

Mr. Pim Passes By

Alan Alexander Milne

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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, MR. PIM PASSES BY *****

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MR. PIM PASSES BY

A Comedy in Three Acts

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by

A. A. Milne

CHARACTERS

The Original Cast at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester

George Marden, J.P. _Mr. Ben Webster._
Olivia (his Wife) _Miss Irene Vanbrugh._
Dinah (his Niece) _Miss Georgette Cohan._
Lady Marden (his Aunt) _Miss Sybil Carlisle._
Brian Strange _Mr. Philip Easton._
Carroway Pin _Mr. Dion Boucicault._
Anne _Miss Ethel Wellesley._

The action takes place in the morning-room at Marden House, Buckinghamshire, on a day in July.

THE ORIGINAL LONDON CAST AT THE NEW THEATRE

George Marden, J.P. _Mr. Ben Webster._
Olivia (his Wife) _Miss Irene Vanbrugh._
Dinah (his Niece) _Miss Georgette Cohan._
Lady Marden (his Aunt) _Miss Ethel Griffes._
Brian Strange _Mr. Leslie Howard._
Carroway Pin _Mr. Dion Boucicault._
Anne _Miss Ethel Wellesley._

MR. PIM PASSES BY

ACT I

The morning-room at Marden House (Buckinghamshire) decided more than a hundred years ago that it was all right, and has not bothered about itself since. Visitors to the house have called the result such different adjectives as "mellow," "old-fashioned," "charming"--even "baronial" and "antique;" but nobody ever said it was "exciting." Sometimes OLIVIA _wants it to be more exciting, and last week she rather let herself go over some new curtains; she still has the rings to put on. It is obvious that the curtains alone will overdo the excitement; they will have to be harmonized with a new carpet and cushions._ OLIVIA _has her eye on just the things, but one has to go carefully with_ GEORGE. _What was good enough, for his great-great-grandfather is good enough for him. However, we can trust_ OLIVIA _to see him through it, although it may take time._

A scene plot is given at the end of the play.

There are three ways of coming into the room: by the open windows leading from the garden, by the doors to R., or by the staircase from up R, MR. PIM _chooses the latter way--or rather_ ANNE _chooses it for him; and_ MR. PIM _kindly and inoffensively follows her. She comes down steps and crosses to_ C., _followed by_ MR. PIM.

ANNE (_moves up, looking off_ L. _and returning to_ PIM R.C.). I'll tell Mr. Marden you're here, sir. Mr. Pim, isn't it?

PIM (_nervously_). Yes--er--Mr. Pim--Mr. Carraway Pim. He doesn't know me, you understand, but if he could just spare me a few moments--er-- (_He fumbles in his pockets_) I gave you that letter?

ANNE. Yes, sir, I'll give it to him.

PIM (_brings out a stamped letter which is not the one he was looking for, but which reminds him of something else he has forgotten. Looking at letter_). Oh! Dear me!

ANNE. Yes, sir?

PIM. Dear me. I ought to have posted this. (_Looking at letter_) Oh, well, I must send a telegram. You have a telegraph office in the village?

ANNE. Oh, yes, sir. (_Moving up to terrace up_ L. _and pointing off_ L.) If you turn to the left when you get outside the gates, it's about a hundred yards down the hill. Turn to the left and down the hill.

PIM. Turn to the left and down the hill. Thank you, thank you. Very stupid of me to have forgotten.

(ANNE _exits up staircase R_.)

(MR. PIM _wanders about the room humming to himself, and looking at the pictures and photos on piano. Then goes out at window up_ L.) (DINAH _enters from staircase up_ R. _dancing, and humming the air of "Down on the Farm:" she is nineteen, very pretty, very happy, and full of boyish high spirits and conversation. She dances to foot of stairs, looks off_ R., _then down_ C., _then to piano; sits and plays a few bars and sings "Down on the Farm," rises and moves up to_ R. _of piano, and as she does so_ PIM _re-enters from window up_ L. _and they come suddenly face to face up back_ C. _below the writing-table. There is a slight pause_.)

DINAH (_backing a step_). Hullo!

PIM. You must forgive me, but... Good morning, Mrs. Marden.

DINAH. Oh, I say, _I_'m not Mrs. Marden. I'm Dinah.

PIM (_with a smile_). Then I will say, Good morning, Miss Diana.

DINAH (_reproachfully_). Now, look here, if you and I are going to be friends, you mustn't do that. Dinah, _not_ Diana. Do remember it, there's a good man, because I get so tired of correcting people. (_Moving down_ C. _to_ B.) Have you come to stay with us? (_Sits on settee_ R.)

PIM (_following her down_). Well, no, Miss--er--Dinah.

DINAH (_nodding_). That's right. I can see I shan't have to speak to

you again. Now tell me your name, and I bet you I get it right first time. And do sit down.

PIM (_ crossing to_ L. _and sitting on settee_ L.). Thank you. My name is--er--Pim, Carraway Pim--

DINAH. Pim, that's easy.

PIM. And I have a letter of introduction to your father--

DINAH (_ rising and crossing to_ R. _of table_ L.C. _and speaking across same_). Oh, no; now you're going wrong again, Mr. Pim. George isn't my father; he's my uncle. Uncle George--he doesn't like me calling him George. Olivia doesn't mind--I mean she doesn't mind being called Olivia, but George is rather touchy. (_ Sitting on table, facing_ PIM.) You see, he's been my guardian since I was about two, and then about five years ago he married a widow called Mrs. Telworthy.

PIM (_ repeating_). Mrs. Telworthy.

DINAH. That's Olivia--so she became my Aunt Olivia, only she lets me drop the Aunt. (_ Speaking very sharply_.) Get that?

PIM (_ a little alarmed_). I--I think so, Miss Marden.

DINAH (_ admiringly_). I say, you _are_ quick, Mr. Pim. Well, if you take my advice, when you've finished your business with George, you will hang about a bit and see if you can't see Olivia. (_ Rising and moving_ C.) She's simply--(_ feeling for the word_)--devastating. I don't wonder George fell in love with her.

(_ Moving to above piano_ R., _ looking at photos, etc._)

PIM (_ rising and looking at his watch and coming_ C.). It's only the merest matter of business--just a few words with your uncle--Perhaps I'd better...

DINAH (_ looking at photo on top end of piano_). Well, you must please yourself, Mr. Pim. I'm just giving you a friendly word of advice. Naturally, I was awfully glad to get such a magnificent aunt. (_ Moving down to_ L. _of piano and taking up and looking at photo of_ OLIVIA.) Because, after all, marriage _is_ rather a toss up, isn't it?--

PIM (_ taken aback_). Well, I don't, know, I haven't had any experience...

DINAH (_ continuing_). And George might have gone off with anybody. (_ Moving to_ PIM.) It's different on the stage, where guardians always marry their wards, but George couldn't marry _me_ because I'm his niece. Mind you, I don't say that I should have had him, because, between ourselves, he's a little bit old-fashioned.

PIM. So he married--er--Mrs. Marden instead.

DINAH. Mrs. Telworthy--don't say you've forgotten already, just when you were getting so good at names. Mrs. Telworthy. (_ Moves to and sits on settee_ R.) You see, Olivia married the Telworthy man and went to Australia with him, and he drank himself to death in the bush, or wherever you drink yourself to death out there, and Olivia came home to England, and met my uncle, and he fell in love with her and proposed to

her--(_rises and kneels on settee_)--and he came into my room that night-- I was about fourteen--and turned on the light and said, "Dinah, how would you like to have a beautiful aunt of your very own?" (PIM _laughs_.) And I said: "Congratulations, George." (PIM _laughs again_.) That was the first time I called him George. Of course, I'd seen it coming for weeks. Telworthy, isn't it a funny name?

PIM. Oh, a most curious name--Telworthy. From Australia, you say?

DINAH. Yes, I always say that he's probably still alive, and will turn up here one morning and annoy George.

PIM (_shocked_). Oh!

DINAH. But I'm afraid there's not much chance.

PIM (_shocked_). Miss Marden! Really!

DINAH, Well, of course, I don't really _want_ it to happen, but it _would_ be rather exciting. (_Crossing to_ PIM.) Wouldn't it, Mr Pim?

PIM. Exciting!

(PIM _crosses to below settee_ L.)

DINAH. However, things like that never seem to occur down here, somehow, (_Running up into window up_ R. PIM _watches her_.) There was a hayrick burnt last year about a mile away, but that isn't the same, is it?

PIM. No, I should say that that was certainly different.

DINAH (_coming to back of table_ L.C.). Of course, something very, very wonderful did happen last night. (_Backing away_.) No, no! I'm not sure if I know you well enough--(_She looks at him hesitatingly_.)

PIM (_uncomfortably_). Really, Miss Marden, you mustn't. I am only a--a passer-by, here to-day and gone to-morrow. You really mustn't--

DINAH (_looking round and earning down to_ PIM), And yet there's something about you, Mr. Pim, which inspires confidence.

PIM (_moving to_ L.). Oh, no. Really, you mustn't tell me.

DINAH (_taking his arm_). The fact is--(_in a stage whisper_)--I got engaged last night!

PIM. Dear me, let me congratulate you. I wish somebody would come here.

DINAH (_running up to foot of staircase up_ R. _and looking off_), I expect that's why George is keeping you such a long time. (_Turning to_ PIM.) Brian, my young man, the well-known painter--only nobody has ever heard of him--he's smoking a pipe with George in the library and asking for his niece's hand. (_Coming back to_ PIM, _and taking his hands, she dances round with him in a circle_.)

(PIM _falls exhausted and coughing on to settee_ L. _and_ DINAH _laughing sits on settee_ R.)

DINAH. Isn't it exciting? You're really rather lucky, Mr. Pim--I mean

being told so soon. Even Olivia doesn't know yet.

PIM. Yes, yes, I congratulate you, Miss Marden. Perhaps it would be better--(_About to get up_.)

(ANNE _comes in from staircase up_ R. _She comes to_ C.)

ANNE. Mr. Marden is out at the moment, sir--

DINAH (_disappointed_). Oh!

ANNE (_seeing_ DINAH). Oh, I didn't see you, Miss Dinah!

PIM. Out! Eh? Dear! Dear!

DINAH, It's all right, Anne. (_Rising_.) _I'm_ looking after Mr. Pim.

ANNE. Very well, Miss.

PIM (_sotto voce_). Out! Oh, well, I'd better go--

(_Exit_ ANNE _up staircase_ B.)

DINAH (_excitedy_). That's me. (_Running up to foot of staircase and watching_ ANNE _off_.) They can't discuss me in the library without breaking down--(_coming down_ R. _and imitating_ GEORGE _and_ BRIAN)--so they're walking up and down outside, and slashing at the thistles in order to conceal their emotion. You know. I expect Brian--(_Crossing up to_ R. _of window_.)

PIM (_rising, calling_). Miss Marden! Miss Marden! (_Looking at his watch_.) Yes, I think, Miss Marden, I had better go now and return a little later. I have a telegram which I want to send, and perhaps by the time I come back your uncle will be able--

DINAH (_coming to_ PIM). Oh, but how disappointing of you, when we were getting on together so nicely! And it was just going to be your turn to tell me all about yourself.

PIM. I have really nothing to tell, Miss Marden. I have a letter of introduction to your uncle, who in turn will give me, I hope, a letter to a certain distinguished man whom it is necessary for me to meet. That is all. (_Holding out his hand_.) And now, Miss Marden, I really think I'd better be going.

DINAH (_taking his arm and hading him up stage_ C. _to_ L.). Oh, I'll start you on your way to the post office.

PIM. Will you? Now, that's really very kind of you.

DINAH. No, it isn't.

PIM. Oh, but it is! You're a very kind little girl.

DINAH. I want to know if you're married--

PIM. Oh, no, I'm not married.

DINAH.--and all that sort of thing. You've got heaps to tell me, Mr. Pim.

Have you got your hat? (PIM _shows his hat_) Oh yes! That's right.

(BRIAN STRANGE _comes in from window up_ R. _He is what_ GEORGE _calls a damned futuristic painter chap, aged 24. To look at he is a very pleasant boy, rather untidily dressed. He is about to tell_ DINAH _the result of his interview with_ GEORGE _when he catches sight of_ PIM.)

Then we'll--hullo, here's Brian! (_Crossing below and to his_ R. _seizing him_) Brian, this is Mr. Pim! Mr. Carraway Pim. He's been telling me all about himself.

PIM. I haven't said a word. I never opened my mouth.

DINAH. It's so interesting. He's just going to send a telegram, and then he's coming back again. Mr. Pim--(_coyly and moving down to head of settee_ R.)--this is Brian--_you_ know,

BRIAN (_nodding_). How-do-you-do?

PIM. How-do-you-do, sir?

DINAH (_pleadingly and crossing below_ BRIAN _to_ PIM), You won't mind going to the post office by yourself now, will you? (_Coyly moving up to chair by writing-table and nervously kicking her ankle, etc_) Because, you see, Brian and I--(_She looks lovingly at_ BRIAN.)

PIM (_moved to sentiment_). Miss Dinah and Mr.--er--Brian, I have only come into your lives for a moment, and it is probable that I shall now pass out of them for ever, but perhaps you will permit an old man--

DINAH. Oh, not so old!

PIM (_chuckling happily_). Not old? Well, shall we say a middle-aged man--(DINAH _nods assent_. PIM _laughs again_)--a middle-aged man to wish you both every happiness in the years that you have before you. (_Crossing in front of_ DINAH, _shakes hands with_ BRIAN.) Good-bye--(_shaking hands with_ DINAH)--good-bye, and thank you so much. Oh, I know my way. (_Moving up_ L. _and turning to_ DINAH.) Turn to the left and down the hill? Turn to the left and down the hill.

(_Exit_ PIM _up_ L. DINAH _watches him off up_ L. _on terrace and_ BRIAN _up_ R.)

DINAH (_coming into the room below writing-table to_ R.C.). Brian, he'll get lost if he goes that way.

BRIAN (_crossing at back of windows and calling after him up_ L.). Round to the left, sir. Yes, that's right. (_He comes back into the room, crossing down_ L.C.) Rum old bird. Who is he?

DINAH. Darling, you haven't kissed me yet.

BRIAN (_moving up to her and pulling her down to below settee_ L.), Oh, I say. I oughtn't to, but then one never ought to do the nice things.

DINAH. Why oughtn't you?

(_They sit on the sofa together--_BRIAN _to_ R., DINAH _to_ L.)

BRIAN. Well, we said we'd be good until we'd told your uncle and aunt all about it. You see, being a guest in their house--

DINAH. But, darling child, what have you been doing all this morning except telling George?

BRIAN. Oh, trying to tell George.

DINAH (nodding). Yes, of course, there's a difference.

BRIAN. I think he guessed there was something up, and he took me down to see the pigs--he said he had to see the pigs at once--I don't know why; an appointment perhaps. And we talked about pigs all the way, and I couldn't say, "Talking about pigs, I want to marry your niece--"

DINAH (with mock indignation). Oh, of course you couldn't.

BRIAN. No. Well, you see how it was. And then when we'd finished talking about pigs, we started talking to the pigs--

DINAH (eagerly). Oh, how is Arnold?

BRIAN. Arnold...? Oh yes, that's the little black-and-white one? He's very jolly, I believe, but naturally I wasn't thinking about him much. I was wondering how to begin. And then Lumsden came up, and wanted to talk pig-food, and the atmosphere grew less and less romantic, and--and I gradually drifted away.

DINAH. Oh, poor darling! Well, we shall have to approach him through Olivia.

BRIAN. But I always wanted to tell her first; she's so much easier. Only you wouldn't let me.

DINAH. That's your fault, Brian. You would tell Olivia that she ought to have orange-and-black curtains in here.

BRIAN. But she wants orange and black curtains in here.

DINAH. Yes. (Rising and standing with her back to fire, imitating GEORGE.) But George says he's not going to have any Futuristic nonsense in an honest English country house, which has been good enough for his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather, and--and all the rest of them. (Kneels on settee.) So there's a sort of strained feeling between Olivia and George just now, and if Olivia were to--sort of recommend you, well, it wouldn't do you much good.

BRIAN (looking at her). I see. Of course I know what you want, Dinah.

DINAH. What do I want?

BRIAN. You want a secret engagement--

DINAH. Oh!

BRIAN. And notes left under door-mats--

DINAH. Oh!

BRIAN. And meetings by the withered thorn--

DINAH. Oh!

BRIAN. When all the household is asleep.

DINAH. Oh!

BRIAN. I know you.

DINAH. Oh, but it is such fun! I love meeting people by withered thorns.

BRIAN. Well, I'm not going to have it.

DINAH (_childishly, sitting close to him_). Oh, George! Look at us being husbandy!

BRIAN. You babe! I adore you. (_He kisses her and holds her hands_) You know, you're rather throwing yourself away on me. Do you mind?

DINAH (_putting her legs up on settee and reclining her head on his shoulder_). Not a bit.

BRIAN. We shall never be rich, but we shall have lots of fun, and meet interesting people, and feel that we're doing something worth doing, and not getting paid nearly enough for it, and we can curse the Academy together and the British Public, and--oh, it's an exciting life.

DINAH (_seeing it_). I shall love it.

BRIAN (_sincerely_). I'll make you love it. You shan't be sorry, Dinah.

DINAH. You shan't be sorry either, Brian.

BRIAN (_looking at her lovingly_). Oh, I know I shan't.... What will Olivia think about it? Will she be surprised?

DINAH. Olivia? Oh, she's never surprised. She always seems to have thought of things about half an hour before they happen. George just begins to get hold of them about half an hour after they've happened. (_Considering him, stroking his hair_) After all, there's no reason why George shouldn't like you, darling.

BRIAN. I'm not his sort, you know, really.

DINAH. You're more Olivia's sort. Well, we'll tell Olivia this morning.

(OLIVIA _comes in from top of staircase up R_.)

OLIVIA (_coming in_). And what are you going to tell Olivia this morning? (_They jump up and go to her_.)

DINAH. Olivia, darling--

OLIVIA, Oh, well, I think I can guess,

(DINAH _goes to her_ R, _and_ BRIAN _to her_ L., _and they bring her down_ C.)

BRIAN (_ following_). Say you understand, Mrs. Marden.

OLIVIA. Mrs. Marden, I am afraid, is a very dense person, Brian, but I think if you asked Olivia if she understood--

BRIAN. Bless you, Olivia. I _knew_ you'd be on our side.

DINAH. Of course she would.

OLIVIA. I don't know if it's usual to kiss an aunt-in-law, Brian, but Dinah is such a very special sort of niece that--(_ she inclines her cheek and_ BRIAN _kisses it_).

DINAH (_ backing away to_ B. _a little_). I say, you are in luck to-day, Brian.

(BRIAN _moves up_ C. _laughing_.)

OLIVIA (_ crossing below settee_ L. _and up_ L. _to cabinet_). And how many people have been told the good news?

BRIAN. Nobody yet.

DINAH. Except Mr. Pim.

BRIAN (_ crossing down to_ DINAH). Oh, does he--

OLIVIA (_ timing as she reaches cabinet, up_ L.), Who's Mr. Pim?

DINAH. Oh, he just happened--(OLIVIA _takes curtains and work-basket from centre cupboard of cabinet_)--I say, are those the curtains? Then you're going to have them after all?

OLIVIA (_ with an air of surprise, coming down L., and putting work-basket on table L.C. and sitting with curtains_). After all what? But I decided on them long ago. (_ To_ BRIAN.) You haven't told George yet.

BRIAN (_ moving to below stool_ L.C.). I began to, you know, but I never got any farther than "Er--there's just--er--"

DINAH (_ crossing quickly below_ OLIVIA _and speaking into her face_). George would talk about _pigs_ all the time.

OLIVIA. Well, I suppose you want me to help you.

DINAH (_ sitting to_ L. _of_ OLIVIA). Oh, do, darling.

BRIAN (_ sits on stool_ L.C.). It would be awfully decent of you. Of course, I'm not quite his sort really--

DINAH. You're my sort.

BRIAN. But I don't think he objects to me, and--

(GEORGE _comes in from terrace, a typical, narrow-minded, honest country gentleman of forty odd._ BRIAN _rises hurriedly and crosses to above piano to_ R. DINAH _rises and stands by fireplace._ OLIVIA _unfolds curtains and prepares to sew_.)

GEORGE (_at the windows--he does not see_ BRIAN). Hullo! Hullo! Hullo! What's all this about a Mr. Pim? Who is he? Where is he? (_He puts his cap on table, and comes down, into room_.) I had most important business with Lumsden, and the girl comes down and cackles about a Mr, Pim, or Ping, or something. Where did I put his card? (_Bringing it out_.) Carraway Pim. Never heard of him in my life, (_Moves back to writing-table and puts down card_.)

DINAH. He said he had a letter of introduction, Uncle George.

GEORGE. Oh, you saw him, did you! (_Comes down_ C. _to_ R.) Yes, that reminds me, there was a letter--(_he brings it out and reads it_).

DINAH. He had to send a telegram. He's coming back.

OLIVIA. Pass me those scissors, Brian.

BRIAN (_crossing to above table_ L.C.). These? (_he passes them_.)

OLIVIA (_giving_ BRIAN _a nod of encouragement and looking round at_ DINAH). Thank you.

GEORGE (_reading_). Ah well, a friend of Brymer's, Glad to oblige him. Yes, I know the man he wants. Coming back, you say, Dinah? (DINAH _nods_.) Then I'll be going back too. Send him down to the farm, Olivia, when he comes. (_Going up meets_ BRIAN.) Hallo, what happened to you? (_Still moving up a little_.)

OLIVIA. Don't go, George, there's something we want to talk about. (DINAH _gives a long whistle. All look sheepish and_ GEORGE _notices their attitude_.)

GEORGE. Hallo, what's this?

BRIAN (_quickly and over back of i.e. table to_ OLIVIA). Shall I---! (DINAH _pantomimes. "Yes, do."_.)

OLIVIA (_with a roguish look at_ DINAH). Yes, (_Sticks needle in work_.)

BRIAN (_stepping out to_ C.) I've been wanting to tell you all this morning, sir, only I didn't seem to have an opportunity of getting it out.

GEORGE. Well, what is it?

(BRIAN, _taken aback for a moment, looks to_ OLIVIA _for encouragement. She nods approval and turning to_ DINAH, _takes her hand encouragingly--_)

BRIAN (_boldly_). I want to marry Dinah, sir.

GEORGE. You want to marry Dinah? God bless my soul!

DINAH (_rushing to him below and to his_ R. _and pulling her cheek against his coat, and her hands on his shoulder_.) Oh, do say you like the idea, Uncle George.

GEORGE. Like the idea! (_Taking her hands from his shoulder_.) Have you heard of this nonsense, Olivia?

(Movement of annoyance from DINAH.)

OLIVIA. They've just this moment told me, George. I think they would be happy together.

GEORGE (crossing to fire-place L., to BRIAN). And what do you propose to be happy together on?

BRIAN (R.C.). Well, of course, I know it doesn't amount to much at present, but we shan't starve.

DINAH. Brian got fifty pounds for a picture last March!

GEORGE (a little upset by this). Oh! (Recovering gamely.) And how many pictures have you sold since?

BRIAN (gives a nervous look at OLIVIA and DINAH, who then sits on settee R.). Well, none, but--

GEORGE. None! And I don't wonder. Who the devil is going to buy pictures with triangular clouds and square sheep? (BRIAN, annoyed, moves up R.C.) And they call that Art nowadays! Good God, man (moving up to the windows), go outside and look at the clouds!

OLIVIA (busy stitching rings on curtains). If he draws round clouds in future, George, will you let him marry Dinah?

(GEORGE looks round, annoyed. BRIAN is hopeful and comes down towards DINAH.)

GEORGE (upset by this, coming down to head of L.C. table). What-- what? Yes, of course, you would be on his side--all this Futuristic nonsense. (OLIVIA commences to sew.) I'm just taking these clouds as an example. (Crossing to BRIAN.) I suppose I can see as well as any man in the county, and I say that clouds aren't triangular.

BRIAN (ingratiatingly). After all, sir, at my age one is naturally experimenting, and trying to find one's (with a laugh)--well, it sounds priggish, but one's medium of expression. I shall find out what I want to do directly, but I think I shall always be able to earn enough to live on. Well, I have for the last three years.

GEORGE. I see, and now you want to experiment with a wife--

BRIAN. Yes--no--no--

DINAH. Yes, you do,

BRIAN. Yes.

GEORGE. And you propose to experimenting with my niece?

BRIAN (with a shrug). Well, of course, if you--

OLIVIA. You could help the experiment, darling, by giving Dinah a good allowance until she's twenty-one.

GEORGE. Help the experiment! I don't want to help the experiment.

(_Crossing up to writing-table_.)

OLIVIA (_apologetically_). Oh, I thought you did.

GEORGE. You will talk as if I was made of money. What with taxes always going up and rents always going down, it's as much as we can do to rub along as we are (_to back of_ L.C. _table_), without making allowances to everybody who thinks she wants to get married. (_To_ BRIAN.) And that's thanks to you, my friend.

BRIAN (_surprised_). To me?

OLIVIA. You never told me, darling. What's Brian been doing?

DINAH (_indignantly_). He hasn't been doing anything.

GEORGE (_round to foot of table_ L.C.). He's one of your Socialists who go turning the country upside down.

OLIVIA. But even Socialists must get married sometimes.

GEORGE (_crossing below_ OLIVIA _to fireplace_). I don't see any necessity.

OLIVIA. But you'd have nobody to damn after dinner, darling, if they all died out.

BRIAN (_coming a little_ C.). Really, sir, I don't see what my politics and my art have got to do with it. I'm perfectly ready not to talk about either when I'm in your house, and as Dinah doesn't seem to object to them----

DINAH (_moving towards_ BRIAN _and championing him_). I should think she doesn't.

GEORGE. Oh, you can get round the women, I daresay.

BRIAN. Well, it's Dinah I want to marry and live with. So what it really comes to is that you don't think I can support a wife.

GEORGE. Well, if you're going to do it by selling pictures, I don't think you can.

BRIAN (_moving to_ R. _of table_ L.C.). All right, tell me how much you want me to earn in a year, and I'll earn it.

GEORGE (_hedging_). It isn't merely a question of money. I just mention that as one thing--one of the important things. (GEORGE _crosses to_ BRIAN _who backs towards_ DINAH.) In addition to that, I think you are both too young to marry. (DINAH _stamps her foot_) I don't think you know your own minds (DINAH _kneels dejectedly on settee_ R.), and I am not at all persuaded that, with what I venture to call your outrageous tastes----

DINAH. Oh!

GEORGE. You and my niece will live happily together. (_Pause. Crossing up to writing-table, sits_) Just because she thinks she loves you, Dinah may persuade herself now that she agrees with all you say and do, but she

has been properly brought up in an honest English country household--
(DINAH _throws up her arms and buries her face in her hands on piano_)
and--er--she--well, in short, I cannot at all approve of any engagement
between you. (_Getting up_) Olivia, if this Mr.--er--Pim comes, I shall
be down at the farm You might send him along to me.

(_He walks towards the windows up_ L.)

BRIAN (_moving up_ R., _followed by_ DINAH; _indignantly_). Is there any
reason why I shouldn't marry a girl who has been properly brought up?

GEORGE. I think you know my views, Strange.

(DINAH, _disappointed, crosses down_ R. _again to below table_ R.C.)

OLIVIA. George, wait a moment, dear. We can't quite leave it like this.

GEORGE. I have said all I want to say on the subject.

(DINAH _sits on settee_ R.)

OLIVIA. Yes, darling, but I haven't begun to say all that _I_ want to say
on the subject.

GEORGE (_crossing down to back of table_ L.C.). Of course, if you have
anything to say, Olivia, I will listen to it; but I don't know that this
is quite the time--(OLIVIA _makes a marked movement as she is sewing the
curtains_), or that you have chosen--(_looking darkly at the curtains_)--
quite the occupation likely to--er--endear your views to me.

DINAH (_mutinously, rising quickly and crossing to stool on which she
kneels and looks up into_ GEORGE'S _face and bangs the table_). I may as
well tell you, Uncle George, that I have got a good deal to say, too.

(BRIAN _crosses down to her_ R., _gingerly pulling her sleeve, trying to
restrain her_.)

OLIVIA. Yes, darling. I can guess what you are going to say, Dinah, and I
think you had better keep it for the moment.

DINAH (_meekly, backing to_ R. _below_ BRIAN _and to_ L. _of table_ R.C.). Yes, Aunt Olivia.

OLIVIA. Brian, you might take her outside for a walk. I expect you have
plenty to talk about.

(BRIAN _and_ DINAH _move up_ R.)

GEORGE (_following them up_). Now mind, Strange, no love-making. I put
you on your honour about that.

BRIAN (_looking round dubiously at_ DINAH). I'll do my best to avoid it,
sir.

DINAH (_cheekily_). May I take his arm if we go up a hill?

OLIVIA. I'm sure you'll know how to behave--both of you.

BRIAN (R. _of writing-table_). Come on, then, Dinah.

DINAH (_ following him_). Right-o. (_ They exeunt through windows and off to_ L.)

GEORGE (_ as they go_). And if you do see any clouds, Strange, take a good look at them. (_ He chuckles to himself_) Triangular clouds--I never heard of such nonsense. (_ He goes back to his chair at the writing-table and sits_) Futuristic rubbish... Well, Olivia?

OLIVIA (_ sewing curtains_). Well, George?

GEORGE. What are you doing?

OLIVIA. Making curtains--(_ grunt of disapproval from_ GEORGE)--George. Won't they be rather sweet? Oh, but I forgot--you don't like them.

GEORGE. No. I don't like them, and what is more, I don't mean to have them in my house. As I told you yesterday, this is the house of a simple country gentleman, and I don't want any of these new-fangled ideas in it.

OLIVIA. Is marrying for love a new-fangled idea?

GEORGE. We'll come to that directly. None of you women can keep to the point. What I am saying now is that the house of my fathers and forefathers is good enough for me.

OLIVIA. Do you know, George, I can hear one of your ancestors saying that to his wife in their smelly old cave--(GEORGE _ looks up annoyed at her levity_)--when the new-fangled idea of building houses was first suggested. "The Cave of my Forefathers is good enough for----"

GEORGE (_ rising and coming to_ R. _of_ L.C. _table_). That's ridiculous. Naturally we must have progress. But that's just the point. (_ Indicating the curtains_) I don't call this sort of thing progress. It's--ah--retrogression.

OLIVIA. Well, anyhow, it's pretty.

GEORGE. There I disagree with you. And I must say once more that I will not have them hanging in my house. (_ Going up_ R.C.)

OLIVIA. Very well, George. (_ But she goes on working_)

GEORGE (_ seeing her continuing to sew, stops_). That being so, I don't see the necessity of going on with them.

OLIVIA. Well, I must do something with them now I've got the material.

(GEORGE _ goes up to writing-table, sits and writes_)

I thought perhaps I could sell them when they're finished--as we're so poor.

GEORGE (_ turns to her with surprised look_). What do you mean--so poor?

OLIVIA. Well, you said just now that you couldn't give Dinah an allowance because rents had gone down.

GEORGE (_ annoyed_). Confound it, Olivia! Keep to the point! We'll talk

about Dinah's affairs directly. We're discussing our own affairs at the moment.

OLIVIA. But what is there to discuss, dear?

GEORGE. Well, those ridiculous things.

OLIVIA. But we've finished that. You've said you wouldn't have them hanging in your house, and I've said, "Very well, George."--(GEORGE _is again annoyed_.)--Now we can go on to Dinah, and Brian.

GEORGE (_shouting_). But put these beastly things away.

OLIVIA (_rising and gathering up the curtains_). Very well, George.

(_Going up_ L. _she places the curtains on the cabinet_.)

GEORGE (_waits impatiently until she has put them away on top of cabinet_). Ah! That's better.

(OLIVIA _comes to table_ L.C., _closes her workbox and then crosses down to settee_ R.)

GEORGE (_rising and crossing down to_ OLIVIA _and placing arms lovingly on her shoulder_). Now look here, Olivia, old girl, you've been a jolly good wife to me--(_takes his arms from her shoulder_)--and we don't often have rows, and if I've been rude to you about this--lost my temper a bit perhaps, what?--I'll say I'm sorry. May I have a kiss?

OLIVIA (_holding up her face_). George, darling! (_He kisses her_.) Do you love me?

GEORGE. You know I do, old girl.

OLIVIA. As much as Brian loves Dinah?

GEORGE (_stiffly, taking her hands from his shoulders_). I've said all I want to say about that. (_He goes away from her to_ L.)

OLIVIA. Oh, but there must be lots you want to say and perhaps don't like to. (_Sits on settee_ R.) Do tell me, darling.

GEORGE (_coming back to_ C.). What it comes to is this. I consider that Dinah is too young to choose a husband for herself, and that Strange isn't the husband I should choose for her.

OLIVIA. You were calling him Brian yesterday.

GEORGE. Yesterday I regarded him as a boy, now he wants me to look upon him as a man.

OLIVIA. He's twenty-four.

GEORGE. Yes, and Dinah's nineteen. Ridiculous. (_Crossing up to smoking-table up_ R., _and filling his pipe which he finds on table_.)

OLIVIA. If he'd been a Conservative, and thought that clouds were round, I suppose he'd have seemed older, somehow.

GEORGE. That's a different point altogether. That has nothing to do with his age.

OLIVIA (_innocently_). Oh, I thought it had.

GEORGE (_crossing down_ C. _stuffing tobacco into his pipe_). What I am objecting to is these ridiculously early marriages before either party knows its own mind, much less the mind of the other party. (_Moving to fireplace looking for a match_.) Such marriages invariably lead to unhappiness.

OLIVIA. Of course, _my_ first marriage wasn't a happy one.

GEORGE. As you know, Olivia, I dislike speaking about your first marriage at all--(_takes a match from table down_ L. OLIVIA _rises slowly and goes up to_ R. _of writing-table_)--and I had no intention of bringing it up now, but since you mention it--well, there's a case in point. (_Sits on settee_ L., _lighting his pipe_.)

OLIVIA (_looking back at it_). When I was eighteen, I was in love.

GEORGE (_turning to her_). What?

OLIVIA. Or perhaps I only thought I was, and I don't know if I should have been happy or not if I had married him. But my father made me marry Mr. Jacob Telworthy. (GEORGE _looks up at her, annoyed_.) And when things were too hot for him in England--"too hot for him"--I think that was the expression we used in those days--then we went to Australia, and I left him there. (_Goes slowly down to back of settee_ L.) And the only happy moment I had in all my married life was on the morning when I saw in the papers that he was dead. (_Leans with her arms over back of settee_.)

GEORGE (_very uncomfortable yet lovingly taking her hands with his left hand_). Yes, yes, my dear, I know, I know. You must have had a terrible time. I can hardly bear to think about it. My only hope is that I have made up to you for it in some degree. (_She places her left cheek lovingly on his head_.) (_Dropping her hands_.) But I don't see what bearing it has upon Dinah's case.

OLIVIA. Oh, none, except that _my_ father _liked_ Jacob's political opinions and his views on art. (_Moving slowly round_ L.C. _table to below stool at foot_.) I expect that that was why he chose him for me.

GEORGE. You seem to think that I wish to choose a husband for Dinah. I don't at all. Let her choose whom she likes as long as he can support her and there's a chance of their being happy together. Now, with regard to this fellow--

OLIVIA. You mean Brian?

GEORGE. Well, he's got no money, and he's been brought up in quite a different way from Dinah. Dinah may be prepared to believe that--er--all cows are blue, and that--er--waves are square, but she won't go on believing it for ever.

OLIVIA. Neither will Brian.

GEORGE (_moving to_ R. _end of settee_). Well, that's what I keep telling him, only he won't see it. Just as I keep telling you about those

ridiculous curtains. (_Points to cupboard with pipe in right hand over his left shoulder_.) It seems to me that I am the only person in the house with any eyesight left.

OLIVIA. Perhaps you are, darling; but you must let us find out our own mistakes for ourselves. (_Sits on stool_ L.C.) At any rate, Brian is a gentleman; he loves Dinah, Dinah loves him; he's earning enough to support himself, and you are earning enough to support Dinah.

GEORGE (_amazed_). What?

OLIVIA. I think it's worth risking, George.

GEORGE (_stiffly_). I can only say the whole question demands much more anxious thought than you seem to have given it. You say that he is a gentleman. He knows how to behave, I admit; but if his morals are as topsy-turvy as his tastes and--er--politics, as I've no doubt they are (_rising and moving to_ L.), then-er--In short, I do _not_ approve of Brian Strange as a husband for my niece and ward. (_Knocks pipe out down_ L.)

OLIVIA (_looking at him thoughtfully_). You _are_ a curious mixture, George. You were so very unconventional when you married me, and you're so very conventional when Brian wants to marry Dinah.... George Marden to marry the widow of a convict!

GEORGE (_advancing_). Convict! What do you mean?

OLIVIA. Jacob Telworthy, convict--I forget his number--surely I told you all this, dear, when we got engaged?

GEORGE. Never!

OLIVIA. Oh, but I told you how he carelessly put the wrong signature to a cheque for a thousand pounds in England; how he made a little mistake about two or three companies he'd promoted in Australia; and how--

GEORGE. Yes, yes (_crossing slowly to_ C. _below_ OLIVIA), but you never told me he'd been--er--well--_convicted_!

OLIVIA. What difference does it make?

GEORGE. My dear Olivia, if you can't see that--a--a--oh, well!

OLIVIA. Oh! A convict! So, you see, we needn't be too particular about our niece, need we?

GEORGE. I think we had better leave your first husband out of the conversation altogether. I never wished to refer to him; I never wish to hear about him again. I certainly had not realized that he was actually--er--well--convicted for his--er--(_moving to writing-table and picking up his cap_).

OLIVIA. Mistakes. GEORGE. Well, we needn't go into that. As for this other matter, I don't for a moment take it seriously. Dinah is an exceptionally pretty girl, and young. Strange is a good-looking boy. (_Coming down to back of settee_ L.) If they are attracted to each other, it is a mere outward attraction which I am convinced will not lead to any lasting happiness. (OLIVIA _is about to protest_.) That must be regarded

as my last word in the matter, Olivia. If this Mr.--er--what was his name, comes, I shall be down at the farm. (GEORGE _goes out by the staircase up_ R.)

(_Left alone,_ OLIVIA _rises, goes up_ C., _takes up her curtains again and crossing down_ L. _sits on settee, and gets calmly to work upon them_.)

(DINAH _comes in by the windows from up_ R. _and crosses to_ L. _window at back, then seeing_ OLIVIA, _beckons to_ BRIAN _and runs down to back of settee to_ R. _of_ OLIVIA. BRIAN _enters from up_ R., _and follows down to back of table_ L.C.)

DINAH (_over back of settee_). Finished?

OLIVIA (_startled_). Oh, no, I've got all these rings to put on.

DINAH. I meant talking to George.

OLIVIA. Oh!

BRIAN. We walked about outside----

DINAH. Until we heard him _not_ talking to you any more----

BRIAN. And we didn't kiss each other once.

DINAH AND BRIAN (_pointing roguishly and with satisfaction at_ OLIVIA). Ah!

DINAH. Brian was very George-like. He wouldn't even let me tickle the back of his neck. (_She goes suddenly to_ OLIVIA _and sits on her_ L.) Darling (_putting her arms round_ OLIVIA _and kissing her_), being George-like is a very nice thing to be--I mean a nice thing for other people to be--I mean--oh, you know what I mean. But say that he's going to be decent about it.

OLIVIA. Of course he is, Dinah.

BRIAN (_sits on stool_ L.C., _and leans forward eagerly_). You mean he'll let me come here as--as----

DINAH. As my young man?

OLIVIA. Oh, I think so.

DINAH (_kissing_ OLIVIA). Olivia, you're a wonder.

(_Embraces her round the neck_.)

(_Rising and crossing below_ BRIAN, _touching him on the shoulder_.)

Brian!

(_Crossing to piano, sits and plays five bars of "The Wedding March," rises and crosses at back of_ BRIAN _to_ L. _of_ OLIVIA _behind settee_.)

Have you really talked him round?

OLIVIA. I haven't said anything yet.

DINAH (_very disappointed_). Oh!

(BRIAN _rises and backs to_ C.)

OLIVIA. But I dare say I shall think of something.

BRIAN. Oh! my lord.

DINAH (_disappointedly_). Oh!

BRIAN (_going up_ C.). After all, Dinah, I'm going back to London to-morrow----

DINAH (_crossing quickly towards_ BRIAN). Oh, no, no!

OLIVIA. Now, Dinah. You can be good for one more day, and then when Brian isn't here, we'll see what we can do.

DINAH (_placing her hands on_ BRIAN'S _shoulders_). Yes, but I didn't want him to go back to-morrow.

BRIAN (_sternly, taking her hands away_). Must. Hard work before me. (DINAH _moves to back of table_ L.C.) Earn thousands a year. (_Going down_ R. DINAH _and_ OLIVIA _are amused_). Paint the Mayor and Corporation of Pudsey, life-size, including chains of office; paint slice of haddock on plate. Copy Landseer for old gentleman in Bayswater. Design antimacassar for middle-aged sofa in Streatham. (_Sitting and putting his legs up on settee R_) Oh, yes. Earn a living for you. Dinah.

DINAH (_giggling_). Oh, Brian, you're heavenly. What fun we shall have when we're married.

BRIAN (_with exaggerated dignity_). Sir Brian Strange, R.A., if you please, Miss Marden. Sir Brian Strange, R.A., writes: "Your Sanogene has proved a most excellent tonic. After completing the third acre of my Academy picture, 'The Mayor and Corporation of Pudsey,' I was completely exhausted, but one bottle of Sanogene revived me, and I finished the remaining seven acres at a single sitting."

OLIVIA (_rising and looking about her_). Brian, find my scissors for me. (_Sits again_)

BRIAN (_rising and crossing to_ C.). Scissors. Sir Brian Strange, R.A., looks for scissors.

(BRIAN, _clasping his hands behind his back, with a very important walk, looks first on the top end of piano, then on writing-table at back_. DINAH _playfully follows him round, imitating his walk_. BRIAN _crosses to cabinet up L. and finds the scissors on top, takes them up and in a threatening attitude turns to_ DINAH, _exclaiming,_ "Ha, ha!" DINAH _with a little playful scream backs to chair below writing-table, and sits. Holding up scissors_.)

Once more we must record an unqualified success for the eminent Academician. (_Turning to_ OLIVIA _and with a bow hands them over the back of settee to her_) Your scissors.

OLIVIA. Thank you so much.

DINAH. Come on, Brian, let's go out. I feel open-airy.

(_They go up_ R.)

OLIVIA. Don't be late for lunch, there's good people. Lady Marden is coming.

DINAH. Aunt Juli-ah! Help! (_She faints in_ BRIAN'S _arms_.) That means a clean pinafore. Brian, you'll jolly well have to brush your hair.

BRIAN (_feeling it_). I suppose there's no time now to go up to London and get it cut?

(_Enter_ ANNE _from stairs up R. and comes to foot of staircase, followed by_ PIM, _who comes half-way down the stairs_.)

ANNE. Mr. Pim!

DINAH (_delighted_). Hullo. Mr. Pim! (_Imitating a clown_.) Here we are again! You can't get rid of us so easily, you see.

PIM. I--er--dear Miss Marden----(_Crosses down to_ C.)

OLIVIA. How-do-you-do, Mr. Pim? I can't get up, but do come and sit down (PIM _shakes hands with_ OLIVIA.) My husband will be here in a minute. Anne, send somebody down to the farm----

ANNE, I think I heard the Master in the library, madam.

OLIVIA. Oh, will you tell him then?

ANNE. Yes, madam,

(ANNE _goes out up staircase_.)

OLIVIA. You'll stay to lunch, of course, Mr. Pim?

DINAH (_coming down_ C. _to_ R.) Oh, do!

PIM. It's very kind of you, Mrs. Marden, but-----

DINAH. Oh, you simply must, Mr. Pim. You haven't told us half enough about yourself yet. I want to hear all about your early life.

OLIVIA. Dinah!

(DINAH _sits at piano and plays thirty-two bars of "If you could only care." _)

PIM. Oh, we are almost, I might say, old friends, Mrs. Marden.

(BRIAN _comes down and kneels on settee_ R., _listening to_ DINAH _playing_.)

DINAH. Of course we are. He knows Brian, too. There's more in Mr. Pim than you think. You will stay to lunch, won't you?

PIM. (sits on stool L.C.) It's very kind of you to ask me, Mrs. Marden, but I am lunching with the Trevors.

OLIVIA. Oh, well, you must come to lunch another day.

PIM. Oh, thank you, thank you.

DINAH. The reason why we like Mr. Pim so much is that he was the first person to congratulate us. We feel that he is going to have a great influence on our lives.

PIM. (to OLIVIA). I, so to speak, stumbled on the engagement this morning, and--er--

OLIVIA. I see. Children, you must go and tidy yourselves up. Run along.

BRIAN. Sir Brian and Lady Strange never run; they walk.

(DINAH stops playing.) (Offering his R. arm and bowing.) Madam!

(DINAH curtsies and takes his arm and they go up C.)

(DINAH takes mincing steps and playfully shakes her hand at MR. PIM, who is amused.)

DINAH. Au revoir, Mr. Pim. (Dramatically.) We--shall--meet-- again!

(PIM. laughing heartily, rises and bows.)

(BRIAN and DINAH go out through the window up C. to L.)

OLIVIA. You must forgive them, Mr. Pim. They're such children. And naturally they're rather excited just now.

PIM. Oh, naturally, naturally!

OLIVIA. Of course you won't say anything about their engagement. We only heard about it five minutes ago, and nothing has been settled yet.

PIM. Of course, of course!

(Enter GEORGE from staircase up R.)

GEORGE. Ah, Mr. Pim, we meet at last. Sorry to have kept you waiting before. (Shaking hands.) How are you? How are you?

PIM. The apology should come from me, Mr. Marden, for having--er--

GEORGE. Not at all. Very glad to meet you now. Any friend of Brymer's. You want a letter to this man Fanshawe?

OLIVIA. Shall I be in your way at all?

PIM. Oh, no, no, please don't.

GEORGE. Oh, no. It's only just a question of a letter. Fanshawe will put you in the way of seeing all that you want to see. (Crossing up to writing-table, sits.) He's a very old friend of mine. (Taking a sheet of notepaper and turning in chair to PIM.) You'll stay to lunch, of

course?

PIM. It's very kind of you, but I'm lunching with the Trevors. (_Sits
settee R. and puts down his hat and gloves_.)

GEORGE. Ah, well, they'll look after you all right. Good chap, Trevor.

PIM. Oh, very good ... very good. (_To_ OLIVIA.) You see, Mrs. Marden, I
have only recently arrived from Australia--(OLIVIA _stops in her sewing
and_ GEORGE _looks up_)--after travelling about the world for some years,
and I'm rather out of touch with my--er--fellow-workers in London.

OLIVIA. I see! You've been in Australia, Mr. Pim?

PIM. Oh, yes, I---

GEORGE (_after a loud cough_). Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Pim. I
shan't be a moment.

PIM. Oh, that's all right, thank you. (_To_ OLIVIA.) Oh, yes, I have been
in Australia more than once in the last few years.

OLIVIA. Really? I used to live at Sydney many years ago. Do you know
Sydney at all?

PIM. Oh, yes, I was----

GEORGE (_coughing_). H'r'm! Perhaps I'd better mention that you are a
friend of the Trevors?

PIM. Thank you, thank you. (_To_ OLIVIA.) Indeed yes, I spent several
months in Sydney a few years ago.

OLIVIA. How curious! I wonder if we have any friends in common there.

GEORGE (_coughing and gruffly_). Extremely unlikely, I should think.
Sydney is a very big place.

PIM. True, true, but the world is a very small place, Mr. Marden. I had a
remarkable instance of that, coming over on the boat this last time.

GEORGE. Ah! (_Feeling that the conversation is now safe, he resumes his
letter_.)

PIM. Yes. There was a man I used to employ in Sydney some years ago, a
bad fellow, I'm afraid, Mrs. Marden, who had been in prison for some kind
of fraudulent company-promoting and had taken to drink and--and so on.

OLIVIA. Yes, yes, I understand.

PIM. Drinking himself to death, I should have said. I gave him at the
most another year to live. Yet to my amazement the first person I saw as
I stepped on board the boat that brought me to England last week was this
fellow. There was no mistaking him. I spoke to him, in fact; we
recognized each other.

(GEORGE _rises_.)

OLIVIA. Really?

PIM. He was travelling steerage; we didn't meet again on board, and as it happened at Marseilles, this poor fellow--er--now what was his name? A very unusual one. Began with a--a T, I think.

OLIVIA (_with suppressed feeling_). Yes, Mr. Pim, yes? (_She puts out a hand to_ GEORGE.)

GEORGE (_in an undertone, taking her hand_). Nonsense, dear!

PIM (_triumphantly_). I've got it! Telworthy!

OLIVIA (_draws back in settee, overcome_). Telworthy!

GEORGE. Good God!

PIM (_a little surprised at the success of his story_). An unusual name, is it not? Not a name you could forget when once you had heard it.

OLIVIA (_with feeling, gazing into space with hands clenched_). No, it is not a name you could forget when once you had heard it.

GEORGE (_hastily coming over to_ PIM). Quite so, Mr. Pim, a most remarkable name, a most odd story altogether. Well, well, here's your letter--(PIM _rises and takes letter_)--and if you're sure you won't stay to lunch----

PIM. No, thank you. You see, I'm lunching with----

GEORGE. With the Trevors, yes. I remember you told me. (_Taking his arm and hurrying him up_ C.) I'll just see you on your way.... (_To_ OLIVIA, _who does not notice_ PIM _holding out his hand to say good-bye_) Er--my dear----

OLIVIA (_holding out her hand, but not looking at him_). Good-bye, Mr. Pim.

PIM (_shaking hands with_ OLIVIA). Good-bye, good-bye!

GEORGE (_taking him by the arm up_ L. _towards the windows_). This way, this way. Quicker for you.

PIM, Thank you, thank you.

(GEORGE _hurries him up_ C. _and he exits to_ L. OLIVIA _looks into the past and shudders_. GEORGE _comes back to_ C.)

GEORGE. Good God! Telworthy! (ANNE _enters from up_ R. _and comes to foot of staircase_) Is it possible?

(_Before_ OLIVIA _can answer, _LADY MARDEN _is announced_)

ANNE. Lady Marden.

(GEORGE _crosses down to_ OLIVIA _and touches her on the shoulder. They pull themselves together, and_ OLIVIA _rises and is crossing towards_ C. _to greet_ LADY MARDEN, _who does not appear_)

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE.-- The same scene and furniture with addition of a camp table and five camp chairs outside on terrace at back centre. Lunch is over. LADY MARDEN'S whip and gloves are on writing-table.

(ANNE enters with coffee for five on salver, from double doors R., and is about to place it on table L.C. when OLIVIA, who follows her on, says:)

OLIVIA. We'll have coffee on the terrace, Anne.

ANNE. Very good, madam. (Moves up L. and places salver on camp table on terrace.)

(LADY MARDEN follows OLIVIA from double doors R. ANNE crosses at back of windows to R.)

OLIVIA. We'll have coffee on the terrace, Aunt Julia.

(LADY MARDEN crosses in front of OLIVIA and up L. through windows and sits R. at back of camp table. GEORGE follows LADY MARDEN, meets OLIVIA, and both throw up their arms despairingly. OLIVIA crosses up L. through windows and sits to L. of camp table. DINAH and BRIAN follow GEORGE on.)

(ANNE exits at doors R.)

(GEORGE turns, and seeing DINAH is annoyed, follows OLIVIA up L. and sits L. of LADY MARDEN.)

DINAH (to BRIAN). I know Aunt Julia likes a little music.

(DINAH comes down to piano and takes up small guitar. BRIAN crosses to L., laughing at her. She goes up L. of writing-table, playing and singing, and crosses round back of writing-table and sits to R. of camp table. BRIAN follows her and stands with his back to windows. GEORGE and LADY MARDEN are annoyed with DINAH'S playing, and tell her to stop, and she does so. OLIVIA pours milk into DINAH'S cup and BRIAN passes it to her; she drinks and then commences to play again and is stopped by looks from LADY MARDEN and GEORGE.)

LADY MARDEN (to DINAH). No! No! Don't do it!

OLIVIA. Your aunt does not like it, dear.

(GEORGE and OLIVIA want to be alone, so do BRIAN and DINAH. At last BRIAN murmurs something about a cigarette-case, and catching DINAH'S eye, comes into the room. He leans against the sofa down L. and waits for her.)

DINAH (loudly, as she comes in strumming on guitar). Have you found it?

BRIAN. Found what?

DINAH (_in her ordinary voice, crossing quickly down to_ BRIAN). That was just for _their_ benefit. I said I'd help you find it. It _is_ your cigarette-case we're looking for, isn't it?

BRIAN (_taking it out_). Yes. Have one?

DINAH. No, thank you, darling. (BRIAN _goes up_ R. _in smoking-table for a match_) Aunt Juli-ah still thinks it's unladylike.... Have you ever seen her beagling? (_Comes down to piano, puts down instrument_)

BRIAN. No. Is that very ladylike?

DINAH (_sitting on settee_ R.). Very.... I say, what has happened, do you think?

BRIAN (_moving down to back of table_ R.C.). Everything. I love you, and you love me.

DINAH. Silly! I meant between George and Olivia. Didn't you notice them at lunch?

BRIAN (_sits on table_). I noticed that you seemed to be doing most of the talking. But then I've noticed that before sometimes. Do you think Olivia and your uncle have quarrelled because of _us_?

DINAH. Of course not. George may _think_ he has quarrelled, but I'm quite sure Olivia hasn't. No (DINAH _beckons to_ BRIAN, _who comes and sits above her_), I believe Mr. Pim's at the bottom of it. He's brought some terribly sad news about George's investments. (_Rising and facing_ BRIAN.) The old home will have to be sold up.

BRIAN. Good. Then your uncle won't mind your marrying me.

DINAH (_by table above settee_ R.). Yes, darling, but you must be more dramatic about it than that. "George," you must say, with tears in your eyes, "I cannot pay off the whole of the mortgage for you. I have only two and ninepence; but at least let me take your niece off your hands." Then George will (_hitting him on the shoulder_) thump you on the back and say gruffly (_crossing to_ L.), "You're a good fellow, Brian, a damn good fellow," and he'll blow his nose very loudly, and say, "Confound this cigar, it won't draw properly."

BRIAN (_rising and crossing to_ DINAH). Dinah, you're a heavenly idiot. And you've simply got to marry me, uncles or no uncles.

DINAH. Hush! (_She takes his hand and they sit on settee_ L., _hiding from others at back_) It will have to be "uncles," I'm afraid, because, you see, I'm his ward, and I can get sent to Chancery or Coventry or somewhere beastly, if I marry without his consent, Haven't _you_ got anybody who objects to your marrying _me_?

BRIAN. Nobody, thank Heaven.

DINAH. Well, that's rather disappointing of you. I saw myself fascinating your aged father at the same time that you were fascinating George. I should have done it much better than you. As a George-fascinator you aren't very successful, sweetheart.

BRIAN (_kissing her hand_). What am I like as a Dinah-fascinator?

DINAH. Plus six, darling.

BRIAN. Then I'll stick to that and leave George to Olivia.

DINAH. I expect she'll manage him all right. I have great faith in Olivia. But you'll marry me, anyhow, won't you, Brian?

BRIAN. I will.

DINAH. Even if we have to wait till I'm twenty-one?

BRIAN. Even if we have to wait till you're fifty-one.

DINAH (_holding out her hands to him_). Darling!

BRIAN (_uneasily_). I say, don't do that.

DINAH. Why not?

BRIAN. Well, I promised I wouldn't kiss you.

DINAH. Oh! (_Rising and crossing to_ C., _watching the others at back_). Well, you might just send me a kiss. You can look the other way as if you didn't know I was here.

BRIAN. Like this?

(_He looks the other way, kisses the tips of his fingers, and flicks it carelessly in her direction. She pretends to catch it, kissing her own hands_.)

DINAH. That was a lovely one. Now here's one coming for you.

(_She throws him a kiss. He catches it gracefully and conveys it to his mouth_.)

BRIAN (_rising, and with a low bow_). Madam, I thank you.

DINAH (_curtsying_). Your servant, Mr. Strange,

OLIVIA (_rising from outside_). Dinah!

DINAH (_jumping up_). Hullo! (_Moving quickly to piano, plays "Mickey."_)

(BRIAN _throws away his cigarette and walks to_ L.)

(OLIVIA _comes in through the window up_ L., _followed by_ GEORGE _and_ LADY MARDEN, _the latter a vigorous young woman of sixty odd, who always looks as if she were beagling_.)

OLIVIA (_coming down to_ DINAH _above piano_). Aunt Julia wants to see the pigs, dear. I wish you'd take her down. I'm rather tired, and your uncle has some business to attend to.

(GEORGE _sits in chair up_ C. _in front of writing-table_.)

LADY MARDEN (_moving down_ C.), I've always said that you don't take

enough exercise, Olivia. (_Turning to others_) Look at me--sixty-five and proud of it. (_Goes up_ R. _and takes up gloves and riding-whip from writing-table_)

OLIVIA (_taking off her coatee_). Yes, Aunt Julia, you're wonderful.

DINAH. How old would Olivia be if she took exercise?

(OLIVIA, _smiling, but with an admonishing look at_ DINAH, _comes up_ R. _and places her coatee on balustrade_)

GEORGE (_from up_ C.). Don't fool about asking silly questions, Dinah. Your aunt hasn't much time.

BRIAN. May I come, too, Lady Marden?

LADY MARDEN (_coming down centre to_ BRIAN). Well, a little exercise wouldn't do _you_ any harm, Mr. Strange. You're an artist, ain't you?

(DINAH _stops playing_)

BRIAN. Well, I try to paint.

DINAH (_rises and moves to_ R.C.). He sold a picture last March for----

GEORGE. Yes, yes, never mind that now.

LADY MARDEN. Yes, unhealthy life. (_Going to_ R. _of writing-table and crossing at back, turns to_ DINAH _and_ BRIAN.) Well, come along.

(_She strides out up_ L., _followed by_ DINAH _and_ BRIAN, _who upset_ GEORGE'S _papers on writing-table as they go_. OLIVIA _takes the curtains and workbox from_ C. _cupboard of cabinet and comes down_ L.)

GEORGE (_looking up and seeing_ OLIVIA). Really, Olivia, we've got something more important, more vital to us than curtains, to discuss, now that we _are_ alone at last.

OLIVIA. I wasn't going to discuss them, dear. (_Sits_)

GEORGE. Of course, I'm always glad to see Aunt Julia in my house, but I wish she hadn't chosen this day of all days to come to lunch.

OLIVIA. It wasn't Aunt Julia's fault. It was really Mr. Pim who chose the wrong day.

GEORGE (_fiercely and rising_). Good heavens, is it true?

OLIVIA. About Jacob Telworthy?

GEORGE. Yon told me he was dead. (_Moving down to_ L. _of_ L.C. _table_) You always said that he was dead.

OLIVIA. Well, I always thought that he was dead. He was as dead as anybody could be. All the papers said he was dead.

GEORGE (_scornfully_). The papers!(_Crossing up to smoking-table for his pipe_)

OLIVIA (_as if this would settle it for_ GEORGE). The _Times_ said he was dead. There was a paragraph about him. Apparently even his death was fraudulent.

GEORGE (_coming down_ C.). Yes, yes, I'm not blaming you, Olivia, but what are we going to do, that's the question, what are we going to do? My God, it's horrible! (_Crossing to fireplace_) You've never been married to me at all! You don't seem to understand.

OLIVIA. It is a little difficult to realize. You see, it doesn't seem to have made any difference to our happiness.

GEORGE. No, that's what's so terrible. (OLIVIA _looks up surprised_) I mean--well, of course, we were quite innocent in the matter. (_Sits in arm-chair down_ L.) But, at the same time, nothing can get over the fact that we--we had no right to--to be happy.

OLIVIA. Would you rather we had been miserable?

GEORGE. You're Telworthy's wife, that's what you don't seem to understand. You're Telworthy's wife. You--er--forgive me, Olivia, but it's the horrible truth--you committed bigamy when you married me. (_In horror, going up_ L.) Bigamy! (_Coming round to_ C.)

OLIVIA. It is an ugly word, isn't it?

GEORGE. Yes, but you don't understand. (_Coming quickly down_ C., _sits on stool_ L.C., _facing her_) Look here, Olivia, old girl, the whole thing is nonsense, eh? It isn't your husband, it's some other Telworthy that this fellow met. That's right, isn't it? Some other shady swindler who turned up on the boat, eh? This sort of thing doesn't happen to people like _us_--committing bigamy and all that. Some other fellow.

OLIVIA (_shaking her head_). I knew all the shady swindlers in Sydney.... They came to dinner.... There were no others called Telworthy.

GEORGE (_rising with gesture of despair_). Well, what are we going to do?

OLIVIA. You sent Mr. Pim away so quickly. He might have told us things. Telworthy's plans. Where he is now. You hurried him away so quickly.

GEORGE. I've sent a note round to ask him to come back. My one idea at the moment was to get him out of the house--to hush things up. (_Going up to writing-table_)

OLIVIA. You can't hush up two husbands.

GEORGE (_in despair_). You can't. (_Sits at writing-table_) Everybody will know. Everybody!

OLIVIA. The children, Aunt Julia, they may as well know now as later. Mr. Pim must, of course.

GEORGE. I do not propose to discuss my private affairs with Mr. Pim----

OLIVIA. But he's mixed himself up in them rather, hasn't he, and if you're going to ask him questions----

GEORGE. I only propose to ask him one question. I shall ask him if he is

absolutely certain of this fellow's name. I can do that quite easily without letting him know the reason for my inquiry.

OLIVIA. You couldn't make a mistake about a name like Telworthy. But he might tell us something about Telworthy's plans. Perhaps he's going back to Australia at once. Perhaps he thinks I'm dead, too. Perhaps--oh, there are so many things I want to know.

GEORGE. Yes, yes, dear. It would be interesting to--that is, one naturally wants to know these things, but of course it doesn't make any real difference.

OLIVIA (_surprised_). No difference?

GEORGE (_rising and coming down to back of settee_ L.). Well, that is to say, you're as much his wife if he's in Australia as you are if he's in England.

OLIVIA. I am not his wife at all. (_Shaking her head_.) Jacob Telworthy may be alive, but I am not his wife. I ceased to be his wife when I became yours.

GEORGE. You never _were_ my wife. (_Annoyed and crossing to_ R. _and back again to_ L.C.) That is the terrible part of it. Our union--you make me say it, Olivia--has been unhallowed by the Church. Unhallowed even by the Law. Legally, we have been living in--living in--well, the point is, how does the Law stand? I imagine that Telworthy could get a--a divorce.... Oh, it seems impossible that things like this can be happening to _us_. (_Going up_ C.)

OLIVIA. A divorce?

GEORGE. I--I imagine so.

OLIVIA. But then we could _really_ get married, and we shouldn't be living in--living in--whatever we were living in before.

GEORGE (_coming down to_ R. _of table_ L.C.). I can't understand you, Olivia. You talk about it so calmly, as if there was nothing blameworthy in being divorced.

OLIVIA. Yes, but---

GEORGE. As if there was nothing unusual in my marrying a divorced woman.

OLIVIA. Yes, but---

GEORGE. As if there was nothing wrong in our having lived together for years without having been married.

OLIVIA (_placing her hands on table_). What seems wrong to me is that I lived for five years with a bad man whom I hated. What seems right to me is that I lived for five years with a good man whom I love.

GEORGE (_taking and patting her hands affectionately_). Yes, yes, my dear, I know. (_Drops her hands and moves to_ C.) But right and wrong don't settle themselves as easily as that. We've been living together when you were Telworthy's wife. That's _wrong_.

OLIVIA. Do you mean wicked?

GEORGE. Well, no doubt the Court would consider that we acted in perfect innocence----

OLIVIA. What Court?

GEORGE. Well, you see, my dear, these things have to be done legally, of course. (_ Moving to_ R. _ to settee, thinking it out_) I believe the proper method is a nullity suit, declaring our marriage null and--er--void. It would, so to speak, wipe out these years of--er---(_ Moving back to_ C.)

OLIVIA. Wickedness?

GEORGE. Of irregular union, and-er--then----

OLIVIA. Then I could go back to Jacob.... Do you really mean that, George?

GEORGE (_ uneasily_). Well, dear, you see--that's how things are--one can't get away from--er-----

OLIVIA. What you feel is that Telworthy has the greater claim? You are prepared to--make way for him?

GEORGE. Both the Church and the Law would say that I had no claim at all, I'm afraid. I--I suppose I haven't.

OLIVIA. I see. (_ She looks at him curiously_) Thank you for making it so clear, George.

GEORGE. Of course, whether or not you go back to--er--Telworthy is another matter altogether. (_ Crossing to fireplace_) That would naturally be for you to decide.

OLIVIA (_ cheerfully_). For me and Jacko to decide.

GEORGE. Er--Jacko?

OLIVIA. I used to call my first husband--I mean my only husband--Jacko. I didn't like the name of Jacob, and Jacko seemed to suit him somehow. (_ Enjoying the joke_) He had very long arms. (GEORGE _is very annoyed_) Poor Jacko.

GEORGE (_ annoyed_). You don't seem to realize that this is not a joke, Olivia.

OLIVIA (_ still amused_). It may not be a joke, but it is funny, isn't it?

GEORGE. I must say I don't see anything funny in a tragedy that has wrecked two lives.

OLIVIA. Two? Oh, but Jacko's life isn't wrecked. It has just been miraculously restored to him. And a wife, too. There's nothing tragic for Jacko in it.

GEORGE (_ stiffly_). I was referring to _our_ two lives--yours and mine.

OLIVIA. Yours, George? Your life isn't wrecked. The Court will absolve you of all blame; your friends will sympathize with you, and tell you that I was a designing woman who deliberately took you in; your Aunt Julia--

GEORGE (*_overwrought_*). Stop it! (*_Crossing over to her_*.) What do you mean? Have you no heart? (OLIVIA *_gives a little hurt cry_*.) Do you think I *_want_* to lose you, Olivia? (*_Sits on her_ L.*) Do you think I *_want_* my home broken up like this? Haven't you been happy with me these last five years?

OLIVIA. Very happy.

GEORGE. Well then, how can you talk like that?

OLIVIA. But you want to send me away,

GEORGE. There you go again. I don't *_want_* to. I have hardly had time to realize just what it will mean to me when you go. The fact is I simply daren't realize it. I daren't think about it.

OLIVIA. Try thinking about it, George.

GEORGE. And you talk as if I *_wanted_* to send you away!

OLIVIA. Try thinking about it, George.

GEORGE. You don't seem to understand that I'm not *_sending_* you away. You simply aren't mine to keep.

OLIVIA. Whose am I?

GEORGE (*_dubiously_*). Your husband's. Telworthy's.

OLIVIA (*_gently_*). If I belong to anybody but myself, I think I belong to you.

GEORGE. Not in the eyes of the Law. Not in the eyes of the Church. Not even in the eyes of--er----

OLIVIA. The County?

GEORGE (*_annoyed_*). I was about to say "Heaven."

OLIVIA. Oh!

GEORGE (*_rising and crossing below_ OLIVIA *_to_ C.**). That this should happen to *_us_*! (OLIVIA *_works in silence. Then she shakes out her curtains_*.)

OLIVIA (*_looking at them_*). I do hope Jacko will like these.

GEORGE (*_turning and seeing curtains_*). What! You----(*_Going up to her quickly and taking her by the hands raises her from the settee_*.) Olivia, Olivia, have you no heart?

OLIVIA. Ought you to talk like that to another man's wife?

GEORGE. Confound it, is this just a joke to you?

OLIVIA. You must forgive me, George; I am a little over-excited--at the thought of returning to Jacob.

GEORGE. Do you want to return to him?

OLIVIA. One wants to do what is right. In the eyes of--er--Heaven.

GEORGE. Seeing what sort of a man he is, I have no doubt that you could get a separation, supposing that he didn't--er--divorce you. I don't know what is best. I must consult my solicitor. The whole position has been sprung on us, and (miserably sits on stool L.C.) I don't know, I don't know. I can't take it all in. (Leaning forward and burying his face in his hands.)

OLIVIA. Wouldn't you like to consult your Aunt Julia too? She could tell you what the County--I mean what Heaven really thought about it.

GEORGE. Yes, yes. Aunt Julia has plenty of common sense. You're quite right, Olivia. This isn't a thing we can keep from the family.

OLIVIA. Do I still call her Aunt Julia?

(ANNE comes in from staircase up R. GEORGE does not see her, but OLIVIA attracts his attention.)

GEORGE (looking up at OLIVIA). What? What? (Rising and crossing up to ANNE.) Well, what is it?

ANNE. Mr. Pim says he will come down at once, sir.

GEORGE. Oh, thank you, thank you.

(OLIVIA picks up curtains. ANNE goes out up staircase up R.)

OLIVIA. George, Mr. Pim has got to know.

GEORGE. I don't see the necessity.

OLIVIA. Not even for me? When a woman suddenly hears that her long-lost husband is restored to her, don't you think she wants to ask questions? Where is he living, and how is he looking, and--

GEORGE (very angry, going to writing-table, sits). Of course, if you are interested in these things--

OLIVIA. How can I help being? Don't be so silly, George. (Moves up to R. of GEORGE with the curtains on her arm.) We must know what Jacko--

GEORGE (annoyed) I wish you wouldn't call him by that ridiculous name.

OLIVIA. My husband--

GEORGE (wincing). Yes, well--your husband?

OLIVIA. Well, we must know his plans--where we can communicate with him, and so on.

GEORGE. I have no wish to communicate with him.

OLIVIA. I'm afraid you'll have to, dear.

GEORGE. I don't see the necessity.

OLIVIA. Well, you'll want to--to apologize to him for living with his wife for so long. (GEORGE _looks up and round at her nonplussed_) And as I belong to him, he ought to be told where he can--call for me.

GEORGE (_after a struggle and scratching his head_). You put it in a very peculiar way, but I see your point. (_With a shudder_) Oh, the horrible publicity of it all! (_Turns away and leans on writing-table_)

OLIVIA (_going up to him and comforting him, placing her hands on his shoulders_). Poor George. Dear, don't think I don't sympathize with you. I understand so exactly what you are feeling. The publicity! It's terrible.

GEORGE (_miserably and turning in his chair to her_). I want to do what's right. You believe that, don't you?

OLIVIA. Of course I do. (_Taking her hands away_) It's only that we don't quite agree as to what is right and what is wrong.

GEORGE. It isn't a question of agreeing. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, all the world over.

OLIVIA (_with a sad little smile_). But more particularly in Buckinghamshire, I think.

GEORGE. If I only considered myself, I should say: "Let us pack this man Telworthy back to Australia. He would make no claim. He would accept money to go away and say nothing about it." If I consulted simply my own happiness, Olivia, that, is what I should say. But when I consult--er--

OLIVIA (_with great feeling_). Mine?

GEORGE. My conscience----

OLIVIA (_disappointed_). Oh!

GEORGE. Then I can't do it. (_Rises and is going up_ L.) It's wrong.

OLIVIA (_making her first appeal_). Yes; but, George, don't you think I'm worth a little--

GEORGE (_turning round, seeing_ DINAH _coming_). H'sh! Dinah! (_Moves back to writing-table. Loudly for_ DINAH'S _benefit_) Well, then I'll write to him and--Ah, Dinah, where's Aunt Julia?

DINAH (_coming in from up_ L.). We've seen the pigs, and now she's discussing the Art of Landseer with Brian. (_Crossing in front of writing-table to_ OLIVIA.) I just came to ask--

OLIVIA. Dinah, dear, bring Aunt Julia here. And Brian too. We have things we want to talk about with you all.

DINAH. Right-o! (_Moves back up_ L.)

GEORGE (_outraged_). Olivia!

DINAH (_turning on terrace_). What fun!

(OLIVIA _goes to table_ L.C. _and picks up her work-box. Exit_ DINAH L.)

GEORGE. Olivia, you don't seriously suggest that we should discuss these things with a child like Dinah and a young man like Strange, a mere acquaintance.

OLIVIA. Dinah will have to know. I'm very fond of her, George. You can't send me away without telling Dinah. And Brian is my friend. (_Moving to cabinet, puts curtains and work-box on top of cabinet_.) You have your solicitor and your aunt and your conscience to consult--mayn't I even have Brian?

GEORGE (_forgetting_). I should have thought that your _husband_--

OLIVIA (_coming down to_ L. _back end of settee_ L.). Yes, but we don't know where Jacko is.

GEORGE. I was not referring to--er--Telworthy.

OLIVIA. Well then?

GEORGE. Oh, of course--You--naturally I--Oh, this is horrible! (_Sits with his face in his hands at writing-table_.)

(OLIVIA _is about to speak to him as_ LADY MARDEN _enters from up_ L. LADY MARDEN _looks at_ GEORGE, _then moves down to centre._ DINAH _follows and comes to_ L. _back end of settee._ BRIAN _follows_ DINAH _and comes to back of table_ L.C. OLIVIA _moves round to_ L. _end of settee_ L.)

OLIVIA (_after a pause_). George and I have had some rather bad news, Aunt Julia. We wanted your advice. Where will you sit?

LADY MARDEN. Thank you, Olivia. I can sit down by myself.

(_She does so, on lower end of settee_ R., _moving cushion away_.)

OLIVIA (_to_ DINAH). You sit there, my darling.

(DINAH _sits in arm-chair down_ L. _and_ OLIVIA _on settee_ L. _There is a good pause_. ALL _are looking very uncomfortable_.)

LADY MARDEN. Well, what is it?

(_Another pause_. ALL _are still looking very uncomfortable_.)

Money, I suppose; nobody's safe nowadays.

(_There is another good pause_. GEORGE _looks up hopelessly at_ LADY MARDEN. BRIAN _moves up inquisitively towards_ GEORGE, _who turns and gradually raising his head catches sight of_ BRIAN _and gives him a severe look and_ BRIAN _retreats quickly to back of_ L.C. _table_.)

GEORGE (_signalling for help_). Olivia----

OLIVIA (_after a pause_). We've just heard that my first husband is still alive.

DINAH. Telworthy!

BRIAN. Good Lord!

LADY MARDEN. George!

DINAH (_excitedly_). And only this morning I was saying that nothing ever happened in this house! (_Rising from arm-chair and sitting to_ L. _of_ OLIVIA _and remorsefully to her_.) Darling, I don't mean that. Darling one!

LADY MARDEN. What does this mean, George? I leave you for ten minutes--barely ten minutes--to go and look at the pigs, and when I come back you tell me that Olivia is a bigamist.

(DINAH _jumps up and moves to_ L. _of settee_ L.)

BRIAN (_indignantly advancing towards_ LADY MARDEN). I say----

OLIVIA (_restraining him_). H'sh!

BRIAN (_to_ OLIVIA _and taking her hand across table_ L.C.). If this is a row, I'm on your side.

LADY MARDEN. Well, George?

GEORGE (_rising and coming down to_ LADY MARDEN). I'm afraid it's true, Aunt Julia. (_Taking stool from_ L.C. _to_ C., _sits on it_. DINAH _sits in arm-chair down_ L.) We heard the news just before lunch--just before you came. We've only this moment had an opportunity of talking about it, of wondering what to do.

LADY MARDEN. What was his name----Tel--something----

OLIVIA. Jacob Telworthy.

LADY MARDEN (_in amazement_). So he's alive still?

GEORGE. Apparently. There seems to be no doubt about it.

LADY MARDEN (_to_ OLIVIA). Didn't you _see_ him die? I should always want to _see_ my husband die before I married again. Not that I approve of second marriages, anyhow. I told you so at the time, George.

OLIVIA. _And_ me, Aunt Julia.

LADY MARDEN. Did I? Well, I generally say what I think.

GEORGE. I ought to tell you, Aunt Julia, that no blame attaches to Olivia over this. Of that I am perfectly satisfied. It's nobody's fault, except----

LADY MARDEN. Except Telworthy's. _He_ seems to have been rather careless. Well, what are you going to do about it?

GEORGE. That's just it. It's a terrible situation (_With a gesture of despair_.) There's bound to be so much publicity. Not only all this, but--but Telworthy's past.

LADY MARDEN. I should have said that it was Telworthy's present which, was the trouble. Had he a past as well?

OLIVIA. He was a fraudulent company promoter. He went to prison a good deal.

(_General consternation_. BRIAN _gives a long whistle and goes up_.)

LADY MARDEN. George, you never told me this!

GEORGE. I--er----

OLIVIA. I don't see _why_ he should want to talk about it.

DINAH (_indignantly rising and moving to L. end of settee_ L.). What's it got to do with Olivia, anyhow? It's not _her_ fault.

LADY MARDEN (_sarcastically and emphatically_). Oh, no, I daresay it's mine.

(_There is an uncomfortable pause_.)

OLIVIA (_to_ GEORGE). You wanted to ask Aunt Julia what was the right thing to do.

BRIAN (_crossing down L.C. and bursting out_). Good Heavens, what is there to do except the one and only thing? (_They all look at him and he becomes embarrassed and backs up stage a little_.) I'm sorry. You don't want _me_ to----

OLIVIA (_taking his hand across table_ L.C.). _I_ do, Brian.

LADY MARDEN. Well, go on, Mr. Strange. What would _you_ do in George's position?

BRIAN (_crosses down to back of table_ L.C.). Do? Say to the woman I loved, "You're _mine_ (_bangs table with his fist_), and let this other damned fellow come and take you from me if he can!" And he couldn't--how could he?--not if the woman chose _me_.

(LADY MARDEN _gazes at_ BRIAN _in amazement_, GEORGE _in anger_. OLIVIA _presses his hand gratefully. He has said what she has been waiting--oh, so eagerly--for_ GEORGE _to say_. GEORGE _rises and goes angrily up to_ BRIAN, _who defies him_. GEORGE _is subdued and moves helplessly up_ C. _followed by_ BRIAN, _who is still defiant_. DINAH _rises and runs up_ L. _and round back of settee_ L. _and up to left of_ BRIAN _and takes his arm_.)

DINAH (_adoringly_). Oh, Brian! (_In a loud whisper_.) It _is_ me, isn't it, and not Olivia?

BRIAN. You baby, of course!

LADY MARDEN. I'm afraid, Mr. Strange (DINAH _with an exclamation of annoyance comes down to_ L. _of settee_ L.), your morals are as peculiar

as your views on Art.

BRIAN (_down to back of table_ L.C.). This is not a question of morals or of art, it's a question of love.

DINAH. Hear, hear!

LADY MARDEN (_to_ GEORGE). Isn't it that girl's bed-time yet?

OLIVIA (_to_ DINAH _and taking her hand_). We'll let her sit up a little longer if she's good.

DINAH. I will be good, Olivia (_aggressively to_ LADY MARDEN), only I thought anybody, however important a debate was, was allowed to say "Hear, hear!"

GEORGE (_coming down_ C.). Really, Olivia, I really think we could discuss this better if Mr. Strange took Dinah out for a walk. Strange, if you--er----

OLIVIA. Tell them what you have settled first, George.

LADY MARDEN. Settled? What is there to be settled? It settles itself.

GEORGE (_sadly_). That's just it.

LADY MARDEN. The marriage must be annulled--is that the word, George?

GEORGE. I presume so. (_Sits on stool_ C.)

LADY MARDEN. One's solicitor will know all about that, of course.

BRIAN. And when the marriage has been annulled, what then?

LADY MARDEN. Presumably Olivia will return to her husband.

BRIAN (_bitterly to_ LADY MARDEN). And _that's_ morality! As expounded by Bishop Landseer!

GEORGE (_angered, rising and facing_ BRIAN). I don't know what you mean by Bishop Landseer. Morality is acting in accordance with the Laws of the Land and the Laws of the Church. I am quite prepared to believe that your creed embraces neither marriage (DINAH _gives a little cry and bangs a cushion on settee angrily_) nor monogamy, but my creed is different.

BRIAN (_fiercely_). My creed includes both marriage and monogamy, and monogamy means sticking to the woman you love, as long as she wants you.

LADY MARDEN (_calmly_). You suggest that George and Olivia should go on living together, although they have never been legally married. Bless the man, what do you think the County would say?

BRIAN (_scornfully_). Does it matter?

DINAH. Well, if you really want to know, the men would say, "Gad, she's a fine woman; I don't wonder he sticks to her," and the women would say, "I can't _think_ what he sees in her to stick to her like that," and they'd both say, "After all, he may be a damn fool, but you can't deny he's a sportsman."

(LADY MARDEN _is very indignant_.)

GEORGE (_indignantly_). Was it for this sort of thing Olivia, that you insisted on having Dinah and Mr. Strange in here? To insult me in my own house?

LADY MARDEN. I can't think what young people are coming to nowadays.

OLIVIA. I think, dear, you and Brian had better go.

DINAH (_getting up_). We will go. (_ Crossing below_ OLIVIA _and putting her knee on stool and looking cheekily up into_ GEORGE's _face_.) But I'm just going to say one thing, Uncle George. Brian and I _are_ going to marry each other, and when we are married we'll stick to each other, however many of our dead husbands and wives turn up! Come on, Brian. (_ She goes up_ C. _and through window and goes out indignantly, followed by_ BRIAN R.)

(GEORGE _follows them up_.)

GEORGE. Upon my word, this is a pleasant discussion.

OLIVIA. I think the discussion is over, George. It is only a question of where I shall go, while you are bringing your--what sort of suit did you call it?

LADY MARDEN (_to_ GEORGE). Nullity suit. I suppose that _is_ the best thing?

GEORGE. It's horrible. (_ Moving down between stool and_ LADY MARDEN.) The awful publicity. That it should be happening to _us_, that's what I can't get over.

LADY MARDEN. I don't remember anything of the sort in the Marden Family before, ever.

GEORGE (_absently_). Lady Fanny.

LADY MARDEN (_recollecting_). Yes, of course; but that was two hundred years ago. The standards were different then. (_Rising and going up_ C. _to_ R.) Besides, it wasn't quite the same, anyhow.

GEORGE (_absently_). No, it wasn't quite the same.

LADY MARDEN (_R. of writing-table_). No. We shall all feel it. Terribly.

GEORGE (_his apology_). If there were any other way! Olivia, what _can_ I do? It _is_ the only way, isn't it? All that that fellow said--of course, it sounds very well--but as things are.... (_ Crossing towards_ OLIVIA.) _Is_ there anything in marriage, or isn't there? You believe that there is, don't you? You aren't one of these Socialists. Well, then, _can_ we go on living together when you're another man's wife? It isn't only what people will say, but it _is_ wrong, isn't it?.... And supposing he doesn't divorce you, are we to go on living together, unmarried, for _ever_? (LADY MARDEN _turns and listens_.) Olivia, you seem to think that I'm just thinking of the publicity--what people will say. I'm not. I'm not. That comes in any way. But I want to do what's right, what's best. I don't mean what's best for us, what makes us happiest, I mean what's

really best, what's rightest. What anybody else would do in my place.
(OLIVIA _holds out her hands lovingly towards him_.) _I_ don't know. It's so unfair. You're not my wife at all, but I want to do what's right....
(_Sits foot of table_ L.C.) Oh, Olivia, Olivia, you do understand, don't you?

(_They have both forgotten_ LADY MARDEN. OLIVIA _has never taken her eyes off him as he makes his last attempt to convince himself_.)

OLIVIA (_almost tenderly_). So very, very well, George. Oh, I understand just what you are feeling. And oh, I do so wish that you could--(_with a little sigh_)--but then it wouldn't be George, not the George I married--(_with a rueful little laugh_)--or didn't quite marry.

LADY MARDEN. I must say, I think you are both talking a little wildly.

OLIVIA (_repeating it, oh, so tenderly_). Or didn't--quite--marry.

(_She looks at him with all her heart in her eyes. She is giving him his last chance to say "Damn Telworthy; you're mine!" He rises and crosses to_ R. _He struggles desperately with himself, turns to_ OLIVIA.)

GEORGE. Olivia! Olivia! My darling!

(_She rises. He crosses to her and takes her in his arms_.)

(ANNE _enters from double doors_ R.)

ANNE. Mr. Pim is here, sir.

OLIVIA (_prompting him_). Mr. Pim, dear.

GEORGE (_emerging from the struggle with an effort_). Pim? Pim? Oh, ah, yes, of course. (_Crossing up to_ ANNE.) Mr. Pim. (_Looking up_.) Where have you put him?

OLIVIA. I want to see Mr. Pim, too, George.

LADY MARDEN (_coming down_ C. _to_ R. _of table_ L.C.). Who on earth is Mr. Pim?

OLIVIA. Show him in here, Anne. (GEORGE _comes back to_ C.)

ANNE. Yes, madam.

(_She goes out double doors_ R.)

OLIVIA. It was Mr. Pim who told us about my husband. He came across with him in the boat, and recognized him as the Telworthy he knew in Australia.

LADY MARDEN. Oh! Shall I be in the way? (_Moving down to_ R.C.)

GEORGE. No, no. It doesn't matter, does it, Olivia?

OLIVIA. Please stay.

(LADY MARDEN _sits_ R. _settee_.)

(ANNE _enters at double doors followed by_ MR. PIM.)

ANNE. Mr. Pim.

GEORGE (_pulling himself together_). Ah, Mr. Pim! Very good of you to have come.

PIM. Oh, not at all!

GEORGE. The fact is--er--(_It is too much for him; he looks despairingly at_ OLIVIA.)

OLIVIA. We're so sorry to trouble you, Mr. Pim. By the way, do you know Lady Marden?

PIM (_centre_). No, I haven't the honour.

GEORGE (_introducing_). My Aunt! Mr. Pim.

(MR. PIM _and_ LADY MARDEN _bow to each other_.)

OLIVIA. Do come and sit down, won't you? (_Pim is moving to_ L., _turns and bumps into_ GEORGE, _who is following him. She makes room for him on the sofa next to her_.) The fact is, Mr. Pim, you gave us rather a surprise this morning, and before we had time to realize what it all meant, you had gone.

PIM. A surprise, Mrs. Marden? Dear me, not an unpleasant one, I hope?

OLIVIA. Well, rather a--surprising one. (LADY MARDEN _coughs_.)

(_Pim sits to_ R. _of_ OLIVIA, _who takes his hat and places it to her_ L.)

GEORGE (_turns to_ LADY MARDEN). Olivia, allow me a moment. Mr. Pim, you mentioned a man called Telworthy this morning. My wife used to (LADY MARDEN _gives a pronounced cough_)--that is to say, I used to--that is, there are reasons--

OLIVIA. I think we had better be perfectly frank, George.

LADY MARDEN (_aggressively_). I am sixty-five years of age, Mr. Pim, and I can say that I've never had a moment's uneasiness by (_beating her knee with her hand, stick in left hand_) telling the truth.

(PIM _and_ LADY MARDEN _fix each other with a look_. PIM _then looks at_ OLIVIA _and_ GEORGE _and leans back on settee_.)

PIM (_after a desperate effort to keep up with the conversation_). Oh!... I--er--I'm afraid I am rather at sea. Have I--er--left anything unsaid in presenting my credentials to you this morning?

GEORGE _and_ OLIVIA Oh, no!

PIM. This Telworthy whom you mention--I seem to remember the name--

OLIVIA. Mr. Pim, you told us this morning of a man whom you had met on the boat, a man who had come down in the world, whom you had known in Sydney. A man called Telworthy.

PIM (_relieved_). Ah, yes, yes, of course. (_To_ OLIVIA.) I did say Telworthy, didn't I? Most curious coincidence, Lady Marden. Poor man, poor man! Let me see, it must have been ten years ago--

GEORGE. Just a moment, Mr. Pim. You're quite sure that his name was Telworthy?

PIM (_to_ GEORGE). Telworthy--Telworthy--didn't I say Telworthy? Yes, that was it--Telworthy. Poor fellow!

OLIVIA. I'm going to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Pim. I feel quite sure that I can trust you.

PIM. Oh, Mrs. Marden!

OLIVIA. This man Telworthy whom you met is my husband.

PIM. Your husband! (_He looks in mild surprise at_ GEORGE.) Your--er----

OLIVIA. My first husband. His death was announced six years ago. I had left him some years before that, but there seems no doubt from your story that he's still alive. His record--the country he comes from--above all, the very unusual name--Telworthy.

PIM. Telworthy--yes--certainly a most peculiar name. I remember saying so. Your first husband? Dear me! Dear me!

GEORGE. You understand, Mr. Pim, that all this is in absolute confidence.

PIM (_turning to_ GEORGE). Of course, of course.

OLIVIA (_pulling his arm, trying to attract his attention_). Well, since he is my husband, we naturally want to know something about him. Where is he now, for instance?

PIM (_surprised and turning to_ OLIVIA). Where is he now? But surely I told you? I told you what happened at Marseilles?

GEORGE. At Marseilles?

PIM (_to_ GEORGE). Yes, yes, poor fellow, it was most unfortunate. (_To_ LADY MARDEN. OLIVIA _again pulls his arm, trying to attract his attention_.) You must understand, Lady Marden, that although I had met the poor fellow before in Australia, I was never in any way intimate----

GEORGE (_thumping the desk_). Where is he _now_, that's what we want to know?

(MR. PIM _turns to him with a start_.)

OLIVIA. Please, Mr. Pim!

PIM (_to_ OLIVIA). Where is he now? But--but didn't I tell you of the curious fatality at Marseilles--poor fellow--the fish-bone?

ALL. Fish-bone?

PIM. Yes, yes, a herring, I understand.

OLIVIA (_becoming hysterical_). Do you mean he's dead?

PIM. Dead--of course he's dead. He's been dead----

OLIVIA (_laughing hysterically_). Oh, Mr. Pim, you--oh, what a husband to have--oh, I----(_But that is all she can say for the moment_.)

LADY MARDEN. Pull yourself together, Olivia. (_To_ PIM.) So he really is dead this time?

PIM. Oh, undoubtedly, undoubtedly. A fish-bone lodged in his throat.

(LADY MARDEN _retreats to settee_ R. _again_.)

GEORGE (_moving up_ C. _to_ L. _window, trying to realize it_). Dead! Dead!

PIM (_rising and turning to_ OLIVIA, _alarmed at her hysteria_). Oh, but, Mrs. Marden!

OLIVIA. I think you must excuse me, Mr. Pim. (_Crossing to_ C.) But a herring! There's something about a herring----

(GEORGE _comes quickly to her, very concerned_.)

(PIM _is also very concerned_.)

(_Turning to_ GEORGE.) Oh, George! (_Shaking her head in a weak state of laughter, turns to_ R. _and is about to hurry out of the room towards staircase_ R.)

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE.--_The same and furniture exactly as in_ ACT II.

(MR. PIM _is below settee_ L. _standing in same position as at the end of_ ACT II. GEORGE MARDEN _is in centre of stage and_ LADY MARDEN _is at foot of staircase. Their altitude is the same as at the end of_ ACT II, _and all are concerned about_ OLIVIA'S _hysteria_.)

GEORGE. Dead! Dead!

PIM. Oh dear! Oh dear! I'm afraid I broke the news rather hastily. The double shock of losing one husband and being restored to another--

LADY MARDEN (_coming to_ GEORGE). A dispensation of Providence, George. One can regard it in no other light. (_Moves to_ R. _of writing-table_.)

GEORGE (_coming to_ PIM). Yes! Yes! Well, I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Pim, for having come down to us this afternoon, and you understand that your news, though tardy, has been very welcome. _De Mortuis_, and so forth.

(LADY MARDEN _crosses at back of writing-table to_ L.)

PIM (_sadly repeating_). _De Mortuis--_

GEORGE (_shaking hands--anxious to get rid of him_). Well, good-bye, and again our thanks.

(_Crosses below and to_ L. _of_ PIM _and rings bell below fireplace_.)

PIM (_crossing to centre_). Not at all. I shouldn't have broken the news so hastily. (_Catches sight of_ LADY MARDEN _up_ L., _and with a profound bow_.) Good-bye, Lady Marden.

LADY MARDEN (_equally profound_). Good-bye, Mr. Pim.

PIM. I'm afraid I broke the news too hastily. (_Goes to table_ B.C. _and takes up_ GEORGE'S _cap in mistake for his hat and is moving towards double-doors when_ GEORGE, _noting this, picks up_ PIM'S _hat from_ L. _of stage where it has been left from previous_ ACT, _and crosses with it to_ PIM.)

GEORGE. Mr. Pim, excuse me, but I think this is yours.

PIM (_he takes it and looks at it closely, comparing it with the cap_). This isn't my hat at all. (_Puts_ GEORGE'S _cap down on table again_.)

No, that isn't my hat. (_Takes his own hat from_ GEORGE.) This is my hat. Good-bye! (_Shakes hands_.) Thank you so much. (_Looking at cap on table_.) Oh, no! Oh, no! (_Moves nearer to door_ R.) Telworthy... I _think_ that was the name.

(_Exit doors_ R.)

(LADY MARDEN, _annoyed at_ PIM'S _stupidity, comes down to_ L. _of_ GEORGE.)

GEORGE (_turning to_ LADY MARDEN _and with a sigh of thankfulness_). Well, this is wonderful news, Aunt Julia.

LADY MARDEN. Most providential. Well, I must be getting along now, George. Say good-bye to Olivia for me.

GEORGE (_crossing towards double-doors as if to open them_). Good-bye, Aunt Julia.

LADY MARDEN. No! No! I'll go this way--(_going up to_ L. _of writing-table_)--and get Olivia out more, George. I don't like these hysterics. (_Banging writing-table_.) You want to be firmer with her.

GEORGE. Yes! Yes! Good-bye.

LADY MARDEN (_going off up_ L.). Good-bye.

GEORGE (_back again down centre and with great thankfulness_). Dead! Dead! (_Moves down to below settee_ L.)

(OLIVIA _enters from staircase, watching him and coming quietly to_ C.)

GEORGE (_approaching her enthusiastically_). Olivia! Olivia! (_Is about to embrace her, but she restrains him_.)

OLIVIA (_drawing herself up_). Mrs. Telworthy!

GEORGE (_taken aback_). What? Olivia! I--I don't understand.

OLIVIA. Well, darling, if my husband only died at Marseilles a few days ago----

GEORGE (_scratching his head_). Yes, I see--I see. Well, we can soon put that right. (_Moving to_ L.) A registry office in London. Better go up this afternoon. We can't do these things too quickly--we can stay at an hotel.

OLIVIA (_pointedly_). You and Mrs. Telworthy! (_Moves slowly round back of settee_ L.)

(GEORGE _moves to centre_.)

GEORGE (_nonplussed_). Oh--er--yes--yes--perhaps I'd better stay at my Club--yes! It will be a bit awkward at first. (_With a sigh of relief_.) However, nobody need know, and how much better than what we feared!

(OLIVIA _comes down to below settee_ L.)

GEORGE (_advancing to embrace her_). Olivia! Olivia!

(_She repulses him and he crosses to her_ L.)

OLIVIA. Mrs. Telworthy!

GEORGE. Yes--yes, I know, but why do you keep on saying it? What's the matter with you? You're so strange to-day. You're not like the Olivia I know.

OLIVIA (_sits on settee to_ R.). Perhaps you don't know me so very well, after all.

GEORGE (_sitting--affectionately to her_ L.). Oh, that's nonsense--old girl. You're just my Olivia. Now we can get married again quietly and nobody will be any the worse.

OLIVIA. Married again! Oh, I see, you want me to marry you at a registry office to-morrow?

GEORGE. If we can arrange it by then. (_Rising and crossing below_ OLIVIA _to centre_.) I don't know how long these things take, but I should imagine there would be no difficulty.

OLIVIA. Oh, no, I think that part of it ought to be quite _easy_. But-- (_She hesitates_.)

GEORGE. But what?

OLIVIA. Well, if you want to marry me to-morrow, George, oughtn't you to propose to me first?

GEORGE (_amazed_). Propose?

OLIVIA. Yes. It is usual, isn't it, to propose to a person before you marry her? And--and we want to do the usual thing, don't we?

GEORGE (_upset_). But you--I mean we--

OLIVIA. You are George Marden, I am Olivia Telworthy, you are attracted by me and think I would make you a good wife, and you want to marry me--very well, then, naturally you propose to me first.

GEORGE (_falling into the humour of it, as he thinks, and with a hearty laugh moves to below stool_ L.C.). The baby! Did she want to be proposed to all over again?

OLIVIA (_coyly_). Well, she did rather.

GEORGE (_rather fancying himself as an actor, he adopts what he considers to be an appropriate attitude_). She shall then. Er--ah, Mrs. Telworthy, I have long admired you in silence, and the time has now come to put my admiration into words (_but apparently he finds a difficulty_)--er--er--

OLIVIA (_looking up at him quizzically and prompting him into words; repeating_). I--I--(_Looking down coyly_) Oh, Mr. Marden!

(GEORGE _roars with laughter and crosses to centre_.)

GEORGE (_returning to her_). Olivia--er--may I call you Olivia?

OLIVIA. Yes, George.

(OLIVIA _puts out her hand and_ GEORGE _notices it_.)

GEORGE. I beg your pardon! Oh, I see. (_Taking her hand in his he gives it a good slap and she winces_) Olivia, I--(_Hesitates_)

OLIVIA. I don't want to interrupt, but oughtn't you to be on your knees? It is--usual, I believe. GEORGE. Really, Olivia, you must allow me to manage my own proposal in my own way.

OLIVIA (_meekly--and resuming her coyness_). I'm sorry. Do go on.

GEORGE. Well--er--confound it, Olivia, I love you. Will you marry me?

OLIVIA. Thank you, George, I will think it over.

GEORGE (_laughing_). Silly girl. (_Pats her on the shoulder and crosses to_ R.) Well, then, to-morrow morning. No wedding cake, I'm afraid, Olivia. (_He laughs again and moves up centre_) But we'll go and have a good lunch somewhere.

OLIVIA. I will think it over, George.

GEORGE (_good-humouredly and coming down to back of settee to her_ R.). Well, give me a kiss while you're thinking.

OLIVIA. I'm afraid you mustn't kiss me until we are actually engaged.

GEORGE (_laughing uneasily, and sitting and leaning over on table_ L.C. _towards_ OLIVIA). Oh, we needn't take it as seriously as all that.

OLIVIA. But a woman must take a proposal seriously.

GEORGE (_a little alarmed at last_). What do you mean?

OLIVIA. Well, what I mean is that the whole question--(_with a sly look at_ GEORGE)--as I heard somebody say once, demands much more anxious thought than either of us has given it. These hasty marriages----

GEORGE (_rising and crossing at back of_ OLIVIA _round settee and to_ L. _of_ OLIVIA). Hasty!

OLIVIA. Well, you've only just proposed to me, and you want me to marry you to-morrow.

GEORGE. Now you're talking perfect nonsense, Olivia. You know quite well that our case is utterly different from--well--from any other.

OLIVIA. All the same, one must ask oneself questions. With a young girl like--well, with a young girl--love may well seem to be all that matters. But with a woman of my age it is different. I have to ask myself whether you can afford to support a wife.

GEORGE. You know perfectly well that I can afford to support a wife as my wife should be supported.

OLIVIA. Oh, I am glad. Then your income--you are not really worried about that at all?

GEORGE (_stiffly_). You know perfectly well what my income is. I see no reason for anxiety, in the future.

OLIVIA. Ah, very well, then we needn't think about it any more.

GEORGE. You know I can't make out what you're up to. (_Sits to her_ L. _on settee_.) Don't you want to get married--to--er--legalize this extraordinary situation in which we are placed?

OLIVIA. I must consider the whole question very carefully. I can't just jump at the very first offer I have had since my husband died. (_Rising and crossing to centre_.)

GEORGE. Oh, so I'm under consideration, eh?

OLIVIA (_moving up_ R.C.). Every suitor is.

GEORGE. Oh, very well, go on! Go on!

OLIVIA. Well then, there's your niece. You have a niece living with you. Of course Dinah is a delightful girl, but one doesn't like marrying into a household where there's another grown-up woman. But perhaps she will be getting married herself soon.

GEORGE. I see no prospect of it.

OLIVIA. It would make it so much easier, George, if she did.

GEORGE (_rising_). Is this a threat, Olivia? (_Crossing up to_ OLIVIA.) Are you telling me that if I do not allow young Strange to marry Dinah,

you will not marry me?

OLIVIA. A threat? Oh, no, George. But I was just wondering if you love me as much as Brian loves Dinah. You do love me?

GEORGE (_from his heart_). Of course I do, old girl.

OLIVIA. You're sure it's not just my pretty face that attracts you. Love which is based upon mere outward appearances cannot result in lasting happiness--as one of our thinkers has observed. (_Moving down to settee_ R.)

GEORGE. Why should you doubt my love? You can't pretend that we haven't been happy together. (OLIVIA_sits on settee_ R.) I've--(_taking a chair from_ L. _of table_ R.C. _brings it down to_ L. _of_ OLIVIA) I've been a good pal to you, eh? We--we suit each other, old girl.

OLIVIA. Do we?

GEORGE (_sitting_). Well, of course we do.

OLIVIA. I wonder. When two people of our age think of getting married, one wants to be quite sure that there is real community of ideas between them. Supposing that after we have been married some years we found ourselves getting estranged from each other upon such questions as Dinah's future, or the comparatively trivial matter like the right colour for a curtain, or the advice to be given to a friend who had innocently contracted a bigamous marriage. Think how bitterly we should regret our hasty plunge into a matrimony which was no true partnership, whether of tastes or ideas or even of consciences. (_With a sigh_) Ah me!

GEORGE (_turning to her quickly_). Unfortunately for your argument, Olivia, I can answer you out of your own mouth. You seem to have-- (_laughing_)--forgotten what you said this morning in the case of--er--young Strange.

OLIVIA (_with exaggerated reproach_). Oh, but is it quite fair, George, to drag up _what was said this morning_?

GEORGE (_enjoying his apparent success_). Ha ha! You've brought it on yourself.

OLIVIA. I?... Well, and what did I say this morning?

GEORGE. You said that it was quite enough that Strange was n gentleman and in love with Dinah for me to let them marry each other.

OLIVIA. Oh! But is that enough, George?

GEORGE (_triumphantly_). Well, you said so.

OLIVIA (_meekly_). Well, George, if you think so too, I'm quite willing to risk it.

GEORGE (_kindly, rising and putting back chair up_ R.C.). Ha ha, my dear! You see!

OLIVIA. Then you _do_ think it's enough?

GEORGE. I--er--yes, yes, I--I think so.

OLIVIA (_rising and going to him and putting her hands on his shoulders_). My darling one! How jolly! Then we can have a double wedding.

GEORGE (_astonished_). A double one!

OLIVIA. Yes, you and me, Brian and Dinah.

GEORGE (_firmly, and taking her hands from his shoulders_). Now look here, Olivia, understand once and for all, I am not to be blackmailed into giving my consent to Dinah's engagement. Neither blackmailed nor tricked. (_Crossing to_ L. _below settee_.) Our marriage has nothing whatever to do with Dinah's.

OLIVIA. No, dear, I quite understand. They may take place about the same time, but they have nothing whatever to do with each other.

GEORGE (_sits on foot of table_ L.C.). I see no prospect of Dinah's marriage taking place for many years.

OLIVIA. No, dear, that was what I said.

GEORGE (_not understanding for the moment_). You said----? I see. (_Turning and facing her_.) Now look here, Olivia, let us have this perfectly clear. You apparently insist on treating my--er--proposal as serious.

OLIVIA (_mock surprise_). But isn't it? Have you been trifling with me?

GEORGE. You know perfectly well what I mean. You treat it as an ordinary proposal for a man to a woman who have never been anything to each other before. Very well then, will you kindly tell me what you propose to do if you decide to--ah--accept me? You do not suggest that we should go on living together--unmarried?

OLIVIA (_shocked_). Of course not, George!! What would--(_pausing for additional explanation_)--the County--I mean Heaven--I mean the Law--I mean--of course not. Besides, it's so unnecessary. If I decide to accept you, of _course_ I shall marry you.

GEORGE. Quite so. And if you--ah--decide to refuse me, what will you do?

OLIVIA. Nothing.

GEORGE. Meaning by that?

OLIVIA. Just that, George. I shall stay here--just as before.

(GEORGE _rises and approaches her, about to expostulate_.)

I like this house. (_Crossing below_ GEORGE, _looking about the room to below settee_ L.) It wants a little redecorating, but I do like it, George... Yes, I shall be perfectly happy here! (_Sits on settee_.)

GEORGE. I see. You will continue to live down here--in spite of what you said just now about the--the immorality of it.

OLIVIA (_surprised_). But what is there immoral in a widow living alone in a big country house--with perhaps the niece of a dear friend of hers--staying with her to keep her company.

GEORGE (_sarcastic_). Oh, and pray what shall I be doing when you've so very kindly taken possession of my house for me?

OLIVIA. You! Oh, I can't _think_! Travelling, I expect.

GEORGE (_indignant and advancing to her_). Thank you! And suppose I refuse to be turned out of my own house?

OLIVIA. Then, seeing that we can't both be in it, it looks as though you'd have to turn me out. (_To herself_) There must be legal ways of doing these things. You'd have to consult your solicitor again.

GEORGE. Legal ways?

OLIVIA. Well, you couldn't just throw me out, could you? You'd have to get an injunction against me--

(GEORGE, _very annoyed, turns away_.)

--or prosecute me for trespass--or something. Of course I shouldn't go if I could help it, I like the house so much.... It would make an awfully unusual case, wouldn't it? The papers would be full of it.

GEORGE. The papers!

OLIVIA (_calling as paper boy_). Extra special! Widow of well-known ex-convict takes possession of J.P.'s house! Special! Special!

GEORGE (_angrily_). I've had enough of this. (_Coming to table_ L.C. _and speaking across_) Do you mean all this nonsense?

OLIVIA. Well, what I _do_ mean _is_, that I am in no hurry to go up to London and get married. I love the country just now, and--(_with a sigh_)--after this morning, I'm--rather tired of husbands.

GEORGE (_in a rage_). I've never heard so much--damned (_bangs table_) ... nonsense in my life. _I will leave you to come back to your senses._

(_He goes out, up staircase up_ R.)

(OLIVIA _rises and crosses to centre, watching_ GEORGE _off. She kisses her hands to him, then turning to_ L. _sees curtains and work-box and extending her arms in ecstasy goes to cabinet, takes them up and comes down_ L. OLIVIA _sits on settee with curtains in her lap and places the work-box to her_ L. _on settee, and as she does so_ MR. PIM _enters from up_ R. _through windows and coming to_ R. _of writing-table taps it with his umbrella to attract_ OLIVIA'S _attention. She turns and sees him. He looks nervously round at staircase_ R. _fearing the return of_ GEORGE.)

PIM (_in a whisper_). Er--may I come in, Mrs. Marden?

OLIVIA (_in surprise_). Mr. Pim!

PIM (_anxiously and again looking round at staircase_). Mr. Marden is--er--not here?

OLIVIA (_getting up_). No! Do you want to see him? I will----

PIM (_another look round at staircase and moving down centre_). No, no, no! Not for the world. There is no immediate danger of his returning, Mrs. Marden?

OLIVIA (_surprised_). No, I don't think so, Mr. Pim. (_Puts down curtains_). But... what is it? You----

PIM. I took the liberty of returning by the window in the hope of finding you alone.

OLIVIA (_sitting again_). Yes?

PIM (_still rather nervous and throwing up his arms in distress_). Mr. Marden will be so angry with me, and very rightly. Oh, I blame myself. I blame myself entirely. I don't know how I can have been so stupid. (_Sits on stool_ L.C. _very concerned_).

OLIVIA. What is it, Mr. Pim? My first husband hasn't come to life again, has he?

PIM. No! No! No! (_Looking round to_ R. _and speaking very mysteriously across table_ L.C.) The fact is--his name was Pelwittle.

OLIVIA (_at a loss_). Whose? My husband's?

PIM. Yes, yes. Henry Pelwittle, poor fellow.

OLIVIA. But _my_ husband's name was Telworthy.

PIM. No! Oh dear, no! Pelwittle. (_Firmly_) It came back to me suddenly just as I reached the gate--Henry Pelwittle, poor fellow.

OLIVIA. But really, Mr. Pim, I ought to know.

PIM. No! No! Pelwittle.

OLIVIA. But who is Pelwittle?

PIM (_in surprise at her stupidity_). The man I told you about, who met with the sad fatality at Marseilles. Henry Pelwittle.... (_With hand on chin, thinking deeply_) Or was it _Ernest_? No! _Henry_ Pelwittle, poor fellow.

OLIVIA (_indignantly_). But, Mr. Pim, you said his name was Telworthy. How could you?

PIM. Oh, I blame myself, I blame myself entirely.

OLIVIA. But how could you _think_ of a name like Telworthy if it wasn't Telworthy?

PIM (_eagerly_). Ah, ah, that is the really interesting thing about the whole matter.

OLIVIA (_reproachfully_). Yes, Mr. Pim, all your visits here to-day have been very interesting.

PIM. Oh, very interesting, very interesting, You see, Mrs. Marden, when I made my first appearance here this morning I was received by--Miss Diana, who----

OLIVIA. Dinah!

PIM. I beg your pardon?

OLIVIA. Dinah. Her name is Dinah!

PIM (_pauses_). You're quite right. Dinah--oh yes. Miss Dinah, yes. She was in--er--rather a communicative mood, and I suppose by way of passing the time she mentioned that before your marriage--to Mr. Marden you had been a Mrs.--er----

OLIVIA. Telworthy.

PIM. Telworthy, yes, of course. She also mentioned Australia. Now by some curious process of the brain--which strikes me as decidedly curious--when I was trying to recollect--the name of the poor fellow on the boat, whom you will remember I had also met in Australia, the fact that this other name was also stored in my memory, a name equally peculiar--this fact I say----

OLIVIA (_seeing that the sentence is rapidly going to pieces_). Yes, I quite understand.

PIM. I blame myself, I blame myself entirely.

OLIVIA. Oh, you mustn't do that, Mr. Pim.

PIM. Oh, but, Mrs. Marden, can you forgive me for the needless distress I have caused you to-day?

OLIVIA. Oh, you mustn't worry about that, please.

PIM. And you will tell your husband--you'll break the news to him?

OLIVIA (_amazed_). Oh, yes! I'll break the _news_ to him.

PIM (_rising and holding out his hand_). Well then, I think before he comes back I will say good-bye and--er----

OLIVIA (_rising_). Just a moment, Mr. Pim. Let us have it quite clear this time. You never knew my husband Jacob Telworthy?

PIM. No!

OLIVIA. You never met him in Australia?

PIM. No!

OLIVIA. You never saw him on the boat?

PIM. No!

OLIVIA. And nothing _whatever_ happened to him at Marseilles?_

PIM. No!

OLIVIA. Is that right?

PIM (_hesitating and thinking it out very deeply_). I think so.

OLIVIA. Very well, then, since his death was announced in Australia six years ago, he is presumably still dead?

PIM. Undoubtedly.

OLIVIA (_holding out her hand with a charming smile_). Then good-bye, Mr. Pim, and thank you so much for--for all your trouble.

PIM. Not at all, Mrs. Marden. I blame myself, I blame myself entirely.

OLIVIA. Oh! You mustn't do that.

(_Going up centre_ PIM _meets_ DINAH, _who enters from the window up L., crosses at back of writing-table and comes down R. of him_).

(DINAH is followed by BRIAN, who is on her R.).

DINAH. Hullo, there's Mr. Pim. (_To_ BRIAN.)

PIM (_nervously looking at the door in case_ MR. MARDEN _should come in_). Yes, yes I--er--

DINAH. Oh, Mr. Pim, you mustn't run away without even saying how-do-you-do! Are you staying to tea?

PIM (_looking off at staircase nervously_). I'm afraid I--

OLIVIA. Mr. Pim has to hurry away, Dinah. You mustn't keep him.

DINAH. Well, but you'll come back again?

PIM. I fear that I am only a passer-by, Miss--er--Dinah.

OLIVIA. You can take Mr. Pim as far as the gate.

PIM (_gratefully to_ OLIVIA). Thank you. (_With nervous look at staircase R., he edges towards the windows._) If you would be so kind, Miss Dinah--.

DINAH (_taking his arm_). Come along then, Mr. Pim.

BRIAN. I'll catch you up.

DINAH (_taking him up L._). I want to hear all about your first wife.

PIM. Oh, but I haven't got a first wife.

DINAH. You haven't really told me anything yet.

(_They go off up L._)

BRIAN. I'll catch you up.

(OLIVIA _resumes her work, and_ BRIAN _crosses down to foot of table L.C., and sits on it._)

BRIAN (_awkwardly_). I just wanted to say, if you don't think it cheek, that I'm--I'm on your side, if I may be and if I can help you at all, I shall be very proud of being allowed to.

OLIVIA (_looking up at him and taking his hand_). Brian, you dear, that's sweet of you. But it's quite all right now, you know.

BRIAN. What?

OLIVIA. Yes, that's what Mr. Pim came back to say. He'd made a mistake about the name--

BRIAN (_rising_). Good Lord!

OLIVIA (_smiling_). George is the only husband I have.

BRIAN (_surprised_). What? You mean that the whole thing that Pim--

OLIVIA (_repeating_). The whole thing.

BRIAN (_crossing up to window R. and shouting off to L. and with conviction_). Silly ass!

OLIVIA (_kindly_). Oh, no, no, I'm sure he didn't mean to be. (_After a pause_) Brian, do you know anything about the law?

BRIAN (_coming down_ C.). The law? I'm afraid not. I hate the law. Why? (_Sits at foot of table_ L.C.)

OLIVIA. Well, I was just wondering. Suppose that George and I had accidentally married each other a second time thinking that the first marriage wasn't quite right, and then we found the first marriage was all right--well----

BRIAN. What on earth do you mean?

OLIVIA. Well, what I mean is that there's nothing wrong in marrying the same person twice?

BRIAN (_rising and moving to centre, thinking it out_). Oh, no. A hundred times if you like, I should think.

OLIVIA. Oh!

BRIAN. After all, in France they always go through it twice, don't they? Once before the Mayor or somebody, and once in church.

OLIVIA. Of course they do! How silly of me. You know, that's a very good idea. They ought to do that more in England.

BRIAN. Well, once will be enough for Dinah and me, if you can work it. (_Anxiously_) D'you think there's any chance, Olivia?

OLIVIA (_smiling_). Every chance, dear.

BRIAN (_coming to above table_ L.C.). I say, do you really? Have you

squared him? I mean has he----

(GEORGE _is heard humming the tune of "Pop goes the weasel" off_ R.)

OLIVIA. You go and catch them up now. We'll talk about it later on.

BRIAN. Bless you. Right-o!

(_Going up_ L. _and off up_ L.)

(_As he goes out by the windows,_ GEORGE _comes in at the doors_ R. GEORGE _stands_ R.C., _and then turns to_ OLIVIA, _who is absorbed in her curtain. He walks up and down the room, fidgeting with things, waiting for her to speak. As she says nothing, he begins to talk himself, but in an obviously unconcerned way. There is a pause after each answer of hers, before he gets out his next remark_.)

GEORGE (_casually_). Good-looking fellow, Strange. What?

OLIVIA (_equally casually_). Brian, yes, isn't he? And such a nice boy.

GEORGE. Yes, yes! (_Catching sight of curtain she is sewing. Hums the tune of "Pop goes the weasel"--crossing down_ R. _to piano, plays a few notes of "Pop goes the weasel" with one finger_.) Got fifty pounds for a picture the other day, didn't he? (_Moving up stage a little_.)

OLIVIA. Ah, yes! Of course he has only just begun----

GEORGE. The critics think well of him, (_Slight pause_.) What?

(_Up C. by chair front of writing-table_.)

OLIVIA. They all say he has genius. Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about it. (_Pause_.)

(GEORGE _left of writing-table_.)

GEORGE. No, no! (_Slight pause, and he sings again_.) Of course I don't profess to know anything about painting, myself.

OLIVIA. You've never had time to take it up, dear.

GEORGE (_coming down_ L. _a little_.) No! No! Of course I know what I like. Can't say I see much in this new-fangled stuff. If a man can paint, why can't he paint like--like Rubens, or--or Reynolds, or----

OLIVIA. I suppose we all have our own styles. Brian will be finding his, directly. Of course, he's only just beginning. (_Pause_.)

GEORGE (_crossing up centre_). Yes, yes. But the critics think a lot of him, what?

OLIVIA. Oh, yes.

GEORGE. Yes! H'm! (_Pause_.) Good-looking fellow.

(_There is rather a longer silence this time._ GEORGE _coming round back of settee L. continues to hope that he is appearing casual and unconcerned--he stands looking at_ OLIVIA'S _work for a moment_.)

GEORGE (_down_ L.). Nearly finished 'em?

OLIVIA. Very nearly. (_Smiling to herself, turns away to R., pretending to look for scissors_.) Have you seen my scissors anywhere?

GEORGE (_looking round_). Scissors?

OLIVIA (_turns to_ L. _and finds them in her work-box_). It's all right, here they are----

GEORGE (_down_ L. _below chair facing_ OLIVIA). Where are you thinking of hanging 'em?

OLIVIA (_as if really wondering_). I don't quite know.... I _had_ thought of this room, but--I'm not quite sure.

GEORGE (_crossing below_ OLIVIA _to centre_). Ah! Yes! Brighten the room up a bit.

OLIVIA. Yes.

GEORGE (_walking up centre a little towards windows_). H'm, yes----They are a bit faded.

OLIVIA (_shaking out hers, and looking at them critically_). You know, sometimes I think I love them, and sometimes I'm not quite sure.

GEORGE. Best way is to hang 'em up and see how you like 'em. Always take 'em down again.

OLIVIA. Oh, that's a good idea, George.

GEORGE. Best way.

OLIVIA. Yes.... I think we might try that--(_looking round at settee and carpets, etc_.)--the only thing is--(_She hesitates_.)

GEORGE. What?

OLIVIA. Well, the carpets and the chair-covers and the cushions and things--

GEORGE. Well, what about 'em?

OLIVIA. Well, if we had new curtains--

GEORGE. You'd want a new carpet, eh?

OLIVIA (_doubtfully_). Well, _new chair-covers, anyhow._

GEORGE. H'm!... Well, why not?

OLIVIA. Oh, but--

GEORGE (_with an awkward laugh_). We're not so hard up as all that, you know.

OLIVIA (_quickly_). No, I don't suppose we are really--

GEORGE. No, no, no, yes--I mean no.

OLIVIA (_thoughtfully_). I suppose it would mean that I should have to go up to London to choose them. You know, that's rather a nuisance.

GEORGE (_extremely casual and moving towards_ OLIVIA). Oh, I don't know. We might go up together one day.

OLIVIA. Well, of course if we _were_ up--for anything else--

GEORGE (_moving away dubiously_). Yes, yes! That's what I meant.

(_There is another silence_. GEORGE _is wondering whether to come to closer quarters with the great question_.)

OLIVIA. Oh, by the way, George--

GEORGE. Yes?

OLIVIA (_innocently_). I told Brian, and of course he'll tell Dinah, that Mr. Pim had made a mistake about the name.

GEORGE (_astonished, moving towards_ OLIVIA). Mistake about the name?

OLIVIA. Yes--I told Brian that the whole thing was a mistake, I thought that was the simplest way.

GEORGE. Olivia--(_crossing below and to her_ L.)--then you mean that Brian and Dinah think that--that we have been married all the time?

OLIVIA. Yes.

GEORGE (_coming closer to her_). Olivia, does that mean that you are thinking of marrying me?

OLIVIA. At your old registry office?

GEORGE (_eagerly_). Yes!

OLIVIA. To-morrow?

GEORGE. Yes.

OLIVIA. Do you want me to very much?

GEORGE. My darling, you know I do.

OLIVIA. We should have to keep it very quiet, George.

GEORGE. Well, of course--(_sitting to her_ L.)--nobody need know. We don't want anybody to know. And now that you've put Brian and Dinah off the scent, by telling them that--(_he breaks off and says admiringly_)--that was very clever of you, Olivia. I should never have thought of that.

OLIVIA (_innocently_). George--you don't think it was _wrong_, do you?

GEORGE (_his verdict, taking her hands and patting them_). An innocent deception... perfectly harmless.

OLIVIA. Yes, dear, that was what I thought about--about--(_laughing to herself_) what I was doing.

GEORGE. Then you will come up to London to-morrow?

(_She nods_.)

And if we should see a carpet or anything else we want----

OLIVIA. Oh, George!

GEORGE (_beaming, rising and backing away to_ L. _a little_). And lunch at the Carlton, what?

OLIVIA (_nodding eagerly_). Oh!

GEORGE. And--and a bit of a honeymoon in Paris?

OLIVIA. Oh, what fun!

GEORGE (_hungrily_). Give me a kiss, old girl.

OLIVIA (_lovingly_). George!

(_She holds up her cheek to him. He kisses it, and then suddenly takes her in his arms_.)

GEORGE. Don't ever leave me, old girl.

OLIVIA (_affectionately_). Don't ever send me away, old boy.

GEORGE (_fervently_). I won't. (_Awkwardly_) I--I don't think I _should have_ really, you know. I--I----

(DINAH _enters from up_ L. _and crosses at back of writing-table and round down_ R. BRIAN _follows her_.)

DINAH (_seeing the embrace, surprised_). Oo--I say!

(GEORGE _looks and feels rather a fool_.)

GEORGE. Hallo!

(OLIVIA _sits, resumes sewing_.)

DINAH (_coming down centre and going below settee_ L., _impetuously to him_). Give me one, too, George. Brian won't mind.

GEORGE (_formally, but enjoying it_). Do you mind, Mr. Strange?

BRIAN (_a little uncomfortable_). Oh, I say, sir----

GEORGE. We'll risk it, Dinah. (_He kisses her_.)

DINAH (_triumphantly to_ BRIAN _and standing above_ GEORGE). Did you notice that one? That wasn't just an ordinary affectionate kiss. That was a special "bless you my children" one. (_To_ GEORGE.) Wasn't it?

OLIVIA. You do talk nonsense, darling.

DINAH (_crossing quickly below and to_ R. _of_ BRIAN). Well, I'm so happy now that Pim has relented about your first husband--(GEORGE _catches_ OLIVIA'S _eye and smiles; she smiles back; but they are different smiles_.)

GEORGE (_the actor_). Yes, yes, stupid fellow, Pim, what?

BRIAN. Yes. Absolute idiot, I think!

DINAH. And now that George has relented about--(_with a significant look at_ BRIAN)--_my_ first husband----

GEORGE. Here, you get on much too quickly. (_Crossing below_ OLIVIA _to_ BRIAN.) So you want to marry my Dinah, eh?

BRIAN (_with a smile_). Well, I do rather, sir.

GEORGE (_to_ BRIAN). Well, you'd better have a talk with me about it--er-- (_with a sly look at_ OLIVIA)--Brian.

BRIAN. Thank you very much, sir.

(GEORGE _goes up and_ BRIAN, _imitating his walk, accompanies him_.)

GEORGE. Well, come along then. (BRIAN _looks at his watch_.) I am going up to town after tea, so we'd better----

DINAH (_moving up to_ R. _of_ BRIAN). I say, are you going to London?

GEORGE (_with a sly look at_ OLIVIA). Yes, a little business.

DINAH (_cheekily_). Eh?

GEORGE. Never you mind, young woman. (_To_ BRIAN.) Come along, we'll stroll down and look at the pigs.

BRIAN. Right-o!

(_They are going off to_ L. _when_ OLIVIA _calls_.)

OLIVIA. George, don't go too far away; I may want you.

GEORGE. All right! I'll be out on the terrace. Give me a shout if you want me.

(GEORGE _and_ BRIAN _go off at windows up_ L.)

(DINAH _follows up_ R. _and watches them off_.)

DINAH (_watching them off_). Brian and George always discuss me in front of the pigs. So tactless of them. I say, are you going to London, too, darling? (_Coming down to table_ L.C.)

OLIVIA. To-morrow----(_Rising and shaking out curtains_.)

DINAH. What are you going to do in London?

OLIVIA. Oh, shopping and--one or two little things.

DINAH. With George?

OLIVIA. Yes. (_Crossing up centre below_ DINAH _with curtains_.)

DINAH (_sits on table_ L.C.). I say, wasn't it lovely about Pim?

OLIVIA. Lovely?

DINAH. Yes, he told me all about it. Making such a hash of things, I mean.

OLIVIA (_innocently_). Did he make a hash of things?

DINAH. Well, I mean keeping on coming like that. And if you look at it all round--well, for all he had to say, he needn't have come at all.

OLIVIA. Well, I don't think I should put it quite like that, Dinah.

DINAH (_referring to curtains_). I say, aren't they jolly?

OLIVIA. I'm so glad everybody likes them. Tell George I'm ready, dear.

DINAH. I say, is _he_ going to put them up for you?

OLIVIA. Well, I thought perhaps he could reach better.

DINAH. All right, I'll tell him. (_Crossing up_ L. _on to terrace and calling off_.) George! (_Returning to back_ L. _end of writing-table_.) Brian is just telling George about the five shillings he has in the Post Office--(_crossing up_ L. _on to terrace again and calling off_.) George!!

GEORGE (_from off_ L.). Coming!

DINAH (_playfully coming down centre, imitating a fairy's footsteps_). Slow music while the curtains go up. (_Sits at piano and plays "As I passed by your Window.")_

(_GEORGE enters from up_ L., _followed by_ BRIAN.)

GEORGE (_to_ OLIVIA). What is it, darling?

OLIVIA. I wish you'd help me to put up these curtains?

GEORGE. Of course, dear. I'd better get the library steps. (_Crosses to doors R. and exits_.)

(BRIAN _goes quickly to OLIVIA and gratefully kisses her hand, then comes down to DINAH and bows to her_.)

BRIAN. Madam! I have the honour to inform you that hence-forward you are at liberty to regard me as your affianced husband.

DINAH (_rising quickly and advancing_). Darling!

BRIAN (_waving her back_). No! No! Stay there! (_She retreats and sits at piano_.) Go on playing.

(DINAH _goes on playing and he takes out a sketch-book, sits on settee and sketches her_.)

DINAH. What is it?

(OLIVIA _comes down centre, watching them_.)

BRIAN. Portrait of Lady Strange.

(_GEORGE enters from doors_ R. _with steps and crossing up R. places them near_ R. _window_.)

OLIVIA (_she hands him the curtains and goes up L. of writing table and round back, watching_ GEORGE). Are you ready, dear?

GEORGE (_mounting the steps_). Yes, quite ready.

OLIVIA. There! (_The curtains become entangled and he nearly falls_.) Oh, take care, dear!

GEORGE (_again mounting steps_). Oh, that's all right, dear. They're a little long. (_The curtains become entangled round his head_.)

(MR. PIM _enters mysteriously from up_ L.)

(OLIVIA _is looking up at_ GEORGE.)

(PIM _touches her on the shoulder and with a start she turns to him_. DINAH _seeing him enter stops playing. OLIVIA, unwilling to attract_ GEORGE'S _attention, signals to_ DINAH _to continue playing, and, she does so_.)

PIM. Mrs. Marden! I _had_ to come back--I've just remembered his name was _Ernest_ Polwittle--not _Henry_! (_Going off up_ L.) Not Henry!

(DINAH _plays forte_.)

QUICK CURTAIN.

SCENE PLOT

Oak panelled chamber, with deep decorative frieze.

Ceiling cloth, painted with carved oak beams.

Fireplace--Large open stone fireplace decorated all over with flutings and carved stone

Doors--Heavy oak doors down R. to open off.

Windows--C. windows (French windows) opening on stage from terrace.

Stairs--Stairs up back R. with carved balustrade. Transparent

windows stained glass at top of stairway.

Back cloth--Painted garden and terrace with stone seat C.

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I

Stage cloth down--Parquette stage cloth with marble pavement piece attached at back for terrace

Persian carpet laid up and down R.

Persian carpet laid up and down L.

Settee set across down L. (Jacobean settee upholstered in tapestry).

On settee L. Two tapestry cushions.

Occasional Jacobean table to R. of settee down L.

Stool--Upholstered in rose R. of table.

Semi-grand piano, with keyboard down stage, _down_ R. below double doors.

On piano--Dinah's musical instrument.

Silk pink brocade piano cover.

Photo of Olivia in frame.

Photo of George Marden in frame.

Photo of Dinah in frame.

Photo of Brian in frame.

E.P. mirror.

Blue china bowl containing flowers.

Quantity of music.

Occasional Jacobean chair--Below piano.

Settee (small Queen Anne cane-backed) upholstered in tapestry set up and down stage against and to L. of piano.

Cushion--dark gold brocade--on settee.

Table (occasional Jacobean) above settee to L., of piano.

On table--Illustrated papers.

Rose-coloured piece of brocade.

Chair (occasional Jacobean with rose-coloured squab) L. of occasional table above settee.

Sideboard (Jacobean) up R. against back wall.

On sideboard --Metal bowl (with flowers)
Match stand.
Matches (safety).
Ash tray.
Tobacco jar filled.
George's pipe filled.
Photo in frame.
Cigarette box (with cigarettes).
Vase lamp with shade.

Arm-chair (Jacobean with rose-coloured squab)--L. of sideboard facing out of windows.

Curtains --Pair of rose-coloured corduroy curtains with tie backs for centre windows.
Single rose-coloured corduroy curtain for archway up R. hung on upstage side of arch.

Stairs --Painted canvas ataircloth.
Brass stair rods.

Occasional chair (Jacobean with rose-coloured squab)--L. of windows and against back wall.

Table (occasional Jacobean)--Up L. against back wall.
On table --Metal bowl containing pink azalea plant in pot.

Writing-table --In front and below C. windows (leather topped).
On writing-table --Specimen glass with flowers
Writing materials.
Matches in stand.
Ash tray.
Paper and pen rack.
Small bookcase.

Arm-chair (Jacobean) below writing-table C.

Large cabinet (Jacobean Court cupboard) with three cupboard doors and on short legs--up L. against L. wall above fireplace.
In cupboard --Very pronounced yellow and black curtains with webbing arranged for Olivia to stitch on rings.
Work-box for Olivia containing needles, thread, quantity of rings, scissors.
On top of cupboard --Metal bowl with palm in pot.
Pair of scissors (extra as an emergency for Brian's business).
Large glass with flowers.

Waste-paper basket --To L. of writing-table.

Fireplace (L.)--Brass dogs and antique fire tongs.

Combined brass switch and bell pushes on wall down L. below fireplace.

Brass spill-box above bell pushes on wall L. below fireplace.

Table (small Jacobean round cane topped) in angle of fireplace

and wall down L. below fireplace.

On table.--Match stand and matches (safety).

Ash tray.

Arm-chair (Jacobean with rose-coloured squab) down L. and to R.
of circular table L. facing up stage.

Pictures on walls.--Picture in gold frame on wall down R.

Picture in gold frame on wall above double doors R.

Picture in gold frame R. of R. wall at back.

Picture in gold frame L. of R. wall at back.

Picture in gold frame R. of L. back wall.

Picture in gold frame L. of L. back wall.

HAND PROPERTIES.

Off R.--Card salver and card for _Anne_.

Letter in envelope unstamped on salver.

Letter in envelope stamped for Mr. Pim.

Letter in envelope not stamped for _George Marden_.

Gentleman's visiting card (Mr. Carraway Pim) for _George Marden_.

ACT II

Same Scene and Properties.

Dinah's small guitar on piano.

Set on Terrace

3 light green canvas camp chairs.

2 green and white striped camp chairs.

Folding camp table with green baize top.

Curtains refolded and placed in cupboard Left.

Off R.

Large double handled E.P. tray.

5 coffee cups (coloured for coffee) and saucers

5 coffee spoons.

Sugar basin with sugar.

Small hunting crop for _Lady Marden_.

Thick leather gloves for _Lady Marden_.

Cigarette case for _Brian_.

ACT III

Same Set and Furniture as Act II.

Off R.--Pair of short library steps (for _George Marden_).

ELECTRIC PLOT

Chandelier (C.)--Jacobean bronze 6-light chandelier hanging centre NOT lighted.

Brackets on walls.

One on wall down L.

One each side of back wall between windows and staircase R.

One each side of back wall between windows and wall L.

All above pictures, _not lighted_.

Fire in fireplace, NOT LIGHTED.

Lengths--Length in stairway, amber and white.

Length in entrance by double door down R.

Foots--Amber and white.

Battens--Ceiling batten, amber and white.

No. 5 batten, amber and white.

Arcs--2 perch arcs o.p.)

2 perch arcs p.s.) Light amber and frost.

No. 1 o.p. flood stage down L.C.

No. 2 o.p. on settee down R.

No. 1 p.s. on settee L.

No. 2 p.s. on stool and flood C.

Flood Arcs--Two flood arcs on back cloth L. and R.

Flood arc on transparency windows above stairs R.

Focus arc through windows C., L. of windows of writing-table and doors down R. into room. Sunlight effect.

To open--All lights full up and remain for Acts I, II and III.

[ILLUSTRATION: Electric Plan "Mr. Pim Passes By"]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, MR. PIM PASSES BY ***

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