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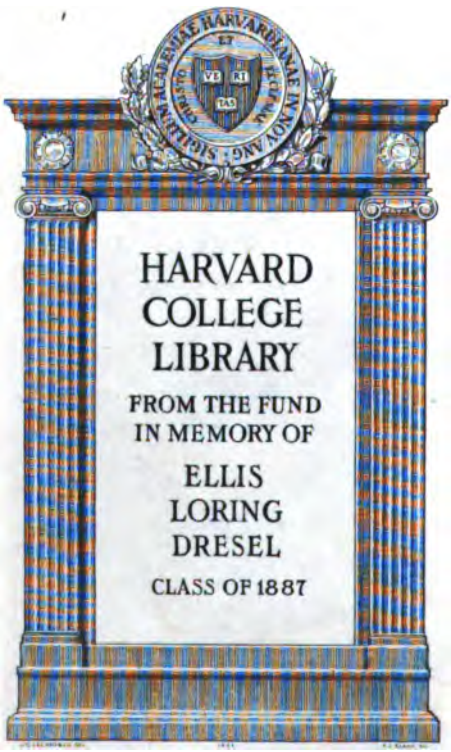

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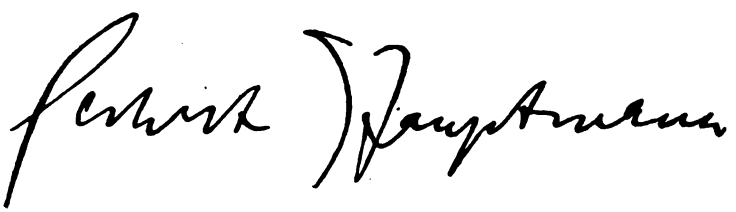

VOLUME THREE:

THE RECONCILIATION
LONELY LIVES PEOPLE
COLLEAGUE CRAMPTON
MICHAEL KRAMER

THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORIZED EDITION)

EDITED BY LUDWIG LEWISOHN
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

VOLUME THREE: DOMESTIC DRAMAS

NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
1914

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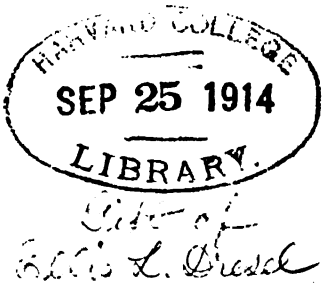

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The first three plays in this volume belong to the years 1890, 1891 and 1892. They were produced in the early fervour of the naturalistic movement and hence deal, explicitly or implicitly, with the conceptions of modern science. To-day naturalism means probity of observation merely. In 1890 it meant the literary expression of scientific positivism. Hence it was all but inevitable that *The Reconciliation* and *Colleague Crampton* should deal with heredity and alcoholism, and that *Lonely Lives* should present the struggle between dogmatic Christianity and the evolutionary monism of Ernst Haeckel translated into terms of individual human experience.

A second element enters into the composition of these plays: the brief but powerful influence of Ibsen. If *Lonely Lives* is a more human and more convincing *Rosmersholm* (cf. Introduction to Vol. I.), *The Reconciliation* owes its theme, though not its fable, to *Ghosts*. And Hauptmann has carried out the theory of heredity with extraordinary minuteness and subtlety. In *Ghosts* a definitely diseased condition is transmitted; in *The Reconciliation* it is moral and spiritual perversion. It is clear that Dr. Scholz, though never a markedly temperate man, has developed into a dipsomaniac under the depression of his unhappy and unequal marriage. Gradually, in the course of time,

an element of persecution mania — no uncommon symptom of alcoholism — asserts itself in his character. To present the physical and psychical characteristics of this man's sons is the central purpose of the play. Dealing with an heredity of complex and incalculable character, Hauptmann carefully guards himself from pronouncing a final verdict. Will the household founded by Wilhelm and Ida be but a sorry repetition of the home of his parents? Or can love and soundness of heart curb the transmitted evils? The problem is a constant one in human life. Art and philosophy, no less than science, must reckon with it in their interpretative synthesis of man and his world.

With *Lonely Lives* the influence of Ibsen upon Hauptmann came definitely to an end. Immediately thereafter he created the naturalistic folk-drama in *The Weavers* (1892) and thus asserted his complete artistic independence. But the scientific bias remained. And it is again the problem of alcoholism that he treats, though in so different a spirit, in *Colleague Crampton.* No symptom of the charming and pitiable Crampton is blinked. But the play is pure comedy. It embodies the fact that the gravest evils have their side of humorous incongruity. And once more the play closes with a note of hope in the regenerative power of youth and faith and love.

Eight years divide *Michael Kramer* from *Colleague Crampton.* During those years Hauptmann had written *Hannele* and *The Sunken Bell.* He had overcome the oppressive positivism of his earlier period, and a larger and nobler air breathes in the play. From the narrow world of science he has passed into the ampler universe, and hence

conflicts akin to those in his former plays rise from the sadness of mere knowledge into the region of the genuinely tragic. It is the union of unerring observation of the actual with philosophic largeness of vision that renders *Michael Kramer* one of the most satisfying achievements of the modern drama. (Cf. Introduction to Vol. I.)

During the years marked by these plays Hauptmann also passed through a severe crisis in his personal life. His first marriage proved an unhappy one and ended in dissolution. This period of restlessness is marked by several extensive voyages, including the one to the United States (1894) recently described in *Atlantis*. From a literary point of view it is characterised by an intense and painful absorption in the problem of modern marriage. In *The Reconciliation*, in *Colleague Crampton*, in *Michael Kramer*, above all, in *Lonely Lives*, the recorded struggle has its roots in the marriage of an intellectual idealist to a woman of inferior knowledge and endowment. In *Lonely Lives* Hauptmann has most clearly shadowed forth his personal experience: Mrs. Vockerat, Sr., is a portrait — *mutatis mutandis* — of his mother; Vockerat, Sr., of his uncle, and the profound tenderness with which the character of Käthe Vockerat is drawn justifies the conjecture that she, too, had her inevitable prototype in life. Equally noteworthy is the intimate reality of the relations between Johannes and Käthe Vockerat. The experience in question cannot be overlooked in any rational interpretation of Hauptmann's work. He returns to the problem again and again. It is equally basic to *The Sunken Bell* (1896) and to *Gabriel Schilling's Flight* (1912).

The memories of older experiences contributed to the making of *Colleague Crampton* and *Michael Kramer*. Crampton and Kramer are portraits of two professors at the Royal College of Art, whom Hauptmann knew during his second Breslau period (1881-1882); the Straehlers in *Colleague Crampton*, who bear the name of Hauptmann's mother, represent his older brother Georg and, perhaps, in the character of Max, some phase at least of the young sculptor of those years. Max Straehler, like Hauptmann, it will be seen, studied agriculture before entering the career of art and, again like him, was rusticated from the college for insubordination.

These observations are not set down to satisfy an idle curiosity in the personal fate of an eminent writer. They are instructive and significant in showing that Hauptmann's work clings with every fibre to the known and familiar elements of life. These elements he seeks to synthesise, to clarify and to interpret, and thus he realises the aim of naturalistic art which — like the sciences of induction — bases its reading of man and nature upon the solid ground of immediate experience. That such art, rightly looked upon, precludes neither poetry nor poetic vision, will be abundantly illustrated in the fourth volume of this edition.

To the student of the drama one word more may be added concerning the technique of *The Reconciliation* and of *Lonely Lives*. The naturalistic drama, in its earliest and most stringent form, neglected no means, however external, that might serve to complete and fortify the illusion of reality. Hence it will be seen that in both dramas Hauptmann observes the unity of place, and in

The Reconciliation the unities of both time and place. Thus the most modern of dramatists returns to the pseudo-Aristotelian unities, striving, like all his predecessors, to escape the Horatian stricture:

"Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi."

The points of inevitable contact between naturalistic and classic art were suspected by a man so little versed in the history of literature as Zola who prophesied for the art of the future "a kind of classical naturalism."[1]

Of the English versions in this volume I am alone responsible for that of *Michael Kramer*. For the rendering of *Lonely Lives*, and of *The Reconciliation* and *Colleague Crampton* the responsibility belongs to Miss Morison and Mr. House, although I have subjected their work, especially the latter's, to careful revision and correction.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

[1] In an interview recorded by Jules Huret in his *Enquête sur L'Évolution littéraire*.

THE RECONCILIATION

"They see no action in any tragedy where the lover does not fall at the feet of his beloved. . . .

"It has never occurred to them that every inner conflict of passions, every consequence of diverging thoughts, where one annuls another — is action too. They are conscious of no activity in such conflicts because their manner of thinking and feeling is too mechanical. To refute them seriously would be wasted labour."— LESSING.

(*Dissertations concerning the fable.*)

ACTING CHARACTERS

DR. FRITZ SCHOLZ, *sixty-eight years old.*
MINNA SCHOLZ, *his wife, forty-six years old.*
AUGUSTE, *twenty-nine years old,*
ROBERT, *twenty-eight years old,*
WILHELM, *twenty-six years old.*
} *their children.*

(As far as is possible, these actors should be made up to indicate a family resemblance.)

MRS. MARIE BUCHNER, *forty-two years old.*
IDA, *her daughter, twenty years old.*
FRIEBE, *servant, fifty years old.*

The action of this play passes on a Christmas eve in the eighties, in a lonely country house on the Schützenhügel near Erkner (Brandenburg).

The scene of all three acts is a high-ceilinged, roomy hall, whitewashed, adorned with old-fashioned pictures, with antlers and the heads of various sorts of animals. A chandelier of deer antlers is hung from the center of the timbered ceiling and filled with fresh candles. In the middle of the rear wall an enclosed space with a glass door projecting inward. Through the door the heavy carved outside door can be seen. Above the door a stuffed mountain-cock. To the right and left

above the door two windows, frozen and partly banked in with snow. In the wall, right, an open gate-like arch which admits to the staircase. Two low doors in the same wall, one leading to the cellar, the other to the kitchen. In the opposite wall two doors leading into the same room. Between these doors an old grandfather's clock, on which sits a stuffed brown owl. The room is furnished with heavy old oak tables and chairs. Parallel with the side wall, right, a table with a white cloth. Right, in the foreground, a little iron stove with pipe running along the wall. All the door panels are ornamented with primitive paintings representing parrots, etc.

THE FIRST ACT

The hall is adorned with green branches. On the stone floor lies a Christmas tree without a pedestal. FRIEBE *is putting one together, on the upper step from the cellar. On opposite sides of table,* MRS. BUCHNER *and* MRS. SCHOLZ *are busy fitting wax lights into their holders.* MRS. BUCHNER *is a healthy-looking, well-nourished, friendly woman, dressed simply, substantially, and very neatly. Her hair simply arranged. Her motions are decided, but entirely natural. Her whole manner indicates unusual cordiality, which is absolutely genuine, even though her way of showing it may at times seem affected. Her speech is careful; when she is excited it becomes declamatory. An atmosphere of satisfaction and comfort seems to emanate from her.* MRS. SCHOLZ *is different. A prematurely old person who is already beginning to show the infirmities of age. Her form shows a tendency to unhealthy obesity. Her skin is whitish-grey. Her toilet is less than unpretentious. Her hair is grey and loosely put together; she wears spectacles. She is fitful in her motions, restless, generally speaks in a melancholy whining voice, and seems constantly excited. While* MRS. BUCHNER *appears to live only for others,* MRS. SCHOLZ

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is completely occupied with herself. On the table two five-branched candlesticks with candles. Neither the chandelier nor the candlesticks have their candles lighted. Burning oil lamp.

FRIEBE

[*Hits a vigorous blow with the hatchet.*] You never saw me miss a lick.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Fff! I can't stand your noise. Friebe! How often have I told you, your hatchet might slip. You shouldn't cut wood on stone.

FRIEBE

Don't you worry, ma'am. What for was I in the gover'ment ten years, eh?

MRS. BUCHNER

In the government?

MRS. SCHOLZ

He was foreman of a gang in the royal forests.

FRIEBE

Not a [*he strikes*] lick — ah — [*he strikes*] would you catch *me* amissin'. [*He rises, examining by the light of the lamp what he has made, and then fastens the tree upright on its new support.* FRIEBE *is small, already somewhat bent, bandy-legged, and partially bald. His mobile little baboon face is unshaven. Hair and stubble beard are yellowish grey. He is a jack of all trades. His coat, a garment stiff with polishing powder, shoe blacking, dust, etc., was made for a*

man of twice the size, so that he has been compelled to roll up the sleeves and lap the skirts one far over the other. He wears a brown, relatively clean porter's apron, from under which he draws out a snuffbox from time to time, and takes a pinch with enthusiasm. The tree is ready. FRIEBE *has lifted it to the table; he stands in front of it and studies it.*] It's a big, fine, good-lookin' fir tree, all right. [*To the ladies, with careless superiority.*] That's what it is, ain't it?

MRS. BUCHNER

With your experience you ought to be able to tell whether it is or not.

FRIEBE

Well, I guess I ought to! Now the fir tree —

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Interrupts him impatiently.*] We mustn't lose time, Friebe. My daughter said, be sure and send Friebe right to me.

FRIEBE

Well, well! —'s all the same to me.

[*With a deprecating gesture, exit through the kitchen door.*]

MRS. BUCHNER

Is he such a useful man as all that?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, pshaw! He's a crazy fool. If 'twasn't for my husband — that's just the way my husband was. This old tobacco-sniffer was just what he wanted, he had to have him around him all the

time, or he wasn't happy. He was the strangest man!

[Auguste *rushes in the front door, in haste and consternation. Once inside, she pushes the glass door hurriedly shut, and throws herself against it, as if to prevent some one's entrance.*

Mrs. Scholz

[*In violent excitement.*] O Lordolordolord! ! !

Mrs. Buchner

What — what's the matter?

[Auguste *is tall and strikingly thin, her toilet exaggeratedly stylish and tasteless. Fur jacket, fur cap, muff. Face and feet long; features sharp, with thin lips, which fit tight together and curve bitterly. She wears glasses. To her mother's uneasiness she adds a defiance which is pathological. She spreads about her an atmosphere of discontent, discomfort, and forlornness.*

Auguste

Outside — good gracious! — somebody followed me!

Mrs. Buchner

[*Pulling out her watch.*] Perhaps it was Wilhelm — no, not yet. The train can't be in yet. [*To* Auguste.] Just wait a minute.

[*She reaches for the knob, to open the door.*

Auguste

No, don't, no, don't.

MRS. BUCHNER

You're nervous, dear child. [*She goes through the glass door and opens the outer door. Somewhat timidly.*] Is anybody there? [*Resolutely.*] Is anybody there?

[*Pause; no answer.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Irritably.*] Well, now, that's a great way! Seems to me we've had excitement enough. It's enough to kill a person. What's the matter with you?

AUGUSTE

Matter! matter! [*Defiantly.*] What's the matter with me?

MRS. SCHOLZ

You're very nice to your mother!

AUGUSTE

Well, suppose I'm not! Isn't it enough to make a person afraid when — in the dark — all alone —

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Embracing her from behind, soothingly.*] Hothead, hothead! Don't get so excited! Come now! [*Helps her lay off her wraps.*] There now — there now!

AUGUSTE

But Mrs. Buchner, it's true!

MRS. BUCHNER

See here, my dear; we've been here four days, I should think. Won't you drop the Mrs.? Yes? All right. Well, then.

[*Embraces and kisses* Auguste, *then* Mrs. Scholz.

Mrs. Scholz

[*Before she allows the embrace.*] Wait a minute, wait, I have wax on my hands.

Mrs. Buchner

[*To* Auguste, *who has gone to the stove to warm herself.*] Well now, don't you feel better? Was the Christmas entertainment pretty?

Auguste

No, I shan't go any more. The air was bad, and it was hot enough to roast a person.

Mrs. Buchner

Did the minister make a good talk?

Auguste

Well, I know this much. If I had been poor and he had made a talk like that, I tell you I'd have thrown the stuff back at their feet.

Mrs. Buchner

But it's a great blessing for the poor people.

[*Behind the scene a clear, beautiful voice is heard singing:*

When the pleasant linden tree
Blooms again,
Comes the old spring dream to me,
Floating through my brain.

[Ida *enters from the staircase. She is twenty years old and wears a plain black woolen dress. She has a fine, full form, a very small head, and at her first ap-*

pearance her long yellow hair hangs loose. In her manner there is a calm content, a veiled cheerfulness and confidence; accordingly, the expression of her intelligent face is generally cheerful, but now and then it changes to mild earnestness and deep thoughtfulness.

IDA

[*A towel about her shoulders, several boxes in her arms.*] Did some one come in?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Auguste has just scared us half to death.

IDA

[*Pointing backward toward the stairs.*] It's rather uncanny upstairs, too! [*Laughing.*] I came down in a hurry.

MRS. SCHOLZ

But child! Robert is up above you.

IDA

[*Puts the boxes on the table, opens them and takes out several objects.*] That doesn't help matters any. The whole story is deserted.

MRS. BUCHNER

Your hair must be nearly dry, isn't it?

IDA

[*Tossing her head gracefully, and throwing her hair back with the motion.*] Feel it!

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Does so.*] No, it isn't! You should have taken your bath earlier, child.

IDA

What a lot of trouble this old mane does cause! I've been cowering over the stove fully half an hour. [*She takes a yellow silk purse out of one of the boxes and holds it out to* AUGUSTE.] Isn't that a pretty color? Of course it's just a little joke. Has he had many purses?

AUGUSTE

[*Shrugging her shoulders from behind the fur jacket which she is busy brushing off.*] I don't know. [*She bends her short-sighted eyes critically over the purse.*] Rather careless piece of work. [*Absorbed in her cleaning again.*] The fur's ruined!

IDA

[*Bringing out a box of cigars.*] Oh, this is such fun. You said you had never trimmed a Christmas tree?

AUGUSTE

Well, it seems to me that that isn't just the thing for grown folks to do.

MRS. SCHOLZ

She never did! If we'd even tried it my husband would have made a scene. When I was at home, now — Oh, whenever I think of it — what a beautiful home life we had! Never a Christmas without a tree. [*Imitating her father's walk and manner.*] Oh, when father came from his office in the evening and brought the beau-eau-tiful Lehmann ginger cookies! [*She brings her thumb and index finger to her mouth as if she held a piece of the superb cakes in question.*] Yes, yes,

that's all past! My husband — he never even ate dinner with us. He lived upstairs, we lived downstairs. He was a regular hermit. If we wanted anything of him we always had to get at him through Friebe.

AUGUSTE

[*Busy with the stove.*] Oh, don't talk like that all the time!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, don't you build such an awful fire!

AUGUSTE

Don't we want to keep warm?

MRS. SCHOLZ

All of the heat flies out at the chimney to-day.

AUGUSTE

[*Hesitates, irritated.*] Well, shan't I put any more fuel on, then?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Don't bother me!

AUGUSTE

[*Throws the coal shovel noisily into the bin.*] All right, then, I won't.

[*Exit left, raging.*

IDA

Oh, don't go, Gustie! [*To* MRS. SCHOLZ.] Just wait, I'll get her in a good humour again.

[*Exit after her.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Resignedly.*] That's the way all my children

are. Such a girl, such a girl! She has no self-control. Now she wants this, now that. Suddenly she has an idea — she ought to study. Then she mopes around upstairs and doesn't say a word for weeks. Next she fancies she's in the way. Oh, gracious, how I envy you! Such a dear little thing as your daughter is —

MRS. BUCHNER

But so is Gustie.

MRS. SCHOLZ

How beautifully she plays the piano; and that charming voice! How I like to hear her sing!

MRS. BUCHNER

Why don't *you* play sometimes?

MRS. SCHOLZ

I! that wouldn't do at all, I'd never hear the last of it! Auguste is so nervous, you know! Just like her father; he'd run from a piano.

MRS. BUCHNER

You ought to hear your Wilhelm play now. He has perfected his art! What would Ida be without him? She has learned everything she knows from him.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, you said so before. He has talent; I know that. It was a pleasure to teach him.

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, and he remembers with so much feeling the time when his dear mother gave him his first lessons.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Does he? Yes, yes, those were beautiful times, too. I used to think then . . . ! but everything turns out *so* different. But it works me all up, anyway.

MRS. BUCHNER

It works you up — what?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Why, his coming. What does he look like now?

MRS. BUCHNER

He looks well, plump, healthy. You will be proud of your son.

MRS. SCHOLZ

I can't believe the boy is really coming. It has nearly broken my heart. And what a lot of letters I've written! He never once even answered his old mother. How did you ever bring him to it? I can't *understand* it. I *can't* understand it.

MRS. BUCHNER

I? Oh, I didn't do it. It was Ida who persuaded him.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Robert doesn't bother his head about us either, but he at least comes home a few days each year, at Christmas. That's something, after all! But Wilhelm — it has been six whole years since he's been here; he and my husband, six whole years! Does she get along well with him?

MRS. BUCHNER

Ida? Very well in every way.

MRS. SCHOLZ

That is too strange! You can't imagine how close-mouthed the boy always was; just like his father. He never had a playmate, never had a school friend, never had anything.

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, yes, that's the way he was at the beginning with us. He never would come to our house for anything except to give his lessons.

MRS. SCHOLZ

But he got to coming after a while?

MRS. BUCHNER

Well, yes. He said we must leave him alone for a while, and when he got to it he would come without asking. We had the good sense to let him do as he wished, and sure enough, after we had waited half a year, in fact, after we had stopped waiting, he came. After that he came every day. So little by little he grew to be very different.

MRS. SCHOLZ

You must use magic. The engagement is a miracle itself. I can't understand it at all.

MRS. BUCHNER

You must know how to treat artists. I learned how — my dear, dead husband was another one.

MRS. SCHOLZ

And about — about — his father? Has he told you that — that secret, too?

MRS. BUCHNER

N-no, dear friend. That is the one matter

. . . or, rather, in that one matter he hasn't been able to conquer himself yet. It wouldn't matter in itself, but you can believe me that he suffers terribly from that memory. He suffers just as much as ever. One reason for his suffering, of course, is that he keeps the affair secret. You know he must get over it, he must get over this, too.

MRS. SCHOLZ

God forbid! — no, no, no, right is right! Honour thy father and thy mother — the hand that's raised against its own father — such hands will grow out of their graves. We quarrelled, I know. Both of us have our faults, my husband and I, but that was *our* affair. No one has a right to interfere, least of all our own son. And who has had to suffer for it? I, of course. It is the old mother that has the broad back to bear the burden. My husband went out of the house, on that same day, and half an hour later, Wilhelm went too. Talking didn't do any good. At first I thought they would come back, but they never had any idea of coming. And Wilhelm alone is to blame, and nobody else,— Wilhelm and nobody else.

MRS. BUCHNER

Wilhelm may be a great deal to blame, I am sure of that, but when a person has suffered so long for his sins —

MRS. SCHOLZ

No, no! Good gracious, what are you thinking about? A person can't get out of things as easy as that. That would be too much! Of

course it's very good of you to take the boy's part as you've done, and it's very nice of him to come; why shouldn't he? But after all, what good does all that do? The clefts are not so easy to bridge over as all that. Yes, yes, there are clefts — great, deep chasms between us.

MRS. BUCHNER

But it seems to me that when we are honest and use our will —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Will, will! Don't say that to me. I know better. You can will and will and will a hundred times, and things don't change. No, no! your daughter's made of different clay entirely; she's one way and Wilhelm's another, and both of them stay the way they are. That's too high a viewpoint for folks like us; that's too high, too high. You can will as much as you please — yes, yes, good will,— your will is very good, but what will it do for you? I don't believe in such things.

MRS. BUCHNER

But I cling all the more to my hope.

MRS. SCHOLZ

May be! I won't deny anything. After all, I'm glad with all my heart to see the boy again; only it excites me — it excites me a good deal, and you may be sure you think it's easier than it is.

IDA

[*Enters left; to* MRS. SCHOLZ, *ingratiatingly.*] She's gilding nuts, mother Scholz.

MRS. BUCHNER

It's high time, Ida! You must dress now. He may be here any minute.

IDA

[*Frightened.*] Oh! So soon?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, don't bother her! She's entirely too pretty for the boy now.

MRS. BUCHNER

I've laid out the blue dress for you. [*Calling after* IDA] And put on the brooch, do you hear?

[*Exit* IDA.

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Continuing, to* MRS. SCHOLZ.] She doesn't care anything about jewelry.

[*A knock at the outer door.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

Wait — who's that? [*To* MRS. BUCHNER.] Won't you see about it — I can't bear to see him just yet . . .

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Calling at the stair door.*] Ida! Your Wilhelm is coming!

[*Enter* DR. SCHOLZ *through the glass door.*

[DR. SCHOLZ *is strikingly tall, broad-shouldered, bloated. Face fat, skin grey and dirty, eyes now expressionless, now glittering as if glazed; wandering look. He wears bushy grey side whiskers. His motions are heavy and uncertain. He speaks by jerks, and gaspingly; articu-*

lates as if he had meal in his mouth, and stumbles over syllables. He is dressed carelessly; a faded velvet waistcoat which was once brown, coat and trousers of indifferent colour. Cap with a great visor, stone grey, of unusual shape. Rough silk neckcloth. Crumpled linen. He blows his nose occasionally on a great Turkey-red handkerchief. He carries in his right hand a stick with a staghorn handle, wears a great military overcoat and carries a fur foot warmer over his left arm.

DR. SCHOLZ

Your servant! your servant!

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Staring at the doctor as if he were an apparition from another world.*] Fritz!

DR. SCHOLZ

Yes, as you see.

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Throwing her arms around her husband's neck with a cry.*] Fritz!

AUGUSTE

[*Opens the door, right, but withdraws at once.*] Father!

[MRS. BUCHNER *steps back in astonishment, then exit through the side door, left.*

DR. SCHOLZ

I'm back, as you see. Now tell me first, is Friebe here?

FRIEBE

[*Peeps through the kitchen door, frightened, then comes forward.*] Doctor! [*He rushes to him, seizes both his hands and kisses them.*] Well now, who'd a thought it? Lord, give me a dollar, who'd a thought it?

DR. SCHOLZ

Pssst! — be careful — shut the front door tight.

[FRIEBE *runs and obeys with joyous zeal.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Beside herself with astonishment.*] But tell me now, Fritz, tell me now — my thoughts are flying away from me [*embracing him with sobs*]. Ah, Fritz! what a lot of pain you've given me in this long time!

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Pushing his wife gently away.*] Oh, yes, my life, too — we'd better not begin with recriminations — you're still the same old melancholy soul [*with something of bitterness*]. Anyway, I wouldn't have troubled you, if it hadn't been — [FRIEBE *takes his overcoat, his foot bag, etc.*] There are circumstances, dear Minna . . . when a man has influential enemies, as I have —

[*Exit* FRIEBE *through the stair door, with the doctor's effects.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Sulking good humouredly.*] But nobody told you to go, Fritz! You had a safe, warm home here. You might have lived here so nice!

DR. SCHOLZ

I don't want to hurt your feelings, but — you don't understand that.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, I know; I'm a very simple-minded person, that is possible, but you weren't responsible to any one. It wasn't necessary at all that you —

DR. SCHOLZ

Pssst! it was very necessary. [*Somewhat mysteriously.*] After guilt comes atonement, after sin comes punishment.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, yes, of course, Fritz. But you had your share of the blame, too. [*From now till the conclusion of the conversation she keeps casting anxious glances toward the door, as if she feared* WILHELM'S *arrival at any moment.*] We could have been so quiet, so contented, if you had only wanted to.

DR. SCHOLZ

All the blame was mine — all.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Now you're unfair again.

DR. SCHOLZ

Well, maybe I am; but a lot of scoundrels banded together against me; that's known well enough. For example, just imagine — in the hotels — the waiters — I never could get a night's sleep. Back and forth they tramped, back and forth in the corridors and always right in front of *my* door.

MRS. SCHOLZ

But they certainly didn't disturb you on purpose.

DR. SCHOLZ

They didn't? Well now, there you are, that's what you can't understand.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, it's possible; the waiters are awful malicious sometimes.

DR. SCHOLZ

Malicious? Yes, that is it! Well, we could talk about that, but I have a headache [*reaches for the back of his head*] there! Oh, it's a scoundrelly business! I know well enough whom I owe that to. I want to see now if I can drive it off with a sound sleep. I'm *very* tired.

MRS. SCHOLZ

But there's no fire upstairs, Fritz.

DR. SCHOLZ

Just imagine, in a trip from Vienna. No fire? That doesn't make any difference. Friebe will see to that at once. Tell me, how is Friebe now? I mean, can you still depend on him as much as ever?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Friebe's just as he always was.

DR. SCHOLZ

I thought so. Good-bye! [*After he has pressed his wife's hand he turns toward the staircase with a deeply thoughtful expression. Noticing the tree,*

he stops and stares at it absently.] What does that mean?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*With a mixture of shame, fear, and emotion.*] We are keeping Christmas!

DR. SCHOLZ

Keeping Christmas? [*After a long pause, lost in memories.*] It's — been — a — long — time — ago! [*Turning around and speaking with genuine emotion.*] And you've turned white, too.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, Fritz — both of us —

[DR. SCHOLZ *nods and turns away. Exit through the stair entrance.*

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Enters hastily, left.*] And your husband's back again.

MRS. SCHOLZ

It's like — as if — I don't know! Lord, what am I to think about it?

MRS. BUCHNER

That's a dispensation, dear friend, and we all must be thankful for it.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, how he looks! What a time he's had! Such a life as he must have lived; from one country to another, from one town — oh! he's paid the price.

[MRS. BUCHNER *starts for the stairs.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Frightened.*] Where are you going?

MRS. BUCHNER

To tell Ida the good news.

[*Exit through the stair door.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, yes! No, what are you thinking about? We mustn't let him notice it! I know my husband too well for that! When he finds out there's anybody but him living upstairs — then I'd have trouble surely!

MRS. BUCHNER

[*From the stairs.*] I'll go very softly —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, yes! don't make any noise!

MRS. BUCHNER

I'll be very quiet.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Olordolordolord! be as still as you can!

AUGUSTE

[*Enters hastily, left.*] Father's here?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Beside herself.*] Yes, he's here! What are we going to do? And now Wilhelm's going to be here too. I'm nearly dead for fright. Suppose he met father? He might come in any minute. All the things a poor old woman like me lives to see!

AUGUSTE

O mama, I have such a strange feeling, such a strange feeling! We had got so used to it without him. It's as if a dead man came back. I'm afraid, mama!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Maybe he's spent all his money.

AUGUSTE

Yes, that would be — Yes, yes! that would be the last straw.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, I don't know how we'll manage if he has. We'll have to go out and beg.

IDA

[*Comes down dressed, joyfully. Pressing* AUGUSTE'S *hand cordially.*] Gustie! Is it true? Oh? I'm so glad!

[MRS. SCHOLZ *and* AUGUSTE *are jarred.*

[ROBERT *enters at one of the doors, left. Medium size, delicate, haggard, and pale. His eyes are deep set and glow at times morbidly. Moustache and full beard. He smokes Turkish tobacco from a pipe with a very short stem.*

ROBERT

[*Lightly.*] It's getting uncomfortable here, mother.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Now *he* begins at me!

AUGUSTE

Let him begin, if he wants to.

[*Privately casting envious glances at* IDA'S *toilet.*

ROBERT

[*To* IDA, *who has looked at him in surprise.*] Well, that's the way I am, Miss Ida!

IDA

[*Shakes her head incredulously.*] No — No —

ROBERT

Why not? I don't think it's worth the trouble to pretend to feel what I don't — It isn't worth the trouble.

IDA

No — that isn't your real self.

AUGUSTE

[*Breaking out.*] You're outrageous, Robert.

ROBERT

Not intentionally. I don't ask any one to be outraged!

AUGUSTE

I don't care!

ROBERT

Ditto here.

AUGUSTE

Ditto, ditto — idiocy!

ROBERT

[*With feigned astonishment.*] I beg your pardon. I supposed you'd be a little politer, but I see you don't care anything about outward charms any longer.

IDA

[*Soothingly.*] Oh, Mr. Scholz —

ROBERT

Well, I must defend myself, mustn't I —

AUGUSTE

[*Half choked with tears.*] Oh, you! — oh, you!

That's just like you — you false wretch — to make a reproach of my age! Mrs. Buchner! isn't it a shame? He — I — I've sat here with mother — here — the best — best part of my — life I've spent, while you — I — just like a servant girl —

ROBERT

That sounds very fine. I'll admit it does! You ought to go on the stage. [*Changing his tone, brutally.*] None of your bad jokes. Listen to me: You and your martyr-halo,— it's all tommy-rot. The truth is that you found what you expected even less out of the home than in it.

AUGUSTE

Mother! I can prove it by you, that I've refused three offers!

ROBERT

Pshaw! If mother'd just shelled out the necessary financial wherewithal, of course the gentlemen would have taken *you* to boot.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Money? [*Approaching* ROBERT, *holding out her hand.*] Here, take a knife and cut it out, cut the money out of my hand!

AUGUSTE

They'd have taken *me,* would they? Do you want to see the letters of refusal?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Interrupting.*] Children! [*She makes a motion as if she would bare her breast to the death thrust.*] Here, kill me first! Haven't you a little consideration for me? Not that much? Haven't

you? Good gracious Lord, not five minutes — I don't know what kind of children they are — not five minutes will they keep from quarrelling.

ROBERT

Yes, I know it; that's what I was saying; it's getting uncomfortable again.

[FRIEBE *comes downstairs officiously. He whispers something to* MRS. SCHOLZ, *whereupon she hands him a key. Exit* FRIEBE *into the cellar.*

ROBERT

[*Has observed the scene silently. At the moment when* FRIEBE *vanishes in the cellar door.*] Aha!

AUGUSTE

[*Has been watching* ROBERT. *Now she breaks out, furiously.*] You haven't a grain of natural feeling — not a grain!

ROBERT

Ditto!

AUGUSTE

But you're playing a part. You're the wretchedest liar, and that's the repulsive part about it.

ROBERT

About father, do you mean?

AUGUSTE

Of course about father.

ROBERT

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] If you think —

Auguste

Yes — that's what I think — yes — for — if you're not then — then — you're a miserable scoundrel!

Mrs. Scholz

[*Interrupting.*] Will this ever stop, or what —

Robert

[*Indifferently.*] Then I *am* a scoundrel. Well, what of it?

[Ida, *who has been waiting uneasily for some time, goes out through the glass door.*

Auguste

You shameless wretch!

Robert

Shameless, that's right, so I am.

Mrs. Buchner

Mr. Scholz! I don't believe you. You are better than you want to make us believe — better even than you think you are yourself.

Robert

[*Coldly, in a slightly sarcastic tone which becomes more pronounced as he proceeds.*] My dear Mrs. Buchner, I suppose it's very kind of you — but as I've said before, I don't exactly understand what I have done to deserve — I must even go so far as to refuse to take advantage of your kindness. My self-respect is, thus far at least, by no means so completely gone that I need anybody to —

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Slightly bewildered.*] Oh, you mistake my intention. But — your father —

ROBERT

My father is to me a certain Doctor Fritz Scholz.

AUGUSTE

Yes, yes, there you go!

ROBERT

And if I do not feel exactly as indifferent to this person as to any other fool I might meet, it is because I — well, because — [*he smokes a moment*] — because I am, in a certain sense, the product of his folly.

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Apparently dazed.*] Forgive me! I can't follow you that far. How can you dare to say such things? It makes the cold chills run over me.

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*To* MRS. BUCHNER.] Let him go, let him go! You'll see some things here that —

AUGUSTE

Now what do you mean by that, mother? We can't help the way we're made. Other people, with all their remarkable ways, aren't a bit better.

ROBERT

Of course I know that there are still a few naïve souls who never feel comfortable unless they're pulling and patching at their fellowmen. Mediæval superstition! Nonsense!

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Seizing* ROBERT *by both hands, heartily.*] Mr. Scholz, I have a mission to accomplish here. That makes me proof against everything. And so — from my heart: you haven't offended me in the least.

ROBERT

[*A little taken back.*] You're a remarkable woman.

FRIEBE

[*Comes out of the cellar. He carries in his left hand three bottles of red wine, holding the necks between his fingers, and under his left arm a bottle of cognac. In his right hand he holds the key. Approaching* MRS. SCHOLZ *officiously.*] Now where is the cigars?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Good gracious, Friebe! I don't know anything —

ROBERT

In the writing desk, mother.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, yes.

[*She takes the bunch of keys and hunts nervously for the right one.*

AUGUSTE

You know the key to the writing desk, don't you?

ROBERT

The one with the straight ward.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, I know! — wait a minute!

ROBERT

Let him have it —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Wait a minute, wait! — here! No, that isn't the one. I'm all out of my head. [*Holding the bunch of keys out to* ROBERT.] There!

ROBERT

[*Drawing off the right key and handing it to* FRIEBE.] There it is. Hope you'll enjoy father's cigars.

FRIEBE

Well, he's at it just the same as ever! Never stops it all day long. [*A violent ring above.*] I'm a-comin'!

[*Exit* FRIEBE *up the stairs.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

The wine won't last much longer, at that rate. Good gracious, where will it all end? All that wine! And such a lot of those expensive, strong cigars! I'm sure he'll ruin himself yet.

ROBERT

That's something you've no right to deprive any one of.

MRS. BUCHNER

What do you mean?

ROBERT

Every one must enjoy himself in his own fashion. As far as I'm concerned, at least, I'm not

going to let any one take that privilege away from me. Not even by the law. It's strange, though!

MRS. BUCHNER

What did you say?

ROBERT

Strange!

MRS. BUCHNER

What makes you look at me like that? Is it something about me that's strange?

ROBERT

In a way, yes. You have been in our house several days, and you're not thinking of going away yet.

AUGUSTE

How you do talk!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Will you never stop it?

[*Shakes her head in despair.*

ROBERT

[*With brutal violence.*] Well now, mother, isn't it the truth? Did anybody ever succeed in staying longer than half a day with us before? Haven't they all fallen away from us, the Nitzches, the Lehmanns —

AUGUSTE

Well, what do we care if they do? It's all the same to me. We can get along very well without strangers . . .

ROBERT

Yes, very nicely indeed! [*In a brutal tone.*]

I tell you, Mrs. Buchner, in the presence of utter strangers they quarreled so rancorously that the dust fairly flew. Mother would tear the table cloth off, father smashed the water bottle. Cheerful, wasn't it? Cheerful scenes, cheerful impressions for childhood?

AUGUSTE

You ought to hide for very shame, you miserable wretch!

[*Exit hastily.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

Now do you see how it is? I've had to stand that for years and years!

[*Exit, greatly moved.*

ROBERT

[*Goes on unfalteringly.*] Of course there's nothing remarkable about it. A man of forty marries a girl of sixteen and drags her into this God-forsaken hole. A man who has been in the Turkish service as a physician, and has travelled over Japan. A cultured, enterprising mind. A man who has been busy forging the most ambitious projects joins himself to a woman who has scarcely outgrown the idea that you can see America as a star in the heavens. Yes, it's a fact! I'm not exaggerating a particle. Yes, and that's what resulted: a standing, dirty, putrefying marsh, and that's where we had the delightful privilege of taking our origin. Mutual understanding, respect, consideration — not a whit! And this is the bed we children grew out of.

MRS. BUCHNER

Mr. Scholz! I'd like to beg you —

ROBERT

Very well! I'm not anxious to talk about it. Anyway, the story's —

MRS. BUCHNER

No, no, I want to ask a favour of you; I'm in a hurry.

ROBERT

A favour — of me?

MRS. BUCHNER

Couldn't you do it to please me? — couldn't you — wouldn't it be possible some way? Couldn't you just for this evening lay aside your mask?

ROBERT

Sounds fine! Lay aside my mask?

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, for it is surely not your real face that you are showing us.

ROBERT

You don't say so!

MRS. BUCHNER

Promise me, Mr. Scholz —

ROBERT

But I haven't any idea —

MRS. BUCHNER

Wilhelm, your brother Wilhelm may come at any minute, and —

ROBERT

[*Interrupting her.*] Mrs. Buchner! if you would only, only believe me! Your efforts, I'm

sure of it, will fail absolutely. We're all rotten to the bone. Rotten in our makeup, completely ruined in our bringing up. You can't do anything with us. It all looks very nice. Christmas tree, lights, presents, family festivities, but it's all on the surface — a morbid, wretched lie, nothing more! And now father shows up. If I didn't know how intractable he is, I swear, I'd believe you brought him here.

MRS. BUCHNER

The Lord knows I didn't! But that has revived my hope. That can't be an accident, that's a dispensation of Providence. And so I say from the bottom of my heart: be friendly and kind to your brother. If you knew how well he speaks of you, with what love and respect —

ROBERT

[*Interrupting.*] Yes, but what for?

MRS. BUCHNER

What do you mean?

ROBERT

Why should I be kind and good to him?

MRS. BUCHNER

How can you ask that?

ROBERT

Why shouldn't I?

MRS. BUCHNER

Well, in the first place, so as not to spoil his coming back to his parents' house at the very start.

ROBERT

Oh, we scarcely interfere with each other, as you seem to believe, and, anyway, if you think that when he enters these precincts a subtle emotion will take possession of him —

MRS. BUCHNER

Your brother is such a good man, such a noble man at bottom! He fought a terribly hard fight before he could decide to take this step. I can assure you he is very anxious indeed to be reconciled with you.

ROBERT

I can't understand at all what that means! Reconciled? What has he got to be reconciled about? I don't understand this business at all. As a rule we understand one another pretty well — we children. This is all a new thing to me. I haven't anything to reproach him with. Of course there are certain facts that aren't easy to get around. Let me ask you; do you think I have any particular reverence for my father? I haven't, have I? Not to speak of loving him. Do you see any evidences of filial gratitude? Of course you know there isn't any reason why there should be. All my life we have got along best with each other when we simply ignored each other. Now and then, when we got to blaming each other for our mutual misfortunes, we have even gone as far as to hate each other. Well now, this same hate reached a monstrous state between father and Wilhelm. Of course I can appreciate that perfectly well. And perhaps it's an accident that I didn't do as Wilhelm did. So I have no grudge against

him, with this restriction — that I never see him. When I do see him, all my tolerance goes to the devil; then I'm rather — rather — well, how shall I say it? Then — then I don't see anything else but the man who struck *my* father — not his, but *my* father — who struck my father in the face.

MRS. BUCHNER

Oh, good Lord!

ROBERT

And then I can't tell what I won't do, I can't tell anything about it.

MRS. BUCHNER

Oh, gracious, gracious! is *that* the secret? Struck him, did you say? — in the face? — his *own* father?

ROBERT

That's exactly what he did.

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Half beside herself.*] Oh, good Lord, good Lord! But — then I can — then I must go right off and talk to your good old father, then —

ROBERT

[*Thoroughly alarmed.*] Talk to whom?

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Half crying.*] To your good, old, poor, abused father.

ROBERT

[*Tries to hold her back.*] For heaven's sake, who is it you want to see?

MRS. BUCHNER

Let me go! I must, must.

[*Exit up the stairs.*

ROBERT

[*Calling after her.*] Mrs. Buchner! [*Turning back.*] Damned hysterical folly!

[*He shrugs his shoulders and walks back and forth across the room; several times he starts as if to rush after her, then changes his mind each time; finally he gives up all idea of interference and by a visible effort forces himself into a condition of apparent calmness. First he busies himself with his tobacco pipe; he taps it clean, fills it with fresh tobacco, which he takes from a pouch, lights it and seems for a minute or two completely given up to the enjoyment of smoking. Then his attention turns gradually to the Christmas tree and the presents on the table; standing before them with his legs wide apart, he surveys the scene, pipe in mouth, and laughs bitterly several times. Suddenly he starts, takes his pipe in his hand, and bends low over the table. Straightening up he seems to come for the first time to the realisation that he is alone. Looking around as cautiously as a thief, he bends again, hastily seizes the yellow silk purse, carries it nearer his eyes, and with a quick, passionate motion touches it to his lips. He is evidently the prey of a secret and morbid passion. A noise disturbs him. In-*

stantly the purse finds its way to its old position. Robert rises on his toes and tries to slink away. As he is passing through the side door, left, he sees his mother, who is entering through the outer door on the same side, and stops.

[MRS. SCHOLZ *goes heavily but hurriedly across the room to the stairway door; here she stops and listens.*

ROBERT

[*Turning back.*] Tell me, mother, what in the world is that woman after?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Frightened.*] Olordolordolord! You do scare a person so —

ROBERT

What — wh — what they're . . . just what the Buchners are after here is what I'd like to know.

MRS. SCHOLZ

I'd rather know what your father — what can he be after here? Yes, tell me that! What does he want here?

ROBERT

Well, I suppose you're not going to refuse to lodge him, are you?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Protesting, half crying.*] I can't see why. He had no use for me all this time. At least I was my own master. Now it'll all begin again, the old torment. I'll have to spend my old days running errands like a little child.

ROBERT

You always do exaggerate. That's the way always; you can't get along without it.

MRS. SCHOLZ

You just watch him when he sees the empty hot house to-morrow. I can't keep a gardener just for that stuff, can I? And the ant boxes are gone too. I don't care if the flowers never grow at all; I never got anything but headaches out of them! And all the vermin! I can't see what good it all does. And I've got to be worn down by all this kind of doings. The very noise is enough to worry me to death. Oh, life isn't worth living any more.

ROBERT

[*While* MRS. SCHOLZ *is still speaking, has started away, shrugging his shoulders; now he stops and speaks back.*] Can you remember the time when it was any more worth living?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Can I? Of course I can!

ROBERT

You can? Well, that must have been before my time.

[*Exit through the first door, left.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Listening again at the stairway door.*] When I think back — They're talking up there.

[*She looks up, notices that she is alone, listens anxiously, and goes up at last, her hand at her ear, her face full of pain, grief, and curiosity.*

[IDA *and* WILHELM *enter through the glass door.* WILHELM, *of medium height, powerful build, in excellent health. Blond, close-cropped hair. Clothing neatly fitting, not at all foppish. Top-coat, hat, traveling bag. His left arm is about* IDA'S *shoulder, her right arm is about his waist, and she draws him forward, slightly resisting.*

IDA

Now you're here, do you see? The worst of it is over already.

WILHELM

[*Sighing heavily.*] Not yet, dear.

IDA

You can be sure your mother will be very, very glad to see you. So will Gustie. [*She pulls off his heavy gloves.*] Where did you get these?

WILHELM

And so you know my — mother?

IDA

All of them, dear.

WILHELM

How do you — like them?

IDA

Thoroughly good people, you know that yourself.

WILHELM

[*From now on more and more embarrassed with*

every moment, speaking slowly and as if to himself.] Re — markable.

[*His eyes fall on the Christmas tree; lost in contemplation of it, he unconsciously stops and stands motionless.*

IDA

[*Unbuttoning his great-coat.*] But sweetheart! that isn't the first Christmas tree you ever —

WILHELM

The first one I ever saw here, and you can't, you can't imagine — how strange —

IDA

[*Drawing off his coat, while he submits mechanically.*] Please, please, Willy. [*Standing before him, the coat over her arm, his hat and bag in her hand.*] Willy! look at me [*emphatically*] hard! [*She stands for a moment stiffly upright, then she lays the things quickly aside and returns to* WILHELM.] You — promised — me —

WILHELM

Did you ever, Ida! did you ever see a funeral vault with wreaths and —

IDA

[*Frightened.*] Why, Wilhelm! [*Embraces him stormily, completely beside herself.*] That's wicked! that's really wicked of you! that's very, very wicked!

WILHELM

[*Pushing her back gently, struggling to repress his emotion.*] No, it doesn't do a bit of good. [*Coldly, absently.*] Very well, very well!

IDA

Oh, oh, what's the matter with you?

WILHELM

[*Studying the tree.*] Except for this, everything is just as it was before, Ida! Ah, you may well give me some credit for this step!

IDA

I'm so afraid all of a sudden, Willy. I wonder if it wouldn't have been better . . . I'm sure mother didn't know that it would be so, *so* hard for you, and I — I just thought, because mother said so, I didn't really want to do it. But now — now you've gone this far, now be — listen — do it for my sake! Oh! [*She embraces him.*

WILHELM

[*Drawn a little farther by* IDA'S *arms, with signs of deep inward disturbance.*] Every step forward! Oh, what I've gone through here!

IDA

No, don't stir it up! don't stir up the old days!

WILHELM

See! It's all clear to me now. Your mother ought not have persuaded me to do it. She is always so confident, so — I knew it well enough, I told her so, but that naïve unshakable confidence of hers — I shouldn't have let it blind me!

IDA

Oh, how hard you do take everything, Wilhelm! I'm sure you will talk differently to-morrow, when you have seen them all again. Then you will at least be justified in your own eyes. You have

proved that you are seriously anxious to live in peace with your family.

WILHELM

When I see all this again, all the old places — everything comes out so, so distinctly, you understand! The past comes so close to me, so terribly close! I can't — I'm completely defenseless.

IDA

[*Embracing him, weeping.*] When I see you like this, Wilhelm, oh, you mustn't believe, you mustn't ever believe, for heaven's sake, that I would have made you do it, if I had had the slightest idea — Oh, don't ever believe that! Oh, it hurts me so to see you like that.

WILHELM

Ida! I must tell you, I tell you solemnly, I've got to get away from here, I must! I can't stand this thing, I can't! I'm not sure but it will ruin me forever. You're only a child, a sweet, pure child, Ida. What do you know . . . thank God forever and ever, you can't ever have even a suspicion of what I — what this creature beside you — I must tell you — Hate! Gall! — the minute I came in —

IDA

Shall we go? Shall we go away from here this minute?

WILHELM

Yes, for when I'm here, even you! — I can scarcely separate you from the others. I'm losing you! It makes me a criminal, just to have you here.

IDA

If you could just be a little plainer! There must have been — something terrible must have happened here, to —

WILHELM

Here? A crime! all the more horrible because it isn't called a crime. They gave me life here, and then right here they — I must tell you — I could almost say, they systematically spoiled that life, till I loathed it, till I dragged it around and panted under it like a beast of burden, crawled away under the burden, dug a cave for myself, buried myself alive, anything — oh, I can't tell you what I suffered — hate, rage, remorse, despair, never a minute of peace! Day and night the same goring, corroding pains [*points to his forehead*] here! [*and to his heart*] and here too!

IDA

Oh, what can I do, Wilhelm? I can't trust myself any more — to advise you at all, I'm so —

WILHELM

You ought to have been satisfied, that I was so nearly free of it as I was. It had all grown so faint and far. Only now do I realise *how* far . . .

[*Crushed by his emotion he drops into a chair.*

IDA

[*Suppressing a cry.*] Wilhelm!

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Enters from the stairs in wild haste. Rushes to* WILHELM.] Wilhelm, listen to me, Wilhelm!

Remember what we agreed to do. Now, if you care anything for me, I beg — Now show — Now I order you, I command you, as the mother of my child, Wilhelm! It depends on you, now, on you alone, Wilhelm! You have done an awful wrong! You have an awful weight on your conscience. You will be happy again — I have done it, I have spoken to your father. He —

WILHELM

[*Leaps up stiffly, with staring eyes and stammering speech.*] F — father? What! W — with m — my f — father?

[*He sways, staggers like a stupid person and reaches dully for his hat and coat.*

IDA

[*Frightened.*] Wil — W —

[WILHELM *gives her to understand by signs that she must not touch him.*

IDA

Oh, mother — Wilhelm — You shouldn't — you shouldn't have told him that — right away.

MRS. BUCHNER

Wilhelm! are you a man? You can't have been deceiving us. If you have a spark of love for us left, for Ida, I insist — I, a woman —

[WILHELM *has taken up his belongings.* IDA *rushes to him, throws her arms around him, and holds him tight.*

IDA

You mustn't go, or I — Mother! if he goes, I will go with him!

WILHELM

Why — why didn't you tell me that before?

IDA

We haven't kept anything from you. You mustn't think as badly of us as that. We haven't kept anything from you at all.

MRS. BUCHNER

None of us, your mother, your sister, none of us knew anything about it, anything more about it than you did. He came a few minutes ago; without telling anybody he was coming; and of course I thought at once of —

WILHELM

Who told you *that?*

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Weeping, reaches for his hand.*] You did an awful, awful thing.

WILHELM

So you know?

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, I know now —

WILHELM

Everything?

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, everything; and you see, I was right, I knew you were carrying something around with you. That was the secret.

WILHELM

You know that I —

[MRS. BUCHNER *nods yes.*

WILHELM

And Ida? Is she to be sacrificed to a creature like — like me,— a — Does she know it? Do you know it, Ida, too?

IDA

No, Wilhelm, but, whether I know it or not; that doesn't make a particle of difference.

WILHELM

No. This hand that you — this hand that has often — this hand has — [*To* MRS. BUCHNER.] Is that what you mean?

[MRS. BUCHNER *nods yes.*

WILHELM

[*To* IDA.] How shamefully I have been deceiving you! I can't bring myself to it. Later!

MRS. BUCHNER

Wilhelm, I know how much I'm asking, but I — You *must* humble yourself before your poor father. Not till you do can you feel entirely free. Ask him to help you! Ask him to forgive you! Oh, Wilhelm, you must do that! You must fall down before him! And if he treads on you with his foot, you mustn't resist him! Don't say a word! Be as humble as a lamb! Believe what I say, I'm a woman, and I know what is best for you.

WILHELM

No, you do *not* know. You have no idea what

you're asking of me. Oh, you must thank God, Mrs. Buchner, that He hasn't shown you the horror of the thing you're insisting on. That may be infamous . . . what I have done may be infamous. But what I have gone through with — that! — what I've fought through and suffered through . . . what unspeakable torments. With all that he burdened me and at last with this fearful — guilt . . . But in spite of it all — [*After a long, deep look into* Ida's *eyes he fights his way to a firm resolution.*] Perhaps — I can do it — in spite of all!

THE SECOND ACT

The room is empty. It is lighted partly by a red hanging lamp in the stairway entrance, but principally through the open doors which lead into the side room at the left. A dinner is in progress there, as may be inferred from the clinking of glasses and the rattling of dishes. Enter IDA *from the dining-room,* WILHELM *after her.*

IDA

At last! [*Ingratiatingly.*] But you must think of father now, Willy! Don't be angry at me, but if you have something to — apologise to father for, you mustn't wait till he comes down to you —

WILHELM

Do you suppose father will come down to dinner?

IDA

Of course! Mamma has —

[WILHELM *suddenly embraces* IDA *and presses her to himself with an impulse of wild passion.*

IDA

Oh — why — you — if somebody were to — my hair will be —

[WILHELM *lets his arms drop limply, folds*

his hands, drops his head, and stands before her, suddenly sobered, like a convicted criminal.

IDA

[*Arranging her hair.*] What an impulsive boy you are!

WILHELM

You call it impulsiveness. I call it — something — very different —

IDA

But, Willy! why are you so cast down all of a sudden? You're incorrigible . . .

WILHELM

[*Seizing her hand convulsively, laying his arm about her shoulders, draws her hastily across the room with him.*] Incorrigible! Yes, that's just it — the thing I'm most afraid of is that I — that all your trouble about me will be useless. I'm so horribly changeable. [*Pointing to his forehead.*] There's never any peace back there! Everything turned topsy turvy in a second! I'm afraid of myself. Can you have any idea what it is like to be running away from yourself? Well, that's what I'm doing — have been doing all my life long.

IDA

Well, after all — but I mustn't say that —

WILHELM

Tell me, please!

IDA

Sometimes — I've thought sometimes — it's

true, sometimes it has seemed to me as if — don't be angry at me — as if there were nothing at all that you needed to run away from. I've felt, myself, as if —

WILHELM

No, you needn't think that! Did you notice Robert, did you watch him?

IDA

No — what did he do?

WILHELM

Did you notice how he met me? He knows well enough what I have to run away from! He knows me. Just ask him, he'll tell you all about it! That's what he's threatening me with. Oh, I know better than that. Just watch, he always looks at me! I'm expected to be frightened, and cringe before him. Ha! ha! ha! No, my dear brother, we aren't in such a bad state as all that yet. And now you can see well enough, Ida, that I can't allow that — I mean, you mustn't cherish any illusions about me. There's only one thing for me to do, and that is to be frank with you. I must force myself to it — that's what I'm fighting to do. When you know me perfectly well, if you can still bear me then — or if you — can still love me — then — that would be something gained; then something would come to me — something brave and proud, I mean, then I would have somebody, and if all the rest of them despised me —

[IDA, *in an impulse of devotion, nestles close to him.*

WILHELM

And now — and now I will tell you — before I go up to father — You know what I mean?

[IDA *nods.*

WILHELM

Now you must — I must make myself tell you what happened between me and my father. Yes, Ida, I will do it. [*Walking back and forth with her.*] It was like this! I was here on a visit — no — I can't begin that way, I must go back farther. You remember when I fought my way for a long time all alone. I've told you all about that, haven't I?

IDA

No — but be calm, dear, it isn't necessary; don't let yourself get so excited, Willy!

WILHELM

Well, now, that's my trouble: I'm such a coward; I've never had the courage yet to tell you about my past. Of course I'm taking a risk when I do. I'm risking something, even with myself. No matter! If I can't even make myself do that, how can I ever reach the point of going up to see father?

IDA

Don't do that if it's hard, dear! You have enough to suffer without it.

WILHELM

You're afraid of it, are you? You're afraid you will hear something —

IDA

No, no, you mustn't talk like that!

WILHELM

Well, then, you must remember that father was living up there. Till he married mother, he had lived alone, and he soon dropped back into the same way; he lived on — his lonely single life. All of a sudden he turned on us, Robert and me, that is; he never paid any attention to Auguste. Full ten hours a day we crouched over our books. When I see the prison hole, even to-day; it was right next his workroom. You've seen the room?

IDA

The great hall above?

WILHELM

Yes, that's it. When they put us in that room, it made no difference how bright the sun shone in at the windows — it was always night for us. Well, you know how it would be; we would run to mother. We would escape from him, and then there would be a scene. Mother would pull me by the left arm, father by the right. We would keep it up till Friebe had to carry us upstairs. We fought, we bit his hands; of course that did no good, it only made our lives more unbearable. But we remained just as obstinate as ever, and now I can see that father began to hate us. Matters reached such a state that one day he drove both of us downstairs. He couldn't endure us any longer. The sight of us was hateful to him.

IDA

But your father — won't you admit it? — meant well by you. He wanted you to learn a great deal, like —

WILHELM

Up to a certain point he may have meant well at the time — he *may* have. But when *that* happened we were only boys of nine or ten, and the meaning well ended with that. He was so far from meaning well that he decided to ruin us completely. Yes, he did, just to spite mother. For five years we were left to ourselves with a vengeance. We were rascals and loafers. I still had something, for I happened to stumble into music. Robert had nothing. But we stumbled into all sorts of other things that I'm afraid we will never get over entirely. At last father's conscience troubled him. There were fearful scenes with mother. Finally we were packed up and taken to a reform school. And when I was unable to get used to the life of slavery there, and ran away, he had me caught and sent to Hamburg; the worthless vagabond was to be shipped to America. Naturally, the worthless vagabond escaped again. I let my family go, and starved and suffered my own way through the world. Robert has about the same record behind him. But in spite of all this we are still good for nothings in father's eyes. Some time later I was so simple minded as to demand an allowance from him — not to beg for it! I wanted to attend the conservatory. Then he wrote back to me on a post card: Be a cobbler! This is how, Ida, we are self-made men, in a way, but we are not particularly proud of it.

IDA

Truly, Willy, I can't help it, dear, I sympathise with you in all of it, but — I can't be serious

for the moment — Don't look at me so strangely, please, please!

WILHELM

Oh, Ida! It's bitter. It isn't anything to laugh about.

IDA

[*Breaking out.*] It's a feeling of jubilation, Wilhelm! I must tell you, it may be selfish, but I'm very, very happy, that you need me so. I want to love you *so* much, Wilhelm. I see the end of it all now. But I am all confused! I'm awfully, awfully sorry for you. But the sorrier I am for you, the gladder I am. Do you understand what I mean? I mean — I imagine — all that you have missed — all the love you have missed, I mean, *I* could give it to you —

WILHELM

If I could only deserve it, dear! For now comes — something — that's my affair, and nobody else's. Years ago — no — it seems — I came back to see mother, now and then, you know. Can you make it clear to yourself, Ida, when I saw all the misery over again — can you make it clear how I — how I felt then?

IDA

You mean — your mother — suffered — a great deal?

WILHELM

In a good many respects I have a different idea about mother now. But, anyway, most of the fault is father's. At that time it seemed to me

as if he kept mother a prisoner here against her will. I insisted that she separate from him.

IDA

But — your mother couldn't do that, at all —

WILHELM

No, and she would not listen to me. She didn't have the courage. Now, the way I regarded father — well, you can imagine that for yourself, I suppose.

IDA

But listen, Wilhelm! Perhaps you were not entirely just to your father. A man —

WILHELM

[*Without noticing* IDA's *interruption.*] Once I was so foolish as to invite a friend — nonsense! He wasn't even a friend — a casual acquaintance, a musician; I brought him here with me. That was a source of encouragement for mother. She played with him, a whole week, four-handed pieces every day. Then — Oh, it makes my blood run cold! As true as I stand before you, there wasn't a shadow of possibility! And by the end of the week the servants bellowed it right into her face.

IDA

Please — I don't — What was it?

WILHELM

Mother! They said mother — they said my mother — they said — Can you believe it? — they had the brazenness to tell her openly that she — was too, too familiar with — that is, I made the girl say it — she did — shamelessly — she said

the coachman had told her. I went to the coachman and he — he — he said — he told me the master had told him — the master himself. Of course I had no reason for believing such vile nonsense! Or, at least, I refused to till — till — I heard a — a talk — that father — had in the — the stables — in the horse stalls with the boy — and — I know you'll believe me — my hands turned to ice when I heard him talk there about my mother.

IDA

Please don't — please let me — don't let yourself get so *terribly* excited. You're all —

WILHELM

I don't know what happened then — I only know — There is something in a man — his will is a windlestraw — A thing like that must be experienced — it was like an avalanche — It was like — and all of a sudden I found myself in father's room — I saw him. He was at work at something — I can't remember what any more. And then — I — I — with — these — with my own hands — I punished him!

[*He has difficulty in holding himself upright.*

[IDA's *eyes are full of tears, which she wipes away. Pale and deeply moved, she gazes at* WILHELM, *then kisses him on the forehead, weeping silently.*

WILHELM

You angel of mercy!

[*The* DOCTOR's *voice is heard from the stair.*

WILHELM

And now — or never!

[*He pulls himself together,* IDA *kisses him again. He has seized her hand convulsively. The* DOCTOR'S *voice dies away, and gay laughter is heard from the dining-room.*

WILHELM

[*Indicating the dining-room and then the staircase, on which the* DOCTOR'S *steps are heard descending.*] You and your mother have a wonderful influence!

[*A hand grasp of mutual encouragement, then* IDA *leaves* WILHELM. *Before she goes, she turns once more, seizes* WILHELM'S *hand and says,* "Be brave"; *then goes out.*

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Still on the stairs.*] Ah, foolishness! To the right, Friebe! Ah! my elbow — don't hold me, don't hold me! Thunder!

[WILHELM, *as the* DOCTOR *approaches appears more and more excited. His colour changes frequently, he runs his fingers through his hair, breathes deeply, moves the fingers of his right hand as if he were playing a piano, etc. It is evident that contradictory impulses are struggling within him, that the decision is still uncertain. He seems inclined to escape, but his design is prevented by the entrance of the* DOCTOR. *He has seized the back of a chair to support him-*

self, and stands, pale and trembling. The Doctor *has stopped likewise, drawn up to his full impressive height, and gazes at his son with a look which expresses successively fear, hate, and contempt. The room is silent.* Friebe, *who has entered also, supporting the* Doctor *and holding a light for him, slinks away into the kitchen. There are physical signs of a struggle in* Wilhelm. *He tries to speak, but his throat refuses to produce a sound, and he does no more than move his lips noiselessly. He takes his hand from the back of the chair and walks toward his father. He walks unsteadily, he sways, he seems on the point of falling, he tries to speak again, but is unable to utter a sound; he drags himself a little farther and falls with folded hands at his father's feet. In the* Doctor's *face have been visible, first hate, then astonishment, growing sympathy, consternation.*

Dr. Scholz

Boy — my dear boy! My — [*He tries to lift him by the hands.*] Please stand up! [*He seizes* Wilhelm's *head, which hangs limp, and turns it toward himself.*] Look at me, boy, look at me, please. What's the matter — with —

[Wilhelm *moves his lips.*

Dr. Scholz

[*In a trembling voice.*] What — what — are you saying to me? I —

WILHELM

F — father — I —

DR. SCHOLZ

What — do you mean?

WILHELM

I — have — I have h — h —

DR. SCHOLZ

Foolishness, foolishness! Don't talk any more about such —

WILHELM

I've committed — a crime — against you —

DR. SCHOLZ

Foolishness, foolishness! I don't know what you're driving at. Bygones are bygones. Do me the favour, boy —

WILHELM

But — take it from me! Take the burden from me!

DR. SCHOLZ

Forgiven and forgotten, boy! forgiven and forgotten —

WILHELM

Thank you.

[*He takes a deep breath and falls unconscious.*

DR. SCHOLZ

Boy! What's this you're doing? What —

[*He lifts the body and drags it to the nearest armchair. Before he has arranged*

it, enter Ida, Robert, Auguste, Mrs. Scholz, *and* Mrs. Buchner *hastily from the dining-room;* Friebe *from the kitchen.*

Dr. Scholz

Wine! Bring some wine, quick!

[Ida *goes out and returns at once with wine.*

Mrs. Scholz

Oh Lordolordolord! Water! Throw some water over him, right away!

[Dr. Scholz *pours wine down his throat.*

Auguste

What was the matter?

Ida

[*Pale and in tears, lays her cheek against* Wilhelm's.] He feels as cold as ice.

Mrs. Scholz

What was it stirred the boy up so, I'd like to know? It all seems perfectly —

Robert

[*Seizing her hand and interrupting her reprovingly.*] Mother!

Mrs. Buchner

Use some water, use some water, Doctor!

Dr. Scholz

Hush! Have you — have you any *eau de cologne?*

Mrs. Buchner

Yes. [*She gives him a bottle.*] Here is some

DR. SCHOLZ

Thank you.

[*He spreads the liquid over the young man's forehead.*

IDA

[*To the* DOCTOR.] It isn't — oh, I hope it isn't so! but — [*She breaks out into sobs.*] Oh, he looks so terrible, he looks just as if he were — dead.

[ROBERT *comforts* IDA.

MRS. SCHOLZ

How the boy's sweating!

[*She wipes his forehead.*

[WILHELM *yawns.*

DR. SCHOLZ

Hush!

[*He and all the rest study* WILHELM *in suspense.*

[WILHELM *clears his throat, stretches himself, opens and closes his eyes like a person drunk with sleep, and lays his head back as if falling asleep again.*

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Audibly.*] Thank God!

[*He straightens up, wipes his forehead with his handkerchief and studies his surroundings with emotion and something of embarrassment.* IDA *has thrown her arms about her mother's neck, laughing and crying at the same time.* ROBERT *stands with folded hands, repressing his emotion with difficulty, and looking in*

turn at the others. Auguste *walks up and down, her handkerchief held tight against her mouth, and every time she passes she stops a moment before* Wilhelm *and gazes at him earnestly.* Friebe *goes out on tiptoe. The* Doctor's *glance meets his wife's. She approaches him timidly and softening, takes his hand quietly, and touches him on the back.*

Mrs. Scholz

My dear!

[Auguste, *following her mother's example, embraces and then kisses her father, who submits unresponsively, without taking his hand from his wife's.*

Auguste

[*Her arms about his neck.*] My dearest father!

[Robert, *with a sudden resolution, steps up to his father and shakes his hand.*

[Mrs. Scholz *releases the* Doctor's *hand and leads* Ida *to him.*

[Dr. Scholz *looks first at* Ida, *then at* Wilhelm, *and casts an inquiring glance at* Mrs. Buchner.

[Mrs. Buchner *nods.*

[Dr. Scholz *makes a motion which seems to say: "I see nothing against it, although I'd rather not commit myself." Then he holds out his hand to the girl.*

[Ida *approaches him, takes his hand, bends over it and kisses it.*

[Dr. Scholz *draws his hand back quickly, as if frightened.*

[Wilhelm *sighs deeply. Every one is startled.*

[Auguste *in the dining-room door, makes a sign to* Mrs. Scholz, *then exit.*

[Mrs. Scholz *makes signs to the* Doctor, *indicating that it would be better to go into the next room and leave the patient.*

[Dr. Scholz *nods assent, and goes away carefully, hand in hand with* Mrs. Scholz.

[Mrs. Buchner, *who has indicated to* Ida *that she must stay with* Wilhelm, *goes into the next room also.*

Robert

[*Softly.*] Miss Ida, would you — would you let me watch a while now?

Ida

[*Joyfully surprised.*] I'd be glad to!

[*Presses his hand, then exit into the dining-room.*

[Robert *draws a chair near* Wilhelm's *and sits down, his eyes on the sleeper as he does so. After a while he draws a pipe out of his pocket, and makes preparations to light it, but remembers the patient in time, and puts it away again.*

[Wilhelm *sighs, stretches out his limbs.*

Robert

[*Softly and cautiously.*] Wilhelm!

Wilhelm

[*Clears his throat, opens his eyes in astonish-*

ment, and says after a while, as if Robert's *call had just reached his consciousness.*] Yes?

Robert

How do you feel now?

Wilhelm

[*After he has looked thoughtfully at* Robert *for some time, in a weak voice.*] Robert? Isn't it?

Robert

Yes, it's I, Robert. How are you now?

Wilhelm

All right. [*Clears his throat.*] I'm very well — now.

[*He smiles in a constrained fashion and makes a feeble effort to rise, which fails.*

Robert

No, no! It's a little bit too soon for that, isn't it?

[Wilhelm *nods yes, sighs, closes his eyes in exhaustion.*

[*A pause.*]

Wilhelm

[*Opens his eyes wide and speaks calmly, softly, but distinctly.*] Just what was it happened? Here?

Robert

I think, Wilhelm, it will be best not to discuss it at present. I can assure you of one thing: it was something — I at least would never have supposed it was possible.

WILHELM

[*From the depth of a spiritual experience.*] Nor I, either.

ROBERT

How could a fellow — oh, pshaw! Nobody would have guessed it in a thousand years! But it happened, all the same.

WILHELM

Yes — now I remember — more and more — it — was — beautiful!

[*His eyes fill with tears.*

ROBERT

[*With a slight trembling in his voice.*] A fellow gets to be a sentimental old woman. Well, there's this much certain, now: We've judged and condemned — at random. We didn't know the old man. It's clear enough we didn't know what we were doing.

WILHELM

Father? No! We are all — *so* blind, *so* blind!

ROBERT

Yes — the Lord knows! — we are that —

WILHELM

How strange it all seems! How wonderful! He loves us! The old man is good at heart!

ROBERT

It looks as if he might be, and I never had any idea of it till now.

WILHELM

I'm beginning to see all sorts of things!

ROBERT

As far as reasoning the thing out is concerned — you know — I had it settled a long time ago. Everything just happened to work out the way it did. I never held father responsible, that is, I haven't for years. Not for what happened to me, nor for any of us. But to-day I've *felt* it; and you know that's a very different thing. My word of honour, it's unbalanced me completely. When I saw him like that — anxious about you — it struck me like a thunderbolt. And now I keep asking myself: Why didn't we see it, why in the world didn't we? It's all come out now, so it must have been *in* us — why didn't it break out before? In father, in you — and in me; good Lord, why didn't it? It was in us, surely! And he choked it all down. Father, I mean — yes, and we did, too, for so many years —

WILHELM

I see how it is now; a person not only turns a different side to everybody he meets, but he is actually different to each person —

ROBERT

But why must that be so between us? Why must we always and forever repel each other?

WILHELM

I'll tell you: We've no innate goodness of heart. Now take Ida, for example! This way of thinking you've figured out is perfectly natural to her. She never sits in judgment. She's instinctively tender and gentle and full of delicacy. That's what spares one, you see! That — and I believe that's —

ROBERT

[*Rising.*] How do you feel now?

WILHELM

Oh, I feel so liberated —

ROBERT

Pshaw — what good does all this do? . . . I mean — I mean — of course *you* may come out all right!

WILHELM

Whom do you mean?

ROBERT

You. You and — and Ida, of course.

WILHELM

I hope so. They have such an influence, both of them. Mrs. Buchner has, too, but Ida has more. I've been hoping that could save me. At first I struggled against it —

ROBERT

[*Thoughtfully.*] They certainly have! They have an influence and that's why, at first — to be frank with you, I was envious of you.

WILHELM

I saw that well enough.

ROBERT

Well, you see, I heard about an engagement, and then I saw Ida. She ran up and down the stairs and sang so cheerfully, without an idea of —

WILHELM

[*Rises.*] I understood it all well enough; I couldn't hold it against you, of course.

ROBERT

Of course not! And now, well now, I've got to be different — I must admit . . . as I said, the way things have come out. So you're all right now?

WILHELM

Perfectly well.

ROBERT

Then you'll come in pretty soon?

WILHELM

As soon as — you go on with the others!

ROBERT

All right! [*Starts away, comes back.*] Let me tell you, I can't help it, I owe it to you, your whole conduct, toward father, and everything . . . was very honourable. I jumped on you, like a brute, with my cursed stupidity. Well, devil take it all! This is the first time in a long while that I've felt such an imperative impulse to kick myself. Does that satisfy you now? Well, you'll have the kindness to — if I — well, I've been insulting you once a minute ever since you came And — I'm sorry for it! Do you hear that?

WILHELM

Brother!

[*They shake hands, greatly moved.*

ROBERT

[*Quietly takes his hand out of* WILHELM's, *pulls out his pipe, lights it, puffs a few times, saying to himself as he does so.*] Can't a fellow's soul turn somersaults, though — pff! pff! Strange thing.

[*Turns and starts away again. Before he opens the door of the dining-room he turns back and calls over his shoulder to* Wilhelm.] I'll send her out to you!

Wilhelm

Oh, well, you needn't do that! All right, if you —

[Robert *nods and vanishes through the door.*

[Wilhelm *takes a deep breath of relief. He is beaming visibly.*

Ida

[*Comes out of the dining-room, rushes into his arms.*] Willy!

Wilhelm

Now — now, you, the two of you — you two angels have got me free. Now, a brand-new life. Oh, I'm raised beyond myself. I seem to myself almost to have a certain greatness. Oh, you dearest! I never knew till now what a terrible weight it was on me! And now I'm strong! I'm strong, dear! You can depend on it, I'll win out now! I'll show him what the good for nothing is worth! I'll show father what I can do. I'll show him there's something living in me; there's power, there's art, and people shall bow before it. The stiffest heads will bend, I feel it! I've been tied, that's all! My finger tips are itching this minute. I want to create, I want to do something!

Ida

I knew it, I knew it! Now you've found yourself at last. Dearest, I'd like to shout for joy. I'd like to shout and sing. See, I was right;

there's nothing dead in you! It was just asleep. It will all wake up again in time, I kept telling you. It has waked up, you see now!

[*They embrace and kiss each other, and walk up and down the room with their arms around each other, speechless with happiness.*

WILHELM

[*Stops, gazes into the eyes of his betrothed in a sort of blissful amazement, then lets his glance rove around the room.*] In these ice-cold vaults . . . the magic of spring!

[*They kiss again, and walk on in happy silence.*

IDA

[*Sings softly, with roguish reference to something in the past, as if implying, "Now, you see I was right."*]

When the pleasant linden tree
Blooms again,
Comes the old spring dream to me —

[MRS. SCHOLZ *enters, sees the pair, and starts hastily back.*

IDA

[*Who has seen her, interrupts her song, and rushes to her.*] Don't run away, mother!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, but I must! You don't want me.

[WILHELM *embraces and kisses his mother, and helps* IDA *bring her back.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Querulously.*] What's the matter with you? You're tearing my —

WILHELM

Oh, well, mother! that doesn't make any difference. Mother! You see another man before you. [*Between his mother and his betrothed, holding a hand of each.*] Come, my dear old mother! Look each other in the eyes! There, take hold of each other's hands!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Foolish boy!

WILHELM

Kiss each other!

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*After she has wiped her mouth with her apron.*] Ah, you stupid fellow! That — there isn't any use of that — you don't need me for that, does he, Ida?

[*They kiss each other, laughing.*

WILHELM

And now we'll have peace!

MRS. SCHOLZ

God grant it, my boy!

[FRIEBE *carrying a smoking punch bowl, comes from the kitchen, and goes into the dining-room.*]

WILHELM

Oho! There it is. Friebe, is it good?

FRIEBE

[*As he passes.*] Ah, you can put all of the stuff before me you please. I never touch none of it.

WILHELM

Impossible, Friebe!

FRIEBE

I used to, I know. Now I've sworn off long ago. Now I don't drink nothing — most of the time — but bitters. [*Exit.*

IDA

[*Has arranged* WILHELM'S *tie and straightened his coat.*] There you are —

WILHELM

Thank you, dear! Is father in a good humour?

MRS. SCHOLZ

He's telling such strange stories. Half of the time you can't understand him at all.

WILHELM

My heart's beginning to hammer again!

MRS. SCHOLZ

If Robert just didn't drink so much.

WILHELM

Oh, mother! To-day — to-day it doesn't make any difference! To-day —

IDA

Well, come in quick now, before you —

WILHELM

[*To* MRS. SCHOLZ.] Will you go with us?

MRS. SCHOLZ

You go in first!

[IDA *and* WILHELM *go into the dining-room.*

[MRS. SCHOLZ *stands thoughtfully stroking her forehead, and following a sudden impulse, goes and listens at the dining-room door.*

FRIEBE

[*Enters through the same door. It is evident that he is tipsy.*] Mrs. Scholz!

MRS. SCHOLZ

What do you want?

FRIEBE

[*Cunningly mysterious.*] It's mighty strange, Mrs. Scholz . . .

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Retreating.*] You've drunk too much. You —

FRIEBE

I've been awatchin' all I could — I could and — and I wanted to tell you a secret.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, yes, yes! Tell ahead, what you've got to say.

FRIEBE

Well, I just mean —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Go on, Friebe, go on!

FRIEBE

I just mean — it ain't just the thing. In this

here b — bisness there's a great lot of things that I mustn't blab. I just mean yer husband, he can't last much longer —

Mrs. Scholz

Oh, gracious, gracious, Friebe! You mean he has — Oh, gracious: Has he been complaining? Is he sick, do you mean?

Friebe

Well, about that — I don't know nothin' about that!

Mrs. Scholz

What's the matter with him, then?

Friebe

Why, I shouldn't — hadn't ought to say.

Mrs. Scholz

Is it something serious? [Friebe *nods solemnly.*] He hasn't been talking about dying?

Friebe

He's done — more'n that — he's used such expressions —

Mrs. Scholz

Well, tell me what you mean, can't you? The fellow's so drunk —

Friebe

[*Angrily.*] Yes, I — well, gardener and shoemaker and whatever happens to come along — no, no! I don't have to do everything comes along, that ain't my bisness. I did before, but I won't no more, there's the whole thing — clear — point!

[*He wheels around and goes into the kitchen.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

The man's gone crazy.

IDA

[*Enters by the second door into the dining-room, closing it behind her. Opening it a little again, she calls back into the room.*] Wait, ladies and gentlemen! Wait patiently and obediently!

WILHELM

[*Following her.*] I want to help you.

IDA

But nobody else!

[IDA *and* WILHELM *light the candles on the Christmas tree.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

See here! Listen! Wilhelm!

WILHELM

[*Busy with the lights.*] In a minute, mother! We'll be ready in a second.

[*The tree, the chandelier, and the stairway light are all lighted.* IDA *removes a great cloth which was spread over the presents on the table.* WILHELM *approaches his mother.*

IDA

[*Calls through the dining-room door.*] Now!

[MRS. SCHOLZ *is about to tell* WILHELM *something, when she is interrupted by the entrance of* DR. SCHOLZ. *He is followed,*

in this order, by Auguste, Robert, *and* Mrs. Buchner.

Dr. Scholz

[*Face heated by drinking, with affected astonishment.*]— Ah! Ah!

Mrs. Buchner

Like a fairy story!

[Auguste *smiles, with some constraint.*

[Robert *walks around the room, pipe in mouth, with a smile that is at first embarrassed, then more and more ironical.*

Ida

[*Has led* Wilhelm, *who is visibly moved by the scene, to the place where his presents are lying.*] Don't laugh at me, Willy.

[*She offers him the purse.*

Wilhelm

Why, no! Ida! I asked you not —

Ida

I knit it for father. The last year before his death he carried it a great deal. Then I thought —

Wilhelm

[*With rising embarrassment, under the eyes of the others.*] Yes, yes, very well, thank you very much, Ida!

Robert

These things ought to be more practical.

Mrs. Scholz

[*Led to the table by* Mrs. Buchner.] But what's

all this about? I can't do anything — I haven't anything for you [*before a crocheted shawl*] — no, no, now you — please don't. Did you crochet that for me? Now, did you, for an old woman like me? Well now, I'm very thankful to you.

[*They kiss.*

MRS. BUCHNER

And I'm very, very glad, if you like it.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Splendid! Wonderful, beautiful. How much time and trouble it must have cost! Well, now!

IDA

Only you mustn't laugh at me!

ROBERT

[*Turning red to the roots of his hair.*] Ah, what's that for?

IDA

I thought your tobacco pipe is going to burn your nose pretty soon, and so I took pity on you, and yesterday, I went out in a hurry. [*She produces a new pipe, which she has been holding behind her back, and offers it to him.*] There's the work of art!

[*General merriment.*

ROBERT

[*Without taking the pipe from her.*] You're joking, Miss!

IDA

Well, yes! But the giving it to you is quite serious.

ROBERT

Oh, no, no! I can't believe it!

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*In an exasperated aside to* WILHELM.] Robert is *unendurable!*

IDA

No, I'm not joking, really!

ROBERT

Well, now, you see — this thing here — I've got so used to it — pshaw, and you're just joking, anyway!

IDA

[*Her eyes full of tears; mastering her annoyance, in a trembling voice.*] Well, all right, as you please.

[*She lays the gift back on the table.*

MRS. BUCHNER

[*Has called to* IDA *softly several times during the conversation; now she rushes over to her.*] Ida, dear, have you forgotten?

IDA

What, mamma?

MRS. BUCHNER

Oh, you know. [*To the others.*] Now you'll hear something.

[IDA, *glad of this opportunity to conceal her emotions, follows her mother, who has seized her by the hand, into the adjoining room.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*To* ROBERT.] Why did you spoil her pleasure for her?

[WILHELM *walks nervously up and down, chewing the ends of his moustache, and now and then casts a threatening glance at* ROBERT.

ROBERT

What's that? How's that? I haven't any idea what you're talking about.

AUGUSTE

Well, it certainly wasn't exactly kind of you.

ROBERT

Let me alone! What was I to do with it, anyway?

[*A song with piano accompaniment, sounding from the next room, interrupts the speakers. All look at each other in astonishment.*

[IDA'S *voice.*]

Oh, come, little children,
Oh, come, one and all!
Oh, come to the manger
In Bethlehem's stall,
And see, in this holy,
This blessedest night,
What the Father has given
To bring us delight!

[DR. SCHOLZ *has grown more and more sombre at* ROBERT'S *behaviour. At the beginning of the song he looks shyly around, as if he feared an attack, and*

tries as unostentatiously as possible to place a certain distance between himself and all the others.

Mrs. Scholz

[*At the beginning of the song.*] Ah, how beautiful!

[*She listens eagerly for a moment, then breaks out into sobs.*

[Robert, *when the song begins, moves slowly away, with a face that seems to say, "This is more than I can stand," smiles ironically and shakes his head several times. As he passes he says something in a low voice to* Auguste.

[Auguste, *considerably disturbed before, breaks out into an angry exclamation.*

[Wilhelm, *a prey to contradictory emotions, has been leaning against the table, nervously drumming on it; now his face flushes angrily.*

[Robert *seems toward the end of the song to be suffering physically from the sound. The impossibility of remaining free from its influence seems to torment him, and to embitter him more and more. Immediately after the conclusion of the stanza he delivers himself involuntarily, as if it were a fragment of an inner monologue, of the words,* "Childish tomfoolery!" *in a biting and contemptuous tone.*

[*Everybody, including the* Doctor, *has heard the words, and they all stare at* Robert *in horror.*

Mrs. Scholz, Auguste.

Robert!

[Dr. Scholz *checks an impulse of violent anger.*

[Wilhelm, *pale with rage, takes several steps toward* Robert.

Mrs. Scholz

[*Rushes in front of him, embraces him.*] Wilhelm! For my sake, for my sake!

Wilhelm

Very well. For your sake, mother!

[*He walks around the room struggling with himself. At this moment the second stanza begins. Scarcely have the first tones reached his ear, when he comes to a decision, as the result of which he starts toward the door of the side room.*

He lies in the manger,
The dear little boy;
While Mary and Joseph
Gaze on Him with joy.
The good simple shepherds
Are kneeling in love:
A chorus of angels
Floats joyous above.

Mrs. Scholz

[*Steps in his way.*] Wilhelm! What are you going to do?

Wilhelm

[*In an outburst of indignation.*] I'm going to have them stop singing.

AUGUSTE

Are you crazy?

WILHELM

Never you mind! I say, they shall stop singing.

MRS. SCHOLZ

But be a little — You're certainly the — All right, then you'll not see *me* any more this evening.

ROBERT

Don't go, mother! Let him do it, if he wants to! It's his own private affair!

WILHELM

Robert! Don't carry this thing too far! Take my advice! You played the sentimental act a while ago, and that makes you all the more repulsive to me now.

ROBERT

That's a fact. Sentimental act. I'm of the same opinion —

[WILHELM *starts for the side room again.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Stopping him again.*] Oh Lordolordolord, child, why must you?

[*The second stanza is finished.*

WILHELM

Because the whole gang of you aren't worth it.

ROBERT

[*Stepping close to* WILHELM, *with a defiant, significant look in his eyes.*] But perhaps *you* are?

Mrs. Scholz

Oh, my Lord, you'll begin all over again!
[*The third stanza begins.*

The glad shepherd children
With faces so brown,
Bring milk, butter, honey,
To Bethlehem town;
A heaping fruit basket
All glowing and red,
A shining white lambkin
With flower-crowned head.

Wilhelm

They must stop!

Mrs. Scholz

[*Holding him again.*] My boy!

Wilhelm

It is simply too shameful for words. It's blasphemy! It's a crime against those two, for us to listen to them. I — I swear it makes me blush with shame for the crowd of you!

Auguste

[*Piqued.*] Well, now, I guess we're not so much wickeder and more contemptible than everybody else, after all.

Wilhelm

Auguste! It turns my stomach to think of it!

Auguste

All right, very well. It's clear that we've all taken second place with you suddenly. Now you can find fault with everything about your sister.

Now this isn't right, and that isn't right. But your Miss Ida —

WILHELM

[*Beside himself, interrupting her.*] Don't speak that name again!

AUGUSTE

Well now, I guess I can speak about Ida —

WILHELM

Leave that name alone, I tell you!

AUGUSTE

Have you gone raving mad? I guess I can. I tell you she's no angel from heaven, either.

WILHELM

[*Shrieking.*] Be still, I tell you!

AUGUSTE

[*Turning her back to him.*] Oh, well, you're just in love, that's all.

WILHELM

[*Seizing* AUGUSTE *roughly by the shoulder.*] See here, woman, I —

ROBERT

[*Seizing* WILHELM's *arm, speaks coldly, bringing each word out distinctly.*] Wilhelm, are you going to do the same thing again?

WILHELM

The devil!

AUGUSTE

Have you got anything to say? You? who raised your hand against your own father?

DR. SCHOLZ

[*In a voice trembling with anger, in a tone of absolute command.*] Auguste! Leave the room! this minute!

AUGUSTE

Well now, I'd like to know —

DR. SCHOLZ

You will leave the room this minute!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, my good Lord, why don't you take me to yourself? [*In a half-weeping tone.*] Auguste! Do you hear! Obey your father!

ROBERT

Why, mother? She shouldn't do anything of the sort. She's no child any longer. Times have changed, by the Lord they have!

DR. SCHOLZ

But I haven't changed. I'm the master in this house. I'll show you that!

ROBERT

Ridiculous!

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Shrieking.*] Rob — ber and mur — derer! I — disinherit you! I'll throw you out in the street.

ROBERT

This is simply comical.

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Conquers a fearful outburst of anger, and*

speaks with ominous calmness and firmness.] You or I, one of us leaves the house this moment.

ROBERT

I, of course, and I shall be very glad to do so.

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Half commanding, half entreating.*] Robert, you must stay.

DR. SCHOLZ

He goes.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Fritz! Listen to me! He is the only one — in the long, long years he hasn't forgotten us, he —

DR. SCHOLZ

He or I —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Give in this time, Fritz, for my sake!

DR. SCHOLZ

Stop that! He or I!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, you needn't have anything to do with each other, as far as I'm concerned; it can be arranged all right — but —

DR. SCHOLZ

Very well, I give in. I give into you and your pack of wolves. You and your pack, you've always won the victory!

WILHELM

Don't go, father! Or if you do go, let me go with you this time!

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Drawing back involuntarily, between anger and horror.*] Don't bother me, vagabond! [*Hunting blindly for his effects.*] Thieves and loafers, wretched vagabonds!

WILHELM

[*With an outburst of indignation.*] Father! And *you* dare call us that! And it was you who made us that. No, no, father, I didn't mean to say that! Let me go with you, I will stay with you, let me make up for all I have —

[*He has laid his hand on his father's arm.*

DR. SCHOLZ

[*As if paralysed with horror and disgust, draws heavily away.*] Let me go! I tell you — the schemes of my persecutors are going to come to — I'm sure — to come to grief. Are these the people, these mighty folks — and are these mighty folks men? A man like me, who is partly to blame, but anyway is entirely — and — through and through, and . . . in short . . .

WILHELM

Father! Father! Oh, my dear father! Try to collect yourself, try to think where you are!

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Swaying to the rhythm of the words, softly.*] And through and through — and so in short.

WILHELM

[*Embracing him, in an instinctive effort to stop the motion.*] Try, father, try to think!

DR. SCHOLZ

[*Pushing at him, like a little child.*] Oh, don't hit me! Oh, don't punish me!

WILHELM

For God's sake, father!

DR. SCHOLZ

Don't hit me! Don't — hit — me again!

[*He makes convulsive efforts to free himself from* WILHELM'S *arms.*

WILHELM

May my hand rot off, dear father, you mustn't believe — father, you mustn't think —

[DR. SCHOLZ *frees himself and starts away, followed by* WILHELM.

WILHELM

Strike *me!* *You* strike *me!*

DR. SCHOLZ

Please, please, please — help!

[IDA *appears in the door from the side room, pale as death.*

WILHELM

[*Catches up with his father, embraces him anew.*] Oh, *you* strike *me!*

DR. SCHOLZ

[*In* WILHELM'S *arms, collapses into a chair.*] I — ah — ah! I — think — it's all over — with — me!

WILHELM

Father! ! !

[Mrs. Scholz *and* Auguste *have fallen in terror into each other's arms.* Robert, *as pale as death, has not moved: but his face bears an expression of invincible determination.*

THE THIRD ACT

It is nearly dark in the hall. All the lights have been extinguished except one or two in the chandelier and one on the Christmas tree. Forward, near the stove, by the table, his back to the side room, sits WILHELM, *his elbows on the table, evidently buried in a heavy, comfortless revery.* ROBERT *and* MRS. SCHOLZ *enter the hall at the same time, coming from the dining-room.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Apparently exhausted, speaks in subdued tones.*] Well, boy! Don't talk any more! One doesn't know what to do any more. Suppose it's dangerous . . . ?

ROBERT

You aren't alone, mother!

MRS. SCHOLZ

But do you mean — you can't be in earnest, you surely can't! It's an awful thing! Where in the world will you go in the middle of the night?

ROBERT

If that were the worst of it! There's a train every few minutes, and I must leave here! This time I simply can't stand it — anyway, it's the best thing for all of us.

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*In her whining tone.*] It's been so nice in these last years! And now those two have to come back! And since the Buchners have been here everything has been all turned around, everything.

ROBERT

You ought to be glad you have them, mother!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, I could have done it all myself, very well.

ROBERT

I thought he wouldn't let any of us come near him — Father?

MRS. SCHOLZ

[*Weeping.*] It's just as if I had done him some harm. And yet, I have always been the only one . . . I know I've always done my best — now tell the truth, Robert, I've always cooked the things he liked to eat — he's always had his warm stockings —

ROBERT

Now, don't talk like that, mother! What's the use of always complaining?

MRS. SCHOLZ

You can say what you please! It's very nice to talk, but when I've worn myself out all my life long, when I've racked my brains to find out how to do things best, and then strangers come in, and are preferred to me!

ROBERT

Is Ida still with him?

MRS. SCHOLZ

An utter stranger. Oh, I'd rather die right here! And this rascal! This Friebe! — this rascal! How he gives himself airs! But Gustie put it to him! Auguste told him the truth to his face, all right! This fellow's getting too bold, he hustled her right out of the room. The girl was beside herself. And she's his own daughter — no — oh, dear, dear, what I've stood in my life! I hope nobody else will ever have to stand as much.

ROBERT

[*Involuntarily, with a slight sigh.*] So has father.

MRS. SCHOLZ

What?

ROBERT

Nothing. So has father, I said.

MRS. SCHOLZ

What do you mean?

ROBERT

Why, father has stood a good deal, too.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, it hasn't been my fault if he has. He didn't have to worry about me. My demands have been modest.

ROBERT

[*Sceptically.*] Well now — well now —

MRS. SCHOLZ

Just wait, when I'm laid in my grave — then you'll see, all right —

ROBERT

Oh, mother, don't begin that! I've heard that a hundred times already.

MRS. SCHOLZ

All right! You'll find out all right — just remember, and pretty soon, too.

ROBERT

Oh, mother, I don't deny that you've suffered a great deal from father; but you've both suffered. I can't see why you keep telling me . . .

MRS. SCHOLZ

Nonsense! What did I ever fail to do for him, *I'd* like to know?

ROBERT

[*Without hesitation.*] If you're absolutely determined to know: You failed to understand him!

MRS. SCHOLZ

I can't pretend to be wiser than I am.

ROBERT

Nobody ever asked you to be that. But — oh, it's rank foolishness to keep on talking about it now!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, this is the last blow . . . [*Weeping.*] Now I suppose it's all my fault that he lies sick there —

ROBERT

I didn't say that, at all.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, you *did* say that.

ROBERT

Oh, mother! I'd better go — I — mother, I simply can't —

MRS. SCHOLZ

No! I want to know — what I have to reproach myself with. I have a good conscience.

ROBERT

Well, I hope you'll keep it then! May the Lord help you keep it, is all I have to say! [*Protesting.*] Now, please don't let's say any more!

MRS. SCHOLZ

I suppose you mean about the money?

ROBERT

I don't mean about anything.

MRS. SCHOLZ

My father and mother worked hard to earn it. What woman would have stood it? Your father just threw it out at the window.

ROBERT

Your uncle cheated you out of it.

MRS. SCHOLZ

We couldn't foretell that!

ROBERT

And father was good enough to earn it back . . .

MRS. SCHOLZ

He might just as easily have speculated wrongly!

[ROBERT *laughs bitterly.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

I know I'm a simple creature. Your father was

too high toned for me. His mother was high toned, just like him. But my father had been as poor as a church mouse. I've got the poverty blood in me! I can't make myself over different. Oh, well, the few years will go past soon enough. The Lord will set me free in His good time.

ROBERT

You'd better wish to be set free from the Lord!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Fy! Nobody but a rascal would say that. Oh — set free from the Lord, then I'd take a knife and stick it into me, here into my heart, into my ribs. What an awful thing that is to say — to be set free from the Lord! What would have happened to me if I hadn't had my Lord! . . . Are you really going away, Robert?

ROBERT

[*On the stairs.*] Oh, be still, mother! I need rest — rest. [*Exit.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

Lord, yes! Lord, yes! You make an old woman's life hard enough! [*To* WILHELM, *who all through the scene has been brooding at his table, and has paid no attention to the conversation.*] Well, what do you think of that? Robert wants to go away!

WILHELM

Well, let him go!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Tell me, what are you sitting like that all the

time for? That doesn't do any good, child! Try to be reasonable!

WILHELM

[*Sighs deeply.*] Yes, yes!

MRS. SCHOLZ

It don't do any good to sigh! Just look at me! I'm an old woman. If I sat down the way you're doing. What's done is done. There's no use trying to change it now. Listen! Read something! Get up and get a book and distract your mind!

WILHELM

[*Sighs.*] Oh, mother! Let me alone, please! I'm not disturbing anybody! Is Friebe back from the doctor's?

MRS. SCHOLZ

No, not yet. That's what I always say, whenever you need a doctor, there's never any to be had.

WILHELM

It's serious, isn't it? Oh, I wonder whether he'll recover at all?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Lord, yes! who knows!

[WILHELM *stares at his mother, and suddenly breaks into a wild sob, and lets his forehead fall on his hands.*

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, yes, my boy; who would have thought of that happening? I don't mean to say — I don't want to throw the guilt on anybody, but to-day of all days you didn't need to begin quarrelling again. Well, we must always hope for the best. At least

his mind isn't wandering any more. If Ida just doesn't make a mistake. Some of the rest of us have had a hundred times more experience. How can he be so friendly to Ida? I guess I don't want to bite him! Of course Ida's a nice girl, she is that. And you, my boy [*tapping him on the head*] you can thank the good Lord,— you might wait a long time before you found another one like Ida! [*Cautiously, confidentially.*] Tell me, Wilhelm, are the Buchners well off?

WILHELM

[*Irascibly.*] Oh, don't bother me! How should I know that? What difference does that make to me?

MRS. SCHOLZ

Well, what have I done? I guess a person can ask a question, you cross bear, you!

WILHELM

Oh, mother, spare me! If you have a spark of pity for me — let me alone! Don't bother about me — let me alone!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Yes, yes, that's the way it always is — I'm always in the way. An old woman like me isn't good for anything but to browbeat.

[AUGUSTE *and* MRS. BUCHNER *enter hastily from the side room.*

AUGUSTE

Mother!

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, Lord! What is it?

AUGUSTE

Friebe's come back.

MRS. BUCHNER

Friebe didn't bring a doctor with him.

AUGUSTE

Father asked him, and then he said —

MRS. BUCHNER

He doesn't want a doctor!

AUGUSTE

He's swearing horribly — he says he'll throw him outdoors.

MRS. BUCHNER

Friebe won't go again.

AUGUSTE

You go and talk to Friebe!

MRS. BUCHNER

Yes, you go and talk to him! It's absolutely necessary that —

AUGUSTE

We must have a doctor. I'll go myself if he won't. I'm not afraid, even if I have to walk to Friedrichshagen.

MRS. SCHOLZ

Oh, what a thing to say! Now, in the middle of the night. Just wait, wait — let me attend to it!

[MRS. SCHOLZ, MRS. BUCHNER, *and* AUGUSTE *return hastily to the side room.*

[MRS. BUCHNER *has scarcely disappeared,*

when she returns again. Before she went out, she turned her eyes furtively and anxiously several times toward Wilhelm, *who sits silent and gloomy by his table. A glance tells* Mrs. Buchner *that there is no one in the room but herself and* Wilhelm. *Hastily at first, then with increasing hesitation, she approaches* Wilhelm.

Wilhelm

[*Who has noticed her approach, raises his head.*] What do — do you want? I told you all about it before.

Mrs. Buchner

But I wouldn't believe it — I couldn't think it could be true.

Wilhelm

And now — do you believe it?

Mrs. Buchner

I — don't know —

Wilhelm

Why don't you tell me the truth? Tell me — right out — yes. It had to come out like this — it was all so ridiculously natural. How could I ever have let myself be blinded so?

Mrs. Buchner

[*With feverish zeal.*] Wilhelm! I think now, as I always thought, that you're a good, noble man. I swear to you that I never doubted you for a second. Even now, though I'm so anxious and afraid —

WILHELM

[*Rises and takes a deep and difficult breath.*] It seems to me now — I've known it for a long time, and yet —

MRS. BUCHNER

I come to you, Wilhelm, I say to you frankly — it's come over me all of a sudden. I'm so horribly anxious about Ida.

WILHELM

I must confess . . . just now —

MRS. BUCHNER

I know well enough you love the child. Nobody could love her any more dearly than you do! I know you will try with all your might to make my daughter happy. You will not lack the will, but now — now there have been so many things — now I've seen so much here, and heard so much. Now a great deal — a great deal of what you told me before has become clear to me. I didn't understand you. I thought you were a pessimist. A great deal of what you said I didn't take seriously at all. I came here with a firm, cheerful faith. I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself. I thought I would do wonders. I would guide such natures — weak, foolish I! Now I'm losing all my faith. I'm feeling all at once my fearful responsibility; I'm responsible for my child, for my Ida. Every mother is responsible for her child. Speak to me, Wilhelm! Tell me everything is going to be well, after all! Tell me we will be happy! You and Ida will be happy. Prove to me that I have no need to be afraid or anxious, Wilhelm!

WILHELM

Why have you let it come so far? I warned you and warned you. What did I say to you? I said this: All of us, the Scholz family, are incurably diseased, that I'm the worst of all, that we're hopeless wrecks. Don't bind your daughter to a cripple, I've said to you. Why wouldn't you believe me?

MRS. BUCHNER

I don't know. I don't know, myself.

WILHELM

And you put me to sleep, you silenced my conscience. And now — I've been half mad with happiness. I've lived through moments, tasted them, and then others too . . . the most terrible battles of my life. And now you want — now I must try — perhaps, even perhaps —

MRS. BUCHNER

Wilhelm, I have the highest opinion of you. I know that you are ready for any sacrifice. But Ida — if it is too late for her — if it is more than she can bear!

WILHELM

Why weren't you willing to believe me? You don't know what it costs me now. I struggled and built myself up step by step — oh, it was so hard! so hard! This house here lay behind me. I was almost saved. Now I've been sucked into it again. Why did you have to let it come so far? Why —

MRS. BUCHNER

[*In tears.*] I don't know! I don't know any-

thing about it! I raised the child. She was everything to me; to work for her happiness was my only calling on earth. Then you came into our home. I came to like you. I thought of your happiness, too, I — perhaps I shouldn't have done it. Perhaps I thought a great deal of *your* happiness, and, who knows? — at last, most of all . . . of *your* happiness.

[*For a moment the two gaze in terror into each other's eyes.*

WILHELM

Mrs. Buchner!

[MRS. BUCHNER, *covering her face with her hands as if overcome with shame, goes out weeping through the stairway door.*

[WILHELM *instinctively takes several steps after her, tries to master his emotion, but falls suddenly against the wall, shaken with sobs.*

IDA

[*Her face is pale, her manner very serious and anxious. She steps softly to* WILHELM, *embraces him and presses her cheek against his.*] Oh, Willy! Listen: sad days come and then — isn't it so, Willy? bright days come again. You mustn't let yourself be so — so utterly and completely crushed.

WILHELM

[*Stammering passionately.*] Ida! My only love! My dearest! Sweet, how can I — how could I even live without you? Your voice, your words, your whole sweet, wonderful self, your hands, your kind, true hands —

IDA

And what about me? Do you think I want to live without *you*? No, sweetheart! We will put our arms around each other and not let go — tight — tight — and as long as we're like that —

WILHELM

Yes, yes! But suppose it can't always be like that?

IDA

Oh, don't talk like that!

WILHELM

I only mean — you can never tell — one of us might die —

IDA

Oh, but we're young.

WILHELM

That doesn't make any difference. It will have to come at last. I'm sure I'll not live to be very old.

IDA

[*Intensely.*] Then I'll put my arms around you, then I'll press up close to you, then I'll go with you.

WILHELM

Ida, people say such things. But you won't do that.

IDA

I will do that!

WILHELM

You think you will now. You don't know how quickly people forget.

IDA

I couldn't breathe without you!

WILHELM

You just imagine so —

IDA

No, no, no, Wilhelm!

WILHELM

To love like that would be pure folly. You don't want to stake everything on one card.

IDA

I don't understand you exactly.

WILHELM

Well, it's I — see here. [*In a tone of exasperation.*] Ah, Ida, the theme is not very delightful! How is father?

IDA

He's asleep now, but why, what's the matter with you?

WILHELM

[*Walking about.*] I have these moods. I don't know why. [*Suddenly gnashing his teeth.*] There are times, I tell you — when I'm mad and desperate, and can't control myself — when I'm like this, it seems as if I could throw myself down five stories, head first, to the pavement; the idea is really a . . . voluptuous one.

IDA

God forbid! You mustn't let yourself think of such things, Willy!

WILHELM

Why shouldn't I, I'd like to know? Why should such fellows as I sponge our way along between heaven and earth? Useless creatures. To put ourselves out of the way, that would be something, then we'd be doing something useful at least once.

IDA

Of course it isn't to be wondered at. You're excited and unnerved.

WILHELM

[*In a rough, disdainful tone.*] Let me alone; you don't understand what I'm talking about! [*Frightened at himself, suddenly changing his manner.*] Oh, dearest! You mustn't be hard on me. You'd better go now! I don't want to hurt you. And feeling as I do now, I can't be responsible for myself.

[IDA *kisses* WILHELM *silently on the mouth, then goes into the side room.*

[WILHELM *looks after her, starts in the same direction, stops, shows a face full of fear and astonishment, and grasps at his head like one who has caught himself in evil thoughts. In the meantime* ROBERT *has entered from the stairs.*

[ROBERT, *his hat in his right hand, his overcoat and a travelling rug over his arm, in his left hand a shawl strap, walks to the table and deposits his effects on it.*

WILHELM

[*Looks at him, and after he has studied him a while.*] Where are you going?

ROBERT

Away.

WILHELM

Now?

ROBERT

Why not? [*Spreading out the shawl strap.*] I've had enough, and good measure, even! Mother will in the future — in the future have to celebrate the Christmas holidays without me. [*Looking around at the stove.*] It's cold here.

WILHELM

It's freezing cold outside.

ROBERT

[*Rolling up the rug.*] There! It was thawing at ten.

WILHELM

There's a change in the weather.

ROBERT

How can I get down the hill on the ice?

WILHELM

The moon's shining!

ROBERT

Even if it is —

WILHELM

He isn't out of his head any longer.

ROBERT

Is that so?

WILHELM

He doesn't want a doctor.

ROBERT

So?

WILHELM

It came so suddenly, I —

ROBERT

Hm — yes, yes!

WILHELM

It must have been in him.

ROBERT

Of course. If it hadn't been he wouldn't have come home —

WILHELM

It's horrible! How will it end?

ROBERT

What can a person do?

WILHELM

My God, I don't know what I am to do, if he dies. With what I know! With what I've learned this time! I don't know how — and now there's the remorse too, the stings of conscience. O! What do you think? What is the thing to do, after all?

ROBERT

Oh, my boy! You'll have a lot to do if you try to straighten things out. The old man is a little different — that's true — our idea wasn't exactly right. But, Lord, that doesn't change matters at all.

WILHELM

I tell you, and I'm in dead earnest about it —

I'd be glad to give up my whole wretched life if I could give his back to him.

ROBERT

[*Pulling on his overcoat.*] That isn't very sensible, my boy — in my opinion. Now, see here, I'm headed for a nice, warm little office, where I sit down with my back to the stove, cross my legs under the table, light up this same pipe here, and write, in all calmness of mind, it is to be hoped, such, well, you know, such jokes, such advertising jokes: traveler in Africa, at the point of death, you know, and then I generally have a caravan come, laden with the article we sell. My boss is very well satisfied; it goes through the advertising columns of as many newspapers as possible; and the principal thing is, when I sit like that, you know, and hear the gas flame hissing above me all day long — from time to time a glance into the court — the court of a factory like that is a wonderful thing, really! A romantic thing, I tell you! Well, there's not a thing on earth can bother me there.

WILHELM

I'd rather be dead.

ROBERT

Matter of taste! For me it's the ideal corner of all corners. Has a man got to be thrown off his balance all the time, has a man got to be driven crazy? I'll need a matter of two or three days to get back the little philosophy of life I'm able to command.

WILHELM

You can say what you will; *I* call that cowardly.

ROBERT

All right, call it so if you like. But sooner or later you'll come round to my point of view. Father came round to this point of view at last, too. Father and you are enough alike, to be taken one for the other. You're the same sort of idealist. In the year '48 father started out on the barricades, and he ends up as a lonely hypochondriac. The thing to do is to get used to the world and yourself *in time,* my boy! Before you've wasted your strength.

WILHELM

Or else go to work at yourself to make yourself *different.*

ROBERT

Catch me doing that! I am what I am. I have a right to be what I am.

WILHELM

Then come out and demand your rights like a man!

ROBERT

I'll take care not to do that, because I want to *get* my rights. The moral Philistines are for the present in the majority. Well, I must go now — so — if you'll take my advice, beware of the so-called good resolutions!

WILHELM

[*Coldly.*] What do you mean by that?

ROBERT

Simply this. You mustn't try to do things that your whole natural bent makes impossible for you.

WILHELM

For example?

ROBERT

Well! For example there come to me a lot of fellows who drive me mad chattering about ideals. We must fight for human ideals, and all that stuff! I must fight for others! Ridiculous assumption! And for what and to what end? Now I know you, and I know that such demands would worry you; you would feel like slinking around like a thief. What a wretched scoundrel I am, you would want to keep saying to yourself. Am I not right? Well, pretty soon you'll come to good resolutions, and they weigh a fellow down, I know that. I used to stagger around with a hundred different brands of good resolutions on my back — did it for years — and it's no fun, *I* tell you!

WILHELM

I don't understand exactly what you're driving at.

ROBERT

I haven't anything perfectly definite in mind; the uneasiness that's troubling you now — has other causes, I know. For my part, at least, when I used to notice — I've gone through the same sort of thing in the past — but as soon as I noticed that the business was more than I could handle, I generally came to a sudden decision and turned my back on it.

WILHELM

And that's a suggestion, is it?

ROBERT

Suggestion? Not that I know of. Well, once more: take care of yourself —

WILHELM

Tell me now, quite objectively, it has a certain interest for me — it is only because —

ROBERT

Well, what do you want me to tell you?

WILHELM

You said something yourself a while ago —

ROBERT

When?

WILHELM

When we were talking about father.

ROBERT

Oh, yes, I remember — what did I say then?

WILHELM

You said things might turn out all right for Ida and me.

ROBERT

Oh, yes, your love affair. Did I say that?

WILHELM

You said that.

ROBERT

Well, yes, I said a number of things then.

WILHELM

I suppose that means — you have backed out of a number of things you said then.

ROBERT

That's right, I have.

WILHELM

But as for — this special thing?

ROBERT

Your love affair?

WILHELM

Yes.

ROBERT

Is it a very important thing to you?

WILHELM

Yes, perhaps.

ROBERT

Yes.

WILHELM

So you don't think any longer — that we —

ROBERT

No.

WILHELM

Very well — thank you. You are frank — thank you. But suppose — suppose I turn my back on the whole thing — let's say nothing about what that would mean to me — suppose we say I go off with you right here — what would happen to Ida then?

ROBERT

How — Ida? [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] Hm, yes, yes, that isn't so easy, that is, well, I wouldn't worry about that very much.

WILHELM

Robert! You're as treacherous as ever. Just as you always were.

ROBERT

Treacherous? What do you mean? No, you're entirely mistaken! I'm not interested enough to be treacherous — in this matter, I mean. Really, now, I don't believe —

WILHELM

I know better, I tell you. You don't think you know more about this girl than I do? It's a fact — you can be sure of it — she has a certain deep feeling for me, and I can't help it. I'm not boasting about it at all. Now what will become of her if I go off?

ROBERT

How — is it really troubling you to know?

WILHELM

Of course, yes, of course.

ROBERT

Well, now please tell me first — suppose you marry, what will become of Ida?

WILHELM

That's more than anybody on earth can tell.

ROBERT

Oh, yes, they can! Everybody knows: Mother.

WILHELM

As if Ida were anything like mother!

ROBERT

Or you anything like father.

WILHELM

Every person is entirely different from every other person.

ROBERT

You'd be very glad to believe that, wouldn't you? Let the thing drop! You're asking too much of yourself. You're the incarnate contradiction of your own theory.

WILHELM

What do you mean by that?

ROBERT

Why, you know well enough.

WILHELM

But a man can develop beyond all that.

ROBERT

If he has had the proper training, that is.

WILHELM

Oh, there's no use talking any more.

ROBERT

Exactly my opinion.

WILHELM

It isn't getting us anywhere. [*Indignantly, losing control of himself.*] You want to ruin me! I'm sacrificed to a plot! You've conspired against us, you're trying to wreck me! You're trying to ruin me!

ROBERT

That was father's constant remark.

WILHELM

It's ridiculous. What you say is simply ridiculous! Haven't I the right to say that — aren't you trying to separate me from Ida? It is — to tell the truth — I haven't the words, it's such monstrous presumption, such brutality, it's simply beyond all comprehension! I'm to have mercy on Ida! Who's having mercy on me, I'd like to know? Name him, if there's any one! Who is there?

ROBERT

Of course! If you take it like that, of course!

WILHELM

You're asking me to make a sacrifice. Without the slightest preparation I'm to make the insanest sacrifice you ever heard of! I'm to —

ROBERT

Cheer up, and spare your words. Of course, under the circumstances, you have a perfect right to hold on to the girl.

WILHELM

Under the circumstanoes? Under what circumstances, pray tell me?

ROBERT

You were talking about Ida, a moment ago, as I recall —

WILHELM

Yes — well — what?

ROBERT

Now you're talking about yourself. I didn't mean to say anything — well — in one word, if

you don't care what happens to the girl — if you have the requisite amount of, well, let's say, ruthlessness in your makeup, if you take her, like a new coat or hat, or something like that —

WILHELM

Robert! Absolutely heartless as you are, you're right this time. I'll go with you — away — not far — and then — then I'm through with all of you. Yes, yes, I am, don't say a word — now I'm through surely — absolutely —

[ROBERT *looks at him in astonishment, and then shrugs his shoulders.*

WILHELM

[*With increasing violence.*] See here! Don't trouble yourself, you can't do it, you can't deceive me with your innocent calmness. You're right, I admit, but the thing that has brought you to the right thought, I say it to your face, is the wretchedest envy. It's simply miserable ill-will. You know very well that I would make an honest struggle to become in some measure worthy of her at last. You know very well how this girl is purifying me with her purity. But you don't want that to happen! You don't want to know that I'm purified. Why don't you? Just because you've got to stay, yourself, just as you are, because she loves me and not you! And that's the reason you've watched me the whole evening with your detective eye, you've given me to understand over and over that you know something about me — all right! You're entirely right! I'm vicious through and through. There isn't a particle of purity in me any more. Black as I am, I don't

belong with such innocence, and I have determined not to commit a crime. But you, Robert! All this doesn't make you any cleaner; it's a good thing for you that you no longer have any sense of shame!

[Robert *during the last third of* Wilhelm's *speech has taken his things and started toward the door. The knob in his hand, he stops as if he would speak, changes his mind, shrugs his shoulders resignedly, and goes quietly out.*

Wilhelm

[*Calling after him.*] Robert! Robert!

Ida

[*Enters from the side room.*] Whom are you calling?

Wilhelm

Oh — you're here!

Ida

The doctor's in there, Wilhelm — he says it's very serious, it —

Voice of Mrs. Scholz

[*Wailing.*] My dear, good husband, oh! oh, my dear, good husband!

Wilhelm

What have I done? What have I done now?

Ida

It breaks my heart. I'd like to — not to ask you, I — but there must be something — there's something the matter with you, Willy!

WILHELM

There's nothing at all the matter with me. I'd like to go off and be alone again. There's where I belong, Ida.

IDA

Why? I don't understand at all.

WILHELM

[*Roughly and violently.*] Yes, yes, yes! That's the old song — I don't understand you. I don't understand you! Mother and father have been talking different languages all their life long; you don't understand me! You don't know me! You have the flat illusions of an ignorant child, and so I have nothing to do in the future except to conceal myself from you, to hide and hide, till I'm nothing more than a miserable deceiver and scoundrel.

[IDA *has been looking at* WILHELM *in amazement; now she begins to cry.*

WILHELM

Now you see. This is my real face. And I need only forget for a moment the part I'm playing before you, and it shows up again. You can't endure my real face. You're crying, and you'd cry for years, if I didn't take pity on you. No, Ida, there must be nothing between us. I've come to a firm decision.

IDA

[*Throwing her arms about his neck.*] That isn't true! That can never be true!

WILHELM

Think of what you've seen here! Shall we

found another household like this? Shall we found this home over again?

IDA

It will be different! It will be better, Wilhelm!

WILHELM

How can you say that?

IDA

I *feel* it.

WILHELM

But you're throwing yourself headlong into destruction, Ida! I'm dragging you to destruction!

IDA

I'm not afraid. I'm not at all afraid of that, Wilhelm! Take courage again! Just give me your hand again! Then I'll be able to be something to you— don't push me away from you — I won't cry any more, I promise you —

WILHELM

Let me go! You love for the first time! You love an illusion. I have thrown myself away, again and again. I have desecrated your sex in others — I am an outcast.

IDA

[*Embracing him in an ecstasy of weeping.*] You are *mine!* You are *mine!*

WILHELM

I am not worthy of you!

IDA

Oh, don't say that! Before you I'm small, oh,

how small! I'm only like a little, little moth. Wilhelm, I'm nothing without you! I am everything with you. Don't abandon whom you have — made!

WILHELM

Ida! Ida, I? [*They embrace and kiss each other, between laughing and crying.*] *I'm* not to abandon *you?* Yes, what do you say now, you bad —

IDA

Now, you'll promise me now —

WILHELM

I'll swear it, now —

[*A terrible cry from the next room interrupts her. Startled and frightened* IDA *and* WILHELM *stare into each other's eyes.*

VOICE OF MRS. SCHOLZ

My husband — is dying! My good, dear husband, he's dying — my husband —

[*Loud weeping.*

WILHELM

Good God! God! What? Father!! Father!!

[*Rushes toward the side room;* IDA *stops him halfway.*

IDA

Wilhelm! Come to yourself! And don't go without me!

[FRIEDE *comes from the next room, shaken with sobs, and vanishes into the kitchen.*

AUGUSTE

[*Comes close on* FRIEDE'S *heels. Stopping before* WILHELM, *she drags out the words with difficulty.*] Who is to blame for this? Who? Who?

[*She falls against the table and leans upon it, groaning in a strange dull and hollow fashion. The loud weeping of* MRS. SCHOLZ *is heard constantly.*

WILHELM

[*Bursts out violently.*] Auguste!

IDA

[*On* WILHELM'S *breast, calming him, in a trembling voice.*] Wilhelm, I believe your father is gone.

[WILHELM *is about to burst out again, is calmed by* IDA, *fights down his agony, seeks and finds* IDA'S *hand, which he presses convulsively in his, and goes toward the side room, hand in hand with the girl, erect and composed.*

EINSAME MENSCHEN

LONELY LIVES PEOPLE

I place this drama into the hands of those who have lived it.

LIST OF PERSONS

VOCKERAT.	MISS ANNA MAHR.
MRS. VOCKERAT.	PASTOR KOLLIN.
JOHN VOCKERAT.	MRS. LEHMANN.
KITTY VOCKERAT, *John's Wife.*	A MAID.
BRAUN.	A VEGETABLE WOMAN.
	A TRAIN PORTER.

The action of the play passes at Friedrichshagen, near Berlin, in a country house with a garden stretching down to a little lake, the Müggelsee.

The scene of all five acts is the same.

A large room, comfortably furnished to serve both as dining and sitting-room. Cottage piano; bookcase, at both sides of which hang photographs and engravings of modern men of science (as well as of theologians), among them Haeckel and Darwin. Above the piano, portrait of a pastor in gown and bands. The other pictures are reproductions of sacred subjects by Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

One door in the left wall, two in the right. The door on the left leads into JOHN VOCKERAT'S *study. One of those on the right leads into a bedroom, the other into the entrance-hall.*

At the back two bow windows and a glass door look on to a verandah, the garden, lake, and the Müggel Hills beyond.

Time: The present day.

THE FIRST ACT

The room is empty. From the study, the door of which is ajar, comes the sound of a pastor's voice raised in exhortation. After a few seconds it stops. Then the chords of the chorale, played on a harmonium, are heard.

During the first bars the door is thrown open. Enter MRS. VOCKERAT, SEN., KITTY VOCKERAT, *and the* NURSE *with a baby in long-clothes. All in gala attire.*

MRS. VOCKERAT: *Matronly appearance; between fifty and sixty. Black silk dress. Hair parted in the middle and waved.* KITTY: *twenty-one; middle height, slightly built, pale, brunette, gentle in manner. Advanced stage of convalescence.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Takes her daughter-in-law's hand and caresses it.*] Well, Kitty, was it not beautiful, what he said?

[KITTY *smiles constrainedly, nods mechanically, and turns towards the child.*

NURSE

The sweet little man! There, there! [*She rocks him in her arms.*] He's going to sleep now, though, he is — sh! sh! sh! nothing more to say to any one, he hasn't. [*She removes a riband that*

is annoying the child.] There, there! — hm! hm! hm! Sleep, ducky, sleep. [*Hums with closed lips the tune of "Sleep, baby, sleep!"*] But what a saucy face the little man made at the Pastor — like this! [*Imitates it.*] Ha! ha! till the water came, ha! ha! That was too much for him. [*She sings.*] "Hush-a-by, baby, on the tree top!" Ha! ha! what a roar he gave then —ow, ow, ow, ow! Sleep, baby, sleep. . . .

[*Beats time with her foot.*

[Kitty *laughs rather hysterically*

Mrs. Vockerat

Just look, Kitty! how sweet! What beautiful long eyelashes the little fellow has!

Nurse

Ha, ha! he got these from his mamma. Sleep, baby. . . . Reg'lar fringes they are.

Mrs. Vockerat

It's true, Kitty — he's his mother all over!

[Kitty *shakes her head energetically in deprecation.*

Mrs. Vockerat

He really is, though.

Kitty

[*Speaking with an effort.*] But, mother dear — that's not what I want at all. He's *not* to be like me. I —

[*She gets no farther.*

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Tries to change the subject.*] He's a fine strong child.

NURSE

A splendid fellow.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Look at these fists, Kitty.

NURSE

Fists like — like a Goliath.

[KITTY *kisses the child.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

He has a beautiful broad chest, has he not?

NURSE

I'll answer for that, ma'am — it's like a general's. Sh! sh! He'll be a match for any five some day.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Come, come now, nurse.

[*She and Kitty laugh.*

NURSE

And it's good sound blood he has too, sh! sh! And the blood's the life, you know, sh! sh! [*Half singing.*] Hush-a-by! Come along — come along We're go — ing, go — ing to by — bye: sh! sh! sh! Sleep, baby . . .

[*Exit into bedroom.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Closes the door behind the* NURSE, *and turns round, shaking her head and laughing.*] What a woman that is! But she's a first-rate nurse, Kitty. I'm glad you have been so lucky.

KITTY

A general — well, well!

[*She laughs. The laugh becomes hysterical, and threatens to end in tears.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Alarmed.*] Kitty! — Kitty!

[KITTY *controls herself.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*With her arms round* KITTY.] My little Kate!

KITTY

There's — nothing — the matter with me.

MRS. VOCKERAT

But I'm sure there is! And no wonder, for you have not got back your strength yet. Come and lie down for a few minutes.

KITTY

I'm — I'm quite well now, mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

But you'll lie down for a little all the same.

KITTY

Oh no — please not! Besides, it is just dinner-time.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*At the table, on which stand cake and wine, pouring out a glass of wine.*] There, anyhow swallow a mouthful of that. Take a sip! It's nice and sweet.

[KITTY *drinks.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

That puts a little strength into you, does it not? Whatever were you thinking of, my dear child? You must still be very careful — that's all — and take things as they come! and don't worry yourself! — It will all come right. Now that baby has come, everything will be different. John will quiet down again. . . .

KITTY

Oh, mother, if he only would!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Think of his delight when the boy was born! He has always been crazy about children. You may be quite sure about it. It's always the way. A marriage without children isn't half a marriage — it's nothing at all. How I have prayed God to bless you two with a child! When I think how it was with ourselves. . . . We dragged through four years, papa and I, but what sort of a life was it! Then God heard our prayers and sent us John. And it was not till then, Kitty, that we really began to live! Only wait till the first three months are over, and you'll see what a joy your child will be to you. Yes, yes, Kitty! you are a lucky woman; you have your boy, you have a husband who loves you, there is enough for you all to live on; what more would you have?

KITTY

I daresay it is foolish. Yes, I am sure it is. I really do often worry unnecessarily.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You must not be angry with me, Kitty, but —

but you would find far more peace, far more — if . . . When things are troubling me very badly, and I pray, pray earnestly, cast all my care on our dear Father in heaven, my burden is lightened, I feel glad at heart. . . . No, no! the learned men may say what they like for me — there is a God, Kitty! — a faithful Father in heaven; you may be sure of that. A man without religion is bad enough; but a woman without religion. . . . Don't be angry with me, Kitty. That's all! That's all! I'll say no more about it. I have prayed so much. I pray every day: and God will answer my prayers; I know He will. Dear, good people you both are, already. He will make you His own believing children. [*She kisses her daughter. The chorale is at an end.*] Dear, dear! I'm forgetting myself.

KITTY

If I were only a little stronger, mamma dear! I can't bear to sit idly and see you toiling away.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*At door into hall.*] It's not worth talking about! It's a holiday time to me. When you are quite well again, I'll sit still and you shall wait on me. [*Exit.*

[*As* KITTY *is going toward the bedroom,* BRAUN *enters from the study, where the baptism has taken place.*

[BRAUN, *aged twenty-six; pale face; wearied expression; hollow-eyed; slight; downy moustache; hair very closely cropped; dress, in the fashion, but verging on the shabby-genteel. He is phleg-*

matic, generally dissatisfied, and consequently ill-humoured.

BRAUN

Well! [*Standing, takes a cigarette from his case.*] That's over, anyhow!

KITTY

And you see you stood it very well, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

[*Lights his cigarette.*] I should have been better employed — painting. It's a sin and a shame to waste such weather!

KITTY

I daresay you'll manage to make up for lost time.

BRAUN

Yes. We're a lazy lot. I know it well. [*Sits down at the table.*] After all, there *is* something about a baptism!

KITTY

Did you notice John?

BRAUN

[*Quickly.*] Extraordinarily restless, you mean! I was afraid the whole time that something would happen; once I thought he was actually going to break in on the Pastor's address. But can you imagine any sane man talking such stuff?

KITTY

Oh, Mr. Braun!

BRAUN

You know it was, Mrs. John! Except for that,

no complaints to make. I may paint a scene of the kind some day. Rare good subject!

KITTY

Are you in earnest, Mr. Braun?

BRAUN

That picture, were it painted, should exhale a perfume of olden days — a sort of mixture, you know, of Rhine wine, cake, snuff, and wax candles; a sort of. . . . It ought to produce a pleasing, swimmy feeling, a kind of youthful intoxication. . . .

[*Enter* JOHN VOCKERAT *from the study: twenty-eight; middle height; fair, intellectual face; expressive play of feature; restless in all his movements; faultlessly dressed — dress-coat, white tie and gloves. He sighs, takes off his gloves.*

BRAUN

Well, did it stir you thoroughly?

JOHN

Can't say it did. What about dinner, Kitty?

KITTY

[*Hesitatingly.*] I thought we might have it out on the verandah.

JOHN

What do you mean? Is it laid out there?

KITTY

[*Timidly.*] Would you rather not? I thought . . .

JOHN

Kitty, for goodness' sake, don't go on as if you were frightened! I'm not going to eat you up. I can't stand it.

KITTY

[*Compelling herself to speak firmly.*] I have had it laid out on the verandah.

JOHN

All right! Of course! Very nice out there! As if I were an ogre!

BRAUN

[*Mutters.*] Oh, stop that nagging!

JOHN

[*Putting his arm round* KITTY, *good-humouredly.*] It's quite true, Kitty. You go on as if I were a regular tyrant. A second Uncle Otto, or something in that line. You must really try to get out of the habit.

KITTY

But you *are* sometimes angry about things, John. . . .

JOHN

[*With renewed violence.*] And what if I am? That's no misfortune. Row with me a bit! Stand up for yourself! I can't help my nature. Don't let yourself be trampled on. I know nothing so utterly objectionable as your patient, Madonna-like way of . . .

KITTY

There now, Jack! Don't excite yourself for nothing. It's not worth talking about.

JOHN

[*Over eager.*] Oh, oh, oh! There you're very far wrong. I'm not excited at all, not in the very least. It's extraordinary the way I am supposed always to get excited. [BRAUN *is going to speak.*] All right then! You all know better than I do. Good! We'll change the subject. . . . [*Sighs.*] Well, well, well! !

BRAUN

It grows tiresome in time, that eternal sighing and sighing.

JOHN

[*Puts his hand to his breast, his face twitches with pain.*] Oh, oh!

BRAUN

What now?

JOHN

Nothing! Only the old story — these pains in my chest — like stabs they are.

BRAUN

Stab back again, Jack.

JOHN

That's all very well, my boy, but it's no laughing matter. Oh, oh . . . !

KITTY

You mustn't be nervous about it, Jack dear. It's nothing serious.

JOHN

You forget that I have twice had inflammation of the lungs.

BRAUN

And that man calls himself a soldier — an officer of the reserve!

JOHN

Much I care about that!

BRAUN

Old hypochondriac! Stop that nonsense! Have something to eat! It's the sermon that is sticking in your throat.

JOHN

To tell the truth, Braun . . . the way you speak of baptism. . . . You know the light in which I look upon it. Certainly not from the Christian point of view. Yet it is a thing held sacred by so many.

BRAUN

But not by me.

JOHN

I know that. Nor by me personally. Just as little as by you. But you have surely some small degree of reverence left for a ceremony, which for so . . .

BRAUN

Bother you and your reverence!

JOHN

I just wish you had a little of it.

BRAUN

Yes, you would like one to have reverence for the very sticks and stones that trip one up on the road. Sheer sentimentality!

JOHN

Excuse me, Braun, but I. . . . Perhaps another time I'll be able to take it from you better than to-day.

[*Exit on to the verandah, where he is seen doing Swedish gymnastic exercises.*

[BRAUN *rises, looks embarrassed, laughs pointlessly.*

KITTY

[*Standing at her work-table.*] You have hurt him, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

[*With an embarrassed laugh, brusquely.*] It can't be helped. I have a deadly hatred of all compromise.

KITTY

[*After a pause.*] You misjudge him.

BRAUN

In what way?

KITTY

I can't tell you. . . . I am not able to express myself. But anyhow . . . John's struggles are genuine.

BRAUN

When did he begin to be so dreadfully irritable again, I should like to know?

KITTY

He has been so ever since we had to arrange about the baptism. I was beginning to be so happy . . . then that unsettled him again altogether.

And yet it's nothing but a form. Were we for the sake of that to make his old parents utterly miserable? . . . no, cerainly not. Just think of them — these pious, strictly orthodox people. You must see yourself that it could not be helped, Mr. Braun.

JOHN

[*Opens the glass-door and calls in.*] Good people, I was rather ill-tempered. Cheer up! We're all right again. [*Exit into garden.*

BRAUN

You big old idiot!

[*Pause.*]

KITTY

He is really touching sometimes, poor John!

[*Pause.*]

[*Enter old* VOCKERAT *and* PASTOR KOLLIN *noisily from the study.* VOCKERAT *is upwards of sixty. Grey hair, red beard, freckled face and hands. Strong and broad-shouldered, inclining to stoutness. He has begun to stoop and walks with short steps. Overflowing with affection and friendliness. Cheerful, simple, optimistic temperament.* PASTOR KOLLIN, *old man of seventy-three; wears a skull-cap and takes snuff.*

VOCKERAT

[*Leading in the* PASTOR *by the hand, speaking in a soft, slightly husky voice.*] Many, many thanks, my dear sir! Our best thanks for your

beautiful words. They were real refreshment to my soul, yes, yes! And here's my dear little daughter! [*Goes up to* Kitty, *embraces and kisses her heartily.*] My dear, dear Kitty! My very heartiest good wishes! [*Kiss.*] Once more, in his great goodness, God has, yes . . . has in his never-ending goodness revealed himself to us. [*Kiss.*] His mercy and goodness are boundless. Now he will, yes . . . he will now have the little one too in his fatherly, yes — fatherly keeping, yes, yes! [*To* Braun.] Allow me, Mr. Braun, to shake hands with you too. [*Re-enter* John; Vockerat *goes to meet him.*] And here is my dear boy John! [*Kiss. Hearty embrace. Half-laughing from excess of emotion.*] I am happy in your happiness. I am truly happy. I can't be grateful enough to God, yes, yes!

Pastor Kollin

[*Trembles a little, short-winded; shakes hands solemnly with* Kitty.] Once more God's richest blessing! [*Shakes hand with* John.] God's richest blessing!

Vockerat

And now, my dear sir, may we offer you something? — What! you won't take anything?

John

At least a glass of wine, sir. I'll fetch a fresh bottle this moment.

Pastor Kollin

Don't put yourself to any trouble on my account; I beg of you, don't.

JOHN

May I give you port or . . .

PASTOR KOLLIN

Quite the same to me, quite the same. But — *I beg* of you — entreat you! — not to take any trouble on my account. [*Exit* JOHN.] I must *be* . . .

[*He looks for his hat, overcoat, and long muffler, which are on a rack beside the door.*

VOCKERAT

You are not going already, Mr. Kollin?

PASTOR KOLLIN

I must indeed, Mr. Vockerat! My sermon, you know. Who is there to preach for me to-morrow?

[BRAUN *holds the* PASTOR'S *overcoat ready for him.*

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Putting his arms into the sleeves.*] Thank you, young man!

KITTY

Would you not do us the honour, Mr. Kollin, to take a plain dinner with us?

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Busy with his muffler.*] Very kind of you — very kind, Mrs. Vockerat! But . . .

VOCKERAT

My dear Pastor, you must really give us that pleasure.

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Hesitating.*] But you know — you know . . .

VOCKERAT

If we all ask it as a great favour.

PASTOR KOLLIN

And what about the holy word of God, eh, that I am to preach to-morrow? Eh! preach, you know — to-morrow — God's word.

[JOHN *has come in again, and pours out some glasses of wine.*

VOCKERAT

[*Takes a glass; tastes it before presenting.*] In the meantime . . . you won't refuse us the pleasure of drinking a glass of wine with us.

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Takes the glass from* VOCKERAT.] No — I couldn't do that — you know. Well, here is to the health . . . to the health of the dear child! [*They all touch glasses.*] May he be a good, true child of God all his life long!

VOCKERAT

[*Quietly.*] God grant it!

JOHN

[*Offering the* PASTOR *a cigar.*] You smoke, sir, don't you?

PASTOR KOLLIN

Thanks, I do! [*Takes a cigar, cuts off the end.*] Thanks! [*Lights his cigar at* JOHN'S.] Pf! pf! [*Has great difficulty in getting it to draw. At last it burns. Looks round.*] What a

pretty room this is, pf, pf — such good taste, you know! [*He first glances generally at the pictures, then examines them more closely. Stops before an engraving representing Jacob wrestling with the Angel.*] I — will not let — thee go — pf, pf! except thou bless me.

[*Mutters to himself in a satisfied tone.*

KITTY

[*A little uneasily.*] Papa dear, don't you think . . . it's so pleasant out in the garden now. Ever so much warmer than it is indoors. Perhaps you and Mr. Kollin would like . . . I can easily have the tray carried out.

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Has arrived at the portraits of the scientists beside the bookcase.*] A mixed company! I suppose these are — pf, pf! — your old professors, Dr. Vockerat? Well, well!

JOHN

[*Slightly embarrassed.*] Yes, sir, they are . . . that is . . . of course with the exception of Darwin.

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Peering closely at the pictures.*] Darwin? Darwin? I see — Darwin! Yes, yes! hm! Well, you know! [*He spells out.*] Ernst — Haeckel. Autograph, too, no less! Pf, pf! [*With a touch of irony.*] And so *he* was one of your teachers?

JOHN

[*Quickly and rather fierily.*] Yes, and I am proud of it, Mr. Kollin. . . .

VOCKERAT

My daughter is right, Mr. Kollin. It is much warmer out of doors. If it is all the same to you, I'll carry out the wine and our glasses.

PASTOR KOLLIN

Certainly! — pf, pf! — of course, of course! — pf, pf! — but only for a few minutes, you know — only for a few minutes! [*Going out with* VOCKERAT, *a little hurt.*] Man, Mr. Vockerat, man is, you know — pf, pf! — no longer God's image, you know. The monkey, you know — pf, pf! — according to the conclusions of natural science, I mean . . .

[*Exit on to the verandah, from which both gentlemen, gesticulating animatedly, descend into the garden.* BRAUN *laughs to himself.*

JOHN

What are you laughing at?

BRAUN

What, I? Because I am pleased.

JOHN

You are pleased?

BRAUN

Yes. Any reason why I shouldn't be?

JOHN

None at all! none at all! [*He walks up and down, sighs, and suddenly says to* KITTY, *who is in the act of leaving the room.*] I say, I'm afraid I expressed myself rather strongly.

KITTY

I think you did — rather.

JOHN

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Well, good people all! it's their own fault. I can't stand it. There's a limit to everything. If they will provoke me . . .

KITTY

Oh, it was nothing very bad!

JOHN

Was it not?

KITTY

I shouldn't wonder if he never noticed it.

JOHN

[*Walking about, scratching his head.*] Still, it makes me feel uncomfortable.

BRAUN

Well, it's always something for you to be cross about, Jack.

JOHN

[*Suddenly furious.*] The devil! — can't they let me alone? They had better not carry it too far, or — once my patience gives way . . .

BRAUN

Wouldn't be the worst thing that could happen!

JOHN

[*Turning on* BRAUN.] As for you, it's nothing but brag. Idea-braggarts, that's what you and your friends are — nothing more! What good can it do me to tell the old man the truth, I should like

to know? When you begin like that, Braun, you cure me of my ill-humour at once. I see instantly how perfectly childish it is of me to let such people cause me annoyance. It is as if I were to be annoyed because pines bear needles and not leaves. One must be objective, my boy.

BRAUN

In science, perhaps, but not in life.

JOHN

Friends, friends! The whole thing is hateful to me! . . . hateful! . . . you don't know how hateful! [*Stamps about.*

BRAUN

[*Walking from the stove, by which he has been standing, to the table, and putting the stump of his cigarette into the ash-tray.*] And do you suppose it's not equally so to me? And often enough too! But to be perpetually moaning and groaning because of it — I'll be hanged if that's the way to take it!

JOHN

[*Mood changed, laughing.*] Come, come! for Heaven's sake don't excite yourself. There is no question of perpetual moaning and groaning. An occasional sigh does no harm. It's a gasp for air, nothing worse than that. No, no — my view of life is by no means so dark as yours; I'm not nearly so far on the road to bankruptcy as you are.

BRAUN

Quite possible.

JOHN

Are you pretending that you are a model character?

BRAUN

Not in the very least.

JOHN

Oh, bankrupt, bankrupt! what *is* being bankrupt? You are no more bankrupt than I am. I just wish now that I had not spoiled the governor's and the pastor's pleasure.

KITTY

[*Embracing* JOHN.] Dear old Jack! Cheer up, cheer up!

JOHN

And my work is weighing on my mind, too. It's a fortnight again since I have been able to touch it.

BRAUN

You are a coward! You don't acknowledge to yourself what a poor thing it is to . . .

JOHN

[*Who has not heard.*] What?

BRAUN

It's wet when it rains, it's white when it snows, there's wind when it blows.

JOHN

Ass!

KITTY

Cheer up, Jack! Think of our little Philip! We'll shut ourselves up here, and all be so com-

fortable together this winter. You'll see how well the work will get on then.

JOHN

I have finished the fourth chapter, Braun, do you know?

BRAUN

[*Carelessly.*] Have you?

JOHN

Look at this manuscript! The mere list of authorities quoted takes up twelve pages. That means work, eh? I promise you there will be head-shaking over this.

BRAUN

No doubt.

JOHN

Here, for instance [*he turns over the leaves of his manuscript*] here I attack Dubois-Reymond.

BRAUN

I say, Jack, don't read it to me just now. I'm in such a beastly bad humour . . . some other time.

JOHN

[*Resignedly.*] No, no! of course not! I never meant to. I . . .

KITTY

Besides, dinner is just ready.

JOHN

No, of course not! I never even thought of it; I was only — oh, dear, dear!

[*Sighing, he puts the manuscript back into the bookcase.*

KITTY

Cheer up, Jack! cheer up!

JOHN

I'm perfectly cheerful, Kitty.

KITTY

No, Jack; you were, but you're not now.

JOHN

If only one person in the wide world cared about me at all! It's not much I ask for. The least little bit of appreciation, the least little scrap of understanding of my work.

KITTY

Now, you are to be reasonable, Jack, and not go plaguing yourself, but have patience. You'll see the time will come when they will acknowledge . . .

JOHN

But in the meantime? Do you imagine that it's easy? with no support at all? . . . Do you think a man's able to stand that till his time comes?

KITTY

Yes, I do. Come, Jack, when your thoughts are too much for you, the only thing is to get away from them. Come and look at little Philip. He's so sweet when he's asleep. He always lies like this [*imitating the position of his arms*] clenching his little fists. He's too funny. Come along!

JOHN

[*To* BRAUN.] Won't you come too?

BRAUN

Not I, Jack; I take no stock in babies. I'm going for a turn in the garden.

[*Exit by verandah.*

JOHN

A queer fellow, that.

KITTY

[*Opens the bedroom door cautiously.*] You've no idea how perfectly sweet he is! Hush — h! quiet! quite quiet. . . .

[*Exit both, on tiptoe, and hand in hand.*

[MRS. VOCKERAT *and a* MAID *have been occupied laying the table on the verandah. Now a loud sound is heard of crockery falling and smashing. A sudden short scream, and the* MAID, *grown pale, rushes through the room — from verandah towards entrance-hall.* MRS. VOCKERAT *follows, scolding.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

This is really too much of a good thing, Minna! Never a day but you break something! And that beautiful mayonnaise! [*Exit* MAID.] Such a thing would never happen in my house. I'd teach these maids a lesson!

JOHN

[*Hearing the noise, comes from the bedroom.*] What's the matter, mother? [*Puts his arm round her, soothingly.*] Quiet, quiet now! Mustn't excite yourself, little mother!

KITTY

[*Opening the door a little.*] What ever was it?

JOHN

Nothing! nothing at all.

[KITTY *draws back her head.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Just listen to him! Nothing at all, indeed! She has broken a good ten shillings' worth of dishes. Nothing at all! And all that beautiful mayonnaise! Well. . . . [*Pushes* JOHN *away.*

JOHN

Mama, mama! we'll do very well without the mayonnaise.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, no, Jack. You and Kitty don't take matters seriously enough. You forget that you can't afford to waste things. You're far too easy with the girls. It only makes them uppish.

JOHN

Well, but, if they're always handling the dishes . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'm not a tyrant either. I keep my servants six, seven years. But what they break they pay for. Of course in *your* house they're fed on cream-tarts and caviare! No, no! These are your fine new ideas; but they don't go down with me — they don't.

JOHN

[*Cheerfully.*] Come, now, mama, don't be cross.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'm not a bit cross, boy. [*Kisses him.*] But you're a hare-brained fellow all the same. You're not fit for this world.

[*The* MAID *is seen on the verandah, cleaning up, and lifting the broken china.*

JOHN

[*With a slight start.*] Is that what you think, mother? [*Jocosely.*] But what a face you're making, mama . . . Why are you looking like that — so frightened — so anxious?

MRS. VOCKERAT

I, John? What do you mean? What sort of face am I making? I don't know what you're talking about!

JOHN

Look at me again.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You silly fellow! [*Looks fixedly at him.*

JOHN

That's all right now.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Silly boy! What I want, Jack, is that you should be happy — a contented man, my son.

JOHN

Ah, mother! you'll never live to see that. The contented people are nothing but the drones in the hive. A worthless set.

MRS. VOCKERAT

But what's the good of all that if . . .

JOHN

[*More serious and more moved.*] That boy in there, he's to be just such another, a thoroughly discontented man.

MRS. VOCKERAT

God forbid, Jack!

JOHN

But he's to be a very different fellow from me. I'll take good care of that.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Man proposes and God disposes. We did our best, too.

JOHN

Well, little mother, I'm not such a dreadful disappointment to you after all, am I?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Of course you're not. That's not what I mean — not at all. . . . But you say yourself that Philip is to be different. And — and — you know what I mean, John. You are an unbeliever . . . you don't even believe in God. You've really and truly no religion at all. That cannot fail to grieve us.

JOHN

Religion, religion! I certainly don't believe that God looks like a man, and acts like one, and that He has a son, and so on.

MRS. VOCKERAT

But, John, we must believe that.

JOHN

No, mother! We can have a religion without believing such things. [*In a rather solemn tone.*] Whoever seeks to know Nature seeks to know God. God *is* nature.

"What were a God impelling from without?
Who, on His finger, whirled the All about?
'Tis from within that He must move the world!"

That's what Goethe says, mama, and he knew more about it than all the pastors and elders in the world put together.

MRS. VOCKERAT

O boy, boy! When I hear you talk like that, I . . . It's a sad pity that ever you gave up the church. I remember well what the superintendent said to me after your trial sermon . . .

JOHN

[*Amused.*] Mother, mother! that's a very old story, now!

[*Door bell rings.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

The door! I thought it was open.

[*Takes a few steps towards door into entrance-hall.*

[*Knock at this door. Enter timidly* MRS. LEHMANN, *the washerwoman, in a shabby, faded, blue print dress.*

MRS. LEHMANN

Good day t' you, ma'am. Good day t' you, sir.

MRS. VOCKERAT *and* JOHN

[*Not quite simultaneously.*] Good day to you, Mrs. Lehmann.

MRS. LEHMANN

You'll not take it amiss, if you please, 'm. I beg pardon, I'm sure. But it's my lodger gentleman I'm lookin' for, ma'am, this half-hour and more.

JOHN

You've come to the right place at last, Mrs. Lehmann. Mr. Braun is here.

MRS. LEHMANN

Thank you, sir. [*Looking round.*] Well, well! if this isn't beautiful!

MRS. VOCKERAT

And how are you, Mrs. Lehmann?

MRS. LEHMANN

O Mrs. Vockerat, ma'am, I've been but in a pore way lately. I've had to send my old man off at last, m'm. It was beyond all bearin'! I'll have to do for my five alone now, Lord help me!

MRS. VOCKERAT

You don't mean to tell me! But —

MRS. LEHMANN

[*Talking faster and faster.*] You see, Mrs. Vockerat, ma'am, it would all be like nothing if I hadn't sich pore health. But it's a pore sufferin' woman I am. And it's nothin' but his conduct that's done it, an' there's no one can't blame me. I says to my old man, says I, Adolf, says I, it's time now as you was a-takin' of yourself off. Go and jine yourself to them as you belongs to, says I, them as you're for ever a-drinkin' with. Go

to them, says I. I'll keep my five children myself, if I've to work my fingers to the bone. See what you can get for *your*self, says I, and then put it down your own throat as fast as ever it will go. What spirit is there in you? says I. If you had as much spirit as that [*snaps her fingers*] in your whole body, you wouldn't have brought your wife and children to sich a pass, says I. Yes, Mrs. Vockerat, m'm, them was my very words; it's as true as I'm standing here; and it went to my very heart to say them, it did — like a knife as you may say. But there was nothing else for it, and if you want me to tell the truth, ma'am, I'm heartily glad things is as they is! And I trusts as how the Lord will stand by me and my five pore children.

[*She sniffs and wipes her eyes.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

If we only always . . .

MRS. LEHMANN

My very words, ma'am; just what I said myself, ma'am! You go your ways, says I. Be off with you, says I. I'm an honest woman and one as can work, says I, and what's more, I can keep what I earns, says I, and there's no fear but what we'll get on somehow. And it's honest I am, Mrs. Vockerat, ma'am. No need to lock things away from me, ma'am — not as much as would go under my finger-nail . . .

JOHN

Do you want to speak to Mr. Braun, Mrs. Lehmann?

MRS. LEHMANN

Well I never. If I hadn't clean forgot! There's a young lady here as would like to speak to him.

[MISS MAHR *puts her head in at the door leading from entrance-hall, but draws back again at once.* JOHN *has noticed it.*

JOHN

Won't you come in? Please do. [*To his mother and* MRS. LEHMANN, *who have seen nothing.*] It was the young lady — she is there. [*To* MRS. LEHMANN.] You ought to have brought her in. [*He opens the door.*] Please come in. You want to speak to my friend Braun, I know.

[*Enter* MISS ANNA MAHR. *She is twenty-four; middle height, with small head, dark, smooth hair, and delicate, mobile features. There is both grace and strength in her unaffected movements. A certain decision and liveliness of manner are softened down by so much modesty and tact that the impression of womanliness is preserved. She is dressed in black.*

MISS ANNA MAHR

I must offer a thousand apologies. I am exceedingly sorry to intrude.

JOHN

I assure you that you are not intruding in the very least.

MISS MAHR

Mrs. Lehmann seemed to be never coming back

again — and I only wanted to say to her — that . . . that I can easily look up Mr. Braun at another time

JOHN

Not at all! I'll call Braun this moment if you will be good enough to take a seat.

MISS MAHR

Thank you very much. [*Remains standing.*] But really I couldn't think of giving so much trouble; I . . .

JOHN

It's not the slightest trouble! I'll have Braun here in a moment.

MISS MAHR

No, I can't allow you to . . .

JOHN

It's a pleasure. Excuse me one moment.

[*Exit by verandah.*

[*Short embarrassed pause.*]

MRS. LEHMANN

Then I'll be off, miss. [*To* MISS MAHR.] You'll be able to find the way back alone.

MISS MAHR

Thank you for coming with me. Here's something for the children. [*Gives her money.*

MRS. LEHMANN

Thank you, miss, thank you! [*To* MRS. VOCKERAT.] The first money that's touched my hand this blessed day, ma'am! And it's the truth I'm tellin' you! No, ma'am, it's no easy matter,

ma'am, but I'll rather, says I, sell myself for a negro slave, says I, than live any longer with such a drunken sot, such a . . . And we've the Lord to trust in, ma'am. And He's never deserted me yet. I'm off to the shop now, ma'am, to get somethin' for my pore little children. [*Exit.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Calls after her.*] Go into the kitchen, Mrs. Lehmann. They'll give you something there. [*Takes a chair herself beside the one* JOHN *has placed for* MISS MAHR.] Do sit down while you are waiting, won't you?

MISS MAHR

[*Seats herself hesitatingly.*] I am not at all tired, I . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

Do you know this neighbourhood well?

MISS MAHR

No. I come from the Russian Baltic Provinces, I . . . [*Embarrassed pause.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

The country about here is very sandy. I don't care for it myself. I'm from the neighbourhood of Breslau. And you would hardly believe how dear everything is here! My husband has a large farm, so we can help the children by sending them things every now and then. . . . Have you seen the lake? Now that's really pretty — the lake *is* pretty, there's no denying it. And we're nice and near it, just on the shore. We have two boats down there at the other end of the garden. But

I can't bear the children to go out rowing; I'm too nervous. May I ask if you are living in Berlin now?

MISS MAHR

Yes. It's my first visit to Berlin. It is a place I have always wanted to see thoroughly.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, yes! Berlin is well worth seeing. But it's very noisy.

MISS MAHR

That it certainly is. Especially when one is accustomed to small towns.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You come . . . if it is not a rude question?

MISS MAHR

From Reval — but I'm on my way back to Zürich, where I have spent the last four years.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Indeed! in Switzerland — beautiful Switzerland. You have relations in Zürich, I suppose?

MISS MAHR

No, I am studying there.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You don't say so! . . . Not at the university?

MISS MAHR

Yes, at the university.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Well, well, I never! You are a student, then? That's most interesting! A real student?

Miss Mahr

Yes, certainly.

Mrs. Vockerat

Well, well! to think of that! And do you mean to tell me that you *like* all that learning?

Miss Mahr

[*Amused.*] Oh, yes, on the whole I do — to a certain extent.

Mrs. Vockerat

Is it possible?

[John *and* Braun *appear on the verandah. The ladies see them and both rise.*

Miss Mahr

Allow me to apologise once more, madam, for this intrusion.

Mrs. Vockerat

No need to do that. It has given me great pleasure to meet a real student for once. Plain people like us get stupid ideas into our heads sometimes. You are a relation of Mr. Braun's?

Miss Mahr

No, we made each other's acquaintance in Paris, at the time of the Exposition.

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Shakes hands with her.*] Good-bye! It has really given me pleasure . . .

Miss Mahr

And I do hope you'll excuse me.

[Mrs. Vockerat *bows; exit by door into entrance hall.*

[Braun *and* John *have deliberated for a moment on the verandah, whereupon* John *seats himself out on the verandah, and* Braun *enters.*

Braun

[*Surprised.*] Miss Mahr! Can it be you?

Miss Mahr

Yes, Mr. Braun — but I hope you won't think that I am so tactless as to . . . It's the fault of that wonderful landlady of yours, Mrs. Lehmann, that I have followed you here.

Braun

Great Cæsar!

Miss Mahr

So *he's* alive yet?

Braun

It would never have occurred to me so much as to dream of this. It's perfectly ripping.

Miss Mahr

Still ripping? Is everything ripping yet? I don't believe you have changed at all.

Braun

Do you think not? But take off your things, Miss Mahr.

Miss Mahr

Certainly not! What are you thinking of, Mr. Braun? I only wanted to see how you were getting on. [*Teasingly.*] And specially to make inquiry about your great picture. Is it on view yet?

BRAUN

It's not in existence yet, Miss Mahr, not even the canvas!

MISS MAHR

That's bad, very bad. And you promised me so faithfully.

BRAUN

Promises are like pie-crust, Miss Mahr. But do please, take off your things.

MISS MAHR

Now I've seen you, I hope you'll . . .

BRAUN

No, no, you must stay here.

MISS MAHR

Here?

BRAUN

Oh! by the bye, I forgot that you didn't know where we are. This is John Vockerat's house. Old John Vockerat — you have heard about him often enough from me. And what's more, you have come in the very nick of time. There's a christening on to-day.

MISS MAHR

No, no! What nonsense you are talking! Besides, I have several errands in town.

BRAUN

The shops are all shut.

MISS MAHR

That doesn't matter; it's only calls I have to

make. But don't suppose you have got rid of me, for all that. We must meet again and have a talk. Besides, I must give you a good scolding, you breaker of promises! I see that you still paint your pictures only in imagination . . .

BRAUN

It's no use beginning until one has come to a clear understanding of what one wants to do. After that, the mere painting is a comparative trifle.

MISS MAHR

That may be so! — possibly!

BRAUN

You needn't think you're going away now, Miss Mahr.

MISS MAHR

Yes, indeed, Mr. Braun. I'll just slip quietly . . .

BRAUN

[*Calls.*] Jack!! Jack!!

MISS MAHR

But, Mr. Braun!

[*Enter* JOHN. *He blushes.*

BRAUN

Allow me! My friend John Vockerat — Miss Anna Mahr.

MISS MAHR *and* JOHN

[*Simultaneously.*] I have heard so much about you.

BRAUN

Fancy, John!—Miss Mahr insists on going off again at once.

JOHN

My wife and all of us would be very sorry indeed if she did. Won't you stay and spend the afternoon with us?

MISS MAHR

I don't know what to say. . . . If you are sure that it is really quite convenient, it will give me much pleasure to do so.

JOHN

Perfectly convenient, I assure you. [*He helps her to take off her jacket, hands it to* BRAUN.] Hang that up, please! I must tell my wife. . . . [*Calls at the bedroom door.*] Kitty!

[*Exit into bedroom.*

MISS MAHR

[*Arranging her dress at the mirror.*] How kind your friend is!

BRAUN

A little too kind, perhaps.

MISS MAHR

Indeed — what do you mean?

BRAUN

I'm only joking. He's a real good fellow — except that he can be a little tiresome when he gets on the subject of his work. You bet he reads his book to you if you stay here this afternoon.

MISS MAHR

What's it about?

BRAUN

Much too learned for me. It's philosophical, critical, psycho-physiological — I don't know what all!

MISS MAHR

But that is very interesting. I'm registered with the faculty of philosophy myself.

BRAUN

Then I can tell you you won't get away in a hurry. He'll be tremendously pleased if you are interested in his work.

JOHN

[*Enters from bedroom.*] Braun!

BRAUN

Well?

JOHN

Go and try if you can relieve Kitty's anxiety, will you? She thinks that one of the child's ribs is sticking out where it ought not to be.

BRAUN

Pshaw!

JOHN

It's nothing at all, but go to her. She is worrying about it.

BRAUN

All right! I'll go. [*Exit into the bedroom.*

JOHN

My wife begs you to excuse her, Miss Mahr.

She'll come in a few minutes. She thinks you might like to see our little garden. Do you care to take a walk round?

MISS MAHR

I should like to, very much.

JOHN

[*Smiling.*] We have quite a nice piece of ground — only rented though, you know. The best thing about it is the pretty lake. Do you know the Müggelsee? [*He hands her her parasol. Both, talking, go toward the verandah door.*] I'm one of those people who hate town life. My ideal is a great park, well walled in. There one could devote one's self undisturbed to one's aims.

MISS MAHR

Epicurean!

JOHN

Yes, quite true! But I assure you it is the only way in which I could possibly . . . Will you not be too cold?

MISS MAHR

Oh, no! I am hardened to all weathers.

[JOHN *lets* MISS MAHR *go first, and follows her on to the verandah, where both stand for a few moments.* JOHN *is seen showing and explaining the view. Then both disappear in the garden.*

[*Enter* BRAUN *from the bedroom, followed by* KITTY.

BRAUN

[*Looks round.*] They've gone out.

KITTY

Oh!

BRAUN

No, no! that rib is in a perfectly natural position.

KITTY

I have such a feeling of oppression.

BRAUN

Oppression? Why?

KITTY

[*Smiling.*] Regular palpitation of the heart.

BRAUN

It's because you're just nervous.

KITTY

Is she very proud?

BRAUN

Who?

KITTY

Miss Mahr, I mean.

BRAUN

Anna Mahr! Proud! Not a bit of it.

KITTY

Well, that's strange! I know *I* should be, if I were . . .

BRAUN

She's not! I can assure you. You do her an injustice there.

KITTY

Not at all! I have an immense respect for her.

BRAUN

Well, well! . . . She can give herself airs on occasion. Then of course one has to take her down a bit.

[*Pause*]

KITTY

I see John has left a page of his manuscript lying there. Now, does she understand anything of that?

BRAUN

I fancy so.

KITTY

Really? Oh, dear! It's a poor figure *we* cut compared with these highly educated women.

BRAUN

I'm not so sure of that! — I know little enough myself.— I'm not a university man. But I'm not overawed by any one's little bit of book-learning.

KITTY

She's a brilliant talker, I've no doubt.

BRAUN

Brilliant? No. She talks . . . very like the rest of us. She's undoubtedly clever; but that — isn't everything.

KITTY

[*Smiling.*] As a girl I was a perfect chatterbox. My tongue went from morning to night about nothing at all. I've cured myself of that, anyhow. But now I make the opposite mistake; now I hardly dare to speak at all. [*Calls out at the*

verandah door.] Mama! you must lay another cover!

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*From the verandah, where she is laying the table.*] Who's coming?

KITTY

The young lady — Mr. Braun's friend.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Who? Yes, yes, I remember. I'll see to it, Kitty.

KITTY

[*Turns towards* BRAUN *again; sighs.*] Yes! it's past all mending! One does one's best — but it's no good — it's too late! [*Stands examining a vase of roses.*] Look how beautiful these are. Fancy having roses still! [*Holds them for* BRAUN *to smell.*] And with such a delicious scent too!

BRAUN

Delicious!

KITTY

[*Returns the vase to its place.*] Is she young?

BRAUN

Who?

KITTY

Miss Mahr.

BRAUN

I really don't know her age.

KITTY

I'm twenty-two already — going down the hill!

BRAUN

Fast. [*Laughs.*

KITTY

I know well what an ignorant, narrow-minded creature I am!

[MRS. VOCKERAT *puts her head in at the door.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Everything is ready. [*Withdraws. Calls from the verandah into the garden.*] Papa! Papa!

[MR. VOCKERAT *and* PASTOR KOLLIN, *both in excellent spirits, come up the verandah steps.*

VOCKERAT

[*At the open door, with the* PASTOR'S *overcoat on his arm.*] Come along, sir! Come in and let me hang up your things. Ha, ha, ha!

[*Laughs heartily.*

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Carrying his hat, muffler and stick, smoking and laughing, interjects.*] Ha, ha, ha! too funny, you know! Pf, pf — never heard anything so funny. [*Laughs.*

VOCKERAT

And it's said to be a perfectly true story, Mr. Kollin. [*Hangs up overcoat.*

PASTOR KOLLIN

"Mr. Becker!" [*Laughs.*] Pf, pf —"Mr. Becker! anything else wanted, sir?"

[*Laughs; hangs up hat and muffler; keeps on skull-cap.*

VOCKERAT

[*Laughing too.*] Mr. Becker. . . . [*To* BRAUN.] It was at a funeral in the country, in our neighbourhood, Mr. Braun. The mourners were all standing round the coffin. [*Quickly, with pantomime of fright.*] All at once something is heard to move. Very likely it was only a chair creaking, or — anyhow something moves. [*Pantomime of horror.*] Every one starts. The beadle is the only one to keep his head — ha, ha, ha! — he's the brave one. He goes cautiously up to the coffin — ha, ha, ha! — and knocks. [*Imitating the beadle's voice, and knocking on the table with his knuckles.*] —" Mr. Becker! — Mr. Becker! anything else wanted, sir? "

[*Fit of hearty laughing.*

PASTOR KOLLIN

[*Laughing.*] Yes, yes! — pf, pf; — that's genuine! I know these beadles.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Comes in from verandah.*] Now, papa, come along! Don't let the soup get cold.

VOCKERAT

Mr. Kollin, will you be so good . . .

PASTOR KOLLIN

You've tricked me into this, you know! [*He puts the end of his cigar into the ash-tray, then offers* MRS. VOCKERAT *his arm.*] May I have the pleasure, Mrs. Vockerat?

VOCKERAT

[*In the act of giving his arm to his daughter-in-law.*] But where is John?

MRS. VOCKERAT

And our young lady? This is too bad of John. Dinner will be . . .

VOCKERAT

[*Jovially.*] How true it is, Mr. Kollin: "There's many a slip"— ha, ha, ha!

PASTOR KOLLIN

"Between the cup and the lip" — ha, ha, ha!

VOCKERAT

Yes, that must have been the lady. We saw a young couple out on the lake. Didn't we, Mr. Kollin?

PASTOR KOLLIN

We did, sir, we did! They must have gone for a row.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Then I think we'll begin without them!

VOCKERAT

Nothing like punctuality.

BRAUN

[*Who has been looking out from the verandah, comes in.*] Here they are! Here they come!

VOCKERAT

And just about time they did!

[*Enter* JOHN *and* MISS MAHR *from the verandah.*

JOHN

Are we very late?

VOCKERAT

No, you're in time yet.

JOHN

I'm very sorry; we had . . . it was so splendid on the lake . . . Allow me! [*Introducing.*] The Reverend Mr. Kollin. My father. My mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I have already had the pleasure.

JOHN

My wife — Miss Mahr.

[*Exeunt all on to the verandah,* MRS. VOCKERAT *taking* PASTOR KOLLIN'S *arm,* KITTY *her father-in-law's,* JOHN *giving his to* MISS MAHR. BRAUN, *alone, bringing up the rear.*

[*The stage is empty. The* NURSE, *in the bedroom, is heard singing softly: "Hush-a-bye, baby," Sound of plates, knives, and forks comes from the verandah. Enter* KITTY *hurriedly, to fetch something from a table-drawer, quickly followed by* JOHN.

JOHN

Now, Kitty — you know you're not to — you know you oughtn't to run. Do let me . . .

KITTY

I'm not so weak as all that.

JOHN

[*Wildly enthusiastic.*] I say, Kitty, that's a splendid girl! Stores of learning! Wonderful independence of judgment! And to think that such

a woman has barely enough to exist upon! At least, so Braun has always told us. I declare I think it's our bounden duty to ask her to stay with us for a few weeks.

KITTY

As you like, John.

JOHN

It's not I. It's you that ought to want it. It's of far greater importance to you than to me. You can learn no end from a woman like that.

KITTY

I must say you're rather horrid, sometimes, John.

JOHN

But is it not true? You ought to be tremendously keen to seize every chance of educating your mind a little. To leave no stone unturned! Certainly you ought to try to get her to stay. I can't understand how any one can be so indifferent.

KITTY

But I'm quite pleased that she should stay, John.

JOHN

No one has a spark of spirit! No one has any initiative! — It's awful!

[PASTOR KOLLIN, *outside, knocks on his glass.*

KITTY

Do go, John! Mr. Kollin is proposing a toast. I'm coming this moment. You may be sure I'm quite in favour of it. But we can't both be away when . . .

JOHN

Come now, Kitty, don't, don't!

[*He kisses away the tears from her eyes and hurries on to the verandah.*

[*The* PASTOR'S *voice is heard. Also the gentle sound of the* NURSE'S *lullaby. A change comes over* KITTY. *As soon as* JOHN *has gone, she seems to turn faint, and has to catch hold of things to support herself by as she tries to make her way back to the verandah. She becomes dizzy, can go no farther, and has to sit down. Stares vacantly; moves her lips without making any sound. Eyes full of tears. The* PASTOR'S *speech comes to an end. Glasses are touched.* KITTY *recovers herself, rises, and moves on towards the verandah.*

THE SECOND ACT

Beautiful autumn morning. MRS. VOCKERAT, *in print dress, with apron and bunch of keys, is arranging the breakfast-table. A party of men passing the house are singing: "God truly shows to them his grace."* MISS ANNA MAHR, *with a basket of grapes on her arm, appears on the verandah from the garden. She stands for a moment listening to the singing, and then, shading her eyes with her hand, looks across the lake into the distance. The music dies away and* ANNA *enters the room. She wears a black wrapper with short sleeves. Black lace scarf thrown over head and neck. Bunch of bright autumn leaves fastened in her dress.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Good morning, Miss Anna.

MISS MAHR

[*Lays down her basket, hurries towards* MRS. VOCKERAT, *and kisses her hand.*] Good morning, Mama Vockerat.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Up so early, Miss Anna?

MISS MAHR

We are gathering the grapes, Dr. Vockerat and I.

MRS. VOCKERAT

It's certainly time they were in. [*Takes one or two from the basket and tastes them.*] They won't turn any sweeter now.— But are you not cold, Miss Anna? [*Touches* MISS MAHR'S *bare arm with her finger.*] You're rather lightly dressed? . . . And the air seems sharp this morning.

MISS MAHR

[*Occupied in spreading out the bunches of grapes carefully on a board.*] It's nice and keen. I don't mind that. Cold suits me. The air is delicious.— The stakes in the lake — I mean the stakes the boats are fastened to — they were white with hoar-frost — early this morning: — it looked quite beautiful. But everything here is beautiful. . . . Can I do anything to help you now, Mama Vockerat?

MRS. VOCKERAT

If you wouldn't mind handing me over the sugar-basin.

MISS MAHR

[*Has placed the sugar-basin on the table. Still bending over it, looks up sideways.*] You are not angry when I call you Mama Vockerat, are you?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Laughs.*] Why should that make me angry?

MISS MAHR

It makes me so happy that you allow me to do it. [*Impetuously kisses* MRS. VOCKERAT.] I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for allowing me to be here.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, Miss Anna!

MISS MAHR

I feel so happy with you all. You are all so sweet to me. You are such good people.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Now did any one . . . ! You are covered with gossamers.

[*Picks the threads off* ANNA'S *dress.*

MISS MAHR

It's such a happy life, this family life. I never knew what it was before.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Still picking off threads.*] Don't say too much, Miss Anna, it's not lucky. Stop a minute! — look at this . . . regular strings!

MISS MAHR

Are you superstitious, Mama Vockerat?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Not I, my dear! We know that we may trust in God's goodness. Yet things are not everything one could wish them to be.

MISS MAHR

You don't really mean that.— I'm sure you are all . . . No, no! you must not say that!

MRS. VOCKERAT

You are quite right. I won't say it. It is wrong of me to grumble. [*Changes the subject.*] We are all enjoying having you with us. [*Mysteriously.*] You do John so much good.

Miss Mahr

[*Surprised; changes colour; suddenly and eagerly.*] Do you really like me a little, then?

Mrs. Vockerat

I like you very much, dear.

Miss Mahr

But not so much as I do you. I love you as if you were my own mother. [*Takes up the basket, in the act of returning to the garden.*] Dr. Vockerat is so kind; he is almost too tender-hearted.

Mrs. Vockerat

In what way?

Miss Mahr

Why, in every way! Yesterday, for instance, we met a tipsy man in the street. The children were just coming out of school, and the grown-up people too were teasing him. Quite a crowd had collected in front of the little castle . . .

Mrs. Vockerat

I know! That's the very sort of thing John can't bear. It maddens him. He has often got himself into trouble by interfering.

Miss Mahr

And do you not admire him for it, Mama Vockerat?

Mrs. Vockerat

Admire him? Well — perhaps I do. He's certainly a kind-hearted fellow. But when you come to think, what's the good of it? Kind-hearted he may be, but what of that? He has forgotten his

God. That's no small grief, I can assure you, Miss Mahr, to a mother . . . to parents — who have, I may say, made it the object of their lives to bring up their son to be a true Christian. [*She blows her nose to hide her emotion.*] I have had a wretched cold for several days. . . . [*Occupied in dusting; after a pause.*] He is a good boy, and of course we are thankful for that, and yet it only makes it all doubly sad. And it's easy to see that he's being punished already — there is no blessing on his labours. Always at it! restless and hurried! And all to no purpose, for it's plain enough that he doesn't get on.— And what a child he was! . . . A perfect wonder! I remember Pastor Schmidel . . . He surprised every one. In the fifth form when he was thirteen — done with school at sixteen — and now? Now most of them have left him far behind. Some that were not half so clever got good appointments long ago.

MISS MAHR

The thing seems so natural to me. It simply proves that Dr. Vockerat is not content to follow the beaten track. Some people must work unfettered. Dr. Vockerat is one of those who are striking out new paths.

MRS. VOCKERAT

But there's nothing to be gained by that, Miss Anna! He's only wearing himself out. I'd a hundred times rather see him a plain farmer — or a gardener — or in any other small way, if he could only give up that brooding. . . . But don't let me make you sad, Miss Anna. It comes over me sometimes, and then I can hardly believe it true. Then

when I've grieved over things for a bit, I say to myself again: God will order everything for the best. Yes, yes! you smile at that. I'm an old-fashioned woman. I put my trust in Him — in Him that's above, I mean: no power on earth can separate me from Him.

MISS MAHR

I'd never wish it to. And I was not smiling, Mama Vockerat. And now you are quite cheerful again yourself. Come out for a little, won't you? It's lovely out on the verandah.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, no! I should catch cold. Besides, I have other things to do. You go — and bring in John. Breakfast is ready. [*Exit* MISS MAHR.

[MRS. VOCKERAT *goes on dusting. The sound of fifes and drums is heard. She hurries to the window. The sounds die away gradually.*

[*Enter* KITTY, *in a morning wrapper, from bedroom.*

KITTY

[*Languidly.*] There are far too many people about on Sundays.

MRS. VOCKERAT

That was a gymnastic club from Berlin, Kitty. Splendid strong fellows! Good morning, child. How have you slept? You don't look particularly well.

KITTY

Baby woke me twice, and it was a long time be-

fore I fell asleep again. Stop, mother! I must try to remember . . . I must think.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'm sure you ought to give in, child, and let nurse take baby at night.

KITTY

[*Gently reproachful.*] Oh, mother! you know! . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

But why not?

KITTY

You know I won't do that.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You'll likely be obliged to do it in the end.

KITTY

[*Annoyed.*] I will not be separated from him — from my own child. A poor little baby without a mother . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

Now Kitty, Kitty! who ever thought of such a thing? Come, come! I must get you something — shall it be coffee? And shall I butter a roll for you, or . . .

KITTY

[*Sitting at the table, exhausted.*] Thank you, mother, if it's not too much trouble. [MRS. VOCKERAT *butters the roll; after a pause,* KITTY *continues.*] But where is John?

MRS. VOCKERAT

They are taking in the grapes; he and Miss Anna.

KITTY

[*Resting her chin on her hand; slowly.*] She is nice, mother, isn't she?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, I must say I like her.

KITTY

And yet, mother, you know you would never allow a word to be said in favour of the New Woman.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Still one must be fair, and there's no denying that . . .

KITTY

[*Musingly.*] So gentle and womanly. Never puts herself forward, though she knows so much, and is so clever all round. That's what I admire in her. Don't you, mama? That she never makes any show of her learning. . . . I've been quite happy about John lately. Don't you notice, mother, that he's always so cheerful now?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Surprised.*] Yes, dear, you're right. He's sometimes in quite high spirits.

KITTY

Isn't he, little mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

That's because he has got some one to hold forth to on these learned subjects of his.

KITTY

Which is of the greatest importance to him.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No doubt! no doubt!

[*Pause.*]

KITTY

I agree with Miss Mahr on many points. She was saying lately that we women live in a condition of degradation. I think she's quite right there. It is what I feel very often.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, these are matters I don't trouble about. And she knows better, too, than to talk that way to an old experienced woman like me. I'm too old and I've seen too much.

KITTY

But she's right, mother. It's as clear as daylight that she's right. We are really and truly a despised and ill-used sex. Only think that there is still a law — so she told me yesterday — which allows the husband to inflict a moderate amount of corporal punishment on his wife.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I didn't know that. And I'll not discuss the matter. I daresay it's nothing so very bad. But if you want to please me, Kitty, don't meddle with these new ideas. They do nothing but confuse people, and destroy their peace of mind.— I'm go-

ing for your coffee, child.— That's my opinion, Kitty. [*Exit.*

[Kitty *sits with her elbow on the table, resting her chin on her hand.* John *and* Miss Mahr, *talking loudly and laughing, suddenly pass the windows.* Kitty *starts, trembles, and rises to look after them, with an anxious expression and breathing hard.* Mrs. Vockerat *is heard coming with the coffee. She enters and finds* Kitty *at the table in the position in which she left her.*

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Pours out coffee.*] There now, that will revive you.

[*Enter* Miss Mahr *and* John *from the verandah.*

Mrs. Vockerat

That's right. You're just in time.

John

[*Leaves the door open.*] We'll not shut the door. The sun is quite warm already — have you hurt yourself, Miss Anna?

Miss Mahr

[*Drawing some long vine sprays after her.*] No, not at all. The trellis was so wet that I slipped, with the scissors in my hand. [*Hastens to* Kitty, *takes both her hands and kisses her on her forehead.*] Good morning, Mrs. John. Oh, what cold hands you have!

[*Rubs her hands to warm them.*

JOHN

[*Kisses* KITTY'S *cheek from behind.*] Good morning, Kitty! [*Affecting surprise, jocularly.*] Heavens! what does she look like again! Miserable! Like some poor little sick chicken!

MRS. VOCKERAT

It's you that are bringing the cold in with you. It is almost time we had fires. But come along now! [*Has poured out coffee for all.*

MISS MAHR

[*Decorates the table with tendrils of vine.*] Something pretty.

KITTY

How lovely!

JOHN

[*Takes his seat.*] I put it to you both; is Miss Anna not a different creature to-day from what she was a week ago — when she arrived?

MISS MAHR

I am too well off here. I really ought not to stay longer.

MRS. VOCKERAT

The country air agrees with her.

JOHN

And who was it that would not, and would not . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

I wonder what papa is doing?

JOHN

Counting the time till you come back to him.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Not so bad as that. He has plenty to do. The winter wheat is sown now, that's true; still, he wrote that I was to stay as long as I was needed.

JOHN

He'll come for you, mother, won't he?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, whenever I write. [*To* MISS MAHR.] He is glad of any opportunity to see the children again. And now there's the little grandson, too! I'll never forget his excitement the morning your telegram came: "Fine boy." The dear man was almost out of his mind with joy.

KITTY

Dear papa! You must really go back to him soon! It would be too selfish of us . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

That's all very fine! You get some colour into your cheeks first.

MISS MAHR

I should be here! You mustn't undervalue me! I know all about housekeeping. You have no idea what fine dishes I could cook for you — Russian ones! — Borschtsch or pillau. [*All laugh.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*With unconscious eagerness.*] No, no! I'm certainly not going yet.

KITTY

Well, mother, if it's really not asking too much of you . . .

[*Pause*]

JOHN

Give me the honey, Kitty.

KITTY

Why, here comes Braun!

[*Enter* BRAUN; *overcoat, hat, umbrella, travelling-bag, book under his arm. Bored expression. Drags himself along wearisomely.*

BRAUN

Morning!

JOHN

Where the deuce are *you* off to so early?

[MRS. VOCKERAT *flaps her table-napkin at something.*

JOHN

It's a bee, mother! Don't kill it! don't kill it!

BRAUN

I was going to Berlin — to fetch colours from my den there. Missed the train, worse luck!

JOHN

Not the first time, Braun!

BRAUN

There's always to-morrow to fall back on.

KITTY

[*Throws up her hands as if the bee were buzzing round her plate.*] It smells the honey.

MISS MAHR

Are there no other trains? [*Looks down at the bouquet she is wearing: threateningly.*] Little bee, little bee!

BRAUN

They are too dear for me. I never travel in any but workingmen's trains.

JOHN

And they only go quite early. But you can get on with your painting, can't you?

BRAUN

Without paints? No.

JOHN

Braun! Braun! you're falling into lazy habits, my boy.

BRAUN

Famous one day sooner or one day later . . . And, after all, this whole business of painting . . .

JOHN

Chess-playing is more to your mind, eh?

BRAUN

Good for you if you had any such tastes. But your sea, my son, has no harbours. There's no rest in your life.

JOHN

You don't say so!

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Jumps up, screams.*] A wasp, a wasp!

[*All get up and flap their table-napkins at the wasp.*

JOHN

There! it's gone.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Sits down again.*] Horrid creatures!
[*All return to their places.*

JOHN

[*To* BRAUN.] Sit down, won't you? — What have you got there?

BRAUN

Oh, you would like to know, would you? Something interesting.

JOHN

Have some more breakfast.

BRAUN

[*Seats himself and gives the book to* JOHN, *who turns over the leaves.*] Thanks, I'll be very glad of some. I had only time . . . Look at "The Artists"— by Garschin . . .

JOHN

[*Turning over the leaves.*] What have you fished out now?

BRAUN

The very thing for you, Jack.

MISS MAHR

Yes, it is an excellent story. Have you not read it before?

BRAUN

No, I only began it in bed this morning. That was what made me miss the train.

MISS MAHR

Well, do you side with Rjäbinin or with Djedoff?

JOHN

Anyhow, you are on the side of reading just now as against painting.

BRAUN

Say rather that I am for the moment on neither. Read Garschin's story yourself, and take it to heart a little. There is work to be done at present that is probably of more importance than all the painting and writing in the world.

MISS MAHR

I see, then, that you side with Rjäbinin.

BRAUN

With Rjäbinin? Oh! I can't say at all decidedly that I do.

JOHN

What is this story, "The Artists"?

MISS MAHR

It describes two artists — one a naïve man, the other a reflective intellect. The naïve man began life as an engineer, and turned painter. The thinker gives up painting and turns schoolmaster.

JOHN

Why?

MISS MAHR

Because at the moment it seems to him to be of so much more importance that there should be schoolmasters than painters.

JOHN

What leads him to the decision?

MISS MAHR

[*Has taken the book, turns the pages.*] Wait a moment. The simplest way is for me to read you the passage. Here it is. [*Turns, marking the place with her finger, and explains to all.*] Djedoff, the former engineer, is taking Rjäbinin over a boiler factory. The men who have to work in the inside of the boilers almost all turn deaf in course of time, from the terrible noise of hammering. In Russia they are known among the other workmen by the name of "the deaf men." Djedoff points out to Rjäbinin such a "deaf man" at work. [*Reads.*] "There he was before my eyes, cowering in the dark depths of the boiler, clothed in rags, almost overpowered with fatigue . . . his face dark crimson . . . the sweat pouring from him . . . his broad, sunken breast heaving painfully."

MRS. VOCKERAT

Whatever is the good of describing such dreadful things? It can give pleasure to no one.

JOHN

[*Laughs, strokes his mother's head caressingly.*] We can't always be laughing, can we, little mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

I don't say that. But we may surely expect to get pleasure from art.

JOHN

We can get much more from art than pleasure.

MISS MAHR

It was not pleasure that Rjäbinin felt. He was

painfully distressed, his innermost soul was stirred.

JOHN

Think of the ground, mother — how it has to be torn up with the plough — every year — if it is to grow anything new.

MISS MAHR

Something new sprang up in Rjäbinin. He said to himself: As long as such misery exists, it is a crime to work at anything which has not for its immediate object the alleviation, the prevention of this misery.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yet it always has existed.

JOHN

There was not much point in his turning schoolmaster.

BRAUN

Do you think not? Is that not more useful work than painting pictures and writing books?

JOHN

I don't know what your opinion of your profession may be, but speaking for myself, I think very highly of mine.

BRAUN

You don't acknowledge it to yourself, and I do; that's all.

JOHN

What's all? What do I not acknowledge to myself?

BRAUN

Why, that!

JOHN

What?

BRAUN

That all that scribbling of yours is every bit as useless as . . .

JOHN

What scribbling?

BRAUN

Well, that psycho-physiological stuff.

JOHN

[*Roughly.*] You know nothing whatever about it.

BRAUN

And care less.

JOHN

There you simply proclaim yourself to be a pitiful ignoramus, a man of no education, a . . .

BRAUN

That's right. Brag of your learning again.

JOHN

You know very well that I don't give a farthing for my learning. But it is self-evident that . . .

BRAUN

You are for ever saying that, and all the time the arrogance of superior education is streaming out at every pore. We'll let the subject alone!

These are ticklish matters, which every man must settle for himself.

JOHN

What do you mean by ticklish?

BRAUN

It's no good beginning, Jack. You can't stand an argument. You'll lose your temper again and . . .

JOHN

I beg you'll explain yourself! Say plainly what you mean.

BRAUN

Oh, stuff! There's nothing to be gained by that. Let every one manage his own affairs.

JOHN

And you think I manage mine badly, eh?

BRAUN

No worse than other people. You temporise, that's all.

JOHN

You must excuse my not replying — it's a subject I'm sick of — [*Breaks out excitedly.*] This is how the matter stands: You good friends of mine, you have threshed out a set of radical catchwords for yourselves, and because I have said to you once for all that I refuse to use them, therefore I'm a temporiser.

BRAUN

That's your way of putting it — now listen to mine: When the rest of us carried our opinions,

regardless of consequences, to their logical conclusion, you turned against us and defended the old, the obsolete, in every shape. And it was by doing this that you drove away your friends and isolated yourself.

KITTY

[*Soothingly.*] John!

JOHN

The friends that I could drive away — such friends, to tell the truth — such friends I snap my fingers at.

BRAUN

[*Rises.*] You snap your fingers at them? [*Looks at* ANNA.] When did you begin to do that, Jack?

KITTY

[*After a pause.*] Are you off already, Mr. Braun?

BRAUN

[*Offended, in an indifferent voice.*] Yes, I have something to do.

JOHN

[*Good-humouredly.*] Don't be silly!

BRAUN

It's quite true.

JOHN

Well, then: Do as you think best.

BRAUN

Good morning. [*Exit.*

[*Pause.*]

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Begins to collect the breakfast things.*] I don't know! You're all so infatuated about that Braun. I must confess that I think very little of him.

JOHN

[*Irritably.*] Mother! Will you do me the favour . . .

KITTY

But really, Braun is not at all nice to you, John.

JOHN

Good people, I must beg of you not to interfere in my private affairs.

[*Pause.* MRS. VOCKERAT *clears away the breakfast things.* KITTY *rises.*

JOHN

[*To* KITTY.] Where are you going?

KITTY

To give baby his bath.

[*Nods and smiles constrainedly to* ANNA; *exit into bedroom.*

[MRS. VOCKERAT, *carrying some of the breakfast things on a tray, is going towards the door into entrance-hall, when it is half opened by a market-woman, who calls in:* "Any vegetables to-day?"

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Answers.*] I'm coming.

[*Exit by door into entrance-hall.*

[*Pause.*]

MISS MAHR

[*Rises, sets her watch.*] I wonder what o'clock it is — exactly? [*Turns to* JOHN, *who is still seated, looking annoyed.*] Well, Dr. Vockerat!

[*She hums the tune of "Cheer, boys, cheer," looking archly at* JOHN. *Both burst out laughing.*

JOHN

[*Serious again, sighs.*] Ah, Miss Anna! it's sad, sober earnest, I'm sorry to say.

MISS MAHR

[*Shakes her finger threateningly at him.*] Be sure you don't laugh, then!

JOHN

[*Laughs again, then seriously.*] No, but really, you don't know all that it means, all that lies behind a speech like that of Braun's.

MISS MAHR

Have you ever heard me play?

JOHN

No, Miss Mahr! — I understood that you did not play.

MISS MAHR

Of course I don't! I'm only joking.— By the bye, are we not going for a row this morning?

JOHN

I don't seem to care about anything now.

MISS MAHR

[*Threateningly.*] Dr. Vockerat! Dr. Vockerat! Why be depressed by such a trifle?

JOHN

I can't understand how a man like Braun . . .

MISS MAHR

Still harping on Braun? Did what he said really make such a deep impression on you?

JOHN

It recalled all sorts of old unpleasantnesses, and . . .

MISS MAHR

Forget them, Dr. Vockerat — the old unpleasantnesses. There is no real progress made so long as one is always looking back.

JOHN

I believe you are right. And so we'll let that alone.— But is it not a curious thing, the way in which quite clever people can stick for years to a wrong opinion? He means what he says. He looks on my scientific work as simple waste of time. Can you imagine such a thing?

MISS MAHR

There are such people.

JOHN

Nothing will satisfy them but public activity, agitation, loud proclamation of one's opinions. Such a thing as a religious marriage ceremony is not to be thought of, not even as a concession to the orthodox upbringing of one's bride. They throw to the winds all respect for things or persons; and a man like me, who shuts himself up in his study and lives a life of devotion to science, is in the eyes of his friends a man who has be-

trayed his ideals. Is that not extraordinary, Miss Mahr?

MISS MAHR

Dr. Vockerat, don't let it be of such importance to you what your friends think. If your opinions satisfy yourself, let it be a matter of indifference to you whether they satisfy others or not. These constant conflicts sap a man's strength.

JOHN

I know, I know! And I promise you that in future I'll not allow myself to be disturbed by their opinion of me. They must take me as I am, or simply let me alone! But you can't wonder at my having minded sometimes. One grows up with one's friends, and gets into the habit of expecting a little approbation from them. The feeling that that is completely withdrawn is like the feeling of trying to breathe in a vacuum.

MISS MAHR

But you have your own family, Dr. Vockerat.

JOHN

Of course I have. Certainly. That is . . . Miss Anna! I know you will not misunderstand me. I have never spoken about it to any one before. You know how deeply attached I am to them all. But, in what concerns my work, my own people are of no assistance to me whatever. Kitty undoubtedly has all the good-will in the world — in fact, it's most touching, the way she tries. And she thinks all I do — lovely. But I know that her judgment is worthless — so what help is it to me? And that's why I have lived

in a sort of seventh heaven since you have been here, Miss Anna. It is the first time in my life that any one has taken an understanding, what may be called a professional, interest in my work, in any possible achievement of mine. It gives me fresh life. It's like rain on the dry ground. It is . . .

Miss Mahr

You're getting absolutely poetical, Dr. Vockerat!

John

It's quite enough to make one poetical. But you are wrong about my family, Miss Anna. My mother positively hates the sight of my poor manuscript. Nothing would give her greater pleasure than to put it in the fire. It is equally uncanny to my good father. You would hardly call that encouragement. As a matter of fact, my family hinder rather than help me. And after all that's not to be wondered at. But that one's friends should not show the very slightest appreciation of one's work — that a man like Braun . . .

Miss Mahr

I cannot understand why Braun's disapproval, of all others, should affect you so much.

John

Well, with Braun, you see, it's this way. . . . We have known each other since we were boys.

Miss Mahr

You mean that you have known *him*.

John

Yes, and he me.

Miss Mahr

Are you quite sure of that?

John

Yes — that is, up to a certain point.

Miss Mahr

It seems to me that your characters are so essentially different.

John

Do you really think so?

Miss Mahr

[*After a pause.*] Mr. Braun is still so undeveloped in every way — so . . . I don't exactly mean that he is jealous of you, but he is provoked . . . your fixed determination to go your own way annoys him. It even frightens him a little.— He has got the name of holding certain ethical or social opinions — call them what you like; to these he sticks, to these he clings, because he cannot stand alone. Like many men of the artistic temperament, he has no strong individuality. He dare not stand alone. He must know that he has numbers at his back.

John

Oh, that some one had given me such advice long ago, in the days when the censure of my friends was almost more than I could bear! Oh, that some one had spoken so to me then, when I was in utter despair; when I reproached myself for living in a comfortable house, for having good food and clothing; when it gave me a guilty feeling to meet a labouring man, and my heart beat as I

slunk past the houses where the masons were at work! I led my poor Kitty a pretty life in those days! I wanted to give away everything and live with her a life of voluntary poverty. Rather than go through such a time again, I would — I would throw myself into the Müggelsee. [*He seizes his hat.*] Now I must go and make that stupid fellow Braun listen to reason.

[Miss Mahr *looks at him with a peculiar smile.*

John

Do you not approve?

Miss Mahr

If you must, then go by all means, you big child!

John

Miss Anna!

Miss Mahr

Your own heart, Dr. Vockerat, is your greatest enemy.

John

But I have no peace as long as I think that he is going about feeling vexed and angry.

Miss Mahr

Do you think it is a good thing to be so dependent?

John

[*Decidedly.*] No — it is not. I know he'll not come back again. He never was the first to make up. But that doesn't matter! You are right; and I'm not going after Braun — this time. We'll

have that row on the lake now, Miss Mahr, if you feel inclined.

Miss Mahr

But you were going to read me the third chapter.

John

We might take the manuscript with us.

Miss Mahr

That would be very nice. I'll go and get ready at once. [*Exit.*

[John *goes to the bookcase, takes out his manuscript, and is at once absorbed in it.*

[*Enter* Mrs. Vockerat *from hall, carrying two small gilt-edged books.*

Mrs. Vockerat

Here I come to take possession of one of the most comfortable chairs, put on my spectacles, and hold my little morning service. Is it warm enough to sit out on the verandah?

John

Certainly, mother. [*Looks up from the manuscript.*] What have you there?

Mrs. Vockerat

"Heart Echoes." You know — my favourite Lavater. And this other is Gerok's "Palm Leaves." What a man that Gerok was! He didn't spare the scientific people.— Oh, dear! [*Puts her arm round* John, *and rests her head on his shoulders. Tenderly.*] Well, my own boy! brooding again already? [*Half jestingly.*] Young father!

JOHN

[*Looks up absently from the manuscript.*] Yes, mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Do you not feel different now that you enjoy the dignity of a fatherhood, Jack?

JOHN

No, little mother; much the same as usual.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Come, come! don't pretend. First you could do nothing but jump for joy, and now . . . You don't mean to tell me you are discontented again?

JOHN

[*Looks up absently.*] Perfectly contented, little mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You are wearing that good suit every day, John, and you ought to wear out your old clothes here. I'm sure Miss Anna wouldn't mind.

JOHN

Mother, I'm not a child now!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Cross already? [*Holds him closer. Tenderly and earnestly.*] Think sometimes of God, my boy — even if it's only to please your old mother. That old Haeckel and that stupid Darwin, they do nothing but make you unhappy. Do you hear? Do it for your mother's sake.

JOHN

[*Looks up despairingly.*] Good people, good

people! you positively drive a man to the point of saying: Forgive them, for they know not . . . Do you really believe that it is such a simple matter — this turning pious?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Moving away.*] Yes, Jack, yes! All that is needed is the will. Just try, Jack — only once.

[*Exit on to verandah, where she seats herself and reads.*

[JOHN *is once more absorbed in his manuscript.*

[*Enter* KITTY *with letters.*

KITTY

[*Reads, then looks up.*] John! here is a letter from the banker.

JOHN

My dear Kitty, I really can't give my mind to such matters just now.

KITTY

He asks if he is to sell out.

JOHN

For goodness sake don't bother me about that at present!

KITTY

But it must be attended to at once, John.

JOHN

[*Angrily.*] Not at all! There — [*taps nervously with his forefinger on the manuscript*] this is what must be attended to first!

KITTY

Well, as you please. Only then we shall be without money to-morrow.

JOHN

[*Still more violently.*] Upon my word, Kitty, we don't suit, you and I! You people are always wondering why a man can't settle down to work; but no sooner has he got his ideas into some little order, than there you come, bursting in, upsetting everything again.

KITTY

I don't know what you mean. The post came and I told you — that was all.

JOHN

Exactly — that was all. There you show your utter want of any understanding. As if my work were like shoe-making. The post comes and you tell me. Of course! Why not? It never for a moment occurs to you that by so doing you break a chain of thought which it has taken no end of time and labour to link together.

KITTY

Still, practical matters must not be neglected.

JOHN

But I tell you that my work comes first — first, and second, and third! Then practical matters if you choose! Do try to understand this, Kitty. Do try to help me a little. If you like, keep every day affairs from me altogether. Take your own way in them. Don't give me . . .

KITTY

I should not like the responsibility, John.

JOHN

There you are! You see! On no account any responsibility! On no account any independent action! You women are simply determined to be dependent — you do all that is in your power to remain irresponsible agents.

KITTY

[*Holds out the letter.*] Please, John, do say what is to be done.

JOHN

I tell you, Kitty, I can't think about it just now.

KITTY

But when am I to come then, John? We can't speak about it before Miss Mahr.

JOHN

There's another piece of narrow minded Philistinism — that keeping private of certain things — the making a mystery of everything connected with money matters. There's a sort of littleness of soul about it that disgusts me.

KITTY

I should like to see your face if I began to speak about these matters before Miss Mahr.

JOHN

Why always Miss Mahr, Miss Mahr? Do let her alone. She is not in the way, is she?

KITTY

I don't say that she is in the way. But it certainly can be of no interest to her to . . .

JOHN

Kitty, Kitty! It's perfectly miserable, this constant talk and worry about money — as if we were on the verge of starvation. It's unendurable. It actually gives one the impression that your whole heart and mind are set on money, nothing but money. And I with my high ideal of woman. . . . What *is* a man to love?

KITTY

It's not for myself at all that I care. But what is to become of our little Philip if . . . And you say yourself that you can't count on earning anything. Are we not bound, then, to take care of what we have?

JOHN

Yes, yes, of course. It's simply this way; your interests are limited by the family circle; mine are wide, general ones. I am not the family man at all. My one aim is to bring out what I feel lies latent in me. I am like a yoked Pegasus. And it will be the ruin of me some day.

KITTY

John! You don't know how you hurt me by saying such things.

JOHN

Miss Anna is quite right. The kitchen and the nursery bound the German married woman's horizon. What lies beyond does not exist for her.

KITTY

Some one must look after the food and attend to the children. It's all very well for Miss Mahr to talk like that! I should prefer to read books, too.

JOHN

If I were you, Kitty, I shouldn't show off my own littleness by speaking in such a way of a noble-minded woman like Miss Anna.

KITTY

If she can say such things . . .

JOHN

What things?

KITTY

About us German women — such stupid things.

JOHN

She said nothing stupid. Far from that. I can hardly bring myself to tell you at this moment how she praised you. I shouldn't like to make you feel ashamed.

KITTY

All the same, she spoke about our narrow horizon.

JOHN

Show that she is wrong, then!

KITTY

[*In tears, passionately.*] John, John! good as you are, you are sometimes — sometimes so cruel, so cold, so heartless!

JOHN

[*Somewhat cooled down.*] I am heartless again, am I? How do I show it, Kitty?

KITTY

[*Sobs.*] By torturing me. You know — very well . . .

JOHN

What do I know, Kitty?

KITTY

You know — how dissatisfied I am with myself. You know it — but — but you have no compassion on me. Every little thing is brought up against me.

JOHN

What do you mean, Kitty?

KITTY

Instead of — praising me a little sometimes — trying to give me a little confidence in myself — I am always made to feel — what a poor creature I am — always kept down. God knows I don't pride myself on the wideness of my horizon. But I have a little of some sort of pride. I know well enough that I'm no shining light. Indeed, I've long felt that I'm a tolerably superfluous person.

JOHN

[*Tries to take her hand,* KITTY *draws it away.*] You are not superfluous, Kitty. I never said such a thing.

KITTY

You said it a few minutes ago. But even if you had not said it, I feel it myself — feel that I can be

nothing to you because I don't understand your work. And as to little Philip — of course I can give him his milk, and keep him clean . . . but a maid can do that quite as well; and by-and-by — when he grows up — I'll be no help to him either. [*Weeps more passionately.*] He would be much better off with — with Miss Anna.

JOHN

You're never . . . my dear girl, how can you?

KITTY

Of course I'm only joking, but yet it's true. She has learned something. She knows and understands things. We are helpless cripples. How can we be a support to others, when we can't even . . .

JOHN

[*Ardent and tender, tries to embrace* KITTY.] My own Kitty! My sweet, sweet girl! You have a heart of gold — a deep, rich, magic mine of treasure! My darling! [*She pushes him away; he stammers.*] If there is any honour in me I . . . I know I'm hard and bad sometimes! I'm not worthy of you, Kitty!

KITTY

No, no, John, please don't! You're only saying that just now because . . .

JOHN

Because I mean it, Kitty. You may call me rogue if I . . .

KITTY

Please let me alone, John! I must think.— And the letter — the letter!

JOHN

You stupid Kitty, what is it you want to think about?

KITTY

Many, many thoughts are rushing in on me. Stop, John! Let me go!

JOHN

[*Eagerly.*] Oh, never mind the letter just now. My own sweet, sweet little wife!

KITTY

No, John dear, no! [*Holds him off.*

JOHN

Why, Kitty, what's the matter with you?

KITTY

You'll look at it, won't you, Jack? [*Holds out the letter.*] He asks if he is to sell out.

JOHN

What shares?

KITTY

The spinning-mill shares.

JOHN

Can we not get along on the interest?

KITTY

Quite impossible. This month again we have spent more than a thousand marks.

JOHN

Is it possible, Kitty? I can hardly believe it. Are you good people economical enough?

KITTY

You can see the accounts, John.

JOHN

It's quite incomprehensible to me.

KITTY

You give away too much, John. Then the capital soon begins to go. Tell me, is he to sell these shares?

JOHN

Yes, of course. But there's no hurry! Anyhow, it's of no consequence.— Where are you going?

KITTY

To answer the letter.

JOHN

Kitty!

KITTY

[*At the door, turns round.*] Well, John?

JOHN

Are you going away like that?

KITTY

Like what?

JOHN

I don't know either.

KITTY

What is it you want?

JOHN

I can't make you out, Kitty. What's wrong?

KITTY

Nothing at all, John. Really.

JOHN

Have you stopped caring for me?

[KITTY's *head droops; she shakes it deprecatingly.*

JOHN

[*Puts his arm round* KITTY.] Don't you remember our promise, Kitty — that we were never to have any secrets from each other? Not even little ones. [*Embraces her more warmly.*] Say something. Darling, don't you care for me at all any more?

KITTY

O John! you know that I do.

JOHN

What is it, then?

KITTY

You know quite well.

JOHN

I assure you I don't. I have not the faintest idea.

KITTY

It's only that I long to be something to you.

JOHN

You are a great deal to me.

KITTY

No, no!

JOHN

But tell me . . .

KITTY

You can't help it, John, but . . . I know that I don't satisfy you.

JOHN

You do, Kitty. You are everything that I want.

KITTY

So you say just now, John.

JOHN

It is my most solemn conviction.

KITTY

Yes, for the moment.

JOHN

What can lead you to suppose that . . .

KITTY

I see it plainly enough.

JOHN

Kitty, have I ever given you cause . . .

KITTY

No, never.

JOHN

There, you see! [*Holds her closer to him.*] It is all fancy — naughty fancies, Kitty, that must be driven away. Come, come!

[*Kisses her tenderly.*

KITTY

Oh, if it were only fancy!

JOHN

You may be quite sure it is.

KITTY

And — Jack dear — I do love you so! — Far more than any words can tell. I believe I could sooner give up baby than you.

JOHN

Oh, Kitty!

KITTY

It's a shame to say it! — the dear, sweet, cunning little fellow! [*Her arms round* JOHN'S *neck.*] My own dear, good husband!

[*Pause. Mute embrace.*]

[MISS MAHR, *dressed for going out, opens the verandah door.*

MISS MAHR

[*Calls.*] I'm quite ready, Dr. Vockerat. Oh, I beg your pardon! [*Draws back.*

JOHN

Immediately, Miss Mahr, immediately. [*Takes his manuscript.*] We're going for a row, Kitty. — No more fancies now, promise me! [*Kisses her, takes his hat, turns on his way out.*] Perhaps you would like to come too?

KITTY

I can't go out just now, John.

JOHN

Well, good-bye for a little! [*Exit.*

[KITTY *gazes after him with the look of a person watching the fading away of some beautiful vision. Her eyes fill with tears.*

THE THIRD ACT

Time: about 10 *a. m.* KITTY *sits, absorbed in accounts, at the writing-table, on which a lamp is still burning.*

Scraping of shoes is heard outside the verandah door. KITTY *looks up eagerly, and half rises. Enter* BRAUN.

KITTY

[*Meets him.*] How kind of you to come, Mr. Braun!

BRAUN

Good morning. Isn't this fog horrible?

KITTY

It seems as if we were to have no daylight at all to-day. Come near the stove and get warm.—Did Mrs. Lehmann give you my message?

BRAUN

She did.

[KITTY *is no longer the same. She has exchanged her old quiet manner for a nervous liveliness. She wears herself out in her eagerness. Her eyes sometimes flash. There is a slight flush on her pale, emaciated cheeks.*

KITTY

Wait, I'll get you a cigar.

BRAUN

No, I can't allow that!

[*Hurries after her, and himself gets down the box of cigars from the top of the bookcase.*

KITTY

Now do make yourself comfortable.

BRAUN

[*Looks at* KITTY.] I don't like to smoke here.

KITTY

You'll please me by doing it. I'm so fond of the smell.

BRAUN

In that case . . . [*Lights the cigar.*

KITTY

You must make yourself at home, just as you used to do.— And now, you wicked person! what is the meaning of your not having come near us for a whole week?

BRAUN

I thought Jack didn't need me.

KITTY

But how could you . . .?

BRAUN

He has Miss Anna Mahr now.

KITTY

How can you say such a thing?

BRAUN

He said himself that his friends might go to Jericho.

KITTY

You know his hasty way. That really meant nothing.

BRAUN

I differ from you there. And I know very well whose influence we have to thank for this change. Miss Mahr may be a clever woman, but there is no doubt that she is a determined and egotistical one, unscrupulous in the pursuit of her aims. She is afraid of me. She knows quite well that she can't impose on me.

KITTY

But what object could she have . . .

BRAUN

Who knows wnat she may want of him? I don't suit her. My influence upsets her plans.

KITTY

But I have really never noticed . . .

BRAUN

[*Rises.*] I thrust my company on no one. It was at Jack's request that I moved out here. If I am not wanted, I shall go back again.

KITTY

[*Quickly and with peculiar emphasis.*] Anna leaves to-day.

BRAUN

Indeed? She is going?

KITTY

Yes. And that is why I wanted to ask you, Mr. Braun. . . . It would be so dreadful for John to be left suddenly without any one at all. You must begin and come regularly again, Mr. Braun. Don't bear him a grudge — I mean for these hasty words the other day. We know him. We know how warm-hearted he really is.

BRAUN

I don't take offence easily, but . . .

KITTY

That's all right, then, Mr. Braun. And now that you are here, you will stay and spend the day with us.

BRAUN

I can't do that, but I might possibly come back later.

KITTY

Try to be back, then, when Miss Anna leaves. You don't know how nice and cosy it's going to be here. I have had my eyes opened to many things. We are going to spend a very quiet, pleasant winter.— And by-the-bye, there was another thing I wanted to ask you. [*As if in joke.*] I must earn some money.— Yes, yes, I mean it! Are we not intended to work too, we women?

BRAUN

How have you suddenly taken this into your head?

KITTY

It would be such fun, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

It's easy to talk about earning money.

KITTY

Well, I can paint on china. I painted the dessert service. Or, if that is no good, I can embroider — on linen you know — beautiful initials and monograms.

BRAUN

Of course you are only joking.

KITTY

Don't be so sure of that!

BRAUN

If you don't speak more clearly, I really can't . . .

KITTY

[*Forgets herself.*] Can you keep a secret? — But no, no! The fact is — so many demands are made on people. . . . It isn't every one that has the gift of calculation.

BRAUN

And Jack least of all.

KITTY

Yes — no . . . that is — there is no good either in being too dreadfully exact. One must only make sure that there is enough.

BRAUN

If you imagine that you can earn as much as that . . . I can tell you beforehand that it will be lost time and trouble.

KITTY

But perhaps as much as twelve hundred marks a year.

BRAUN

Twelve hundred marks! Hardly.— Why exactly twelve hundred?

KITTY

I need that sum.

BRAUN

Has Jack's boundless generosity been imposed on again?

KITTY

No, certainly not.

BRAUN

Then is it Miss Anna who is to be assisted?

KITTY

No, no, no! What do you mean? How can you dream of such a thing? I'll say no more — not another word, Mr. Braun!

BRAUN

[*Takes his hat.*] And I couldn't possibly aid and abet. It would really be . . .

KITTY

Very well; then we'll say no more about it. But you'll come back?

BRAUN

[*Ready to go.*] Of course, certainly.— Were you in earnest, Mrs. John?

KITTY

[*Tries to laugh, but tears come into her eyes.*] No, no! I was joking. [*Motions him away eagerly, half playfully.*] Go away now, Mr. Braun, go!

[*No longer able to master her emotion, rushes into the bedroom. Exit* BRAUN, *thoughtfully.*

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT, *carrying a large dish of string-beans. Seats herself at the table, and begins to string and chop them.*

[KITTY *returns, sits down at the writing-table.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Shakes the beans in the dish.*] It's a good thing that we're going to settle down again, isn't it, Kitty?

KITTY

[*Bending over her accounts.*] Don't speak to me, please, ~~little~~ dear mother: I must think.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I didn't notice.— I'll not disturb you.— Where is it she is going?

KITTY

To Zürich, I believe.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, yes. The more suitable place for her, too.

KITTY

Why, mother, I thought you liked her.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Not I; I don't care for her; she's too modern for me.

KITTY

Oh, mother!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Nor do I think much of any young girl that can go about for three days with a big hole in her sleeve.

[*Enter* JOHN *from the verandah, with his hat on. Hurries towards the study.*

KITTY

John!

JOHN

Yes.

KITTY

Shall I come to the station?

JOHN

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*] You ought to be the best judge of that. [*Exit into study.*

[*Short pause.*]

MRS. VOCKERAT

What's the matter with him now? [*Has finished stringing the beans; rises.*] Yes, it's high time things were settling down again.— People are even beginning to talk.

KITTY

About what?

MRS. VOCKERAT

I don't know. I only say . . . And besides it costs money.

KITTY

A fourth makes very little difference, mother, when you are preparing food for three.

MRS. VOCKERAT

That's all very fine, Kitty, but crumbs make bread.

[*Re-enter* JOHN. *He seats himself, crosses his legs, and turns over the pages of a book.*

JOHN

Impertinent wretches, these railway officials! A station-master who drinks, drinks, drinks all day long. And as insolent as . . . bah!

KITTY

When does the best train go? Don't be annoyed, John!

JOHN

Miserable hole. [*Slams the book noisily; jumps up.*] I won't stay here either.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You have taken the house for four years, my boy.

JOHN

And am I to go to the dogs here, simply because I have been unlucky and stupid enough to rent a house for four years?

MRS. VOCKERAT

You were determined to come to the country,

and you have hardly been here six months before everything is wrong again.

JOHN

There's plenty of country in Switzerland, too.

MRS. VOCKERAT

And baby? What's to become of him? Is he to be dragged all round the world too?

JOHN

It will be healthier in Switzerland than here for him as well as for us.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You will be off to the moon presently, my boy. But you may please yourselves as far as I am concerned. An old woman like me doesn't expect to be taken into consideration at all.

[*Exit by door to entrance-hall.*

[*Short pause.*]

JOHN

[*Sighs.*] I tell you, good people, you had better take care.

KITTY

How do you come to think of Switzerland, John?

JOHN

That's right; look as innocent as you can. [*Mimics her.*] "How do you come to think of Switzerland?" I know that trick — underhandedness in place of straightforwardness. I know what you think. And you are quite right. I should like to be where Miss Anna is. There is nothing unnatural about that — nothing to prevent one saying it straight out.

KITTY

John, you are so strange to-day. So strange . . . I had better go.

JOHN

[*Quickly.*] I'll go instead.

[*Exit by verandah.*

KITTY

[*Sighs and shakes her head.*] Oh dear! Oh dear!

[*Enter* MISS MAHR. *She lays hat, travelling-bag, and cloak in a chair.*

MISS MAHR

I am quite ready. [*Turns to* KITTY.] Now we have still — how long?

KITTY

Three-quarters of an hour at least.

MISS MAHR

Is that all? I have been very happy here.

[*Takes* KITTY'S *hand.*

KITTY

Time passes quickly.

MISS MAHR

Now I'm going to bury myself in work at Zürich. Work, work, and nothing else.

KITTY

Let me get you something to eat.

MISS MAHR

No, thank you; I couldn't. [*Short pause.*] If only the first meetings and visits were over! Per-

fectly horrible they'll be. Crowds of friends — endless questioning — birr! [*Cold shiver.*] Will you write to me sometimes?

KITTY

Oh, yes! but there is never much to tell.

MISS MAHR

Will you give me your photograph?

KITTY

With pleasure. [*She searches in a drawer of the writing-table.*] But it's an old one.

MISS MAHR

[*Taps her gently on the back of the neck. Almost pityingly.*] Thin little neck!

KITTY

[*Still searching, turns her head. Smiles sadly.*] It has nothing weighty to carry, Anna. Here — this is it.

[*Hands* ANNA *a photograph.*

MISS MAHR

Very nice, very nice! Do you think there is one of Dr. Vockerat, too? — I have grown so fond of you all.

KITTY

I don't know that there is.

MISS MAHR

Look, Kitty, dear; please look! Have you one? — Yes?

KITTY

Yes, there is one left.

MISS MAHR

May I have it?

KITTY

Yes, Anna, take it.

MISS MAHR

[*Hurriedly slips the photograph into her pocket.*] And now — now I'll soon be forgotten by you all. O Kitty! O Kitty!

[*Throws her arms round* KITTY's *neck and bursts into tears.*

KITTY

No, Anna, you won't. I'll always remember you, Anna; and . . .

MISS MAHR

And care for me a little?

KITTY

Yes, Anna, yes.

MISS MAHR

Is it unmixed liking, Kitty?

KITTY

I don't know what you mean by *unmixed.*

MISS MAHR

Are you not a little glad, too, that I am going away?

KITTY

What ever do you mean, Anna?

MISS MAHR

[*Has drawn away from* KITTY *again.*] Yes, yes, it's a good thing that I'm going, in every

way. Mama Vockerat does not care for me any longer either.

KITTY

I think you are mistaken in . . .

MISS MAHR

No, Kitty, I'm not. [*Seats herself at the table.*] It's no use trying to persuade me. [*Forgets herself — takes the photograph from her pocket and gazes at it.*] There is such a deep line about the mouth.

KITTY

Whose?

MISS MAHR

John's. It's a line of unhappiness — loneliness brings it. A lonely person suffers much, has much to bear from others. . . . How did you get to know each other?

KITTY

Oh, it was . . .

MISS MAHR

He was still a student?

KITTY

Yes, Anna.

MISS MAHR

And you were very young, and you said Yes?

KITTY

[*Red and confused.*] At least I . . .

MISS MAHR

[*Feeling awkward, too.*] Kitty, Kitty! [*She*

puts the photograph into her pocket. Rises.] Must I be off now?

KITTY

No, not for a long time yet.

MISS MAHR

Long? Do you call that long? [*Seats herself at the piano.*] You don't play? [KITTY *shakes her head.*] Nor sing? [KITTY *again shakes her head.*] And John loves music, does he not? — I both played and sang — once. Not for many a day now. [*Jumps up.*] Never mind! What we have enjoyed we have enjoyed. We must not be greedy. There is a fragrance, a bloom, a glamour over these things, which is the best of them. Is that not so, Kitty?

KITTY

I don't know.

MISS MAHR

What smells so sweet is not always pure sweetness through and through.

KITTY

That may be.

MISS MAHR

I know it is. Oh! liberty! ! liberty! ! ! The great thing is to be completely free — to have no country, no family, no friends.— Now it must be time.

KITTY

Not yet, Anna.

[*Short pause.*]

Miss Mahr

I get to Zürich too early — a whole week too early.

Kitty

Indeed?

Miss Mahr

If only work began at once! [*Suddenly throws her arms round* Kitty's *neck; sobs.*] Oh, I am so full of woe and dread!

Kitty

Poor, poor Anna!

Miss Mahr

[*Hastily disengages herself from* Kitty's *embrace.*] But I must go. I must.

[*Short pause.*]

Kitty

Anna — before you go — won't you give me a little advice?

Miss Mahr

[*Smiles sadly, almost compassionately.*] Dear Kitty!

Kitty

You have the power to. . . . You have had such a good influence upon him.

Miss Mahr

Have I? Have I really?

Kitty

Yes, Anna. And — and on me too. I owe you gratitude for many things. I have made a firm resolve. . . . Advise me, Anna.

Miss Mahr

I can't advise you. I am afraid to do it.

Kitty

You are afraid?

Miss Mahr

I'm too fond of you, Kitty, much too fond.

Kitty

If I could only do anything for you, Anna!

Miss Mahr

You must not — you cannot.

Kitty

Perhaps I can. Perhaps I know what it is you are suffering.

Miss Mahr

What am I suffering then?

Kitty

I would tell, but . . .

Miss Mahr

Oh, nonsense, nonsense! what should I be suffering? I came here and I'm going away again. Nothing whatever has happened. Look, the sun is actually shining again. We'll end up by taking a turn round the garden. Whatever the circumstances, hundreds and thousands are no better off. Or — by-the-bye — I have a few words to write.

Kitty

You can do that here. [*Makes room for her at the writing-table.*] No, I see the ink and pens

are in John's room. He is out. Go in there, Anna!

[*She opens the door for* Anna, *remains behind herself.*

[*Short pause.*]

[*Enter* John. *More restless than before.*

John

It's beginning to rain again. We should have ordered a cab.

Kitty

It is too late to do it now.

John

Yes, unfortunately.

Kitty

Braun has been here.

John

That's a matter of tolerable indifference to me. What did he want?

Kitty

He intends to come again as usual, and things are to be just as they were between you.

John

[*Gives a short laugh.*] Funny! That is supposed to tempt me? . . . Could we not send yet — quickly? Really, altogether . . .

Kitty

For a cab, John? It's such a short way to the station.

JOHN

But the roads are in such a state, they're almost impassable. It's altogether the most miserable weather for travelling.

KITTY

Once she gets into the train she will be all right.

JOHN

Yes, in a crowded third-class carriage, with wet feet.

KITTY

She is sure to get into the ladies' compartment.

JOHN

You might at least give her the big foot-warmer.

KITTY

Yes, yes! you are right. I had thought of that too.

JOHN

Really — this whole arrangement has been over-hasty.

[KITTY *does not answer.*

JOHN

I'm sure she would be glad to stay a few days longer.

KITTY

[*After a short pause.*] But you asked her.

JOHN

[*More hastily.*] Yes, I did. But you did not — you and mother. You said nothing, and of course she noticed that.

KITTY

O John! . . . No, no, I don't think so . . .

JOHN

And with two people standing there — perfectly dumb — how can one go on insisting? It takes away one's very desire. . . . But I can't bear to be sending her away like this, in storm and darkness.

KITTY

[*Goes up to him timidly and affectionately.*] No, no, John! Don't look at the thing in such a wrong light. And please don't always think so badly of me. It's not a question of sending away at all, John.

JOHN

You and mother have not enough delicacy of feeling. You don't see. It seems to me as if we were simply showing her the door — nothing else. "You have been here long enough, you may go! Go wherever you like — away out into the wide world! Get on as best you can! Sink or swim!" That is what it looks like to me, Kitty. We put ourselves to the trouble of expressing a little cold pity, that's all!

KITTY

No, John! We have at least arranged matters so that she shall not suffer from want.

JOHN

How do you know that she will accept it from us? And even if she does — that's doing damned little for her. Money can't make up to her for want of friendliness.

KITTY

But, John, she must go some time.

JOHN

So Mrs. Grundy says, Kitty. She has been here, she has become our friend, and now Mrs. Grundy says it is time for us to part. It's a way of thinking that I don't understand. It's the sort of cursed nonsense that's always coming in one's way, destroying one's life.

KITTY

Do you want her to stay, then, John?

JOHN

I want nothing. I only say that it's a — that these principles of ours are nothing but the ordinary mean, narrow-minded worship of Mrs. Grundy. I can tell you that if it depended on me alone — if I were not tied and bound by all sorts of miserable little considerations — I should arrange these things very differently. I should set up a different standard of inward purity for myself, should have a cleaner conscience than I have now. You may be quite sure of that!

KITTY

O John, John! I'm beginning to feel as if — as if I were really quite superfluous.

JOHN

I don't know what you mean.

KITTY

As if you were not contented with — with me alone.

JOHN

Good God! Heaven preserve us!!! No — really — upon my word — this is the last straw! My nerves are not made of cast-iron. This is rather more than I can bear. [*Exit into garden.*

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT, *carrying a cup of beef-tea, which she puts down on the table.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

There, that's for Miss Mahr.

KITTY

[*With an outburst of despair runs to* MRS. VOCKERAT, *throws her arms round her neck, and sobs.*] Mother, mother! I must go — away from here — out of this house — away from you all. It's more than I can bear, mother, more than I can bear!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Good gracious! My child, what's this? What ever . . . who has been . . .

KITTY

[*Indignation takes the place of despair.*] No, I'm not such a poor creature as all that. I'll not allow myself to be set aside. I'm too good to be simply flung away. Mother, I must go this very moment. With the steamer — to America — away anywhere, only away — to England, where no one knows me, where . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

My good child! — to America! Goodness gracious! are you mad? Are you going to leave your husband, to leave your child? Is little Philip to grow up without a mother? Never, never!

KITTY

A pretty mother he has! A stupid, narrow-minded woman! What good can such a mother as I am be to him! Yes, I know how utterly stupid and narrow-minded I am. They have told me it every day. They have succeeded in making me out to be such a poor, miserable creature that I actually loathe myself. No, no! away, away!

MRS. VOCKERAT

But, Kitty, you don't consider. . . . To leave husband and child . . . For God's sake think what it is you are doing!

KITTY

Was he ever mine? First he belonged to his friends, now he belongs to Anna. He has never been satisfied with me alone. Oh that I had never been born! I am sick of life, accursed life!

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*In her turn breaks forth excitedly, as if under the influence of a sudden enlightenment. Her set eyes sparkle, her colour changes.*] There, now! There, now! [*Points into vacancy.*] There! What did I tell you? What did I say? That a house from which God is banished is doomed to destruction. There you have it! Don't deceive yourselves. There! What did I say? First, deniers of God, then adulterers, then . . . Kitty!

KITTY

[*Struggling against faintness.*] No, mother! No, no, mother! I . . . I . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

Kitty! — rouse yourself — come! I hear some one. Come!

[*Exit with* KITTY *into bedroom.*

[*Enter* JOHN *from the verandah.* MRS. VOCKERAT *opens the bedroom door.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, it's you, John!

[*Comes out, forcibly repressing her excessive emotion; pretends to be looking for something.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Well, my boy!

JOHN

What, mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Nothing. [JOHN *looks at her questioningly.*] What is it, John?

JOHN

It seemed to me as if you . . . I must say that I don't like being watched.

MRS. VOCKERAT

John, John! it's well for you that winter is coming. Your state is anything but . . . You never used to be so nasty to me. What you need is rest.

JOHN

Yes, yes, of course! You all know better than I do what is good for me.

MRS. VOCKERAT

And Kitty too, she is not at all so well yet as she ought to be.

JOHN

Well, Anna has certainly not added much to her work.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Perhaps not. But you must remember too that I am an old woman now — and however willing I may be, the old bones are apt to strike sometimes.

JOHN

But there's no need for your working; I have told you that a hundred times. There are plenty of servants in the house.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Anyhow, it is time for Miss Mahr to be going back to her work again.

JOHN

That is her affair.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, not altogether. There can be too much of a good thing. We have had enough of this. She has been here long enough.

JOHN

What do you mean, mother, by speaking in this extraordinary way? I can't understand . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

You want to ask Miss Mahr to stay on, and . . .

JOHN

And I mean to do it, too. I shall most certainly do it — most certainly. . . . Have you anything against it, mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Warningly.*] My boy, my boy! . . .

JOHN

No, mother! this is really . . . Any one would suppose I had committed a crime. It's more than . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Affectionately persuasive.*] Now, my own boy, be reasonable! Do listen to me! Remember I'm your mother. It is for your good I'm speaking. No one would do more for you than I would. I know well how honourable you are — but we are weak creatures, John, the best of us . . . and Kitty is making herself miserable — and . . .

JOHN

[*Laughs.*] Don't be offended, mother, but I can't help laughing. It's the only way to take it. It's perfectly ridiculous.

MRS. VOCKERAT

John, John! stronger men than you have fallen into the snare. And before one knows it, it is often too late.

JOHN

Mother! unless you people want to drive me out of my mind, you must not talk like that to me. Don't for God's sake confuse me, bewilder me, by suggesting things to me which . . . Don't drive

me into positions which I never thought of; I implore you!

MRS. VOCKERAT

I suppose you know what you are doing, John. I only say to you — take care!

[*Exit* MRS. VOCKERAT *into the bedroom.*

[*Re-enter* MISS MAHR.

MISS MAHR

[*Sees* JOHN.] You are there, Dr. Vockerat! [*Takes her waterproof from the chair on which her things are lying, and proceeds to put it on.*] We must be going.

JOHN

[*Hastens to help her.*] Has it come to this?

MISS MAHR

[*Fastening her cloak.*] What we were speaking about — you'll send me it soon?

JOHN

Yes, I'll not forget. But, Miss Anna, you might give me at least one little comfort. Will you not allow us the privilege of friends?

MISS MAHR

You hurt me, Dr. Vockerat.

JOHN

Then I'll say no more about it. But you promise me — if you should ever be in difficulty.— If others may help you, surely we may. [*Goes to the bedroom door and calls.*] Mother! Kitty!

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT *and* KITTY.

MISS MAHR

[*Kisses* MRS. VOCKERAT'S *hand.*] A thousand, thousand thanks! [KITTY *and* ANNA *kiss each other affectionately.*] My dear, kind Kitty! — and you'll remember to write?

MRS. VOCKERAT

I hope everything will go well with you, Miss Anna.

KITTY

Yes — and that you will be — [*she sobs*] — will be happy. Don't . . . [*Can say no more.*

[JOHN *takes* ANNA'S *bag.* KITTY *and* MRS. VOCKERAT *accompany them on to the verandah, where they meet* BRAUN, *who takes leave of* ANNA. *General farewell.* MRS. VOCKERAT, KITTY, *and* BRAUN *remain on the verandah,* KITTY *waving her handkerchief. Presently they re-enter.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Comforting* KITTY, *who still weeps.*] Child, child, comfort yourself! she'll get over it — she is young.

KITTY

Those sad eyes of hers haunt me. Oh, she has suffered much.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Life is not a bed of roses for any of us, Kitty dear.

KITTY

Oh, the misery of this weary world!

[*Exit into the bedroom.*

[*Short pause.*]

MRS. VOCKERAT

She has not taken the beef-tea after all. [*Lifts the cup to carry it away, stops in front of* BRAUN.] Mr. Braun, I can't help telling you that in these last ten minutes I have gone through more — yes . . . [*She takes a few steps towards the door, is suddenly overcome by weakness and obliged to sit down.*] It's taking effect on me now. I feel it in every limb. There's not a bit of strength left in me.

BRAUN

Has anything happened, Mrs. Vockerat?

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'm not complaining. I'll not say one word if nothing worse comes of it than this. It has been a warning from our heavenly Father — and I — have understood it. . . . You are one of the godless too! Yes, yes! But you may take the word of an old experienced woman for it, Mr. Braun — we can't do without *Him*. Sooner or later we are sure to trip and to fall. [*Short pause.*] I'm just shaking — [*She tries to rise but is still too exhausted.*] Yes, I begin to feel it now. Who knows what harm it may have done me? [*Listens to sounds in entrance-hall.*] Who can that be? Is there not some one on the stair? Oh, I was forgetting — we are to wash to-morrow. The maids are fetching the linen to steep. There will be peace now to get something done. [*Short pause.*] Just see now — a man with such a character — an honourable, blameless man like John — just see what he is led into by trusting in his own strength. You say so grandly: Our religion is

a religion of deeds. See what it comes to. God blows them down, these card houses of ours.

[*Enter* John *hurriedly from hall, excited, not very sure of himself.*

John

Good people, she has decided to stay.

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Not understanding.*] To stay John! How?

John

Well, to stay a few days longer here, mother, of course.

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Stunned.*] Miss Anna has come . . . Where is she?

John

She is in her room, mother. I really don't understand . . .

Mrs. Vockerat

So you have done it after all?

John

I must beg that you won't make such a dreadful fuss over things; it . . .

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Rises; in a tone of command.*] John! listen to me! [*With emphasis.*] Miss Mahr's place is no longer here. I say to you plainly that she must leave the house again. I insist upon it.

John

Mother, in whose house are we?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, I have not forgotten. I know only too well. We are in the house of a man who . . . who has forgotten what duty is . . . and, as you remind me of it . . . certainly, certainly! — I can make way for this, this person.

JOHN

Mother, you speak of Miss Anna in a way that I cannot allow.

MRS. VOCKERAT

And you speak to your mother in a way that is a transgression of the ~~Fifth~~ 4th Commandment.

JOHN

I'll control myself, mother. But I must ask you all to have some little consideration for my state of mind. I can't answer for myself if you don't. . . . If you drive me to it, I may do something which could not be undone again.

MRS. VOCKERAT

A man that lays hands on himself is lost, for time and for eternity.

JOHN

I can't help that. All the more reason why . . . why you should take care of what you are doing.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I wash my hands of it all. I shall go.

JOHN

Mother!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Either this person leaves the house or I do.

JOHN

Mother, you ask an impossibility. It was with the greatest trouble I persuaded her to change her mind. Am I to go to her now and . . . I'd rather shoot myself.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*With sudden determination.*] Very well — then *I'll* go. I'll tell her my opinion pretty plainly — the wily coquette! the . . . She has entangled you nicely in her net.

JOHN

[*Comes between* MRS. VOCKERAT *and the door.*] You shall not go near her, mother! ! She is under my protection, and I will not permit her to be insulted — by any one.

BRAUN

Jack, I say, Jack! . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

I see now — my son — how far things have gone. [*Exit by verandah door.*

BRAUN

Jack, what in the name of goodness has happened to you?

JOHN

Let me alone — you soul-destroyers!

BRAUN

Don't be silly, Jack! You know me, Braun. I have no intention of preaching to you.

JOHN

You degrade my very thoughts. You're guilty

of moral violation. I am under torture. Not another word do I say.

BRAUN

No, no, Jack! This is not the time for silence. As things stand now, you are bound to explain yourself. Try to be a little calmer.

JOHN

What is it you all want to know? Of what are we accused? No, my good friends, under no circumstances shall I try to prove my innocence to you. My pride won't allow that, Braun . . . Abominable . . . the very idea of such a thing!

BRAUN

Come now, Jack! I take a perfectly sober view of the situation.

JOHN

Take any view of it you like. Only hold your tongue about it, for every word you say is like a lash in my face!

BRAUN

You must confess, Jack, that you are playing with fire.

JOHN

I must confess nothing. It is not for you people to pass judgment on my relations with Miss Anna.

BRAUN

You can't deny, however, that you owe a certain duty to your family.

JOHN

And you can't deny that I owe a certain duty

to myself. Yes, Braun, you fellows boasted and bragged — but now, when I take the first free step, you are frightened, you begin to talk of duties, you . . .

BRAUN

That was not what I meant at all. I know nothing about duty! I only want you to see things as they are — to understand that it is a question of deciding between Anna and your family.

JOHN

I really think you have gone off your head. Are you all determined to talk me into believing in a conflict of interests which does not exist? What you say is not true. There is no decision required. The bond between Anna and me is not the same as the bond between Kitty and me — there need be no clashing. It is friendship, damn it all! It is the result of a similarity of mind, combined with similar intellectual development, which enables us to understand each other, even when no one else understands us. She understands in me what you and my other friends cannot. Since she has been here I have been like a new man. Courage and self-esteem have come back to me. I feel creative power. And I feel that all this is her work — that she is necessary to my development. As friend, you understand. Is friendship between a man and a woman impossible?

BRAUN

You must not be offended with me for saying it, Jack, but you have never been able to look things straight in the face.

JOHN

It is you people who do not know what you are doing, I tell you. You judge by a miserable conventional standard, which I trample under foot. If you care for me at all, do not interfere with me. You don't know what is going on in me. That there may be danger now, after your attacks, is not at all impossible. But I have made up my mind to insure for myself, without transgressing bounds, what is to me a necessary of life. My mind is made up, you understand?

BRAUN

This is your old mistake again, Jack. You are trying to reconcile things that are irreconcilable. As far as I can see, there is only one thing for you to do — go to her, tell her plainly how things stand, and ask her to leave.

JOHN

Have you quite finished? Done at last? Well then, so that on this point at any rate there may be no misunderstanding, no further waste of words, I tell you — [*eyes flash; emphasis laid on every word*] — *that I don't intend to do what you and mother want!!* I am not the man I was a short time ago, Braun. I am ruled by a different spirit; you and your opinion have lost all power over me. I have found myself, and intend to be myself — myself in spite of you all.

[*Exit quickly into the study.* BRAUN *shrugs his shoulders.*

THE FOURTH ACT

Time, between 4 and 5 P. M. MRS. VOCKERAT *and* KITTY *are sitting at the table,* KITTY *sewing a baby's shirt,* MRS. VOCKERAT *knitting.* KITTY *looks terribly ill and emaciated. In the course of a few seconds, enter* JOHN *from the study, drawing on a summer overcoat, his hat only half on his head.*

JOHN

Has Anna gone?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Gives a sniff.*] Yes, this minute.

JOHN

[*Goes up to* KITTY *and kisses her on the forehead.*] Are you sure you are taking your tonic regularly?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Much good that stupid medicine will do her! I know what would be more to the purpose.

JOHN

Now mother, mother!

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'll say no more.

KITTY

Yes, yes! I'm taking it. But I am really quite well.

JOHN

You certainly do look better to-day.

KITTY

And I feel better, too.

JOHN

See you take good care of yourself, then. Good-bye! We'll be back soon.

KITTY

Are you going far?

JOHN

Only into the wood a little. Good-bye!

[*Exit by verandah.*

[*Short pause. Rush and whistle of a railway train are heard, then the distant sound of the station bell.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Listen! there's the station bell.

KITTY

Yes, the wind must be from that direction to-day, mother.

[*Drops her work and begins to dream.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Glancing at her.*] What are you thinking about, Kitty dear?

KITTY

[*Takes up her work again.*] Oh! — about a great many things.

MRS. VOCKERAT

What, for instance?

KITTY

Well, I was wondering if there are people in the world who have nothing to repent of.

MRS. VOCKERAT

None, Kitty, you may be quite sure.

KITTY

[*Holds out her hand to her mother-in-law.*] Should I do chain-stitch here, mother? [*Shakes out the little shirt.*] It's long enough, I think.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Rather make it too long than too short. Children grow so fast. [*Both work busily.*

[*Short pause.*]

KITTY

[*Continues to sew.*] John has sometimes had a great deal to suffer — from my fancies. I have often felt sorry for him. But one cannot help one's nature — that's the miserable thing. [*Gives a short bitter laugh.*] I was too sure. I didn't guard what I possessed. [*Sighs.*] Sewing at this little shirt reminds me of an old woman — a servant she was — in the institution at Gnadenfrei, who had sewn her own shroud, and had had it lying for years in her drawer. She showed it to me once. It made me quite melancholy.

MRS. VOCKERAT

The silly old woman!

[*Short pause.*]

KITTY

[*Sewing.*] What a nice little boy that Harry Fiedler is! I brought him in yesterday and showed him some pictures. When we were looking at them he said: "The butterfly is the husband and the dragon-fly is the wife; that's the way, isn't it, Auntie Kitty?"

[MRS. VOCKERAT *laughs good-humouredly.*

KITTY

Funny little fellow! And then he tapped me gently on the eyelids and asked, "Do the eyes sleep in there?"

MRS. VOCKERAT

Children sometimes have pretty fancies.

KITTY

[*With a touch of melancholy amusement.*] He still always says 'parks, instead of sparks, and then I tease him.

MRS. VOCKERAT

'Parks! [*Laughs.*

KITTY

[*Lets the work drop into her lap.*] What sorrows children have too! I remember how for years when I was a child, I used to pray earnestly whenever I saw a potato field, "O God, please let me find a big death's-head moth; only one!" But I never found it. [*She rises, fatigued. Sighs.*] When one grows up one has other disappointments.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Where are you off to? Sit still a little longer.

KITTY

I must see if baby is awake.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Now don't fidget, Kitty! You know he'll be attended to.

KITTY

[*Standing still, her hand to her forehead.*] Let me alone, mother. I must think.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Expostulates gently.*] There's exactly what you must not! Come — tell me something more. [*Draws her down on her chair,* KITTY *offering no resistance.*] There — sit down again. When John was a little boy he used to say very funny things too.

KITTY

[*Sits as if in a dream, her wide-open eyes fixed on the portrait above the piano.*] Dear papa in his gown! He never dreamed what his daughter . . . [*Her voice is choked by tears.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Notices.*] Kitty, Kitty dear!

KITTY

[*Speaking with difficulty.*] Please, please don't speak to me.

[*Both work silently for a short time.*

KITTY

[*Sewing.*] Were you very happy when John was born?

MRS. VOCKERAT

From my very heart! Were you not happy about Philip?

KITTY

I really don't know. [*Rises again.*] I really must go and lie down for a little.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Also rises, strokes* KITTY'S *hand.*] Yes, do, dear, if you don't feel well.

KITTY

Take hold of my hand, mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Does so.*] Why, it's as cold as ice, child!

KITTY

Take the needle. [*Holds it out to her.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Hesitates.*] What am I to do with it?

KITTY

Look!

[*Drives it quickly several times into the palm of her hand.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Seizes her hand.*] Good gracious, child! what are you doing?

KITTY

[*Smiles.*] It doesn't hurt in the least. Not an atom. I feel nothing at all.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Silly fancies! Come, come! You had better lie down — much better.

[*Leads* KITTY *into the bedroom, supporting her a little.*

[*After a short pause, enter* BRAUN. *He takes off his hat and overcoat, and hangs them on the rack.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Looks out at the bedroom door.*] Oh, it's you, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

Good day, Mrs. Vockerat.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'm coming this moment. [*Disappears; enters presently, hurries up to* BRAUN, *and puts a telegram into his hand.*] Advise me, Mr. Braun!

[*Anxiously watches the expression of his face as he reads.*

BRAUN

[*Has finished reading.*] Have you told Mr. Vockerat how things are?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Indeed I have not! I couldn't bring myself to do it. I only wrote that I would like him to come, because . . . because I couldn't say how long I might have to stay, and because Kitty is not getting on as well as she ought to — nothing more, not even that Miss Anna is still here.

BRAUN

[*After a little reflection, shrugs his shoulders.*] Well, there is really nothing to be said.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*More anxiously.*] Do you think I was wrong? — that it would have been better not to write? But Kitty is fading away before my very eyes! If she once takes to bed, then . . . I don't know what will be the end of it. As it is, she has constantly to lie down. She is lying down at this moment. I can't stand it any longer, Mr. Braun. The responsibility is too much for me to bear alone. [*She wipes her eyes.*

BRAUN

[*Looks at telegram.*] It is the six o'clock train that Mr. Vockerat is coming by? What o'clock is it now?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Not half-past four yet.

BRAUN

[*After a moment of reflection.*] Has there been no change in the course of the week?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Shakes her head hopelessly.*] None.

BRAUN

Has she given no hint of any intention to go?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Not the slightest. And as to John, he is perfectly bewitched. He was always a little touchy and irritable, but in the end he generally did what one wanted. Now he hears and sees no one but this woman — mother and wife do not exist for him, Mr. Braun. What in Heaven's name is to be done? I lie awake all night. I have thought

it over in every possible way. What is to be done? [*Pause.*]

BRAUN

I really don't know if it is a good thing that Mr. Vockerat is coming. It will only serve to irritate John to the highest degree . . . And then . . . to be taken to task before *her* . . . I have sometimes the feeling that — that he would gradually work his way out of this if he were left alone.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Just what I thought myself, Mr. Braun. That was why I allowed myself to be persuaded when he brought her back again. That was why I stayed on. But no — things are getting worse and worse. One dare not so much as open one's mouth about it now. I must not even mention the subject to Kitty. What am I to do?

BRAUN

Has Mrs. John never spoken to her husband on the subject?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, once — they lay awake for half the night. God knows what passed between them. But Kitty is far too patient. She takes John's part whenever I say anything. She does not even see through this . . . this . . . lady we are talking about. She positively takes her part too.

[*Short pause.*]

BRAUN

I have been wondering — if my speaking to Miss Anna could possibly do any good.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Quickly.*] I do believe it might.

BRAUN

I once thought of writing to her . . . But seriously, Mrs. Vockerat, it seems to me that Mr. Vockerat's interfering in the matter, in his way, may make things very much worse.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! But where else was I to turn in my distress? Oh, Mr. Braun . . . if you would only speak to her! [ANNA'S *and* JOHN'S *voices are heard.*] No! I can't possibly meet her just now.

[*Exit by door into entrance-hall.*

[BRAUN *hesitates. As no one immediately appears, exit also by door into entrance-hall.*

[*Enter* MISS MAHR *from the verandah.*

MISS MAHR

[*Takes off her hat. Speaks through the open door to* JOHN, *who has not come in from the verandah.*] Anything interesting going on, Doctor?

JOHN

Something must have happened. There is a policeman in a boat. [*Enter.*] Perhaps some one drowned again.

MISS MAHR

Why at once suppose the worst?

JOHN

Such things happen here often enough. It is

a dangerous little lake. What have you got there, Miss Anna?

MISS MAHR

Everlastings, Doctor Vockerat. I mean to take them with me as a remembrance.

JOHN

Yes, when you go — which will not be for a long time yet.

MISS MAHR

I'm not so sure about that.

[*Short pause, during which they walk up and down slowly, at different ends of the room.*

MISS MAHR

It turns dark very early now.

JOHN

And cold, as soon as the sun goes down. Shall I light the lamp?

MISS MAHR

As you like. Suppose we enjoy the twilight a little? [*Seats herself.*

JOHN

[*Also takes a chair, at some distance from* ANNA. *Pause.*] The twilight is the time for old memories, is it not?

MISS MAHR

And for fairy-tales.

JOHN

Yes, for them, too. And what beautiful ones there are!

Miss Mahr

Yes. And you know how almost all the most beautiful end? — I put on the glass slipper — and then I tripped on a stone — there was a loud crack — and it broke into bits.

John

[*After a short silence.*] Do you not call that supposing the worst, too?

Miss Mahr

I don't think so.

[*Rises, goes slowly to the piano, sits down at it and breathes into her hands.*

John

[*Also rises, takes a few slow steps, and stands still behind* Anna.] Only a bar or two. Give me that pleasure. I'll be quite satisfied with any simple little air.

Miss Mahr

I can't play.

John

[*In a tone of gentle reproach.*] Now, Miss Anna, why say that? It's only that you won't.

Miss Mahr

For six years I had not touched a piano, until this spring; then I made a beginning again; but I only strum a little for my own pleasure — sad, hopeless little songs, that I used to hear my mother sing.

John

Will you not sing me one of these sad, hopeless little songs?

MISS MAHR

There, you are making fun of me already.

JOHN

I see you are determined not to oblige me, Miss Anna.

[*Short pause.*]

MISS MAHR

Yes, Dr. Vockerat, I am a horrid creature — full of whims and fancies.

JOHN

I didn't say that, Miss Anna.

[*Short pause.*]

MISS MAHR

[*Opens the piano, lays her hands upon the keys. Meditatively.*] If I only knew something merry.

[JOHN *has seated himself in a far-off corner, with his legs crossed; he rests his elbow on his knee and holds his hand to his ear.*

MISS MAHR

[*Lays her hands on her lap, speaks slowly and with pauses.*] It is a great age that we live in. That which has so weighed upon people's minds and darkened their lives seems to me to be gradually disappearing. Do you not think so, Dr. Vockerat?

JOHN

[*Clears his throat.*] How do you mean?

MISS MAHR

On the one hand we were oppressed by a sense of uncertainty, of apprehension, on the other by gloomy fanaticism. This exaggerated tension is

calming down, is yielding to the influence of something like a current of fresh air, that is blowing in upon us from — let us say from the twentieth century. Do you not feel this too, Dr. Vockerat? People like Braun, for instance, remind one of nothing so much as owls in the daylight.

JOHN

I don't know, Miss Anna! What you say about Braun is true enough. But I don't find it possible to arrive at any real joy in life yet. I don't know . . .

MISS MAHR

It has no connection with our individual fates —our *little* fates, Dr. Vockerat!

[*Pause.*]

[MISS MAHR *strikes a note and holds it down.*

JOHN

[*After the sound has died away.*] Well!

MISS MAHR

Dr. Vockerat!

JOHN

Please do play something!

MISS MAHR

I have something to say to you — but you are not to get angry; you are to be quite quiet and good.

JOHN

What is it?

MISS MAHR

I think my time has come. I want to go.

[John *sighs deeply, rises and walks about slowly.*

Miss Mahr

Dr. Vockerat! we also are falling into the error of weak natures. We must look at things more impersonally. We must learn to take ourselves less seriously.

[*Short pause.*]

John

Must you really go?

Miss Mahr

[*Gently, but firmly.*] Yes, Dr. Vockerat.

John

I shall be ten times more lonely now than I was before.

[*Pause.*]

John

But we'll not talk about that at present.

Miss Mahr

No. Only I must tell you that I have written to Zürich that they may expect me on Saturday or Sunday.

John

You have actually . . . but, Miss Anna, why this hurry?

Miss Mahr

There are many reasons.

[*Pause.*]

John

[*Walking about faster and more excitedly.*]

And is one really to sacrifice everything that one has gained to this cursed conventionality? Are people incapable of understanding that there can be no crime in a situation which only tends to make both parties better and nobler? Do parents lose by their son becoming a better, wiser man? Does a wife lose by the spiritual growth of her husband?

MISS MAHR

[*In a tone of gentle reproof.*] Dr. Vockerat! Dr. Vockerat! There's your hasty temper, again.

JOHN

[*More gently.*] But am I not right, Miss Anna?

MISS MAHR

You are both right and wrong. . . . Your parents have a different standard from you. Kitty's again, differs from theirs. It seems to me that in this we cannot judge for them.

JOHN

That is what is so dreadful — dreadful for us.

MISS MAHR

For them . . . for the others no less so.

[*Pause.*]

JOHN

Yes, but you have always said yourself that one should not allow one's self to be ruled by the opinion of others — that one ought to be independent?

MISS MAHR

Unless one is dependent.

JOHN

Granted. I am dependent — unfortunately! But you? . . . Why do you take the others' part?

MISS MAHR

Because I have learned to love them too.

[*Pause.*]

MISS MAHR

You have often said to me that you foresee a new, a nobler state of fellowship between man and woman.

JOHN

[*Warmly, passionately.*] Yes, I feel that it will come some time — a relationship in which the human will preponderate over the animal tie. Animal will no longer be united to animal, but one human being to another. Friendship is the foundation on which this love will rise, beautiful, unchangeable, a miraculous structure. And I foresee more than this — something nobler, richer, freer still. [*Stops. Turns to* ANNA.] If it were not so dark I believe I should see you smiling. Am I right?

MISS MAHR

No, Dr. Vockerat — I was not smiling this time, though it is true that such words — which are apt to carry away the speaker himself — do generally awaken a spirit of ridicule in me. Let us suppose, however, that there may really have been something new, something nobler, in our relation to each other.

JOHN

[*Saddened.*] Can you doubt it? Shall I tell

you how you may know it? Do you, for instance, feel anything for Kitty but the warmest affection? Is my love for her less strong than it was? On the contrary, it has grown deeper and fuller.

Miss Mahr

But will you get any one, except me, to believe this? Will this prevent Kitty's grieving herself to death? . . . Don't let us speak of ourselves at all. Let us suppose, quite generally, the feeling of a new, more perfect relationship between two people to exist, as it were prophetically. It *is* only a feeling, a young and all too tender plant which must be carefully watched and guarded. Don't you think so, Dr. Vockerat? That this plant should come to perfection during our lifetime is not to be expected. We shall not see or taste of its fruits. But we may help to propagate it for future generations. I could imagine a person accepting this as a life-task.

John

And hence you conclude that we must part.

Miss Mahr

I did not mean to speak of ourselves. But it is as you say . . . we must part. Another idea . . . had sometimes suggested itself to me too . . . momentarily. But I could not entertain it now. I too have felt as it were the presentiment of better things. And since then the old aim seems to me too poor a one for us — too common, to tell the truth. It is like coming down from the mountain-top with its wide, free view, and

feeling the narrowness, the nearness of everything in the valley.

[*Pause.*]

JOHN

But suppose it ruined no other life?

MISS MAHR

That is an impossibility.

JOHN

What if Kitty really possessed the power? — really succeeded in rising to the level of this idea?

MISS MAHR

Even if Kitty were able — to live — sharing with me . . . I — I could not trust myself. There is something in me — in us — that opposes itself to these purer relations which we see dawning, Dr. Vockerat, something that in the long run would assert its power. Shall we have the lamp now?

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT *from the hall, with a light.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Calling back into entrance-hall.*] It's still dark here. Stay where you are for a moment, Mr. Braun, until I light the lamp. I'll arrange things so that . . .

[JOHN *coughs.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Starting.*] Who is there?

JOHN

We are here, mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

You, John?

JOHN

Miss Anna and I, mother. Who is in the hall?

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Rather angrily.*] I must say, John, you might have lit the lamp. Sitting in the dark like this — really . . . [*Lights the lamp.* MISS MAHR *and* JOHN *sit still.*] John!

JOHN

Yes, mother.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Can you come with me for a minute? I want to speak to you.

JOHN

Can't you do it here, mother?

MRS. VOCKERAT

If you have no time to spare for me, then say so plainly.

JOHN

Oh, mother! of course I'll come. Excuse me, Miss Mahr.

[*Exit with* MRS. VOCKERAT *into the study.*

MISS MAHR

[*Begins softly striking simple chords, then sings to them in a low voice.*] "The tortures of prison sapped thy young strength; to fate thy proud head bowing, with honour thou laid'st down thy life in thy loved people's cause." *

[*She stops.* BRAUN *has entered.*

* Words of a Russian folk-song.

MISS MAHR

[*Turns round on the piano-stool.*] Good evening, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

I did not mean to disturb you. Good evening, Miss Mahr.

MISS MAHR

We have seen little of you lately, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

Oh! does it seem so?

MISS MAHR

I have heard the remark made several times.

BRAUN

By whom? Not by John, I am sure.

MISS MAHR

No, it was by Mrs. John.

BRAUN

I knew it! — To tell the truth, I . . . But no, all that is of comparatively little importance now.

[*Pause.*]

MISS MAHR

I think we are both in the mood to-day when it would do us good to hear something amusing. One must sometimes force one's self to laugh. Don't you know any entertaining stories, Mr. Braun?

BRAUN

No, upon my word I don't.

MISS MAHR

I don't believe you know what laughing means.

[*Pause.*]

BRAUN

I really came, Miss Mahr, to talk to you — about something serious.

MISS MAHR

You? — to me?

BRAUN

Yes, Miss Anna.

MISS MAHR

[*Rises.*] Go on, then, Mr. Braun. I am listening.

[*Goes to the table, unfastens the bunch of everlastings, and occupies herself arranging and re-arranging them.*

BRAUN

I was in the throes of a hard inward struggle — at the time I made your acquaintance — in Paris. It was an unnecessary one, for, after all, the question: Is one to paint with or without a serious motive? is most unimportant. Art is a luxury, and to be a luxury producer nowadays is a disgrace in any circumstances. At that time your influence was what helped me to my feet again. And, which is what I chiefly wanted to say, I learned at that time to respect and appreciate you.

MISS MAHR

[*Busy with the flowers, flippantly.*] You don't express yourself with much delicacy, Mr. Braun — however, proceed.

BRAUN

If such words as these offend you, Miss Mahr — then I regret . . . then I am quite perplexed.

MISS MAHR

I am sorry for that, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

It is painful and disagreeable to me. One ought simply to let things take their course — if it were not for their serious consequences. But one can't . . .

MISS MAHR

[*Humming the tune of "Spin, my daughter, spin away!"*] Pretty little everlastings.— I'm listening, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

When I see you like this, Miss Mahr, I can't help feeling that — that . . . you don't seem to be the least aware . . . you seem to have no idea whatever of the terribly serious state of matters.

[MISS MAHR *hums the tune of "Haiden-röslein."*

BRAUN

Yet every one has a conscience. There is nothing else for it, Miss Mahr — I must appeal to your conscience.

MISS MAHR

[*After a short pause, coolly and flippantly.*] Do you know what Pope Leo the Tenth said about the conscience?

BRAUN

No, I do not, and at the present moment it is really a matter of indifference to me, Miss Mahr.

MISS MAHR

He said it was a noxious animal which compelled

men to take up arms against themselves.— But I beg your pardon! I'm all attention.

BRAUN

I don't know, but the thing seems to me so self-evident. You can't but see — that the very existence of a whole family is at stake. It seems to me as if one glance at young Mrs. Vockerat, one single glance, removed any possibility of doubt. I should have thought . . .

MISS MAHR

[*Serious at last.*] Oh! That is what we are coming to! Well, go on, go on.

BRAUN

Yes, and — and your — your relations with John.

MISS MAHR

[*With a deprecating gesture.*] Mr. Braun! — It seemed to me that I owed it to the friend of my friend to listen to what he had to say — so far. Anything beyond this is spoken to deaf ears.

[*Short embarrassed pause, after which* BRAUN *takes his hat and overcoat, and leaves the room with the air of a man who has done what he can.*

[MISS MAHR *throws away her bouquet as soon as* BRAUN *has gone out, and walks up and down excitedly for a few seconds. She then becomes calmer and takes a drink of water.*

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT *from the hall.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Looks round anxiously, hastens towards* ANNA

as soon as she has made sure that there is no one else in the room.] I am in such terrible anxiety — about my John. You know what a violent temper he has. There is something weighing on my mind. I can keep it back no longer, Miss Mahr. Oh, Miss Anna! Oh, Miss Anna!

[*Looks at* Anna *with a touching glance of entreaty.*

Miss Mahr

I know what you want.

Mrs. Vockerat

Has Mr. Braun spoken to you?

[Miss Mahr *tries to say Yes, but her voice fails her. She bursts into a fit of weeping and sobbing.*

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Trying to quiet her.*] Miss Anna! Dear Miss Anna! Don't let us lose our heads. Oh, what shall we do if John comes? What ever am I to do? Oh, Miss Anna, Miss Anna!

Miss Mahr

It was only . . . I'm quite myself again. And you shall have no more cause for anxiety, Mrs. Vockerat.

Mrs. Vockerat

I'm sorry for you too. I should be a cruel woman if I were not. You have had a hard life, and I feel truly for you. But yet John comes first with me — I can't help that. And you are very young yet, Miss Anna, very young. At your age people get over things more easily.

Miss Mahr

It is inexpressibly painful to me that it should have come to this.

Mrs. Vockerat

I never did such a thing before. I can't remember ever having refused hospitality to any one. But I can't help myself. There is no other way out of it for us all.— I am not judging you, Miss Anna; I am speaking to you as one woman to another; I am speaking to you as a mother. [*Her voice is choked by tears.*] As my John's mother, I implore you to give him back to me! Give an unhappy mother back her child!

[*She has sunk down on a chair, and her tears fall on* Anna's *hand.*

Miss Mahr

Dear, dear Mrs. Vockerat! This . . . this is terrible! — But — can I give back? Is it true that I have taken anything?

Mrs. Vockerat

We won't enter into that. I don't want to examine into things, Miss Anna. I don't want to find out which tempted the other. I only know this, that never all his life has my son shown bad inclinations. I was so sure of him that — to this day I don't understand . . . [*She weeps.*] It was presumption on my part, Miss Anna.

Miss Mahr

You may say what you please, Mrs. Vockerat, for I can't defend myself. . . .

Mrs. Vockerat

I don't want to hurt you. I wouldn't for the

world anger you. For I am in your power. All I can do in my anguish of heart is to beg you, to implore you to let John go — before it is too late — before Kitty's heart is broken. Have pity!

MISS MAHR

Mrs. Vockerat! You make me feel myself too utterly vile. . . . I feel as if I were being beaten; and . . . But no — I'll say nothing except that I was already prepared to go. And if that is all . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

I don't know what you'll think, Miss Anna. I can hardly bring myself to say it. But because of certain circumstances . . . it would need to be at once . . . within the hour . . . if possible . . .

[MISS MAHR *collects the outdoor things which she had taken off.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

I have no choice, Miss Anna.

[*Short pause.*]

MISS MAHR

[*Her things over her arm, walks slowly in the direction of the door into entrance-hall; she stops in front of* MRS. VOCKERAT.] Could you suppose that I would still delay?

MRS. VOCKERAT

God be with you, Miss Anna!

MISS MAHR

Good-bye, Mrs. Vockerat!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Shall you tell John what has passed between us?

MISS MAHR

You need have no anxiety about that, Mrs. Vockerat.

MRS. VOCKERAT

God bless you, Miss Anna.

[*Exit* MISS MAHR *by door into entrance-hall.* MRS. VOCKERAT *draws a long breath of relief, and hurries off into the bedroom. A lantern appears on the verandah. Enter* OLD VOCKERAT *in travelling cloak and cap, followed by a station porter loaded with packages.*

VOCKERAT

[*Beaming with satisfaction.*] What! No one here? Lay the things on the table. Wait a minute! [*Looks in his purse.*] Here's something for your trouble.

PORTER

Thank you, sir.

VOCKERAT

Stop, my good friend. [*Looks in the pockets of his cloak.*] I thought — I was sure I had a few left — "Palm Leaves" . . . Here they are! [*Hands him one or two little paper books.*] He was a true Christian who wrote these. Actual experiences. May they be blessed to you!

[*He shakes hands with the bewildered* PORTER, *who, not knowing what to say, retires silently.*

[VOCKERAT *hangs up his cloak and cap, looks about, rubs his hands cheerfully, and then goes and listens at the bedroom*

door. Hearing some one approach it, he runs and hides behind the stove.

KITTY

[*Entering from bedroom, sees the parcels, cloak, and cap.*] What! Surely these are — surely these are — these are papa's things.

VOCKERAT

[*Rushes out from behind the stove, laughing and crying at the same time quite uncontrollably. He embraces* KITTY, *and kisses her repeatedly.*] My daughter! My little Kitty! [*Kiss.*] How are you all? What's going on? Are you all well and in good spirits? [*Kiss.*] You've not the least idea . . . [*Lets* KITTY *go*] not the very least idea how I have looked forward to this day. [*Laughing all the time.*] And what's our prince about? — ha, ha, ha! How is his highness, ha, ha! Our little Prince Sniffkins, ha, ha, ha, ha! Thank God that I'm here again at last! [*Rather exhausted.*] Do you know — [*taking off his spectacles and rubbing the glasses*] — it's all very well to live alone for a short time, but it doesn't do in the long run. Ha, ha! Man does not thrive on a lonely life; he's happier far when he takes a wife. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Yes, yes, that's the way of it! And then, you know, it was a very busy time, too — dung carting, you know. Dung, ha, ha, ha! that's the farmer's gold. When Pastor Pfeiffer came to see me lately, he found fault with me for having the dung-heap so near the house. [*Laughs.*] But I said to him: "My good sir, do you not know," said I, "that this is our gold-mine?" Ha, ha, ha, ha! But where's my old

lady all this time — and where's John? [*Looks more closely at* Kitty.] I don't know — can it be the lamp-light? It strikes me that you are not looking so well yet as you used to do, Kitty.

Kitty

[*With difficulty concealing her emotion.*] Oh, yes, papa dear, I feel quite . . . [*Throws her arms round his neck.*] I'm so glad you have come!

Vockerat

I surely didn't . . . yes, I did give you a fright, Kitty. What a shame!

[Mrs. Vockerat *appears at the entrance-hall door.*

Vockerat

[*Much excited again.*] Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Here she comes!

[*He and his wife rush into each other's arms, weeping and laughing.*

[*Exit* Kitty, *quite overcome.*

Vockerat

[*After their silent embrace, clapping his wife on the back.*] Well, well, my dear old woman! — We were never away from each other so long before.— Now we only want John.

Mrs. Vockerat

[*After a short hesitation.*] Our visitor is here still.

Vockerat

A visitor, do you say?

Mrs. Vockerat

Yes, the young lady.

VOCKERAT

What young lady?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Why, you know! Miss Mahr!

VOCKERAT

I thought she had gone. But look here, I've brought plenty of provisions with me. [*He turns over the packages.*] Here is butter. I brought no eggs this time, remembering what disasters we had with the last. This is cheese — for John — home-made. These things must be taken to the cellar at once. Here's a ham — and it's a delicately cured one too, I can tell you, Martha — like salmon.— But you're so quiet. You're well, I hope?

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, yes, papa. But — but I have something on my mind. I first thought I wouldn't tell you about it — but — I . . . You are my own dear husband. I can bear it no longer. Our son . . . our John — has been on the brink . . .

VOCKERAT

[*Looks astonished, then alarmed.*] What! John? Our boy John? What is it? Tell me at once.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Yes, but you are not to be alarmed. Thanks be to God, the danger is over. At least — the lady is leaving the house this evening.

VOCKERAT

[*Painfully affected.*] Martha! This *cannot* be true.

MRS. VOCKERAT

I have no idea how — how far they have gone — but . . . oh, what I have endured!

VOCKERAT

I would have staked my right hand on his honour, Martha, without one moment's hesitation.— *My* son — Martha! my son — to forget his duty and his honour!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Don't take it so to heart, yet. You must investigate into the matter. I don't even know . . .

VOCKERAT

[*Walks about, pale, murmuring to himself.*] Thy will be done! Thy will be done!

[MRS. VOCKERAT *sheds tears silently.*

VOCKERAT

[*Stopping in front of her; in a hollow voice.*] Martha — we are being punished.— Let us search our hearts.

MRS. VOCKERAT

We have looked on in silence and allowed our children to stray farther and farther from God and the right way.

VOCKERAT

Just so. That is it. And now we are being punished. [*Takes his wife by both hands.*] But we will humble ourselves in prayer to God, Martha — day and night, day and night.

THE FIFTH ACT

The action follows almost directly on that of Act IV. No one in the room. The lamp is still burning on the table.

[*Enter* JOHN *hurriedly from the hall.*

JOHN

[*Angrily.*] Mother! [*Opens the bedroom door.*] Mother!

[*Enter* MRS. VOCKERAT *from bedroom.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Well, John, what's the matter? What a noise you're making! You'll waken baby.

JOHN

I should like to know, mother, who gave you the right to — to turn visitors out of my house.

MRS. VOCKERAT

O John! . . . I never dreamt of doing such a thing. I have turned no one out of the house.

JOHN

[*Walking furiously up and down.*] You lie, mother! !

MRS. VOCKERAT

You are not ashamed to use such language to your mother? John, John!

JOHN

I can't help it. It is the truth. Miss Anna is going, and . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

Did she tell you that I was driving her away?

JOHN

She didn't need to tell me. I know it.

MRS. VOCKERAT

How can you possibly know that, my boy?

JOHN

She is going. You have worked and worked to bring it about. But I tell you this — she'll go over my dead body. You see this revolver? [*Takes one out of the bookcase.*] I put it to my head — so, and if she goes out of this house I draw the trigger. I solemnly swear it.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Terrified, tries to catch hold of his arm.*] John! . . . for goodness' sake don't! Don't do that!

JOHN

I give you my word . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Calls.*] Papa! papa! come here! How easily it might go off and . . . Papa! come and make him listen to reason.

[*Enter* VOCKERAT *from the bedroom.*

JOHN

F — ather!

[*Suddenly comes to himself, lowers the revolver.*

VOCKERAT

Yes, here I am — and is this — this the way you meet me?

JOHN

What does it all mean, mother?

VOCKERAT

[*Going towards him slowly and solemnly.*] That you must think what you are about, my son — that is what it means.

JOHN

What has brought you here just now?

VOCKERAT

The will of God, boy. Yes, God's will has brought me here.

JOHN

Did mother summon you here?

VOCKERAT

Yes, John.

JOHN

For what purpose?

VOCKERAT

To help you, my boy, as your true friend.

JOHN

Why should I need help?

VOCKERAT

Because you are weak, John — a poor, weak creature like the rest of us.

JOHN

And suppose I am, what will you do to help me?

VOCKERAT

[*Goes up to him, takes his hand.*] First I will tell you how much we all love you — yes! And then I will tell you that God rejoices over a sinner, yes, over a sinner who repents.

JOHN

And so I am a sinner?

VOCKERAT

[*Still gently.*] A great sinner, yes — in the sight of God.

JOHN

In what does *my* sin consist?

VOCKERAT

He that looks on a woman to lust after her, says Christ, yes — and you have done more — yes, yes!

JOHN

[*Holds his hands to his ears.*] Father . . .

VOCKERAT

Nay, John, don't close your ears! Give me your hand — sinner to fellow-sinner — and let me fight the battle with you.

JOHN

I must tell you, father, that we take our stand on quite different ground.

VOCKERAT

The ground you stand on is crumbling beneath your feet.

JOHN

How can you say that, father? You don't know on what ground I stand. You don't know what path I take.

VOCKERAT

I do. The broad path that leads to destruction. I have silently looked on, yes — and so has a higher than I — God. And because I knew that, I neglected what was my duty, yes! But to-day I come in His name, and say to you, Turn! you are on the edge of a precipice.

JOHN

Good words and kindly meant, father . . . but I must tell you that they find no echo in my breast. I am not afraid of your precipices. But there are other precipices — beware of driving me over their brink!

VOCKERAT

No, no, John! . . . no . . .

JOHN

It is not true that whoever looks at a woman to desire her commits adultery. I have struggled and struggled . . .

VOCKERAT

No, John, no! I have often given you advice before, which you have proved to be good. I say to you to-day: Don't deceive yourself — put an end to it! Think of your wife, of your boy, and think a little too of your old father and mother. Don't heap . . .

JOHN

Am I not to think of myself at all, father?

VOCKERAT

As soon as you have made up your mind, you will feel free and happy.

JOHN

And if I don't?

VOCKERAT

Take my word for it, you will.

JOHN

And if . . . and Miss Anna?

VOCKERAT

The children of the world, John, get over such things easily.

JOHN

But what if she does not?

VOCKERAT

Then it has not been God's will.

JOHN

Well, father, I differ from you. We don't understand each other. In this matter I don't suppose we ever shall.

VOCKERAT

[*Struggling to maintain a friendly tone.*] It's — it's not a question of understanding. You mistake the position — yes, yes! That's not the position in which we stand to each other at all, as you used to know very well. It's no question of coming to an understanding.

JOHN

Excuse me, father, then what is it a question of?

VOCKERAT

Of obeying, it seems to me.

JOHN

You think that I should do what you wish, even if it seems wrong to me?

VOCKERAT

You may be sure that I'll not advise you to do anything wrong. I'm sorry that it should be necessary to say this to you . . . to remind you . . . how we brought you up — not without toil and trouble and many a sleepless night. We nursed you when you were ill, John, never sparing ourselves; and you were often ill, my boy, yes! And we did it all willingly, gladly.

JOHN

Yes, father, and I am grateful to you for it.

VOCKERAT

So you say, but these are words, and I want to see deeds, deeds. Be a good, a moral man, and an obedient son — that is real gratitude.

JOHN

So you consider me ungrateful; I don't reward you for your trouble?

VOCKERAT

Do you remember the prayer you used to say when you were a little child, every morning, yes, and evening, in bed?

JOHN

Well, father?

VOCKERAT

"O God, I humbly pray to Thee
That I Thy faithful child may be;
And if I from Thy paths do stray . . ."

JOHN

"Then take me, Lord, from earth away." So you think it would have been better if I had died?

VOCKERAT

If you continue to wander on the downward path, if . . . yes! — if you go on hardening your heart.

JOHN

I almost think myself that it would have been better.

[*Short pause.*]

VOCKERAT

Be yourself again, my son. Think of your old teachers, John — think of Pastor Pfeiffer and all his pious admonitions. Imagine . . .

JOHN

[*Frantic.*] Father, stop these reminiscences, unless you want to make me laugh. Reminding me of my teachers, indeed! — a pack of blockheads who educated the marrow out of my bones!

MRS. VOCKERAT

Gracious heavens!

VOCKERAT

Quiet, Martha, quiet! [*To* JOHN.] Neither your teachers nor your parents have deserved this of you.

JOHN

[*Screams.*] They were my destruction.

VOCKERAT

This is blasphemy, John.

JOHN

I know what I am saying. You have been my destruction.

VOCKERAT

Is this the reward of our love?

JOHN

Your love has been my destruction.

VOCKERAT

I don't recognise you, John — I can't understand you.

JOHN

You are right there, father. None of you ever did or ever will understand me.

[*Short pause.*]

VOCKERAT

Very well, John! I'll say no more. I did not think things had gone so far. I hoped to be able to help you, but that hope is at an end. Only God can help you now. Come, my poor old Martha; we have nothing more to do here. We'll go and hide our heads somewhere until it pleases God to take us. [*He turns again to* JOHN.] But, John, one thing more I must say to you; keep your hands free from blood. Do you hear? — free from blood! Do not bring that too upon yourself.— Have you ever noticed Kitty lately? Do you know that we

are in fear of her mind giving way? Have you ever really looked at the poor, sweet young creature, eh? Have you the least idea of what you have done to her? Get mother to tell you how she sobs and cries at night over your old photographs. Once more then, John, beware of blood-guiltiness! — Now we are ready to go — yes, yes. Come, Martha, come!

JOHN

[*After a short struggle.*] Father!! Mother!!

[VOCKERAT *and his wife turn round.* JOHN *throws himself into their arms.*

VOCKERAT

O John!

[*Pause.*]

JOHN

[*In a low voice.*] Tell me what to do.

VOCKERAT

Don't keep her. Let her go, John.

JOHN

I promise you that I will.

[*Sinks exhaustedly on to a chair.*

[MRS. VOCKERAT, *overcome with joyful emotion, hurries into the bedroom.*

VOCKERAT

[*Claps* JOHN *gently on the back, kisses his forehead.*] Now God give you strength — yes, yes!

[*Exit into bedroom.*

[JOHN *sits quiet for a moment; then he shudders, rises, looks out at the window into the darkness, opens door into entrance-hall.*

JOHN

Is any one there?

MISS MAHR

Yes, Dr. Vockerat, I am. [*Enters.*

JOHN

Were you going without saying good-bye?
[*Walks up and down.*

MISS MAHR

I half thought of doing so. But it doesn't matter now.

JOHN

My situation is a terrible one. Father is here. I have never seen him in such a state. The blithe, jovial man! I can't get over it. And yet how am I to sit still and see you go, Miss Anna, and . . .

MISS MAHR

You know, Dr. Vockerat, that I should have had to go anyhow.

JOHN

No, you are not to go! You must not! Most certainly not now — at this moment.

[*Is seated again, holding his hand to his head, groaning deeply.*

MISS MAHR

[*In a voice hardly audible from emotion.*] Dr. Vockerat! [*Lays her hand gently on his head.*

JOHN

[*Raises his head; sighs.*] O Miss Anna!

MISS MAHR

Remember what we said to each other hardly an hour ago.— Let us make a virtue of necessity.

JOHN

[*Rises and walks about excitedly.*] I don't know what we said. My brain is racked, confused, vacant. I don't know what I said to father. I don't know anything! My brain is an ugly blank.

MISS MAHR

Dear Dr. Vockerat, if only our last minutes together might be clear, conscious ones!

JOHN

[*After a short struggle.*] Help me, Miss Anna! There is no manliness, no pride left in me. I am quite changed. At this moment I am not even the man I was before you came to us. The one feeling left in me is disgust and weariness of life. Everything has lost its worth to me, is soiled, polluted, desecrated, dragged through the mire. When I think what you, your presence, your words made me, I feel that if I cannot be that again, then — then all the rest no longer means anything to me. I draw a line through it all and — *close my account.*

[*He walks about, stops in front of* ANNA.

Give me something to hold on by. Give me something to cling to — a support. I am falling. Help me! I am on the verge of destruction, Miss Anna!

MISS MAHR

It grieves me terribly, Dr. Vockerat, to see you

like this. I hardly know how I am to help you. But one thing you ought to remember — that we foresaw this. We knew that we must be prepared for it sooner or later.

[JOHN *stands still, reflecting.*

MISS MAHR

Now you remember, don't you? Shall we try it? — you know what I mean. Shall we make a law for ourselves — and act according to it all our lives, even if we never see each other again — our own one law, binding us two alone? Shall we? There is nothing else that can unite us. Don't let us deceive ourselves. Everything else separates us. Shall we do this? Are you willing?

JOHN

I do feel — that this might support me. I might be able to work on, hopeless of attaining my aim. But who is to answer for me? Where am I to draw my faith from? Who is to assure me that I am not wearing myself out for nothing at all?

MISS MAHR

If we will a thing, Dr. Vockerat, what need is there of faith, of guarantees?

JOHN

But if my will is not strong?

MISS MAHR

When I feel mine weak, I shall think of him who is bound by the same law, and I know that that will give me strength. I shall think of you, Dr. Vockerat!

JOHN

Miss Anna — Well, then, *I will! I will!* — Our prophetic feeling of a new, a free existence, a far-off state of blessedness — that feeling we will keep. It shall never be forgotten, though it may never be realised. It shall be my guiding light; when this light is extinguished, my life will be extinguished too. [*Both silent and overcome.*] I thank you, Miss Anna!

MISS MAHR

Good-bye, John!

JOHN

Where shall you go?

MISS MAHR

I may go north — I may go south.

JOHN

Will you not tell me where?

MISS MAHR

Don't you think it is better that you should not ask?

JOHN

But shall we not from time to time . . . let each other know . . . only a few words to tell where we are, what we are doing . . .

MISS MAHR

[*Shakes her head, smiling sadly.*] Would that be wise? Does not the greatest danger of failure lie that way? — in our yielding to ourselves? And failure would mean that we have been deceiving ourselves.

JOHN

Be it so, then — I will bear the burden. I will clasp it tight — even if it should crush me. [*Has taken* ANNA'S *hand.*] Good-bye.

MISS MAHR

[*Speaking with difficulty, sometimes timidly, changing colour, showing strong emotion throughout.*] John! one word more! This ring — was taken from the finger of a dead woman, who — who had followed her — her husband . . . to Siberia — and faithfully shared his sufferings — to the end. [*With a little mocking laugh.*] Just the opposite to our case.

JOHN

Miss Anna!

[*He lifts her hand to his lips and holds it there.*

MISS MAHR

It is the only ring I have ever worn. Its story is a thing to think of when one feels weak. And when you look at it — in hours of weakness — then — think too of her — who, far away — lonely like yourself — is fighting the same secret fight.— Good-bye!

JOHN

[*Wildly.*] *Never, never* to meet again!

MISS MAHR

If we meet again we are lost.

JOHN

But how am I to bear it?

MISS MAHR

What does not overcome us strengthens us. [*Turns to go.*

JOHN

Anna! Sister!

MISS MAHR

[*In tears.*] My brother!

JOHN

May not a brother — kiss his sister — before they part for ever?

MISS MAHR

No, John.

JOHN

Yes, Anna! Yes, yes!

[*He takes her into his arms, and their lips meet in one long passionate kiss. Then* ANNA *tears herself away, and goes out by the verandah.* JOHN *stands for a moment as if dazed, then strides up and down, putting his hand through his hair; sighs, sighs again more deeply, stands still and listens. The noise of the approaching train rushing through the wood is heard.* JOHN *opens the verandah door, and stands listening there. The sound grows louder, and then gradually dies away. The station bell is heard. It rings a second time — a third time. Shrill whistle of the departing train.* JOHN *turns to go into his room, but breaks down on the way; sinks on to a*

chair, his body shaken by a convulsion of weeping and sobbing. Faint moonlight on the verandah.

[*Voices are heard in the bedroom.* JOHN *jumps up, goes towards the study, stops, thinks for an instant, and then hurries out by the verandah.*

[*Enter* VOCKERAT *from the bedroom, followed by his wife. Both go towards door into entrance-hall.*

VOCKERAT

[*Stopping.*] John! — I thought I heard some one here.

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*At door into entrance-hall.*] Some one has just gone upstairs.

VOCKERAT

Yes, yes! What he wants now is rest. We'll not disturb him. What would you say, though, to sending Braun up to him?

MRS. VOCKERAT

The very thing, papa! I'll send for Mr. Braun. I don't know, though, if I shouldn't go to John myself.

VOCKERAT

[*Going towards verandah door.*] Better not, Martha. [*He opens door; listens.*] Beautiful clear moonlight. Listen!

MRS. VOCKERAT

[*Comes quickly from entrance-hall door.*] What is it?

VOCKERAT

Wild geese — look! there! over the lake. The black specks you see crossing the moon.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, my eyes are not so young as they once were.
[*Goes back to entrance-hall door.*

VOCKERAT

Listen, Martha!

MRS. VOCKERAT

What is it now, papa?

VOCKERAT

[*Shuts the door and follows his wife.*] Nothing! I only thought I heard some one moving about down there — fumbling with the oars.

MRS. VOCKERAT

Who should be doing that at this hour?

[*Exit both by door into entrance-hall.*

[*Some one is seen peering through the verandah window. It is* JOHN. *He presently enters, stealthily. He is changed in appearance, is deathly pale, and breathes open-mouthed. Glances round hurriedly, afraid of being discovered. Gets writing materials and writes a few words; jumps up, throws down the pen, and hurries out by the verandah as soon as sounds are heard.*

[*Re-enter* MR. *and* MRS. VOCKERAT, *with* KITTY *between them.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Did any one ever hear of such a thing? Sitting alone in the pitch-dark!

KITTY

[*Holding her hand before her eyes.*] The light dazzles me.

MRS. VOCKERAT

What a naughty, naughty girl! In the dark for who knows how long?

KITTY

[*Half suspiciously.*] What? . . . Why are you both so good to me?

VOCKERAT

Because you are our own, only, dear daughter.
[*He kisses her.*

KITTY

[*Smiling faintly.*] Yes, yes! You are sorry for me.

MRS. VOCKERAT

There's nothing else wrong, is there, Kitty?

VOCKERAT

Let's say no more about it, Martha. Things will be all right again now. The worst is over, thank God.

KITTY

[*Sitting at the table; after a short pause.*] Mother, I feel. . . . The light is still dazzling me. . . . I feel like a person who has been attempting to be something perfectly foolish, but who has come to her senses again.

MRS. VOCKERAT

How so, dearie?

KITTY

Has Anna gone, Mother?

VOCKERAT

Yes, Kitty. And now — now you must be happy and bright again.

[KITTY *remains silent.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

Don't you love John any longer, Kitty?

KITTY

[*After thinking a little.*] I have not been so badly off, after all. My friend Fanny Stenzel married a pastor. But however contented and happy she may be, do you think I would change with her? Not I.— There's a smell of smoke here, isn't there?

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, child, I smell nothing.

KITTY

[*Wringing her hands piteously.*] Oh dear! Oh dear! Things can never come right again — never!

VOCKERAT

You must have more faith, my dear daughter. Mine has come back to me, and my sure trust that all will be well. God has sometimes strange ways of leading erring souls back to Himself. I believe, Kitty, that I can trace the workings of His purpose.

KITTY

The first feeling that I had, mother, when John came and asked me to marry him, was the right one. I remember how all that day the thought was never out of my head: What can such a clever, learned man want with a creature like you? What can you be to him? And you see, I thought rightly.

MRS. VOCKERAT

No, Kitty, no! The truth is that it is not you who need to look up to John, but John who needs to look up to you; you stand high above him.

VOCKERAT

[*With a trembling voice.*] But . . . what Martha says is true, yes, yes! but — if you can forgive . . . if you can forgive his great sin . . .

KITTY

Oh, if there were only anything to forgive! I could forgive once — a hundred times — a thousand times. But John . . . John is not a man to do anything disgraceful. A poor creature like me has nothing to forgive John. It all comes from my being what I am and not something else. I know now exactly what I am and what I am not.

[*Repeated cries of "Hallo there!" are heard outside.*

MRS. VOCKERAT

I'll tell you what we'll do, Kitty. I'll help you to get to bed, and then sit beside you and read aloud to you — "Grimm's Fairy Tales" — until you fall asleep. And to-morrow morning early you shall have a little nice hot soup and a soft boiled

egg, and then you will get up, and we'll go into the garden; and the sun will be shining bright, and everything will seem quite different. Come!

[*Enter* Braun *from verandah.*

Braun

Good evening!

Vockerat

Good evening, Mr. Braun!

Braun

How do you do, Mr. Vockerat? [*Shakes hands with him.*] Is John here?

Vockerat

He is upstairs, I think.

Braun

Is he? — are you sure?

Vockerat

I believe so. Isn't he, Martha? What makes you doubt it, Mr. Braun?

Braun

I'll just look and see.

[*Exit quickly by door into entrance-hall.*

Mrs. Vockerat

[*Rather anxiously.*] What does Mr. Braun mean?

Kitty

[*Excitedly.*] Where is John?

Mrs. Vockerat

Don't you be anxious, Kitty. He can't be far off.

KITTY

[*With rapidly increasing anxiety.*] But where is he?

VOCKERAT

Upstairs — upstairs, of course.

[*Re-enter* BRAUN. *Momentary pause of anxious expectation.*

VOCKERAT

Well, Mr. Braun? —

BRAUN

No, he's not upstairs, Mr. Vockerat, and . . . and . . .

VOCKERAT

Well, what's the matter?

BRAUN

Nothing, nothing!

KITTY

[*Rushing up to* BRAUN.] Yes, there is something!

BRAUN

No, really! There's really no cause for anxiety — only — I have the feeling that John ought not on any account to be left alone at present. And just now as I was — oh! it's probably all nonsense.

MRS. VOCKERAT

What is it, Mr. Braun? do say.

VOCKERAT

Speak out, man; don't lose time.

BRAUN

When I opened the garden gate, I heard some one unchaining a boat, and as I came round some one rowed out. I don't know who it was — a man — and it flashed into my mind — but he gave no answer. And John would have answered.

KITTY

[*Frantically.*] It was John! it was John. Run, run, for God's sake run! Mother! Father! It is you who have driven him to this. Why did you do it? . . .

MRS. VOCKERAT

O Kitty!

KITTY

I feel it. He *can't* go on living. I'll do anything he likes, gladly. But O God, not this! not this!

VOCKERAT

[*Hurrying down the garden, calls at intervals.*] John! John!

KITTY

[*To* BRAUN.] A man? And you called? Did he not answer? Oh, run! [*Exit* BRAUN.

KITTY

[*Calls after him.*] I'm coming too. [*Wrings her hands.*] O God! if only he is alive and can hear me!

[BRAUN *is heard down at the lake, calling* "Hallo, there! hallo!"

KITTY

[*Opening door into entrance-hall, calls.*] Alma! Minna! Bring lanterns into the garden. Lanterns — quick!

[*In the act of hurrying out on the verandah she sees the note, stands stock-still, then goes forward, stiff and quivering, lifts it, stares at it for a few seconds as if stunned, and falls to the ground. Continued calling outside.*

COLLEAGUE CRAMPTON

CHARACTERS

CRAMPTON, *Professor at the College of Art.*
GERTRUD CRAMPTON, *his daughter.*
AGNES, *née* STRAEHLER, *widow of* WIESNER.
ADOLF STRAEHLER.
MAX STRAEHLER.
KIRCHEISEN, *professor,*
MILIUS, *an architect,* } *teachers at the College.*
JANETZKI, *janitor.*
LOEFFLER, *servant,* CRAMPTON'S *factotum.*
POPPER, *an art-student.*
FEIST, *a restaurant-keeper.*
KASSNER, *keeper of a low tavern.*
KUNZE,
SEIFERT, } *sign-painters.*
SELMA, *waitress.*
WEISSBACH,
STENZEL, } *older art-students.*
A MODEL.
About twenty students of PROFESSOR CRAMPTON.

THE FIRST ACT

The studio of PROFESSOR HARRY CRAMPTON *in the College of Art of a large city in Silesia. A good-sized, high-ceilinged room, whose right wall is nearly filled by two large windows. A door left, forward, and one in the rear wall. Under each of the windows stands a Gothic table, covered with rolls of paper, brushes, water-colour-boxes, tubes, palettes, maulsticks, etc., in picturesque disorder, and adorned with several bronzes. On the table, left, the Drunken Faun of Herculaneum, on the right the Silenus of Pompeii. Against the middle pillar between the two windows a complete human skeleton is set up, the skull surmounted by a great artist's hat, set back at an audacious angle. The rear wall is covered with Gobelins, which fall below a low Persian divan. Before the divan is spread a tiger's skin, on which stands a Gothic prie-dieu. On the prie-dieu lies a great Bible in old pigskin binding. The rest of the wall is occupied by a Gothic cupboard and several Gothic church-chairs. The upper part of the left wall is covered with a paste-board frieze which is traced in charcoal and represents a dance of Mænads. On this wall hang oil paintings and studies, while a Gothic*

chest, the Apollo Belvedere and other art-objects stand below. On the easels several fantastic pictures have been begun, one of which represents Mephistopheles and the student from "Faust." The floor is covered with a rich carpet. Tabourets, chairs of various forms, etc., are numerous. Gas-light. A movable partition separates the sofa-corner from the remainder of the studio. PROFESSOR CRAMPTON *lies asleep on the divan with his legs drawn up. He is a man of medium size, well on in the forties, delicate, thin-legged. On his raven-black hair sits a fez. The moustache and thick beard are also deep black. Projecting eyes which often show a vague, staring expression and betray the drinker. He scarcely ever looks at the person he addresses. When he walks he generally keeps his eyes fixed on the ground. His dress is disorderly. Now and then he pulls his broad, peg-top trousers violently upward; his velvet jacket is worn, and his Turkish slippers are faded.*

[*There is a knock at the door left. Behind the door right various persons are heard going calmly about, exchanging greetings, now and then laughing, etc.; chairs are moved back and forth.*

The knock is repeated.

CRAMPTON

[*Half awake, hoarsely.*] Come — come in!

LOEFFLER

[*Enters.*] Mornin', Perfesser.

[CRAMPTON *grunts, but does not move.*

LOEFFLER

[*Comes somewhat nearer and speaks louder.*] Mornin' to you, Perfesser.

CRAMPTON

Good morning!

LOEFFLER

[*Seizes the* PROFESSOR *and shakes him.*] Perfesser, Perfesser, can't you hear? The scholars is all here already.

CRAMPTON

[*Sits up with a jerk and looks around blankly.*] How — how late is it, Loeffler? What — what did you say?

LOEFFLER

[*Roughly.*] It's more'n eight o'clock already. Can't you hear? The scholars is in the sketch-room now.

CRAMPTON

More than eight? [*He rises, crosses thoughtfully to the middle of the room, takes off his fez with his left hand and scratches the back of his head slowly with his right.*] Huh! [*He looks at* LOEFFLER.] Do I have an evening class today?

LOEFFLER

[*Lowering the awnings at the windows and turning out the gas.*] Good Lord, sir, don't you see it's bright daylight? It's mornin' and not night, Perfesser!

CRAMPTON

What a fool, what a fool! Didn't you take me home last night, Loeffler?

LOEFFLER

How could I do that? I told you we'd better go home, but I couldn't do nothin' with you.

CRAMPTON

[*Running around in despair, half crying.*] But, Loeffler, Loeffler, this is an awful business, this is an awful business! What will my wife say? My dear Loeffler —

LOEFFLER

[*Roughly.*] Well, I told you when you got to your third case I wouldn't go no farther. I says to you, I says: Perfesser, we've got to go home, or your wife'll never let us in, I says to you. And then you roared at me and sent me home.

CRAMPTON

[*Wringing his hands.*] My dear friend, my good friend — and I really wanted to go. But they kept dragging me on with 'em, the dirty rascals. To the City of Venice, to the — oh, I can't remember all the places. [*Knock at the door right.*] What's the matter? Let me get my breath, won't you? This school-teacher business is a dog's life, anyway. Go to work, paint away, spatter away!

SEVERAL VOICES

[*Together.*] We haven't any model, we haven't any model!

POPPER

[*A young student from Vienna — curly hair, downy beard, elegant clothing, broad accent.*] Morning, Professor! I thought I'd take the lib-

erty to ask — we're all here; only the model is lacking . . . so I thought I'd venture . . .

CRAMPTON

Pshaw, that's bad, that's bad, friend Popper! You can't depend on anybody any more! You have to run after all of them. I ordered the man for this morning. Punctually — punctually, friend Popper.

LOEFFLER

That ain't true, Perfesser. You ain't never even seen the man.

CRAMPTON

Haven't I? Then I have things mixed. Well, you see, friend Popper, a man can't even get around to that. It's horrible. [*To* LOEFFLER.] Well, where is the man? Where is the man, then?

LOEFFLER

I thought it wouldn't be long till —

POPPER

If you thought so, you ought to have brought the man with you.

LOEFFLER

Well, I *did* bring him with me.

CRAMPTON

[*Impatiently, violently.*] Such a fool, such a fool. [*Without looking at* LOEFFLER.] Well, there he stands and stares at us. Go and bring the fellow at once. [*Exit* LOEFFLER.] Do you smoke, friend Popper?

POPPER

I'd like to, if the rules allowed us to.

CRAMPTON

Oh, yes, the college and the college and then the college again! Deuce take it all! [*He smokes with great puffs.*] I don't know how long I'm going to be able to stand it here. I have plans. It doesn't suit me any longer. [*Significantly.*] I have plans, friend Popper. You know of course that the Empress of Russia is interested in me. [*Carelessly.*] Oh, there's a lady with the artistic sense for you! You know I've been in this hole ten years now. A man can get enough of a thing. He goes to seed — goes to seed absolutely. There are all sorts of things here that don't suit my taste. Little talent among the students and not a scrap among the teachers. These colleagues of mine, ha, ha! This director, ho, ho, ho! — Oh, he's a good fellow, all right; but he'll never change the course of the planets — think so?

[POPPER *laughs. Enter* LOEFFLER. *He pushes before him a porter, a somewhat undersized man.*

CRAMPTON

[*Without looking the man straight in the eye.*] Come here, my man! [*The man obeys. The* PROFESSOR *looks him over, glances at* POPPER, *then again at the model, then at* LOEFFLER, *and breaks out at last.*] What a joke! What a joke of a fellow! Don't you think so, Popper? What a joke! [*To* LOEFFLER.] And he wants to pose?

LOEFFLER

[*Indignantly.*] Well, now —! The man's all

right. Just take a-hold of his muscles. [*He touches his arm.*] Hard as stone! The man's got nine children, Perfesser. [*To the* Model.] See here, August, don't make a fool of yourself. You're all out o' shape. What's that you got in your blouse? [*As he talks he takes from the man's blouse one after the other a thick loaf of bread, a ball of string, a full sack of tobacco, a pipe, several match-boxes and two blacking-brushes.*] If you want to do business here, you've got to look a little smarter. Keep your eyes open, August! See here now, Perfesser, you oughta see him when he ain't got no clothes on . . .

Crampton

[*Pulls a bottle out from under the divan and pours something into a metal cup.*] You'd better strip, then! [*He drinks, replaces bottle and cup, goes over to* Popper *with a wan smile on his face and says:*] I have to drink China wine, my dear. A man has to do what the doctor says. [*He sighs heavily.*] What else can I do? [*He sighs again.*] Ah, my stomach, my stomach! It's an awful thing.

The Porter

[*To* Loeffler, *who has been vainly urging him by signs and whispers to take off his clothing,—with sudden determination.*] No, Karl, I can't do nothin' like that.

Loeffler

But, August, if you're a-goin' to be as modest as all that, you can't do business here. Can he, Mr. Popper? They've got a good fire in the room.

CRAMPTON

[*Lighting his cigar again. In his distraction he allows it to go out from time to time.*] Forward, forward! Forward march into the sketch room! Bring him along, Popper. [POPPER *laughs, seizes the* MODEL *and leads him off, right.*] There are bone-studies for you! What a joke.

[*As soon as* POPPER *and the* MODEL *have disappeared through the door, a general explosion of gaiety is heard in the sketch-room.*

CRAMPTON

[*Strokes his beard, clears his throat, seizes the malstick and throws things about as if he were looking for something. As he does so he glances at* LOEFFLER *now and then and makes a gesture of command that indicates a corner of the studio, but which seems to have no effect on the servant. The* PROFESSOR *discovers this and turns around with a sudden excited jerk.*] Are you deaf, Loeffler?

LOEFFLER

No, Perfesser.

CRAMPTON

Is anything wrong with you?

LOEFFLER

Nothing at all, but — [*He twists his cap.*

CRAMPTON

But what?

LOEFFLER

[*After some hesitation.*] I can get you a

brandy, Perfesser, but beer — I'll have to have some money, or I can't get you none. I'd rather not go no more, the folks makes so much fuss about it every time. *He's* all right, but the old fat woman, she's a terror.

CRAMPTON

Give them a mark of your own, Loeffler, and charge it up to me.

LOEFFLER

Perfesser, I ain't got it to spare. You see them people — they got it to spare much more'n me! They ain't in no want on account o' the sixty marks you owe 'em.

CRAMPTON

But you certainly have a mark in your pocket, Loeffler.

LOEFFLER

Don't believe I have, honest now. If my wife didn't watch me so close; but she's after every penny like a pointer hound. I can't stand it to use up too much this way. It's twenty-two marks and sixty that I've put up again.

CRAMPTON

But, Loeffler, the first of the month —

LOEFFLER

Yes, if it wasn't for your wife, Perfesser. But she sticks to you all day long, and how's anything ever goin' to get to me?

CRAMPTON

[*In a whining, grumbling tone.*] Oh, Loeffler,

Loeffler! You annoy me terribly. You make me tired. I want to paint, and you make me tired. In place of washing my brushes for me, you bore me. I don't know . . . go away, man! Go where you please. [*He throws things about.*] You neglect your work. Nothing is in order. Dust a foot thick, phew! The devil! A man'll get consumption in this hole, this house-painting academy. [*In a commanding tone.*] There's the basket. [*He pulls out a bottle-basket from some place of concealment and pushes it into the servant's hands.*] And now no arguments, respected sir.

LOEFFLER

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Even if I wanted to, Perfesser, I ain't got —

CRAMPTON

Hush! [*Walking around the room.*] There's a rug — that must be cleaned . . .

[*He thrusts both hands into his pockets and whistles an air from "Boccaccio," keeping time to it as he walks, looks into a hand-mirror a moment, marches up and down the room whistling with his head thrown back, then exit into the class-room.*

[*In the meantime,* LOEFFLER *has knelt down, rolled up a little Persian rug and raised it to his shoulder. When the* PROFESSOR *disappears, he is about to leave, the beer-basket in his right hand, holding the rug on his shoulder with his left.* *Enter* JANETZKI, *the janitor, left.*

JANETZKI

[*Gigantic build, Slavic type of face, no collar, badly worn clothes, clumsy shoes. He holds an official letter in his hand. Speaks brokenly.*] Where's perfesser?

LOEFFLER

Oh, I don't know.

[*He tries to pass* JANETZKI.

JANETZKI

He, he! — where — take carpet, Loeffler?

LOEFFLER

None of your business, Polack; get out o' my way!

JANETZKI

I Polack — good! — Polack is good for to give money perfesser, Polack must be good too to get money back.

LOEFFLER

What do I care about your affairs with the perfesser?

JANETZKI

Good, I will not let carry perfesser's things away. Good, I care about that. I give supply, canvas, frame, paper — don't know all I give.

LOEFFLER

Well, don't hold *me* up for it, I tell you. I've got to carry the rug out and get 'er cleaned.

JANETZKI

I don't believe it. Sell, one piece after other.

LOEFFLER

Well, suppose we did sell it, the perfesser can do what he wants with his stuff.

JANETZKI

He can *not* do. He can not do at all. Not a bit of canvas his of all that. First pay debts, then he can do —

LOEFFLER

Get away, I say, if you don't want trouble!

JANETZKI

I will not get. Not get at all. I will call police. I will tell director.

[*Enter* CRAMPTON *and* MAX STRAEHLER.

CRAMPTON

[*To* JANETZKI, *with constrained amiability.*] Have you something for me, friend Janetzki?

JANETZKI

[*Looking askance at* STRAEHLER *with a shy vindictiveness which* STRAEHLER *answers with a look of hate and contempt, steps up cringingly.*] Here, writing from director.

CRAMPTON

[*Lays the letter on the Bible.*] Anything else, friend Janetzki?

JANETZKI

Here I have made bill. Day after to-morrow, October first.

CRAMPTON

Thank you. Lay it on the table there. [*As* JANETZKI *still shows no intention of leaving.*]

Very well, friend Janetzki — very well, very well. [*Exit* Loeffler.] Crampton *calls after him.*] My herring, Loeffler! Don't forget my bit of breakfast. [*To* Straehler.] That's what I like, Straehler. That's what I eat every day.

Janetzki

If perfesser say when carpet be cleaned, my wife know very well —

Crampton

[*Nodding his head in apparently perfect agreement.*] A good idea, Janetzki, good idea.

Janetzki

[*Rushes off, calling while still in the door.*] Loeffler! Loeffler! Perfesser say — give carpet my wife — [*Exit.*

Crampton

[*Looks after* Janetzki *with flashing eyes, shaking his fist with suppressed rage.*] A dog, that Janetzki, a cunning Polish dog! [*Lighting his cigar again — angrily.*] Have a smoke, dear Straehler! Have a smoke, have a smoke! [*He walks about, smoking furiously.*] Yes, I'm sorry for you, dear Straehler! You've got your walking papers. They settled it yesterday — I couldn't do anything. I did all I could, but you know how it is. [*Stops, thoughtfully.*] In the first place, you were accused of having led a fast life.

Straehler

[*Young, pale, beardless man of less than twenty, clothing of dark, good materials; everything neat and new.*] Professor —

CRAMPTON

I know what you are going to say. That has nothing to do with it, you're going to say — a man can be fast and still have talent. Yes, my dear friend, that's what *we* say, but the eminent faculty. . . . You know how it is — it is entirely unnecessary for a student to have talent. What do we care about talent? Conduct, conduct, dear Straehler, respect, reverence for your teachers. From the director down to the janitor. Especially the janitor, my dear. And you wanted to thrash the janitor, dear Straehler. Just remember that!

STRAEHLER

And I would have thrashed the rascal if he hadn't hidden.

CRAMPTON

You might better have thrashed the director's wife, twice over; not a hair of your head would have suffered, not a hair, I tell you. But the janitor, to want to thrash the janitor!

[*He laughs bitterly.*

STRAEHLER

That fellow is a scoundrel, Professor. I wouldn't stand a thing from that man. He went a little bit too far, and I showed him where he belonged. I never bought my material of him because the fellow was repulsive to me from the beginning. That's the crime I've committed.— Now the fellow has been spying on me and told the director all sorts of tales, till he got him persuaded too. . . . And now I'm expected to be calm about it!

CRAMPTON

Well now, don't let it worry you, Straehler. Just whistle at the whole college. When a man has a real talent, he's like a tree in the forest. Do you follow me? A college — that's mere pruning, that's the Spanish boot, that's the stocks, that's the uniform, that's the Philistinism of it all! Pah! [*Spits.*] Devil take it all! [*After a pause, more calmly.*] Let me tell you something — you know you *have* been something of an idler. I hear you're in good circumstances and throw your money around and always have a lot of sponges around you. Well, well, you're young and you get your pleasure out of it; but you must get to know men better — Now let me tell you something in confidence: you leave those fellows alone. And then: don't you let anybody know you have any money. Not so they won't squeeze it out of you — Lord! I'm not thinking of that, — but you know money produces a kind of atmosphere that a man of judgment hesitates to venture into, because there are too many vulgar schemers wallowing around in it. And when these toadies get a fellow into their claws — Did you ever see the hedgehogs at work on a frog? Well now, dear Straehler, give me your hand.

[*He holds out his hand to* STRAEHLER.

STRAEHLER

[*In an unsteady voice.*] Thank you, Professor!

CRAMPTON

[*Lays his hand on his shoulder.*] And from now on, young man, chest out! Head high! And even if the devil and his grandmother get in your

way, go on! And if your best friends advise you to drop art — let 'em talk! The first time you do anything worth while the world will make things hot for you. Every crossing-sweeper will spit at you and yell at you: Be a crossing-sweeper! The main thing is to work and pray. But don't pray too much, my dear! Better work a little more. And now turn in and prove yourself, Straehler. Good-bye! Visit me as often as you want to. Do you hear? As often as you want to. Or stay here a little longer now. I'm glad to have you with me.

[*He picks up the letter from the Bible.*

STRAEHLER

I just wanted to say, Professor, that you needn't worry about my sticking to it. It may sound funny, but I can't change it — I have a good deal of self-confidence.

CRAMPTON

Naturally, at your age —

STRAEHLER

The little art we have in Germany nowadays, I'm not afraid of that. I can compete with that.

CRAMPTON

My dear boy, don't get too fiery!

STRAEHLER

No really, I can, I'm sure of it.

CRAMPTON

[*Subtly.*] Ta, ta, my dear boy, that's quite a speech to make! One thing more, dear Straehler; as soon as you can, get out of this hole. To

Munich, to Rome, to Paris,— here you'll never be more than a sign-painter. There! [*He draws a piece of drapery aside, revealing a tavern-sign.*] There's where a man wrecks his craft. [*He looks darkly at the floor, then makes an effort and opens the letter. As he reads, his face lights up. By the time he is through, he is beside himself with delight. Tears come to his eyes more than once during what follows.*] What? What? What? Straehler! Do you know, Straehler, the duke is coming! Straehler, my duke is coming. Do you know what that means? My patron! My Mæcenas! My saviour is coming. Yes, sir, my saviour, Straehler. For Lord knows I was almost choked in this hole. My saviour is coming, and now everything will take a different look. Now Loeffler or the devil can finish the sign. I'll not touch it; I'll never touch it again. [*Seizing* Straehler *by the shoulders.*] Straehler! There's a character for you, a character, I tell you, like gold, and a child for goodness. The man's like a little child. That man has been a father to me. Here, read this, read it aloud, dear Straehler.

Straehler

[*Reads.*] "I am to inform the gentlemen of the faculty that His Highness, the Duke Fritz August, is pleased to announce that he will visit our college to-morrow afternoon. It is recommended that the gentlemen of the faculty —"

Crampton

Yes, we know all that already, we know all that. The good director is an imbecile. I shan't put on a pair of trousers with holes in them, that

goes without saying. I don't suppose the good director ever had more than a smell of court society himself. When I was your age I was right in the court atmosphere. Yes, yes, my dear, you must stick to it. When I was nineteen years old I was the duke's court painter. This visit is meant for me. [*Enter* Loeffler, *the full beer-basket in one hand, the plate with the herring in the other.*] Loeffler! Loeffler! My duke is coming. What do you say to that? He is coming to visit me. Here's the letter. Pour us out some beer in a hurry. We'll drink to celebrate the event. You know the duke, don't you, dear Straehler? A charming man. So discreet and modest. And an enthusiastic connoisseur of everything connected with art. The duke respects me. My dukedom for a Crampton, that man once said. Of course in a joke. His health! drink, drink! [Straehler *sips his beer, the* Professor *empties the vessel greedily. They are drinking from old-fashioned stone mugs.*] But here I am talking nonsense, instead of laying my plan of campaign. What have I ready? The man will buy some pictures, of course. [*As he wanders around he suddenly fixes his eyes on* Straehler's *head and gives vent to a long whistle.*] Ah, what's this? [*Clapping his hands, like a crazy man.*] The scholar, the scholar, there's the scholar! See there, will you, Loeffler, there's my scholar.

Loeffler

Yes, Perfesser, I knowed that a long time ago.

Crampton

Ah, you stupid mule! [*He rushes for his mal-*

stick and palette, establishes himself before the little picture which represents Mephistopheles and the scholar, and points imperiously to a chair that stands near.] Here's what I mean, the scholar for my Mephistopheles — there, sit down, Straehler! [*Choosing a brush and setting up the picture.*] You're a jewel! To-day is my lucky day. [*He mixes colours.*] I've been looking for this head for two years. [*Still mixing.*] This head is a thick little head. It's given me trouble enough, this thick head. But now we'll get it in a hurry, we'll get the thick head. Yes, dear Mephistopheles, we have bored each other long enough. To-morrow we'll sell you to the duke — or the devil. [*Sings.*] "On the morrow we must part —" [*Speaks.*] Good-bye! Farewell! Farewell!

LOEFFLER

Well, can I go now?

CRAMPTON

[*As if relieved.*] By all means.

LOEFFLER

When will I come back?

CRAMPTON

At noon, Loeffler.

LOEFFLER

Wait a minute! I've got two marks change for you.

CRAMPTON

Keep 'em, Loeffler.

LOEFFLER

Thanks. [*Starts off.*] Wait, hold on, I saw the little one. Said she'd be here in half an hour.

CRAMPTON

[*Perplexed.*] What little one?

LOEFFLER

Your youngest, to be sure.

CRAMPTON

[*With emphasis.*] Miss Gertrud? All right, Loeffler, all right. Go on. [*Exit* LOEFFLER. CRAMPTON *runs, not yet having made the first stroke with his brush, and hides the beer-mugs and bottles as well as a full wine-bottle which* LOEFFLER *brought.*] When my daughter comes, dear Straehler, we'd better — What would the child think? [*He steps behind the pasteboard partition, pours out a glass of wine hastily, drinks and hides the bottle. He sighs as he does so.*] Heigho! So it goes!

[*A knock. The* PROFESSOR *rushes madly to his easel, and tries to act as if he has been and still is very busy painting. Another knock. The door opens.* GERTRUD CRAMPTON *enters.*

GERTRUD

[*A handsome, dignified girl of eighteen with a Rembrandt hat. Her dress is not modish but of a liberal, artistic design. Her face shows anxiety and grief, in spite of its youthful freshness.*] Good morning, papa!

CRAMPTON

[*Feigning surprise.*] Oh, my child, it's you!

GERTRUD

Yes, papa, it's I.

[*She draws off her gloves slowly.*

CRAMPTON

Excuse me, child, I'll be through in a second.

GERTRUD

Oh, don't let me disturb you. I have plenty of time.

CRAMPTON

You haven't heard why I'm hurrying so. The duke is to be here to-morrow. He'll want to buy this picture of me. So I must paint till I paint my very eyes out. Mustn't I, dear Straehler? [*To* GERTRUD.] That's the criminal we've expelled. Doesn't he look like a young girl?

[GERTRUD, *who up to this time has paid no attention to* STRAEHLER, *glances at him quickly at the word "criminal," and blushes.*

CRAMPTON

Come here, dear child. [*He puts his arm about her waist and draws her upon his knee, caressing and stroking her like a lover.*] Just look at it. What do you think? It's a pretty picture, a graceful bit of work. [*Violently.*] Sit still, Straehler. You're wabbling back and forth. What can I do when you do that? You bob your head as if you were a hundred years old. Isn't that the scholar for you, child? Now rest a little, Straehler. There! [*Laying aside his palette.*] Don't you know each other? This is my dear sweetheart. My immortality, dear Straehler. Isn't she a pretty nice immortality, young man?

GERTRUD

Oh Papa, don't do that, please.

CRAMPTON

[*Triumphantly to* STRAEHLER, *who is looking at the picture.*] Well? What? That's a picture, now. That's the way they painted when Van Dyck went to school to Rubens. I'd like to see one of these other fellows do that. These bunglers, these bunglers. Just take a look at this. This is the cartoon for my Mænad Dance. You know the picture has gone all over the world. Do you know, Straehler, what Genelli said when he saw the cartoon? Genelli was my friend — at the duke's court. "There are only two persons who can draw such an outline; you, Crampton, and I." Good Lord, half past nine! I must go into the class-room, I must go into the class-room, and do some correcting. Confounded schoolmastering! Confounded schoolmastering! Amuse yourselves, children, till I come back.

[*He has put on the fez again and starts toward the door. Before he enters the class-room, he straightens up and begins as before to whistle a tune. Exit.*

[GERTRUD *and* STRAEHLER *are alone together. She fingers a book, he picks up colour-tubes and lays them down again. Suddenly* GERTRUD *brushes against an object that falls off the table. She and* STRAEHLER *bend to pick it up, touch each other's hands as they do so, and show signs of confusion.*

GERTRUD

[*After a pause.*] Mr. Straehler? Is that the name?

STRAEHLER

Yes. My name is Straehler.

GERTRUD

I think I know your sister.

STRAEHLER

Yes, my sister has told me about it.

GERTRUD

We often met at the conservatory.

[*Short pause.*]

GERTRUD

Is it true that the duke is coming?

STRAEHLER

Oh yes. It's certain. There's the announcement.

GERTRUD

[*After a pause.*] You were in training to be a farmer for several years, weren't you? Or am I mistaken? I don't know who said so. I believe Professor Mueller told me lately that you had.

STRAEHLER

It's true — I did, Miss Crampton.

GERTRUD

Why didn't you go on, then? It seems to me it would be lovely, to be a farmer!

STRAEHLER

Unfortunately I hadn't any talent for farming.

GERTRUD

Does it take talent?

STRAEHLER

Yes; a great deal.

GERTRUD

Well, I don't know — I know I shouldn't like to be an artist.

STRAEHLER

Ah! Why not?

GERTRUD

It seems to me it would be much better to have a farm. [*After a pause.*] How do you think papa is, Mr. Straehler?

STRAEHLER

He is very cheerful and jolly, it seems to me.

GERTRUD

Do you think so? I'm very anxious about him.

STRAEHLER

Oh, really?

GERTRUD

You know that I have to lead papa most of the time, he can't go alone. When he goes alone, he gets dizzy.— He is getting worse and worse. He is so frail, he has to be so careful all the time, that — that I would thank anybody to keep reminding him that he must take care and not overexert himself.— Mr. Straehler, you may think it strange,

but — I've endured so much already . . . Perhaps you may be able to understand my position. Perhaps you know that papa — last night — didn't come home at all. Maybe you even know where he was? — I couldn't sleep a bit all night.— Just think what might happen to him. He's so helpless, so dependent on other people! [*With a deep sigh of exhaustion.*] Oh, I can't stand it any longer. I can't stand it any longer.

STRAEHLER

But, Miss Crampton!

GERTRUD

You're young, but papa isn't young any longer.

STRAEHLER

But I assure you! I have never influenced the professor to do anything. I've been out with him only a few times, and then —

GERTRUD

But who is it that does it? You surely can see that papa isn't well, that he is ruining himself. And not himself alone. It's terrible, it's awful, to have to say it, but you see what is at stake here.

STRAEHLER

My dear Miss Crampton, one thing — I'd like to say to you just one thing — since you are frank with me: On my honour and conscience, I am not unworthy of your confidence.

[*He has come very close to her.*

GERTRUD

[*Springing up from the chair into which she*

has dropped, drying her tears and turning away.] Hush, hush! Papa's coming.

CRAMPTON

[*Trips in humming, with a beaming face.*] Always *undici, dodici, tredici, tralala-la-la-la.*

[*Stops in a proud pose in the centre of the studio, snaps his fingers and looks triumphantly at* STRAEHLER *and* GERTRUD, *with an expression of ecstatic joy.*

THE SECOND ACT

Same setting. CRAMPTON'S *studio. It is afternoon.* MAX STRAEHLER, *accompanied by his brother* ADOLF STRAEHLER, *has just entered left.*

ADOLF

[*A man of the world, about thirty-two years old, of healthy appearance with a tendency to stoutness. He is dressed with elegant ease.*] Come now, where are you dragging me to?

MAX

You know I haven't troubled you very often. But the man has been so kind to me that it's simply your confounded duty to let him have a few words of thanks.— Look around, Adolf! You can see at a glance what sort of fellow he is.

ADOLF

[*Looking around.*] Cracked, Max.

MAX

Cracked? What makes you think so?

ADOLF

Well, look at that [*pointing to the skeleton*] that jolly boy there with the sombrero on his pate, that's wretched bad taste.

MAX

Your taste is as flat as a six-penny piece.

ADOLF

Maybe so, I'm not up on such things. But look at this, for instance [*he taps the tiger-skin with the tip of his shoe*] what's that thing doing here? That's all out of place!

MAX

All out of place?

ADOLF

Royal Bengal tiger —

MAX

Oh pshaw, your cheap contemptuousness. That's cynicism. You're all disgusting cynics, you business men. It's a disgrace to your calling.

ADOLF

[*With a subdued burst of laughter.*] Ho, ho! that's great. The fellow was chucked out, expelled from the college, and he talks about disgrace! Oh, you draggled little rooster you, you draggled —

MAX

[*The* PROFESSOR *opens the door, coming from the class-room.*] Stop it, Adolf —

ADOLF

Oh you draggled —

MAX

Hush — shut up!

ADOLF

All right.

CRAMPTON

[*In full-dress and patent leathers, a riband in his button-hole. He seems very busy, and approaches* MAX, *casting a distracted glance at* ADOLF.] Good day, gentlemen! What can I do for you? [*Surprised.*] How are you, dear Straehler? I didn't know you at first.

MAX

Let me introduce my brother to you, Professor.

CRAMPTON

[*Absently.*] You're the brother; oh, yes. Very glad to meet you. [*Breaks off impatiently, almost impolitely.*] You must excuse me, dear Straehler. You see I am very busy. [*Complacently.*] His Highness may come at any moment. [*Carelessly.*] His Highness the Duke Fritz August is to visit me to-day.

ADOLF

Professor, we only want a moment. This young fellow is not only my brother, but my ward.

CRAMPTON

[*Mechanically.*] What can I do for you?

ADOLF

He comes and tells me they've expelled him, and as I'm his guardian —

CRAMPTON

[*Wringing his hands in despair.*] Well, what do you want of me, what do you want of me? I talked to your brother about it a long time. Must I say it all over to you again? I can't remember what I said before; I've forgotten it all, I swear

I have. I've got to keep the few words in my head, that I've put together for the duke.

ADOLF

[*Struggling in vain to preserve his gravity.*] My dear Professor, I just want two words — not a word more.

CRAMPTON

[*Who is conscious of his smile without having looked at him.*] It's no laughing matter to me. It's no laughing matter to me. These mothers and fathers and guardians will drive me mad yet. These people come and expect me to prophesy for them. I'm not on the tripod. I'm no Pythia. I don't know to-day whether I have any talent myself. They'll be bringing the babies to me next. I can't prophesy from entrails, do you understand?

ADOLF

I beg your pardon —

CRAMPTON

There's no pardon about it, sir.

ADOLF

Professor, you misunderstand me. I only wanted to thank you very heartily. There are times in which, as you probably know —well . . . Before my brother came to see you yesterday, I was rather uneasy about him. Now your encouragement brightened him up remarkably — I'm heartily glad of it, and I just wanted to come and thank you for it.

CRAMPTON

Oh, that's where the wind blows from! All

right, dear Straehler. [*Touching* MAX's *shoulder as he passes him.*] Well now, I'm glad, my boy, if it helped you. [*To* ADOLF.] You see, my friend, you said you were his guardian. Just say guardian again, and you'll drive me mad.

ADOLF

[*Laughing.*] I'll take good care not to.

CRAMPTON

[*Laughing also.*] Yes, my friend, you were innocent, but you started a flow of language —

ADOLF

That was of course meant for the duke, Professor.

CRAMPTON

Very good, very good!

ADOLF

I'll not disturb you any longer.

CRAMPTON

No, stay a while, stay a while! [*He looks at his watch.*] The duke won't be in any hurry.

ADOLF

But unfortunately I'm in a hurry myself. [*Bows.*] Glad to have met you, Professor!

CRAMPTON

[*With a careless motion of his hand.*] Good-bye then, good-bye then! Come and see me when you can, I'll be glad to see you. And you, dear Straehler, could you stay and help me a little now?

ADOLF

That's all right; I can find the way home.
[*Exit.*

[*Short pause.*]

CRAMPTON

In the first place, dear Straehler, how does my full-dress suit fit me?

MAX

Very well, Professor!

CRAMPTON

Looks nice, doesn't it? — And now hold the door a minute. [*He goes for his bottle, and pours out a glass.*] I keep a little on hand all the time; I have to have something to strengthen me in the house [*drinks*] and especially for occasions like this. I must be thoroughly alert to-day, dear Straehler. You wonder at my excitement, perhaps. But to-day is, in a way, a decisive day. I'll tell you about it later when I have a chance. Besides, if you were to get married some day — but you'd better not do it, there isn't any necessity for it at all; for when an artist does that, he stakes everything on one card and generally loses everything, even his art, before he can count three. But if you ever do marry, then insist on a regular allowance first, my dear. [*A knock; he calls.*] Come in! Come in!

[*Enter* PROFESSOR KIRCHEISEN *and* ARCHITECT MILIUS, *in full dress.*

CRAMPTON

Your servant, your servant, gentlemen! His Highness not in sight yet? Sit down, gentlemen!

KIRCHEISEN

[*A handsome man in the fifties with thin artist locks and long Barbarossa beard. He is fidgety and excited, and laughs nervously now and then.*] Hi, hi! My body tickles all over as if I had ants on me. Hi, hi! The Lord knows I can't sit down, Colleague Crampton!

MILIUS

[*Thirty-five years old, fat, short of breath, hence talking in jerks. Laughing.*] It's delicious! The director's wearing himself out in the service of art. He fell down the steps out of pure zeal for the cause. I think he skinned his nose. The janitor's wife is washing the blood off the steps.

KIRCHEISEN

[*Laughing.*] Lord, Lord! What a disaster! Hi! hi! Suppose he gets up before the duke and it begins to bleed again. Blood, gentlemen, dripping off his nose. [*All laugh.*] Blood, gentlemen —

CRAMPTON

[*Passes cigarettes around.*] Bring us some matches, dear Straehler! [*The teachers look at* STRAEHLER *in astonishment.*] Straehler is my private pupil. In my private studio I am my own master. I have come to the decision to show the director my teeth. I'm not going to let them twist my best talents out of my hands any longer. And, gentlemen, we ought to stick together. As progressives we owe it to ourselves. Do you know, gentlemen, I have an idea. We should form a St. Luke Club. Our colleagues Weingaertner,

Milius, you, Kircheisen and I to begin with. As a compact mass, gentlemen, we'll be able to instil respect enough into the other party, these fellows Mueller and Schulze and Krause and Nagel and all the rest of these parochial celebrities. And especially, gentlemen, we want to bring a little life and enthusiasm into this hole. If we only will, we can build up this town to be an artistic community of the first order. Do you know, it occurs to me that I can talk the thing over with the duke.

MILIUS

[*Laying a hand on the* PROFESSOR'S *shoulder.*] Professor, the duke isn't going to be here right away. The man's outside,— you know, the man I brought with me. He wants to see the sign. May he?

CRAMPTON

[*With some annoyance, carelessly.*] Yes, he can see it, friend Milius. He can see it; there it stands, over there.

MILIUS

[*Calling out of the door.*] Mr. Feist! Mr. Feist! Come in, Mr. Feist!

FEIST

[*Appearance of a prosperous restaurant proprietor, carriage of a waiter.*] At your service, at your service!

MILIUS

[*Introducing the two.*] Professor Crampton, Mr. Feist.

[CRAMPTON *looks at him hastily, and goes*

on rolling a cigarette. MILIUS *grows nervous and embarrassed, the inn-keeper still more so.* MILIUS *conducts him to the sign and uncovers it.* CRAMPTON *talks softly and cheerfully with* PROFESSOR KIRCHEISEN.

MILIUS

[*To* FEIST.] Do you like it?

FEIST

[*Assuming the critical air of a customer.*] Yes, it's pretty enough, but I had a little different idea about it. Here I wanted a fine, fat Gambrinus, and here a fine, big pitcher, with the foam running down, you know, and here I wanted some fine little angels at work with the wine bottles —

CRAMPTON

[*To the professors.*] Queer creature! [*With sudden rage.*] Paint your confounded signs yourself. If you know so perfectly how it's done, why do you bother somebody else with it? It's an insult, a bare-faced insult!

MILIUS

But Colleague Crampton, the gentleman hasn't made the slightest statement that would justify you —

CRAMPTON

Doesn't make any difference, doesn't make a particle of difference. It's an insult! I'm an artist! I'm no whitewasher.

FEIST

[*Withdrawing.*] Oh, excuse me — excuse me — good day!

MILIUS

[*Accompanying him out.*] I'm very sorry, Mr. Feist —

[*Exit with* FEIST.

CRAMPTON

What's this Milius, this architect, thinking of, gentlemen? Shoving his customers on my back, expecting me —

JANETZKI

[*Black suit, white knit gloves; peeps in the door in great excitement.*] Perfesser, Perfesser Kircheisen! Duke down in the sculpture class.

KIRCHEISEN

The deuce, Janetzki! [*Jumps up. Exit.*

CRAMPTON

[*Calling into the class-room.*] The duke's coming!

[GERTRUD *enters, very pale, traces of weeping.*

CRAMPTON

Gertrud, the duke will be here any moment. He is down with Kircheisen now. Stay here with me; don't go away, child. I will introduce you to His Highness. If I have a chance, I will introduce you too, dear Straehler. Why shouldn't I? You show up very well. Take hold of my hand, children. [*Trembling with excitement.*] I was excited a while ago, but I'm perfectly calm now. That's always the way with me. The nearer I come to an important moment the calmer I get. [*He rubs his hands.*] Children, I'm glad

to see the old fox again! [*He calls into the class-room.*] Come in, gentlemen, I have something to say to you. [*About twenty students from eighteen to thirty years old troop in.*] Gentlemen! His Highness the Duke Fritz August is to honour me with a visit. This distinction is not conferred only on me, but on my whole class. I am sure there is no one among you who is not able to appreciate the honour. It is not impossible that if the opportunity arises I may call on you for three cheers for His Highness. If anybody should have views that do not allow him to give three cheers for His Highness, I should be glad if he would quietly leave the premises. And now do your best.

ALL TOGETHER

All right, Professor!

[*Laughing, joking, talking all together, they disappear into the class-room.*

CRAMPTON

[*Running after them and calling.*] Gentlemen! one more important point, one more important point, gentlemen! [*Exit into the class-room.*

GERTRUD

[*In despair, convulsively, hurriedly.*] Mr. Straehler, Mr. Straehler! It's awful! He's so confident. He'll never live through it — it's horrible; unspeakable!

MAX

But Miss Crampton! What has happened?

GERTRUD

You love papa, I know, Mr. Straehler! Please, please, see to him. He has nobody else, nobody.

[*She wrings her hands.*

MAX

You can depend on me, Miss Crampton. But tell me —

GERTRUD

The disgrace, the disgrace, that is the worst. A letter came for mama this morning. A letter from the director, telling her that papa would probably be relieved of his duties to-morrow. She was to prepare papa for the news. Now she's gone — how could she have stayed? Everything is sealed up at home. The landlord has had everything seized. And here, the director writes, they will do the same thing to-day or to-morrow. Oh, my papa is a beggar! My papa is a poor, helpless beggar. [*She sobs.*

MAX

[*Deeply moved.*] You take the darkest view of it. I know you think it is worse than it is!

JANETZKI

[*Enters.*] Where is Perfesser?

CRAMPTON

[*Returns.*] Where I am, Janetzki. Where's the duke?

JANETZKI

[*Grinning.*] Duke? Perfesser? Duke is gone away.

CRAMPTON

Oh, pshaw! I mean the duke, Janetzki. The duke just got here.

JANETZKI

Good, good. He visited Perfesser Kircheisen and gone away.

GERTRUD

[*Throwing her arms around the* PROFESSOR'S *neck. He stares blankly before him.*] My dear, dear papa! Don't take it to heart so —

CRAMPTON

Let me alone, dear, let me alone — Why should I take it to heart? [*Breaking out suddenly in rage and agony.*] What? How? What? The duke didn't visit me? The duke is gone? The duke didn't come to my rooms? Am I a dog, then? Am I a mangy cur — am I? What?

[*He breaks out into a loud laugh.*

GERTRUD

[*Embracing him, with rising terror.*] Oh, dear papa! Oh, sweet papa!

CRAMPTON

Well, well, let me alone. This is a conspiracy. This is the work of my enemies, the work of jealousy. Slanderous tongues did this. Oh, I'm not so stupid, I'm not so stupid! I know who lied to the duke about me! I know the man. All right, all right! I'll catch the fellow. Just don't worry, he'll make my acquaintance soon enough.

[*Enter several scholars from the classroom.*

CRAMPTON

[*Shrieks at them.*] What do you want here? This is not the place for you. Knock, when you want to come in.

FIRST SCHOLAR

We knocked, but nobody heard us.

CRAMPTON

When nobody answers, stay out. I'm still master here. This is still my room, my studio, do you understand? And I can kick out anybody I please. I could even kick Janetzki out. But I won't do it yet a while. What do you want?

SECOND SCHOLAR

We just wanted to ask if you still expect the duke?

CRAMPTON

What do I care for the duke, what do you care for the duke?

SECOND SCHOLAR

Professor, it's five o'clock, and we'd like to go home.

CRAMPTON

Well get out, then. What are you waiting for?

[*Exeunt* SCHOLARS.

CRAMPTON

[*Without looking at* JANETZKI.] What's the fellow grinning about? I wish the scoundrel would clear out. Either the scoundrel clears out [*wild with rage, but without looking at* JANETZKI, *he lays his hand on a bronze statuette*] or he'll suffer the consequences. [JANETZKI *edges off.*] Get out, get out! Good riddance. I'll show you what's what, you rascals! Come now, children, come now. Come here. We'll go. Let the rag of a letter lie; I know what's in it. I'll give up. I'm going of my own accord. I'm going at once.

[*He starts to leave, but suddenly sinks on*

the divan, exhausted, sobbing and crying like a child.]

GERTRUD

[*Sobbing also, kneels down by the old man's side.*] My dearest papa, my dearest papa! Oh, my poor, poor papa!

MAX

[*Standing.*] The poor man, the poor, poor man! Professor! Miss Gertrud! Pluck up your courage, put on a bold face. What was it you said to me, Professor? Chest out, head high, even if the devil and his grandmother get in your way, that's what you said —

CRAMPTON

[*Sitting up, exhausted, in a weak voice.*] Dear children,— dear Straehler, dear friend. I know you're my friend. I'm not afraid any longer to make my confession to everybody. It won't do any good to keep quiet any longer. I'm in a bad way. I'm in a miserably bad way. If somebody would do me the kindness — but you don't look as if you would, dear friend. Gertrud, I want to make a confession to you. When anybody says to you after this: honour your father and mother, I tell you your papa isn't worth honouring. Your father has brought all of you and himself to the brink of the precipice.

GERTRUD

Oh, dear papa! you mustn't talk like that. You mustn't have that hopeless, desperate look. You must take courage, you must —

CRAMPTON

[*Exhausted.*] Now it's over, now it's finished, you can't call it back — half an hour ago I still had hope. I wanted to tell the duke the situation I am in. I didn't intend to beg of him. I only thought — possibly the picture, or something — Oh, children, children! let's end it all. [*Enter* LOEFFLER.] Oh, there's Loeffler. Welcome, my friend! We'll go together, we'll go together!

GERTRUD

[*Filled with fear, throwing her arms around his neck again.*] Papa, papa! where are you going? Take me with you, I am going to stay with you.

CRAMPTON

Home, home. You must go home!

GERTRUD

Oh, mamma's gone, and my sisters are gone.

CRAMPTON

Well, go where they are, then. Why do you want to stay here? My cloak, Loeffler, my hat, my neckcloth. [*As* LOEFFLER *throws the cloak over his shoulders.*] Ha, ha! So mamma has taken herself off? That's the way . . . ah yes! Oh, these women, these women! But seriously, Gertrud, you must follow your mamma. [*To* STRAEHLER.] A last request, the first and last. My wife's parents are rich people . . . Thuringian nobility. I'll send the child to them, and if she hasn't money enough. . . . [*He seizes and shakes* STRAEHLER'S *hand. In the young man's look is a silent promise.*] I am your debtor. Now

good-bye, child. Live at peace with mamma, get into the good graces of his honour your grandpa. Then you will at least have enough to eat and drink.

GERTRUD

[*Embracing him.*] Papa, I can't.

CRAMPTON

[*Releasing himself gently.*] You'll forget it. You'll get over it. [*Goes to the door; with a slight gesture of the hand.*] Get along well together! Get along well together!

[*He takes* LOEFFLER'S *arm.*

GERTRUD

Papa, I want to go with you.

CRAMPTON

[*Stamps his foot angrily.*] Do you want to be lashed through the streets?

[*Exit with* LOEFFLER.

THE THIRD ACT

The private room of the manufacturer ADOLF STRAEHLER. *Easy, comfortable, distinctive furniture. A square room with a great, broad bow-window left, a door rear, another in the right wall. The walls are wainscoted to the height of about six feet. On the cornice which ends this wainscoting, a collection of curios is ranged entirely around the room. There are skulls of small animals, crystals, rare minerals, corals, shells, trinkets of wood and porcelain, carved boxes, strange little jugs of red clay, old beer-mugs, vessels of Nile mud, evidently souvenirs of voyages. Above the cornice the walls are plastered white, and the ceiling is white, without stucco or painting. In the centre a stuffed flying crane is suspended. Diagonally to the left an old, etched rococo cupboard. On it an ordinary Santa Claus, such as may be seen in any shop-window and bought for a trifle. Against the wall to the right and forward stands a brown leather sofa. Above it, so that one lying on the sofa can reach it, hangs on the wall a pipe-shelf with five or six long tobacco-pipes and a number of long-stemmed clay pipes, also tobacco-pouches and other smoking equipment in great variety. In the right-hand corner stands before a dark etched corner-bench a*

beautiful, great, carved table, also etched. Above the bench on the wall, still under the cornice, stands an oak cupboard beautifully carved. A great leather chair of an old pattern is set against the window. The large writing-table before it is covered with books, all beautifully arranged, and provided also with counting-house equipment. The whole arrangement, with its good taste, maintains a strongly individual appearance and shows the peculiar ambition of its creator to collect a great many things, but to collect with individual discrimination. Beside the door a telephone. Rugs on the floor.

[Adolf *comes through the open middle door. Through this door a suite of rooms is visible. In the last room can be seen* Agnes Wiesner, *née* Straehler, *busy, with a servant-girl, at clearing the table.*

Adolf

[*Takes a tobacco-pipe from the shelf, unscrews the stem and blows through it. When he has it cleared out, he calls through the middle door.*] Agnes, where are you keeping yourself?

Agnes

[*Young widow of thirty. Her attractive face is spiritualised by suffering and bears an expression of quiet resignation and mild cheerfulness. Her manner is gentle and considerate. She comes forward quickly.*] I'm coming, Adolf!

Adolf

Where's Miss Trude?

AGNES

The carrier just brought her a letter. I think it's from her relatives in Thuringia.

[*She lights his pipe with a paper lighter.*

ADOLF

[*Smoking.*] What do they — care — why do they worry about the girl, is what I'd like to know! [*He walks slowly around, smoking.*] You tell her, Agnes, there's no going away about it. We simply won't let her go.

AGNES

I don't believe she wants to go to Thuringia. She doesn't seem to agree with her mother at all. She and her sisters don't agree, either; and she lives in mortal fear of her grandparents.

ADOLF

Well there, that's what I say! — Where's that fellow Max stowed away? We never see the boy any more at all. He doesn't come to meals —

AGNES

He never comes in till after four, when you are away at the office.

ADOLF

Still searching, is he?

AGNES

You know he never gives up.

ADOLF

He's going at it very stupidly. He must be going at it stupidly. Just think, Agnes, in a town

of three hundred thousand inhabitants to hunt five days for a man as well known as the professor!

AGNES

He has asked everywhere, at the schools, of the police —

ADOLF

Well, if he's at the end of the rope, why the deuce doesn't he say a word to me about it?

AGNES

You can't be surprised. He doesn't trust you. You tease him too much.

AGNES

Ho, ho! just listen to that!

AGNES

It's true, Adolf.

ADOLF

Oh, nonsense, Agnes! We know each other. I tease him, and he teases me. How can a fellow take offense at anything like that?

AGNES

He doesn't take offense at it. I didn't say that. But now — I know this certainly — he's in a condition where he can't endure it.

ADOLF

In a condition? Ho, ho! yes, I know about his condition.

ADOLF

Now see, you're beginning to tease.

ADOLF

Well now, seriously, Agnes; haven't you noticed anything? I'm beginning to smell a rat.

AGNES

Yes, I've noticed something, of course.

ADOLF

Well, then?

AGNES

Well what?

ADOLF

I believe Max is nineteen years old.

AGNES

He was nineteen three weeks ago.

ADOLF

Three weeks into his twentieth year. Do you think everything is all right?

AGNES

Why, yes, fairly so.

ADOLF

"Fairly so" is good. "Fairly so" is very good. And suppose father and mother were living? What do you think they'd have to say, Agnes?

AGNES

They would decide the matter according to their best judgment. They would do whatever seemed to them best for Max. And that is what I shall do.

ADOLF

You think it's good for a fellow to get engaged when he's nineteen years old?

AGNES

Under certain circumstances, why not? The most beautiful years of my life came before my twentieth. When I was twenty-one, when Ludwig died, my part in life was over.

ADOLF

That's a different matter, entirely different.

AGNES

Well, if you think so, you decide. You have a right to, you're his guardian —

ADOLF

Yes, decide, decide. How can I decide? I'm not the sort of man that decides things. And anyway, what good will it do? [*Pointing to his forehead, to* AGNES' *forehead, then into the air.*] Hard-headed! Hard-headed! We Straehlers are all hard-headed. [*With rising, comic violence.*] But we're always running our hard heads against stone walls. We pound bruises into our hard heads, in all the colours of the rainbow. He can get into all the trouble he pleases, I'm not going to be robbed of my rest. I'll worry myself to death. [AGNES *laughs.*] Yes, I'll kill myself off, because the fleas get to hopping around in his head, because he has crazy ideas. He's mighty young to go courting. He may go to smash with his courting; that happens sometimes.

[*He runs off, right.* GERTRUD *appears in the second room.*

AGNES

[*Calls to her.*] Here I am, Miss Gertrud!

GERTRUD

[*Comes forward.*] Oh, here!

AGNES

Good news?

GERTRUD

Oh, yes, very —

[*She stops; tears come into her eyes.*

AGNES

[*Embracing her with motherly tenderness.*] Don't cry, don't cry, it will all come out all right.

GERTRUD

They are to be divorced, papa and mamma. She doesn't even want to hear papa's name any longer. And then I must go. Grandpa says I must.

AGNES

That doesn't make any difference. If you don't want to go, no one can force you.

GERTRUD

I don't want to, I don't want to. I don't want to eat their charity bread. I don't want to have to listen when they lay all the blame on papa. Mamma is to blame too. Mamma was hard and unloving. And if grandpa comes, I won't go with him. I don't want to, I don't want to. My papa is alone. My papa has no one. Mamma and my sisters are well taken care of. I want to stay with papa. I belong to my papa.

AGNES

Will your grandfather come after you?

GERTRUD

The letter says he's on a journey and will probably come through Silesia. Oh, dear Mrs. Agnes, dear Mrs. Agnes, don't give me up. I am not a child any longer. I know what I'm doing. If I have to go with him, everything is lost. Please keep me a few days longer. Just till we have found poor papa. Then I will go to him and never leave him again. Just till then, just till then.

AGNES

How you talk, my dear! You're with us, and you are to stay with us. And even when you want to go away, it's very doubtful whether we will let you go.

GERTRUD

[*Embracing her.*] You dear friend!

AGNES

It's agreed, then?

[*She holds out her hand to her.*

GERTRUD

[*Covering the hand with kisses.*] You, dear, dear —

[*Short pause.*]

ADOLF

[*Enters right.*] Well now, see here — that's what I've always said; when I find you and Miss Trudchen together, she always has a long face. You're a great one! Instead of cheering her. — You wouldn't do a thing like that! You sit down at the piano and play [*singing with exaggerated melancholy*] "I know not what it betokens." Miss Trudchen! I tell you there isn't

the slightest reason to be uneasy. You just take my word for it, the professor is as healthy and happy as you and I. Come on, let's have a game of chess. Don't you want to? You ought to want to, because you've simply got to cheer up. Shall I tell you about my museum?

AGNES

Oh Adolf, please stop; you're annoying Miss Trudchen.

ADOLF

[*To* TRUDCHEN, *who shakes her head.*] Lord help us! What an idea! Do I annoy you? Really now, do I annoy you?

AGNES

Of course she won't tell you so.

ADOLF

Ah, you're foolish! Miss Trudchen, don't you think my sister's foolish? When I tell you you must eat more so as to get fat, she says: please stop! When I say you must get out into the fresh air to get some colour in your cheeks — "please stop," "please stop." You've got to be rough with people. Drag 'em away from their thoughts by main force; most of their thoughts don't help anything. Come, little girl, I prescribe an hour's circumnavigation. See here; the market in Timbuctoo. Just look at these exquisite shiny black cattle-traders. And see how the giraffe ducks his head and kicks out behind.

[*He imitates the motions of the giraffe in a comical fashion.*

AGNES

Please don't, Adolf!

ADOLF

Well, what's the matter with that? Don't you approve of my playing giraffe a little? My sister is a fearfully respectable person. Do you know, she is so respectable that I get the most horrible case of asthma now and then, just out of pure respect for her. [*A ring.*] Who comes there? [ADOLF *goes out left to open the door, and comes back again two seconds later.*] Agnes, would you let me have this room? It's a man on business. One of my tiresome customers, Miss Trudchen. [AGNES *and* GERTRUD *go off, middle.* ADOLF *closes the door carefully behind them. Then he goes to the door left and calls.*] Come in, please!

LOEFFLER

[*Enters.*] Good day to you.

ADOLF

You want to speak to my brother?

LOEFFLER

[*Twisting his cap around.*] I wanted to say a word to him, yes.

ADOLF

Isn't your name Loeffler?

LOEFFLER

Yes, sir, my name's Loeffler.

ADOLF

Didn't you work for Professor Crampton?

LOEFFLER

Yes, sir, I did that.

ADOLF

Then tell me where the professor has stowed himself.

LOEFFLER

That was what I wanted to tell Mr. Straehler about.

ADOLF

Oh, it was? My brother isn't in just now. You can sit down and wait, and while you're waiting, have a cigar. Take a seat over there, won't you? Sit down, sit down. Now fire away. Where's the professor?

LOEFFLER

[*Scratches the back of his head.*] Why, sir, I don't know for sure if I ought to tell you.

ADOLF

He hasn't jumped into the water, at least?

LOEFFLER

[*Still speaking very cautiously.*] No, sir, not yet he hasn't. You see he ain't the kind of man for that. Too well educated, you know. And anyway, water —

ADOLF

Yes, of course, water — [*laughs*] — I understand. He hasn't any great love for water.

LOEFFLER

No, he ain't done that yet. He was brought up too fine for that. Oh, that's a man for you. Yes,

sir, yes, sir! If he'd just get at something. With the head that man has! If I had a head like his!

ADOLF

He's alive, then — and I hope he's well too?

LOEFFLER

Yes, he's alive yet.

ADOLF

Of course, of course — where's he living now?

LOEFFLER

He's a-livin'— Why, sir, I haven't got the right to tell you. It's a sort of ticklish business. I'm not to tell anybody. No sir, that wouldn't do.

ADOLF

But what do you want of my brother, then?

LOEFFLER

Of your brother — why, you see he knows the perfesser. I think I could risk it with him. I've got to do somethin'; I see that plain enough. I've got to take it on me to do somethin'. When a man's got to look on at a thing like that, you know, it twists his heart clear around inside of him.

ADOLF

So he's not thriving remarkably well?

LOEFFLER

[*Moved.*] No, no, not now he ain't.

ADOLF

Well now, see here. You can trust me, Loeffler. I'd be willing to do anything I possibly could.

LOEFFLER

Why, you know I wanted to ask your brother. He took the little 'un to the train.

ADOLF

What little one?

LOEFFLER

His youngest. The perfesser's.

ADOLF

Oh, Miss Gertrud? Yes, I know he did.

LOEFFLER

Well, you know, I wanted to ask him about her. She's here in this town now, Mr. Straehler, I know she is. I saw her on the street.

ADOLF

Then why didn't you speak to her?

LOEFFLER

That wouldn't have done at all.

ADOLF

Wouldn't have done? Why not?

LOEFFLER

She'd have turned in and asked me about her popper!

ADOLF

Of course she would; what harm would that have done?

LOEFFLER

Well, you know, I can't give the thing away. I tell you the place where the man's a-hangin' out, a girl can't go to see him, anybody'd say she

couldn't. And even if I did take the girl there — you know I could bet on it, the man would finish me up. Because you know, little Trude, she's his dearest. And suppose I go and say to him, here's Gertrud, then you couldn't tell what wouldn't happen. Where is she, where is she? The man's goin' mad! [*He rises.*] He ain't got any relations and he ain't got any friends. And he can call his wife's folks any names he pleases, he's glad all right she's with 'em. He don't like strangers, the man don't.

ADOLF

Here's something to pay for your trip.

LOEFFLER

Thank you, sir, thank you.

ADOLF

Now pay attention. You be at the postoffice at six o'clock. Left main entrance. I'll send my brother to you there. I think he knows something about Miss Trudchen. [*A ring.*] Sh! — wait a minute. [*He locks the door left and listens. The outside door is heard opening and shutting. Someone walks back toward the door rear. At the moment when the noise of an opened door is heard from the back room,* ADOLF *hastily opens his door and pushes* LOEFFLER *out.*] Six o'clock to-night, then!

[ADOLF *accompanies* LOEFFLER *to the outside door. Returning, he reaches for his pipe, which he has laid aside in his excitement, and lights it. Enter* MAX, *two packages in his arms, through the middle door.*

ADOLF

[*With ill-concealed joy.*] He's alive, he's here, he lived through it.

MAX

Who's here? The professor?

ADOLF

[*Astonished.*] Who? What professor? Oh, yes, your Professor Crampton! Why, I imagine he isn't far away.

MAX

[*Laying packages down with a sigh.*] Who knows, who knows?

ADOLF

[*Stretches himself out on the sofa, still smoking, and picks up a newspaper.*] What's that you've brought?

MAX

[*Unpacking.*] Oh, nothing; a couple of bronzes.

ADOLF

For whom, my boy?

MAX

Oh, just for fun.

ADOLF

Expensive fun, seems to me.

MAX

Do you think so?

[*Short pause.*]

ADOLF

Well, now — they're nice things, aren't they?

Didn't the professor have two things like that, just like that? Didn't he?

MAX

I believe he did.

ADOLF

I believe he did, too.

[*Short pause.*]

MAX

What's all this about, Adolf? I dare say I can buy a pair of bronzes if I want to, can't I?

ADOLF

Of course. It just seemed funny, that's all. Buy 'em as far as I'm concerned. I haven't anything against it. It just seemed curious. I saw your account at the office yesterday.

MAX

I'm fitting up a studio. You know you told me yourself a year ago that you had no objections.

ADOLF

Yes, I know, I haven't any. Only it seems to me a little comical and — not exactly delicate, to tell the truth, that you're so — well that you've set about buying up all the things the professor had in his studio.

MAX

[*Turning red.*] How do you know that?

ADOLF

Oh, I heard about it. [*A short pause.*] You know a fellow hears a lot of things, my boy. Now

tell me seriously, Max: what does this business mean?

MAX

[*Looks at him irresolutely.*] What business?

ADOLF

The only one we've been talking about.

MAX

I don't know of any.

ADOLF

Of course there's a business side to the affair.

MAX

The business — the affair! I don't know anything about any business. I don't know anything about any affair.

ADOLF

Shall I call it the work of salvation, or would you prefer to have me say the labour of love? It's quite dignified to call it the Crampton affair.

MAX

I've known for a long time that you always make sport of this sort of thing.

ADOLF

Sport, you say! I hardly agree with you. I simply want you to realise what you are undertaking. You have rented an apartment at three thousand marks.

MAX

With two studios, that isn't dear at all.

ADOLF

Good! Good! But that isn't all. You're planning to live with the noble sufferer.

MAX

The noble sufferer? Who's that?

ADOLF

Let's drop side issues, my boy. The heart of the matter is, you are trying to save him. You're fitting up a nest for him, aren't you? You think you are going to live there together, separate and yet in sweet communion.

MAX

Well, do you think that's so crazy, Adolf?

ADOLF

Let me say something, now. That's very pretty. The idea is very neat. But suppose this noble sufferer — suppose he doesn't change any, suppose he keeps on simply — simply taking liquid nourishment from morning till night?

MAX

Adolf, I can hardly control myself enough to answer. The man's made a mock of and stones are thrown at him and every rascal kicks him, now he's down. I tell you, I'll go bail for him. Well, laugh at me if you want to. I'll say it again; I'll go bail for him, hide and hair. Just listen to the people that know all about him. They've exploited him. They've sucked him dry. The leeches have sucked him dry. He's unworldly, he's good-natured, confiding —

ADOLF

And arithmetic isn't his forte.

MAX

No, arithmetic isn't his forte. But he has his forte. What he needs is rest. People who understand him and keep the little cares of life away from him. And when he has that I'll go his bail.

ADOLF

Well, I hope you're not mistaken.

MAX

I'm not mistaken. I can't be mistaken. Just listen to what Miss Trudchen tells. His greatest misfortune was his wife. A heartless, egotistical, empty person. Foolish and snobbish to boot — .

ADOLF

Is that what Miss Trudchen tells?

MAX

She doesn't tell exactly that, but you can guess it from what she says.

ADOLF

Yes, you can guess it. Now tell me, Max, have you ever made this a matter of conscience? I mean, about your motives.

MAX

See here, I can't stand this chaffing.

ADOLF

Now listen to that! Chaffing! Do you call that chaffing? When a simple-minded fellow is interested in getting a glimpse of how a man of genius thinks and acts, you call that chaffing? Chaffing is a very different thing. For example,

if I should ask you: how's your papa-in-law? Or: when do you think you'll get married? Or: are you absolutely sure she likes you? Ho, ho! my dear, that isn't so sure, by any means. Who knows if she hasn't been engaged for years? Now listen to me — yes, yes, I'm serious: if you want to win her — always down in the mouth, always melancholy, my boy. Melancholy does the business best. The woe of all the world pent in your bosom; you know how it goes! That always has the best effect with the girls.

MAX

[*Who has been listening to his brother against his will, and has tried to interrupt him several times, takes his hands from his ears, where he has held them during the latter part of the other's speech, and bursts out in a rage.*] Girls, girls, there aren't any girls in it!

ADOLF

Ho, ho! — you know well enough, my boy, that that's absurd.

[MAX *and* ADOLF *both burst out into hearty laughter.*

MAX

No, Adolf, that's enough,— there's nothing sacred to you.

ADOLF

[*Laughs with unreasonable violence.*] Whenever I think of my first visit to the papa-in-law. [*He mimics him with great exaggeration of word and gesture.*] Well, what do you want of me, what do you want of me? You're a guardian, huh? You'll drive me to death. You want to know if the

boy has talent? I haven't any talent myself. What do you want, what do you want? I'm no Pythia. I can't prophesy from entrails. [*With a sigh of exhaustion, still laughing.*] The noble sufferer can't prophesy from entrails! It was an elevating interview.

ADOLF

[*After a pause.*] But where is the professor?

MAX

If I just knew that, I'd feel better.

ADOLF

Haven't you any trace of him at all?

MAX

Not a trace yet. I can't learn anything at the college. The factotum, Loeffler, can't be found. Not in the street or at the lodgings. Now and then I'm afraid of the worst.

ADOLF

Well, you must be prepared for anything.

MAX

[*Violently.*] There, you see, you see, you say it yourself. And when I said it, you always laughed. Now you're afraid too, you see, you see? What did I say the second day? We must be prepared for the worst. The man is in a state to drown himself. The man will shoot himself, I said. Then you laughed and said there was nothing to it. You swore —

ADOLF

I didn't swear.

MAX

You swore up and down that it was all right, and here we are now. Here I've run my legs off, like a fool, like a donkey. And built all sorts of air-castles —

ADOLF

And bought up so many things.

MAX

Oh, the few things I've bought, they don't worry me any. I don't know why you haven't done a little. You're always boasting about what a detective you are. But still if you can't find him, ladies and gentlemen, just hunt *me* up. Then your troubles about me will be over.

ADOLF

[*Still laughing violently, has tried to interrupt him several times.*] Lord! Lord! What am I going to do? Come to, come to, can't you? He's found. I found him a long time ago. I've settled the whole business, a long time ago.

MAX

[*In astonishment, runs to* ADOLF, *seizes him and shakes him.*] What do you mean, you rascal, you?

ADOLF

Just what I said.

MAX

[*Dances about with* ADOLF *in an outburst of wild joy.*] You brick! You brick! [*He releases* ADOLF *and drops on a sofa.*] Oh, how glad I am!

ADOLF

[*Exhausted.*] Yes, I know, you're very, very young.

THE FOURTH ACT

A little, narrow, furnished room. The furniture consists of a cheap sofa, an unsteady table, an iron wash-stand, a parlor stand, a bed and several chairs. On the stand two cheap miniature busts of plaster of Paris. Over the sofa on the walls hangs a chromo-lithograph. In the corner stands a tile-stove. In the back wall a door; another in the side-wall, right. PROFESSOR CRAMPTON *lies on the sofa — a wet cloth wrapped around his head like a turban — playing cards with two young men. He wears an old dressing-gown, has a pillow at his back and at his side on a chair a basin full of water. On the table, half-empty beer-glasses. The two young men,* STENZEL *and* WEISSBACH, *are between twenty-eight and thirty years old. Their faces indicate a very moderate degree of intelligence. Their hats and overcoats lie on a chair. An old Italian cloak of the* PROFESSOR'S, *with his fez and a broad-brimmed artist's hat, hang on the middle door. Heaps of books, volumes of old periodicals, are piled up on the stand, the chairs and even on the floor. A mandolin lies beside the beer-glasses on the table. It is nearly half-past five in the afternoon. A lamp is burning on the table. The players are smoking vigorously.*

CRAMPTON

[*Humming.*] *Sul mare luccica.* [*Turns up a card.*] That — and that — and that — Thank you, gentlemen. I've had enough.— *Sul mare luccica.*

WEISSBACH

It's Stenzel's deal.

STENZEL

Professor, it's getting along toward six. I think we'd better stop.

WEISSBACH

That's right, we have a class to-night.

CRAMPTON

[*Shuffles the cards, sings.*] I'm free, I'm free, and sing.— Must you go, really? You have class from six to eight, haven't you? You will come back at eight, then?

WEISSBACH

[*Indicating* STENZEL.] He lives with his mother, Professor. She won't give him the key any more.

CRAMPTON

[*Softly.*] Get free, Stenzel. Get free from your mother. I'm going to cut loose from my wife, dear friend! [*He throws the cards together.*] Well, we'll stop then, gentlemen.— But come back again at eight o'clock. Be prompt. [*Enthusiastically.*] I have a couple of great jokes for you. A couple of delicious little Boccaccio stories. Delightful little things, delightful. You know Boccaccio, the inspired rake.—Don't you? Go drown yourselves, you Philistines!

STENZEL

Professor, Boccaccio is too immoral for us.

CRAMPTON

[*Tittering.*] A delicious notion, my dear Stenzel! I'll tell you something. He's too elegant for you. You have a stomach for peas and pork, you young people here in the province. You make love like gorillas — yes sir, like gorillas! — Well, go on, go on! [*good-natured, mocking*] — you don't want to be late. You don't want to be late at your drill-ground. [*Laughing.*] If you are, they'll keep you in — tremendous joke!

[STENZEL *and* WEISSBACH *pull on their overcoats, laughing.* SELMA, *a waitress, enters. Through the open door is visible a billiard-room with guests who are chalking their cues.*

CRAMPTON

[*Takes the mandolin, plays and sings with feeling and fire the first stanza from "Santa Lucia."*] That's it, my pretty Selma, that's the way they coo in Italy. But here in your country, it's like the grocery business. [*Repeats the last line.*] Bring me something to drink, my child, and something smokable! [*To the young men.*] What can a man do? There's just smoking and drinking, drinking and smoking.

SELMA

[*As she takes away the glasses and wipes off the table.*] I'm sure you smoke too much, Professor. All day and all night.

CRAMPTON

[*Wearily.*] What can I do? I can't sleep. I

can smoke and read and swill down beer. By the way, dear Stenzel, books, books! You said you had some old papers, some old illustrated magazines. Bring me what you have. I'll be thankful for anything. I don't need to eat, but I must read. [*He takes off his turban.*] You don't read enough, you young artists. You are ignorant, horribly ignorant, you don't know anything about God or the world. Do you know Swift? No. Do you know Smollett? Do you know Thackeray? Do you know Dickens? Do you know that a man named Byron wrote a thing called "Cain"? Do you know E. T. A. Hoffmann? You are horribly ignorant.

SELMA

[*Who has gone out with the empty glasses, comes back with a full one. She hums:*

Miss Alma was the sweetest girl I ever saw;
I took a better look,
And she looked like an old red squaw.

WEISSBACH

Good-bye, Professor! We'll improve.

STENZEL

Professor! I'd almost forgotten it: Somebody asked me yesterday where you lived.

CRAMPTON

[*Walks about, gloomily.*] I live nowhere, nowhere, my dear fellow.

STENZEL

Yes, I said I didn't know where you lived.

CRAMPTON

That's right, Stenzel, that's right; I live nowhere — Who is asking about me?

WEISSBACH

You remember him — Straehler, the painter they fired. He asked *me* about you, too.

CRAMPTON

[*Irritably.*] How do I concern those people, I'd like to know? I wish they'd leave me in peace. — Well, good luck, Stenzel! Good luck, Weissbach!

STENZEL *and* WEISSBACH

Good-bye, Professor!

[WEISSBACH, *as he passes, pinches* SELMA'S *arm.*

SELMA

Oh, go home, you baboon, you!

[STENZEL *and* WEISSBACH *go out laughing. A billiard game is in progress in the restaurant.*

CRAMPTON

Great bore. Horrible bore — my dear child, I'm sorry for you.

[*He draws off his dressing-gown and puts on the velvet jacket.*

SELMA

Me? Why?

CRAMPTON

Do you like this life?

SELMA

What can I do?

CRAMPTON

That's the question.

SELMA

[*Hesitating.*] But you, Professor, I'm sorry for you.

CRAMPTON

Me? Ha, ha! better yet. [*Impatiently.*] Well, go now, go now!

SELMA

A man like you, Professor, ought to get out of this life. If you only wanted to, you could. Instead of that you're ruining your health.

CRAMPTON

[*With tragi-comic despair.*] *O dio mio!* [*Motioning her away abruptly and ill-humouredly.*] Now let me sleep.

[*He stretches himself out on the sofa. Exit* SELMA.

[*Outside a wild drinking-song is begun. Someone knocks hastily several times, and as the* PROFESSOR *does not answer, the middle door is opened from the other side. Several red convivial faces peer through the opening, and a man in embroidered bedroom slippers, soiled linen and dirty clothing, with a coarse, pale face, comes in. It is* KASSNER, *proprietor of the establishment.*

KASSNER

Beg yer pardon, Professor.

CRAMPTON

[*Starts up in alarm.*] What — what's the matter?

KASSNER

There's a couple of gentlemen here that wants to see you — wants to know if you'll be so kind and drink a glass with 'em.

CRAMPTON

[*Brusquely.*] What sort of gentlemen?

KASSNER

It's a little club, Professor.

[*Enter* KUNZE *and* SEIFERT, *two fat, tipsy Philistines.*

SEIFERT

Hope you'll excuse us, Perfesser, we heard you was here; and since we're havin' a celebration to-day — and since we're all havin' a celebration together to-day — we wanted to ask you if you would be so kind, Perfesser —

CRAMPTON

So you know me?

SEIFERT

Perfesser, you're a great artist, you're an art-painter, and I'm only an ordinary house painter. But we're all men, all the same. [*Moved.*] And when a man has a good, true heart, I say — here, under the stomacher, I says that spot's the main thing. And so maybe we ain't too 'umble for you. And maybe you'll come down with us this evenin' and empty a glass with us and drink a health with

us, even if it's just an ordinary house-painter, Perfesser.

KUNZE

[*While several more guests and the waitress collect laughing about the door.*] You needn't be ashamed of us, Perfesser. Even if we are ordinary folks. We know how to respect art, we do.

CRAMPTON

[*With a show of indifference.*] Well, I've nothing against it, I've nothing against it.

[*A hurrah. The spectators in the door applaud with the others.* KUNZE *and* SEIFERT *take an arm of* CRAMPTON *apiece and lead him off in triumph, with repeated hurrahs.*

KASSNER

[*Running after.*] Perfesser, Perfesser! They'll make things lively for you all right, they're a little fuller than the law allows already.

[*Cheering within. During the cheering the door right is unlocked and thrown open. Enter* LOEFFLER *and* MAX STRAEHLER.

LOEFFLER

[*Allowing* MAX *to precede him.*] Go in, go in, Mr. Straehler.

MAX

[*Looking around.*] This is where the professor lives?

LOEFFLER

And just listen to the racket. It goes on like that from six in the evenin' till six or seven the

next mornin'. Oh, it's a shame, it's a rotten shame!

MAX

Tell me, Loeffler, what did he pick out this hole for?

LOEFFLER

Well, I can tell you that in a hurry. It happened this way: The man here, we owed him sixty marks. So he took the perfesser in not to lose the money. Then he thought he was a-speculatin' on the relations. But he got hold of the wrong pig that time. Now he's just a-findin' out that he's a done a little bit too much speculatin', for he's been here pretty near a week, the perfesser has, and there ain't a rooster crowed after him. Nobody knows how much longer he'll let him stay.

MAX

Where do you suppose the professor's gone?

LOEFFLER

Guess he's in there in the tap room. You see it's this way: now the boss finds out he can't get his money one way, he's takin' a try at another. Now he's usin' the perfesser for bait, you might say.

MAX

Listen to me. Take this money first. [*He gives* LOEFFLER *a banknote.*] Pay the debts here out of it. Then the professor's got to get out of this dive at once.

LOEFFLER

Well now, that's just the point. The man's got

a will — I tell you, Mr. Straehler, that man's got a will of his own — when he gets his back up — good Lord! there ain't no use then. Now, if he didn't have such a will! Why you know, it's a regular prison for him here. There's the bar — and he's at it the whole day. And here he sits — and all he's got to do is squeal and here comes the girl. And the girl, she's dead gone on him. And no difference what he orders, she brings it right along. And when the boss won't let him have no beer, she keeps mum and pays for it out o' her own pocket. So the man don't do anything but drink, drink. Well now you see — what'll it all end in? So when I says to him: Perfesser, we'll try to get a job, then his back goes up. I tell you the man's got pride.— If he wasn't so proud — There's been several folks here a-wantin' to help him. What you goin' to do? When one comes he chucks him outa the door. [*Voices approach the middle door.*] Now I'll bet he'll raise a row because I brought you.— Let him row! [*Enter the* PROFESSOR, *followed by* SEIFERT, *who fawns upon him.*] Evenin', Perfesser!

CRAMPTON

Good evening, my dear man. Go in and order beer. [*Exit* LOEFFLER. *To* MAX.] Art-student, are you?

MAX

[*Who stands in a dark corner of the room.*] Yes sir! I —

CRAMPTON

Good, good; wait a bit, please.

SEIFERT

[*Zealously.*] Yes, Perfesser, we're agreed, then. We've got a first-class business, you can bank on that. And if we like each other, you can make more money than you have any use for. I tell you I'm well fixed, myself.

CRAMPTON

[*Impatiently.*] I'm sure of that, I'm sure of that.

SEIFERT

Yes, yes, Perfesser, I'm well fixed. You can ask anywhere you want to, anywhere! Best references, Perfesser. You know, we have artistic jobs to do, we have — and you see, if we can come to terms. . . . I've got a great proposition. I could take up a great proposition then. Over in Goerlitz it is — they want a concert-hall painted over there.

CRAMPTON

[*With growing impatience.*] Yes, yes, my dear friend, yes, yes. I'll sleep over the proposition. If I can get time, I don't see why I might not accept your offer. We'll see, we'll see. Let's leave it till morning, then.

SEIFERT

Hope I haven't offended. We'll leave it till mornin'.

CRAMPTON

All right, all right, dear sir; that's the way.

[SEIFERT *bows and scrapes himself out.*

MAX

[*Steps forward a little.*] Good evening, Professor. I hope I may ask how you are getting —

CRAMPTON

[*Stretches himself out on the sofa, ill-humouredly.*] Very well, very well, my dear fellow. What's the name, please?

MAX

My name is Straehler.

CRAMPTON

Oh, yes, Straehler — Well, my dear Straehler, you're a painter, you say.

MAX

Certainly, Professor! I used to work with you.

CRAMPTON

Oh yes, I remember, Straehler, Straehler? Up there in the treadmill establishment? When I was wasting my time over there? You see, my dear fellow, that time has gone pretty well out of my memory.— Oh, certainly, certainly! They expelled you, didn't they? You had a little talent, hadn't you? And that's why they drove you out.

MAX

For some reason or other they decided to exclude me from the college.

CRAMPTON

You came to my studio often, of course you did! It was a pretty, comfortable studio. My studio was comfortable, wasn't it? I had collected some

things, a few at a time. Do you remember my Gothic chest? My Dresden china?

MAX

Oh yes, very well.

CRAMPTON

And the charming bronzes? Everything there had a history. What's the difference? I must get along this way! They took it all away from me — I've taken lodgings here for a while. It's quite tolerable, a little dark, but quite tolerable! — What did you say your name was?

MAX

My name is Straehler.

CRAMPTON

Mr. Straehler, Mr. Straehler.
[*Short pause.*]

MAX

Professor, my object in coming here was to ask you if there was anything I could do for you. I . . .

CRAMPTON

I don't know for the moment — that is, my dear fellow, if you want to do something — bring me some books. I read almost all the time. I can't sleep. I'd prove myself grateful. I could give you recommendations, to Weimar, to Vienna. I have the best connections everywhere.

MAX

Have you any news of your daughter, Professor?

CRAMPTON

[*Jumping up from the sofa, brusquely and defiantly.*] How does my daughter happen to concern you, young man?

MAX

Perhaps you remember, Professor, that not long ago you honoured me with the proof of your very great confidence.

CRAMPTON

[*Passing his hand over his forehead.*] Oh yes! yes! That is —

MAX

[*Modestly, but firmly.*] Professor! I believed that what I did then secured me the right to mention the name of your daughter.

CRAMPTON

Very well, very well, then do me a favour. There is a certain atmosphere here . . . at least don't say anything about my daughter in this place.

MAX

In this place? Very well, Professor. Then I should like to ask in what other place I may be allowed to speak of your daughter?

CRAMPTON

Better not at all, better not at all.

MAX

Well — if you wish.— Then I should like to ask just one other question. Why . . . well, it isn't so easy. But, Professor, in a word: It hurts me to see how you live here in a narrow,

dark room, where you don't even have light enough to work and where you are ruining your health. Wouldn't you permit me . . . I assure you it would make me happy, it would make me proud, if I could do something for a man I honour as much as I do you, Professor. Can't you bring yourself to have some confidence in me?

CRAMPTON

[*Somewhat more mildly, but still on his guard.*] But, my dear friend, what's got into your head? I live here because it pleases me to live here. I find it very tolerable here. They've taken all my material away from me. If it weren't for that, I might work a little even here.

MAX

You will at least allow me to furnish you materials.

CRAMPTON

Yes, do that, do that. I'm no dog in the manger. But do you know, it's my fault too; I'm tired. The orders come flying in, but I'm tired. For example, they want me to decorate a concert-hall. The man's pressing me. I have a very neat idea in my head, but as I said, I'm tired. I had a thing thought out for the ceiling, you know, a round picture. A thing to represent the music of nature. I'd thought of a sea, you know, the ocean and a storm tearing it up. And in the middle of the ocean I'd figured a rock and giants tearing the rock asunder. And out of the crack, you know, there was to be fire thundering out, yes, so that you might almost hear the roar of the thunder. — How's that? What do you think? Am I an

old cart-horse? Have I got sawdust in my head? [*In ecstasy.*] Just let them come! Just let them match me, those daubers and pastry-cooks at the treadmill college.

[*He walks around the room.*

MAX

Do you remember my brother, Professor?

CRAMPTON

A fat tradesman, isn't he?

MAX

A fat dealer, yes, Professor! I have a sister here too. They live together, my brother and my sister.

CRAMPTON

[*Absently.*] That so? Glad to hear it, glad to hear it. Do they agree pretty well?

MAX

Very well, Professor.

CRAMPTON

Good. Glad of it, my dear fellow.

MAX

The reason I mentioned my sister — my sister asked me to ask you something, Professor.

CRAMPTON

[*Beside himself.*] For the Lord's sake! You're going to ask me to paint her. My dear fellow, my dear fellow! I can't do it, really, I mustn't do it. The tavern-keeper wants me to paint him for fifty pfennigs. A green-grocer woman wants me to slap down her likeness for a pot of sour

pickles. A portrait, my friend, costs six hundred thalers; no more and no less. I can't throw myself away. If you want me to do it on those conditions, I'm at your service.

MAX

[*Rising, holding out his hand to him.*] Agreed, Professor!

CRAMPTON

Man, are you crazy?

MAX

Not in the least. It's for a present, Professor. My brother Adolf —

CRAMPTON

I thought it was your sister.

MAX

[*Stammering in his embarrassment.*] That is, my sister will sit for her picture.

CRAMPTON

And your brother gives the order.

MAX

[*Blushing.*] My brother gives the order.

CRAMPTON

Very well, dear Straehler, if you're in earnest. [*With ill-concealed joy.*] I can't refuse on those conditions.

MAX

And now, Professor — I must — I'm to give you your daughter's love.

CRAMPTON

[*Turns away from* MAX *to conceal his emotion.*] But — but when have you seen her?

MAX

[*Stammering.*] As you kept your address so quiet, Miss Gertrud had to apply to me.

CRAMPTON

Do you correspond with my daughter?

MAX

I correspond — that is, Professor, I'm the only one who, Miss Gertrud thought, would know anything about you.

CRAMPTON

And behind my back, my dear? What does that mean? What does that mean?

MAX

That is — not exactly — It was, as I thought, not a pleasant prospect for Miss Gertrud to go to her grandparents at all. And so —

CRAMPTON

[*Laughing bitterly.*] I'll warrant you it wasn't! I'll warrant you! They'll make hell hot for the child! They'll keep jabbing at her papa! I have no doubt. They'll cry: Crucify him, crucify him! and if she doesn't agree — she's lost. Our dear relatives! The good souls. The woman's an angel. My wife's an angel. An angel from Heaven — that's what she is. I hope she'll stay there —

MAX

[*After a pause.*] I know too that Miss Ger-

trud is very anxious to see you again, to visit you, Professor.

CRAMPTON

I can't have it! I can't have it. You can see for yourself. I can't have it. I'm leading a life — a dog's life! It makes no difference to me, one way or another. I'm done for — one way or another. But I can't have it, my dear Straehler.

MAX

My sister asked me to make a request of you. It would be a pleasure to her to offer Miss Gertrud her hospitality.

CRAMPTON

[*Turning away again.*] Well now, well now! What sort of business is this? No, no, my dear, that's absolutely impossible. The long journey in winter, too. I think it might be better. I think it might be better to leave things . . .

MAX

You could easily satisfy yourself if you would just pay us a visit. Miss Gertrud would be very well taken care of at my sister's. They're old friends from the conservatory.

CRAMPTON

But, dear Straehler, I haven't any doubt — [*He cannot speak for a moment, because of his emotion.*] Of course it goes without saying that I would be glad to have the child near me. You can't imagine what a child she is. What a wise, clever, little head the child has. How justly this child, this bit of a girl, thinks. And how brave she can be. She didn't always let me have my

own way. She brought me to rights pretty roughly, I tell you, but she loved me dearly, for all that. She defended me like a little tiger. [*He draws a photograph from his pocket.*] There's her little head. Isn't it a sweet little head? A strong character —

MAX

Just say one word, Professor, and she'll be here.

CRAMPTON

A word, my dear fellow? Oh, the dear little girl! That word would make trouble. I can't have it.

[*Enter* SEIFERT *and* KUNZE.

SEIFERT

[*Red, pleased, cheerful.*] Professor, we wanted to talk over a matter o' business with you. You see I've brought my pardner along with me. Kunze, he's my pardner. That's our firm, Kunze and Seifert. You see we want to know if you're willin' to give us an answer. We'll keep you in beer — free. All of us likes to drink, don't we? A little thing like that won't —

CRAMPTON

[*Brusquely, indignantly.*] Who are you and what do you want, gentlemen?

SEIFERT

Well, we was half an' half agreed, seems to me?

CRAMPTON

I don't know what you want. My name is Crampton, Professor Crampton — and who are you?

SEIFERT

My name's Seifert.

KUNZE

Mine's Kunze.

CRAMPTON

Well, Messrs. Hinz and Kunz — or whatever your names are — what business have you to run into my room like this? Do you happen to know what good manners are? Do you know anything about the laws of politeness? I would thank you to leave us alone.

[SEIFERT *and* KUNZE *draw back in consternation.*

SEIFERT

[*Bowing and scraping.*] Beg yer pardon! Beg yer pardon!

KUNZE

Beg yer pardon, sir! Excuse me, sir!

CRAMPTON

[*Calls after him.*] You're excused! you're excused! [*Enter* LOEFFLER.] See here, Loeffler, who are those fellows? To run right into my room! I'm not sure of my life for these fellows. I'll move. I'll move at once. I can't stay here. I'll not stay here a minute longer. Loeffler, pay our little bill. Pay this little sum. A good lodging, Loeffler, a good lodging. And let this young man in at any time. [*He puts on his hat and cloak.*] And about that portrait, dear Straehler, I'd be glad if we could begin at once. I'll be busy from next week on, and I won't know whether I'm on my head or my heels.

[KASSNER *brings a cup of coffee.*

CRAMPTON

[*Violently.*] What are you bringing there? Thank you for your milk and water. I don't want any more of it. I'm moving.

KASSNER

Well, git out, git out, but pay first. I've got enough of you long ago, you can bet on that. You won't work, you won't do nothin'. You could have got a fine job, if you'd took it. Them painters is rich, I tell you.

CRAMPTON

The man's murdering me, dear Straehler! This tavern fellow is driving me mad.

MAX

Then let's go at once, Professor.

KASSNER

Shell out every cent you owe me, then go if you want to.

CRAMPTON

[*To* STRAEHLER.] We'll go, my dear. Settle the business, Loeffler.

LOEFFLER

Things is goin' right for once! [*To* KASSNER.] How much do we owe you?

[*Exit* MAX *with the* PROFESSOR *on his arm.*

KASSNER

What's all this mean?

LOEFFLER

Well, a perfesser like that, he's got money, of course.

THE FIFTH ACT

A studio in the rooms lately rented by MAX. *It is furnished principally with articles from* PROFESSOR CRAMPTON'S *former studio and imitates it in arrangement. Various articles have not found their place yet, and stand around in confusion. A little door right, a little door with a bell left. Great studio windows in the rear wall.*

[MAX *and* GERTRUD, *in winter costumes, step in breathlessly, left. Their faces glow with happiness, red with exercise, and a boisterous gayety has possession of them.*

MAX

[*Throwing aside his hat, tearing off his overcoat.*] Here we are!

GERTRUD

[*Unfastening her cap.*] Here we are.

MAX

[*Looks at her.*] Well?

GERTRUD

[*Blushes.*] Well?

MAX

Gertrud!

[*He takes her in his arms and holds her close, kissing her repeatedly.*

GERTRUD

Max! [*She frees herself.*] Hurry, now, we must straighten things out.

MAX

Yes, let's be quick!

[*Both run helplessly about.*

GERTRUD

But what first?

MAX

I'm all out of breath!

GERTRUD

[*The same.*] So am I. We ran so fast.

MAX

[*Runs and locks the door.*] Wait till I fasten this. [*He runs back to her.*] Now —

GERTRUD

[*In graceful apprehension.*] What now?

MAX

Just wait!

[*He catches her and kisses her again.*

GERTRUD

Ow — ow! — But Max, we must clear up.

MAX

[*Releasing her, runs through all the rooms. Crying out:*] Hurrah, hurrah! [*In the studio again.*] Oh, Gertrud, I'm crazy!

GERTRUD

[*In astonishment before the Gothic chest.*] What's that?

MAX

Papa's chest.

GERTRUD

[*Before the Silenus.*] And what's that?

MAX

Papa's Silenus.

GERTRUD

But dear Max, what does it mean?

MAX

I just got after them and hunted till I found them all. Here, just look at the Gobelins.

GERTRUD

[*Astonished.*] Oh!!

MAX

Here's the leather Bible, the tiger skin. The table's new, but he won't notice that.

GERTRUD

You dear boy! How good you are!

MAX

No time for that. We've got to straighten things out.

GERTRUD

That's right, let's go to work.

MAX

[*Lifting the Silenus from the table.*] Let's put him here.

GERTRUD

There's the picture you sat for.

MAX

We'll put that here.

GERTRUD

[*Looking at the picture which stands on the easel.*] Do you remember? [*Imitating the* PROFESSOR.] Sit still, Straehler! you bob your head as if you were a hundred years old!

[*Both laugh.*

MAX

[*Taking her head in both his hands.*] Oh, Gertrud, Gertrud!

GERTRUD

[*Struggling.*] Max, go to work, go to work; don't think of anything but the work!

MAX

You're mine, you're mine, and I'll not give you up to anybody!

GERTRUD

[*Provokingly.*] Go to work!

MAX

You'll never, never leave me! Will you?

GERTRUD

No, never, never!

MAX

And when we die, we'll die together!

GERTRUD

We'll go together. [*Kisses. Short pause.*

GERTRUD

You're a fine fellow; that's what *you* call cleaning up.

MAX

You're right, Gertrud, I must go to work. Papa is punctual.

GERTRUD

[*With the eagerness of repressed joy.*] Good, dear papa! I'm to see him again. Oh, I'm happy! I'm happy! I'm so happy! [*Dropping her voice in deep emotion. With conviction.*] Now he'll be happy too.

MAX

[*Jubilantly.*] We'll all be, we'll all be! Where shall we go now?

GERTRUD

[*In the next room.*] A voyage of discovery! Oh, Max, how pretty, how wonderfully pretty!

MAX

[*Busy at arranging furniture.*] There's where I'll work and your papa here.— Gertrud, come here, I must look at you.

GERTRUD

Well, find me then, find me!

MAX

[*Rushes into the other room.*] Wait then, you butterfly!

[*Laughing, shrieking, scuffling in the next room.*

GERTRUD

[*Rushes in, followed by* MAX. *Laughs, cries out defiant but exhausted.*] I'm flying, I'm flying!

MAX

I'll tame you!

[*He catches her, she escapes. He catches her again, she escapes a second time.*

GERTRUD

[*Stopping in exhaustion, pushing him weakly away with her hands.*] Go to work! Go to work!

MAX

[*Suddenly bursts out laughing.*] Oh, it's ridiculous.

GERTRUD

What are you laughing about?

MAX

What a face I made! How I stuttered!

GERTRUD

You did stutter horribly.

MAX

Did you have any idea what would happen?

GERTRUD

Oh, just the least bit! But out there by the moat, when you preached me that sermon and got so personal — I began to feel uncanny.

MAX

Yes, and I got scared.

GERTRUD

You poor little rabbit!

MAX

Just wait, just wait!

[*He catches her and kisses her.*

GERTRUD

My hair, my dress! Be still, Max! Your brother and sister will be here any minute. [*With a pretense at a sigh.*] What will they say?

MAX

Congratulate us.

GERTRUD

They will? Will that be all?

MAX

What else should there be?

GERTRUD

You're so young yet, Max.

[*Short pause. Laughter.*

GERTRUD

[*Claps her hands.*] Dear, good papa! Those eyes, those eyes he'll make! Oh, I'll choke him [*softly, roguishly*] the rascal.

MAX

[*With feigned astonishment.*] I didn't exactly understand what you said.

GERTRUD

The poor fellow, he can't hear well!

MAX

Oh, you'll tease me, will you? Come here and be punished at once.

GERTRUD

[*With feigned indifference.*] Yes, I'll be there shortly.

MAX

Come here, or I'll come after you.

GERTRUD

I'll scratch you.

MAX

Did you hear me?

GERTRUD

Oh, I can be wicked. When I don't want to do a thing, I say right out: [*She stamps her foot.*] I won't! I won't!

MAX

Much good that'll do you! [*He rushes at her.*

GERTRUD

[*Taking refuge behind a chair.*] Why Max, see what we're doing! How we'll be scolded! I by papa and you by your sister.

MAX

Hoo, how scared I am!

GERTRUD

Just pretend to be so fearless!

MAX

Have I committed a crime?

GERTRUD

Just see how good he pretends to be! You know it's all your fault.

MAX

My fault? Listen to that! If it's anybody's fault,—

GERTRUD

[*Quickly.*] It's yours!

MAX

No, it's yours.

GERTRUD

I tell you it's yours.

MAX

I'm going to kiss you till you beg my pardon.

GERTRUD

[*Beneath his kisses.*] I confess, I confess! It's my fault. But now, Max, go to work! Papa doesn't know anything at all?

MAX

I didn't have the courage to tell him.

GERTRUD

Not even that I'm here?

MAX

No, nothing at all, nothing at all.

GERTRUD

You were afraid to tell the truth, you rabbit. 'Fraidy-cat!

MAX

[*Kissing her hands.*] Oh, if I had had any idea of how beautiful a thing life is!

GERTRUD

Now listen, dearest!

MAX

I'm listening.

GERTRUD

[*Ties a little green riband about his wrist.*] Here, do you see this riband? I've tied you fast with it, and if you ever touch it, woe to you!

MAX

I'll take care not to.

GERTRUD

[*Frightened.*] Listen, they're coming.

MAX

What a shame!

GERTRUD

What a shame!

MAX

Oh, deuce take 'em!

GERTRUD

Suppose it's papa! Shall we tell him right away?

MAX

Yes, on the spot.

GERTRUD

And your brother and sister?

MAX

Right on the spot, too. [*A ring.*] Come in! Who's there?

[*He opens the door. Enter* AGNES, *left.*

MAX

[*Calls to her, his face flaming.*] Agnes, Agnes! we're engaged.

AGNES

[*With pretended astonishment.*] Oh, is that so?

GERTRUD

[*Rushes into* AGNES' *arms.*] Oh, Agnes, Agnes! I'm so happy.

AGNES

[*Kissing her at each word.*] You dear, little, sweet, new sister, you!

ADOLF

[*Enters left.*] See here, Max, the professor is downstairs with Loeffler studying the list of rooms.

MAX

[*With shining eyes.*] Adolf, we're engaged!

ADOLF

[*Carelessly.*] Yes, I know it. But Miss Gertrud must hide. You must hide, Miss Gertrud.

[*Everybody rushes around zealously seeking a hiding-place for* GERTRUD.

ADOLF

[*In the door right.*] In here, people! In here! In here!

[*All vanish through this door.*

[*Behind the door left, which is ajar, a murmuring is heard, a knock and more murmuring. The bell rings, then* LOEFFLER *pushes the door open.*

LOEFFLER

[*Calling back.*] The door's open. But there ain't anybody here.

CRAMPTON

[*Still outside, exasperated.*] What are these people thinking about? What does this mean, what does this mean? I can't wait here on the stairs. I'll be sure to catch cold. Oh, don't stop, don't stop! Go on, Loeffler!

LOEFFLER

[*Steps completely in, followed by the* PROFESSOR *in his cloak.*] What's all this mean, eh?

[*He looks around in astonishment.*

CRAMPTON

Well, what do you think of this, Loeffler? This is what they call punctual! We're here on the minute, and they keep us waiting. [*Looking about him in bewilderment.*] What does it mean, Loeffler?

LOEFFLER

[*Troubled.*] Yes, Professor! it's strange, for sure.

CRAMPTON

[*Slowly and thoughtfully.*] The man has a very comfortable place.

LOEFFLER

He's got his pattern from you.

CRAMPTON

Yes, it seems so. [*He takes a few steps forward and stops before the Gothic chest.*] Well now, devil take me!

LOEFFLER

What's that for, Professor?

CRAMPTON

Why, Loeffler, that's my chest!

LOEFFLER

It looks mighty like it, for sure.

CRAMPTON

I'm director of the college if that isn't my chest. I'll let 'em chop my head off, I'll let 'em send me back to the college, if . . . [*He runs around.*] You can say what you please, Loeffler, these are my things you see here, these are my things from top to bottom. I dare say I know my own things!

LOEFFLER

Well, I think I see how 'tis — He's a rich fellow, this Mr. Straehler, so he bought up this thing here and that thing there —

CRAMPTON

But, Loeffler, what would he do that for? They're making game of me, aren't they? Remarkable! My things! What does this boy want with my things? Such lack of tact — it's simply maddening! This young scholar, this dilettante, this blooming tyro. So he wants to pluck me bare! Wants to puff himself up and pose in my studio! Come on, let's go! The devil can stay here, and paint old women!

ADOLF

[*Comes out with an innocent expression;* AGNES *a little behind him.*] Glad to see you, Professor!

Beg your pardon,— we didn't know you'd got here. My sister Agnes, Professor Crampton.

CRAMPTON

[*Bows slightly to* AGNES, *a hostile look on his face.*] You'll pardon me a question. Am I to paint here?

ADOLF

Well, I suppose you are! You haven't any objections, have you, Professor?

CRAMPTON

No, I haven't any objections, but perhaps you are not ignorant of the fact that the first necessity for painting is light. Where is the light here? I don't see any light. It is pitch dark here. How can anyone paint here? Nobody can paint in such a potato-cellar.

ADOLF

[*Repressing his laughter with difficulty.*] I must confess that I don't know much about such things. I supposed my brother . . .

CRAMPTON

Your brother, my dear man, your brother, your brother! He's no authority. Your brother is only a modest beginner, and I have grown gray in the profession. And when a man like me tells you this studio isn't worth three cents, this studio can't be used — you can be sure of it, you can take twenty oaths on it. Which one of you is to be painted?

ADOLF

I think it's you, Agnes.

CRAMPTON

Let me see, please, madam. [*He orders her by gestures to step into the light, and studies her face sharply.*] You don't make a particularly good subject. What have you been doing to yourself, my dear madam? You have such a gray, fatty tone. I don't know — perhaps you are in the habit of painting your face? That would be bad for you as a subject. We must be satisfied with nature. [*To* ADOLF.] I beg your pardon — I have a certain interest — How did your brother get hold of these things?

ADOLF

There he comes himself. Perhaps, Professor —

CRAMPTON

[*Addresses the newcomer in a much more cordial fashion.*] How do you do, my dear fellow? How's your health?

MAX

Very well, thank you, Professor!

CRAMPTON

Now tell me, what do these things mean? You have become a great painter, have you? Makart himself wasn't as splendidly fitted out as you are.

MAX

No, no, Professor, that's a mistake.

CRAMPTON

How can it be a mistake? How can it be a mistake? You certainly know my things! You worked with me.

LOEFFLER

Perfesser, them things *was* yourn, all right.

CRAMPTON

Yes, they were, yes, they were! I know they were, Loeffler. A man is unfortunate and they plunder him. They have plundered me!

MAX

Before I forget it, Professor, I should like to ask you something at once.

CRAMPTON

Very well, ask it.

MAX

My brother and sister here, Professor, have fitted up this room for me to celebrate my release from the college. Now, Professor, I am only a beginner. All this splendour troubles me a little. Anyway, I don't need all this equipment. Right next here is a pretty, light room, which is certainly more than good enough for me. Of course, I don't want to give this room up to anyone I don't know, but suppose you, Professor, would be willing to take it off my hands at least for a while?

CRAMPTON

How take it off your hands?

ADOLF

You might rent it.

MAX

Yes, you might rent it.

CRAMPTON

Well — now — I might think about it.

MAX

What do you think of the light, Professor?

CRAMPTON

[*Eagerly.*] The light is good,— very good, dear Straehler! No, no, there is nothing to be said against it. The idea appeals to me very much. What do you think, Loeffler? [*As* LOEFFLER *makes a long face.*] What would it cost?

MAX

Cost — cost — That's my brother's affair.

ADOLF

Professor, we'll talk about that later. Of course I don't want to let it too cheap.

CRAMPTON

[*Laughing.*] Yes, you're a shopkeeper, you're a shopkeeper. [*Clapping* MAX *on the shoulder.*] Now I'm next door to you, and you can take lessons of me! [*Suddenly checked by an idea, he puts his hand to his forehead.*] Yes, but, yes, but — it seems to me — [*He steps to the window, so that he stands with his back to the others.*] I don't know, I don't know —

[AGNES, ADOLF *and* MAX *gesticulate wildly toward the door right. Then* ADOLF *goes to bring* GERTRUD *out. He does not return.* GERTRUD *comes rushing out on tiptoe, like the wind, and claps her hands over her father's eyes from behind.*

GERTRUD

[*Gleefully.*] Who am I? Who am I?

CRAMPTON

For the Lord's sake! [*In a condition of joyous bewilderment.*] My child, my heart, my little cat, my little major, what does this mean? What has happened? What are you doing? How did you get here? I'm raving crazy.

GERTRUD

Oh, dearest papa! Don't be angry at me, I'm engaged!

CRAMPTON

[*Laughing.*] Just listen to the little rogue! Very well, let that be. [*He kisses her fingers.*] You can have a dozen suitors for each little finger, I swear you can! And counts and princes.

GERTRUD

Thank you kindly, I don't want any counts — I'm talking seriously — I'm engaged. And see here, papa. [*She rushes over to* AGNES *and throws her arms about her neck.*] This is my sister.

CRAMPTON

You are engaged? That is your sister? [*Pointing to* MAX.] Then this fellow here is your betrothed? [*He runs around laughing and crying.*] For Heaven's sake — the girl wants to be married! My dear Loeffler, what do you say to that? Isn't it a great joke? A great joke! And dear madam, you have nothing to say?

AGNES

I can only say that I am heartily glad.

CRAMPTON

You are heartily glad? I'm glad to hear that, I'm glad to hear that! So I have nothing to cry about. But tell me, Gertrud, you little rascal, how did you ever get such an idea? [*To* MAX.] And you, my boy, what did you do it for? Well come here, come here. My blessing, my children, retails for two pfennigs.

[*He takes both in his arms.*

CRAMPTON

[*Releasing* GERTRUD, *holding* MAX *by the hand.*] Now tell me, my boy, what is your name?

GERTRUD

His name is Max.

CRAMPTON

Max, is it? All right. I want to tell you something. Devil take all honeymoons. Now we must go to work, Max, like two coolies! [*Releases him, rushes across to* LOEFFLER, *overcome with emotion.*] Max is the blockhead's name, what do you think of that, Loeffler? [*He runs around the room.*] Such a blockhead! Such a blockhead!

MICHAEL KRAMER

LIST OF PERSONS

MICHAEL KRAMER, *teacher at the Royal College of Art, painter.*
MRS. KRAMER, *his wife.*
MICHALINE KRAMER, *his daughter, painter.*
ARNOLD KRAMER, *his son, painter.*
LACHMANN, *painter.*
ALWINE LACHMANN, *his wife.*
LIESE BÄNSCH, *daughter of the restaurant keeper* BÄNSCH.

ASSISTANT JUDGE SCHNABEL,
ARCHITECT ZIEHN,
VON KRAUTHEIM,
QUANTMEYER,
} *Frequenters of* BÄNSCH'S *restaurant.*

KRAUSE, *chief janitor in the College of Art.*
BERTHA, *maid at the Kramers'.*
FRITZ, *waiter in* BÄNSCH'S *restaurant.*

The events of this drama take place in a provincial capital.

TO

THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND

HUGO ERNST SCHMIDT

THE FIRST ACT

A large room, having a single window in one corner, in KRAMER'S *apartment. Time: A winter morning toward nine o'clock. On a table beside the window that gives on the court a burning lamp and the breakfast dishes are still standing. The furnishing of the room is quite ordinary.* MICHALINE, *a dark girl with an interesting face, having pushed her chair slightly away from the table, is smoking a cigarette and holding a book in her lap.* MRS. KRAMER *enters by the door in the rear on some household errand. She is a white-haired woman about fifty-six years old. Her demeanour is restless and anxious.*

MRS. KRAMER

Are you still there, Michaline? Isn't it time for you to go?

MICHALINE

[*Pausing before she answers.*] No, mother, not yet.— Anyhow, it's quite dark outside yet.

MRS. KRAMER

Be careful that you don't neglect anything, Michaline; that's all.

MICHALINE

There's no danger, mother.

MRS. KRAMER

Because really . . . you shouldn't miss any opportunity; there's worry enough left anyhow.

MICHALINE

Yes, mother, surely! [*She smokes and looks into her book.*]

MRS. KRAMER

What are you reading there? You always have your nose in a book!

MICHALINE

Am I not to read?

MRS. KRAMER

You may read for all I care! — I'm only surprised that you have the peace of mind to do it.

MICHALINE

Dear me, if one were to wait for that! Would one ever get to do anything?

MRS. KRAMER

Didn't papa say anything at all when he went?

MICHALINE

No.

MRS. KRAMER

That's always the worst sign when he doesn't say anything.

MICHALINE

Oh yes, he did though. I almost forgot. Arnold is to come to him at the studio at eleven o'clock sharp.

MRS. KRAMER

[*Opens the door of the stove and fastens it*

again. As she draws herself up, she sighs.] Ah, yes, yes! Oh, dear, dear, dear!

MICHALINE

Do as I do, mother. Divert your mind! — There's nothing new! it's the same old story. Arnold's not going to change in that respect either.

MRS. KRAMER

[*Sits down at the table, supports her head with her hand and sighs.*] Oh, you don't understand the boy — none of you! You don't understand him! And as for father — he'll be the ruin of him.

MICHALINE

Oh, I don't think it right for you to make such an assertion. You're bitterly unjust. Papa does his very best by Arnold. He's tried every way. If you and Arnold fail to recognise that, mother — why, so much the worse.

MRS. KRAMER

You're your father's daughter; I know that very well.

MICHALINE

Yes, I'm your daughter and father's.

MRS. KRAMER

No, you're father's daughter much more than mine. Because if you were more my daughter, you wouldn't always be taking sides with father.

MICHALINE

Mother, we'd better not excite ourselves by such talk.— One tries merely to exercise simple justice and at once one is told: You take sides with so and

so or so and so.— You make life pretty difficult, you can believe me.

MRS. KRAMER

I side with my boy and there's an end to it! You can all of you do what you please.

MICHALINE

I don't see how one can bear to say a thing like that.

MRS. KRAMER

Michaline, you're not a woman at all; that's it! You're not like a woman! You talk like a man! You think like a man! What comfort can a woman get of such a daughter?

MICHALINE

[*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Well, mother, if that's really true . . . ! I don't suppose I'll be able to alter that either.

MRS. KRAMER

You can alter it, only you don't want to!

MICHALINE

Mama . . . I'm afraid it's time for me to go. And do, mother, be sensible and don't excite yourself. You don't really mean what you've just been saying.

MRS. KRAMER

As truly as that I'm standing here — every syllable!

MICHALINE

Then I'm very sorry for us all, mother.

MRS. KRAMER

The truth is we all suffer under papa.

MICHALINE

Do me a favour, mother, once and for all: I have never suffered under papa and I do not suffer under him now. I honour father as you very well know! And it would be the damndest lie . . .

MRS. KRAMER

I'm ashamed of the way you swear, Michaline.

MICHALINE

. . . if I were to say that I am suffering under him. There isn't any human being in the world to whom I am so boundlessly grateful.

MRS. KRAMER

Not to me either?

MICHALINE

No. I'm sorry. What father really is and what he is to me seems clearer to strangers than to you — I mean you and Arnold, mother. That's just the fatality of it. Those who ought to be closest to papa are most alien to him. He'd be lost among you alone.

MRS. KRAMER

As if I didn't remember how often you cried when father . . .

MICHALINE

That's true. I cried often. He did hurt me at times. But I always had to admit to myself finally that, though he hurt me, he was never un-

just, and that I always learned something in the process.

MRS. KRAMER

Whether you learned anything or not, father has never helped you to be happy. If you had a comfortable home of your own, a husband and children . . . and all that . . .

MICHALINE

Father didn't rob me of that!

MRS. KRAMER

And now you work yourself sick just as papa does and nothing comes of it except discontent and worry.

MICHALINE

Oh, mother, when I hear such talk I always feel so shut in! So caged and throttled and depressed, you would scarcely believe it! [*With bitter sadness.*] If Arnold weren't just — Arnold, how grateful would he be to father!

MRS. KRAMER

Why, he whipped the boy when he was fifteen!

MICHALINE

I don't doubt that father can be hard, and that he lost control of himself at times. I neither palliate nor excuse. But I ask you, mother, whether on that occasion Arnold hadn't provoked father's anger! He forged his signature that time!

MRS. KRAMER

In the terror of his soul! Because he was so frightened of papa!

MICHALINE

No, mother, that doesn't quite explain it all.

MRS. KRAMER

The boy is wretched; he isn't well; he's been sickly from the beginning.

MICHALINE

That may be true. He must resign himself and settle that with his own soul. That's the fate of all men, mother. To keep a grip on oneself and fight one's way through to something higher — that's what everybody has had to do. He has the best example of that in father.— By the way, mother, here are twenty marks; I can't spare more this month. I've had to pay the bill for paint; that alone mounted up to twenty-three marks. I must have a winter hat, too. I've had to trust two pupils for their tuition.

MRS. KRAMER

That's it. You work yourself to death for those women and then they cheat you of your little earnings.

MICHALINE

No, mother, there's no question of cheating at all. One is a poor, hunch-backed girl without means, and Miss Schäffer saves the fees from her food. [*The outer door-bell rings.*] The bell just rang; who could it be?

MRS. KRAMER

I don't know. I'll just blow out the lamp.— I wish I were lying in my grave.

[BERTHA *goes through the room.*

MICHALINE

Ask what name first, Bertha.

MRS. KRAMER

Is Mr. Arnold still asleep?

BERTHA

He didn't stop to lie down at all.

[BERTHA *exit.*

MICHALINE

But who do you think it can be, mama?

[BERTHA *returns.*

BERTHA

A painter named Lachmann and his wife. He used to study with the professor.

MICHALINE

Papa is not a professor. You know that he wants to be called simply Mr. Kramer.

[MICHALINE *goes out into the hall.*

MRS. KRAMER

Just wait a bit! I just want to straighten up here a little. Hurry, Bertha! Then I'll look in later. [*She and* BERTHA *leave the room, carrying dishes with them.*]

The sounds of greeting are heard from the outer hall. Thereupon appear the painter ERNEST LACHMANN, *his wife* ALWINE, *and finally* MICHALINE. LACHMANN *wears a top-hat and overcoat and carries a stick;* MRS. LACHMANN *wears a dark, small hat with feathers, a feather boa, etc. The clothes of both show signs of wear.*

MICHALINE

Where do you come from, and what are you doing here?

LACHMANN

[*Introducing the two women.*] Alwine: Michaline Kramer.

MRS. LACHMANN

[*Thoroughly surprised.*] Well! Is it possible? So that's you!

MICHALINE

Does that surprise you so greatly?

MRS. LACHMANN

Yes! If I'm to be honest. A little bit, anyhow. I had such a different idea of you.

MICHALINE

Did you think I was even older and more wrinkled than I really am?

MRS. LACHMANN

[*Immediately.*] No, quite the contrary, to tell you the truth.

[MICHALINE *and* LACHMANN *laugh with amusement.*

LACHMANN

I foresee great things. You're making a fine start.

MRS. LACHMANN

Why? What did I do again?

LACHMANN

How is your father, Michaline?

MICHALINE

Well. He is about as usual. I doubt whether you'll find him at all changed.— But please, sit down! Won't you, please, Mrs. Lachmann? And you will pardon us, won't you? Everything is still a bit upset here. [*They all sit down at the table.*] Do you smoke? [*She offers* LACHMANN *cigarettes.*] Or did you drop the habit? Do forgive me; I've been puffing away! I know it isn't womanly, but the realisation came to me too late. I dare say you don't smoke? No? And doesn't it annoy you, either?

MRS. LACHMANN

[*Shakes her head.*] Ernest sucks away at something all day at home.

LACHMANN

[*Taking a cigarette from* MICHALINE'S *case.*] Thank you.— You don't understand that.

MRS. LACHMANN

What is there about it to understand?

LACHMANN

A great deal, dear Alwine.

MRS. LACHMANN

How's that? I don't see.

MICHALINE

It's much easier to talk freely if one smokes.

MRS. LACHMANN

Then it's a mighty good thing I don't smoke. According to my husband I chatter too much as it is.

LACHMANN

It all depends on *what* one says.

MRS. LACHMANN

Well, you talk nonsense yourself sometimes, dear Ernest.

LACHMANN

[*Changing the subject violently.*] Yes . . . what is it I wanted to say! . . . Oh, yes: So your father is well; I'm glad of that.

MICHALINE

Yes; as I said before: He is as usual. By and large, anyhow. I suppose you've come here to see your mother?

MRS. LACHMANN

[*Talkatively.*] What he wanted to do was to look around here a bit — if there wasn't something or other to be done here. There's absolutely no chance in Berlin any longer. Are things just as dull here, do you think?

MICHALINE

In what respect? I don't know. . . . Just what do you mean?

MRS. LACHMANN

Well, I thought you'd established a school. Doesn't that pay you pretty well?

LACHMANN

Look here! Tell me when you're through! Will you?

MICHALINE

My school? I earn something. Oh, yes. Not

much. But something, no doubt; I get along. [*To* Lachmann.] Do you intend to offer me competition?

Mrs. Lachmann

Why, of course not! Gracious! What do you think? My husband's crazy about you, I can tell you. My husband wouldn't never do that. But a man's got to do something, you know. People have to eat and drink, don't they? My husband . . .

Lachmann

My husband; I am not *your* husband. That expression always makes me nervous.

Mrs. Lachmann

Did you ever hear the like of that?

Lachmann

Ernest is my name, Alwine. Try to remember that. You may say my coal shovel or my coffee strainer or my false hair. But slavery is abolished.

Mrs. Lachmann

But hubby . . .

Lachmann

That sounds like a dog's name.

Mrs. Lachmann

Now you see how it is. That's the kind of husband a woman has. Do me one favour — don't marry at any price! Old maids are a sight better off.

[Michaline *laughs heartily.*

LACHMANN

Alwine, that ends it! You'll kindly take your boa and wait somewhere else for me. Do you understand? For otherwise my coming here will be quite futile! Just take your boa, that most tasteful favourite adornment of yours. Then have the kindness either to ride out to mother's or wait in the restaurant across the way. I'll even come for you.

MRS. LACHMANN

Did you ever? That's the way a wife's treated, you see. I don't hardly say a word, but what — Lord, Lord!

LACHMANN

It isn't necessary for you to say anything. There's nothing but folly at the bottom of it, anyhow.

MRS. LACHMANN

I'm not as clever as you, to be sure.

LACHMANN

Agreed! I agree with everything you're about to say!

MICHALINE

But please, Mrs. Lachmann, won't you stay?

MRS. LACHMANN

For heaven's sake! What are you thinking of! But you needn't feel a bit sorry for me. He'll come running after me again. Good-bye.— There's a pastry-cook at the corner across the street. You understand, hubby? That's where you report.

[*Exit, accompanied by* MICHALINE.

LACHMANN

But don't eat thirteen pieces of pastry again.

[MICHALINE *returns.*

MICHALINE

Old maids are a sight better off! She really is a little direct.

LACHMANN

She babbles like a brook.

MICHALINE

[*Sitting down again.*] You do make short work with her, though. Not every woman would endure that, Lachmann.

LACHMANN

Michaline, she presses me hard. I have no choice.— She wanted to make your acquaintance; otherwise I wouldn't have brought her with me.— How are you, anyhow?

MICHALINE

Well, thank you. And you?

LACHMANN

Oh, so, so. Not brilliant.

MICHALINE

I feel the same way.— You're getting grey about the temples, too.

LACHMANN

The donkey reveals itself more and more.

[*Both laugh.*

MICHALINE

And so you think of settling down here?

LACHMANN

I never dreamed of such a thing. She fancies all kinds of things, bubbles over with them, and then asserts roundly that I had expressed myself to the same purpose. [*Pause.*] How's your brother?

MICHALINE

Well, thank you.

LACHMANN

Does he work steadily at his painting?

MICHALINE

On the contrary.

LACHMANN

What else does he do?

MICHALINE

He dawdles about, of course. He wastes his time. What else do you think?

LACHMANN

Why didn't he stay in Munich? He succeeded in doing something there now and then.

MICHALINE

Do you still expect anything of Arnold?

LACHMANN

Why do you ask? I don't quite understand. I thought that was pretty well settled.

MICHALINE

Well, if he has talent . . . then he isn't worthy of it.— By the way, to change the subject: Father has asked after you repeatedly. He will be glad

to see you again. And leaving myself quite out of the question, of course, I'm very glad, for father's sake, that you came over again. He is really in need of some intellectual refreshment.

LACHMANN

And so am I. Probably more than he is. And — leaving you out of the question once more — what exclusively drew me here — everything else could well have waited — was the wish to be with your father once again. To be sure I'd like to have a look at his picture too.

MICHALINE

Who told you anything about the picture?

LACHMANN

There's a report that the public gallery has bought it.

MICHALINE

The director of the gallery was here, but I don't know whether he bought it. Father is excessively reticent and conscientious. I hardly think so. I think he'll want to finish it entirely first.

LACHMANN

You know the picture? Of course you do.

MICHALINE

It's two years ago that I saw it. I can't quite judge it any longer. Papa has been at work on it a very long time.

[*Pause.*]

LACHMANN

Do you think he will show it to me? I don't

know why, but I have a presentiment that it is something extraordinary. I can't help it: I have great faith in it. I have known many men, but no other of whose inner life one has so deep a wish to see a bit. And anyhow — if I haven't quite gone under artistically — and really, I still have some grip on myself — I owe it primarily to your father alone. The things he said to a fellow, and the way he said them — no one can forget. There isn't another teacher like him. I always say that any one whom your father has once influenced can never become quite shallow again.

MICHALINE

That's what I always think, Lachmann; just that.

LACHMANN

He stirs one up to the very depths. One learns a good many things from different men; I've known some excellent ones. But your father always seemed to loom up behind them and then not one could hold his own any longer. He ploughed up the very souls of us, his pupils, he turned us inside out, made us over again — thoroughly. He knocked all the wretched philistinism out of one. A man can feed on his teaching for a lifetime. For instance, to any one who has known his unflaggingly loyal seriousness in the service of art, the outside world seems at first entirely frivolous . . .

MICHALINE

Well, and you see, father's deep seriousness . . . you say yourself that you feel it in your very blood; it's become my best possession: his serious-

ness has made an impression on the shallowest donkeys, but not on Arnold. He doesn't profit by it. [*She has arisen during her last words.*] I must correct my pupils' work now, Lachmann. You're laughing because you think my own ability is pretty small.

LACHMANN

You're your father's daughter, after all. But it's something I was always shy of. I imagine it must be terribly bleak to bother oneself with women who want to paint.

MICHALINE

Oh, there's something to be accomplished. They make the most honest efforts. That in itself is a reconciling element. What more do you want? Whether in the end they really achieve something — ? The striving in itself is an achievement. And, beyond that, I feel the way father does — it amuses me to influence people. Then, too, one grows young again in one's pupils. And, as time goes on, that's rather necessary. [*She opens the door and calls out into the rear of the apartment.*] Good-bye, mama, we're going now.

ARNOLD'S

[*Voice; mocking her.*] Good-bye, mama, we're going now.

LACHMANN

Why, who was that?

MICHALINE

Arnold. He won't stop that kind of thing. There's no good dwelling on it. Come on!

[LACHMANN *and* MICHALINE *leave.*

ARNOLD *enters. He is a homely fellow with black, fiery eyes behind spectacles, dark hair and indications of a beard. His figure is slightly bowed and slightly deformed. The colour of his face is a dirty pale. He is dressed only in coat, trowsers and bedroom slippers. He shuffles up to the mirror, takes off his spectacles and regards the impurities in his skin, making faces the while. His whole appearance is slovenly.*

[MICHALINE *returns.*

MICHALINE

[*Taken by surprise.*] Why, Arnold! — I forgot my umbrella.— By the way, do you know that Lachmann is here?

ARNOLD

[*With gestures warding off her interference and demanding silence.*] That worthy is in the highest degree indifferent to me.

MICHALINE

Will you kindly tell me what Lachmann has done to you?

ARNOLD

. . .

MICHALINE

[*Shrugging her shoulders, but calmly.*] Don't forget to meet father at eleven.

[ARNOLD *puts his fingers into both ears.*

MICHALINE

Look here, Arnold, do you think that decent?

ARNOLD

Yes.— You'd better lend me a mark.

MICHALINE

Surely I can lend it to you. Why not? Only in the end I have to reproach myself that I . . .

ARNOLD

Run along! Take to your heels, Michaline! I know your miserliness.

[MICHALINE *is about to answer, shrugs her shoulders instead and leaves the room.*

[ARNOLD *shuffles up to the breakfast table, nibbles a bit of sugar and glances carelessly at his mother who has just entered. Thereupon he returns to the mirror.*

MRS. KRAMER

[*Dries her hands on her apron and sits down on a chair, sighing heavily and anxiously.*] Oh, dearie me! Yes, yes.

ARNOLD

[*Turns around, pushes his spectacles forward on his nose, draws up his shoulders, and assumes a comical attitude in keeping with his remarks.*] Mother, don't I look like a marabout?

MRS. KRAMER

Oh, Arnold, I don't feel a bit like fooling. I can't laugh at your nonsense.— Who unlocked the door for you last night?

ARNOLD

[*Approaching her and still keeping the mock-*

gravity of the animal he is imitating.] Father.

Mrs. Kramer

He went down all the three flights of stairs?

Arnold

[*Still staring comically through his spectacles.*] Yes.

Mrs. Kramer

No, really, Arnold, the way you act is repulsive! Do please stop your nonsense. Can't you be serious for once? Be sensible! Tell me what papa said.

Arnold

Everything's repulsive to you people. Well, you're all of you pretty repulsive to me now and then.

Mrs. Kramer

Was father very angry when he opened the door for you?

[Arnold, *absent-minded, does not answer.*

Mrs. Kramer

What did he say to you?

Arnold

Nothing.

Mrs. Kramer

[*Approaching him with tenderness.*] Arnold, try to do better. Try for the love of me. Lead a different kind of life!

Arnold

How do I live?

MRS. KRAMER

Dissolutely! Idly! Whole nights long you're out of the house! You gad about . . . O Lordy, Lord. You're leading a horrible life, Arnold!

ARNOLD

Don't take on so frightfully, mother. I'd like to know where you get your information.

MRS. KRAMER

It's very nice, I must say, the way you treat your mother.

ARNOLD

Then have the kindness to leave me in peace! The whole crowd of you is always yelping at me! It's enough, actually, to drive any one crazy.

MRS. KRAMER

You call that yelping at you, Arnold, when we come to you for your own sake? Isn't your own mother to plead with you? Arnold, Arnold, you're sinning and blaspheming!

ARNOLD

Mother, all that doesn't do me any good! The eternal whining can't help me. And, anyhow, I have a horrible headache! Let me have a bit of money of my own and I'll manage to get along without you . . .

MRS. KRAMER

Is that so? You want a chance to go to the dogs entirely?

[*Pause.*]

ARNOLD

[*At the table, picks up a roll.*] Supposed to be a roll? The thing's hard as a rock!

MRS. KRAMER

Get up earlier and you'll find them fresher.

ARNOLD

[*Yawning.*] The day's disgustingly long and empty enough as it is.

MRS. KRAMER

With your carrying on it's no wonder you feel that way. Take a decent night's rest and you'll be refreshed through the day.—Arnold, I won't let you go this way to-day! Oh, yes, you can fly up at me if you want to, I know that! But I can't bear to see things going on this way any longer. [ARNOLD *has sat down by the table and she pours him a cupful of coffee.*] You can make faces all you want to; I'm up to your tricks. There's something wrong with you. I ought to know you. There's something that weighs on you and worries you. D'you think I haven't heard you sigh! You do nothing but sigh all the time. You don't seem to realise it yourself any longer!

ARNOLD

Good Lord, this eternal spying! The devil, I say! The number of times a fellow sneezes and things like that; the number of times a fellow spits and sighs and so forth! It's enough to make one want to jump out at the windows!

MRS. KRAMER

You can say what you please. I care little

about that. I know what I know and that's all about it. Something or other, Arnold, is weighing you down. I know that from your very restlessness. Of course, you always were a little restless, but not the way you are now. I know that!

ARNOLD

[*Beats his fist on the table.*] Mother, leave me in peace, d'you understand? — Otherwise you'll drive me out into the street entirely — What business is it of yours *how* I carry on, mother? I'm not a child any longer and what I don't want to tell, I won't. I'm sick of your nagging! I've been pestered by you all long enough. Your help I don't want either. You can't help me, I tell you. The most you can do is to cry: Help! Murder!

MRS. KRAMER

[*Dissolved in tears.*] Arnold, did you do something awful? Merciful God! Arnold, for God's sake, what have you done?

ARNOLD

Murdered an old Jew, mama.

MRS. KRAMER

Don't jeer, Arnold. Don't mock me! Tell me, if you've done something. I know very well that you're not really bad, but sometimes you're so full of hate and so hasty. And when you act in rage and haste . . . who knows what misfortune you'll be guilty of yet.

ARNOLD

Mama, mama! Calm yourself! I haven't murdered an old Jew. I haven't even sold a forged

pawn-ticket, although I needed a bit of money pretty badly.

MRS. KRAMER

I stick to my point: You're keeping something from us! Why, you can't look into any one's eyes! You always did have something shrinking and secretive about you, but now, Arnold — you don't notice it yourself, of course — now you act as if you were branded. You're drinking. You couldn't bear the sight of beer formerly. Now you drink to deaden your soul, Arnold!

ARNOLD

[*Has been standing at the window and drumming on the panes.*] Branded! Branded! And what else, I'd like to know? — Say what you please, for all I care.— I'm branded, you're quite right there. But in that respect, at least, it seems to me that I'm not to blame.

MRS. KRAMER

You always thrust about you and hit out at us and try to stab, and sometimes you stab deep — to our very hearts. Surely, we've done our best by you. That you grew up to be what you are now . . . One has to bear that, as God wills it.

ARNOLD

Very well! Then kindly go ahead and bear it! [*Pause.*]

MRS. KRAMER

Arnold, listen to me! Don't harden yourself! Do tell me what the trouble is. We live in fear and trembling day and night. You don't know how papa tosses about at night. And I haven't

slept either these many days. Take this burden from us that drags us down, my boy. Maybe you can do it by one frank word. You're frail, I know that well . . .

ARNOLD

Oh, mother, let the whole business be. Otherwise I'll sleep in my studio after this — in my hayloft, I should have said. I'd rather freeze stiff. There *is* something! Very well. I don't deny that at all. But do you want me to raise a row on that account? That would only make the whole business still worse.

MRS. KRAMER

Arnold, you are . . . Is it still the same thing? Weeks ago you betrayed yourself once! Then you tried to hush it all up.— Is it still the affair with that girl, Arnold?

ARNOLD

Mother, are you quite crazy?

MRS. KRAMER

My boy, don't inflict that misery on us! Don't entangle yourself in love affairs. If you fasten your heart to a creature like that, you'll be dragged through all the slime on earth. I know how great the temptation is here. You find these pitfalls here wherever you set your foot. You hear that wild rabble when you pass. And the police tolerate all that! — And if you don't listen to your mother's warning, you'll come to harm some day. There are crimes committed daily in those places.

ARNOLD

Just let any one try to touch me, mother, that's

all. [*With a gesture toward his back pocket.*] I've provided myself against that contingency.

MRS. KRAMER

What do you mean by that?

ARNOLD

I mean that I'm prepared for anything. There are ways and means to be had nowadays, thank heaven.

MRS. KRAMER

Doesn't the very sight and sound of it all disgust you — the strumming on the piano, the red lanterns, the whole vile, repulsive atmosphere! Arnold, if I had to believe that you pass your nights there . . . in such holes, I mean . . . in such vile resorts . . . then I'd rather die and be out of it.

ARNOLD

Oh, mother, I wish the day were over. You make me feel confused; my ears just buzz. I've got to keep a firm hold on myself not to fly up the chimney. I'll buy a knapsack and drag you all around with me.

MRS. KRAMER

Very well. But I tell you this one thing. You won't leave this house to-night.

ARNOLD

No? Then I'll leave it this minute.

MRS. KRAMER

You go to meet papa at eleven and then come back here.

ARNOLD

I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing! Good heavens!

MRS. KRAMER

Where do you intend to go then?

ARNOLD

I don't know yet.

MRS. KRAMER

So you don't want to come home to dinner?

ARNOLD

With your faces around the table? No. And anyhow I don't eat anything.

MRS. KRAMER

And to-night you mean to stay out again?

ARNOLD

I'll come and go exactly as I please.

MRS. KRAMER

Very well, my son. In that case it's all over between us. And, besides, I'll track you down! I won't rest before I do; depend upon it! And if I find out that it's a wench like that, I swear to you and God is my witness — I'll turn her over to the police.

ARNOLD

Well, mother, you'd better not do that.

MRS. KRAMER

I'll tell father. On the contrary. And father, he'll know how to bring you to reason. You just let him find this out: he'll be beside himself.

ARNOLD

All I have to say is: You'd better not. When father thunders out his moral preachments all I do, as you know, is to put my fingers in my ears. It doesn't affect me in the slightest. Good Lord! Anyhow, you've all grown to be so strange to me . . . How did I get here — tell me that!

MRS. KRAMER

Is that . . . ?

ARNOLD

How? How? Where am I when I'm here, mother? Michaline, father, you — what do you want of me? What have you to do with me? How, when all's said and done, do you concern me?

MRS. KRAMER

How? What?

ARNOLD

Yes, what is it? What do you want of me?

MRS. KRAMER

What shocking talk that is.

ARNOLD

Oh, yes, shocking; I'll admit that. But true, mother, true! No lying about that. You can't help me, I tell you. And if, some day, you cut up too rough for me, then, maybe, something will happen, mama . . . something, some day, that'll leave you all with foolish faces! — That'll put an end to all this trouble.

THE SECOND ACT

The studio of MICHAEL KRAMER *in the College of Art. The studio proper is shut off from the room visible to the spectator by drawn hangings of grey. To the right of the hangings a door which is led up to by several steps. Also to the right but farther forward an old leather sofa with a covered table before it. To the left one-half of a great studio window, of which the other half is hidden by the hangings. Beneath this window a small table on which are lying etching tools and an unfinished plate. On the table in front of the sofa writing utensils, paper, an old candle-stick with candle, etc. On the wall are hanging plaster casts: An arm, a foot, a female bust, as well as the death mask of Beethoven. All these casts have a bluish-grey hue. Emerging from behind the hangings which reach to only about two-thirds the height of the room, the top of a great easel is visible.— Above the table by the sofa a gas-pipe.— Two simple cane chairs complete the furnishing of the room. Cleanliness and the nicest order predominate.* MICHAEL KRAMER *is sitting on the sofa and, heavily groaning, is signing a number of documents for which* KRAUSE, *the head janitor, is waiting, cap in hand.* KRAUSE *is broad and comfortably stout.* KRAMER *is a*

bearded man over fifty, with many white splotches in his black beard and hair. His shoulders are high, his neck is bent forward as if under a yoke. His eyes lie deep in their sockets; they are dark, glowing and at the same time restless. He has long arms and legs; his gait is ungraceful, with long steps. His face is pale and thought-worn. He has a habit of groaning. In his speech there is an unconscious fierceness: He keeps the points of his ugly, highly polished shoes far outward. His garb consists of a long black coat, black waistcoat, black trowsers, old-fashioned turn-down collar, topshirt and small, black string-tie, all scrupulously laundered and kept. He has taken off his cuffs and placed them on the window-sill. All in all, his appearance is odd, distinguished, and at first glance repellent rather than attractive. LACHMANN *is standing by the window at the left, his back turned to the room. He is waiting and looking out.*

KRAMER

[*To* LACHMANN.] You see, we worry along just as we used to. [*To* KRAUSE.] So. Give my best regards to the director. [*He rises, puts the documents together and hands them to* KRAUSE. *Then he sets about restoring the disturbed order of his little table.*] You're looking at my poplars, eh?

LACHMANN

[*Who has been looking at the copper-plate, is slightly startled and draws himself up.*] I beg your pardon.

KRAUSE

Good mornin', Mr. Kramer. Good mornin', Mr. Lachmann.

LACHMANN

Good morning, Mr. Krause.

KRAMER

Good-bye.

[KRAUSE *exit.*

KRAMER

Five years ago Böcklin visited me. He stood by that very window, I tell you . . . and he couldn't look enough.

LACHMANN

The poplars are really remarkably beautiful. Years ago, when I first came here, they used to impress me greatly. The rows stand there with so much dignity, that the grove has almost something of a temple about it.

KRAMER

That's deceptive, I tell you.

LACHMANN

Oh, but only partly so.— I didn't know, though, that Böcklin was ever here.

KRAMER

At that time they had the notion that he was to provide the grand entrance over there, in the Museum of the province, with mural paintings. In the end one of their professors did it. Ah, I tell you, there's a great deal of sinning done about such things.

LACHMANN

Oh, it's boundless!

KRAMER

But let me tell you this: It was always so. Only one feels especially sorry nowadays. What treasures the present could lay up for the future with the huge expenditure and display that are going on in the country to-day. As it is, the best men must stand aside. [LACHMANN *has picked up the proof of an etching and* KRAMER *continues to speak, referring to it.*] That's a page for my decorative work. But the plate wasn't properly prepared. The whole thing doesn't suit me yet. I must get a better insight first.

LACHMANN

I tried my hand at etching too, once, but I soon gave it up again.

KRAMER

What have you been working at, Lachmann?

LACHMANN

Portraits and landscapes, one thing and another. Not much has come of it, God help me!

KRAMER

Always work, work, work, Lachmann. I tell you, we must work, Lachmann. Or the dry rot'll eat into our living bodies. Look at a life like Böcklin's. The work that man does. But something's accomplished in such a life. Not only what he paints; the whole man! I tell you — work is life, Lachmann.

LACHMANN

I'm thoroughly conscious of that, too.

KRAMER

I'm a wretched creature without my work. In my work I become something.

LACHMANN

With me, unfortunately, the time slips by and I can't get down to any real work.

KRAMER

Why so? Tell me that!

LACHMANN

Because I have other things to do — work which is no work at all.

KRAMER

How am I to understand that, eh?

LACHMANN

I used to be a painter and nothing else. Nowadays I'm forced to sling copy.

KRAMER

What does that mean?

LACHMANN

I write for the papers.

KRAMER

Is that so?

LACHMANN

In other words, Mr. Kramer, I use most of my precious time to earn a little dry bread by writing. There isn't enough to be made for butter too. When a man has a wife and child . . .

KRAMER

A man ought to have a family, Lachmann.

That's quite right and quite befitting. And as for your scribbling: Write from your conscience! You have a sense for the genuine in art. You can advance the cause not a little.

LACHMANN

But it's only a kind of Sisyphus labour. No change takes place in the public taste. There you drag up your stone daily . . .

KRAMER

Tell me, what would we be without that?

LACHMANN

And after all, it's a sacrifice of one's very self. Then, too, if one fails to make an impression by one's real work, this . . .

KRAMER

I tell you, it doesn't matter a jot. If my son had become a cobbler and did his duty in that station, I'd honour him, I tell you, just as much. Have you any children?

LACHMANN

One. A son.

KRAMER

Then you've accomplished something, I tell you. What better thing can a man do? Your articles must almost write themselves, eh?

LACHMANN

I can hardly say that, Mr. Kramer.

KRAMER

Duties, duties — they're the main thing. That's what makes a man into a man, I tell you. To real-

ise the nature of life in all its seriousness — that's it. When you've done that, you can rise above it.

LACHMANN

Often enough that's not easy, though.

KRAMER

That ought to be hard, I tell you. It's meant to bring out the manhood in us. A fellow can show, in that struggle, what he's made of. These vagabonds of to-day think the whole world is a whore's bed! A man must recognise duties, I tell you.

LACHMANN

But surely the duties he owes himself, too.

KRAMER

You're right. Yes, there's no doubt. And a man who recognises the duties he owes himself, will not fail to recognise those he owes to others. How old is your son?

LACHMANN

Three years old, Mr. Kramer.

KRAMER

I tell you, that time when my boy was born . . . I'd set my heart on a son . . . and I waited fourteen long years till my wife gave birth to one. I tell you, I trembled on that day. And I wrapped up the man-child, I tell you, and I took him into my chamber and locked the door, and it was like a temple, Lachmann. I placed him there before God. You fellows don't know what it is to have a son. I knew it, by the Eternal! And I thought to myself: Not I, but you! Not I, I

thought to myself, you — perhaps! — [*Bitterly.*] My son is a good for nothing, Lachmann! But I tell you I would do the same thing over again.

LACHMANN

Surely, Mr. Kramer, he isn't that.

KRAMER

[*Vehemently and grimly.*] I tell you: Let that be! He's a vagabond and nothing else. But let's not talk about it any more.— And I'll tell you something, Lachmann: That's the worm that eats into my life, gnaws at my marrow! But let's say no more.

LACHMANN

Surely all that will change.

KRAMER

[*Vehemently, bitterly and fiercely.*] It will not change! It will not change! There's not a sound fibre in his being! The boy's nature is poisoned at the root. A bad fellow he is; a vulgar soul. That can't change; that doesn't change. I tell you, I can forgive anything, but I can't forgive the fundamentally ignoble. A vulgar soul revolts me, and that's what he has, I tell you, a vulgar soul — cowardly and low. It revolts me. [*He goes to a simple, grey wall closet.*] And, oh, I tell you, the scamp has gifts! It's enough to make one want to tear one's hair out! Where we have to toil and torment ourselves days and nights — the finished product seems to fall down to him from heaven. Look here! See his sketches and studies! Isn't it tragic? He has but to sit down to accomplish something. Whatever he does has

quality and solidity. Look at the firmness, the perfection of it! One could shed bitter tears. [*He strides up and down in the foreground repeatedly while* LACHMANN *looks through the sketches and studies. A knocking at the door is heard.*] Come in!

[MICHALINE *enters in street costume.*

MICHALINE

Father, I've come for Lachmann.

KRAMER

[*Looking over his spectacles.*] Eh? And you leave your school in the lurch?

MICHALINE

I've just been correcting.— Lachmann, I've just met your wife. She said she didn't want to grow fast to the restaurant, so she went out to your mother.

KRAMER

Why didn't you bring her with you?

LACHMANN

Her social presentableness isn't exactly of the . . .

KRAMER

Nonsense! What's that mean? Don't understand that.

MICHALINE

[*Has stepped up behind* LACHMANN *and looks at the study which he is just scrutinising.*] I painted that mill, too, once.

KRAMER

Hm. But differently.

MICHALINE

It was a different view of it.

KRAMER

Yes, yes, I am of the same view.

[LACHMANN *laughs.*

MICHALINE

Father, that doesn't hit me in the least. If one does the very best that is in one — more than that can't be required.

KRAMER

Girl, you know how things are.

MICHALINE

To be sure, I know. I know very well indeed. Your opinion of me is of the smallest.

KRAMER

Listen, how do you infer that? If Arnold were half as industrious as you are and half as well provided in the matter of brains — the boy would be all of a man. In those respects he simply can't be compared with you. But beyond that — the spark — you haven't it. Every human being should be quite clear about himself. You are that and that is your advantage. For that reason one can speak seriously with you. You've made the best of yourself that can be made by industry and tenacity of purpose and character, and with that you may be satisfied. [*He consults his watch.*] Ten o'clock.— Lachmann, there's no more chance for work this morning. I'm glad that you've come. I'll be glad to go with you later; we could even go and drink a glass of beer somewhere. I must

first look in at my class once more and at eleven I have an appointment with my son.

MICHALINE

[*Earnestly.*] Father, aren't you going to show your picture to Lachmann?

KRAMER

[*Turning swiftly.*] No, Michaline! What made you think of it?

MICHALINE

It's quite simple. He heard of it and told me he would like to see it.

KRAMER

Don't bother me with such things. There they all come and want to see my picture. Paint your own pictures, as many as you please! I can't show it to you, Lachmann.

LACHMANN

Mr. Kramer, I didn't mean to be insistent . . .

KRAMER

This is getting too much for me, too much! I've been living with this picture for seven years. Michaline has seen it just once—the boy never asked after it—now Director Müring comes along! No, it's getting too much for me. That won't do, I tell you; that can't be done. Suppose you have a mistress, and everybody wants to get into bed with her . . . a sty is the result, no more, no less. What ardour will you have left?—Lachmann, it isn't possible! I don't like it.

MICHALINE

I don't understand how your illustration applies. That kind of reticence strikes me as weakness.

KRAMER

Think of it as you please! On the other hand, mark well what I say: The original, the genuine, the deep and strong in art grows only in a hermitage — is born only in utter solitude. The artist is always the true hermit. So! And now go and bother me no more.

MICHALINE

It's a pity, father. I'm very sorry. If you barricade yourself in that way, even keep Lachmann out . . . I'm surprised. You deny yourself any possible stimulus. And in addition, if you were to be quite frank you would admit that Director Müring's visit the other day did really refresh you. You were quite jolly afterward.

KRAMER

There's nothing to it. It isn't anything yet. I tell you, don't make me unhappy. You must have something to show before you show it. Do you think it's a jest? I tell you, if a man has the impudence to want to paint that Man with the Crown of Thorns — he needs a lifetime to do it, I tell you. And not a life, I tell you, of revelry or noise, but lonely hours, lonely days, lonely years, I tell you. The artist must be alone with his sorrow and with his God. He must sanctify himself daily, I tell you! Nothing low or mean must be about him or within him! Then, I tell you, the Holy Ghost may come — when a man digs and

strives in his solitude. Something may come to him then; the work begins to take shape, I tell you, and one feels it. You rest in the Eternal, I tell you, and it lies before you in quietness and beauty. It comes to you without your knowing. You see the Saviour then and you feel him. But when once the doors begin to slam, Lachmann, then you see him no longer, you feel him no longer. He is gone, I tell you, gone far away.

LACHMANN

I assure you, Mr. Kramer, I'm truly sorry I ever . . .

KRAMER

There's nothing to feel sorry about, I tell you. In that respect each man must go his own way. The place on which you stand is holy ground — that's what you must say to yourself at your work. You others: Out with you! Away with you! There is space enough in the world for your vanity fair. Art is religion. If thou prayest, go into thy secret chamber. Moneychangers and chafferers — out from the temple!

[*He turns the key in the entrance door.*

MICHALINE

We are hardly moneychangers and chafferers.

KRAMER

You are not. God forbid. But for all that and all that! It's getting too much for me. I understand it very well in Lachmann. He wants to see what's behind it all. He's had to swallow big words all this time; he wants to see something tangible at last. There's nothing behind all the

talk, I tell you. There's nothing in the old fellow. Sometimes he gets a glimpse, a hint — then he takes a scalpel and scratches it all off again. [*A knocking is heard.*] Some one is knocking. Perhaps later, another time, Lachmann! Come in! — Nothing more to be done this morning, anyhow.— D'you hear? Some one has knocked — Come in!

MICHALINE

But you locked the door, father.

KRAMER

I? When?

MICHALINE

Just now; this moment. Just as you were walking through the room.

KRAMER

Open the door and look.

MICHALINE

[*Opens the door slightly.*] A lady, papa.

KRAMER

A model, probably. I need none.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Still without.*] Might I speak to the professor?

MICHALINE

Would you mind telling me your errand?

LIESE BÄNSCH

I'd like to speak to the professor himself.

MICHALINE

What professor do you mean?

KRAMER

Tell her that no professor lives here.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Doesn't Professor Kramer live here?

KRAMER

My name is Kramer. Please come in.

LIESE BÄNSCH *enters, a slender, good-looking young woman, tricked out in the finery of the half-world.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

If you'll permit me, I'll take the liberty.

KRAMER

Go over into the museum, children. That's where you intended to go. I'll expect you at twelve o'clock, Lachmann. [*He. accompanies* LACHMANN *and* MICHALINE *to the door. They leave.*] With whom have I the honour? I'm at your service.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Not without embarrassment, but with a good deal of affectation.*] Professor, I'm Liese Bänsch. I've come to you about a delicate matter.

KRAMER

Please sit down. You are a model?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, no, professor; you're mistaken there. I

don't have to do things like that, thank heaven. No, I'm not a model, professor.

KRAMER

And I, thank heaven, am no professor. Well then, to what am I to attribute the honour of your visit?

LIESE BÄNSCH

You want to know that, right straight off? You don't mind my getting my breath a bit? I just wore myself out, that's a fact. First I really wanted to turn back at the door downstairs, but then I got up my courage.

KRAMER

As you please. Whenever you're ready.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Has taken a seat, coughs, and taps her rouged face under her veil carefully with her handkerchief.*] No, to think that you'd imagine such things of me! It's a good thing that George didn't hear that! My intended, you know, he's in the legal profession, he gets awful angry at the least thing. Do I really look like a model?

KRAMER

[*Drawing a window-shade.*] That depends entirely on who wants to paint you. In certain circumstances any one may be a model. If you imagine, however, that being a model involves a slur, you are guilty of a mistake.

LIESE BÄNSCH

No, you know, I'm really scared. Don't be of-

fended, Mr. Kramer, but I was that frightened of you!

KRAMER

Let's come to the point, however. What brings you here?

LIESE BÄNSCH

I made inquiries about you and they all acted as if you were, well, I don't know what . . . a kind of old Nick or something.

KRAMER

Sincerely obliged. What do you wish? I can give you the assurance that not a hair of your head will be harmed.

LIESE BÄNSCH

And Arnold is so frightened of you, too.

KRAMER

[*Stunned and confused.*] Arnold? What's the meaning of that? What's the fellow's name?

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Rises fearfully.*] Oh, but what eyes you're making, Mr. Kramer! I'd much rather get out of this. Arnold has just that expression in his eyes . . .

KRAMER

Arnold? I don't know the fellow.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Frightened and soothingly.*] Please, Mr. Kramer, I'm not doing anything special. I'd rather let it all go. I've come here without telling my parents . . . it is, as I said, a delicate matter. But I'd rather not speak of it at all.

KRAMER

[*Mastering himself.*] I see you for the first time to-day. You must be so kind as to pardon me therefore. I have a son who is named Arnold. And if you speak of Arnold Kramer . . .

LIESE BÄNSCH

I'm talking about Arnold Kramer, of course!

KRAMER

Very well, then. That doesn't . . . after all . . . surprise me.— And what have you to tell me about him?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, he's so silly and so crazy and he just won't leave me alone.

KRAMER

H-m. Is that so? In what respect? How do you mean?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Why, he makes me a regular laughing-stock. I can't make him behave sensible any way I try.

KRAMER

Is that so? Yes, that is difficult. I can believe that.

LIESE BÄNSCH

I've said to him: Go home, Arnold! Not he! There he squats all night long.

KRAMER

So he was with you last night?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Why, nobody can get him to move an inch.

Papa's tried it, mama's tried it, the gentlemen who are our regular guests have tried it, and I've tried it — but it's no use. There he sits and glowers just the way you do and he won't move or budge till the last guest is gone.

KRAMER

Your father is an innkeeper?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Proprietor of a restaurant.

KRAMER

And who are these gentlemen who are your regular guests?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Assistant Judge Schnabel, architect Ziehn, my intended and several other gentlemen.

KRAMER

And these gentlemen have taken all possible pains, so to speak, to assist him out?

LIESE BÄNSCH

They always call him the marabout. [*Laughing.*] That's a kind of a bird, you know. They think he looks exactly like one. I suppose that's because he's a little deformed . . .

KRAMER

Ah, yes, quite true! — And these gentlemen, I take it, are very jolly?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Awfully! Fit to kill! I should say so! Sometimes it's such a joke — you can hardly imagine it. Enough to make you split your sides, I tell

you. You know Arnold always eats an awful lot of the bread that stands around free in little baskets on the tables. So the other day they took the basket and hung it up from the ceiling right over the place where he always sits. You see? But high enough up so he couldn't reach it from where he was. Everybody in the place just fairly roared.

KRAMER

And so my son sits at the same table with these gentlemen?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, no. My intended wouldn't stand that. He just crouches alone in a corner. But sometimes he takes out a leaf of paper and looks over at the gentlemen so spiteful! And they don't like it, of course. Once one of them got up and went over to him and called him to account.

KRAMER

The gentlemen are of the opinion that he ought not to draw?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Yes, because they're such horrid pictures. People can't allow such things, Mr. Kramer. Why, he once showed me a drawing — a little dog, you know, and a lot of big ones after it. It was so vulgar . . . horrible.

KRAMER

Does Arnold pay for what he eats and drinks?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, yes. I didn't come on that account. He

drinks a couple of glasses of beer, three at most — and if there wasn't nothing more, Mr. Kramer . . .

KRAMER

But you're a sensitive soul, as it were.— If I understand you correctly, then, my son is a kind of — what shall I call it — a kind of butt in your house, but one that one would rather, after all, be rid of. Furthermore, I may probably assume that neither the gentlemen who are your regular guests — most estimable gentlemen, doubtless — nor yet the beer or the bread of your excellent father form the attraction that draws Arnold to you —?

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Coquettishly.*] But it really isn't my fault.

KRAMER

No, no, assuredly not. Why should it be? — But what am I to do in the matter?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Mr. Kramer, I'm that scared of him! He lies in wait for me at all corners and then I can't get rid of him for hours and I just feel sometimes, I do declare, as if he might do me some harm.

KRAMER

H-m. Has he ever uttered a definite threat?

LIESE BÄNSCH

No, not exactly. I can't say that. But anyhow, it's in the way he acts. Sometimes I just get frightened all over when I look at him. When

he sits that way, too, just brooding, . . . for hours and don't say a word, half the night through, just as if he didn't have good sense! And then, too, when he tells his stories. He tells such awful lies! . . . Ugh! And then, you know, he looks at me so . . .

KRAMER

And you're not drawn to him either, eh?

[*A bell rings.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

. . . Oh, heavens alive! Surely not!

KRAMER

Very well. Do you wish to meet Arnold here?

LIESE BÄNSCH

For heaven's sake! On no account!

KRAMER

It is exactly eleven o'clock and the bell has rung. Arnold has been ordered to come here at eleven. [*Opening the door of a small side room and ushering* LIESE BÄNSCH *into it.*] Step in here, please. I can assure you that everything in my power will be done. [LIESE BÄNSCH *disappears.* KRAMER *opens the main door and admits* ARNOLD *in whose feeble countenance defiance, repugnance and fear are struggling.*] Wait in the rear; I'll come to you in a moment. [KRAMER *leads* ARNOLD *behind the hangings, closes them and opens the door of the side room.* LIESE *appears. He lays his finger on his lips and points to the hangings.* LIESE *imitates the gesture. He leads her to the main door through which she slips*

out. KRAMER *remains standing, groans heavily, grasps his forehead and then begins to walk up and down in the foreground. It is evident that it takes all his will power to become master of his profound emotion and to suppress a moan of spiritual pain. After several struggles he controls himself. He opens the hangings and speaks through them.*] Arnold, I simply wanted to talk to you. [ARNOLD *comes slowly forward. He has a gay coloured tie on and betrays other attempts at foppishness.*] Why are you so tricked out?

ARNOLD

How?

KRAMER

I mean your red tie, for instance.

ARNOLD

Why?

KRAMER

I'm not used to seeing such things on you. You had better let them be, Arnold.— Have you made your designs?

ARNOLD

What designs, father? I don't know of any.

KRAMER

H-m. To be capable of forgetting such things! You have forgotten. Well, if it's not too much trouble, perhaps you wouldn't mind trying to think a little.

ARNOLD

Oh, yes; you mean those for the cabinet maker?

KRAMER

Yes, those for the cabinet maker, for all I care. It's not to the purpose what they were for. So I suppose you haven't made much progress with them? Say: No, quite simply, please. Don't think of excuses. But how do you pass your time?

ARNOLD

[*Feigning astonishment.*] I work, father.

KRAMER

What do you work at?

ARNOLD

I draw, I paint — the usual thing.

KRAMER

I thought you were wasting your days. I am glad to know that I've been deceived. Furthermore, I won't keep watch on you any longer. I'm not your gaoler.— And I want to take the opportunity of telling you that, if you have anything on your heart, I am, after all — if you don't mind my saying it — your father. Do you understand? Remember that, please.

ARNOLD

But I haven't anything on my heart, father.

KRAMER

I didn't say you had. I made no such assertion. I said: *If* you have! In that case I might be of some little help to you. I know the world somewhat more thoroughly than you do. I was trying to take a precaution; do you understand? — You were away from home again last night. You are ruining yourself. You are making yourself ill.

Take care of your health. A sound body means a sound spirit; a sound life means sound art. Where were you so long yesterday? Never mind; it doesn't concern me after all. I don't want to know what you don't care to tell me. Tell me voluntarily or be silent.

ARNOLD

I was out of town with Alfred Fränkel.

KRAMER

Is that so? Where? In Pirscham, or where?

ARNOLD

No; over by Scheitnig and thereabouts.

KRAMER

And you were both there all night?

ARNOLD

No, later we were at Fränkel's house.

KRAMER

Until four o'clock in the morning?

ARNOLD

Yes, almost until four. Then we took a stroll through the streets.

KRAMER

You and Fränkel? You two alone? Then you're very great friends indeed. And what do you do together when you sit there while other people are in their beds?

ARNOLD

We smoke and talk about art.

KRAMER

Is that so? — Arnold, you're a lost soul!

ARNOLD

Why?

KRAMER

You're a lost soul! You're depraved to the very core.

ARNOLD

You've said that more than once.

KRAMER

Yes, yes; I have been forced to say it to you. I have been forced to say it a hundred times and, what is worse, I have felt it. Arnold, prove to me that I am lying; prove to me that I am doing you wrong! I'll kiss your feet in gratitude!

ARNOLD

It doesn't much matter what I say, I believe . . .

KRAMER

What? That you *are* rotten?

[ARNOLD, *very pale, shrugs his shoulders.*

KRAMER

And what's to be the end of it all, if that's true?

ARNOLD

[*In a cold and hostile voice.*] I don't know that myself, father.

KRAMER

But I know! You're going straight to your ruin!

[He walks about violently, stops at the window, holding his hands behind him and tapping his foot nervously to the floor.

ARNOLD, *his face ashy pale and distorted, grasps his hat and moves toward the door. As he presses the knob of the door,* KRAMER *turns around.*

KRAMER

Have you nothing else to say to me?

ARNOLD *releases the knob. He has hardened himself and peers watchfully at his father.*

KRAMER

Arnold, does nothing stir in you at all this? Do you not feel how we are all in torment for your sake? Say something! Defend yourself! Speak to me as man to man! Or as friend to friend! I am willing! Do I wrong you? Teach me to deal more justly, then; but speak! You can speak out like the rest of us. Why do you always slink away from me? You know how I despise cowardice! Say: My father is a tyrant. My father torments me and worries me; my father is at me like a fiend! Say that, but say it out openly. Tell me how I can do better by you! I will try to improve, I give you my word of honour. Or do you think that I am in the right in all I say?

ARNOLD

[*Strangely unmoved and indifferent.*] Maybe it's true that you're right.

KRAMER

Very well, if that is your opinion. Won't you, then, try to do better? Arnold, here I give you my hand. There; take it; I want to help you. Let me be your comrade; let me be your friend at the eleventh hour. But don't deceive yourself! The eleventh hour has come; it has come now! Pull yourself together; rise above yourself! You need only to will it and it can be done. Take the first step toward good; the second and third will cost no effort. Will you? Won't you try to be better, Arnold?

ARNOLD

[*With feigned surprise.*] Yes, but how? In what respect?

KRAMER

In all respects . . .

ARNOLD

[*Bitterly and significantly.*] I don't object. Why should I? I'm not very comfortable in my own skin.

KRAMER

I gladly believe that you're not comfortable. You haven't the blessing of labour. It is that blessing, Arnold, that you must strive for. You have alluded to your person! [*He takes down the death mask of Beethoven.*] Look, look at this mask! Child of God, dig for the treasures of your soul! Do you believe *he* was handsome? Is it your ambition to be a fop? Or do you believe that God withdraws himself from you because you are near-sighted and not straight? You

can have so much beauty within you that the fops round about you must seem beggars in comparison. — Arnold, here is my hand. Do you hear? Confide in me this one time. Don't hide yourself from me; be open with me — for your own sake, Arnold! What do I care, after all, where you were last night? But tell me, do you hear, tell me for your sake! Perhaps you will learn to see me as I truly am. Well, then: Where were you last night?

ARNOLD

[*After a pause, deathly pale, with visible struggles.*] Why . . . I've told you already, father.

KRAMER

I have forgotten what you said. So: Where were you? I don't ask you in order to punish you. I ask you for the sake of truth itself! Prove yourself truthful! That is all!

ARNOLD

[*With bold front, defiantly.*] Why, I was with Alfred Fränkel.

KRAMER

Is that so?

ARNOLD

[*Wavering again.*] Why, where should I have been?

KRAMER

You are not my son! You can't be my son! Go! Go! My gorge rises at you! My gorge . . . !

[ARNOLD *slinks out at once.*

THE THIRD ACT

The restaurant of BÄNSCH. *A moderately sized tap-room with old German decorations. Wainscoting. Tables and chairs of stained wood. To the left a neat bar with a marble top and highly polished faucets. Behind the bar a stand for cordial bottles, glasses, etc. Within this stand a small square window to the kitchen. To the left, behind the bar, a door that leads to the inner rooms. A large show window with neat hangings; next to it a glass door giving on the street. To the right a door to the adjoining room. Twilight.*

LIESE BÄNSCH, *neatly and tastefully dressed, with long white apron, comes slowly through the low door behind the bar. She looks up carelessly from her crocheting work and perceives* ARNOLD *who is sitting over his glass of beer at a table in the foreground to the right. Shaking her head she continues to crochet.*

ARNOLD

[*Very pale, tapping gently and nervously with his foot, stares over at her as if in ambush and says:*) Good evening.

LIESE BÄNSCH *sighs ostentatiously and turns away.*

ARNOLD

[*With emphasis.*] Good evening. [LIESE *does not reply.*] Well, if you don't want to answer, you needn't. I'm not exactly crazy about it. [*Continues to regard her with feverish excitement.*] But why do you open a hole like this if you're going to be rude to your customers?

LIESE BÄNSCH

I'm not rude. Leave me alone.

ARNOLD

I said good evening to you.

LIESE BÄNSCH

And I answered you.

ARNOLD

That isn't true.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Is that so? Very well, then! Your opinion don't bother me.

[*Pause.*]

[ARNOLD *shoots a paper arrow at* LIESE *from a rubber sling.*

[LIESE BÄNSCH *shrugs her shoulders arrogantly and contemptuously.*

ARNOLD

D'you think that kind of thing impresses me?

LIESE BÄNSCH

I suppose I'll think what I please.

ARNOLD

I pay for my beer as well as anybody else. D'you understand me? I want you to remember

that! — Does one have to wear a monocle here? — I'd like to know who frequents this grand place of yours, after all? D'you think I'm going to be driven out? By those Philistines? Not at all!

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Threatening.*] Well, you better not carry on too much!

ARNOLD

Aha! I'd like to see one of them do anything about me. He'd be surprised, I give you my word. Provided he had time left to be surprised.

[LIESE BÄNSCH *laughs.*

ARNOLD

If any one touches me — d'you understand — there'll be a bang!

LIESE BÄNSCH

Arnold, some fine day soon I'll give notice to the police, if you go on making such threats.

ARNOLD

What about? — If some one touches me, I say! — And if I box their ears that'll bang too.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Don't insult our guests.

ARNOLD

[*Laughs maliciously to himself, sips his beer and says:*] Bah! How do these nonentities concern me!

LIESE BÄNSCH

Why, what are you, that you act so high and

mighty? What have you accomplished, tell me that!

ARNOLD

Unfortunately you don't understand that.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, yes, anybody could say that. Go ahead first and do something! And when you've shown what you can do, then you can abuse the others.

[*Pause.*]

ARNOLD

Liese, listen to me. I'll explain all that to you.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, pshaw! You criticise everybody! According to you Mr. Quantmeyer isn't the right kind of lawyer, and Mr. Ziehn is no architect! Why that's pure rot!

ARNOLD

On the contrary, it's the solemn truth. In this place, of course, a plaster slinger like that can put on airs even if he hasn't a notion of what art is. If he goes among artists he doesn't count for more than a cobbler.

LIESE BÄNSCH

But you're an artist, I suppose? [*Pityingly.*] Lord, Lord!

ARNOLD

Surely I am an artist; that's just what I am! All you have to do is to come to my studio . . .

LIESE BÄNSCH

I'll take good care not to do that . . .

ARNOLD

You just go to Munich and ask the professors there about me. They're people of international fame! And they have a most thorough respect for me.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Well, it's you who do the boasting, not Mr. Ziehn . . .

ARNOLD

They respect me and they know why. I can do more than all these fellows together . . . with one hand. Ten thousand times more than they — including my own father.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Anyhow, it's you who boast and not Mr. Ziehn. If you were really such a very big man you'd look a bit different, I think.

ARNOLD

How?

LIESE BÄNSCH

How? Well, that's simple enough: famous painters make a great deal of money.

ARNOLD

[*Vehemently.*] Money? And do you suppose I haven't made money? Money like dirt. Just ask! All you need do is to ask my father! Go and ask him; I give you my word.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Well, what do you do with all that money?

ARNOLD

I? Just wait till I'm of age. If a fellow has a miserly father —? Liese, do be a bit decent.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Fritz!

FRITZ

[*Starts up from his sleep.*] Yes!

LIESE BÄNSCH

Fritz! Go into the kitchen, will you? New champagne glasses have come, and I believe the gentlemen are going to drink champagne to-day.

FRITZ

Certainly! With pleasure, Miss Bänsch.

[*Exit.*

[LIESE BÄNSCH *stands by the bar, her back turned to* ARNOLD, *takes several hair-pins from her hair and arranges it anew.*

ARNOLD

You do that in a dashing way!

LIESE BÄNSCH

You can be as vain as you please. [*Suddenly she turns around and observes* ARNOLD *glaring at her from over his glasses.*] Dear Lord, there he glares again!

ARNOLD

Liese!

LIESE BÄNSCH

I'm not "Liese" to you!

ARNOLD

Oh, you little Liese, if you'd only be a bit sensi-

ble. You good for nothing little bar maid! I feel so awfully horrible.

[Liese Bänsch *laughs, half amused, half jeering.*

Arnold

[*More passionately.*] Laugh, laugh if you can! Laugh! Go on laughing! Maybe I am really ridiculous. On the outside, I mean; not within. If you could look within me you'd see that I could scorch all those fellows off the earth.

Liese Bänsch

Arnold, don't excite yourself. I believe you; I'm willing to believe you. But in the first place you're far too young, and in the second, third, fourth, fifth place . . . why, it's just madness, child! Now listen and be sensible, won't you? I do feel sorry for you. But what can I do?

Arnold

[*Moaning heavily.*] It's like a pestilence in my blood. . . .

Liese Bänsch

Nonsense! — Get up on that bench and hand me down the pail. [Arnold *does it groaning.*] I'm just a girl like many others. There! Come on! [*She has stretched out her hand to him; he grasps it and jumps down. He holds her hand and as he bends down to kiss it,* Liese *withdraws it.*] Can't be done, little boy! That's it! You can get ten others instead of me, my dear.

Arnold

Liese, what do you want me to do for you —

plunder, rob on the highway, steal? What? What?

LIESE BÄNSCH

You are kindly to leave me alone.

[The door is heard opening in the next room.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[Listens. With suddenly changed demeanour she withdraws behind the bar and calls into the kitchen:] Fritz! Customers! Quick, hurry up!

[The door resounds again and a noisy company is heard to enter the adjoining room.

ARNOLD

Please: I would like another glass of beer. But I'm going into the other room.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[Adopting a formal tone.] But you're very comfortable here, Mr. Kramer.

ARNOLD

Yes, but I can draw much better inside.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Arnold, you know there'll only be trouble again. Do be sensible and stay here.

ARNOLD

For nothing in the world, Miss Bänsch.

[ARCHITECT ZIEHN enters in a very jolly mood.

ZIEHN

Hurrah, Miss Lizzie, the crowd is here, the whole moist and merry brotherhood. What are

you doing? How are you? Your intended is already languishing after you! [*He observes* Arnold.] Well, well, the deuce! I beg your pardon!

Liese Bänsch

Fritz! Fritz! Our gentlemen are here!

Ziehn

[*Cuts the end of his cigar on the cigar-cutter.*] Fritz! Beer! Beer's what's wanted, in the devil's name! — How's your papa?

Liese Bänsch

Oh, not at all well. We've had to call in the doctor twice to-day.

[Assistant Judge Schnabel *enters.*

Schnabel

Well, sir, are we going to have a game of skat to-night?

Ziehn

I thought we were going to throw dice to-day and drink a bottle of champagne.

Schnabel

[*Raises his arms, sings and prances.*]

"Lizzie had a little birdie,
And a cage to keep it in."

Don't let your friend in there perish with longing.

Ziehn

[*Softly, with a side glance at* Arnold.] He'll get his share.

SCHNABEL

[*Noticing* ARNOLD, *also furtively.*] Ah, yes! There is our stony guest — our pocket edition of Raphael.— Please let me have a great deal of bread, Miss Lizzie! With my order I want a great deal of bread.

[FRITZ *has entered and busies himself behind the bar.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

What was your order?

SCHNABEL

Oh, yes. A veal chop with paprika and bread. A tremendous lot of bread, dear Lizzie. You know what huge quantities of bread I eat.

ZIEHN

They should hang the bread-basket out of your reach, then.

[VON KRAUTHEIM *enters; he is a law-student of long standing.*

VON KRAUTHEIM

For heaven's sake, where's the stuff, Fritz?

FRITZ

Gentlemen, we've just broached a new keg.

SCHNABEL

[*Peers at the beer faucet through his monocle.*] Nothing for the present but air, air, air! Nothing but air!

[ARNOLD *takes his hat, rises, and goes into the adjoining room.*

VON KRAUTHEIM

Now the air is not contaminated, at least. It's air still, but pure air.

SCHNABEL

[*Sings.*]

"You're a crazy kid
Berlin is your home."

Thank heaven, he fleeth, he departeth from hence!

FRITZ

Don't you believe that. He just goes in there to be sitting where you gentlemen sit.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Affectedly.*] I think that's really ridiculous.

ZIEHN

Let's take up our rest in this room.

VON KRAUTHEIM

Well now, look here, I beg of you, that would be the last straw for us to run away from any monkey that happens to turn up.

[QUANTMEYER *enters. Dashing exterior. Monocle.*

QUANTMEYER

Good evening. How are you, my dear? [*He takes hold of* LIESE'S *hands; she turns her head aside.*] That wretched fellow Kramer is here again too . . .

SCHNABEL

And I would like to have you see where that fine fellow passes his time! Early yesterday

morning I saw him — a sight for gods and men, I assure you —'way out, in the vilest kind of a hole, in an incredible condition. When he leaves here, he just begins.

QUANTMEYER

Are you angry at me, sweetheart, tell me!

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Frees herself from him, laughs, and calls out through the window into the kitchen.*] Veal chop with paprika for Mr. Schnabel.

SCHNABEL

But bread, too — a lot of bread. Don't forget that. A tremendous lot of bread — a gigantic lot!

[*General laughter.*

FRITZ

[*Enters, carrying four full beer glasses.*] Here is the beer, gentlemen!

[*He goes into the adjoining room.*

[ZIEHN, SCHNABEL *and* VON KRAUTHEIM *follow the waiter.*

[*Pause.*]

QUANTMEYER

Look here, you kitten, why are you so spiteful to-day?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Me? Spiteful? Do I act spiteful? You don't say so?

QUANTMEYER

Come, you little devil, don't pout. Come, be sensible and hold up your little snout quickly. And

day after to-morrow you can come to see me again. Day after to-morrow is Sunday, as you know. My landlady and her husband'll both be out. Not a mouse at home, I give you my word.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Still resisting a little.*] Are we engaged to be married or not?

QUANTMEYER

To be sure we are! Why shouldn't we be, I'd like to know? I'm independent; I can marry whom I please.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Permits herself to be kissed, taps him lightly on the cheek, and then escapes from his arms.*] Oh, go on! I don't believe a word you say any more.

QUANTMEYER

[*About to follow her.*] Kiddie, what makes you so pert to-day?

[*The street door opens and* MICHALINE *enters.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

Sh!

QUANTMEYER

[*With feigned innocence, cutting the end of his cigar.*] You just wait, Lizzie; I'll have my revenge. [*Exit into the other room.*

[MICHALINE *comes farther forward into the tap-room.* LIESE BÄNSCH *has taken up her position behind the bar and observes.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*After a brief pause.*] Are you looking for any one, Miss?

MICHALINE

Is this the restaurant of Bänsch?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Certainly.

MICHALINE

Thank you. In that case it's all right. The friends whom I'm expecting will be here.

[*She is about to go into the adjoining room.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

Only the gentlemen who come every night are in there.

MICHALINE

Ah? I'm expecting a young couple. So I'll sit down somewhere here.

LIESE BÄNSCH

Here, please? Or here? Or, maybe, over there?

MICHALINE

[*Sitting down on a bench that runs along the wall.*] Thank you, I'll sit down here.—A small glass of beer.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*To* FRITZ *who is just returning.*] Fritz, a small glass of beer. [*She leans back, assumes a very decent and dignified air, adjusts details of her toilet, observes* MICHALINE *with great interest,*

and then says:] The weather is very bad out, isn't it?

MICHALINE

[*Taking off first her overshoes, then her coat and finally her hat.*] Yes, I'm grateful that I put on my galoshes. It looks very bad in the streets.

[*She sits down, straightens her hair and dries her face.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

May I offer you a comb? I'd be pleased to fetch you one.

[*She approaches and hands her comb to* MICHALINE.

MICHALINE

You are very good. Thank you.

[*She takes the comb and busies herself rearranging her hair.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Gathering some strands of* MICHALINE'S *hair.*] Let me help you, won't you?

MICHALINE

Thank you. I'll be able to adjust it now.

[LIESE BÄNSCH *returns to the bar and continues to observe* MICHALINE *with interest.* FRITZ *brings the beer and places it in front of* MICHALINE. *Then he takes up a box of cigars and carries it into the next room. Loud laughter is heard from within.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Shrugs her shoulders and speaks not without*

affectation.] Oh, yes; there's nothing to be done about that. The gentlemen can't get on any other way. [*She comes forward a little again.*] You see, I don't like all this: the noise and the roughness and all that. But you see, my father was taken sick; my mother can't stand the smoke and, of course, she nurses papa. So what is there left to do? I had to come in and help out.

MICHALINE

Surely; that was your duty in the circumstances.

LIESE BÄNSCH

And, anyhow, I'm young, don't you see? And there are some very nice gentlemen among them, really well-educated, nice gentlemen. And you do learn a great deal from people.

MICHALINE

Surely. Of course you do.

LIESE BÄNSCH

But do you know what is horrid? [*Suddenly confidential.*] They can't get along without quarreling. First they drink and then they quarrel. Heavens, I have to be careful then! Sometimes I'm supposed to be too pleasant to one of them, or not to give my hand to another, or not touch a third with my arm. Half the time I don't know that I've done all that. And another one I'm not to look at, and another I'm to get out of the place. And you can't please every one, can you? But oh, in just a minute, they'll all be fighting.

VOICES

[*From the adjoining room.*] Liese! Liese! Where are you keeping yourself?

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*To* MICHALINE.] I'll stay with you; I won't go in. I'm never comfortable any more with them. One of the gentlemen is my intended. Now, I leave it to you: that isn't very nice, is it? Of course, he wants to take liberties with me. Now I ask any one . . . that isn't possible?

MICHALINE

Surely he can't demand such things of you, your intended.

LIESE BÄNSCH

No, no, and of course he doesn't demand it, but even so . . . [*She looks up again as* FRITZ *returns with the empty beer glasses.*] Do take my advice and don't get mixed up with men admirers.

[LACHMANN *enters from the street, observes* MICHALINE *at once and holds out his hand to her.*

LACHMANN

[*Hanging up his overcoat and hat.*] Michaline, we've grown real old.

MICHALINE

[*Amused.*] Heavens, how suddenly you come out with that!

LACHMANN

I have, at least; I. Not you, but I. Surely so if I compare myself with your father.

[*He sits down.*

MICHALINE

Just why?

LACHMANN

There are reasons and reasons.— D'you remember when I entered the school of art here . . . by heaven! . . . And look at me to-day. I've advanced backward a bit!

MICHALINE

But why? That's the question after all: Why?

LACHMANN

Well, in those days . . . what didn't a fellow want to do? Reconcile God and the devil! What didn't we feel equal to doing? What a noble and exalted idea of ourselves didn't we have? And now? To-day we're pretty well bankrupt.

MICHALINE

Why bankrupt? In respect of what?

LACHMANN

In respect of a good many things and a few more. Our illusions, for instance.

MICHALINE

H-m. I'm under the impression we get along very fairly without them! Do you still lay so much weight on that?

LACHMANN

Yes. Everything else is doubtful. The power to nurse illusions, Michaline — that is the best possession in the world. If you think it over, you'll agree with me.

MICHALINE

What you really mean is imagination. Without that, of course, no artist can exist.

LACHMANN

Yes. Imagination and faith in its workings.— A pint of red wine please, the same as yesterday.

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Who has the wine in readiness and has opened the bottle.*] I recognised you again right away.

[*She places the bottle and glass in front of* LACHMANN.

LACHMANN

Is that so? Very happy, I'm sure. If I had the necessary wherewithal we'd be drinking champagne to-day.

[*Pause.*]

MICHALINE

You go from one extreme to another, Lachmann. What connection is there between these things?

LACHMANN

There isn't any. That's the joke of the whole business.— It's all over with me, that's all. There you are! All that's left is to have a jolly time.

[*Laughter and noise resound again from the adjoining room.* LIESE BÄNSCH *shakes her head disapprovingly and goes in.*

MICHALINE

You're strangely excited.

LACHMANN

Do you think so? Really? Well, usually my

soul's asleep. I thank God that I'm a bit wrought up. Unfortunately, it won't last very long.— "Age with his stealing steps!" We're dying slowly.

MICHALINE

You don't impress me as being so old, Lachmann.

LACHMANN

Very well, Michaline. Then marry me!

MICHALINE

[*Surprised and amused.*] Well, hardly that! I wouldn't go that far. We're both really too old for such things.— But it seems to me that so long as you keep your good humour, as you seem to do, you can't be so badly off.

LACHMANN

Oh, yes, I am, though; I am! I am! But the less said about that the better.

MICHALINE

Tell me: What has depressed you so?

LACHMANN

Nothing. Because I'm not really depressed. Only I've looked back over the past to-day and I've seen that we're really no longer among the living.

MICHALINE

But why? I must ask you again.

LACHMANN

Fishes are adapted to a life in water. Every living thing needs its proper atmosphere. It's just the same in the life of the spirit. And I've

been thrust into the wrong atmosphere. When that happens, whether you want to or not, you must breathe it in. And then your real self is suffocated. You cease to have the sensation of your own individuality; you're no longer acquainted with yourself; you know nothing about yourself any longer.

MICHALINE

In that case I seem to be better off in my voluntary loneliness.

LACHMANN

You're better off here for other reasons — all of you. You see nothing and you hear nothing of the great philistine orgy of the metropolis. When once you've sunk into that, it whirls you hither and thither through — everything! — When one is young, one wants to go out into the wide world. I wish I had stayed at home.— The world is not wide, at all, Michaline! It is no wider anywhere than here! Nor is it smaller here than elsewhere. He for whom it is too small, must make it wider for himself. That's what your father has done here, Michaline.— As I was saying, when I entered the art school here, long ago, in spring . . .

MICHALINE

It was in autumn.

LACHMANN

Nothing but spring remains in my memory. Ah, weren't we liberated from the philistine yoke. And it really seemed in those days . . . we could truly say . . . the world opened itself to us, great

and wide. To-day one is back again in it all — buried in domesticity and marriage.

MICHALINE

I seem still to see you standing there, Lachmann, with your fair, silken hair — there, in the passage, do you remember, at father's door? Father's studio was still upstairs in those days; not in the small wing by itself. Do you remember that or have you forgotten?

LACHMANN

Forgotten? I? One doesn't forget such things. I've forgotten nothing that happened then. The least little detail still clings to my memory. But those were our great days.— It isn't possible to express — to come near to expressing — the mysterious change that came over us then. A fellow had been a flogged urchin: suddenly he became a knight of the spirit.

MICHALINE

Not every one felt that as you did, dear Lachmann. Many felt oppressed by father's personality.

LACHMANN

Yes. But what kind were they! There wasn't one who had a grain of promise, but he ennobled him at one stroke. For he opened the world of heroes to us. That was enough. He deemed us worthy of striving to emulate their work. He made us feel toward the lords of the realm of art, that we and they were of one blood. And so a divine pride came upon us, Michaline! — Ah, well.— I drink to you! How do the faery tales say: It

was — once upon a time! [*He observes that* Michaline *has no glass and turns to* Fritz *who is about to carry champagne into the other room.*] Let us have another glass, please.

[Fritz *brings it at once and then hurries off with the champagne.*

Michaline

Something very special must have happened to you, Lachmann.

Lachmann

[*Filling her glass.*] I have seen your father's picture.

Michaline

Is that so? You have been with him?

Lachmann

Yes. Just now. I came straight here.

Michaline

Well, and did the picture impress you so deeply?

Lachmann

As deeply as possible. Yes.

Michaline

Quite honestly?

Lachmann

Honestly. Honestly. Without doubt.

Michaline

And you are not at all disappointed?

Lachmann

No. No. By no means.— I know what you

mean and why you ask. But all art is fragmentary. What there is, is beautiful; beautiful and deeply moving. And all that is yet unattained but felt, Michaline, is equally so. The final expression in which all is to culminate — therein one recognises most fully what your father is.— The great failure can be more meaningful — we see it in the noblest works — can move us more deeply, can lead us to loftier heights — deeper into immensity — than the clearest success.

MICHALINE

And what was father's state of mind about other things?

LACHMANN

He dragged me over the coals thoroughly; a futile process, unfortunately. But do you know, if a fellow were to close his eyes and let those great reprimands and encouragements pour down upon him he might imagine, if he cared to, that it is still the first storm of his spiritual spring and that he might still grow to touch the stars.

[ZIEHN *and* SCHNABEL *enter. They are both tipsy, speak loudly and freely and then again whisper suddenly as if communicating secrets, yet distinctly enough for all to hear. Laughter in the next room.*

ZIEHN

Fritz, hurry! Another bottle of that extra dry! Eight marks per bottle — small matter! This thing is beginning to amuse me.

SCHNABEL

A deuce of a fellow, this Quantmeyer, eh? He's got notions like I don't know what!

ZIEHN

[*Laughing.*] I thought I'd roll under the table!

SCHNABEL

[*Looking at* MICHALINE.] Fritz, is the circus in town again?

FRITZ

[*Busy with the champagne bottle.*] Why, your honour? I didn't hear nothing.

SCHNABEL

Why? Why? Why, you can almost smell it! Don't you scent the stables?

ZIEHN

To the noble art of bareback riding! May it flourish!

VON KRAUTHEIM

[*Enters on his way to the bar. In passing he says to* ZIEHN *and* SCHNABEL:] Man and woman created he them. Which is that?

ZIEHN

Better go and investigate. [*Whispering to* SCHNABEL.] Tell me, how is that about Quantmeyer? Is that fellow really a lawyer? I can't make head or tail of it all. What's he live on?

SCHNABEL

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Money, I suppose.

ZIEHN

Yes, but who gives it to him?

SCHNABEL

He's got plenty of it, anyhow, and that's the main thing.

ZIEHN

And this talk about an engagement, d'you believe in that?

SCHNABEL

Ziehn! You must be pretty far gone!

ZIEHN

Well, in that case the girl is damned stupid. A girl may be a bit of a fool — all right! But, look here, to throw herself away . . . well! [*He whispers something into* SCHNABEL'S *ear upon which both break out into ribald laughter and blow great clouds of smoke. Then* ZIEHN *continues.*] I want you to look around here. [*He draws his arm through* SCHNABEL'S *and leads him, regardless of* LACHMANN *and* MICHALINE, *close up to their table. Without asking pardon, he presses close up to them and points with outstretched arm and loud and boastful speech to the details of the room.*] This whole business here — I designed it all. Made it all myself: wainscoting, ceiling, bar, whole thing! Designed it all myself; all my work. That's the reason I like to come here. We've got some taste, eh? Don't you think so? Damned tasteful tap-room, this! [*He releases* SCHNABEL *and lights a cigar with a match which he strikes with rude circumstantiality against the table at which* LACHMANN *and* MICHALINE *are sitting. Again the sound of laughter is heard from the other room.* FRITZ *carries in the champagne.*

ZIEHN *turns around and says:*] He'll end by driving that young man quite crazy.

[SCHNABEL *shrugs his shoulders.*

ZIEHN

Come on in. It's starting again.

[*Both go into the adjoining room.*

[MICHALINE *and* LACHMANN *look at each other significantly.*

[*Pause.*]

LACHMANN

[*Taking his cigar-case from his pocket. Drily.*] These types are rather deficient in interest. . . . Do you mind if I smoke a little?

MICHALINE

[*Somewhat disquieted.*] Not at all.

LACHMANN

Will you smoke too?

MICHALINE

No, thank you, not here.

LACHMANN

Yes, there's no doubt, we've made admirable progress — we wonderful fellows of this generation! Or, tell me, do you doubt it?

MICHALINE

I don't think it's very comfortable here.

LACHMANN

[*Smoking.*] And if you were to take the wings of the morning, you would not escape these or their kind.— Heavens, how we started out in life! And to-day we chop fodder for a society of this

kind. There's not a point concerning which one thinks as they do. They stamp into the mud all that is pure and bare. The meanest rag, the most loathsome covering, the most wretched tatter is pronounced sacred. And we must hold our tongues and work ourselves weary for this crowd.— Michaline, I drink to your father! And to art that illuminates the world.— In spite of everything and everything! — [*They clink their glasses.*] — Ah, if I were five years younger than I am to-day. . . I would have secured one thing which is now lost to me, alas, and then much would look brighter now.

MICHALINE

Do you know what is sometimes hardest to bear?

LACHMANN

What?

MICHALINE

Among friends?

LACHMANN

Well, what?

MICHALINE

The command not to divert each other from their erring ways! Well, then, again: Once upon a time . . . !

[*She touches her glass significantly to his.*

LACHMANN

Surely. Surely. I deserve your reproach. That time is irrevocably past. Once upon a time we were so near it . . . Oh, you may shake your

head to-day. I need but have beckoned to you then.

[*Hallooing and laughter in the next room.*

MICHALINE

[*Grows pale and starts up.*] Lachmann, listen! Did you hear that?

LACHMANN

Yes; does that really excite you, Michaline?

MICHALINE

I really don't know myself why it should. I suppose it's connected with the fact that the relations between father and Arnold are very much strained just now and that I have been worrying over it.

LACHMANN

Yes, yes. But just how, just why does that occur to you here?

MICHALINE

I don't know. Wouldn't it be better for us to go? Oh, yes, your wife! Oh, yes, we will wait, of course. But really, I have an uncanny feeling here.

LACHMANN

Don't pay any attention to that vulgar crowd.

[LIESE BÄNSCH *comes from the next room.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

O dear Lord! No, no, such things! Those gentlemen drink so much champagne that they don't know what they're doing any longer. I tell you, it's a miserable business.

[*Unembarrassed, she sits down at* Lachmann's *and* Michaline's *table. Her great excitement makes it clear that some incident has taken place which really annoys her.*

Lachmann

I dare say the gentlemen are not very tactful in their behaviour.

Liese Bänsch

Oh, they're not so bad as far as that goes. They're decent enough. But you see, there's a young fellow, they just make him . . . [*Imitating what she is trying to describe she lets her head hang back, shakes it in a kind of unconsciousness and makes wild gestures with her hands.*] . . . They make him . . . oh, I don't know what!

Lachmann

I suppose that is your betrothed?

Liese Bänsch

[*Acts as though shaken with cold, looks down upon her bosom and pulls the laces straight.*] Oh, no, he's just a foolish fellow that's taken all kinds of silly things into his head. The young fool is no concern of mine, is he? I wish he'd go where he belongs! [*To* Michaline.] Or would you stand it if some one always sat there like a marabout? I can do what I please, can't I? What do I care for a spy like that! [*She looks up in her excitement.*] And, more'n that, my intended is drunk; and if he wants to get drunk I'd thank him to do it elsewhere and not here.

[*She crouches in a corner behind the bar.*

LACHMANN

You may imagine how the contrast impresses me: your father in his studio and here this — let us say, this noble company.— And if you imagine his picture, in addition, the solemn, restful picture of the Christ, and imagine it in this atmosphere in all its sublime quietude and purity — it gives you a strange feeling . . . most strange.— I'm glad my other half isn't here. I was actually afraid of that.

MICHALINE

If we only knew whether she is coming. Otherwise I'd propose . . . Do you feel at ease here?

LACHMANN

[*Replacing his cigar case in his overcoat pocket.*] Oh, yes. Since we clinked our glasses a while ago, I do. In spite of everything and everything. For if two people can say, as we have said: *Once* upon a time! . . . something of that old time is not quite dead, and to that remnant we must drink again.

[*After a last outburst of laughter, there takes place in the adjoining room, with growing boisterousness, the following colloquy:*

QUANTMEYER

What's your name? What are you? What? Why d'you always sit here and glare at us? Eh? And stare at us? Why? What? It annoys you, eh, if I kiss my intended? Is that it? Well, d'you think I'm going to ask you for permission? Why,

you're, you're crazy! Crazy! That's what you are!

VOICES

[*Of the others amid confused laughter.*] Give him a cold douche! A cold douche! That's what he needs!

QUANTMEYER

Can't I show my own garter here? Do you think that I may not?

[*Laughter.*

LACHMANN

That seems to be a nice crowd, I must say.

QUANTMEYER

So you think I oughtn't to, eh? Well, I wear lady's garters. That's all. And if it isn't mine, then it isn't. Maybe it's even Lizzie's, come to think of it!

[*Laughter.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*To* MICHALINE *and* LACHMANN.] He lies. Oh, what meanness to lie so. And that fellow pretends to be my intended!

QUANTMEYER

What's that? What? All right! Come on! Come ahead! I don't care if you look like a chalk wall, my boy, that's not going to upset me a little bit! A dauber like that! A sign painter! Just say one more word and out you fly! You can all depend on it!

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Hastily and confused in her overeagerness.*]

It all came about this way, you know . . . You mustn't think that I'm to blame for all this scandalous business. But it happened this way. Just as I'm going to tell you. My intended, you know, he's just a bit tipsy and so he kept pinching my arm because they'd all made up their minds that they'd make him jealous . . .

LACHMANN

Whom did they want to make jealous?

LIESE BÄNSCH

The young fellow that I was talking about. I've been to see his father about him. What haven't I tried to do? But nothing does any good! He comes here and sits in a corner and carries on till things happen this way.

LACHMANN

What exactly does he do?

LIESE BÄNSCH

Why, nothing, really. He just sits there and watches all the time. But that isn't very nice, is it? He needn't be surprised if they try to scare and worry him out in the end. [QUANTMEYER *is heard speaking again.*] There you are. It's starting up again. I'm really going up to father. I don't know what to do no more.

QUANTMEYER

D'you hear what I said to you just now? You didn't? You forgot it, eh? Well, I'll say it again, word for word: I can kiss my intended how I want to — where I want to — when I want to! I'd like to see the devil

himself come and prevent me. There! Now you just say one more word, and when you've said it you'll be flying out at the end of my boot!

LIESE BÄNSCH

Oh, goodness me! And that fellow pretends to be my intended! And then he goes and tells such lies and behaves that way!

[*From a sudden violent outcry of the voices in the next room the following words are distinguishable:*

ZIEHN

Hold on, my good fellow, that's not the way we do business!

SCHNABEL

What's that? What? Call the police! Put that scamp in gaol!

VON KRAUTHEIM

Take it away, Quantmeyer. No use fooling!

QUANTMEYER

Try it! Just try! I advise you!

ZIEHN

Take it away from him!

SCHNABEL

Grab it! One, two, three.

QUANTMEYER

Put it down! Do you hear? Put it down, I tell you!

ZIEHN

Are you going to put that thing down or not?

SCHNABEL

You see that fellow, just simply an anarchist.

[*A brief, silent struggle begins in the next room.*

MICHALINE

[*Has suddenly jumped up in inexplicable dread and grasps her garments.*] Lachmann, I beg of you. Come, come away from here.

ZIEHN

There, fellows, I've got it! Now we've got you.

SCHNABEL

Hold him! Hold the scoundrel!

[ARNOLD, *deathly pale, rushes madly in and out at the street door.* ZIEHN, SCHNABEL *and* VON KRAUTHEIM *pursue him with the cry:*] Hold him! Stop him! Get hold of him! *They run out into the street after him and disappear. Their cries and the cries of several passersby are still heard for some moments. Then, growing fainter and fainter, the sounds die away.*

MICHALINE

[*As if stunned.*] Arnold! Wasn't that Arnold?

LACHMANN

Don't speak.

[QUANTMEYER *and* THE WAITER *enter.*

QUANTMEYER

[*Exhibiting a small revolver.*] You see, Lizzie, that's the kind of a scoundrel he is. I wish you'd come and look at this thing. Dirt cheap article no doubt, but it could have done harm enough.

LIESE BÄNSCH

I wish you'd leave me alone.

FRITZ

Beggin' your pardon, if you please. But I don't hold with servin' customers who pull out revolvers and put them down next to their glasses.

LIESE BÄNSCH

If you don't want to, you don't have to — that's all.

LACHMANN

[*To* FRITZ.] Did the gentleman threaten you?

QUANTMEYER

[*Regards* LACHMANN *with a look of official suspicion.*] Oho! *Did* he? The *gentleman!* Maybe you doubt it! By God, that's a fine state of affairs! Maybe it's we who'll have to give an account of ourselves!

LACHMANN

I merely ventured to address a question to the waiter — not to you.

QUANTMEYER

You ventured, did you? Who are you, anyhow? Have you any reason to interfere? Maybe you're related to that fine little product, eh? Then we could make a clean sweep of the crowd, so to

speak.— The gentleman! [*Laughing derisively.*] I think he has enough for to-day, the gentleman! I think that lesson'll stick in his mind. But do you imagine the coward defended himself . . .

MICHALINE

[*Awakening from her stunned condition arises and, as if beside herself, walks up to* QUANTMEYER.] Arnold!! Wasn't that Arnold!!

LIESE BÄNSCH

[*Suspecting the connection, steps with lightning like rapidity between* QUANTMEYER *and* MICHALINE. *To* QUANTMEYER.] Go on! Don't interfere with our guests or I'll çall papa this minute!

MICHALINE

[*Approaches the door in intense dread with a cry of pain and despair.*] Arnold!! Wasn't that Arnold?

LACHMANN

[*Following her and holding her.*] No! No, no, Michaline! Control yourself!

THE FOURTH ACT

The studio of MICHAEL KRAMER *as in the second act. It is afternoon, toward five o'clock. The hangings which conceal the studio proper are drawn, as always.* KRAMER *is working at his etching. He is dressed as in the second act.* KRAUSE *is taking from a basket which he has brought with him, blue packages of stearin candles.*

KRAMER

[*Without looking up from his work.*] Just put down the packages, back there, by the candlesticks.

KRAUSE

[*Has placed the packages on the table upon which stand several branched candlesticks of silver. He now produces a letter and holds it in his hand.*] I suppose there's nothing else, professor?

KRAMER

Professor? What does that mean?

KRAUSE

Well, I suppose it's that. Because this here letter's from the ministry.

[*He places the letter in front of* KRAMER *on the little table.*

KRAMER

H-m. Eh? Addressed to me? [*He sighs deeply.*] All due respect.

[*He lets the letter lie unopened and continues to work.*]

KRAUSE

[*Picking up his basket and about to go.*] Don't you want me to watch to-night, professor? You ought to take a bit o' rest, really.

KRAMER

We'll let things be as they have been, Krause. In regard to the watching too, I tell you. And, anyhow, it's provided for. I've made an agreement with Lachmann. You recall him, don't you?

KRAUSE

[*Takes up his cap and sighs.*] Merciful Father in Heaven! Dear! Dear! So there's nothing else just now, I suppose?

KRAMER

Is the director in his office?

KRAUSE

Yes, sir, he's there.

KRAMER

Thank you; that's all.— Hold on. Just wait a moment. On Monday evening . . . where was that? Where did your wife meet Arnold?

KRAUSE

Why, it was down by the river, where the boats are lying . . . right under the brick bastion. Where they rent boats by the hour.

KRAMER

On the little path that leads around down there? Close by the Oder?

KRAUSE

Yes; that's where it was.

KRAMER

Did she address him or he her?

KRAUSE

No, sir. He was sittin', you see, on the parapet or on the wall, you might say, where people sometimes stand an' look down to watch the Polacks cooking potatoes on their rafts. An' he seemed so queer to my wife an' so she just said good ev'nin' to him.

KRAMER

And did she say anything else to him?

KRAUSE

She just said as how he'd catch a cold.

KRAMER

H-m. And what did he answer?

KRAUSE

Why, the way she says, he just laughed. But he laughed in a kind o' way, she was thinkin', that was terrible. Kind o' contemptuous. That's all I know.

KRAMER

He who desires to scorn all things, I tell you, will find good reasons for his scorn.— I wish you had come to me.— But I believe it was too late even then.

KRAUSE

If only a body had known. But how is you to know? Who'd be thinkin' of a thing like that straight off? When Michaline came to me — she came to me, you know, with Mr. Lachmann — then the fright got hold o' me. But by that time it was half-past twelve at night.

KRAMER

I tell you, I will remember that night. When my daughter wakened me, it was one o'clock.— And when, at last, we found the poor boy, the cathedral clock was striking nine.

[KRAUSE *sighs, shakes his head, opens the door in order to go and, at the same time, admits* MICHALINE *and* LACHMANN *who enter.* KRAUSE *exit.* MICHALINE *is dressed in a dark gown; she is deeply serious and shows signs of weariness and of tears.*

KRAMER

[*Calls out to them.*] There you are, children. Well, come in. So you are going to watch with me to-night, Lachmann. You were his friend too, in a way, at least. I am glad that you are willing to watch. A stranger, I tell you, I could not bear. — [*He walks up and down, stands still, reflects and says:*] I will leave you alone for five minutes now and go over to see the director. To tell him the little that is to be told. You won't go in the meantime, I dare say.

MICHALINE

No, father. Lachmann, at all events, will stay here. As for me, I have to go on some errands.

KRAMER

I'm very glad that you'll stay, Lachmann. I won't take long; I'll be back presently.

[*He puts on a muffler, nods to both and leaves.*

[MICHALINE *sits down, draws up her veil and wipes her eyes with her handkerchief.* LACHMANN *puts aside his hat, stick and overcoat.*

MICHALINE

Does father seem changed to you?

LACHMANN

Changed? No.

MICHALINE

Dear me, there's something that I forgot again! I didn't send an announcement to the Härtels. One loses the little memory that's still left.— There's another wreath.— [*She gets up and examines a rather large laurel wreath with riband that is lying on the sofa. She takes up a card that was fastened to the wreath and continues with an expression of surprise.*] Why, it's from Miss Schäffer.— There's another soul left solitary now. She had but one thought — Arnold. And Arnold didn't even know of it.

LACHMANN

Is she that slightly deformed person whom I saw in your studio?

MICHALINE

Yes. She painted simply because Arnold did. She saw in me just — Arnold's sister. That's the way life is — she'll pay for this wreath by living for weeks on tea and bread.

LACHMANN

And probably be very happy doing it, in addition.— Do you know whom else I met? And who is going to send a wreath too?

MICHALINE

Who?

LACHMANN

Liese Bänsch.

MICHALINE

She . . . needn't have done that

[*Pause.*]

LACHMANN

If only I had been able to talk to Arnold. About Liese Bänsch too! Perhaps it would have done some good!

MICHALINE

No, Lachmann, you're mistaken. I don't believe it.

LACHMANN

Who knows? But what could I do? He avoided me! I could have made several things clear to him . . . never mind what, now! And from my very own experience. Sometimes our most ardent desires are denied us. Because, Michaline, were they granted us . . . ! A wish like that was granted me once and I — I needn't conceal it from you — I am much worse off than I was before.

MICHALINE

Experience is not communicable, at least not in the deeper sense.

LACHMANN

It may be so, and yet . . . I've had my lesson.
[*Pause.*]

MICHALINE

Yes, yes, that's the way it goes. That's the way of the world. The girl was playing with fire, too, I dare say. And of course it never occurred to her, naturally, that the end might be this! [*At her father's small table.*] Look what father has been etching here.

LACHMANN

A dead knight in armour.

MICHALINE

Mh-m.

LACHMANN

[*Reads:*]

"With armour am I fortified,
Death bears my shield for me."

MICHALINE

[*With breaking voice, then with tears.*] I have never seen father weep, and look — he wept over this.

LACHMANN

[*Involuntarily taking her hand.*] Michaline, let us try to be strong; shall we?

MICHALINE

The paper is quite wet! Oh, my God. [*She masters her emotion, walks a few paces and then continues in a higher strain:*] He controls him-

self, Lachmann, assuredly. But how does it look in his soul? He has aged by ten years.

LACHMANN

I have buried my father and my brother, too. But when life discloses itself to us in its deepest seriousness — in fateful moments in the course of time — when we survive what is hardest — surely our ships sail more calmly and firmly — with our beloved dead — through the depths of space.

MICHALINE

But to survive at all! That, surely, is hardest.

LACHMANN

I never felt it to be so.

MICHALINE

Oh, yes. It was like lightning! Like a stroke from heaven! I felt at once: If we find him — well! If we don't find him, it's over. I knew Arnold and I felt that. So many things had heaped themselves up in him and when this affair grew clear to me, I knew that he was in danger.

LACHMANN

Yet we followed him almost immediately.

MICHALINE

Too late. We didn't go till I had pulled myself together. Just one word, one little word! If we could have said one word to him, it would probably have changed everything. Perhaps if they had caught him, those people, when they chased after him, I mean — if they had brought him back! I wanted to cry out: Arnold, come!

[*Her emotion overpowers her.*

LACHMANN

Things wouldn't have turned out so badly then. There was nothing against him except the childish fooling with the revolver . . .

MICHALINE

Oh, but there was the girl, and the shame of it all, and father and mother! He fled from his own terror. He acted as though he were as old and sophisticated as possible. And yet he was, to any one who knew him as I did, quite inexperienced and childish. I knew that he was carrying the weapon.

LACHMANN

Why, he showed it to me in Munich, long ago.

MICHALINE

Yes, he thought himself pursued everywhere. He saw nothing but enemies all around him. And he wouldn't be persuaded out of that opinion. It's nothing but veneer, he always said. They only hide their claws and fangs and if you don't look out, you're done for.

LACHMANN

It wasn't so foolish. There's something to it. There are moments when one feels just so. And he probably suffered a great deal from coarseness of all kinds. If one tries to realise his situation: he probably wasn't so far wrong as far as he was concerned.

MICHALINE

We should have given more time and care to him. But Arnold was always so gruff. However

kindly one's intention was, however good one's will, he repelled any advances.

LACHMANN

What did he write to your father?

MICHALINE

Papa hasn't shown the letter to any one yet.

LACHMANN

He intimated something to me. A mere intimation — nothing more. He spoke of it quite without bitterness, by the way. I believe there was something like this in the letter, that he couldn't endure life, that he felt himself quite simply unequal to it.

MICHALINE

Why didn't he lean on father! Of course he is hard. But there's something defective in any one who can't get beyond the exterior, and doesn't feel father's humanity and goodness. I was able to do it, and I am a woman. It was so much harder for me than for Arnold. Father strove to get Arnold's confidence; I had to fight for father's. Father is tremendously veracious, but that's all. In that respect he hit me harder than Arnold. Arnold was a man. Yet I stood the test.

LACHMANN

Your father could be my confessor —

MICHALINE

He fought his way through a similar experience.

LACHMANN

One feels that.

MICHALINE

Yes. I know it for a certainty. And he would have understood Arnold without a doubt.

LACHMANN

Ah, but who knows the word that will save?

MICHALINE

Well, you see, Lachmann, this is the way things go: Our mother is a stranger to father's inmost self. But if ever she had a quarrel with Arnold, she threatened him at once with father. In this way — what has she brought about? Or, at least, has helped to bring about?

[KRAMER *returns.*

KRAMER

[*Takes off his muffler.*] Here I am again. How is mama?

MICHALINE

She doesn't want you to wear yourself quite out. Are you going to sleep at home to-night or not?

KRAMER

[*Gathering cards of condolence from the table.*] No, Michaline. But when you go home, take these cards to mama. [*To* LACHMANN.] See, he had his friends, too, only we didn't know of it.

MICHALINE

There were many callers at home to-day, too.

KRAMER

I wish people would refrain from that. But if they think they are doing good, it is not for us to restrain them, to be sure.— You are going again?

MICHALINE

I must. Oh, these wretched annoyances and details!

KRAMER

We mustn't by any means let that vex us. The hour demands our last strength.

MICHALINE

Good-bye, papa.

KRAMER

[*Holding her back gently.*] Good-bye, my dear child. I know you don't let it vex you. You are probably the most reasonable of us all. No, no, Michaline, I don't mean it in that way. But you have a sane, temperate mind. And her heart, Lachmann, is as warm as any. [MICHALINE *weeps more intensely.*] But listen: Approve yourself now too, my child. We must show now how we can stand the test.

[MICHALINE *calms herself resolutely, presses her father's hand, then* LACHMANN'S *and goes.*

KRAMER

Lachmann, let us light the candles. Open these packages for me. [*Going to work himself.*] Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow! Do you taste the full savour of that word? I tell you, that is the way it is with words: They become alive only at times. In the daily grind of life they are dead. [*He hands a candlestick into which he has placed a candle, to* LACHMANN.] So. Carry this in to my boy.

[LACHMANN *carries the candlestick behind*

the hangings and leaves KRAMER *alone in the outer room.*

KRAMER

When the great things enter into our lives, I tell you, the trivial things are suddenly swept away. The trivial separates, I tell you, but greatness unites us. That is, if one is made that way. And death, I tell you, always belongs to the great things — death and love. [LACHMANN *returns from behind the hangings.*] I have been downstairs to see the director and I have told him the truth, and why should I lie? I am surely in no mood for it. What is the world to me, I should like to know? The director took it quite sensibly too.— But, you see, the women want concealment. Otherwise the parson won't go to the grave and then the matter is irregular. I tell you, all that is of secondary importance to me. God is everything to me. The parson is nothing.— Do you know what I have been doing this morning? Burying my heart's deepest wishes. Quietly, quietly, I've done it, all by myself, I tell you. And there was a long train of them — little ones and big ones, thin ones and stout ones. There they lie, Lachmann, like wheat behind the scythe.

LACHMANN

I have lost a friend before. I mean by a voluntary death.

KRAMER

Voluntary, you say? Who knows how true that is? — Look at the sketches yonder. [*He fumbles in his coat and draws from his breast-pocket a sketch-book. He leads* LACHMANN *to the win-*

dow where one can barely see by the dim light of evening, and opens the book.] There he assembled his tormentors. There they are, look you, as he saw them. And I tell you, he had eyes to see. It is almost the evil eye. But vision he had, surely, surely.— I am perhaps not so shattered as you think nor so disconsolate as many imagine. For death, I tell you, leads us into the divine. Something comes upon us and bows us down. But that which descends to us is sublime and overwhelming at once. And then we feel it, we see it almost, and we emerge from our sorrows greater than we were.— How many a one has died to me in the course of my life! Many a one, Lachmann, who is still alive to-day. Why do our hearts bleed and beat at once? Because they must love, Lachmann: that is the reason. Man and nature yearn toward oneness, but upon us is the curse of division. We would hold fast to all things, yet all things glide from our grasp even as they have come.

LACHMANN

I have felt that too, in my own life.

KRAMER

When Michaline awakened me on that night, I must have cut a pitiable figure. I tell you, I knew it all at once.— But the bitterest hours came when we had to leave him, to let him lie there — alone. That hour! Great God, Lachmann, was that hour sent to purify me as by fire or not? I scarcely knew myself. I tell you, I would never have believed it of myself! I rebelled so bitterly; I jeered and I raged at my God. I tell you, we don't know what we are capable of! I laughed

like a fetishist and called my fetish to account! The whole thing seemed to me a devilish bad joke on the part of the powers that be, a wretched, futile kind of trick, Lachmann, damnably cheap and savourless and poor.— Look you, that's the way I felt; that's the way I rebelled. Then, later, when I had him here near me, I came to my senses.— A thing like this — we can't grasp it at first. Now it's entered the mind. Now it's become part of life. It's almost two days ago now, I was the shell; there lies the kernel. If only the shell had been taken!

[MICHALINE *enters softly without knocking.*

MICHALINE

Papa, Liese Bänsch is downstairs at the janitor's. She's bringing a wreath.

KRAMER

Who?

MICHALINE

Liese Bänsch. She'd like to speak to you. Shall she come in?

KRAMER

I do not blame her and I do not forbid her. I know nothing of hatred; I know nothing of revenge. All that seems to me small and mean. [MICHALINE *exit.*] Look you, it has struck me down! And it's no wonder, I tell you. We live along, take our accustomed ways for granted, worry over small affairs, think ourselves and our little annoyances mightily important, groan and complain . . . And then, suddenly, a thing of this kind comes down upon us as an eagle swoops

down among sparrows! Then, I tell you, it is hard to stand one's ground. But I have my release from life now. Whatever lies before me in the future, it cannot give me joy, it cannot cause me dread; the world holds no threat for me any more!

LACHMANN

Shall I light the gas?

KRAMER

[*Pulls the hangings apart. In the background of the large, almost dark studio, the dead man, swathed in linen, lies upon a bier.*] Behold, there lies a mother's son! Are not men ravening beasts? [*A faint afterglow comes through the tall windows at the left. A branched candlestick with burning candles stands at the head of the bier.* KRAMER *comes forward again and pours wine into glasses.*] Come, Lachmann, refresh yourself. There is some wine here; we need to be strengthened. Let us drink, Lachmann, let us pour a libation; let us calmly touch our glasses to each other! He who lies there is I — is you — is the majestic symbol of us and our fate. What can a parson add to its meaning? [*They drink.* [*Pause.*]

LACHMANN

I told you about a friend of mine a while ago. His mother was a clergyman's daughter. And she took it deeply to heart that no priest went to her son's grave. But when they were lowering the coffin, the spirit, so to speak, came upon her and it seemed as if God himself were speaking through

her praying lips . . . I had never heard any one pray like that.

[Michaline *leads* Liese Bänsch *in. The latter is dressed in a simple, dark dress. Both of the women remain standing near the door.* Liese *holds her handkerchief to her mouth.*

Kramer

[*Apparently without noticing* Liese, *strikes a match and lights more candles.* Lachmann *does the same until two branched candlesticks and about six separate candles are burning.*] What did those coxcombs know of him: these stocks and stones in the form of men? Of him and of me and of our sorrows? They baited him to his death! They struck him down, Lachmann, like a dog.— And yet, what could they do to him; what? Come hither, gentlemen, come hither! Look at him now and insult him! Step up to him now and see whether you can! I tell you, Lachmann, that is over now! [*He draws a silken kerchief from the face of the dead.*] It is well to have him lie there as he does; it is well; it is well! [*In the glimmer of the candles an easel is seen to have been placed near the bier.* Kramer, *who has been painting at it, sits down before it again, and continues, calmly, as though no one were present but he and* Lachmann.] I have sat here all day. I have drawn him; I have painted him; I have modelled a death mask of him . . . It's lying yonder, in that silken cloth. Now he is equal to the greatest of us all. [*He points to the mask of Beethoven.*] And yet to try to hold that fast which now lies upon his face, Lachmann, is but a fool's

effort. Yet all that . . . all that was in him. I felt it, I knew it, I recognised it in him; and yet I could not bring that treasure to light. Now death has brought it to light instead. All is clarity about him now; his countenance is radiant with that heavenly light about which I flutter like a black, light-drunken butterfly. I tell you, we grow small in the presence of death. All his life long I was his schoolmaster. I had to maltreat him and now he has risen into the divine.— Perhaps I smothered this plant. Perhaps I shut out his sun and he perished in my shadow. But, look you, Lachmann, he would not let me be his friend. He needed a friend and it was not granted me to be that one.— That day when the girl came to me, I tried my best, my very best. But the evil in him had power over him that day, and when that happened it did him good to wound me. Remorse? I do not know what that is. But I have shrivelled into nothingness. I have become a wretched creature beside him. I look up to that boy now as though he were my farthest ancestor.

[MICHALINE *leads* LIESE BÄNSCH *toward the background.* LIESE *lays down her wreath at the feet of the dead.* KRAMER *looks up and meets her glance.*

LIESE BÄNSCH

Mr. Kramer, I, I, I . . . I'm so unhappy, so . . . People point at me on the street!

[*Pause.*]

KRAMER

[*Half to himself.*] Wherein does the lure lie that is so deadly? And yet, any one who has ex-

perienced it and still lives, lives with the thorn of it in his palm, and whatever he touches, the thorn pricks him.— But you may go home in quiet. Between him and us all is peace!

[*Pause.*]

[Michaline *and* Liese Bänsch *leave the studio.*

Kramer

[*Absorbed in the contemplation of his dead son and of the lights.*] These lights! These lights! How strange they are! I have burned many a light, Lachmann; I have seen the flame of many a light. But I tell you: This light is different. — Do I frighten you at all, Lachmann?

Lachmann

No. What should I be frightened of?

Kramer

[*Rising.*] There are people who take fright. But I am of the opinion, Lachmann, that one should know no fear in this world . . . Love, it is said, is strong as death. But you may confidently reverse the saying: Death is as gentle as love, Lachmann. I tell you that death has been maligned. That is the worst imposture in the world. Death is the mildest form of life: the masterpiece of the Eternal Love. [*He opens the great window. The chimes of evenfall are ringing softly. He is shaken as by frost.*] All this life is a fever — now hot, now cold.— Ye did the same to the Son of God! Ye do it to him to-day even as then! To-day, even as then, he will not die! . . . The chimes are speaking, do you not hear them? They are telling a story to the folk

on the streets — the story of me and of my son. They are saying that neither of us is a lost soul! You can hear their speech clearly, word for word. To-day it has come to pass; this day is the day.— The chime is more than the church, Lachmann, the call to the table more than the bread.— [*His eye falls upon the death-mask of Beethoven. He takes it down and, contemplating it, continues:*] Where shall we land? Whither are we driven? Why do we cry our cries of joy into the immense incertitude — we mites abandoned in the infinite? As though we knew whither we are tending! Thus you cried too! And did you know — even you? There is nothing in it of mortal feasts! Nor is it the heaven of the parsons! It is not this and it is not that. What . . . [*he stretches out his hands to heaven*] . . . what will it be in the end?

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