



THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR W. PINERO

The Freaks

AN IDYLL OF SUBURBIA

In Three Acts

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

THE FREAKS

AN IDYLL OF SUBURBIA

IN THREE ACTS

BY

ARTHUR PINERO



LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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*This play was produced in London, at the New
Theatre, on Thursday, February 14th, 1918.*

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Ordinary Mortals.

MRS. HERRICK, *née* SMITH (*a widow*).

RONALD }
SHEILA } (*her son and daughter*).

LADY BALL-JENNINGS } (*her sister and brother-*
SIR NORTON BALL-JENNINGS } *in-law*).

REVD. STEPHEN GLYN (*Vicar of St. Paul's, Mole Park*) } (*her bachelor*

MR. EDWARD WATERFIELD, M.R.C.S. } *friends*).

COLLINGRIDGE } (*her parlourmaids*).

LUFF

Extraordinary Mortals.

HORATIO TILNEY } (*late of Segantini's World-*
JAMES EDDOWES } *Renowned Mammoth In-*
THOMAS QUINCY PRATT } *ternational Hippodrome*
JULIE MAUD PRATT } *and Museum of Living*
ROSA BALMANO } *Marvels*).

Place.—"Marsden Lodge," Grand Avenue, Mole Park, the residence of MRS. HERRICK.

Time.—Before the War—those far-off days when, in our ignorance, small troubles seemed great, and minor matters important.

Mole Park, it is necessary to inform strangers to London, is a suburb about twelve miles from Charing Cross.

ACT I.

MRS. HERRICK GIVES A TEA-PARTY.

A fortnight passes.

ACT II.

SICKNESS IN THE HOUSE.

PART I.—Morning. PART II.—Afternoon.

PART III.—Evening.

A curtain will fall between the Parts.

Three weeks pass.

ACT III.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE FREAKS

THE FIRST ACT

MRS. HERRICK GIVES A TEA-PARTY

The scene is a drawing-room of the suburban type, prettily but conventionally furnished and decorated. In the wall facing the spectator two windows opening to the ground give a view of a flower-garden and tennis-lawn, and beyond, of a receding line of villas and gardens, suggesting that the house is one of an avenue of houses of a similar character. In the wall on the right is the fireplace, the grate being hidden by a bank of flowers, and on the farther side of the fireplace in the corner of the room, there is a comfortable "corner-seat." On the nearer side of the fireplace a door opens into the room from a living-hall—the scene of the Second and Third Acts—and opposite this door, in the left-hand wall, there is a companion door opening from a passage.

A semi-grand piano—set obliquely, its keyboard towards the windows—and a music-stool stand out into the room on the left. By the side of the piano there is a settee, and at each end of the settee an arm-chair.

In the middle of the room, a few feet from the wall facing the spectator, is an oblong table with books and knick-knacks upon it. On the left of this table

there is a chair, and in front of the table a fauteuil-stool. Close to the right-hand window are a small writing table and a chair, and at the farther side of the fireplace there is another arm-chair.

On the right-hand side of the room, balancing the group of furniture on the left, are a round table, two arm-chairs, and a second settee. The settee is on the right of the table, one of the chairs on its left, and the other chair behind the table.

A marble statuette stands upon a pedestal between the windows, and some "occasional" chairs, a cabinet full of china, a case of music-books, a jardinière, etc., occupy spaces not provided for in this description.

There is a bell-push on either side of the mantel-piece.

The light is that of a fine, warm afternoon in June, and the window on the left is partly open.

[Note — Throughout, "right" and "left" are the spectators' right and left, not the actor's.]

[SHEILA, a slim, graceful girl of twenty, is lying, propped up by cushions, on the settee by the piano, deep in a novel. SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS, unobserved by SHEILA, appear in the garden and stroll past the windows from right to left. LADY BALL-JENNINGS is carrying a sunshade, and SIR NORTON'S neck is protected by a handkerchief

which falls from under his straw hat. As they disappear, the door on the right opens and RONALD pops his head in. He is a good-looking, boyish young fellow, a year older than his sister. His dress suggests "the City."]

RONALD.

[*Seeing SHEILA and coming into the room.*] Hallo, old thing!

SHEILA.

[*Surprised.*] Hallo! What's brought you home so early? Why this treat?

RONALD.

[*Closing the door and advancing.*] Letter from Mums.

SHEILA.

Letter from Mums!

RONALD.

Asking me to be on hand at four o'clock.

SHEILA.

[*Shutting her book.*] Same here. I've had one, too.

RONALD.

You? [SHEILA rises and lays her book on the piano.] Anything up, Sheila? Where is mother?

SHEILA.

[*Smoothing herself out.*] In her bedroom. Bolted away directly after lunch; might have been on board

ship. [*Extracting a note from her waist-belt.*] Then she sent me down this.

RONALD.

[*Producing his pocket-book and taking a note from it.*] What on earth—— ?

SHEILA.

[*Reading.*] “ My darling girl. Be in the drawing-room at four without fail. Am resting on my sofa. Don’t disturb me.” [*To RONALD.*] When did you get yours ?

RONALD.

Found it in the City this morning.

SHEILA.

Posted last night !

RONALD.

[*Reading.*] “ My dearest boy. Do beg Mr. Lindenbaum, with my compliments, to allow you to leave the office early to-morrow. I particularly wish you to be home at four o’clock at latest. Your loving mother.”

SHEILA.

Why couldn’t she have told us ?

RONALD.

Exactly !

SHEILA.

[*Puckering her brow.*] She’s been jolly weird in her manner for days. [*Suddenly.*] Ronald !

RONALD.
Eh ?

SHEILA.
No chance that Mums has screwed up her courage,
and means to revolt, is there ?

RONALD.
Put her foot down !

SHEILA.
On the necks of the tyrants—this afternoon—— !

RONALD.
And can't do it without we're present—without
our moral support !

SHEILA.
Bonnie Scotland, if only she would !

RONALD.
By Jinks—— !

SHEILA.
[*Her tone changing to one of gloom.*] Oh, but she'd
have prepared us—confided in us. 'Tisn't as if she
didn't know our views.

RONALD.
[*Depressed.*] You're right; no reason for mystery.

SHEILA.
[*With a wry face.*] Besides, her rotten old sense of
duty ! Poor Mums'll never go back on that. She'd
let 'em jump on her chest first.

RONALD.

[*Darkly.*] Duty or no duty, I warn you, Sheila; Aunt Meg and Uncle Norton are rapidly making this house intolerable to me.

SHEILA.

And me—beasts!

RONALD.

Paupers!

SHEILA.

Locusts!

RONALD.

[*Walking away.*] Couple of arrogant, stuck-up nonentities! [*Kicking his legs about.*] Blow! Dash! Hang!

SHEILA.

Damn! [*Moving to the right.*] Damn, damn, damn, damn——!

[*COLLINGRIDGE, a neat, dignified parlourmaid, enters at the door on the right, followed by the*
 REVD. STEPHEN GLYN.

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*To SHEILA.*] Mr. Glyn.

SHEILA.

[*Giving her hand to GLYN.*] Vicar dear!

GLYN.

[*A bluff, burly man of fifty, with a short beard—as COLLINGRIDGE withdraws.*] How'r you, Sheila?

SHEILA.

[*Sweetly.*] Did you hear what I was saying as you came in ?

GLYN.

No.

SHEILA.

[*Whispering into his ear.*] Damn.

GLYN.

[*Pushing her from him gruffly but kindly and going to RONALD.*] Tsch! Get away with you!

SHEILA.

[*Laughing.*] Ha, ha!

RONALD.

[*On the left—shaking hands with GLYN familiarly.*] Well, Reverend!

GLYN.

Well, you cheeky boy! [*To SHEILA, who slips her arm through his.*] How's mother?

SHEILA.

The author of my being seems a bit nervy.

GLYN.

She sent me round a note this morning—

SHEILA

Note!

RONALD.

[To GLYN.] Asking you to be here at four ?

GLYN.

Yes.

SHEILA.

Rains notes ! [Showing her note.] We also have been favoured.

RONALD.

[Showing his note.] Sheila and I.

SHEILA.

We can't make out why she should communicate with her offspring by letter. [Pressing GLYN's arm.] Don't you think it rummy ?

GLYN.

I might, if I understood the meaning of the word.

RONALD.

Now, Rev, no starch !

[COLLINGRIDGE reappears, ushering in EDWARD WATERFIELD, a breezy, jovial man of seven-and-forty in the sober clothes of a doctor.]

SHEILA.

[Going to him.] Doctor !

RONALD.

Hallo, doc !

WATERFIELD.

[*As COLLINGRIDGE withdraws—shaking hands with SHEILA.*] Well, Pretty Girl, and how are you? Still turning all the boys' heads? [*She wrinkles her nose at him impudently and puts out the tip of her tongue.*] Thank you; perhaps you'll wait till I've asked to see it. [*Going to GLYN and shaking hands with him.*] I was just behind you, vicar; you didn't hear me whistle.

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] How's old Mrs. Bembridge to-day?

WATERFIELD.

[*Pursing his lips.*] H'm! [*Shaking hands with RONALD, as GLYN, muttering "Dear, dear!" moves away.*] Ronny, old chap!

RONALD.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] I say, doc, have you had a note from Mums?

WATERFIELD.

This morning.

SHEILA.

[*At his elbow.*] Asking you to turn up at four?

WATERFIELD.

Yes.

RONALD.

[*Showing his note and then putting it into his waist-coat-pocket.*] So've we all.

SHEILA.

[*Replacing her note in her belt after flourishing it at WATERFIELD.*] All of us.

WATERFIELD.

[*To RONALD and SHEILA.*] What's the matter ? [*Banteringly.*] You two kids been giving trouble lately, both of you ?

GLYN.

That's it; you've hit it, Waterfield. [*Sitting on the settee on the right.*] You and I are summoned to assist at the reprimanding of these young people for being naughty.

SHEILA.

[*Going to GLYN and standing over him.*] Naughty !

RONALD.

[*Punching WATERFIELD in the chest playfully.*] Giving trouble !

SHEILA.

[*To GLYN.*] My boots ! the world doesn't hold two better children than Ronny and me——

RONALD.

[*Continuing his attack on WATERFIELD.*] Hear, hear !

WATERFIELD.

[*Defending himself.*] Leave off, Ronald!

SHEILA.

[*To GLYN.*] Though it wouldn't be for want of provocation if we *did* give a little trouble!

GLYN.

Provocation? Stuff an' nonsense! What are you talking about, Sheila?

RONALD.

[*Advancing.*] Solemn fact, Rev.

SHEILA.

[*Plumping herself down beside GLYN and again slipping her arm through his.*] Oh, vicar! [*Nestling against him.*] Oh, ye banks and braes, our uncle and aunt!

RONALD.

[*In the middle of the room.*] Uncle Norton and Aunt Margaret!

WATERFIELD.

Now, shut up, Ronny; shut up, Sheila! Don't start that.

RONALD.

[*Turning upon WATERFIELD.*] Yes, you'll defend 'em, doc, 'cause Uncle Norton's always ailing, or imagines he is. Doctors love whatd'yecall'ems—hypochondriacs.

SHEILA.

Bask in them !

WATERFIELD.

[*Throwing himself into the chair on the extreme left.*]

Ha, ha, ha, ha !

RONALD.

A modest invalid one could stick——

SHEILA.

And a modest invalid's modest wife——

RONALD.

But, Columbus, the airs they give themselves !

SHEILA.

[*Withdrawing her arm from GLYN's and sitting upright.*] Overbearing—domineering,—interfering——

RONALD.

Selfish—jealous—greedy——

SHEILA.

[*Beating her knee with her fist.*] For the last six weeks Marsden Lodge has been simply hell !

GLYN.

[*Sharply.*] *What !*

SHEILA.

[*Resting her head against his shoulder.*] Simply—most unpleasant.

RONALD.

And who *are* they, when all's said and done !

SHEILA.

[*Softly.*] Yes; if I may put the question in the most ladylike language at my command, who the deuce *is* Uncle Norton ?

WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha !

GLYN.

[*Rising and going to the fireplace.*] Be quiet, Waterfield; you encourage her.

SHEILA.

[*To WATERFIELD, demurely.*] Yes, you encourage me, Waterfield.

RONALD.

[*With withering scorn.*] Uncle Norton is a City knight !

SHEILA.

[*Curling her lip.*] A City knight who can't even invest his money properly !

RONALD.

Anybody could have advised him that Maikop Oil 'ud let him down.

GLYN.

[*Dryly.*] Ah, pity your connection with the City is so recent, Ronald.

RONALD.

Stop it, Rev; none of your sarcasm !

SHEILA.

And then my silly, sentimental mother takes 'em in as P. G.'s ! Fancy ! One of the best houses in the Park taking paying guests !

RONALD.

[*Derisively.*] *Paying* guests ! Two and a half guineas a week !

SHEILA.

Not each; the pair !

RONALD.

[*Sneering.*] To do 'em justice, they stipulated for a monetary arrangement.

SHEILA.

To preserve their spirit of independence !

RONALD.

So that they might feel under no obligation !

SHEILA.

And for that munificent sum they bag two of our largest bedrooms and *my* bathroom——

RONALD.

And Mums's morning-room for Uncle Norton's study !

SHEILA.

Precious soon they'll be seizing the top and bottom places at table !

RONALD.

Aunt Meg *has* begun to carve—— !

GLYN.

[*Coming to RONALD, severely.*] Ronald !

SHEILA.

[*In a low voice.*] Now we're in for it ! [*Pattering with her feet on the floor.*] La, la, la !

GLYN.

[*To RONALD.*] Do you consider it decent to tell me and Dr. Waterfield all this ?

RONALD.

Why, you *know* it, Rev !

GLYN.

Another reason for not telling us. [*To SHEILA, as RONALD lounges up to the left-hand window.*] As for you—yes, you may look down your nose !—I don't believe you're your mother's daughter at all. [*SHEILA rises, her head drooping.*] Ashamed of you !

SHEILA.

Ah, no ! [*Winningly.*] There *is* good in me, vicar dear ; heaps and heaps of good. [*Sighing.*] But for

the moment it's got buried under a mighty, irresistible desire.

GLYN.

[*Relenting.*] Desire? [*His hands on her shoulders, fondly.*] What desire, child?

SHEILA.

[*Raising her beautiful, innocent eyes to his.*] To scrape my uncle and aunt to death with an oyster-shell.

WATERFIELD.

[*Jumping up and dancing with laughter.*] Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

GLYN.

[*In spite of himself.*] Ho, ho, ho——! [*To WATERFIELD, reprovingly.*] Waterfield! Waterfield——!

RONALD.

He, he, he! [*To SHEILA.*] Bravo, old thing!

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

Ho, ho, ho, ho——!

RONALD.

[*Leaving the window hurriedly.*] Look out, here they are! [*Retreating to the right-hand corner of the room, where SHEILA joins him.*] Ready with the oyster-shell, Sheila!

[*LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON enter at the open window on the left.* LADY BALL-

JENNINGS is a large, masterful, middle-aged woman with an aggressively cheerful manner ; SIR NORTON a lank, loose-limbed man of fifty-five. Everything about him is run to seed. His skin is withered and sallow, his hair and long mouse-coloured moustache are thin and mildewy, his eyes weak and faded, and his clothes hang on him like a misfit.]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Bearing down upon* GLYN.] Vicar! Who ever would have thought it! [*Shaking hands with him vigorously.*] And I was saying to Sir Norton this very morning, I was afraid our taking up our abode here was keeping you away!

GLYN.

Bless me, why should it!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Tapping him with her sunshade.*] Ah, people suffering from reverses are not always favourites even with the clergy! [*Discovering* WATERFIELD *and going to him.*] The doctor too! [*Shaking hands with* WATERFIELD.] We see more of him; [*tapping him with her sunshade*] but that's partly professional, isn't it?

WATERFIELD.

[*Constrainedly.*] Ha, ha, ha!

SIR NORTON.

[*Who has come forward and given a limp hand to GLYN—nodding to WATERFIELD.*] Doctor, we've met before to-day——

GLYN.

[*Brushing an object from SIR NORTON'S jacket.*] Excuse me—wasp——

SIR NORTON.

[*With a ghastly smile of resignation.*] Wasp! My dear vicar, there are more wasps in this garden than in any other garden in the United Kingdom.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Myriads!

SIR NORTON.

[*To WATERFIELD, blinking.*] No danger, I suppose, doctor?

WATERFIELD.

[*Reassuringly.*] Not much.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Not much! [*Shaking her finger at WATERFIELD.*] Shows how little you know of the state of his blood. Oh, you general practitioners, how casual you are! [*Turning to GLYN.*] We heard sounds of merriment just now. [*Moving away.*] Go on with your joking. Don't let us be dampers.

SIR NORTON.

[*Moving away.*] No, don't let us be wet blankets, pray. [*Catching sight of RONALD, who is making himself scarce behind SHEILA.*] Ronald! What are you doing here at this hour?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Surveying RONALD through her glasses.*] What indeed!

RONALD.

[*Advancing a step or two.*] Mother asked me to be back early, uncle.

SIR NORTON.

H'm! *That* won't answer, my boy; that won't get you to the top of the tree.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

No, that won't win you a Knighthood.

SIR NORTON.

T't, t't, t't! On the contrary.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To RONALD.*] However, since you *are* here, why don't you take your uncle's hat? [SIR NORTON gives his hat to RONALD and drops wearily into the chair at the farther end of the settee by the piano.] And you, Sheila! Can't you see I'm burdened with a sunshade? Come, come; bustle, bustle!

SHEILA.

[*Relieving LADY BALL-JENNINGS of her sunshade—sulkily.*] Sorry.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And fetch me a fan quickly; [*seating herself on the settee by the piano*] and you find one for your uncle, Ronald. Sharp, sharp, sharp! [RONALD and SHEILA go out at the door on the right, making hideous grimaces at GLYN as they pass him.] Now, doctor; come and talk to me! [*Patting the settee on which she is sitting.*] Come along and be amusing!

WATERFIELD.

[*Sitting beside her with forced alacrity.*] Certainly—er—certainly. Ha, ha!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Shaking her finger at GLYN, who is again at the fireplace.*] That bad, unchristian vicar removes himself from me as far as possible, I notice.

GLYN.

[*Coming forward and sitting on the fauteuil-stool.*] No, no——

[COLLINGRIDGE and LUFF, the latter a second and less imposing parlourmaid, enter at the door on the left, carrying a low, double-leaved tea-table.]

COLLINGRIDGE *has a tea-cloth of silk and lace tucked under her arm. They set the table in front of the settee on the right and raise the leaves. Then COLLINGRIDGE unfolds the tea-cloth, and she and LUFF lay it methodically.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Elevating her eyebrows.*] What's this? The large tea-table, Collingridge?

COLLINGRIDGE.

Yes, m'lady.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And why the *large* table, may I inquire? The ordinary table is ample for two or three extra persons.

COLLINGRIDGE.

Mrs. Herrick blew down the tube a little while ago, m'lady, to say there's to be twelve altogethah!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Twelve?

SIR NORTON.

Twelve!

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*Languidly.*] Five are arriving later on, in a lump

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

In a lump?

SIR NORTON.

In a lump!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

The best tea-cloth too! Who *are* they, Collingridge?

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*Retiring, followed by LUFF.*] Dun'no, I'm shaw, m'lady.

[*As COLLINGRIDGE and LUFF go out at the door on the left, SHEILA and RONALD return on the right.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Receiving a fan from SHEILA.*] Sheila, are you aware that your mother is giving a tea-party this afternoon?

SHEILA.

Tea-party, aunt?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Don't echo me, there's a dear girl. Collingridge has orders to prepare tea for twelve. Five are yet to come.

SIR NORTON.

In a lump.

SHEILA.

[*Tossing her head.*] Really? [*Moving away.*]
Good business!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Good business——!

SIR NORTON.

[*As RONALD presents him with a fan.*] Perhaps you can enlighten us, my boy—— ?

RONALD.

[*Almost disrespectfully, joining SHEILA at the music-stool.*] Regret my inability to do so, sir. Wow, wow!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Over her shoulder.*] Wow, wow! Is that the way you speak to your uncle! [*To SIR NORTON.*] This accounts for Dorothy's note, asking us to be on the spot this afternoon.

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN.*] I assume, then, that you are here by invitation, vicar ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] And you, doctor ?

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*Nodding.*] Yes.

SIR NORTON.

[*Drawing in air through his teeth.*] The vicar of the parish and the doctor one can't see too much of——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Tapping WATERFIELD with her fan.*] Can't see enough of.

SIR NORTON.

[*Leaning back in his chair and crossing his legs.*]
But I confess I am not always in the mood for a crowd.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Most inconsiderate !

SIR NORTON.

Dorothy has two regular At Home days per month. Surely—— !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

I was content with two At Home days a month when I had my own establishment.

SIR NORTON.

[*Smiling painfully at LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*]
Ah, what sufficed for you, Margaret, in your important position——

[*He is interrupted by the opening of the door on the right.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Here is dear Dorothy——

[*MRS. HERRICK enters quietly. She is a timid, gentle, sweet-looking woman, some years younger than LADY BALL-JENNINGS. She is carrying a hand-bag and has an anxious expression. GLYN and WATERFIELD rise eagerly to greet her.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Shaking hands with them clingingly.*] Vicar—
doctor—how kind of you!

WATERFIELD.

Kind of us! Ho, ho!

GLYN.

[*Patting her shoulder.*] My dear!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To RONALD, who brushes past SIR NORTON, to that gentleman's evident annoyance, and comes to her—kissing him.*] They have let you off, then, my pet.

RONALD.

Jack Lindenbaum was awf'ly civil, Mums.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Genially.*] Yes, Ronald hasn't made himself so
absolutely indispensable at the office, Dolly, that he
can't be spared.

SIR NORTON.

Ha, ha, ha! No, it's at tea-parties that Ronald
is indispensable, it appears, Dorothy.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*As GLYN, WATERFIELD and RONALD move away
in different directions—to MRS. HERRICK.*] Colling-
ridge tells us you are expecting quite a big gathering

this afternoon, Dolly dear. [*Glancing at her gown.*] You ought to have warned me.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Laying her bag upon the round table, nervously.*] It—it's about the people who are coming by-and-by that I want to talk to you all. They're not due till half-past four. [*To those who are standing.*] Please sit down, everybody. [*Beckoning to GLYN and indicating the chair behind the round table.*] Vicar— [*To WATERFIELD, pointing to the fauteuil-stool.*] Sit there, doctor.

[*She seats herself in the chair on the left of the table, whereupon GLYN takes his place by her. WATERFIELD sits on the fauteuil-stool, RONALD at the writing-table, and SHEILA on the music-stool.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Viewing MRS. HERRICK through her glasses.*] Why, Dolly, you're trembling; you are positively! And how flushed your face is!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Putting her hands to her cheeks and laughing faintly.*] Ha, ha! I'm afraid that what I'm doing won't in the least meet with your approval, Meg—yours or Norton's—

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

What you are—doing ?

MRS. HERRICK.

And I know I shall get into dreadful hot water with my boy and girl into the bargain.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Consigning RONALD and SHEILA to oblivion by a wave of her fan.*] Pish !

RONALD.

[*Remorsefully.*] No, you won't, Mums.

SHEILA.

[*In the same tone.*] No, you won't, mother darling.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Casting an appealing smile at GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] At any rate, I've taken the precaution to have my old and faithful friends near me——

GLYN.

[*Touching her arm.*] Ah—— !

WATERFIELD.

[*Chuckling.*] Ha, ha ! *We'll* stick up for you, Mrs. Herrick ; *we'll* protect you. Go ahead !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Yes, don't beat about the bush so, Dorothy. *Who* are Sir Norton and I to have the pleasure, and privilege, of helping you to entertain ?

MRS. HERRICK.

They—they are not ordinary folks, Meg dear, by any means. [*To GLYN and WATERFIELD, moistening her lips.*] Vicar—doctor—you've heard me speak of my brother Charles—my poor brother Charles who died in America the year before last—— ?

GLYN.

Often. And I saw him once, here.

MRS. HERRICK.

Of course; I'd forgotten.

WATERFIELD.

So did I. Charming fellow !

GLYN.

Charming.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Her mouth hardening.*] Oh, yes, my brother Charles had *charm* decidedly.

SIR NORTON.

[*Sententiously.*] Fatal gift !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Staring at Mrs. HERRICK, startled.*] But what, in heaven's name—— ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] I've never told you—it's the one bit of family history I've kept from you—I've never told you—what his profession was.

GLYN.

[*Shaking his head.*] No.

RONALD.

[*In an undertone, sheepishly.*] Oh, I say, mother—— !

SHEILA.

[*In the same way.*] Mums !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Gasping.*] Gracious me, you're not going to wash our dirty linen before Mr. Glyn and Dr. Waterfield, Dorothy !

SIR NORTON.

[*Closing his eyes.*] Heugh !

MRS. HERRICK.

There was nothing discreditable in it; only such things are apt to be misunderstood. [*Boldly.*] He was the proprietor of a circus, and used to ride in the ring.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

After driving round it in a gaudy coach with a team of white ponies. There! A nice revelation!

RONALD.

[*Half rising, defiantly.*] Anyhow, he was a jolly good sort, Aunt Meg——

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*Hushing him.*] Ronald!

SHEILA.

[*Loudly.*] Ripping! Top-hole!

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*To SHEILA.*] Sheila!

MRS. HERRICK.

He ran away from home when he was quite a lad—he didn't get on well with my father——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

With none of us. [*With another wave of her fan.*] It may have been our fault.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Softly.*] He was fond of *me*, Meg.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Fanning herself energetically.*] He left you a miserable little legacy, if that denotes affection.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Picking up her bag and opening it.*] Poor Charles's estate wasn't a large one, and he knew I am very comfortably off. [*Producing a legal-looking document from the bag—to GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] The bulk of his money is held in trust to provide small annuities for some of the members of his troupe. [*Quaking.*] And—and that brings me to the point.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Sharply.*] Point ?

MRS. HERRICK.

The—the injunction he laid upon me, which I have shamefully neglected.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Drawing a long breath.*] Oh-h-h-h, I see ! Mercy on us—— !

SIR NORTON.

[*Solemnly.*] Dorothy, this is an act of lunacy.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Hastily handing the document to GLYN.*] A c-c-copy of my brother's will, vicar. [*GLYN puts on his pince-nez.*] It didn't get into the English papers; he was an American citizen, and had no property in this country.

GLYN.

[*Reading the endorsement.*] “ Will of Charles Holbrook Smith, otherwise Carlo Segantini.”

MRS. HERRICK.

He called himself Segantini in business. [*Replacing the bag on the table.*] Open it and read the clause I’ve marked in pencil. [*Helping GLYN to find the passage.*] This one. Read it aloud. [*Prompting him.*] “ And without seeking—— ”

GLYN.

[*Reading.*] “ And without seeking to impose it as a legal obligation, I entreat my sister Dorothy to avail herself of any opportunity that may arise to extend to the several persons benefiting by this trust, to whom I have become attached from long and intimate association, such practical sympathy and kindness as her heart will dictate.”

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Fuming.*] Dorothy, I’ve said it again and again, and I repeat it—if ever there was an absurd, heedless request—— !

SIR NORTON.

Outrageous !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN and WATERFIELD, shrinkingly.*] There are seventeen beneficiaries—*were*, to be exact—two

have passed away. Ten are fulfilling engagements on the Continent; and the rest have been in London for over a month, and till the last few days I've scarcely taken the slightest notice of them!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Fiddle! You were sending fruit and poultry to a horrible address in South Lambeth weeks ago, to my own knowledge. I saw it in the tradesmen's books.

MRS. HERRICK.

Fruit and poultry! Do you think *that* is what poor Charles meant, Margaret? [*Putting the document back into the bag—passionately.*] No! No, no!

RONALD.

[*Rejoicing at the chance of annoying his uncle and aunt—rising.*] No; 'course it isn't.

SHEILA.

[*Also bobbing up—in the same spirit.*] Certainly not.

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*To RONALD and SHEILA.*] Sit down.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*As RONALD and SHEILA subside.*] No; he intended that I should take them under my wing, if they drifted to London, and make them part of my life—

SIR NORTON AND LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Throwing up their hands.*] Oh!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Starting to her feet.*] And the first step towards carrying out Charles's wish—[*moving to the middle of the room*] I am extremely sorry, Norton—I am extremely sorry, Meg—if I upset you—the first step towards it—is—as you have guessed——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Stonily.*] Five of them will be here to tea presently!

SIR NORTON.

In a lump!

MRS. HERRICK.

Y—yes.

[*After a moment's pause, LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON rise and walk across to the fireplace with unnatural calmness. Then RONALD and SHEILA and GLYN and WATERFIELD rise and surround MRS. HERRICK.*]

RONALD.

[*Embracing MRS. HERRICK exultingly.*] Good old Mums! Eh, Sheila?

SHEILA.

[*Pulling MRS. HERRICK away from RONALD and kissing her.*] Gold medal!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To RONALD and SHEILA, weakly.*] Oh, my dear children, I am so glad you are not angry with me!

RONALD.

[*Dropping into the chair on the left of the round table and sticking his legs out.*] Angry!

SHEILA.

[*Sitting on the settee by the piano.*] Not us!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN and WATERFIELD, giving each a hand.*] Vicar—doctor—?

GLYN.

[*Pressing her hand.*] And you were inclined to apologize for your brother's profession!

WATERFIELD.

Splendid chap!

GLYN.

Worthy of his sister.

WATERFIELD.

[*Dubiously, rubbing his head.*] Hope they won't presume on your good nature, though, Mrs. Herrick.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Reproachfully.*] Oh, doctor! [*Leaving GLYN and WATERFIELD and seating herself beside SHEILA.*] If

you had seen them, and chatted with them, as I have in their humble lodgings, you wouldn't be anxious on that score.

SHEILA.

[*Her arm round MRS. HERRICK.*] O'ho, this is why you've been giving me the slip lately, artful woman !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] They're out of shop, as they term it, and their annuities are barely enough to keep their heads above water; but their pride is wonderful.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Breaking in, in deep tones.*] The females of the party—if there are any—— ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Inquiringly.*] Daring equestrians ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Muscular ladies who leap through hoops ?

SIR NORTON.

And the men—— ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Jockeys—acrobats—buffoons—— ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Facetiously.*] To drink tea in the company of a clown in mufti would be an interesting experience.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Mirthlessly.*] Ho, ho, ho, ho !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*In a level voice.*] No, Margaret; the poor souls who are coming don't — don't *perform*, strictly speaking.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Not ?

MRS. HERRICK.

No; they—[*with an effort*] they're Freaks, Meg.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Blankly.*] Freaks ?

SIR NORTON.

Freaks !

RONALD AND SHEILA.

[*Aghast.*] F-f-freaks !

MRS. HERRICK.

Human oddities, doomed to exhibit themselves as a side-show of a circus, or in a booth at a fair.

RONALD.

[*Rising and joining* GLYN and WATERFIELD.] Oh, Mums !

SHEILA.

[*Withdrawing her arm from* MRS. HERRICK *and edging to the end of the settee.*] Mother !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*In a flutter.*] Oh, but they wouldn't stoop to a fair! The rise of the cinema has knocked the stuffing out the circus, Mr. Tilney says, but they'd die sooner than stoop to a fair!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Tilney?

SIR NORTON.

Who's Tilney?

MRS. HERRICK.

He's the leading spirit of the little group; he shepherds them, as it were.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And what species of monstrosity does Mr. Tilney belong to?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Timorously.*] He—he's a skeleton.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Skeleton!

MRS. HERRICK.

A living skeleton.

SIR NORTON.

[*Hoarsely.*] Living——!

MRS. HERRICK.

The—the Skeleton Nut is his professional description. He—he's quite a superior young man.

[*Again there is a short pause, and then WATERFIELD turns away abruptly and, sitting in the chair on the left of the oblong table, hides his face in his hands. LADY BALL-JENNINGS advances, and SIR NORTON, waving his arms, paces up and down on the right.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*At the chair on the left of the round table.*] Dorothy!

RONALD.

[*Going to the open window.*] My hat!

SHEILA.

[*Rising and flouncing away to her brother as GLYN seats himself on the fauteuil-stool and gazes fixedly at the carpet.*] Mums, how could you!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Searching for her handkerchief, tearfully.*] D-d-don't be cruel, children. [*Trying to repress a sob.*] The—the sight of him isn't at all repellent. [*Wiping her eyes.*] He's terribly thin; but he tells me his bones don't actually protrude till he's had a fortnight's training.

WATERFIELD.

[*Unable to contain himself.*] Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Beseechingly.*] Doctor—— !

RONALD.

[*Fiercely.*] Nothing to laugh at, doc.

SHEILA.

Sh'd think not !

WATERFIELD.

Ho, ho, ho—— !

GLYN.

Waterfield—Waterfield—— !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Who is now sitting glaring into space.*] Is this a dream ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Sinking into the chair at the farther side of the fireplace.*] A nightmare !

WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha, ha—— !

SIR NORTON AND LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Indignantly.*] Dr. Waterfield—— !

[*The toot of a motor-horn, sounding not far off on the right, produces silence.*]

RONALD.

[*After a pause.*] Car.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Holding her heart.*] They—they're before their time. [*The horn sounds again impatiently.*] It—it's Proctor's motor char-à-banc; I—I hired it to bring them over.

SHEILA.

Ye gods! An open vehicle!

MRS. HERRICK.

Sheila, you're brutal! It was the only conveyance I could hit upon that would accommodate the giant's legs.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Falling back in her chair.*] G-g-giant!

SIR NORTON.

[*Struggling to his feet.*] Giant!

RONALD AND SHEILA.

Giant!

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*Rising, the former with a doubtful look, the latter with twinkling eyes and his hand over his mouth.*] Giant?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*In distress.*] Oh! Oh! Oh! Don't you desert me, vicar. [*To WATERFIELD.*] Doctor, he's an exceedingly gentle, inoffensive creature——

SHEILA.

[*Suddenly.*] Hark ![*Everybody listens. Some shrill, treble voices are heard cheering.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Heavily.*] Cheers !

SIR NORTON.

[*Clasping his temples.*] The populace !

RONALD.

Oh, confound it, Mums—— !

SHEILA.

[*Flopping against RONALD.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha ![*The cheering is repeated. LADY BALL-JENNINGS rises and goes to SIR NORTON in a trance.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Her head on the rail of the settee, her eyes closed.*]
 I remember; Proctor's boy was present when I gave the order. I—I was obliged to explain to Proctor. The lad must have told his playmates—(*The door on the right opens and COLLINGRIDGE appears. Her aspect is wild and she is clutching her bosom. MRS. HERRICK pulls herself together and rises.*) M-m-my guests ?

[COLLINGRIDGE, *supporting herself by the door-handle, murmurs an inarticulate affirmative. At the same moment TILNEY is heard speaking in the hall.*]

TILNEY.

Now, you don't want your cap, Jimmy; neither do you, Tom. Lay 'em on the table. Julie, take Jimmy's cap from him. No, no, Rosa, keep *your* hat on; you're a lady. Follow me, the lot of you! Ready? One—two—three—go! [HORATIO TILNEY *enters briskly—a young man of three-and-thirty with a pale face and sunken cheeks and an emaciated body. His shabby suit of blue serge fits him tightly and accentuates his leanness; but his clean linen and gay necktie give him a smart air, and his manner is simple and engaging and full of quiet humour. MRS. HERRICK advances to him and he shakes hands with her warmly.*] Here we are, ma'am. Most enjoyable ride, and an enthusiastic demonstration from the juveniles outside.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] Vicar—doctor—
[*to TILNEY, as they come forward*] Mr. Glyn—our vicar—Dr. Waterfield—[*introducing TILNEY*] Mr. Tilney—

TILNEY.

[*Going to them and shaking hands with them.*] How'r you, sir—[*to WATERFIELD*] and you, sir? Glad to make your acquaintance.

MRS. HERRICK.

M-m-my sister—Lady Ball-Jennings—Sir Norton Ball-Jennings—

TILNEY.

[*Going to SHEILA and RONALD and shaking hands with them.*] How'r you, ma'am—pardon—ought t'say m'lady, oughtn't I—[*to RONALD*] how'r you, sir?

RONALD.

[*Frowning.*] No, no; no, no. We're—

MRS. HERRICK.

No, no; that's my son and daughter—

TILNEY.

Ha, ha! Thought there was something wrong. My mistake. [*Going to LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON and shaking hands with them.*] Now we're right, aren't we, and no harm done. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

[*LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON accept TILNEY'S salutation helplessly. SHEILA and RONALD, astonished at TILNEY'S freedom,*

titter to each other, and WATERFIELD is again convulsed.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Her hand to her brow.*] Where—where are the others?

TILNEY.

By Jove, yes, you may well ask, ma'am! [*By the tea-table, calling into the hall.*] Oh, I say, Jimmy, wake up there! Give him a shove, somebody! [*To MRS. HERRICK.*] They're shy, ma'am; they're shy. [*To those in the hall.*] *That's the ticket! All together! At last we've got a move on! [Coaxingly.] Don't be funky, Jimmy; don't be funky, ol' man.*

[*JAMES EDDOWES enters reluctantly, closely followed by JULIE MAUD PRATT, THOMAS QUINCY PRATT, and ROSA BALMANO. EDDOWES, who is muffled up in a rusty-black cloak reaching below his knees, is about thirty-five years of age and between eight and nine feet high. His hair is long and clubbed, his face of a sickly colour, his expression sad and wistful. The two PRATTS are "midgets" with lined, wizen features, a tottery gait, and heads which, being too heavy for their necks, have a tendency to lop on one side. Notwithstanding their physical defects, however,*

they have a cute look and are obviously very vain. ROSA is a short, almost stunted young woman of two-and-twenty with the frame of a gymnast. She resembles her comrades in the unhealthy pallor of her complexion, but her eyes are big and luminous and her whole personality is arresting. She and JULIE are dressed in their "best," cheaply and tawdrily, JULIE especially aiming at the extreme of fashion. PRATT wears a frock-coat and a fancy waistcoat, both belonging to a bygone period, and has a large flower in his button-hole, and his tiny feet are incased in brand-new patent-leather shoes. As soon as the visitors are in the room, COLLINGRIDGE escapes from it quickly, slamming the door behind her.]

TILNEY.

[Bringing EDDOWES to MRS. HERRICK.] Shake hands with the kind lady, Jimmy. [EDDOWES obeys, dully and mechanically.] Capital! [Presenting EDDOWES to the company while MRS. HERRICK greets the PRATTS and ROSA.] This is James Eddowes, ladies and gentlemen. Born at Mevagissey in Cornwall, where he was discovered by Mr. Segantini in the year eighteen-ninety-five. Weren't you, Jimmy?

EDDOWES.

[*In a weak, plaintive voice.*] Yes.

TILNEY.

Gee! That's the way to rattle on. [*Leading EDDOWES round the room.*] Make your bow, Jimmy. [*EDDOWES bows like an automaton to GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] And again. [*EDDOWES bows to SHEILA and RONALD.*] First-rate! [*As EDDOWES faces SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Tell the ladies and gentlemen how tall you are, Jimmy.

EDDOWES.

[*As before.*] Eight-feet-two-inches in my stockings.

TILNEY.

Eight-feet-two in his stockings *or* socks. [*Pointing to the chair behind the round table.*] Sit down, ol' man. [*Settling EDDOWES in the chair and loosening the collar of his cloak.*] 'Scuse his cloak. We keep him wrapped up, indoors and out, all weathers; he's delicate. [*To EDDOWES, patting him on the back.*] There you are! Not frightened now, Jimmy, are we?

EDDOWES.

[*Mournfully.*] No.

TILNEY.

[*Motioning the PRATTS to come forward*] Julie—Tom—[*The little people stumble in their haste to get to*

him. He catches them dexterously and steadies them.]
 Hold up, Julie; steady on your pins, Thomas Quincy!
[He presents them to the company, straightening their heads on their shoulders and putting them generally in order as he does so.] Julie Maud Pratt—Thomas Quincy Pratt—natives of the State of Illinois in America, and reputed to be the smallest adults living. Stopped growing, Julie when she was seven, Tom when he was nine, but are remarkably intelligent. *[To PRATT.]* Aren't you, Thomas?

PRATT.

[With a strong American drawl—inflating his little chest.] I b'lieve so.

TILNEY.

[To JULIE.] And you, Julie Maud?

JULIE.

[With the same accent—leeringly.] Should'n be surprised.

TILNEY.

Make your bow, Tom; make your bow, Julie.
[Leading them round the room.] Hardly a habitable spot on the globe they haven't been shown at. *[Presenting them to LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON.]* Decorated by three Presidents and two crowned heads. *[To the PRATTS.]* Got your medals at home, haven't you?

PRATT.

Yaas.

JULIE.

We hev.

TILNEY.

You're through. [He picks JULIE up lightly and plops her into the chair on the left of the round table. Then he tucks PRATT under his arm and carries him to the settee by the piano and deposits him there. Having thus disposed of the PRATTS, TILNEY calls to ROSA.]

Rosa. [*She advances to him slowly with a half-scared, half-sullen look.*] Miss Rosa Balmano, ladies and gentlemen—the Human Knot. Has the gift of tying herself into a knot with her arms and legs which she defies the strength of a dozen men to unravel. Don't you, Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*Huskily, hanging her head.*] Twen'y men could'n untie me.

TILNEY.

Rosa was born under canvas at Arbroath in Scotland, of mixed parentage—Irish mother, Spanish father. Originally apprenticed to the high and lofty; but lost her nerve at the age of ten and was turned over to us as a speciality. [*Adjusting a string of common beads at ROSA's throat.*] Weren't you, ol' woman ?

ROSA.

[*Making a lip*] Never c'd do nothin' 'cept my knot.

TILNEY.

[*Merrily.*] A limited but brilliant repertory !
Ha, ha !

ROSA.

[*In a low tone, scowling at him.*] Now, then Raiche, cheese it !

TILNEY.

Ha, ha, ha ! [*Leading her round.*] Miss Rosa Balmano.

SIR NORTON.

[*Standing with LADY BALL-JENNINGS, her arm through his—to TILNEY, with ironical politeness.*] Your claim to distinction, I gather, Mr.—er——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Who has seated herself on the settee on the right and is plucking apprehensively at the table-cloth.*] T-T Tilney.

SIR NORTON.

Your claim to distinction is your abnormal lack of flesh ?

TILNEY.

[*Putting ROSA on to the fauteuil-stool.*] That's it, sir ; and I really blush for being so frightfully out of form. Fat as a pig !

SIR NORTON.

[*Regarding him curiously.*] And your origin—— ?

TILNEY.

[*With a change of manner.*] Oh—[*his tongue in his cheek*] oh, I was found at a workhouse door, in a washerwoman's basket with a bottle of skim-milk. [*Seeing that PRATT has sunk into a heap and hurrying to him.*] Whoop ! Sustain yourself, Thomas Quincy !

SHEILA AND RONALD.

[*Completely won over by TILNEY'S good humour—looking on laughingly while he shakes the little fellow up.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha !

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

[*Also highly amused.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Retiring with SIR NORTON to the corner-seat.*] Revolting !

TILNEY.

[*Putting a finishing touch to PRATT.*] Accidents will happen, won't they, Mr. Pratt ? [*Sitting in the chair at the farther end of the settee by the piano and pulling off PRATT'S left-hand glove—to ROSA.*] Better take your gloves off, Rosa, or you'll mess 'em when tea comes ; [*to JULIE*] and you, Julie Maud. [*WATER-*

FIELD *seats himself beside PRATT and removes the right-hand glove.*] Thank you, sir. [GLYN *sits in the chair on the extreme left.*] Jimmy dropped *his* gloves on the road; [to EDDOWES] didn't you, Jimmy ?

EDDOWES.

[*Sitting like a carved image.*] Yes.

JULIE.

[*Taking off a glove.*] Careluss.

PRATT.

Yaas, an' they was noo f' th' occasion; [*displaying his shoes*] same as my shoes.

TILNEY.

[*Folding PRATT'S gloves neatly and pocketing them.*] Ha, ha ! You conceited little monkey !

PRATT.

[*To GLYN and WATERFIELD.*] Two-an'-a-haa'f dollars, them shoes, gen'lemen.

GLYN.

Beautiful !

WATERFIELD.

Worth double.

PRATT.

[*Pointing to TILNEY'S necktie.*] Raiche purchased his tie 's mornin' at the same em-porium.

TILNEY.

[*Slapping PRATT'S hand.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha! You needn't give me away, Thomas Quincy.

[*There is more laughter from SHEILA and RONALD and from GLYN and WATERFIELD.*]

ROSA.

[*To TILNEY.*] Raiche——

TILNEY.

[*Turning to her.*] Hello!

[*She rolls her gloves, which are of white cotton, into a ball and throws them to him. He catches them deftly and puts them into his pocket.*]

ROSA AND TILNEY.

[*As he catches them—unconsciously, with a gesture from the circus.*] Hi!

SHEILA.

[*Running to JULIE, who, having taken off one glove is unsuccessfully tugging at the other.*] Scissors! That atom'll have a fit. [*To JULIE.*] Let me——

JULIE.

[*Offended.*] Thaanks; I can vurra wull slide out o' my gloves without outside help.

SHEILA.

Ho, ho! As you please. [*The glove comes off suddenly and, as a result, JULIE collapses.*] There now! [*Collecting her and straightening her head.*] Ha, ha, ha!

PRATT.

[*Relishing the mishap.*] He, he, he!

JULIE.

[*Tartly.*] Thomas Quincy, yew jes' shut yewer face!

TILNEY.

Julie—Julie——

SHEILA.

[*Giving JULIE'S gloves to TILNEY, who rises to receive them.*] What an awfully good mother you are to them all, Mr.—[*puzzled*] Raiche?——

TILNEY.

Short for Horatio—my Christian name——

[*They continue talking. LUFF, carrying a stand containing two uncut cakes upon dishes and a plate of sweet biscuits, opens the door on the left to admit COLLINGRIDGE, who enters with a tray on which are cups and saucers, a jug of milk and another of cream, a sugar-basin, etc. The tray, jugs, and sugar-basin are of silver. COLLINGRIDGE, whose eyes are*

bolting, staggers slightly at the sight of JULIE and EDDOWES. LUFF, at her heels, is similarly affected.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*As COLLINGRIDGE sets the tray upon the tea-table.*]
D-d-don't bring in tea till I ring for it, Collingridge.

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*Controlling her emotions.*] N-no, madam

[*She goes out stiffly at the door on the right.*

LUFF places the stand in front of the tea-table and follows her. MRS. HERRICK watches the servants out of the room.]

JULIE.

[*Admiring the silver.*] My, but that's fine! [*To PRATT.*] Thomas Quincy!

PRATT.

Yaas, Joolie Maud?

JULIE.

[*Pointing to the silver.*] Notus the metal?

GLYN AND WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha!

TILNEY.

[*To JULIE.*] Julie——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Turning and addressing TILNEY.*] B-b-before we have tea I should like to say a few words to you, Mr. Tilney—you and your companions——

TILNEY.

Cert'nly, ma'am.

MRS. HERRICK.

And after tea we will go round the garden and—
and see the flowers.

JULIE.

[*One eye on MRS. HERRICK, the other on the cakes.*]
After tea.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To JULIE, feebly.*] Yes, dear, I said after tea.

TILNEY.

[*To JULIE.*] The lady *said* after tea, Julie.

JULIE.

[*To PRATT.*] Thomas Quincy——

PRATT.

Yaas, Joolie Maud ?

JULIE.

[*Pointing to the cakes.*] Notus the caakes ?

TILNEY.

Ssh, ssh !

SHEILA.

[To ROSA.] May I sit beside you ?

ROSA.

[*Shifting to the end of the fauteuil-stool, loweringly.*]
I don' mind.

TILNEY.

[To ROSA.] Yes, you do, Rosa; you know you'll be delighted if the young lady sits next to you. [To SHEILA, *with a wink.*] She's shy, miss; she's shy.

ROSA.

[To TILNEY, *as SHEILA sits beside her and takes her hand—almost whimpering.*] Tol' yer 'fore we come out, I hain't useter sercierty.

TILNEY.

Yes, you *are*, Rosa. Think of the thousands o' people you've shaken hands with in business. Not used to——! [To MRS. HERRICK.] Beg your pardon, ma'am.

[*He resumes his seat and RONALD perches himself upon the edge of the oblong table.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Gaining firmness as she proceeds.*] In the first place, Mr. Tilney, I—I bid you all a hearty welcome to Marsden Lodge. I—I ought to have asked you

earlier—as soon as I heard from you that you were in London—but I—[*self-accusingly.*] well, I didn't.

TILNEY.

[*Cheerfully.*] Better late than never, ma'am.

MRS. HERRICK.

Now, however, that we—we've broken the ice, I—

JULIE.

[*Crinkling her forehead.*] Broke *whaat* ice ?

TILNEY.

[*To JULIE.*] Ssh !

MRS. HERRICK.

Now that we've broken the ice, I—I trust that, as long as we are within easy reach of each other, you will be frequent visitors here.

TILNEY.

[*With feeling.*] You—you're a brick, ma'am.
[*To EDDOWES.*] Hear that, Jimmy ?

EDDOWES.

[*Unmoved.*] Yes.

TILNEY.

Hear that, Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*Her eyes on the ground.*] Yus

TILNEY.

[*Bringing his hands together softly as a hint to PRATT.*] Thomas Quincy!

PRATT.

[*Clapping his hands.*] He, he, he!

TILNEY.

Julie Maud!

[*They give MRS. HERRICK a round of applause, perfunctorily on the part of EDDOWES and ROSA. WATERFIELD is seized with contortions and again hides his face in his hands.*]

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] Waterfield—Waterfield—

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To the applauders.*] T-t-thank you. [*Fanning herself with her handkerchief and then gently dabbing her brow.*] This leads to a suggestion I have to make to you—which is—which is that, while the summer lasts, two or three of you should spend every week-end at Marsden Lodge—Saturday to Monday—and be as much as possible in the fresh air. [RONALD and SHEILA and GLYN and WATERFIELD stare at MRS. HERRICK in amazement, and SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS, their eyes starting out of their heads

and their mouths open, rise and come to the fireplace.]
 I—I am sorry I am unable to put you all up at once, but you must accept the will for the deed. [*Dabbing her brow again.*] What do you say, Mr. Tilney—shall we begin next Saturday ?

TILNEY.

[*Thickly.*] By Jove, ma'am, your—your kindness almost takes my breath away ! [*To EDDOWES.*] Hear the lady's proposal, Jimmy ?

EDDOWES.

[*As before.*] Yes.

TILNEY.

[*To ROSA.*] Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*As before.*] Yus.

TILNEY.

[*To the PRATTS.*] Julie Maud—Thomas Quincy—
 [*The five are about to start another round of applause, but MRS. HERRICK checks them by raising her hands appealingly.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

Thank you—thank you—thank you. [*To TILNEY.*] Who—who shall be the first, Mr. Tilney—— ?

TILNEY.

Jimmy for one, ma'am, if agreeable to you. [EDDOWES *stirs uneasily.*] Jimmy's more in need of fresh air than any of us; [to EDDOWES] aren't you, Jimmy ?

EDDOWES.

[*Quaking.*] No.

TILNEY.

Yes, you *are*, Jimmy. [To MRS. HERRICK.] Let Jimmy and Rosa be the first, ma'am. She's never happy when he's out of her sight. He's her baby; [to ROSA] isn't he, Rosa ?

ROSA.

Yus.

JULIE.

[*Snappishly.*] Guess he ain't Rosa's baby more'n he is mine.

TILNEY.

[To JULIE.] Julie—Julie——

ROSA.

[*Flaring up.*] Wot, Joolie Maud ! When it was through your meddlin' with 'im while I was lyin' sick in my cabin that 'e caught 'is bad cold on board the steamer !

TILNEY.

[To ROSA.] Ssh, ssh !

JULIE.

[*In a fury.*] Yew dare accuse me of that, Rosa Balmano——!

TILNEY.

[*To JULIE.*] Silence!

JULIE.

I call Raiche t'witnuss——! [TILNEY rises *authoritatively.*] Raiche, I call yew t'witnuss——! [*Collapsing again.*] Owh!

TILNEY.

[*Shaking her up roughly.*] Serve you right, you nasty little vixen!

PRATT.

[*As before.*] He, he, he!

JULIE.

[*Choking with rage.*] Thomas Quincy——!

TILNEY.

[*Straightening her head.*] Quiet, will you!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Clutching at SIR NORTON.*] Oh! Oh, dear!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Agitatedly.*] Very well, Mr. Tilney; it's decided, then, that Mr. Eddowes and Miss Balmano come to

me on Saturday. [*Extending her hand to him across the table.*] You and I will settle details in the garden.

TILNEY.

[*Grasping her hand and retaining it.*] Ma'am, I—I—ha!—[*Finding himself at a loss for words, he releases her hand and goes to PRATT and lifts him off the settee.*] You give us a speech, Thomas—one of your best. [*Sitting beside WATERFIELD and holding PRATT in front of him—to MRS. HERRICK.*] Thomas Quincy's our official orator, ma'am, not I. *He's* our Roosevelt; [*to PRATT*] aren't you, Tom?

PRATT.

[*Puffing himself out again.*] Yew bet.

TILNEY.

[*To PRATT.*] Listen to me. You've got to express our gratitude to the warmest-hearted lady that walks God's earth. [*Straightening PRATT'S head.*] See, ol' man?

PRATT.

[*Shooting his cuffs.*] Why, sure.

TILNEY.

[*In PRATT'S ear.*] Ladies and gentlemen—

PRATT.

[*Oratorically.*] Ladus — an' — gen'lemen — [ROSA, EDDOWES, and JULIE, the latter very sourly, applaud as

if from habit] ladus an' gen'lemen, I hev the honour of re-turnin' thaanks fur the trooly magnafurcent reception yew hev ac-corded us doorin' our visut ter yewer important city——

TILNEY.

No, no, Tom——

[SHEILA and RONALD and GLYN and WATERFIELD clap their hands laughingly. ROSA and EDDOWES look askance at PRATT, their faces full of concern, and JULIE cocks her nose in derision.]

PRATT.

[*Sticking his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waist-coat.*] And I beg leave ter staate that we are lookin' forward with feelin's of pleasurable antusurpation ter re-nooin' our acquaintance with this noomerous and distinguished as-semblage.

TILNEY.

Ha, ha, ha! [*To MRS. HERRICK, apologetically.*] This is his stock farewell speech, ma'am. He's excited; his brain's not working.

SHEILA.

[*To Tilney.*] Oh, don't interrupt him! [*To PRATT.*] Go on!

PRATT.

[*Elated by his success.*] In con-cloosion, I wush yew all good health, long life, an' prosperity. [*Blowing kisses.*] And now, on behaa'f of myself and confreers, in the language of the culurbrated po-um, I wull say au-revoir but not good-bye.

[*There is more applause and laughter, which PRATT acknowledges by bowing, and then SHEILA rises impulsively and picks the little fellow up.*]

SHEILA.

[*Sitting with PRATT upon her lap in the chair at the farther end of the settee by the piano.*] Ha, ha, ha ! [*Hugging him.*] Oh, you dear, dinky little chap !

JULIE.

[*Thoroughly in a bad temper—to SHEILA.*] Hyah, ef yew hev no objection, I'll jes' trouble yew ter put my husband down !

TILNEY.

Julie—— !

SHEILA.

Husband !

MRS. HERRICK.

Yes, they—they're husband and wife, Sheila.

SHEILA.

[*Getting rid of PRATT hastily.*] I thought they were brother and sister.

JULIE.

Shucks !

TILNEY.

[*To SHEILA.*] I ought to have mentioned—old married couple—

PRATT.

[*In the middle of the room.*] Yaas; [*pointing to JULIE*] that lady an' me has been marrud yeeears. [*Rakishly.*] I'm forty-one.

JULIE.

[*Tumbling herself out of her chair and grabbing PRATT by his coat-collar.*] Forty-one; [*shaking him*] an' ye'r behavin' like a puffect boob !

TILNEY.

[*Dashing at them and separating them.*] Gee—— !

[*He puts PRATT into the chair and JULIE upon the fauteuil-stool, and then stands over her threatening her with his forefinger.*]

RONALD.

[*While this is going on, jumping about in glee.*] Ha, ha, ha ! Sheila ! Ha, ha, ha !

SHEILA.

[*Rocking herself to and fro, hysterically.*] Oh, crumbs !

WATERFIELD.

Ho, ho, ho, ho—— !

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] Waterfield—Waterfield——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To SIR NORTON.*] Disgusting !

SIR NORTON.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Loathsome !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Her head thrown back and her eyes closed, exhausted.*]
Ring for tea ! [SIR NORTON *hurries to one bell-push,*
LADY BALL-JENNINGS *to the other.*] For mercy's sake,
ring for tea !

END OF THE FIRST ACT

THE SECOND ACT

SICKNESS IN THE HOUSE

The scene is the inner hall at Marsden Lodge. With certain concessions to comfort, it is furnished and decorated in the modern-antique style. In the left-hand wall a door opens into the room from the outer hall, and in the wall on the right a large bay-window looks on, and gives admittance, to the garden. The view seen from the window is the same as that shown in the previous act. In the wall facing the spectator is a door opening into the drawing-room and corresponding in size and position to the door in the right-hand wall of the scene of the First Act, and on the right of this door is a large fireplace with a hooded overmantel. On the other side of the door a staircase runs up to an arched opening in the left-hand wall. Beyond the opening is a landing ; and beyond the landing, another arched opening, across which a curtain is hung, leads to a continuation of the stairs.

Standing out into the room, a little to the right of the centre, there is an oblong table. On it are some morning newspapers and a number of magazines and illustrated "weeklies." There is a chair on the right of this table, another on the left, and one behind it, and in front of the table is a fauteuil-

stool. On the other side of the room, set to follow the line of the left-hand wall, is a settee. At the end of the settee there is a round table with a work-basket upon it, and on the right of the table an arm-chair. On either side of the fireplace there is an oaken settle, and at the farther side of the window, facing the garden, are an arm-chair and a foot-stool. Another arm-chair, set to face the room, is at the nearer side of the window, and beside it is a little square table with a bowl of flowers upon it.

In the left-hand corner of the room are a small harmonium and a music-stool, and on the top of the harmonium, which is closed, are a pile of hymn-books, a library candle-lamp, and a match-bowl. Near the harmonium, against the left-hand wall, is a little table bearing a large Bible and an equally big Book of Common Prayer; and also against the left-hand wall, but on the nearer side of the door, is an escritoire with a chair before it.

On each side of the window is a dwarf book-case, in the right-hand corner of the room a long-case clock, and between the fireplace and the drawing-room door stands a small cabinet.

There is a bell-push on the right and left of the fireplace. A fire is laid and a basket of logs is by the hearth.

The garden is full of sunshine.

[MRS. HERRICK enters from the drawing-room and at the same moment SHEILA and ROSA run down the stairs. MRS. HERRICK and SHEILA are wearing light morning-dresses and ROSA is a quaintly attractive figure in a skimpy, washed-out cotton frock. They all look towards the door on the left.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[To SHEILA.] Wasn't that Dr. Waterfield's car, Sheila ?

SHEILA.

[Halting with ROSA on the stairs.] Fancy so.

[WATERFIELD enters briskly from the outer hall and simultaneously LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON enter from the garden at the window.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[Welcoming WATERFIELD with a cheerful smile.] We thought we heard you, doctor.

WATERFIELD.

[Shaking hands with her.] Morning. [To SHEILA and ROSA.] Morning, Sheila; morning, Rosa.

SHEILA.

Morning.

ROSA.

[*Whose cheeks, though still pale, are of a healthier colour than when she was last seen.*] Mornin'.

WATERFIELD.

[*To MRS. HERRICK.*] How goes it ?

MRS. HERRICK.

Splendidly.

SHEILA.

[*Coming down the remaining stairs.*] Ripping night Nurse Webb is frightfully bucked.

WATERFIELD.

Good !

ROSA.

[*Joining SHEILA.*] Slep' straight off for five howers.

SHEILA.

[*To ROSA, laughingly.*] Hours, Rosa.

ROSA.

[*Making a despairing face.*] Oh, gosh !

WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha ! [*Waving his hand to LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON.*] How's your ladyship ? How'r you, Sir Norton ?

[*SHEILA takes WATERFIELD'S arm and bustles him upstairs, and MRS. HERRICK and ROSA follow.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Moving to the middle of the room.*] Ha! How are we indeed!

SIR NORTON.

[*Also advancing.*] How are we! [*With the air of a martyr, laying his hat upon the oblong table.*] It's no use, Margaret, my attempting to consult this man about my eczema.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Not the slightest, I should imagine, if you wish proper importance to be attached to it.

[*RONALD, dressed in flannels and smoking a cigarette, enters from the garden.*]

RONALD.

[*As he closes the window.*] That the doctor?

SIR NORTON.

[*Sarcastically.*] If you allude to Mr. James Eddowes's medical attendant, he has just gone upstairs.

RONALD.

[*Passing SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS and taking the stairs two steps at a time.*] Good old doc!

[*LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON look after RONALD as he disappears and then turn and gaze at one another.*]

SIR NORTON.

[*Blinking.*] Margaret, the state of things here is becoming impossible.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Absolutely impossible. [COLLINGRIDGE *enters from the outer hall, showing in* GLYN.] Oh, good morning, vicar.

GLYN.

[*Shaking hands with* LADY BALL-JENNINGS.] Good morning. [*Going to* SIR NORTON *and shaking hands with him as* COLLINGRIDGE *withdraws.*] Good morning. [*To both.*] I see Waterfield's car outside. How's the invalid?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Bored by the inquiry.*] Thank you; quite a satisfactory night, I believe.

SIR NORTON.

[*In the same way.*] Yes, yes; quite, quite.

GLYN.

Capital! [LADY BALL-JENNINGS *seats herself on the settee.*] H'm! Crisis was passed on Friday; to-day's Wednesday. I suppose we may conclude that the poor chap's out of the wood, hey?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Heaving a large, fat sigh.*] I hope so.

SIR NORTON.

[*Walking away to the fireplace.*] I hope so.

GLYN.

[*Sitting in the chair on the left of the oblong table and wiping his brow.*] He's had a bad time, has the unfortunate Mr. Eddowes !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Expansively.*] We've *all* had a bad time, vicar.

SIR NORTON.

Wretched.

GLYN.

Naturally.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Since Saturday week—it seems ages ago—everything and everybody in this house have been sacrificed to a sick giant !

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN.*] He was put to bed with a temperature almost immediately he arrived, as you know.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Shall I ever forget that evening; the fuss and the flurry !

SIR NORTON.

[*Poising himself on his toes.*] And as his complete recovery must necessarily be slow, we shall continue to have a bad time, I apprehend.

GLYN.

[*Over his shoulder.*] Come, come, *you* have your little ailments occasionally, Sir Norton——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Little ailments !

SIR NORTON.

Little—— !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN.*] At this moment my husband can hardly lift his arm to his head from neuritis, to say nothing of a rash which *may* be eczema but which looks to *me* suspiciously like shingles. Do you call those little ailments ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Demonstrating his difficulty in raising his left arm and crying out with pain.*] Oh !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Sir Norton not being a *giant*, however, *physically*, his condition is regarded by my sister and her son and daughter with the utmost callousness.

SIR NORTON.

[*Coming forward.*] The expense, too, that Dorothy is being put to over this miserable business ! Shocking !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

A day and night nurse; and such unpleasant women, both of them !

SIR NORTON.

Oxygen in enormous cylinders ! [*Rubbing his knee.*] I fell over one this morning in the corridor.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

If my husband had pneumonia at Marsden Lodge and was ordered gas, a sniff at the meter would be as much as he'd get.

GLYN.

[*Forcibly.*] No, no, no, no——

SIR NORTON.

[*At the chair on the right of the round table.*] But it isn't only Mr. Eddowes's illness that interferes with our comfort and peace of mind, my dear vicar.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

By no means.

GLYN.

What else—— ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

The inconvenience of his illness we could endure——

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN, sitting.*] My good sir, do you realize that my wife and I are living—practically *living*—with this pack of human curiosities ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Or, rather, that they are living with *us*.

SIR NORTON.

Monstrous !

GLYN.

Miss Balmano came with Eddowes on his unlucky week-end visit, and remains here. He's a timid, sensitive creature and clings to her. You wouldn't have Mrs. Herrick turn her out, and leave him to be nursed wholly by strangers ?

SIR NORTON.

I am not referring particularly to Miss Balmano, though I admit I regret her presence.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

The others !

SIR NORTON.

The two offensive dwarfs——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And the skeleton man !

SIR NORTON.

They have the entire run of the place; it might belong to them !

GLYN.

To be frank, it was *my* suggestion that a temporary lodging should be found close by for Mr. Tilney and Mr. and Mrs. Pratt, to save them the frequent journey from Lambeth. They're devoted to their sick comrade. [*Grimly.*] Sir Norton himself describes them as human.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Oh, I've no doubt, vicar, that you've been animated by the kindest intentions——

SIR NORTON.

But the liberties these persons take !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Their gross familiarities !

SIR NORTON.

Every trace of respect, if they ever felt any, for Lady Ball-Jennings and myself——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Vanished utterly !

SIR NORTON.

And even *that* is not the most serious aspect of the affair.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*In a solemn voice.*] Vicar——

GLYN.

Hey ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Bending forward.*] I ask you, why has my nephew Ronald suddenly wheedled his employers into letting him start his summer holiday *now*, in June ? My sister never goes away till August.

SIR NORTON.

And having got his holiday, why isn't he off to the seaside or elsewhere ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Precisely ! What is the special attraction for him at home ?

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN.*] A parson may be a man of the world, sir. Doesn't it strike you that these strange individuals are singularly undesirable associates for my wife's nephew and niece ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Miss Balmano for Ronald, and Mr. Tilney for Sheila !

GLYN.

[*Staring at* LADY BALL-JENNINGS *and* SIR NORTON.]
Miss Balmano—and Ronald! Sheila and—and Mr.
Tilney——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Raising his hand.*] Listen—! [*A few cheers are heard, proceeding from the right.* GLYN *rises frowningly and moves towards the window.* SIR NORTON *also rises.*] Here is Tilney——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Rising.*] And the dwarfs.

[*The cheering is repeated.*]

SIR NORTON.

[*Shaking his fist in the air.*] Gur-r-rh! These
hateful children!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

A scandal to the district!

SIR NORTON.

Rabble!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Gutter-snipes!

SIR NORTON.

Something ought to be done—*shall* be done—to
stop this annoyance.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[To GLYN.] Vicar——!

[TILNEY and the PRATTS appear outside the window.]

SIR NORTON.

[To GLYN.] Look! I told you; he hasn't even the modesty to come to the front-door.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Uses the garden gate——!

[TILNEY opens the window and enters, pushing the PRATTS before him. They are all dressed in a brave attempt at summer attire and, like ROSA, look healthier and fresher.]

TILNEY.

[To GLYN, closing the window.] Ah, vicar!

GLYN.

Good morning, Mr. Tilney.

TILNEY.

Morning. [Waving his hat genially to SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS.] Morning.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS AND SIR NORTON.

[Stiffly.] Good morning.

TILNEY.

[*Shaking hands with GLYN over the PRATTS' heads.*]
Glorious news about Jimmy, isn't it ?

GLYN.

[*Nodding.*] Going on well, I understand.

TILNEY.

Great strides. I was round here at seven o'clock, and he was sleeping grandly. [*To the PRATTS, straightening them.*] Make your greetings, Julie; [*taking PRATT'S hat from him*] and you, Thomas Quincy.

JULIE.

[*Giving her hand to GLYN.*] Howdy ?

GLYN.

How are you, Mrs. Pratt; [*looking down upon her kindly*] in the best of spirits ?

JULIE.

[*Cocking her eye at him.*] Yew kin bet yewer rubbers on thaat. [*Toddling across to SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS and shaking hands with them as PRATT shakes hands with GLYN.*] Howdy ? [*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Howdy ?

PRATT.

[*Going to SIR NORTON and shaking hands with him, conceitedly.*] Say, did yew hyah the boys an' gals cheerin' me an' Joolie Maud jes' now ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Retiring to the fireplace.*] I did.

JULIE.

[*Wriggling with gratification.*] My, but their en-thoosiasm tickles me ter death !

TILNEY.

[*Laughing at JULIE.*] Ha, ha, ha !

PRATT.

[*Shaking hands with LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Guess we are the biggust stunt that has ever happened in this lo-cality.

TILNEY.

[*Laughing at PRATT.*] Ha, ha, ha !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Under her breath, joining SIR NORTON.*] Oh—— !

GLYN.

[*To TILNEY.*] Dr. Waterfield is upstairs.

TILNEY.

[*Nodding.*] Seen his car at the door. [*Going to the PRATTS.*] Come along, Julie Maud; come along,

Tom. [*Throwing his own hat and PRATT'S on to the oblong table, where they chance to light on SIR NORTON'S, and leading the PRATTS to the staircase.*] Perhaps the doctor'll let you have a peep at Jimmy.

GLYN.

[*Crossing to the foot of the stairs.*] Tell Mrs. Herrick I've dropped in to ask after Mr. Eddowes, will you?

TILNEY.

[*Half lifting, half dragging the PRATTS up the stairs.*] Righto! [*The PRATTS miss a step and come to grief.*] Whoop! Hold up, Julie; steady on your pins, Thomas Quiney!

SIR NORTON.

[*As TILNEY and the PRATTS disappear—indignantly rescuing his hat and dusting it with his sleeve.*] Upon my word——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Advancing.*] Terrible young man!

SIR NORTON.

[*Also advancing.*] And my sister-in-law blindly allows her daughter to be on terms of the friendliest character with this gentleman!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Yesterday they were weeding the lawn together. I made a point of keeping near them, hot as the sun was.

SIR NORTON.

[*Sitting in the chair by the little square table.*] And she partners him at tennis.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Coming to SIR NORTON.*] Playing against Ronald and Miss Balmano.

SIR NORTON.

Mr. Tilney in an old pair of Ronald's tennis-shoes.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And Miss Balmano in a pair of Sheila's.

GLYN.

[*Approaching them, his brows knit.*] Mr. Tilney's manners are somewhat free-and-easy, certainly; but he impresses me as being essentially simple and extraordinarily good-natured.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Incredulously.*] Simple!

GLYN.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] In fact, when Sir Norton speaks of Mr. Tilney as a gentleman, I'm not sure that he doesn't, without intending it, hit the mark.

SIR NORTON.

Oh, the fellow may be slightly different from the common run of circus folk—heaven only knows what his history is!—

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

He's an arrant impostor, at any rate; *that's* beyond question.

GLYN.

Impostor ?

SIR NORTON.

A fraud on the public.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

His claim to be a walking skeleton is a piece of rank charlatanism. He's no thinner than my poor husband.

SIR NORTON.

[*Jealously.*] If as thin.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Swelling with a mixture of pride and resentment.*] My dear vicar, if you saw Sir Norton in his bath you'd be horrified.

GLYN.

Probably.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

His ribs are as distinct as the rungs of a ladder; and as for his shoulder-blades—— !

[*MRS. HERRICK comes down the stairs, followed by WATERFIELD.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN.*] Vicar—— !

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD, as he takes her hand.*] Morning, Waterfield.

WATERFIELD.

[*Seating himself at the escritoire and writing.*] Morning, vicar.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN.*] Thank you so much for calling.

GLYN.

[*Patting her hand.*] Glad to hear the excellent report.

MRS. HERRICK.

Isn't it a relief! [*Lowering her voice so that she shall not disturb WATERFIELD.*] But we have still to be very careful——

WATERFIELD.

[*As he writes.*] I want this prescription taken to Crosby's as soon as possible.

MRS. HERRICK.

Yes, doctor. [*To GLYN.*] Will you dine with us to-night? We're a cheerful household again, and you haven't broken bread here for a fortnight.

GLYN.

With pleasure, my dear. Usual hour?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Nodding.*] Half-past seven. [*To WATERFIELD, seeing that he is blotting his prescription—speaking louder.*] Will you dine here to-night too, doctor? Do; the vicar's coming.

WATERFIELD.

[*Rising, a shade of uneasiness on his face.*] Sorry; can't.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh——!

WATERFIELD.

[*Giving her the prescription.*] Wish I could, but I'm frantically busy. [*Shaking hands with her.*] I shall pop in during the day, though, once or twice.

GLYN.

[*Looking at his watch—to WATERFIELD.*] You going towards the Grove?

WATERFIELD.

Yes.

GLYN.

Give me a lift. [*Shaking hands with MRS. HERRICK.*] I must be off.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN.*] This evening, then,——?

GLYN.

This evening. [*While this has been going on, LADY BALL-JENNINGS has seated herself with an air of aloofness in the chair facing the window, and SIR NORTON has risen and followed her and is now standing by her.*] Good-bye, Lady Ball-Jennings; good-bye, Sir Norton.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS AND SIR NORTON.

[*Distantly.*] Good-bye.

WATERFIELD.

[*Waving his hand again to LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON.*] Good-bye.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS AND SIR NORTON.

[*Even more frigidly.*] Good-bye.

WATERFIELD.

[*Going into the outer hall.*] Ready, vicar?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Accompanying GLYN to the door.*] Half-past seven.

GLYN.

[*Following WATERFIELD.*] All being well.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Speaking into the outer hall—to WATERFIELD.*] I shall see you later on, doctor.

WATERFIELD.

[*Out of sight.*] Rather !

[RONALD and ROSA and SHEILA and TILNEY appear on the stairs. SHEILA is now wearing a garden-hat.]

RONALD.

[*From the staircase, to MRS. HERRICK.*] Hallo !
Has the Rev gone, Mums ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Closing the door.*] Yes, darling; but he's dining with us to-night.

RONALD.

Good egg !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*At the foot of the stairs, showing RONALD the prescription.*] Ronny, my pet, I wonder whether you'd run with this to Crosby's ? Dr. Waterfield wants it made up at once.

RONALD.

[*Coming down the stairs and taking the prescription from MRS. HERRICK and reading it gaily.*] " Digitalis—Ammon Carb.—Ammon Aromat—" [*To ROSA.*] Come with me, Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*At his side, quietly.*] If y'like. [SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS exchange glances and nudge each other.] Oh, but I ain't smart 'nough——

RONALD.

Rot! You look awfully dinky; [*to* MRS. HERRICK] doesn't she, Mums?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To* ROSA.] Yes, you couldn't look nicer than in that neat little frock, dear.

SIR NORTON.

[*Advancing and holding out his hat to* RONALD, *stomily.*] Kindly hang this in the hall as you go out with Miss Balmano.

[MRS. HERRICK *takes the hat—a soft "panama"*—*from* SIR NORTON *and hands it to* RONALD, *who light-heartedly claps it on* ROSA'S *head.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

Romy——!

RONALD.

[*Arranging the hat.*] Isn't it becoming, Mums?

MRS. HERRICK.

Very; [*with a frightened glance at* SIR NORTON, *who sinks upon the fauteuil-stool*] but your uncle——

RONALD.

[*Opening the door on the left and pushing* ROSA *out.*] Speed up, Rosa! [*As he closes the door behind him.*] Toot, toot!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS, who has risen in horror and come to the oblong table.*] I've ordered the pony-cart, Meg, for a quarter to eleven. W-w-will you—— ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

I thank you; no, Dorothy. [*Taking up a newspaper.*] I prefer not to leave Norton.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Moving to the staircase—to SIR NORTON.*] I don't ask *you*, Norton; the shaking disagrees with you.

SIR NORTON.

Gravely. [*Also taking a newspaper from the table.*] My last ride in the cart had a most disastrous effect upon my nerve centres.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Ascending the stairs—to SHEILA, who has been talking to TILNEY at the fireplace and is now walking with him to the window.*] Sheila dear—— ?

SHEILA.

No, thanks, Mums. Mr. Tilney is going to help me mend the tennis-net.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*From the top of the stairs—to TILNEY.*] Will you trust Mr. and Mrs. Pratt to me, Mr. Tilney, if they care for a drive ?

TILNEY.

[*Who has picked up his hat—opening the window for SHEILA to pass out.*] Sweet of you, Mrs. Herrick. The little 'uns'll jump for joy. [*To MRS. HERRICK, as he follows SHEILA into the garden.*] I'll wait here till you return, if I may.

[*Immediately MRS. HERRICK has disappeared in the one direction, and SHEILA and TILNEY in the other, LADY BALL-JENNINGS hurries to the window.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Watching the receding figures of SHEILA and TILNEY.*] There they go—their elbows almost touching—and not in the direction of the tennis-court either! [*Gasping.*] N-N-Norton——

SIR NORTON.

[*Joining her.*] What—— ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

She's picking a flower. It can't be for *him* !

SIR NORTON.

[*Peering over her shoulder.*] No, no; no, no !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

I believe it *is* !

SIR NORTON.

Yes !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And she—she's actually fastening it in his coat !

SIR NORTON.

An indecent act; a flagrantly indecent act !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Turning from the window.*] How any niece of mine can so degrade herself passes my comprehension ! [The PRATTS, in a state of great excitement, descend the stairs with alarming precipitancy. LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON clutch each other.] Heavens ! [To JULIE, as PRATT hurls himself at the oblong table and seizes his hat.] What is it, madam ?

JULIE.

[*On the left, ecstatically.*] My, but Mrs. Herruck is A Re-al Peach ! She is good ter eat, that woman !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Peach !

SIR NORTON.

Good to eat !

PRATT.

[*Tottering to JULIE.*] Why, sure ! She's gwine ter taake Joolie Maud an' me fur a ride in the buggy.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Dropping on to the fauteuil-stool and fanning herself with her newspaper.*] Is that all!

SIR NORTON.

[*Sitting in the chair on the right of the oblong table—shutting his eyes.*] Margaret, this sort of thing is extremely bad for my heart.

JULIE.

[*Shaking PRATT up and straightening his head.*] He, he, he! Guess we are growin' as popular in the Herruck mansion as we are in the publuck thoroughfares.

PRATT.

[*Rendering JULIE a similar service.*] Yew bet!

JULIE.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] The only folks that don't seemter freeze ont'er me an' Thomas Quincy are yew an' Sir Jennings.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Raising her eyebrows.*] Don't seem to—freeze——?

JULIE.

[*Advancing.*] Say, I sh'd like ter roller this out some.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Roller——?

JULIE.

[*With dignity.*] I am puffedly wull aware that when anybody gits my goat I kick up most awful rough.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Your goat——!

JULIE.

When I'm riled. [*Pointing to PRATT.*] Al-so that Thomas Quincy is at times not on the top range of his interlectual devulopment.

PRATT.

He, he, he!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Uncomfortably.*] Really——!

JULIE.

[*In a conciliatory tone.*] Now I waant yew an' Sir Jennings ter fur-get the un-favourable im-preshhun we pro-dooeed at our day-bew at the Herruck home.

PRATT.

[*Chuckling.*] We was both con-siderably rattled that aafternoon, Joolie an' me.

JULIE.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Say, is it a deal?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

A deal?

JULIE.

A lead-pipe cinch ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Shrinking.*] I—I don't——

JULIE.

[*Offering her hand.*] Lady Ball, on behaa'f of yewerself an' Sir Jennings—put it right there.

[LADY BALL-JENNINGS *yields her hand to JULIE powerlessly as MRS. HERRICK comes down the stairs and COLLINGRIDGE enters at the door on the left. MRS. HERRICK is dressed for driving and is drawing on her gloves.*]

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*To MRS. HERRICK.*] The pony-cart, ma'am.

MRS. HERRICK.

I'm ready, Collingridge.

PRATT.

[*Toddling to the door.*] Yaas, we are ready, Collun-ridge.

[COLLINGRIDGE, *darting a fearful look at PRATT, retires.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Taking JULIE's hand.*] Mrs. Pratt— ? [*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON.*] We sha'n't be long, Meg; we sha'n't be long, Norton.

JULIE.

No, we shaa'n't be long. [*Waving her disengaged hand to them affably.*] Don't be lonesome.

[*Mrs. HERRICK and JULIE follow PRATT into the outer hall, leaving the door open. LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON rise.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Dumbfounded.*] Norton——

SIR NORTON.

[*Blinking.*] M-M-Margaret——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Is the earth crumbling beneath us ?

[*The cheering is heard again, coming from the left.*]

SIR NORTON.

Oh! [*Agitatedly.*] Oh, dear me, I am quite unhinged! [*Gathering up the rest of the newspapers and tucking them under his arm.*] I shall lock myself in my study and read the papers.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Clearing the table of the magazines and weeklies.*] I'll come with you.

SIR NORTON.

[*Going unsteadily to the door on the left.*] Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*At his heels.*] Try not to upset yourself, Norton.
Try not to upset yourself.

[*As they withdraw into the outer hall, the cheering is repeated. Then there is silence, and after a moment's pause SHEILA flounces in at the window and, crossing the room pettishly, seats herself with a clouded face in the chair on the right of the round table. TILNEY follows slowly, closes the window, and stands looking at her. He now has a rose in his button-hole*]

TILNEY.

[*Quietly, removing his hat.*] Offended ?

SHEILA.

[*In a way that belies her statement.*] Not in the least.

TILNEY.

[*Approaching her.*] It was a slip o' the tongue.

SHEILA.

Slip of the tongue ! I thought I'd cured you of these "slips of the tongue."

TILNEY.

So you have; most of 'em. I haven't called your mother "ma'am" for a whole week.

SHEILA.

[*Curling her lip.*] Gregory, what progress !

TILNEY.

Nor you “miss” till just now.

SHEILA.

Before the gardener ! I marvel you don’t address him as “sir.”

TILNEY.

[*Passing his hand over his head.*] You see, Miss Herrick——

SHEILA.

That’s better—“Miss Herrick” ; or even “Miss Sheila.” [*Softening.*] Not “miss” again, *please*, or I’ll have a fit on the carpet.

TILNEY.

You see, I’ve been so long among a different class of people that I—I’ve lost touch——

SHEILA.

[*Abruptly.*] Hold on ! [*She glances at the door on the left, rises, peeps into the outer hall and, having closed the door carefully, returns to the middle of the room.*] I say ! You needn’t answer my questions if you consider them cheeky. Who are you ?

TILNEY.

Who am I ?

SHEILA.

I mean, what have you sprung from, Mr. Tilney; where were you born; how did you come to be mixed up with this curious crowd? [*Walking away to the fireplace.*] Of course, I knew you were a cut above them, directly I saw you.

TILNEY.

[*Moving to the left.*] Oh, but I'm not a cut above them——

SHEILA.

Piffle! Don't be tedious.

TILNEY.

[*Laying his hat on the round table and examining the contents of the work-basket.*] I was born in Liverpool, if it interests you to hear it—the third son of an eminent cotton-broker. [*Toying with a ball of silk.*] A great mistake, Miss Herrick.

SHEILA.

[*Turning.*] What is?

TILNEY.

To be born in Liverpool—the third son of a cotton-broker. Let me give you a piece of advice; may I?

SHEILA.

[*Advancing to the oblong table.*] Well?

TILNEY.

If ever you marry, and have children, take care that your third boy isn't born in Liverpool, and that his father isn't a cotton-broker.

SHEILA.

[*Behind the table—coldly.*] You weren't happy at home ?

TILNEY.

[*Throwing the silk into the basket.*] Good lord !

SHEILA.

Your story appears rather to resemble my Uncle Charles's.

TILNEY.

[*Facing her.*] You're right. I was the black-sheep of my family, as he was of *his* early in his life; and like him I became a rover, a waster, a ne'er-do-weel. It was that that appealed to him when he found me on my beam ends at Suva Harbour and I told him my tale.

SHEILA.

Suva—— ?

TILNEY.

Suva's the boss town of the Fijis. I'd been put ashore there, discharged from my ship—I was on a small trading schooner and didn't hit it off with the mate—and I'd been lying ill for a month with fever

when Segantini arrived at the island with his circus. A week before, his Skeleton Dude had died at sea; and there was I, nothing but skin and bone, the very man for the emergency.

SHEILA.

[*Understandingly.*] Ah——!

TILNEY.

[*Again approaching her.*] That launched me on my career as one of your uncle's Staggering, Startling, Stunning, and Stupendous Sensations, as he was wont to describe his collection of by-products of the animal kingdom. Thenceforward I dwelt in the atmosphere of reeking canvas, brass bands, and gilded chariots; with giants, midgets, dog-faced boys, attached twins, fat and bearded women, and the Circassian and the tattooed lady for my pals. And a Freak I've remained ever since.

SHEILA.

[*Earnestly.*] But you're not a Freak actually; not a genuine skeleton. The last fortnight has made a wonderful alteration in you.

TILNEY.

[*Laughing.*] Ah, you should see me after a bout of the dear old ague! [*Sitting in the chair on the left of the oblong table.*] And at other times, with the

help of a constitutional leanness, a spare diet, and an ingenious costume——

SHEILA.

[*Hotly.*] Oh! Oh! How can you be content with such a mode of existence! [*Seating herself petulantly upon the oblong table with her back to him.*] My godfathers! Fancy a man sinking so low willingly!

TILNEY.

[*After a pause, during which he eyes her thoughtfully—in a different tone.*] Miss Herrick——

SHEILA.

[*Taking off her hat and putting it down beside her.*] Hallo?

TILNEY.

Why haven't you rounded me up on this subject till to-day? You've been on the verge of it more than once.

SHEILA.

[*Tidying her hair, stiffly.*] Indeed?

TILNEY.

I've read it in the glint of your steely-grey eyes.

SHEILA.

My eyes are not steely-grey, and—[*shrugging her shoulders*] oh, I don't mind telling you. [*In a subdued*

voice, stroking the edge of the table.] I hope I'm not snobbish; but, though I felt pretty sure you're not—really—common——

TILNEY.

You shirked finding out that I *am* ?

SHEILA.

Exactly.

TILNEY.

[*Gently.*] In that case you couldn't have gone on allowing me to play with you in your back-yard, could you ?

SHEILA.

Why, no; imposs.

TILNEY.

As it is—— ?

SHEILA.

As it is, after we've mended the tennis-net, you may assist me to stick the carnations.

TILNEY.

[*Contemplating his shoes.*] And when—when Jimmy Eddowes is on his legs again—and we all take up the trail—what then ?

SHEILA.

What then ?

TILNEY.

Your—your friendship for me—breaks, I suppose ?

SHEILA.

Depends.

TILNEY.

Depends ?

SHEILA.

On whether you resume your low calling.

[There is another pause, and then TILNEY rises and walks over to the window and stares into the garden.]

TILNEY.

Is it—low ?

SHEILA.

Beyond words.

TILNEY.

It would be less low, in your opinion, if, having cast in my lot with Segantini's Freaks in the depth of my adversity, I suddenly chucked 'em—left those of them who are most in need of me to continue the struggle alone ?

SHEILA.

Tosh ! Don't be futile. *[Getting off the table.]* They've got their little pensions, and Rosa Balmano is quite capable of running the menage without you. *[Moving to the foot of the staircase and resting her elbows upon the stanchion of the banisters.]* However, if you've no higher ambition than to remain a Freak, why should I object ? *[He leaves the window and, with his head bent, comes slowly to the back of the oblong table. She laughs, partly to herself, softly and contemptuously.]* Ho, ho, ho ! A Freak ! Ha, ha, ha !

TILNEY.

[Contracting his brows.] Miss Herrick—

SHEILA.

[Indifferently.] Yes, Mr. Tilney ?

TILNEY.

Strange as it may seem to you, I've *grown* to this queer life of mine—thrown out roots, as it were—

SHEILA.

[Tapping her foot impatiently.] Oh——!

TILNEY.

And if I dug a spade into the roots, they—they'd bleed red. [Drawing himself erect.] Besides, here is something for you to think over ! [With a wry smile.] Who is a Freak and who is normal in this world ? Who shall decide ? Was my father normal—I never knew my mother—was *he* normal, he who hadn't an ounce—a grain—of affection for me; and were my brothers normal, who stood by and grinned ? [Harshly.] God, were *they* normal ! Was McAlpin, mate of the *Malaita*, who kicked me down the ship's ladder in Suva Harbour—blast his soul!—was *he* normal ? [Going a step or two nearer to her.] You—you're a shrewd girl—what has *your* experience taught you, short as it is ? Are there no Freaks

in your list of acquaintances? Are all the women you lip, and all the men you rub palms with, beautiful specimens of the normal—the Christian—type? And yet you sneer at my poor grotesque companions, who, in spite of infirmities of body and temper, have more true love in their hearts, treat 'em kindly, than seventy-five per cent. of the well-formed and the well-endowed. [*Grinding his teeth.*] Freaks, are they! I declare to you, Miss Herrick, that, looking into the faces in front of me at our shows, my hardest task has been to refrain from crying out that we ought to change places—to *change places*—the so-called Freaks upon the rickety platform and the damned sniggering spectators on the tan floor! [*While he is speaking, SHEILA turns and slowly approaches him. She is now close to him, gazing at him with wide-open eyes.*] Phew! [*Hanging his head.*] Excuse my rough tongue. When I'm stirred——

SHEILA.

[*Dropping her eyes and touching the flower in his coat with wavering fingers—simply.*] Doesn't matter. I often use bad language myself.

TILNEY.

[*Embarrassed.*] Er—shall we—shall we proceed to execute the necessary repairs to the tennis-net?

SHEILA.

Wait. [*Raising her eyes.*] I—I want you to know
—I—I want you to know that I admire you——

TILNEY.

Admire me ? [*Wincing.*] Sss !

SHEILA.

I do, I do, I do. And I apologize for sneering.
I—I didn't understand. [*Offering him both her
hands.*] There, Mr. Raiche !

TILNEY.

[*Taking her hands and holding them ardently—in a
broken voice.*] Thank you—thank you—Miss——

SHEILA.

[*Faintly, wrinkling her nose.*] Oh—— !

TILNEY.

[*Pressing her hands to his breast.*] Thank you,
Sheila.

SHEILA.

[*Relieved.*] Thought you'd relapsed into plain
“miss.” [*Making no effort to withdraw her hands.*]
Ah, but what you've told me makes it all the worse
—— !

TILNEY.

The worse—— ?

SHEILA.

That you should sacrifice yourself as you are doing. Oh, it's a crime; a crime !

TILNEY.

[*Sadly.*] Sacrifice myself !

SHEILA.

[*In a tone of entreaty.*] It would be easy to provide for the comfort of—of the others, and for you to strike out in a new direction. It's not too late. [*Eagerly.*] Remember, things are different with you now !

TILNEY.

[*Giving her a quick, startled look.*] D-d-different — ?

SHEILA.

Now that you have *us* to—to encourage you—to spur you on—my mother, who likes you—and—and——

TILNEY.

[*Tightening his grip of her.*] And—— ?

SHEILA.

[*Releasing herself and putting her hands behind her.*] Well, there's my brother Ronald—he's got the hang of the City—he could—[*She breaks off, looking at the door on the left and listening.*] Somebody—— !

TILNEY.

[*With a movement towards the window.*] Tennis-net——!

SHEILA.

[*Lowering her voice.*] No; blow the tennis-net!
 [*Snatching up her hat and going to the drawing-room door and beckoning to him.*] Come into the drawing-room and tell me more of your adventures. [*He picks up his hat and joins her.*] We sha'n't disturb poor Mr. Eddowes overhead if we speak low——

[*They disappear into the drawing-room and close the door. Almost at the same moment, RONALD and ROSA enter from the outer hall. They are without their hats. RONALD is carrying a bottle of medicine.*]

RONALD.

[*To ROSA, shutting the door.*] Enjoyed the walk, Rosa?

ROSA.

[*Shyly but happily.*] Yus.

RONALD.

Ripping, wasn't it?

ROSA.

Yus.

[*They ascend the stairs side by side.*]

RONALD.

[*To ROSA, confidentially.*] We'll always fetch the medicine from Crosby's when we get the chance, shall we ?

ROSA.

[*Averting her head.*] Dunno.

RONALD.

[*Halting.*] You'd like to, wouldn't you—with me ?

ROSA.

[*In a whisper.*] Yus.

[*As they are mounting the stairs, a curtain falls.*

Upon it is painted a representation of a garishly-lighted side-show of a circus. On one side of the picture, a company of Freaks, as enumerated by TILNEY, with the addition of a "living skeleton," are exhibiting themselves upon a raised stage; on the other, a throng of sight-seers feast their eyes on the show. In the front rank is a party of men and women in evening dress, the men idiotic-looking, the women flashy, décolletées, and bejewelled. An opening at the back of the booth, through which more visitors are trooping in, gives a glimpse of the arena. After a short interval, the curtain rises. The hall is

empty, the light in the garden the warm light of afternoon. TILNEY'S hat is on the oblong table. Presently he comes down the stairs with WATERFIELD, WATERFIELD preceding him.]

TILNEY.

[*To WATERFIELD, searchingly.*] Well, doctor ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Digging his hands into his trousers pockets and jingling his keys and money.*] Well ?

TILNEY.

You're not satisfied with him ?

WATERFIELD.

A little worried, I own.

TILNEY.

What—— ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Strolling to the window.*] Temperature going up a bit.

TILNEY.

[*Looking after him with a blank face.*] Why—this morning—— !

WATERFIELD.

Not really. There were symptoms I didn't quite like this morning, as a matter of fact.

TILNEY.

[*Quietly.*] There's danger of a thing called an empyema, isn't there? Is that right? [WATERFIELD *nods at the prospect outside, whereupon* TILNEY *sits in the chair at the round table in great dejection.*] Poor old Jimmy! Poor dear old Jimmy!

WATERFIELD.

Don't alarm anybody. I shall be in again by-and-by. Able to tell better then. [*Turning and advancing.*] Where are they all?

TILNEY.

[*In a dreary voice.*] Mrs. Herrick and her daughter have gone to town, shopping. [*Glancing in the direction of the garden.*] The boy's teaching Rosa a stroke at the net, and Lady Ball-Jennings is in Sir Norton's room putting hot compresses on him.

WATERFIELD.

Hot compresses——?

TILNEY.

[*Attempting a smile.*] Acute attack of indigestion.

WATERFIELD.

[*Chuckling.*] Ha, ha! Dreadfully sorry. Ha, ha, ha! [*Shaking TILNEY'S shoulder.*] So-long. Don't lose heart. [*Going.*] Let's hope for the best.

TILNEY.

[*Detaining him.*] Doctor——

WATERFIELD.

Eh ?

TILNEY.

While I was superintending the washing of Julie Maud's head this afternoon at our lodgings, I had a message from the nurse asking me to come over at once. [*His hand on WATERFIELD's arm.*] Jimmy's got an odd craving, doctor.

WATERFIELD.

Craving ?

TILNEY.

To see us round his bed—under the electric-light—me and Rosa, and Julie and Thomas Quincy—dressed in our professional duds.

WATERFIELD.

Your professional—costumes ?

TILNEY.

His mind's running on the show, nurse says. He's been rambling about it in his snatches of sleep to-day continually.

WATERFIELD.

So I gather.

TILNEY.

[*In EDDOWES'S mournful tone.*] “Eight-foot-two-inches in my stockings,” he keeps repeating. “Would any lady or gentleman like to step on to the platform and stand beside me?” [*Starting up and crossing to the other side of the room.*] You don’t think he realizes—you don’t think he has a feeling that he—he—[*halting*] do you, doctor ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Avoiding TILNEY'S eye.*] No, no; no, no. Merely a fancy; nothing more.

TILNEY.

Will you give permission ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Thoughtfully.*] He’s very bent on it ?

TILNEY.

Intensely.

WATERFIELD.

H’m ! If it’ll cheer the poor chap—make him easier——

TILNEY.

You consent ?

WATERFIELD.

[*After a brief pause.*] Yes——

[*RONALD and ROSA enter from the garden, flushed and breathless. They are wearing*

tennis-shoes and RONALD is carrying his jacket over his arm.]

RONALD.

[*Seeing WATERFIELD.*] Hallo, doc!

ROSA.

Oh! [*Going to WATERFIELD, her eyes flashing.*]
'Ere! W'y 'asn't nobody tol' me you was in the
'ouse?

RONALD.

[*At the fireplace, pressing a bell-push.*] We're
dying for a drink, Rosa and I.

WATERFIELD.

[*To ROSA.*] Ho, ho! What a fierce little person!

ROSA.

I reckon them nusses take a grea' deal too much
on theirselves——

TILNEY.

[*Gazing out of the window.*] Shut up, Rosa.

WATERFIELD.

[*To ROSA, soothingly.*] My dear Miss Balmano,
there wasn't the slightest necessity for interrupting
you at your game, or we'd have done so.

RONALD.

[*Who has thrown his hat on to one of the settles and
is now putting on his jacket.*] 'Course. You are a
fiery girl, Rosa.

ROSA.

[*Mollified.*] Beg pardon. [*To WATERFIELD, wistfully.*] 'E's goin' on, then, as well as c'n be 'xpected, is 'e ?

WATERFIELD.

That's it ! As well as can be expected ; as well as can be expected. [*Bustling to the door on the left, where RONALD joins him.*] Good-bye for the present. [*Opening the door.*] I shall look in again after dinner.

RONALD.

[*Slapping WATERFIELD on the back.*] Goo'-bye, doc.

TILNEY.

[*Sitting in the chair behind the oblong table, absently.*] Good-bye, doctor. [*WATERFIELD disappears into the outer hall.*]

ROSA.

[*Taking off her hat and laying it on the round table preparatory to sitting on the settee.*] Golly, I am 'ot !

RONALD.

[*Closing the door and coming forward.*] By Jinks, Rosa'll lick me close up at the net in no time, at this rate !

ROSA.

[*Seated—with a modest wriggle.*] Ga'rn ! Cut it out—kiddin' me !

RONALD.

Gospel. [*Sitting in the chair at the round table and sticking his legs out.*] Phew!

TILNEY.

[*His elbows on the oblong table, examining his hat.*]

Rosa——

ROSA.

[*Altering the position of a hairpin.*] Yus?

[*COLLINGRIDGE enters from the outer hall.*]

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*To RONALD.*] D'you ring, sir?

RONALD.

Rather! Two lemon-squashes, quick as you can.
[*To TILNEY.*] Have a drink, ol' man?

TILNEY.

No, thanks.

RONALD.

[*To COLLINGRIDGE.*] Lots of ice, Collingridge.

COLLINGRIDGE.

Yessir.

[*COLLINGRIDGE goes out.*]

ROSA.

[*To TILNEY.*] Wot say, Raiche?

TILNEY.

I'm just off to Lambeth.

ROSA.

Lambeth? To Dufferin Street? [TILNEY *nods.*]
Wo' for?

TILNEY.

To open our baskets and bring our show togs away.

ROSA.

Our show togs!

TILNEY.

[*Brokenly.*] Jimmy has a craze—a longing—to see us in 'em for a few minutes. It's only a whim; but he—he's plumb weary of lying upstairs—and—and Dr. Waterfield says we ought to humour him——

ROSA.

[*Rising and going to* TILNEY.] Sign 'e's gittin' quite 'isself, ain't it?

TILNEY.

S-s-sign his brain's working, anyway.

ROSA.

An' that 'e's 'ungerin' for the road! [*To* TILNEY.]
Does 'e know of the offer we've 'ad, Raiche?

TILNEY.

Not yet.

RONALD.

[*Pricking up his ears.*] Offer ?

ROSA.

[*To RONALD.*] Yus, we've 'ad an offer through our hagents—oh, gosh !—agents—through our agents, Crumelli an' Frampton, for Boscovitz's circus in the States—to sail for Noo York in August an' join up at Los Angeles fust o' September.

RONALD.

[*To TILNEY, his jaw falling.*] You—you're not going to accept it, are you, Tilney ?

TILNEY.

Haven't decided. [*Rising, hat in hand.*] Frampton gives us a month to make up our minds.

ROSA.

[*Unconsciously putting herself through some gymnastic exercises.*] 'Ave ter loosen meself if anythink comes of it.

TILNEY.

[*At the window—to RONALD.*] Herrick—

RONALD.

[*Staring at the carpet.*] Hallo ?

TILNEY.

Will you explain to your mother, so that she won't be surprised when we turn up to-night in our show-clothes ? [RONALD *nods abstractedly.*] And, Rosa—

ROSA.

[*Kissing the tips of her fingers mechanically to an imaginary audience.*] Hi !

TILNEY.

[*Opening the window.*] Rosa——

ROSA.

[*Sitting on the fauteuil-stool.*] Wo' say ?

TILNEY.

[*With a motion of his head.*] You'd better feed with us this evening in the Alexandra Road. I shall want you there early, to help dress Julie and Thomas Quincy.

ROSA.

Ri'cher'are, Raiche.

[*He passes into the garden, shuts the window, and disappears. As soon as he is out of sight, RONALD rises and goes to ROSA.*]

RONALD.

[*Looking down upon her with an aggrieved air.*] First I've heard of this idea of your going to America later on with Tilney and the others.

ROSA.

[*Softly.*] Never thought it 'ud interest you.

RONALD.

Excuse me, Rosa; that's an equivocation. You know perfectly well I am deeply interested—not interested—interested—deeply interested in all that concerns you.

ROSA.

[*Raising her eyes to his for a moment.*] Are yer ?

RONALD.

[*Frowning.*] Am I !

ROSA.

[*Lowering her eyes.*] Yus, I *do* know. I'm lyin'. Went kimpetely outer me stoopid 'ead; that's the truth.

RONALD.

[*Loftily.*] And when did Mr. Tilney receive this precious offer, pray ?

ROSA.

Days ago 'e 'ad the letter, but 'e did'n side-step off ter Maiden Lane till lars Monday.

RONALD.

Maiden Lane ?

ROSA.

The hagents. [*Clenching her hands.*] Oh, gosh, there I go agin ! [*Jumping up.*] 'Ere ! Them

haitches are torturin' me; my word, they are !
 [*Desperately.*] If anythink drives me ter the States,
 it'll be my haspirits, as Sheila calls 'em; an' so you
 c'n inform 'er, with my bes' respects.

RONALD.

[*Sternly.*] Rosa——

ROSA.

Jumpin' Jonquils, life is gittin' ter be a reg'lar
 hagony for me when I'm with yer mammy an'
 sister—— !

RONALD.

Quiet, Rosa ! [*Firmly.*] *Anything*, not any-
think——

ROSA.

[*Waving her arms.*] Very likely; very likely. I
 don' deny it.

RONALD.

Aspirates, not *haspirates*——

ROSA.

All right, all right; 'ave it yer own way.

RONALD.

[*Pointing to the fauteuil-stool.*] And please resume
 your seat and listen to me. [*She hesitates, rebelli-*
ously.] Rosa—[*authoritatively*] Rosa——

[*Gradually her face clears and lights up with a
 childish smile.*]

ROSA.

[*Edging towards the fauteuil-stool.*] He, he, he !
Lordy, don' whip me, mister !

RONALD.

Whip you ? [*His manner changing.*] Whip you ?

ROSA.

[*Reseating herself with a little writhing movement of her shoulders—still smiling.*] If yer did, it would'n be the fust larrupin' I've 'ad, not by 'undreds.

RONALD.

[*Sitting upon the oblong table, close to her.*] You—
you've been beaten, Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*Cheerfully.*] Oh, yer need'n be 'orrified. We
don' take no count o' that in our bizness.

RONALD.

[*Stroking her hair.*] My dear little girl !
When—— ?

ROSA.

When I was trainin' f'r the trapeese.

RONALD.

[*Correcting her.*] The trapèze.

ROSA.

Said so, did'n I ?

Who—— ?
RONALD.

ROSA.
Me father mostly—Seenyer Balmano.

RONALD.
Your father !

ROSA.
Yus. “ Valga me Dios ! ” ’e useter yell out, an’
thwish-sh-sh ’ud come the tickler on me skinny back.

RONALD.
[Choking.] Gur-r-rh—— !

ROSA.
Oh, better ’im than some, I c’n tell yer. [Glow-
ingly.] ’E was sech a ’andsome man, me father.

RONALD.
Handsome—— !

ROSA.
[With a scowl.] If it ’ad bin O’Hagan now—— !

RONALD.
O’Hagan ?

ROSA.
Mike O’Hagan—— !

RONALD.
Who was O’Hagan ?

ROSA.
Me mother’s ’usband.

RONALD.

Your mother's——! W-w-why, wasn't Balmano——?

ROSA.

No. [*Guilelessly.*] I'm illergitermit. O'Hagan be'aved brutal ter mother, so she turned 'im down an' took up with Seenyer Balmano.

RONALD.

I—I see.

ROSA.

[*Proudly.*] It's a honour ter be illergitermit when yer the child of a man like Seenyer Balmano.

RONALD.

[*Weakly.*] The h is silent in honour.

ROSA.

[*Beginning to enjoy her own prattle.*] O'Hagan was a clown—no caste—"Ireland's Funny Little Gem"—the Dago! Would'n 'a bin 'is daughter f'r somethink!

RONALD.

[*In a murmur.*] *Something, not somethink.*

ROSA.

'E died o' drink, Mike O'Hagan did; an' then Seenyer Balmano preposed marridge t'mother, but she preferred 'er hindependence.

RONALD.

Not *h*independence——

ROSA.

Mother was Madamersel Lar Grange——'least, that was 'er *per*fesshnul name——she was Miss Rooney 'fore she married O'Hagan. Ever 'eard of 'er ?

RONALD.

[*Gently.*] No.

ROSA.

Sing'ler ! She did the Oatycole.

RONALD.

[*Puzzled.*] Oatycole ?

ROSA.

In the long 'abit an' tall 'at——made 'er 'orse do parlour tricks.

RONALD.

Haute École !

ROSA.

Said so, did'n I ?

RONALD.

[*Tenderly.*] Is—is she—— ?

ROSA.

[*Nodding solemnly.*] Yus. Through a *h*accident.

RONALD.

[*Stroking her hair again.*] Accident, not *h*accident.

ROSA.

Me father—Seenyer Balmano—'e was as vers'tile as 'e was 'andsome. 'E ended by bein' Champion Jockey-Act Rider of Two 'Emmerspheres.

RONALD.

Indeed ?

ROSA.

[*Rapturously.*] The way 'e off'd 'is saddle an' bridle, gallopin' roun' the ring, an' chucked 'em ter Segantini was unpa-rara-lelled. Ever 'eard of 'im ?

RONALD.

No.

ROSA.

Sing'ler.

RONALD.

Where—— ? [*She makes a downward gesture.*]
Your father too ?

ROSA.

[*Nodding.*] Through a haccident.

RONALD.

[*Taking her hand and smoothing it.*] My poor little woman ! Haven't you any relations living at all ?

ROSA.

[*Shaking her head.*] No.

RONALD.

My poor dear little—— !

[*He drops her hand suddenly, listening, and they rise and separate as COLLINGRIDGE enters from the outer hall carrying two tumblers of lemon-squash and some straws upon a small tray. COLLINGRIDGE goes to ROSA, who takes one of the tumblers.*]

ROSA.

[*To COLLINGRIDGE.*] Thanks.

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*To ROSA, chillingly.*] Straw ?

ROSA.

[*Taking a straw and putting it into her tumbler.*]
Thanks.

RONALD.

[*To COLLINGRIDGE, taking the other tumbler and a straw.*] Thanks.

[*COLLINGRIDGE withdraws and ROSA and RONALD imbibe thirstily through the straws.*]

RONALD.

[*Between gulps.*] Not bad !

ROSA.

[*Drinking noisily.*] Bad ! Geronimo— ! [*Having consumed half her drink, she sits, panting, in the chair on the right of the oblong table and draws her sleeve across her mouth.*] Golly, I was 'ot !

RONALD.

[*Moving to the oblong table, drinking as he goes.*] What I was about to say to you, Rosa—[*drinking*] ssss!—what I was about to say to you—ssss!—is this. [*Sitting in the chair behind the table.*] It 'ud be a rotten mistake—ssss!—a rotten mistake for you to leave England—London—*now*.

ROSA.

[*Drinking again.*] Would it? Ssss! W'y?

RONALD.

Just when luck has brought you some jolly good—ssss!—some jolly good friends——!

ROSA.

[*Peering into the depths of her tumbler as she drinks.*] Ssssssss!

RONALD.

My mother and Sheila—ssss!—[*kindly but patronizingly*] and myself.

ROSA.

[*Putting her tumbler and her elbows on the table and facing him.*] Don' see wot difference it 'ud make whether we 'it the breeze f'r America or not. D'reckly Jimmy recovers, this—*this*—'ll be hover. [*Bending her head to drink.*] Ssss!

RONALD.

[*Following her example as to his tumbler and the position of his elbows.*] My dear Rosa, there you are in error. [*Also stooping to drink.*] Ssss! [*Gazing at her earnestly over his glass.*] It'll be your fault entirely if ever I lose sight of you.

ROSA.

[*Raising her eyes to his.*] W-w-wot, f'r the rest o' me life, d'ye mean ?

RONALD.

Yes, for the rest of your life. [*They lower their eyes and drink together. Then she pushes her tumbler from her and, drawing back, sits with her hands in her lap, staring before her. After a pause he jogs his chair a little nearer to her.*] You—you won't go to America, Rosa ?

ROSA.

[*Falteringly.*] Jimmy—an' Raiche—an' Joolie an' Thomas Quincy—I could'n deesert them. I sh'd 'ate ter be a quitter.

RONALD.

But you needn't be a quitter. You can persuade Tilney to refuse the agents' offer, and to remain in this country. Surely you've a voice in the matter. [*Urgently.*] Rosa—Rosa——

ROSA.

[*In a tremor.*] Well, there ain't no 'urry, is there ?
The ship don' sail termorrer, any old 'ow.

RONALD.

No, but——

ROSA.

[*Flutteringly, straightening her skirt.*] I—I'll run
upstairs an' change me shoes, an' then I'll be gittin'
along ter the Halexandra Road——

RONALD.

[*Jolting his chair still closer to her.*] Not yet——

ROSA.

Tom an' Joolie'll want lookin' after while Raiche is
habsent——

RONALD.

Stay and finish your drink. Finish your drink.

ROSA.

[*Shrinking.*] No, thenks.

RONALD.

Why not ?

ROSA.

Strikes cold on me stummick.

[*She rises and goes to the round table and picks
up her hat.*]

RONALD.

[*Springing up and following her.*] Rosa—Rosa——

ROSA.

[*Her bosom heaving.*] Lem'me be ! Lem'me be !

RONALD.

Rosa—give me a kiss.

ROSA.

K-k-kiss—— ?

RONALD.

One—one——

ROSA.

W-w-wo' for ?

RONALD.

[*Wildly.*] What for—— !

[*He catches hold of her impulsively and their eyes meet and then their lips ; and then she breaks from him and scurries up the stairs, leaving him with his arms hanging loosely and a half-scared, half-vacant look on his face. The picture-curtain falls again and rises after another short interval. The light in the garden is now the cooler light of evening. In the room a small fire is burning. MRS. HERRICK is seated on the settee, engaged upon a piece of fancy-work and talking to GLYN, who is in the chair on the right of the round table. LADY BALL-JENNINGS is in the chair on the left of the oblong table, twiddling her thumbs ; SHEILA, with an absent-minded air,*

is on the fauteuil-stool ; SIR NORTON stands at the fireplace, his back to the fire, discontentedly tapping his front teeth ; and COLLINGRIDGE, carrying a salver, is collecting some empty coffee-cups. The ladies are in demi-toilette and GLYN is in his dress-coat, but SIR NORTON'S evening dress is modified by his wearing an ill-fitting black velvet jacket.]

SIR NORTON.

[Coming forward on the right as COLLINGRIDGE goes out at the door on the left—with his ghastly smile.] Well, well, well ! Can't we amuse ourselves more profitably than by discussing carnations and antirrhinums, hey ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[In her most cheerful manner.] Amuse ourselves ! Ha, ha !

MRS. HERRICK.

[Bending over her work.] The vicar knows, Meg dear, that while Mr. Eddowes is lying upstairs——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[To GLYN.] We are practically deprived of the use of the drawing-room—— ?

SIR NORTON.

[To GLYN.] And unable to offer a guest the entertainment of a little music ?

GLYN.

[*Nodding.*] Yes, yes; yes, yes.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Why Mr. Eddowes was honoured by being given the room immediately above the drawing-room, I can't conjecture.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Looking up appealingly.*] But how could I possibly have foreseen——?

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN.*] Owing to his extreme length, vicar, the giant's bed is made up on the floor.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

And as this house is exceedingly ill-built—jerry-built, in fact——

SIR NORTON.

[*Indicating the drawing-room.*] Even a whisper is taboo in there, let alone the piano

LADY BALL-JENNINGS

[*Beaming upon everybody.*] Not that the piano has ever been silenced when my husband has had one of his neuralgic headaches.

SIR NORTON.

[*Still smiling.*] Never.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Distressed.*] Norton——!

SHEILA.

[*Rousing herself.*] Oh, la, la; la, la! Don't worry, good people. [*Rising and moving towards the fireplace, giving GLYN a mischievous pat on the head as she passes him.*] I'm not in the least inclined to play to-night, and shouldn't have, anyway.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Bridling.*] Sheila——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Advancing.*] What I was about to suggest—though really I hesitate to do so—what I was about to suggest is that it might pass half-an-hour agreeably if I were to resume my reading of “Macbeth.”

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Enthusiastically.*] Ah! [*Clapping her hands.*] Bravo, bravo, bravo! Splendid idea!

[*SHEILA, unobserved, throws up her arms and then frantically clasps her brow.* MRS. HERRICK *shrinks in her seat and GLYN's jaw becomes rigid.*]

SIR NORTON.

[*Adjusting his necktie.*] Of course, it's for all of you to say——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN.*] Vicar—— ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To GLYN, in a weak voice.*] Sir Norton is kind enough to read Shakespeare to us occasionally——

GLYN.

[*Grimly.*] Quite so; quite so.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Jumping up and going to SIR NORTON.*] Isn't his vitality marvellous? [*Her hand on SIR NORTON'S shoulder.*] Who would believe that this afternoon he was writhing in agony? Positively writhing! [*To MRS. HERRICK, as GLYN rises and joins SHEILA at the fireplace.*] Away with your stupid needlework, Dorothy; away with it!

SIR NORTON.

[*As MRS. HERRICK hastily crams her work into the work-basket—stalking to the door on the left.*] The volume is in my study——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Turning to SHEILA as SIR NORTON disappears.*] Sheila—[*scandalized at finding her flopping against GLYN*] Sheila, what are you doing!

SHEILA.

[*Pulling herself together.*] N-nothing, aunt.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Dragging the chair on the left of the oblong table out into the room—severely.*] Help me to arrange the chairs at once.

GLYN.

[*As SHEILA pushes the chair on the right of the oblong table into a corresponding position on the other side of the room.*] May I——?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN.*] Certainly not, vicar. [*Counting the chairs.*] One—two—three—four—that will do. [*To SHEILA.*] And now fetch a carafe of water and a tumbler from the dining-room. [*Joining GLYN.*] Quick, quick!

SHEILA.

[*Obediently.*] Yes, aunt.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN.*] You mustn't expect a vast amount of lung power in the declamatory passages to-night, vicar——

[*Crossing to the door on the left, SHEILA executes a savage war-dance before her mother in passing.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Hoarse with terror.*] Sheila——!

SHEILA.

[*At the door, colliding with SIR NORTON, who re-enters carrying a large book.*] Sorry, uncle.

SIR NORTON.

[*As SHEILA bolts away.*] Oh——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Turning.*] Norton——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Pressing his hand to his diaphragm.*] My niece—
[*in pain*] the corner of the book——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Taking the book from him and laying it on the oblong table.*] Clumsy girl!

[*RONALD, in a dinner-jacket and without a hat, has entered quietly at the window, smoking a cigarette. He also has an abstracted air.*]

RONALD.

[*Encountering GLYN, who has moved towards the window.*] Er—nice in the garden, Rev.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To RONALD.*] Ah, there you are, my boy! I was just going to hail you in. Get rid of that filthy cigarette and run upstairs and fetch your uncle's voice lozenges. [*RONALD flings his cigarette into the*

garden and closes the window.] You'll find them in his room, on the small table by the wash-stand. [*As RONALD turns from the window.*] Your uncle is treating us to some Shakespeare.

RONALD.

[*Under his breath, reeling slightly.*] Great Cæsar!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

What do you say!

RONALD.

[*In a tone of mild inquiry.*] "J-J-Julius Cæsar," aunt?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Suspiciously.*] No, "Macbeth." Sharp, sharp, sharp! [*RONALD slouches across the room, exchanging looks with MRS. HERRICK as he passes her, and goes up the stairs. SIR NORTON, who has put on a pair of tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles, seats himself in the chair behind the oblong table and opens his book while LADY BALL-JENNINGS brings a pillow from one of the settles and places it at his back. The light is now beginning to fade.*] Are you comfortable, Norton?

SIR NORTON.

[*Searching in his book.*] Fairly.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

What a pity that ignorant young woman, Miss Balmano, isn't home yet! She'll lose the finest

parts of the tragedy. [SHEILA returns, with the water-bottle and glass.] Ah! [Taking them from her and standing them on the oblong table and half filling the glass.] Thank you, child. Now settle yourself and try not to fidget. The slightest movement distracts your uncle. [SHEILA sits in the chair on the right of the round table and furtively grips her mother's hand.] No, no, no! [Hurrying to GLYN, who is about to sit at the farther side of the window, and conducting him to the chair at the nearer side.] I advise you to sit there, vicar. You'll have a better view of Sir Norton's face there.

GLYN.

[Obeying her.] Certainly; certainly.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

His facial expression, when he's reading tragedy, is terrible.

SHEILA.

[Gurgling.] Goo-oo-oo-oo——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[Elevating her eyebrows.] Sheila——! [Seeing RONALD sluggishly descending the stairs.] Come along, Ronald! Bustle, bustle! You're not walking in your sleep, are you?

RONALD.

[Hurt.] Haven't been two ticks.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Snatching a small cardboard box from him and looking at the lid.*] Corn-plasters!

RONALD.

Oh——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Dabbing the box on to the oblong table angrily.*] Never mind; nev-er mind.

RONALD.

Sorry.

SHEILA.

Ho, ho, ho——!

MRS. HERRICK.

Sheila——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Silence! Silence! [RONALD, *after making an ugly grimace at his sister, sits sulkily in the chair which LADY BALL-JENNINGS has moved out into the room on the left.*] Not another sound! [Seating herself in the corresponding chair on the right—to SIR NORTON.] Forgive us, Norton, for keeping you. [With a final look round.] H'sssh——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Peering at everybody over his spectacles.*] I propose to take it up from the point where I was interrupted the other night by my dreadful fit of coughing. [*Preparing to read.*] Er——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN, sotto voce.*] Most alarming. Nearly frightened us to death.

SIR NORTON.

[*Reciting in very poor style, his gestures following his delivery of the text instead of accompanying it, and his attempts to trust to his memory invariably ending in his having to consult his book.*] Er——

“ Go bid thy mistress—when my drink is ready—
She strike upon the bell. Er—get thee to bed.

[*Gesture.*]

Is this a dagger—which I see before me—

The hilt toward my hand—no—the handle—the
handle toward my hand ? Come, let me clutch
thee:— [*Gesture.*]

I have thee not—er—and yet I see thee still—— ”

[*The door on the left opens and WATERFIELD enters cheerily.*]

WATERFIELD.

A’ha ! [*Closing the door.*] Here I am again !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Over her shoulder.*] Ah, doctor !

WATERFIELD.

How cosy you look here ! [*Coming to MRS. HERRICK and taking her hand.*] Hope you gave the hard-

working medico a thought while you were eating your dinner. [*To RONALD and SHEILA, who jump up and, one on each side of him, slip an arm through his.*] Hallo, kids! [*Nodding to GLYN.*] Vicar! [*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON.*] Evening, Lady Ball-Jennings; evening, Sir Norton.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Icily.*] Good evening.

SIR NORTON.

[*Leaning back in his chair and putting the tips of his fingers together.*] Good evening.

WATERFIELD.

[*Grasping the situation.*] Oh, am I——? [*Releasing himself from SHEILA and RONALD and approaching SIR NORTON.*] Afraid I've disturbed you. [*Pointing to the book.*] You're——?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Sir Norton is reading aloud to us—Shakespeare.

WATERFIELD.

A thousand apologies—bounding in like a wild animal——

RONALD.

[*To MRS. HERRICK, eagerly.*] Shall I take the doctor upstairs, Mums?

SHEILA.

[*Receiving a scowl from RONALD for her pains.*] No, Ronald needn't; *I* will.

WATERFIELD.

[*Facing them, with a twinkle.*] No, no; you stay where you are and improve your minds. I don't want either of you. [RONALD and SHEILA glare at him fiercely.] Ha, ha, ha!

[*He ascends the stairs, chuckling, and disappears.*

SHEILA reseats herself, but RONALD inadvertently remains standing.]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To SIR NORTON.*] Begin afresh, Norton.

SIR NORTON.

[*Pushing the book from him.*] What's the use? [*Glancing pettishly at the stairs.*] This hilarious gentleman——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Surely Dr. Waterfield will have the sense to leave by the servants' staircase!

GLYN.

Yes, yes; I'll be bound he will.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To SIR NORTON, coaxingly.*] Norton——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[To SIR NORTON.] Norton——

SIR NORTON.

[*Yielding.*] Well—[*taking a sip of water*] if you insist——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Ah——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Restarting.*] Er—h'm——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*As before, not noticing that RONALD is on his feet.*] H'sssh!

SIR NORTON.

[*Gabbling in an undertone, to get into his stride.*] Er—"Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready——"[*Suddenly RONALD makes for the fire and pokes and mends it.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Ronald!

MRS. HERRICK.

Ronald, *darling*——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Hitting the table with his fist.*] This is outrageous!

GLYN.

Go back to your seat, Ronald.

RONALD.

[*To them all, the poker in his hand.*] You don't want the fire to go out completely, do you ?

SIR NORTON.

[*Thoroughly upset.*] Damn the fire, damn the fire, damn the fire !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Rising and hurrying to him.*] Norton—— ! [*To RONALD.*] Put the poker down, sir.

MRS. HERRICK.

Come here, Ronny !

SHEILA.

[*To RONALD.*] Don't be a silly ass, Ron.

RONALD.

[*Who has dropped the poker and picked up a log.*] Am I to put this log on or am I not ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

You can swallow the log if you choose.

RONALD.

We shouldn't have a stuffy fire in June at all but for Uncle Norton !

GLYN.

Hold your tongue, Ronald.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To RONALD.*] My son——!

RONALD.

[*Throwing the log on and returning to his chair, much injured—to GLYN.*] Wasn't aware the reading had begun again, Rev.

SHEILA.

[*To RONALD.*] Shut up!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Not aware——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Leaning his head on his hands.*] Oh, dear; oh, dear!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To RONALD.*] Beg your uncle's pardon, Ronny.

RONALD.

[*Seated.*] For putting a log on!

SHEILA.

[*To RONALD.*] What's it matter? Chuck it off your chest.

RONALD.

[*Kicking his legs about.*] Oh, I beg pardon, on my bended knees. Wow, wow!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Indignantly.*] So you ought, with your "wow, wow!" [*Resuming her seat.*] Now, then; once more. [*To SIR NORTON.*] Norton——

MRS. HERRICK.

[To SIR NORTON.] Norton——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[As SIR NORTON, obviously shaken by the unfortunate incident, gulps some more water.] H'sssh !

SIR NORTON.

[*Gabbling to himself as before, but feebly.*]

“ Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

[*Aloud, renewing his effort at dramatic effect.*]

Is this a dagger—which I see before me—

The—er—the handle toward my hand ? Er—
come, let me—er——”

[*Looking up.*] The light's very poor.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Shocking, for the time of year.

SIR NORTON.

[*Continuing.*]

Er——“ Come, let me clutch thee:— [*Belated
gesture.*]

I have thee not—er—and yet I—I see thee
still——”

[*Leaning back.*] I can't see anything.

MRS. HERRICK.

[To RONALD.] Switch the light on, Ronald.

RONALD.

[*Shaking his head.*] Not me. Pokin' the fire has finished me.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To SHEILA.*] Sheila——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*As SHEILA rises, pointing to the lamp on the harmonium.*] Bring that candle-lamp. The electric-light would strike right into your uncle's eyes. [*While SHEILA is lighting the lamp—surveying an imaginary window in the fourth wall of the room.*] Why the architect stuck a cheap stained-glass window in that wall instead of a clear one is another inscrutable mystery.

SIR NORTON.

[*Deploringly.*] Flashy; flashy. [*SHEILA carries the lamp to the oblong table and stands it on the table so that it casts its beam on SIR NORTON'S book.*] I thank you.

[*She returns to her seat, annoying RONALD by ruffling his hair as she passes him. It is now almost dusk.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To SIR NORTON.*] Now, Norton. At last! [*As before.*] H'sssh!

SIR NORTON.

[*Resuming.*]

“ Art thou not—er—fatal vision, sensible
To feeling—er—as to sight ? or art thou——”

[*Loud and prolonged cheers are heard from
without. SIR NORTON breaks off abruptly
and everybody listens.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Faintly.*] It's Rosa.

SIR NORTON.

[*In despair, leaning back in his chair again.*] I
am *not* to be allowed to proceed, evidently.

[*The sound increases.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Stonily.*] The others must be with her—the noise
is worse than usual.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Her hand to her brow.*] They may have brought
her home——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To RONALD, in dreadful tones.*] Ronald, I com-
mand you, go out into the drive; stop this hubbub
and bring Miss Balmano in quietly.

[*There is an uproarious outburst as RONALD,
with a blank face, gets upon his legs, and then
the tumult subsides.*]

RONALD.

[*His jaw falling.*] Aunt, I—I——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Stamping her foot.*] Do as I bid you !

RONALD.

Yes, but—[*to everybody*] I say ! Blest if I haven't forgotten to mention it—— !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Mention—— ?

RONALD.

That they were all coming round this evening in their professional rig-out. The doctor told 'em they might, and Tilney asked me to explain to mother——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Gasping.*] In—in their—— !

SIR NORTON.

[*Sitting upright.*] Professional—— !

GLYN.

[*To RONALD.*] Their professional dress, Ronald ?

MRS. HERRICK.

Ronny—— !

SHEILA.

Ron !

RONALD.

[*To MRS. HERRICK.*] Went clean out o' my head,
Mums.

GLYN.

[*To RONALD.*] What earthly reason—— ?

RONALD.

Eddowes has got a longing to see his pals in their circus togs, and—[*going softly to the door on the left*] they've arrived.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Struggling out of her chair.*] Merciful powers—— !

SIR NORTON.

[*Rising and joining her — unsteadily.*] M-M-Margaret——

SHEILA.

[*Jumping up and retreating to the fireplace.*] Oh, Mary Ann!

[*MRS. HERRICK and GLYN also rise. Meeting him in the middle of the room, she clings to him and he pats her hand consolingly.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

Vicar—— !

RONALD.

[*Who has opened the door an inch or two and is peeping into the outer hall.*] They're taking their wraps off—they're—[*recoiling*] lord, look at Tilney—— !

[*He hurries to SHEILA and stands clutching her arm and, with the rest, watching the door. Presently the door opens fully and JULIE and PRATT enter, followed by ROSA and TILNEY.*]

JULIE is in a poor imitation of a Court gown of the Victorian era, PRATT in a nondescript full-dress uniform, partly naval, partly military. Their garments are creased and faded and their white kid gloves exceedingly dirty. PRATT carries a cocked-hat and both have a lot of trumpery stars and medals on their breasts. ROSA is wearing a gymnast's dress—much soiled, as are her pink "fleshings" and heelless shoes—and TILNEY is in an almost skin-tight suit of seedy black, "faked" by having high-lights artfully painted on it to bring his more prominent bones into relief. The faces of the entire party are "made up," ROSA'S and the PRATTS' crudely and vividly, TILNEY'S with a leaden-coloured preparation which adds to its cadaverousness.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[Under her breath, aghast.] Oh——!

SIR NORTON AND LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[In the same way, falling back towards the window.]

Oh——!

TILNEY.

[As the PRATTS and ROSA advance—shutting the door.] Had to walk, Mrs. Herrick; couldn't get a cab for love or money.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Sinking on to the fauteuil-stool.*] Walk—in that guise——!

TILNEY.

[*Coming forward, apologetically.*] We were covered up from neck to heels; [*shaking his fist at the PRATTS*] and if it hadn't been that these two vain little devils would persist in showing their finery to everybody we met——!

JULIE.

[*Haughtily.*] Shucks! Come off yer perch, Raiche. I reckon me an' Thomas Quincy owes a dooty ter the in-habitants of this villudge.

PRATT.

[*Giggling.*] He, he, he! Yew bet!

GLYN.

[*Standing by MRS. HERRICK—to TILNEY.*] Dr. Waterfield is with his patient now, Mr. Tilney. Mrs. Herrick understands that it's with his consent——

TILNEY.

[*Nodding.*] That's right, vicar; [*leading the PRATTS to the stairs*] the doctor approves.

[*He pauses near the foot of the stairs to put the little people in order.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To ROSA, who is following TILNEY—horrified at her appearance.*] Oh, my child—— !

ROSA.

[*Absorbed in her costume—with a complacent twist of her waist.*] This 'appened ter be at the top o' me basket, but it's me blue I'm fondest of.

TILNEY.

[*To ROSA.*] Rosa——

Hi !

ROSA.

[*Unconsciously she gives a little professional skip ; then she joins TILNEY and the PRATTS, and they are all about to ascend the stairs when WATERFIELD appears at the top and comes down. His face is grave, his manner altered.*]

WATERFIELD.

[*To TILNEY.*] Hallo ! [*Halting on one of the lower steps and eyeing the group.*] You're a magnificent sight, all of you.

TILNEY.

How's Jimmy ? May we go up ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Shaking his head.*] No; rather you didn't. [*Pushing through them and coming to MRS. HERRICK.*]

Sorry to say the poor chap's not so well, Mrs. Herrick.

MRS. HERRICK.

Not so well ? [*Rising.*] Oh, doctor—— !

WATERFIELD.

It's necessary for me to have some assistance—call in another man——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Agitatedly.*] Anything—anything——

TILNEY.

[*Who has left the PRATTS and followed WATERFIELD—at his elbow.*] Is it desperate ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Nodding.*] Pretty bad.

ROSA.

[*Darting up the stairs with a half-stifled cry.* Oh—— !

TILNEY.

[*Calling to her.*] Come back, Rosa—— !

ROSA.

[*As she disappears.*] Sha'n't. Oh—oh—oh—— !

WATERFIELD.

[*Checking TILNEY by a touch.*] Let her alone.
[*Significantly.*] The nurse'll tell her.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] Tell her—— ?

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] Tell her—— ?

[RONALD and SHEILA come to the middle of the room, listening, and SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS, their heads in the air, move to the fireplace. *It is now quite dusk.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] What will the nurse tell her, doctor ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Looking at TILNEY.*] That my diagnosis of this afternoon was correct. I was afraid——

TILNEY.

[*To WATERFIELD, quietly.*] An empyema ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Nodding.*] A definite empyema.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Faintly.*] I'm frightened to ask——

WATERFIELD.

[*To MRS. HERRICK—looking at his watch.*] May I use your telephone ?

MRS. HERRICK.

Of course.

WATERFIELD.

I want to get hold of Peel—Atkinson Peel—if I can——

MRS. HERRICK.

The s-s-surgeon—— ?

WATERFIELD.

Yes.

GLYN.

Is Mr. Peel—— ?

WATERFIELD.

[*Nodding again.*] Fine operator—I've the fullest confidence in him.

GLYN.

When—— ?

WATERFIELD.

To-morrow morning—early. [*Turning to the door on the left.*] Out there, isn't it ?

RONALD.

[*Hastening to the door and opening it.*] Here you are, doc. [*As WATERFIELD goes out.*] Just opposite.

SHEILA.

[*Coming to TILNEY.*] Oh, Mr. Tilney ! [*Taking his hand.*] Mr. Tilney—— !

TILNEY.

[*Thickly.*] Thank you, thank you.

[*While this has been going on, the PRATTS, with piteous faces, have crept to TILNEY'S side. At this juncture JULIE suddenly bursts into tears.*]

JULIE.

Oh—oh—oh——!

PRATT.

[*Screwing his fists into his eyes.*] Oh—oh—oh——!

TILNEY.

[*Turning upon them sharply.*] Julie Maud! Be a woman! Where's your handkerchief?

JULIE.

[*Sobbing.*] I ain't got no pockut in these blame clothes.

TILNEY.

Thomas Quincy——!

[*He lifts them on to the settee and, producing a handkerchief, dabs their cheeks. SHEILA and RONALD join GLYN and MRS. HERRICK.*]

SHEILA.

[*Sorrowfully.*] Oh, Mums! Oh, vicar!

TILNEY.

[*To PRATT and JULIE.*] There, there, there, there! We're not going to give up hope, Tom;

we're not going to give up hope, ol' lady; [*leaving them and sitting in the chair on the right of the round table*] we—we—[*his head drooping*] we're not going to give up—hope——

[*ROSA, with wild eyes, runs down the stairs.*]

ROSA.

[*Hoarsely.*] Oh! Oh, my Gawd! [*Looking about for GLYN.*] 'Ere! Where's the clergeeman? Where's the wot-yer-call-'im—the vikker? Ain't gorn, is 'e? [*GLYN steps forward and confronts her.*] Oh, 'ere yer are! [*Clutching his sleeve.*] Look 'ere, I ain't no church-goer—none of us is. But you 'eard wot Raiche an' the doctor said—desprit; an' nurse sez the same. That's 'ow things are hupstairs—desprit. [*Shaking GLYN'S arm.*] Say a prayer for 'im, will yer—for our Jimmy? Harsk for 'im ter be pulled through, will yer—ter be pulled through, if o'ny f'r this once? [*Beseechingly.*] 'Scuse us f'r troublin' yer out o' bizness——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Partly to GLYN and partly to ROSA.*] I am sure Mr. Glyn will offer up a prayer, Rosa——

GLYN.

[*Laying his hand on ROSA'S head.*] Willingly, my dear.

ROSA.

[*Rushing to the little table on the left.*] That is kind of yer ! [*Carrying the Prayer-Book to the farther side of the oblong table and, having shifted the volume of Shakespeare, setting it under the light of the lamp.*] If it don't do no good, it won't do no 'arm; [*returning to GLYN*] an' we oughter try heverythink. [*Sitting on the fauteuil-stool and rocking herself to and fro moanfully.*] Oh—oh—oh—— !

[*GLYN, putting on his pince-nez, takes his stand before the Prayer-Book and MRS. HERRICK, SHEILA, and RONALD seat themselves in the chairs on the right.*]

GLYN.

[*Opening the Prayer-Book and turning the pages—in a dry, gruff voice.*] My dear friends, as Miss Balmano reminds us, in times of tribulation, suspense, affliction, we ought indeed, in seeking deliverance, to try *everything*—[*surveying those around him queerly from under his brows*] even prayer. And happily we have no reason to suppose—[*in answer to a short cough from SIR NORTON*] hey ?——

[*SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS, after holding an animated consultation with each other in whispers, have moved from the fire-*

place, LADY BALL-JENNINGS leading the way, and are now near the foot of the stairs. They both address GLYN heatedly.]

SIR NORTON.

One moment, vicar——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

We *must* interrupt you——

SIR NORTON.

While sympathizing deeply with the unfortunate man upstairs, Lady Ball-Jennings and I are hardly in a fit mood to take part in this ceremony.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[Beginning to mount the stairs.] No; when people are smarting under a sense of injury——

SIR NORTON.

[Close behind her.] Suffering from a long-continued series of affronts——

MRS. HERRICK.

[To LADY BALL-JENNINGS.] Injury, Meg? *[To SIR NORTON.]* What affronts, Norton?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[Halting.] Oh, it's easy to feign ignorance, Dorothy——!

SIR NORTON.

Very, very.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To Mrs. Herrick, over the banisters.*] My husband has been more or less an invalid during the whole of our stay at Marsden Lodge——

SIR NORTON.

Considerably *more* than *less*.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Has the vicar ever been invited to offer up a prayer for *him* ?

SIR NORTON.

Never.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Or has Norton ever been specially prayed for at our usual family worship ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Wringing her hands.*] Margaret, Margaret, the cases are different——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Continuing her ascent.*] Vastly ! That is what we complain of.

SIR NORTON.

That is our contention.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Vanishing.*] Good night. We are going to our beds.

SIR NORTON.

[*Following her.*] Good night.

SHEILA.

[*As soon as SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS are out of sight—throatily, clenching her hands*] Oh-h-h-h——!

GLYN.

[*To SHEILA.*] H'sh, h'sh, h'sh, h'sh!

RONALD.

[*Jumping up and shaking his fist at the stairs.*] Good night, and a jolly good riddance!

GLYN.

[*To RONALD.*] Ronald——!

RONALD.

Of all the mean, paltry, pitiful——!

GLYN.

Sit down.

SHEILA.

[*Vindictively.*] Ha, ha, ha! Uncle Norton wants to be prayed for, does he——!

GLYN.

Sheila——!

RONALD.

[*Seated again.*] He *shall* be; *I'll* put in a word for him!

SHEILA.

So will I, for both of 'em !

RONALD.

[To GLYN.] Fire away, Rev !

MRS. HERRICK.

[Wiping her eyes.] Children ! Children—— !

[WATERFIELD reappears.]

WATERFIELD.

[As he enters.] Peel's not at home; [closing the door] expected back every minute. [Advancing.] They'll ring me up when he comes in. [Seeing the Prayer-Book open before GLYN.] Oh—— ! [Sitting quietly in the vacant chair on the left.] Pardon, vicar.

GLYN.

[Still turning the pages of the book.] My dear friends, I was about to say, [eyeing the poor, woebegone "freaks"] for the comfort of those among us who are not in the habit of carrying their griefs and anxieties to the divine fount—I was about to say that we have no reason to suppose that our voices will not be heard to-day because, during periods of ease, and freedom from positive misfortune, we have neglected to perform our duty, or have discharged it only intermittingly or half-heartedly. [Finding his place and flattening

the pages with his palm.] Common experience mercifully points to the contrary; and whether the simple but solemn appeal, [*glancing at ROSA*] which that young woman has called upon me to make, be accepted or rejected, we may at least be sure——

[Hearing footsteps on the stairs, he breaks off and looks over his shoulder. All eyes follow his. To the general wonderment SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS come down the stairs and return, slowly and sheepishly, to the fireplace, where they sit in silence, he on one of the settles, she on the other. There is a pause.]

MRS. HERRICK.

[Almost inaudibly.] Thank you, Meg; thank you, Norton.

GLYN.

[Reading from the Prayer-Book, his hand upraised.]
 “Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.”

[He motions to everybody to kneel and—with the exception of WATERFIELD, who inclines his head reverently—they do so, JULIE and PRATT being helped to their knees by TILNEY. Then GLYN himself kneels and the curtain falls.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

CONVALESCENCE

The scene is the same, the disposition of the furniture as it was at the beginning of the previous Act. The oblong table is again littered with newspapers, magazines, etc., and some travelling rugs and a couple of air-cushions are on the settee.

A leaf of the window is open and the morning sun streams into the room.

[GLYN enters from the outer hall, shown in by COLLINGRIDGE.]

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*As GLYN passes her.*] She's in the garden, sir; [closing the door] I'll find her.

GLYN.

[*Making for the window.*] No, no; don't trouble. [MRS. HERRICK appears at the window in her hat and gardening gloves.] Here she is.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Seeing GLYN and hurrying into the room.*] Ah—— !

GLYN.

[*Heartily.*] Good morning. [*She takes off her right-hand glove to shake hands with him.*] I had your note last night——

MRS. HERRICK.

I knew you'd wish to give them your blessing, vicar.

GLYN.

Of course. [*Her hand in his.*] Splendid day for the journey, hey?

MRS. HERRICK.

Perfect. [*Crossing to COLLINGRIDGE, who has lingered to remove the rugs and cushions from the settee and is now going out with them—anxiously.*] Have they got Mr. Eddowes down safely, Collingridge?

COLLINGRIDGE.

[*In whom a capacity for amiability seems to have developed—at the door.*] Five minutes ago, ma'am. He's on the couch in the morning-room, quite comfortable.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Relieved.*] Thank heaven! [*Returning to GLYN as COLLINGRIDGE withdraws.*] The nurses insisted on everybody being out of the way, and doing it by themselves; [*sitting on the fauteuil-stool and taking off her other glove*] so I've been helping Roberts to pick the nosegays.

GLYN.

[*Standing over her.*] The poor fellow's to recruit at Bournemouth, then, is he?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Nodding.*] At Bournemouth. The train leaves Waterloo at twelve-thirty. Dr. Waterfield has engaged a motor ambulance for the invalid, and the rest follow with the luggage in Proctor's char-à-banc. Similar arrangements have been made at the other end. [*Laying her gloves on the table behind her.*] Ronald and Sheila have gone to the Alexandra Road to fetch Mr. Tilney and the little folks—[*looking at a watch she wears on her wrist*] the party starts from this house at a quarter-past eleven——

GLYN.

[*Growling.*] Ugh! We're in for a nice display of local excitement. [*With a motion of his head.*] There's a crowd outside already——

[LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON enter *fussily from the outer hall. Their self-importance is as pronounced as ever, but under it there is a kindlier, if a more patronizing, tone.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Vicar——! [GLYN advances and they shake hands.] You've come to say good-bye to our departing friends?

GLYN.

[*Shaking hands with SIR NORTON.*] Yes.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Charming of you; charming!

SIR NORTON.

[*To GLYN.*] We have just succeeded in bringing Mr. Eddowes down, vicar. [MRS. HERRICK'S *eyes widen.*] No slight undertaking, as you may imagine. [*Dilating his chest.*] Ouf!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Ouf, indeed. [*With an air of exhaustion.*] The servants' staircase has fewer twists than this one, but, oh, the difficulties!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To LADY BALL-JENNINGS, fearfully.*] The nurses said they'd rather not have assistance, Meg.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

That didn't apply to *us*, Dolly. Norton was invaluable.

SIR NORTON.

I stood on the top landing and directed the movements.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

I was at the bottom, in case of a slip.

SIR NORTON.

The women had merely to carry Mr. Eddowes.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Bustling to the stairs.*] Excuse us, vicar; we are going to hunt through our possessions for some small objects——

SIR NORTON.

[*Following her.*] Some small objects to bestow on these worthy people——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Labouring up the stairs.*] As souvenirs——

SIR NORTON.

[*At her heels.*] Trifles for them to treasure to the end of their lives.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Disappearing.*] From Sir Norton and Lady Ball-Jennings!

SIR NORTON.

[*Disappearing.*] From Sir Norton and Lady Ball-Jennings, they will be able to boast!

GLYN.

[*After watching LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON till they are out of sight—to MRS. HERRICK, puzzled.*] A change, surely?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Fervently.*] Isn't it delightful!

GLYN.

[*Raising his eyebrows.*] What——?

MRS. HERRICK.

Ah, I forget, you haven't heard! My brother-in-law's affairs have unexpectedly taken a favourable turn, vicar.

GLYN.

Dear me! Glad.

MRS. HERRICK.

I can't tell you exactly what's occurred—I've no head for business; [*rising*] but Margaret and Norton are fairly well off again.

GLYN.

I see. [*Nodding.*] Where there's good in us, prosperity draws it out, doesn't it?

MRS. HERRICK.

They've fallen in love with a flat in Kensington, near the Albert Hall——

GLYN.

[*Sharply.*] You mean you're losing them too—your sister and her husband——?

MRS. HERRICK.

I'm afraid so; almost at once.

GLYN.

[*With startling loudness.*] Ha, ha !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Staring at him in astonishment.*] Vicar—— !

GLYN.

I beg your pardon——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Listening to the sound of cheering in the distance.*]
Hark !

GLYN.

[*Also listening.*] Tilney and Mr. and Mrs.
Pratt—— ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Moving to the middle of the room.*] Being escorted
from their lodgings——

[*The cheering is now taken up by those close to
the house.*]

GLYN.

Listen to 'em. [*Grimly.*] The throats of my
young parishioners will be pretty sore after this.

MRS. HERRICK.

And my heart. [*Turning to him.*] You've no
idea how lonely we shall feel at Marsden Lodge, vicar.
Rosa and Mr. Tilney especially have become like
members of my own family.

GLYN.

[*Rubbing his beard thoughtfully.*] H'm !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Brightening.*] However, it won't be for long. As soon as they are all back from Bournemouth, the week-end visits must be resumed. [*Unobserved by MRS. HERRICK, GLYN makes a wry face.*] In fact, I don't see why they shouldn't live in this neighbourhood, instead of at that dreadful Lambeth—[*touching his arm*] do you ?—and my boy and girl think the same——

[*Suddenly there is a vociferous volley of cheers, and then WATERFIELD, laughing breathlessly, bursts into the room from the outer hall.*]

WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha, ha ! Ho, ho, ho—— !

MRS. HERRICK.

Doctor—— !

WATERFIELD.

[*Dropping into the chair by the round table as the hullabaloo ceases.*] Ha, ha, ha ! I met Tilney and the little 'uns on their way here and tacked on to 'em——

GLYN.

[*To WATERFIELD.*] And came in for your share of public acclamation ?

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Glowingly.*] He deserves it! [TILNEY enters, pushing JULIE and PRATT before him. The three are dressed for travelling, the PRATTS very elaborately as if for a trip round the world.] Good morning, Mr. Tilney!

TILNEY.

Good morning!

[JULIE and PRATT totter excitedly to MRS. HERRICK, who kisses JULIE and shakes hands with PRATT. TILNEY, having closed the door, also advances.]

MRS. HERRICK.

Good morning, Julie; good morning, Mr. Pratt.

JULIE.

Say, are we laate?

MRS. HERRICK.

Late! No.

PRATT.

We was delayed through Joolie bustin' her blame suspenders.

WATERFIELD.

[As the PRATTS shake hands with GLYN.] Ha, ha, ha!

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Reprovingly.*] Doctor——!

TILNEY.

[*Who is somewhat grave and preoccupied—pressing MRS. HERRICK'S hand and exchanging nods with GLYN.*] Morning, vicar. [*Discovering that PRATT has not removed his cap.*] Thomas Quincy! Where's your cap? I'm ashamed of you!

JULIE.

My wurrrd, but that guy makes me maad——!

[*Enraged at PRATT'S want of manners, she pounces upon him and tears the cap from his head. Then they fall against one another helplessly and are separated and steadied by MRS. HERRICK and GLYN.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

Julie! Julie!

GLYN.

Mrs. Pratt.

TILNEY.

Julie Maud——!

PRATT.

[*Idiotically.*] He, he, he, he!

TILNEY.

[*To MRS. HERRICK and GLYN, apologetically.*] Don't notice 'em, please. They're a bit wrought up at the prospect of the journey.

WATERFIELD.

Ho, ho, ho, ho—— !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To* WATERFIELD.] Doctor—— !

GLYN.

Waterfield—— !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To* TILNEY.] Aren't Sheila and Ronald with you, Mr. Tilney ?

TILNEY.

No.

MRS. HERRICK.

They've gone out to fetch you !

TILNEY.

We went first to the Parade, to buy Julie a veil——

MRS. HERRICK.

Ah, you've missed them. [*Sympathizing with his disappointment.*] Never mind; they'll be here in a minute or two.

WATERFIELD.

[*Jumping up.*] Mr. Jimmy downstairs yet ?

MRS. HERRICK.

In the morning-room.

WATERFIELD.

[*Moving to the door on the left and opening it.*] Let's go and interview him.

MRS. HERRICK.

Yes! [*To GLYN, as she follows WATERFIELD.*]
Vicar——?

GLYN.

[*Joining her.*] Certainly.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To TILNEY.*] Mr. Tilney——?

TILNEY.

[*With the PRATTS—sadly.*] We'll have a last stroll round the garden, Mrs. Herrick—Tom and Julie and I—if we may.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*In a cheerful voice.*] Not the last. [*At the door.*]
The last for a month or six weeks.

TILNEY.

[*Forcing a smile.*] I—I mean—the last for the present.

MRS. HERRICK.

That's better!

[*She passes into the outer hall and GLYN and WATERFIELD follow her, the latter shutting the door. TILNEY puts his hat on—he has been carrying it—and, his chin sunk upon his breast, is leading JULIE and PRATT to the window when ROSA appears at the top*

of the stairs with a wan, pinched face. Seeing TILNEY, she gives a quick glance round the room and calls to him.]

ROSA.

[*Hoarsely.*] Raiche——

TILNEY.

[*Turning.*] Hallo! That you, Rosa?

ROSA.

Yus——

[She descends the stairs rapidly and signs to him to get rid of the PRATTS.]

TILNEY.

[Taking PRATT'S cap from JULIE and cramming it on the little man's head.] Run along, both of you; I'll be out in a jiffy. *[Coming to ROSA as the PRATTS disappear into the garden.]* Well?

ROSA.

[Who, like the PRATTS, is grotesquely dressed for travelling—gripping TILNEY'S sleeve.] 'Ave yer—'ave yer sent it, Raiche?

TILNEY.

The letter——?

ROSA.

T' Crumelli an' Frampton——

TILNEY.

[*Nodding.*] Posted it last night.

ROSA.

Hacceptin' the hoffer ?

TILNEY.

[*With compressed lips.*] Accepting the offer.

ROSA.

They—they'd 'a got it this mornin', would'n they ?

TILNEY.

[*Nodding again.*] This morning.

ROSA.

[*Faintly.*] It—it's settled, then ?

TILNEY.

Finally.

ROSA.

No wrigglin' hout of it now, is there ?

TILNEY.

No.

ROSA.

Not even if we felt inclined.

TILNEY.

Not even if we felt inclined. The letter's a contract in itself. [*Her eyes fill and her mouth twitches.*]

What are you grizzling about? [*Hotly.*] We're doing the c'rect thing; we—we—we—damn it, you agreed, Rosa——!

ROSA.

Yus, I 'greed; [*gulping*] but it's jolly 'ard when ye'r hup ag'inst it.

TILNEY.

Hard! It 'ud be a great deal harder on this near-sighted, confiding lady if we paid her for her kindness by—by—[*stamping his foot*] oh, we've worn this smooth! Drop it!

[*They turn from each other and sit, she in the chair by the round table, he on the fauteuil-stool, the picture of misery.*]

ROSA.

[*Screwing her gloved fist into her eyes, then rubbing her glove on her skirt—with a sniff.*] When d'we sail, Raiche?

TILNEY.

[*Tossing his hat on to the oblong table.*] August third, in the *Rhadamanthus*.

ROSA.

[*Drearily.*] That gives ol' Jimmy a fortnight at Bournemouth, don't it?

TILNEY.

A fat fortnight.

ROSA.

[*Gazing wistfully in front of her.*] Mrs. 'Errick figures we'll be there a month or more——

TILNEY.

[*Bitterly.*] Ha, ha!—and afterwards recommence our visits to Marsden Lodge! [*Leaning his head on his hands and groaning.*] Oh-h-h! I'll write to her before the week's over——

ROSA.

[*Holding her breath.*] Write—— ?

TILNEY.

Telling her of our plans.

ROSA.

W-w-w'y, wot's the objection ter tellin' 'er ter-day, Raiche—tellin' 'em all?

TILNEY.

[*Weakly.*] It—it's easier to write the news. [*Raising his head.*] It'll spare us pain this morning, and it'll take the edge off our good-byes when we pass through London.

ROSA.

[*Getting to her feet.*] Not it! [*Clenching her hands.*] Nothin'll take the hedge off the partin' 'tween me an' Ronald. [*Going to him.*] Look 'ere,

Raiche! [*Entreatingly.*] F'Gawd's sake, let's put 'em wise now an' 'a done with it! An' when we walk outer this 'ouse in 'alf-an-hour's time let that be the larst we see of 'em, an' they of hus. I carn't bear ter 'ave it 'angin' over me, Raiche——

TILNEY.

[*Abruptly, looking at her.*] Rosa——

ROSA.

Wot ?

TILNEY.

[*With sympathetic curiosity.*] How far have matters gone with you and the boy ?

ROSA.

'Ow fur—— ?

TILNEY.

Has he——explicitly—— ?

ROSA.

[*Nodding.*] Toosday hevenin'. Previous ter that 'e'd meally 'inted.

TILNEY.

But on Tuesday evening—— ?

ROSA.

[*Simply.*] We'd bin ter Crosby's, the chemist's, for Jimmy's med'cine, an' comin' 'ome we set on the public seat hunder the big tree at the corner o'

Helm-tree Lane. There was on'y two kids there, with a biby in a pram'later, an' Ronald bribed 'em ter withdror.

TILNEY.

And—proceeded to—— ?

ROSA.

[*Nodding again.*] T'harst me ter be 'is wife. [TILNEY makes a mournful gesture.] Hour engagement was ter be kep' secret till I got more o' wot 'e calls tone—himproved meself an' me style o' speakin'.

TILNEY.

And—did you—— ?

ROSA.

[*Shaking her head.*] No. I said 'is prerposal 'ad hoverwhelmed me with surprise, w'ich 'e said was a 'ighly proper harnswer ter make, an' that I reequyred a week ter kinsider me decision; an' then the kids come back an' deemanded another tuppence, an' we rose an' lef' the spot.

TILNEY.

[*Taking her hand.*] Poor old girl! Poor—old—girl!

ROSA.

[*Chokingly.*] An'—an' 'ow fur 'ave matters gorn with you an' Sheila, Raiche ?

TILNEY.

[*Dropping her hand.*] Rosa——! [*Sternly.*] How dare you!

ROSA.

'Ow dare I!

TILNEY.

[*Rising and walking away to the left.*] How dare you be so inquisitive?

ROSA.

[*Her eyes flashing.*] Hinquisitive! [*Following him.*] Yer don' mind wormin' me secrets outer me——!

TILNEY.

[*Facing her.*] Worming!

ROSA.

[*Her bosom heaving.*] Sneak; that's wot y'are! Sneak!

TILNEY.

Oh, if you're bent on being abusive——!

ROSA.

Abusive! 'Oo's abusive? [*Her anger dying out.*] 'Oo——'oo——?

[*With a sob, she goes to him and lays her head upon his breast. He puts an arm round her waist and pats her shoulder soothingly.*]

TILNEY.

There, there, there, there !

ROSA.

[*Crying softly.*] Ho ! Ho ! Ho ! We won't hever reeturn ter Hengland, will we, Raiche ?

TILNEY.

Never.

ROSA.

We'll give Hengland the frozen mit 'enceforth, won' we ?

TILNEY.

We will.

ROSA.

Me for the States f'r the rest o' me life. No more British Hisles f'r yors cordyelly.

TILNEY.

[*After a moment's pause.*] Rosa——

ROSA.

Yus ?

TILNEY.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Hope we shall have the grit to—to stick to our resolve, ol' woman.

ROSA.

[*Looking up.*] Grit—— ?

TILNEY.

I—I hope—we——

ROSA.

[*Staring at him.*] Wotjermean—'ope we—— ?

TILNEY.

Hope we sha'n't find ourselves—by-and-by——

ROSA.

Waverin' ?

TILNEY.

Wavering.

ROSA.

Sighin' for the mightabin !

TILNEY.

Sighing for what *still might be*—until——

ROSA.

Huntil—— ?

TILNEY.

Until the sound of the water plashing against the dock-wall, and of the siren of a big liner bound for Liverpool, cry to us irresistibly—lure us from our allegiance to Boscovitz—— !

ROSA.

[*Clutching the lapels of his jacket.*] Goramighty, that would'n do, Raiche !

TILNEY.

Nope; that wouldn't do, Rosabella.

ROSA.

[*Full of fright.*] Raiche——!

TILNEY.

Hallo!

ROSA.

I—I gotter—I got'n ideer——

TILNEY.

Produce it.

ROSA.

[*Earnestly.*] W'y should'n me an' you fix up tergether?

TILNEY.

Fix up——?

ROSA.

Git married somewheres in the States soon after we land.

TILNEY.

[*Frowning.*] You and me——?

ROSA.

It 'ud put the lid on this unforchnit hepisode in our c'reers, would'n it——?

TILNEY.

[*Relaxing into a grin.*] By Jove, it would, with a vengeance!

ROSA.

An' deeliver us from temptation——

TILNEY.

And deliver us from temptation. [*Gravely.*] Amen.

ROSA.

[*Her head drooping.*] 'Corse, yer'd be lowerin' yerself by marryin' me, jest as much as Ronald would—ye'r a gen'leman——

TILNEY.

[*Gently.*] Now, stop that !

ROSA.

An' there would'n be no rermance in it——

TILNEY.

[*Putting his hand under her chin and raising her head.*] Wouldn't there ? [*Smiling at her.*] I'm not so sure about that, Miss Balmano.

ROSA.

[*Releasing herself petulantly.*] 'Ow could there be ! [*With a wry mouth.*] Ye'r too familyer with the sight o' me, Raiche. [*Confronting him, her face clearing.*] But it 'ud 'ave one tremenjous advantidge hanyway.

TILNEY.

One—— ?

ROSA.

We don' kermmand the sellery we useter, do we ?

TILNEY.

'Deed we don't.

ROSA.

[*Unconsciously.*] An' it 'ud save the price of a room hev'rywhere we went, if we both occypied——

TILNEY.

[*Hastily.*] Yes, yes, yes. Well, we'll talk it over some other time—on board the boat perhaps—
[*Suddenly they turn their heads towards the window and listen.*] The garden gate—! [ROSA goes to the window and looks out.] Ronald and Sheila ?

ROSA.

Yus. [*Hurrying back to TILNEY agitatedly.*]
Raiche—— !

TILNEY.

[*Also in a fluster.*] All right, all right; have it your own way.

ROSA.

Tell 'em ?

TILNEY.

[*Throwing up his arms.*] Tell 'em.

[ROSA retreats to the fireplace as SHEILA and RONALD, flushed and breathless, appear outside the window.]

SHEILA.

[*Seeing TILNEY.*] He's here, Ron ! [*Entering.*]
The missing man !

RONALD.

[*Entering.*] Oh, confound you, Tilney—— !

TILNEY.
Sorry.

RONALD.
Sorry be blowed——!

SHEILA.
[*Advancing to TILNEY.*] Where the devil——!

TILNEY.
Had to go to the Parade—Julie'd lost her veil——

SHEILA.
[*Indignantly.*] You might have left word——

TILNEY.
Never struck me——

RONALD.
Rats! [*Discovering ROSA.*] Hallo, Rosa! [*ROSA comes forward slowly.*] Through with your packing?

ROSA.
[*Between RONALD and the window.*] Hages ago. Me box is in the 'all.

Hall.
RONALD.

SHEILA.
[*Taking off her hat and pushing her hair from her brow—shrilly.*] Hall!

ROSA.
[*Giving TILNEY a significant look and then plucking at RONALD'S sleeve—in a low, shaky voice.*] C-c-come

inter the garden with me, will yer ? [*With a motion of her head.*] Thomas Quincy an' Joolie Maud's there, an' I—I—I gotter bit o' noos for 'em.

News—— ? RONALD.

 ROSA.
An'—an' for you too.

Me ? RONALD.

 SHEILA.
[*Carelessly.*] What's your news, Rosa ?

 RONALD.
[*Noticing ROSA's pallor.*] By Jinks, you do look white—— !

 SHEILA.
[*To TILNEY—becoming interested.*] Bad news of any sort ?

 RONALD.
[*To ROSA.*] Bad news ?

 ROSA.
[*Turning from him, a little wildly.*] Ho, jest as yer choose ter take it !

 [*She darts away into the garden, pursued by*

 RONALD.]

 RONALD.
[*As they disappear.*] Rosa ! Rosa ! What's up ?
Rosa—— !

SHEILA.

[*To TILNEY.*] Something's wrong; positive of it. I saw Rosa give you a squint—! [*Wrinkling her forehead.*] Don't be mysterious, Raiche!

[*With an effort, he pulls himself together and faces her.*]

TILNEY

[*Steadily.*] Sheila, you remember my mentioning an offer I'd had from a firm of agents in the Strand—Crumelli and Frampton, Maiden Lane—to join Carl Boscovitz's circus in America, beginning of September?

SHEILA.

[*Staring at him.*] Distinctly.

TILNEY.

Eighty dollars a week for the five of us, our fares out and a guarantee of nine months, Bosco to have the option of renewal for three seasons.

SHEILA.

What of it?

TILNEY.

[*Digging his nails into the palms of his hands.*] Oh, I—I've thought it better to—to close with them.

SHEILA.

[*Staggered.*] C-close with them!

TILNEY.

Wrote last night. We sail on the third of August—
—from Liverpool—in the *Rhadamanthus*—

SHEILA.

[*Breathing hard.*] I—I understood you—didn't intend—didn't intend—[*He makes a vague, indefinite gesture and hangs his head. There is a short silence, during which, her face a blank, she fingers the flowers in her hat.*] What—what has caused you to change your mind ?

TILNEY.

[*Thickly.*] Can't you—can't you guess ?

SHEILA.

Is it—on account of—Ronald and Rosa ?

TILNEY.

P-p-partly—yes—

SHEILA.

Aren't you attaching too much importance to a—to a silly flirtation ?

TILNEY.

Flirtation !

SHEILA.

[*Tearing one of the flowers to shreds.*] Frightfully decent of you, of course, to be so concerned about my brother, but I—I don't believe it's serious. [*In an artificial tone.*] Bet you, before you've been away

a week Ronald will have cooled on Rosa and be spoons in another direction.

TILNEY.

[*Coming closer to her and speaking with deep earnestness.*] Ah, my dear, my dear, don't let's try to deceive ourselves; don't let's be blind to the infernal mess we've got into, we four!

SHEILA.

[*Avoiding his gaze.*] M-m-mess—— ?

TILNEY.

You know perfectly well that Ronald's feeling for Rosa is more than mere flirtation, and hers for him, poor little wretch; [*intensely*] and you know—you know—[*clutching her by the shoulders*] oh, Sheila, you know that I love you with all my heart and soul!

SHEILA.

[*Faintly.*] Yes, I do know—ssss! you're bruising me!—I do know—that is, I—I've fancied——

TILNEY.

Fancied!

SHEILA.

[*Panting.*] If you loved me, Raiche, really and truly, you—you'd chuck every other consideration aside——

TILNEY.

And take advantage of your mother's goodness; ruin the hopes she sets upon her children; tempt you to marry a worthless vagabond; connive at Ronald's making a fool of himself with Rosa! [*Impulsively clasping her in his arms.*] By God, I can't do it, Sheila! [*Putting her from him.*] I can't do it, my girl. [*Going to the window and standing there with his back to her and his hands gripped tightly behind him.*] Perhaps you're right; I don't love you enough for that! [*Commanding himself with difficulty.*] No; I don't—I don't love you enough for that.

SHEILA.

[*After a moment's pause.*] Evidently. [*Another pause.*] There's nothing further to be said, then?

TILNEY.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] 'Fraid not.

[*Again there is a pause and then she moves slowly towards the stairs.*]

SHEILA.

[*Halting midway—haughtily.*] Is Rosa in this, or are you—forcing her——?

TILNEY.

Rosa's a willing party to it.

[*She continues her walk and at the foot of the stairs again halts.*]

SHEILA.

[*Coldly, but with a tremor in her voice.*] Mother ! Mums has had her fling. Jolly rough that the happiness of four people should be played skittles with for such mouldy old reasons. [*He makes no reply. She dashes away a tear and turns to him in frank appeal.*]
R-R-Raiche——

TILNEY.

[*Inflexibly.*] Hallo !

SHEILA.

[*Advancing a step or two.*] Won't anything induce you to off it ?

TILNEY.

Off it ?

SHEILA.

Your rotten arrangement with Fumelli and—what's their beastly names ?——

TILNEY.

[*Shaking his head.*] Can't—can't be done.

SHEILA.

[*Humbly.*] Not if I—ask you—beg you—to stay ?

TILNEY.

[*His hands quivering.*] Not if you—went down on your knees, Sheila——

SHEILA.

[*With a gasp.*] Oh—— ! [*At the foot of the stairs again, drawing herself to her full height.*] Thanks

awf'ly. [*Her mouth askew.*] I wish you had slapped my face, Raiche; it wouldn't have hurt so much.

[*She is about to ascend the stairs when LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON appear at the top. LADY BALL-JENNINGS is carrying a little basket.*]

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Seeing TILNEY.*] Ah, there's Mr. Tilney! [*Coming down the stairs with SIR NORTON—to SHEILA, who draws back to allow them to pass.*] Your uncle and I are distributing gifts, Sheila——

SIR NORTON.

To our friends who are leaving us.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*In the middle of the room, rummaging in her basket.*] I think we have been fortunate in our selection. [*To SHEILA, hearing the creak of her steps upon the stairs.*] Won't you stop and witness the pretty ceremony?

SHEILA.

[*Stealing away.*] Head aches, aunt; touch o' sun.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*As SHEILA vanishes.*] Odd girl!

SIR NORTON.

Unsympathetic.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Unimaginative. [*To TILNEY, who has turned from the window.*] Mr. Tilney—[*Presenting TILNEY, who advances to receive it, with an ancient penknife.*] Knife.

SIR NORTON.

Carried by myself for many years.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Beaming upon TILNEY.*] In his waistcoat pocket.

SIR NORTON.

[*Pointing to the knife, which TILNEY is handling respectfully.*] You can have the broken blade replaced at any time.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

At a very small cost.

TILNEY.

[*Bowing profoundly.*] Lady Ball-Jennings—Sir Norton——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*With a wave of her hand.*] Not at all.

SIR NORTON.

Only too pleased.

TILNEY.

[*Slipping the knife into his pocket.*] I can't—I can't adequately——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Interrupting him.*] Where are the others ?

TILNEY.

Julie and Tom are in the garden with Rosa.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Producing a shabby pipe-case from her basket.*]
Ah, then we'll take Mr. Eddowes next. [*To TILNEY.*]
You had better come with us.

SIR NORTON.

[*Stalking to the door on the left.*] Yes, yes; he may
break down and weep.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Showing TILNEY an old, blackened pipe.*] A pipe
for him.

SIR NORTON.

[*Opening the door.*] One of Dunhill's choicest
briars.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Joining SIR NORTON.*] Smoked by Sir Norton
continuously.

SIR NORTON.

[*Following her into the outer hall.*] Until I had
my first attack of quinsy.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Out of sight.*] The stem is loose, but that can
easily be repaired——

[*TILNEY has picked up his hat and is going after
them when RONALD, his head bare and his*

hair ruffled, and looking altogether very upset, enters at the window. Presently ROSA also appears and comes quickly into the room.]

RONALD.

[*Huskily.*] Tilney——!

TILNEY.

Hallo!

RONALD.

[*Advancing with a slightly reeling gait.*] What's the meaning o' this? It isn't true!

ROSA.

[*At his elbow, piteously.*] Ron! Ron——!

RONALD.

[*To TILNEY.*] It's a joke, isn't it? [*To both.*] You—you—you—you're spoofing me——!

TILNEY.

Joke——?

RONALD.

[*A lump in his throat.*] 'Merica—Boshcovish's circush—Rosha——!

TILNEY.

[*Moving to the door.*] No, it's no joke, ol' chap. [*Disappearing.*] I'm just going to tell your dear mother.

RONALD.

[*Dazed.*] Wait a minute! Tilney! Til——!

ROSA.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Oh! oh, don' take it like this, Ron! Don' take it like this! Ron——!

RONALD.

[*Suddenly flaring up.*] What's happened? [*Shouting.*] What's happened?

ROSA.

Oh, 'ush!

RONALD.

[*Stamping about the room.*] Something's happened that's being kept from me!

ROSA.

[*Running to the door, which TILNEY has left open, and shutting it.*] Yer'll be 'eard!

RONALD.

[*On the right, waving his arms.*] I don' care who hears me! It's a conspiracy; a foul conspiracy!

ROSA.

[*Returning to him.*] No, it ain't.

RONALD.

[*Halting and confronting her accusingly.*] Going to tell my dear mother! Humbug! *Mums* has found out——

ROSA.

No, she 'asn't.

RONALD.

Aunt Meg or Uncle Norton, then—or the Rev!

ROSA.

No, nor them neither. It's all Raiche's an' my doin'

RONALD.

[*Fiercely.*] Yours!

ROSA.

Hours an' no one helse's. Our consciences is smitin' us. We've be'aved bad, me an' Raiche, an' we're boltin' f'r ter avoid the consequences.

RONALD.

Behaved badly——?

ROSA.

Ain't fallin' in love with you an' Sheila, an' sufferin' you and Sheila ter fall in love with hus, be'avin' badly? [*Seizing his hands and holding them to her breast.*] Oh, dearie, carn't yer—carn't yer see——!

RONALD.

[*Scowling horribly.*] My sister's infatuation for Tilney is asinine, o' course. But she's fickle—she's jilted heaps o' men——

ROSA.

[*Flinging his hands from her angrily.*] Hasinine, is it! Well, so's yer infatyation for me; that's hasinine.

An' we're a' nippin' of it in the bud. [*Doggedly.*] As I've tol' yer, we sail from Liverpool on the third o' Haugust in the *Reddymanthus*, an' open with that bald'-eaded ol' tough, Bosco, at Los Angeles fust o' September, 'cordin' ter programme; [*raising her fists to heaven as she turns away*] an' no power on hearth—oh, gosh!—earth—no power on earth stops us!

RONALD.

[*Wretchedly.*] For—for how long——?

ROSA.

'E's gotter hoption on us, Bosco 'as, for three years from the hend o' nex' season. Seems ter me we're 'is property till the Day o' Judgment, wily ol' sinner!

RONALD.

[*Sinking on the fauteuil-stool—the lump in his throat again.*] Oh-h-h-h! Oh, Rosha——!

ROSA.

[*In a low steady voice, gazing into space.*] Yus, after rollin' in the lap o' lux'ry, back we go t'our dirty lil'l side-show, ter the blindin' lights, an' the stiffin' 'eat, an' the ear-splittin' band, an' the stink o' the hanimals; after sleepin' nights in sorf clean beds, an' takin' our hease durin' the day, back we go ter the heverlastin' trek—[*drawing a deep breath*] an' may the Lord 'ave mercy on our souls! [*There is a short silence, and then,*

startled by a sound resembling a sob, she turns sharply to find that RONALD, who has not been heeding her, has covered his face with his hands and that his shoulders are heaving. She hurries to him in consternation.]
 Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh, don't! Ron! Ye'r not cryin', are yer! Oh, ye'r not cryin'! [*Pressing his head against her skirt.*] Oh, my darlin' boy! My darlin'! [*Stroking his hair tenderly.*] W'y, wot the 'ell are you whinin' for? [*Swallowing her tears.*] Yer'll soon fill my place in yer 'art, an' with a more illegible gel than me——

RONALD.

[*Freeing his head from her caress and sitting upright and blinking at her—sternly, but still suivelling.*] Missh Balmano—— [*She retreats a step, her jaw falling. He gets to his feet.*] Missh Balmano——

ROSA.

W-w-wot?

RONALD.

Missh Balmano, don' thing I regret the dechision you have arrived at, to scorn my affections and to reshume the misherable vocation from whish I d'sired t'reshcue you. [*Blowing his nose.*] On the cont'ry, I am eshtremely obliged t'you.

ROSA.

[*Blankly.*] Erbliged——?

RONALD.

F'readin' me a usheful lesshion—[*bowing*] a lesshion
whish I 'sure you I sh'not forget.

ROSA.

Wotjermean—lesson ?

RONALD.

Fill your place! Ha, ha! Not me! From
thish momen' I have done with the female shex—an
ungra'ful, treash'rous, double-faceshed——!

[*A motor-horn hoots several times, accompanied
by another with a deeper note, and the cheering
of those assembled outside is renewed. ROSA
and RONALD start and listen.*]

ROSA.

[*As the cheers abate, dully.*] We—we're fetched.
[*RONALD turns from her slowly and, with his head bent,
goes to the fireplace. She utters a little gasp and
follows him.*] Oh! [*Holding out her hand.*] 'Ere!
[*Pleadingly.*] Won't yer—won't yer shake ?

RONALD.

[*Giving her his hand and endeavouring to keep up
his severe tone.*] Pleasure. Accep' my bes' wishes
for your fusure, Missh Balmano. Dessay my sister
will be gla' t'receive ler'rer or pos'card occasion'ly.

I——[*Suddenly relenting and opening his arms to embrace her—wailingly.*] Oh, Rosha——!

ROSA.

[*Shrinking.*] No——!

[*He is checked by the entrance of JULIE and PRATT at the window and LADY BALL-JENNINGS and SIR NORTON from the outer hall. The PRATTS are in a blaze of excitement.*]

JULIE.

[*Dragging PRATT after her.*] The sharrybang!

PRATT.

An' the ox-cart f'r Jimmy!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Advancing with SIR NORTON.*] Here are Mr. and Mrs. Pratt——!

SIR NORTON.

And Miss Balmano!

JULIE.

[*Staggering to LADY BALL-JENNINGS and hanging on to her.*] Say, hev yew hurrrd?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Supporting JULIE.*] Oh, pray be careful!

SIR NORTON.

Ssss! Her ladyship's gown!

JULIE.

We are re-turnin' ter the Staates al-most im-mejutly.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Dipping into her basket.*] Yes, yes——

PRATT.

[*Puffing his chest out.*] We re-appearr in Amurrica in the fall!

SIR NORTON.

[*Grandly.*] Mr. and Mrs. Pratt, it is our wish that you should not leave Mole Park without receiving from Lady Ball-Jennings and myself——

JULIE.

[*Wagging her head.*] The Amurrican publuck caan't con-trive ter git 'long without us.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Testily.*] Tscht, tscht, tscht! [*Exhibiting a couple of faded photographs in dilapidated frames.*] Before you leave this morning, Sir Norton and I——

PRATT.

[*Strutting about and spouting.*] “An’ the star-spangled banner, oh long may it waave”——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To JULIE.*] Make him be quiet——!

SIR NORTON.

Lady Ball-Jennings and I——

JULIE AND PRATT.

[*Together.*] “ O’er the laand of the free and the
ho-ome of the braave !”

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Ruffled.*] Mr. and Mrs. Pratt—— !

SIR NORTON.

[*To ROSA.*] Miss Balmano—— !

ROSA.

[*Coming forward on the right and collaring the
PRATTS.*] Hi ! Joolie Maud ! Thomas Quincy !
[*Straightening them.*] Kinduct yerselves !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Giving one of the photographs to JULIE.*] Mrs. Pratt
—[*to PRATT*] Mr. Pratt—[*ROSA pushes him to the
front and he is given the other photograph*] those are
to decorate your lodging in whatever part of the
globe you happen to be——

SIR NORTON.

[*To the PRATTS.*] And to remind you that you
have met and been spoken to by Sir Norton and
Lady Ball-Jennings.

JULIE.

[*Viewing her gift with wide-open eyes.*] My !

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Smiling benignly upon the little people.*] Photographs of Sir Norton and myself at a fancy-dress ball at the Guildhall——

SIR NORTON.

I as “*Mercutio*”——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

A character from his favourite Shakespeare——

SIR NORTON.

Lady Ball-Jennings as “*Trilby*”——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Taken in 'ninety-seven. [*To SIR NORTON, archly.*] My tootsies are unchanged.

ROSA.

[*Prompting JULIE.*] Joolie! Thanks!

JULIE.

[*Spell-bound by the photograph she is examining.*] Thaanks.

ROSA.

[*Jogging PRATT.*] Thomas Quincy——!

PRATT.

[*Like JULIE, agape at the photograph in his hand—giggling.*] He, he, he, he!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Under her breath.*] Stupid little fellow! [*To ROSA, with some asperity.*] Miss Balmano—[*ROSA advances and is presented with a sea-shell*] picked up on the beach at Worthing a few summers ago by Sir Norton——

SIR NORTON.

Belonging to the branch of the molluscoid family called Brachiopoda, the local newsagent informed me.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

Stuffed with sawdust, they make admirable pin-cushions.

ROSA.

[*Regarding the shell with very faint interest.*] Thenks.

JULIE.

[*Sheltered behind ROSA—having exchanged photographs with PRATT.*] Gee!

PRATT.

He, he, he he!

JULIE.

[*To PRATT.*] Ef ol' man Boscovitz c'd jes' git 'em over ter the other side——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Hearing imperfectly.*] Ehhhh——?

ROSA.

[*Hurrying the PRATTS to the fireplace.*] 'Ere——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Moving to the right with SIR NORTON, eyeing the PRATTS through her glasses suspiciously.*] What was that? [*Seeing SHEILA.*] Ah, Sheila——!

[*SHEILA, composed but somewhat pale, has come down the stairs softly and has been joined by RONALD. MRS. HERRICK now enters from the outer hall, followed by TILNEY. A little later, GLYN strolls in and stands looking into the outer hall at a short distance from the open door.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Going to SHEILA and RONALD with a grieved expression.*] Oh, my dear children, what sad news! You know——?

SHEILA.

[*With strained cheerfulness.*] Yes, Mums.

RONALD.

[*Throwing himself into the chair behind the oblong table with a great air of unconcern.*] Oh, yes, we know.

MRS. HERRICK.

Ronald! Sheila! How can you be so indifferent! [*Coming to TILNEY, who is standing by the settee, and laying her hand upon his arm.*] And you're quite, quite determined——?

TILNEY.

[*Nodding.*] Quite.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Wistfully.*] You'd rather go down to Liverpool without having seen us again ?

TILNEY.

[*In a husky voice.*] Ah, Mrs. Herrick—— !

MRS. HERRICK.

[*To SHEILA and RONALD—producing her handkerchief.*] Sheila darling—Ronny—this is to be farewell !

SHEILA.

[*Turning away and joining the group at the fireplace.*] Oh, much better, Mumkin !

RONALD.

[*Glaring at the litter on the table.*] Yes; what's the use o' keepin' on saying good-bye ?

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Who has seated herself upon the fauteuil-stool.*] Very sensible ! [*To MRS. HERRICK.*] Norton and I have given our presents, Dorothy——

SIR NORTON.

[*Also seated, in the chair at the nearer side of the window.*] Anything else, in my opinion, would be an anticlimax.

[*A subdued, sympathetic burst of cheering is heard.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Impulsively, moving towards the door, her hand to her heart.*] Oh——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Listening, undisturbed.*] Poor Mr. Eddowes——!

SIR NORTON.

[*In the same way.*] Carrying him out.

GLYN.

[*Restraining* MRS. HERRICK.] Don't worry. Do as you're bid. Waterfield and the nurses are managing it.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To* MRS. HERRICK.] Dolly, when *will* you learn to control your nerves? [MRS. HERRICK, *wiping her eyes, sits in the chair on the left of the oblong table and* GLYN *joins* TILNEY.] Lifting the sick is entirely a matter of knack.

SIR NORTON.

Knack, simply. You either *have* it or you *haven't* it.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Emphatically.*] When I dropped Norton, after his rheumatic fever, I *hadn't* it.

SIR NORTON.

[*Gloomily.*] No, Margaret, you certainly had *not*.

ROSA.

[*Who has crammed her shell into a travelling-bag slung at her side and has slowly approached* MRS. HERRICK.]

Mrs. 'Errick——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Taking her hand.*] Oh, my dear——!

ROSA.

[*Hoarsely.*] I wanter say—I wanter say——

MRS. HERRICK.

Yes, Rosa?

ROSA.

[*With a gulp.*] Thenks.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Drawing ROSA'S face down and kissing her.*]

Thank you, child, and—and—and all of you.

[*Wiping her eyes again.*] I—I—I am sure it has been delightful——

ROSA.

[*Tugging at GLYN'S coat as RONALD rises sullenly and slouches to the window.*] Vikker—vikker——

GLYN.

[*Who is talking to TILNEY—turning to her.*] Hey?

ROSA.

I—I wanter say—I wanter say——

GLYN.

[*Kindly.*] Out with it!

ROSA.

[*Hanging her head.*] I ain't no churchgoer—tol' yer so—but if Jimmy's hever took ill agin—promise yer I sh'l try ter git 'old ev another clergeeman——

GLYN.

[*Placing his hands upon her shoulders.*] Ha, ha——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*To GLYN, swelling with a sense of her own worthiness.*] Ah! Ahhhh, I can never be sufficiently grateful, vicar, that Sir Norton and I were at hand on that eventful evening to back up your appeal to the Deity!

SIR NORTON.

[*Putting his finger-tips together.*] Most fortunate; most fortunate.

GLYN.

[*As ROSA turns away, to be joined at the foot of the stairs by SHEILA, who kisses and embraces her—to LADY BALL-JENNINGS, dryly.*] M'yes, that was a piece of good luck, Lady Ball-Jennings——

[*The PRATTS, their photographs tucked under their arms, have now come forward.*]

JULIE.

[*Suddenly confronting MRS. HERRICK.*] Mrs. Herrick——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Startled.*] Ah, Julie——!

JULIE.

[*Offering her hand.*] Put it right there! [MRS. HERRICK *obeys.*] Now, don't yew b'lieve I am handin' yew any hot air——

MRS. HERRICK.

I—I won't.

JULIE.

[*Measuring her words.*] Mrs. Herruck—of—all—the—women—I—hev encountered—in my life—yew—are—the—re-al—Peroovian doughnut.

[*She throws her arms round MRS. HERRICK and kisses her vigorously on both cheeks. GLYN and TILNEY laugh and applaud.*]

TILNEY.

Hear, hear!

GLYN.

Ha, ha, ha, ha——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Sotto voce.*] Good gracious!

SIR NORTON.

[*Sotto voce.*] Great heavens!

JULIE.

[*Catching hold of PRATT, who is at her elbow, and swinging him towards MRS. HERRICK.*] Thomas Quincy——!

PRATT.

[*His brain failing him again.*] Ladus—an'—gen'lemen——

TILNEY.

Oh, Tom—— !

PRATT.

I hev the honour of re-turnin' thaanks fur the trooly magnufurcent re-ception yew hev ac-corded us doorin' our visut ter yewer important city——

JULIE.

[*Furiously.*] Git off yer foot, yer boob !

PRATT.

An' I beg leave ter staate——

JULIE.

[*Grabbing him by the collar.*] No streets wull ever be named aafter yew !

TILNEY.

[*Hurrying to them.*] Julie Maud—— !

ROSA.

[*Seizing the PRATTS and dragging them to the door.*] 'Ere—— !

PRATT.

[*Stubbornly.*] “ Hail, Col-umbia! happy laand——!”
 [At the door they almost come into collision with
 WATERFIELD, who is entering briskly. MRS.
 HERRICK rises.]

WATERFIELD.

[*To ROSA.*] Hallo, hallo, hallo! [*Advancing, as ROSA and the PRATTS disappear—rubbing his hands.*] Ha, ha, ha! Got him in, in first-rate style. Those women are wonderful.

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Rising and moving to SIR NORTON, displeased.*] More like men than women. No feminality!

WATERFIELD.

[*Looking at his watch.*] Past eleven. [*To TILNEY.*] Better be off.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Taking TILNEY'S hand as GLYN goes to the door—in a flutter.*] There's a nosegay for each of you—[*glancing towards the outer hall*] out there; [*tearfully*] I helped Roberts to pick them—

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

T't, t't, t't——!

SIR NORTON.

[*Rising.*] Why encumber them with flowers?

TILNEY.

[*Trying to speak.*] Mrs. Herrick, I—I——

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Pressing his hand to her bosom.*] My dear—I'm a mother—and growing an old lady—I make no excuse—[*kissing him*] God bless you——!

TILNEY.

[*Folding her in his arms for a moment, to the amazement of SIR NORTON and LADY BALL-JENNINGS.*] Ah——!

SHEILA.

[*Coming swiftly to TILNEY, on his other side.*] Mr. Tilney——

TILNEY.

[*Releasing MRS. HERRICK and turning to SHEILA.*] Yes, miss? [*In confusion.*] Oh——!

SHEILA.

[*Making a half-sorrowful, half-reproachful moue at him.*] Oh——!

TILNEY.

[*Abashed.*] I—I beg your pardon—Miss Sheila——

SHEILA.

[*Holding out her hands, which he accepts, and looking into his eyes steadily and sweetly.*] To keep my mother in countenance—[*brushing his cheek with her lips*] God bless and prosper you!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*With a snort.*] Well——!!!

WATERFIELD.

Ha, ha, ha, ha! [*Facetiously.*] Wish *I* was going to America!

[*There is another burst of cheering, loud, uproarious, as SHEILA wrinkles her nose at WATERFIELD.*]

GLYN.

[*Going out quickly.*] Those little imps——!

WATERFIELD.

[*Following him.*] What are they up to now?

[*TILNEY also hurries out, accompanied by MRS. HERRICK.*]

MRS. HERRICK.

[*At the door.*] Sheila—Ronald—aren't you coming?

SHEILA.

[*Calmly.*] No, thanks, Mums. [*Sanctering to the oblong table as the cheering slackens.*] Finished with my good-byes.

RONALD.

[*Still at the window, with his back to the room.*] Same here.

MRS. HERRICK.

[*Vanishing.*] Oh——!

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

[*Moving towards the door—to SIR NORTON.*] Norton——?

SIR NORTON.

[*Stiffly.*] We have not been asked, Margaret——

LADY BALL-JENNINGS.

No, but I think it's your duty just to show yourself to the crowd—*bow* to them. [*With a dignified inclination of his head, he joins her.*] *Noblesse oblige!* After all, we are the only titles in the Park——!

[*They, too, disappear, SIR NORTON closing the door, and immediately SHEILA's manner alters, and a magazine she has picked up falls from her hand.*]

SHEILA.

[*Going to the staircase droopingly, struggling to repress her tears.*] Ah! Ah! Ah! Oh, I'm glad they've gone! [*Ascending the stairs.*] I'm glad they've gone!

RONALD.

[*Whimpering.*] Sho'm I! Sh-sh-sh-sho'm I!

SHEILA.

[*Suddenly halting and drawing herself erect—in a tone of exaltation.*] Yes, but I'm glad they came——!

[*With a firm bearing, she continues her ascent. As she passes out of sight, RONALD creeps away into the garden. Then, when the room is empty, the cheering breaks out afresh.*]

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