston— (*she notices the shoe*) What are you doing with that shoe?

DOR. Just picked it up.

MISS P. Why did you touch it? Your doing so seems to me to be strangely wanting in delicacy.

DOR. Don't see anything indelicate in picking up an old shoe. I found it on the garden path.

MISS P. My shoe on the garden path!

DOR. Yours! I thought it was Gandy's.

MISS P. If you thought to keep me a prisoner in my room by the removal of my shoe, the expedient was abortive. I have several other pairs.

DOR. Don't know what the deuce you're driving at, ma'am. Sorry I disturbed the thing. Shall I put it back?

MISS P. I will thank you to restore it to me. (DORVASTON *hands shoe, and* MISS PILLENGER *crosses, and puts it on cabinet R.*) Thank you! (*she returns and sits L. of table*) Now, with your permission, I will resume what I was saying to Mr. Pillenger when you came in. (*the men exchange glances*) I warned you last night I should consider it my duty to acquaint Lucy with the details of—my—very painful discovery (DORVASTON *starts to go off at window; PILLENGER follows his example upstairs*) but I find she has gone out for a walk—at least so I imagine. Well—Audley—Audley (MISS PILLENGER *calls PILLENGER back, and he calls DORVASTON back; PILLENGER sits on settle, and DORVASTON leans on balustrade*) Well, Audley, the painful discovery I allude to was this. After returning home last night I had occasion to visit the kitchen in order to speak to Cook for a moment. While doing so, I heard a mysterious noise. I investigated its origin, and found Captain Dorvaston concealed in the broom cupboard. He was unable to give me any lucid explanation. I now leave the matter in your hands. (*slight pause*)

DOR. I don't know whether it's much good me saying anything—is it, sir?

PIL. (*rises*) I think otherwise. (DORVASTON *surprised*) I shall be very happy to hear anything you care to tell me. Appearances are often misleading.

MISS P. But, Audley, surely—

PIL. Hannah, the matter has now been submitted to my judgment. I shall not approach it in a spirit of carping doubt. If our dear friend can give us his personal assurance that the whole thing was—a—little joke for instance—

MISS P. A little joke!

PIL. If he could tell us that in concealing himself in the—er—broom cupboard, he had an idea of jumping out suddenly and startling somebody by saying "Boo"—not you particularly—but Cook, or Keziah, or myself—

MISS P. You? What should you be doing in the kitchen?

PIL. No—that is so; but still, though I deprecate practical joking as a rule, I should consider the explanation as not being without a certain measure of antecedent plausibility.

MISS P. You appear to be putting words into Captain Dorvaston's mouth.

PIL. No, pardon me, I merely say that such a line of defence would carry conviction to an unbiased mind. The army is proverbially a light-hearted profession.

DOR. Well, sir, I'm afraid I can't exactly say that.

MISS P. There!

PIL. In any case, Hannah, our friend Dorvaston is Lucy's responsibility. (*leans on mantel*)

MISS P. At all events, Cook is *yours*!

PIL. Eh? Hum—yes—

MISS P. You will of course ring the bell and discharge her.

PIL. I—really think we should endeavour to avoid any—

MISS P. (*rises*) Her continued presence in the house would be an insult to *me*.

PIL. (*loudly*) To avoid any appearance of temper—do you hear me, Hannah?—of temper.

DOR. (*coming to* MISS PILLENGER) Upon my soul, ma'am, Cook hadn't anything to do with it. I was there against her wish.

PIL. (*crossing to C.*) Surely that is a most convincing testimony.

DOR. I know last night things didn't look quite square, but whatever fault there *was*, was my fault.

PIL. Precisely! No doubt! (*the men look at each other*)

DOR. I was chatting to Cook—it was a stoopid thing to do—but there was no harm in it.

PIL. None whatever, I feel sure.

DOR. In fact, the governor knows there wasn't!

MISS P. How should my brother know?

PIL. Hum!—tut—tut!

DOR. How! Why, because he was in the lar— (pause, MISS PILLENGER stares, both men stare at each other with their mouths open)

PIL. (eagerly) I was sure to take a broad-minded view. Doubtless that is our friend's meaning.

DOR. Yes, that is what I meant. It got late, and I heard you coming, ma'am, and I knew you're a bit strict, don't you know!

PIL. Quite so!

DOR. And as I was supposed to be seedy, I thought you'd take my being there the wrong way, don't you see? So I—nipped into the broom cupboard, don't you understand? (crosses up back)

PIL. (crosses to top of table) To a moderately impartial intelligence the whole thing is as clear as day, and really reflects discredit on no one.

MISS P. Is it your intention to say nothing to Cook on the subject?

PIL. I think we should give her to understand that careful investigation has tended to modify our original misconception of the true facts of the case.

MISS P. (rising) Then, Audley, I have this to say— (crosses to R.)

(GANDY enters L.)

GAN. (at top of steps) I've just found a gent in the dry ditch at the end of the garden.

PIL. (pause) A gent in the ditch! (DORVASTON crosses to balustrade) What gent?—er—gentleman?

GAN. 'E was asleep and I shook 'im—'e grunted, and I shook 'im again. 'E says his name's Crayll, and 'e'd like to see you.

PIL. Crayll! (to DORVASTON) That is the person who called on you yesterday?

DOR. Yes, I know him.

PIL. He wished to see me? (to GANDY)

GAN. 'E said so.

PIL. Show him in. (GANDY goes out. DORVASTON crosses L.) Surely a most singular circumstance! Why did he go to sleep in my ditch? (MISS PILLENGER crosses up to top of window)

DOR. I suppose, as he's an acquaintance of mine, he thought you wouldn't object.

PIL. He must be very eccentric. (crosses to R. corner)

DOR. Yes, he's a rum sort of chap! (GANDY enters, followed by CRAYLL, who looks rather dilapidated)

GAN. Mr. Crayll! (at top of steps—he goes out—CRAYLL is at top of steps)

CRAY. Good mornin'! (at top of steps)

PIL. Good morning!

CRAY. (to DORVASTON) How are you? (crosses down and puts hat on settle)

DOR. How are you?

CRAY. Think I'll sit down. (crosses R.) Feel rather shaky. (he sits L. of table; DORVASTON is standing with his back to the fireplace)

PIL. By all means. (indicating MISS PILLENGER) My sister!

CRAY. Oh! (he nods carelessly)

PIL. But, my dear sir, (sits R.) I understand you passed the night—or some portion of it—in er—the ditch?

CRAY. 'Pears I did.

PIL. But—how did you get there?

CRAY. How the devil should I know?

PIL. Tut, tut!

CRAY. I must have bin sprung last night, that's about the size of it. I seem to recollect somebody pickin' me up, and then chuckin' me down again, like a sack of coals. (to PILLENGER) It wasn't you, was it?

PIL. Certainly not! But you seem to be shivering. May I offer you anything?

MISS P. (from back of table—coming down a little) A hot cup of tea?

CRAY. Tea be damned!

PIL. Tut! (MISS PILLENGER is shocked, and goes up)

CRAY. No, I should like a hair of the dog that bit me.

PIL. (rises excitedly and leans over table) Bitten by a dog! Good Heavens! My dear sir, the place should be cauterised at once—no time should be lost!

CRAY. Oh, don't be such an ass! I mean whiskey. (looking closely at PILLENGER) What's that on your

face? What is it? What's that filthy black thing crawling over your face?

PIL. I—er—you probably—

CRAY. What is it? (*loudly—rises excitedly*) Why the devil don't you tell me what it is?

PIL. A slight accident in shaving. My razor is somewhat out of condition—merely sticking plaster.

CRAY. Oh! (*subsiding*) Thought it was a spider. (*pause*) I want to talk to you.

PIL. Yes. (*sits*)

CRAY. Want to say a word or two about your Cook. (DORVASTON *makes a slight movement*; MISS PILLENGER *crosses down to chair*)

PIL. Indeed!

CRAY. I s'pose you didn't know much about her when you took her. Did you?

MISS P. No.

PIL. Hannah, permit me! In answer to your inquiry, I may say we obtained the highest testimonials from the Duchess of Sturton.

CRAY. Oh yes, that's all right—they're pals. (*all start*) Did she tell you your Cook was married.

MISS P. Married?

PIL. Hannah! Hannah! No, sir, she did not.

CRAY. Well she *is*. Did she say she was a well-known society woman, who wasn't living with her husband?

MISS P. Good gracious!

PIL. Her Grace did not mention the fact—if it *is* a fact.

CRAY. It *is*—you may lay your shirt on it. That ain't quite the sort of party you want in your kitchen, is it? Now I happen to know the husband'd be willin' to overlook the past—and take her back again—

PIL. Er—really?

CRAY. He's a good-natured beggar, and he don't bear malice. He put it to her, but she's an obstinate devil—she didn't listen to reason. Now it struck me that as you're a magpie—

PIL. Tut!

MISS P. A magpie?

CRAY. Beg pardon—I mean as you're a parson, with your eye on the marriage service—"Those who Heaven joined" and all that kind of thing—you might see your way to chuckin' her out, neck and crop, without a character—D'you see?—and so bring her to a sense of dooty.

MISS P. Really, Audley, there is something to be said for this gentleman's suggestion.

PIL. Whatever course it may ultimately be desirable for me to adopt, I shall require more definite information than I at present possess as to the intentions and—er—general identity—of the alleged husband.

CRAY. You can have it. I'm her husband.

PIL. You! (MISS PILLENGER *also conveys surprise*)

CRAY. Yes, you ask her; she'll admit she's been married all right.

MISS P. I'll ring for her at once. (*makes movement, rises and crosses to L.*)

CRAY. (*hastily*) Hold hard! Stop that, old woman! (MISS PILLENGER *pauses*) I don't want to see her—there wouldn't be any good in that—the meeting would be painful all round. (*rising*) No! you do what I say—tell her to pack up her traps and go—and then my arms will be open to her. (MISS PILLENGER *returns and sits*) Good mornin'! (*crosses C.*)

(CRAYLL *goes L.*, DORVASTON *intercepts him.*)

DOR. You're not leaving us?

CRAY. Yes, I am!

DOR. I think not!

CRAY. What d'you mean? I suppose I can go when I like? (*moves forward*)

DOR. You will go when I like; and before you do, you've got to face the lady you've just been trying to injure. Sit down there (*pointing to settle*) and don't move, or I shall hurt you! (CRAYLL *hesitates*) Sit down! (CRAYLL *sits sulkily*) Now I'm going to ring the bell, and Mr. Pillenger will send for Mrs. Crayll; but if you try to get away, I shall probably hurt you rather badly. Do you follow me?

CRAY. Yes.

DOR. That's all right. (*crosses and rings bell; to MR. PILLENGER*) Sorry to take the business out of your hands, sir, but we've got to see it through, don't you know?

PIL. I think it would undoubtedly be desirable. (GANDY *enters*) Will you ask Mrs.—er—I mean—er—kindly inform Cook we should like to speak to her. (GANDY *goes out*, MISS PILLENGER *sits; long pause, during which no one moves*) Er—wonderful how the—eh—fine weather lasts! (*another*

pause)

(*Then CAROLINE enters in outdoor costume; she is putting on her gloves. She comes down the steps and advances quietly to the table.*)

CAR. You have something to say to me?

MISS P. Yes, we have.

CAR. That is fortunate, because I have something to say to you.

PIL. (*MISS PILLENGER makes to speak*) Hannah, you will greatly oblige me by remaining silent. We wished, Cook—

CAR. (*near chair C.*) Pardon me, Mr. Pillenger, I have no longer any claim to that title—I beg to hand in my resignation.

PIL. You contemplate leaving us?

CAR. Yes. I've sent for a fly.

MISS P. Audley, since this lady objects to be referred to as Cook, I think you should address her by her name—her real name.

CAR. (*glancing at MISS PILLENGER*) I doubt if you know it.

MISS P. We are better informed than you imagine, Mrs. Crayll!

CAR. Oh, that's it!

PIL. (*rises*) My dear madam, pray believe the—er—somewhat startling information came to us unsought. Our informant was that gentleman. (*points to CRAYLL*)

CAR. What gentleman?

DOR. (*to CRAYLL*) You can stand up now. (*CRAYLL rises and crosses down L. C., and advances a step or two. COOK turns and sees him*)

CAR. I see! (*slight pause*) Well, what has he told you?

MISS P. This gentleman came here this morning to beg us—

CAR. To turn me out?

MISS P. Be that as it may, he is anxious to make an appeal to his, I fear, misguided wife.

CAR. Is he indeed?

CRAY. I've been tellin' 'em I want you to come back—man can't say more, can he?

CAR. What else did he tell you?

MISS P. He mentioned you were a well-known woman in society—and that you had been living apart from your husband.

CAR. Quite so! Was that all he said?

PIL. I think that embraced the whole of Mr. Crayll's statement. (*pause*)

CAR. Up to a certain point he told the truth. I did marry him some years ago.

MISS P. You concealed the fact when you entered our service.

CAR. It wasn't a thing I felt inclined to boast of. As he was so confidential, it seems odd he forgot to tell you we were recently divorced.

PIL. Divorced!

MISS P. Divorced!

CAR. There is one other thing—I think it is only fair you should know what a distinguished individual you have been entertaining in the person of Mr. Crayll.

CRAY. Keep your infernal tongue between your teeth!

CAR. This gentleman—

CRAY. I shan't stay here to be baited—and badgered. (*going*)

DOR. (*advancing*) You'll stay where you are!

CAR. This gentleman is Lord Huntworth, I am—I was Lady Huntworth. (*all convey astonishment*) Last night Lord Huntworth dropped in the kitchen a letter. It was from a firm of solicitors.

CRAY. (*putting his hand to his breast pocket*) Damn!

CAR. Telling him I had inherited a large sum of money. Lord Huntworth is rather hard up just now. There is nothing unusual in the circumstance, but I mention it because it explains the reason of his generous offer to condone the past. (*pause*) Here is your letter; (*producing it*) you needn't trouble to answer it—I shall call on Messrs. Brampton and Stokes in the course of the day. (*CRAYLL snatches the letter*) I don't think we need detain you any longer, need we? (*CRAYLL turns for hat L., snarls at DORVASTON and exits up steps; CAROLINE watches him off*)

PIL. Is it actually the case that you are the Lady Huntworth?

CAR. (*turns to the PILLENGERS*) Yes, I am the Lady Huntworth who is so widely and so very unfavourably known. (*turns to DORVASTON*) Would you oblige me by ringing the bell, Captain

Dorvaston?

DOR. Certainly? (*he does so*)

CAR. (*again speaking to the PILLENGERS*) If I thought there was even a chance that you could understand my doing what I have done I would try to make it clear to you, but you couldn't—I should only waste your time and my own. (GANDY *enters*) Gandy, has the fly come?

GAN. It 'as.

CAR. Thanks! Good-bye! (*she holds out her hand, he takes it respectfully*) We've been good friends, haven't we?

GAN. We 'ave; servin' with you 'as bin a honour. (*exit*)

CAR. (*smiling and to the PILLENGERS*) Mr. Pillenger—(*he rises*) You have done everything in your power to render my little experiment a pleasant one. I am grateful; and if your thoughts should ever turn in my direction I hope you will let your mind dwell on the excellence of my curried chicken, rather than on the supposed hopelessness of my moral character. Good-bye.

PIL. (*bows sadly*) Good-bye! (*sits disconsolate; COOK nods to MR. PILLENGER pleasantly; then turns and gives a very stately bow to MISS PILLENGER, who stiffly returns it; COOK then goes L., but pauses as she mounts the steps and speaks to DORVASTON*)

CAR. We have already taken leave of each other, but it has occurred to me that perhaps you might care to let me hear from you. I am leaving England for some time, but that address will find me. (*gives a card to him*) Poste Restante, Brussels.

DOR. Poste Restante, Brussels.

CAR. Yes. Good-bye!

DOR. (*with a sigh*) Good-bye! (*sits down on settle; she goes out*)

(*After she has gone DORVASTON sits pensively on the settle; there is a pause; all three sit staring at nothing; then GANDY enters with newspapers at window; he goes to PILLENGER.*)

GAN. (*crosses to R. to PILLENGER*) "Standard!" (PILLENGER *takes it, but allows it to drop by his side; GANDY then crosses to MISS PILLENGER*) "Church Times!" (*he then crosses to DORVASTON and hands him the other paper*) "Sportin' Life!" (PILLENGER and DORVASTON *pick up papers and try to read; MISS DORVASTON reads, GANDY goes up two steps, then turns*) 'Ow about dinner?

PIL. Eh?

DOR. What?

GAN. 'Ow about dinner?

PIL. Don't dare allude to it. (*rises and sits at exit*)

DOR. Get out of the room! (*rises and sits at exit*)

(*GANDY goes out, the two men open their papers firmly and begin to read; LUCY enters at window followed nervously by THORSBY—LUCY dragging him into C.; LUCY is L. C., THORSBY R. C.*)

LUCY. Good-morning, everybody!

MISS P. Good morning!

PIL. (*not looking up*) Good morning!

DOR. (*doing the same*) Good morning!

LUCY. I've brought Mr. Thorsby with me.

MISS P. Good day, Mr. Thorsby! (*he bows*)

DOR. (*not looking round*) Ah, Thorsby! (THORSBY *bows*)

DOR. (*not looking round*) How are you, Thorsby? (THORSBY *bows once more*)

LUCY. We've just been married.

MISS P. |
PIL. | What? (*all rise and throw down papers; DORVASTON immediately takes Bradshaw off*
DOR. | *mantel and sits on settle looking out trains*)

LUCY. Uncle, it wasn't Harry's doing, so if you feel riled you must pitch into me. I'm responsible. Harry hated the deception all through—didn't you?

THOR. I—

LUCY. All right, don't interrupt. We started early, biked over to Ingledene Church—did the trick—rode back, and we want everybody's blessing, and a good breakfast.

PIL. As you are practically independent of my control I fear I have no power to withhold the blessing. The good breakfast may be less easily obtained.

LUCY. Why?

PIL. Cook has left us? (*crosses up to desk R., kicking the papers from his feet viciously as he goes*)

LUCY. Oh! I'm sorry! She got up early, and made us some coffee, (*takes hat up R. C.*)

DOR. Then she knew?

LUCY. Of course she did! I told her.

MISS P. She would naturally take a prominent part in any duplicity. (*crossing to window; THORSBY goes up after her to make his peace*)

LUCY. That's all rot. She was a real good sort—a long way better than most of us (*she goes to DORVASTON*) Jack, old boy!

DOR. Yes, little woman? (*sitting L. looking at Bradshaw*)

LUCY. You're the only one that matters. I cared for Harry—and you didn't care for me—did you? Tell me you didn't, or I shall hate myself. You'd have married me and tried to look pleasant, but it would have taken you all your time. Now, Jack, I want to hear you take your oath you don't mind.

DOR. (*rises*) Mind! (*rings bell, returns, and takes LUCY by both hands*) My dear child, you don't know what a turn you've done me by throwing me over for a better man. Mind? (*crosses to THORSBY, claps him on the shoulder*) My dear Thorsby, I wish you all the luck you could wish yourself—and you'll get it! A chap who could carry out a thing of this kind in such an exceptional way has all the makings of a future bishop. (*GANDY enters*) Pack my things at once; I must catch the 11:15 to town. (*GANDY goes out*)

LUCY. Going to leave us?

DOR. (*crosses to LUCY*) I must, little woman—but I won't forget to send you a wedding present—silver mug—no, that's later! (*LUCY crosses to THORSBY U. B. To PILLENGER*) Good-bye, sir. (*PILLENGER rises, and they shake hands across the table, he then sits again*) Keep your head up and your liver active.

PIL. Good-bye!

DOR. (*to MISS PILLENGER*) Good-bye, ma'am. I mean to be quite respectable by the time we meet again. (*they shake hands*)

MISS P. I hope so.

DOR. (*to THORSBY*) Good-bye, young fellah! Give that little filly her head, and she won't want the whip. (*crosses L. of LUCY and the others*) Good-bye, little woman! (*kisses her*) God bless you! (*kisses her—runs up steps*)

LUCY. Good-bye, dear old boy! (*leans over balustrade; he is going*) You'll let us hear from you?

DOR. Yes! (*runs up steps*)

LUCY. Where will a letter find you?

DOR. (*hastily taking out card and looking at it. Turns to her*) Poste Restante, Brussels! (*as he goes off the*

CURTAIN FALLS.

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Silently corrected simple spelling, grammar, and typographical errors.

Retained anachronistic and non-standard spellings as printed.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LADY HUNTWORTH'S EXPERIMENT: AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS ***

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