

Why Marry?

A Comedy in Three Acts by Jesse Lynch Williams

THE PEOPLE AT THE HOUSE (As You Meet Them)

JEAN, the host's younger sister, who has been  
brought up to be married and nothing else

REX, an unmarried neighbor, who has not been  
brought up to be anything but rich

LUCY, the hostess, who is trying her best to be  
"just an old-fashioned wife" in a new-fashioned  
home,

UNCLE EVERETT, a Judge, who belongs to the  
older generation and yet understands the new--  
and believes in divorce,

COUSIN THEODORE, a clergyman and yet a  
human being, who believes in everything--  
except divorce,

JOHN, who owns the house and almost every one  
in it--and does not believe in divorce,

HELEN, the host's other sister, whom every one  
wants to marry, but who doesn't want to marry  
any one,

ERNEST, a scientist, who believes in neither  
divorce nor marriage but makes a great  
discovery,

THE BUTLER,

THE FOOTMAN,

ACT I

"And So They Were Married"

Up from the fragrant garden comes a girl,  
running. She takes the broad terrace steps two

at a stride, laughing, breathless, fleet as a fawn, sweet as a rose. She is hotly pursued by a boy, handsome, ardent, attractively selfish, and just now blindly determined to catch the pretty creature before she gains the protecting shelter of home. She is determined to let him but not to let him know it. There, she might have darted in through the open door, but it is such a cold, formal entrance; she pretends to be exhausted, dodges behind a stone tea-table, and, turning, faces him, each panting and laughing excitedly; she alluring and defiant, he merry and dominant.

She is twenty-five and he is a year or two older, but they are both children; in other words, unmarried.

REX: Think I'll let you say that to me?

JEAN: [making a face at him] Think I'm afraid of you!

REX: Take it back, I tell you.

JEAN: I won't.

REX: I'll make you.

JEAN: [with a dance step] Think so, do you?

REX: I warn you.

JEAN: Booh-woo!

[He makes a feint to the right, then dashes to the left and catches her.

REX: [triumphantly] Now!... You would, would you?

JEAN: [struggling] Let me go.

REX: I couldn't think of it.

JEAN: [seizes his hands to free herself--can't ] You're so strong--it isn't fair.

REX: You're so sweet--it isn't fair.

[Smiling down at her struggles, rejoicing in his

strength, her weakness, he gently draws her near.

JEAN: [knows what is coming No, Rex.

REX: Yes.

JEAN: You mustn't.

REX: But I will.

[He laughs and kisses her lightly on the cheek. Therefore she struggles furiously. Therefore he does it again. And again. Suddenly he enfolds her completely and kisses her passionately--cheeks, mouth, eyes--until she gasps in alarm. Laughter has gone from them now.

JEAN: Oh, please!... some one will come.

REX: [with the intoxication of such moments] I don't care who comes--I love you.

JEAN: No ... let me go.

REX: Not till you kiss me, Jean. [JEAN hesitates, brushes his cheek lightly with her lips, and in pretty confusion tries to escape.] Not till you say you love me, Jean. [Eyes hidden in his coat, she bobs her head. He laughs and loves it.] Say it!

JEAN: I--er--do.

REX: Do what?... Say it!...

[She cannot. He swings her about, bringing her face close to his.

JEAN: I love you, Rex. Are you sure you love me?

REX: Am I sure! You irresistible little--

[Begins to kiss her. Masculine triumph.

JEAN: And want to marry me, Rex?

REX: [stops--startled--had not thought of that] Why--er--of course. What did you suppose!

[Drops his eyes, sobered.

JEAN: [feminine triumph] And me "a penniless orphaning"?

REX: [fascinated by the way she says it, he laughs.  
Then, his honor touched] Why, what kind of a man do  
you take me for!

[And wants her lips again.

JEAN: [giving herself to him, head sinks upon his  
shoulder] Then, oh, Rex, love me and be nice to me  
and--and take me away from all this!

[She covers her face with her hands and sobs.  
He pats her tenderly, with a manly look on his  
face. LUCY comes up from the garden. She is  
dressed in white with a garden hat, a garden  
basket filled with flowers in one hand, long  
scissors in the other. She is JOHN'S wife, the  
mistress of the house, sister-in-law to JEAN;  
conspicuously a "sweet" woman, affectedly so,  
a contrast with JEAN'S more modern, less  
delicate charm. JEAN is frank and brave,  
LUCY indirect and timid, pretty but fading,  
forty but fighting it.

JEAN: [laughing] It's all right, Lucy--we're engaged!

LUCY: Well, I should hope so!

[Shoots a look at JEAN, "So?"

REX: [recovering himself] I have often tried to thank  
you and good old John for letting me come over here  
so much, but now! How can I ever thank you? See-  
what-I-mean?

LUCY: I'll tell you how. Behave yourself after you are  
married to John's little sister.

JEAN: Rex, have you had a fearful past? How  
fascinating!

REX: I'm going to have a glorious future, all right.

JEAN: Not unless you do as I tell you. Going to obey  
me, Rex?

REX: You bet I am.

JEAN: Then begin now. Go!... Get out! [She pushes REX, laughing and protesting, toward the garden.] I want to tell Lucy how nice you are. Run along over to the golf club, and by and by--if you are a good boy--you can take me out in your new car. [REX kisses the hand on his arm and leaves, laughing.] My dear, he has five cars! Thank you so much.

[Alone, they throw off the mask worn before men.]

LUCY: Now, deary, tell me all about it. How did it happen?

JEAN: Oh, I simply followed your advice.

LUCY: Picked a quarrel with him?

JEAN: [laughing] Yes. I pretended to believe in woman suffrage!

LUCY: Good! They hate that.

JEAN: I told him all men were bullying brutes!

LUCY: They are! And then you ran away?

JEAN: Of course.

LUCY: And he after you?

JEAN: Of course.

LUCY: And you let him catch you?

JEAN: Of cour--well ... he caught me.

[They both laugh.]

LUCY: I can guess the rest.

JEAN: Why, it didn't take five minutes.

LUCY: And now it's to last through all eternity.... Isn't love wonderful?

JEAN: Um-hum. Wonderful.

[They begin to cull out the flowers.]

LUCY: But you do love him, dear, don't you?

JEAN: [arranging flowers] I did then. I don't now. Why is that, Lucy?

LUCY: Oh, but you will learn to love him. [Jean shrugs,

drops flowers, and turns away.] Now, now! no worrying--it brings wrinkles! [Patting Jean's shoulder.] Rex is just the sort to give the woman he adores everything in the world.

JEAN: [wriggling out of LUCY'S embrace] I am not the woman he adores.

LUCY: Why, Jean! He's engaged to you.

JEAN: But he's in love with my sister. You know that as well as I do.

LUCY: [uncomfortably] Oh, well, he was once, but not now. Men admire these independent women, but they don't marry them. Nobody wants to marry a sexless freak with a scientific degree.

JEAN: Oh, what's the use, Lucy? He's still wild about Helen, and she still laughs at him. So you and John have trotted out the little sister. Why not be honest about it.

LUCY: Well, I may be old-fashioned, but I don't think it's nice to talk this way when you're just engaged.

JEAN: Here comes your "sexless freak"--not with a degree, either.

LUCY: [following JEAN'S gaze] With a man!

JEAN: [smiling] With my man.

[HELEN, with REX bending toward her eagerly, appears. She is a beautiful woman of twenty-nine, tall, strong, glorious--plenty of old-fashioned charm, despite her new-fashioned ideas. She is dressed in a tennis costume and is swinging a racquet.

REX: But they told me you were going to stay abroad all winter.

HELEN: My work, Rex--I had to get back to work.

REX: Work!... You are too good to work.

JEAN: [amused, not jealous] Is this your high-powered

car, Rex? Have you learned to run it yet?

REX: [startled] But ... well ... you see, I met Helen on the way. See-what-I-mean?

JEAN: [laughing] Oh, we see.

REX: But I hadn't seen her for so long. I thought--

[Looks from HELEN to JEAN] ... wait, I'll get the car.  
[He hurries off.]

LUCY: [to JEAN] Why couldn't she have stayed abroad!

JEAN: Helen, don't talk about your work before Lucy-- it shocks her.

HELEN: Oh, very well; make it my 'career'!

JEAN: [arm around HELEN] Sssh!--that's worse.

LUCY: Helen, dear, I deem it my duty to tell you that you are being talked about.

HELEN: Lucy, dear, do you always find your true happiness in duty?

LUCY: Well, if you think you are going back to that horrid place again ... after what happened that night? John won't hear of it.

HELEN: If the Baker Institute of Medical Experiment is not a respectable place you should make John resign as trustee.

[She laughs it off.]

LUCY: John is trustee of--oh, nearly everything. That makes it all the worse. It isn't as if you had to work.

HELEN: Oh, but John is so rich now, his credit can stand it. And you oughtn't to mind! Why, some of our most fashionable families now contain freaks like me. It's becoming quite smart, just as in former days one of the sons would go into the Church or the navy.

LUCY: Well, of course, I am old-fashioned, but going down-town every day with the men,--it seems so unwomanly.

HELEN: But wasn't I womanly for years? Instead of going down-town and working with highbrows, I stayed up-town and played with lowbrows--until I was bored to death.

LUCY: [sighs] Yes, that's what comes of going to college, leaving the home, getting these new ideas. All the same, Helen, the men, really nice men, don't like it.

HELEN: Well, you see, I don't like really nice men, so that makes it agreeable all around.

LUCY: If it were only art or music or something feminine, but that awful laboratory! How can a lady poison poor, innocent little monkeys?

HELEN: If I were a lady I'd dine with monkeys.... Do you know what the word means, Lucy? In Anglo-Saxon times "lady" meant "one who gives loaves"; now, one who takes a loaf.

LUCY: Very clever, my dear, but some day you'll be sorry. No man, Helen, likes a woman to have independent views.

JEAN: Helen can afford to have independent views; she has an independent income--she earns it.

LUCY: Independent income! Her salary wouldn't pay for your hats.

JEAN: All the same, I wish I had gone to college; I wish I had learned a profession.

LUCY: What have these New Women accomplished? Just one thing: they are destroying chivalry!

HELEN: Not entirely, Lucy, not entirely. For instance, I am the best assistant Ernest Hamilton has, but the worst paid; the others are all men. Hurray for chivalry!

LUCY: Well, I'm just an old-fashioned wife. Woman's sphere is the home. My husband says so.

HELEN: But suppose you haven't any husband! What can a spinster do in the home?



LUCY: Stay in it--till she gets one! That's what the old-fashioned spinster used to do.

HELEN: The old-fashioned spinster used to spin.

LUCY: At any rate, the old-fashioned spinster did not stay out of her home all night and get herself compromised, talked about, sent abroad! Or, if she did, she knew enough to remain abroad until the gossip blew over.

[Lucy turns to leave.

HELEN: [mischievously] Ah, that wonderful night!

[LUCY turns back, amazed.] The night we discovered the Hamilton antitoxin, the night that made the Baker Institute famous! And, just think, I had a hand in it, Lucy, a hand in the unwomanly work of saving children's lives! But, of course, an old-fashioned spinster would have blushed and said: "Excuse me, Doctor Hamilton, but we must now let a year's work go to waste because you are a man and I am a woman, and it's dark outdoors!" ... That's the way to preserve true chivalry.

LUCY: You think we can't see through all this?

Science--fiddlesticks! The good-looking young scientist--that's why you couldn't stay abroad. We see it, John sees it, and now every one will see it. Then how will you feel?

HELEN: Ernest is rather good-looking, isn't he?

LUCY: Do you think your brother will let you marry a mere scientist!... Oh, well, Doctor Hamilton is in love with his work--fortunately.... Besides, he's a thoroughbred; he wouldn't even look at a girl who throws herself at his head.

HELEN: So I needn't try any longer? Too bad.

LUCY: [losing her temper and going] Oh, you New Women are quite superior, aren't you?... Thank

heavens, little Jean didn't elbow her way into men's affairs; she had no unwomanly ambitions for a career! But she is engaged to Rex Baker!

HELEN: Jean, is this true?

LUCY: [triumphantly] Marriage is woman's only true career.

HELEN: Jean! You can't, you won't, you mustn't marry Rex!

LUCY: [flouncing out] "She who will not when she may," my dear!

JEAN: [avoiding HELEN'S eyes Lucy hears John coming]--he'd take her head off if she weren't there to meet him. [HELEN only looks at her.] He bullies and browbeats her worse than ever. I can't stand it here much longer. It's getting on my nerves.

HELEN: Jean! You care for Rex no more than I do.

JEAN: [still evasive] John's bringing out Uncle Everett and Cousin Theodore. My dear, the whole family is up in the air about you.

HELEN: Oh, I can take care of myself, but you!... Jean, you're not the sort to marry Rex or any other man, unless you simply can't live without him.

JEAN: [after a little pause] Well ... how can I live without him--without some man? You can support yourself. I can't.

HELEN: But you wouldn't live on a man you didn't really love!

JEAN: Why not? Lucy does; most wives live on men they don't really love. To stop doing so and get divorced is wrong, you know.

HELEN: Jean, Jean, poor little Jean!

JEAN: Well, I'd rather have domestic unhappiness of my own than watch other people's all my life.

HELEN: I don't like to hurt you, dear, but--[Takes

JEAN'S face and raises it.] How about that nice boy at the Harvard Law School?

JEAN: Don't! [Controls herself, then, in a low voice]

Bob is still at the Law School, Helen.

HELEN: Can't you wait, dear?

JEAN: He never asked me to, Helen.

HELEN: He would, if you let him.

JEAN: It wouldn't be fair. It takes so long to get started.

Everything costs so much. Why, nowadays, men in the professions, unless they have private means, can't marry until nearly forty. When Bob is forty I'll be forty, Helen.

HELEN: Ah, but when a girl really cares!

JEAN: Helen, do you know?

HELEN: Never mind about me--you!

JEAN: Oh, we'll get over it, I suppose.... People do!

Some day, perhaps, he'll smile and say: "Just think, I once loved that fat old thing!" [Suddenly changes to sobbing.] Helen! when Rex caught me and kissed me I shut my eyes and tried to think it was Bob.

HELEN: [takes JEAN in her arms] You can't keep on thinking so, dear.

JEAN: But that isn't the worst! When he held me fast and I couldn't get away, I began ... to forget Bob ... to forget everything ... [Breaks off, overcome with shame.] But not now, not now! It's not the same thing at all. [Buries face in HELEN'S breast and sobs it out.] Oh, I feel like the devil, dear.... And all this time he doesn't really want me--he wants you, you! I trapped him into it; I trapped him!

HELEN: And I know Rex--he's a good sport; he'll stick to it, if you do, dear--only you won't! You've caught him by playing on his worst--don't hold him by playing on his best!

JEAN: But what shall I do? I'm nearly twenty-six. I've got to escape from home in some way.

HELEN: But what a way!

[REX returns.

REX: Ready, Jean? [To HELEN.] Lucy and John and your Cousin Theodore are in there having a fine, old-fashioned family fight with the judge.

HELEN: With Uncle Everett? What about?

REX: They shut up when they saw me. All I heard was the parson--"Marriage is a social institution." Grand old row, though. [A BUTLER and FOOTMAN appear, wheeling a tea-wagon.] Looks as if they were coming out here.

HELEN: Then I am going in. [Detaining JEAN.] You will follow my advice?

JEAN: [apart to HELEN] Oh, I don't know. Soon or late I must follow the only profession I have learned.

[JEAN leaves with REX. HELEN watches them, sighs, and goes in. The SERVANTS arrange the tea-table and go into the house. LUCY comes out, followed by her husband, JOHN, and the JUDGE, who is UNCLE EVERETT, and COUSIN THEODORE. JOHN, the masterful type of successful American business man; well set up, close-cropped mustache, inclined to baldness; keen eye, vibrant voice, quick movements, quick decisions, quick temper. UNCLE EVERETT is a genial satirist with a cynical tolerance of the ways of the world, which he understands, laughs at, and rather likes. COUSIN THEODORE, a care-worn rector, who, though he buttons his collar behind, likes those who don't; a noble soul, self-sacrificing and

sanctified, but he does not obtrude his profession upon others--never talks shop unless asked to do so, and prides himself upon not being a bigot. They are continuing an earnest discussion, with the intimate manner of friendly members of the same family. JOHN, LUCY, and THEODORE deeply concerned; UNCLE EVERETT detached and amused.

THEODORE: But, Uncle Everett, hasn't Aunt Julia always been a good wife to you?

JUDGE: Quite so, quite so, a good wife, Theodore, a good wife.

LUCY: And a devoted mother to your children, Uncle Everett?

JUDGE: Devoted, Lucy, devoted.

JOHN: She has always obeyed you, Uncle Everett.

JUDGE: Yes, John--a true, old-fashioned woman.

THEODORE: She has been a great help to me in the parish work, Uncle Everett.

JUDGE: An earnest worker in the vineyard, Theodore--in fact, I might say, a model female.

ALL: Then why, why do you want a divorce?

JUDGE: Because, damn it, I don't like her!

LUCY: But think of poor Aunt Julia!

JUDGE: But, damn it, she doesn't like me.

THEODORE: [wagging head sadly] Ah, yes, I suppose there has been fault on both sides.

JUDGE: Not at all! No fault on either side.... Both patterns of Christian fortitude to the end! We still are. Just listen to this telegram.

LUCY: [puzzled] From Aunt Julia?

JUDGE: Yes from Aunt Julia in Reno. Not used to travelling without me; knew I'd worry. Thoughtful of her, wasn't it? [Puts on glasses.] A night letter. Much

cheaper; your Aunt Julia was always a frugal wife. Besides, she never could keep within ten words. [Reads.] "Arrived safely. Charming rooms with plenty of air and sunlight. Our case docketed for March 15th. Wish you were here to see the women in Divorcee Row--overdressed and underbred." Rather neat, eh? "Overdressed and underbred." "I should love to hear your comments on the various types." Now, isn't that sweet of her? Well, you know, I always could make her laugh--except when I made her cry. "Write soon. With love. Julia." Now [folds telegram], isn't that a nice message? From a wife suing for divorce? You happily married people couldn't beat that.

[Pats telegram and pockets it tenderly.]

JOHN: [like a practical business man] But if there's no other woman, no other man--what's it all about?

JUDGE: She likes her beefsteak well done; I like mine underdone. She likes one window open--about so much [indicates four inches]; I like all the windows open wide! She likes to stay at home; I like to travel. She loves the opera and hates the theatre; I love the theatre and hate the opera.

THEODORE: Stop! aren't you willing to make a few little sacrifices for each other? Haven't you character enough for that?

JUDGE: We've been making sacrifices for twenty-five years, a quarter of a century! Character enough to last us now.... Why, I remember the first dinner we had together after we were pronounced man and wife, with a full choral service and a great many expensive flowers--quite a smart wedding, Lucy, for those simple days. "Darling," I asked my blushing bride, "do you like tutti-frutti ice-cream?" "I adore it, dearest," she murmured. I hated it, but nobly sacrificed myself and

gave her tutti-frutti and gained character every evening of our honeymoon! Then when we got back and began our "new life" together in our "little home," my darling gave me tutti-frutti and indigestion once a week until I nearly died!

LUCY: But why didn't you tell her?

JUDGE: I did; I did. Got chronic dyspepsia and struck!

"You may adore this stuff, darling," I said, "but I hate it." "So do I, dearest," says she. "Then why in thunder have you had it all these years, sweetheart?" "For your sake, beloved!" And that tells the whole story of our married life. We have nothing in common but a love of divorce and a mutual abhorrence of tutti-frutti. "Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one!" It has been the dream of our lives to get apart, and each has nobly refrained for the other's sake. And all in vain!

JOHN: Bah! All a cloak to hide his real motive. And he knows it!

JUDGE: [after a painful pause] I may as well confess.

[Looks around to see if overheard. Whispers.] For over twenty years I--I have broken my marriage vow!

[LUCY drops her eyes. THEODORE aghast. JOHN wags head.] So has your Aunt Julia!

THEODORE: No! not that!

JUDGE: Well, we solemnly promised to love each other until death did us part. We have broken that sacred vow! I don't love her; she doesn't love me--not in the least!

JOHN: Rot! A matured, middle-aged man, a distinguished member of the bar--break up his home for that? Damned rot!

JUDGE: Right again, John. That's not why I'm breaking up my home. I prefer my club. What does the modern

home amount to? Merely a place to leave your wife.  
LUCY: Of course, it doesn't matter about the poor little wife left at home.

JUDGE: Wrong, Lucy, it does matter. That's why I stayed at home and was bored to death with her prattle about clothes and the opera, instead of dining at the club with my intellectual equals, picking up business there, getting rich like John, supplying her with more clothes and a whole box at the opera, like yours, Lucy.

LUCY: [shoots a glance at her husband] Oh, that's the way you men always talk. It never occurs to you that business, business, business is just as much of a bore to us!

JUDGE: Wrong again! It did occur to me--hence the divorce! She couldn't stand seeing me bored; I couldn't stand seeing her bored. Once we could deceive each other; but now--too well acquainted; our happy home--a hollow mockery!

THEODORE: You ought to be ashamed! I love my home!

JOHN: So do I.

[He glances sternly at LUCY.]

LUCY: [nervously] So do I.

JUDGE: All right. Stick to it, if you love it. Only, don't claim credit for doing what you enjoy. I stuck to my home for a quarter of a century and disliked it the whole time. At last I'm free to say so. Just think of it, Lucy, free to utter those things about marriage we all know are true but don't dare say! Free to be honest, John! No longer a hypocrite, no longer a liar! A soul set free, Theodore--two souls, in fact. "Two souls with but a single thought----"

THEODORE: Stop! You have children to consider, not merely your own selfish happiness!



LUCY: Yes, think of Tom and little Julia!

JUDGE: We did ... for a quarter of a century--sacrificed everything to them, even our self-respect; but now--what's the use? We are childless now. Tom and Julia have both left us for "little homes" of their own to love.

THEODORE: Ah, but don't you want them to have the old home to come back to?

JUDGE: "No place like home" for children, eh? You're right--can't have too much of it. Most children only have one home. Ours will have two! When they get bored with one they can try the other.

THEODORE: But, seriously, Uncle Everett--"Whom God hath joined together!"

LUCY: [clasping JOHN'S arm] Yes, Uncle Everett, marriages are made in heaven.

JUDGE: I see; quite so; but your Aunt Julia and I were joined together by a pink parasol made in Paris.

JOHN: What rot! Stop your fooling and speak the truth, man.

JUDGE: Just what I'm doing--that's why you think I'm fooling. A very pretty parasol--but it wasn't made in heaven. You see, God made poor, dear Julia pale, but on that fatal day, twenty-five years ago, the pink parasol, not God, made her rosy and irresistible. I did the rest--with the aid of a clergyman, whom I tipped even more liberally than the waiter who served us tutti-frutti. Blame me for it, blame her, the parasol, the parson, but do not, my dear Theodore, blame the Deity for our own mistakes. It's so blasphemous.

[A pause. LUCY takes place at the tea-table to serve tea.]

LUCY: And to think we invited you, of all people, here to-day of all days! [To JOHN.] We mustn't let Rex know. The Bakers don't believe in divorce.

JOHN: What's this? You don't mean that Jean----?

LUCY: Yes! Just in time--before he knew Helen was back.

JOHN: [jumps up] She's landed him! She's landed him! We're marrying into the Baker family! The Baker family! [Shaking hands right and left.] Why, she'll have more money than any of us!... Well, well! We'll all have to stand around before little Jean now!... My, my! Lucy, you're a wonder! Those pearls--I'll buy them; they're yours! Hurray for Lucy!

[Kisses LUCY.

LUCY: [feeling her importance] Now, if I could only get Helen out of this awful mess and safely married to some nice man!

JUDGE: [sipping his tea] Meaning one having money?

THEODORE: The Hamiltons are an older family than the Bakers, Lucy, older than our own.

JUDGE: Meaning they once had money.

JOHN: [still pacing to and fro] Waste a beauty on a bacteriologist? A crime!

THEODORE: See here, John, Ernest Hamilton is the biggest thing you've got in the Baker Institute! One of the loveliest fellows in the world, too, and if you expect me--why did you ask us here, anyway?

JUDGE: Far as I can make out, we're here to help one of John's sisters marry a man she doesn't love and prevent the other from marrying the man she does.

JOHN: Oh, look here: I've nothing against young Hamilton.... I like him--proud of all he's done for the institute. Why, Mr. Baker is tickled to death about the Hamilton antitoxin. But, Theodore, this is a practical world. Your scientific friend gets just two thousand dollars a year!... Lucy, send for Helen.

[LUCY goes obediently.

JUDGE: Well, why not give the young man a raise?

JOHN: Oh, that's not a bad salary for scientists, college professors, and that sort of thing. Why, even the head of the institute himself gets less than the superintendent of my mills. No future in science.

JUDGE: Perfectly practical, Theodore. The superintendent of John's mills saves the company thousands of dollars. These bacteriologists merely save the nation thousands of babies. All our laws, written and unwritten, value private property above human life. I'm a distinguished jurist and I always render my decisions accordingly. I'd be reversed by the United States Supreme Court if I didn't. We're all rewarded in inverse ratio to our usefulness to society, Theodore. That's why "practical men" think changes are "dangerous."

JOHN: Muck-raker!

JUDGE: It's all on a sliding scale, John. For keeping up the cost of living you and old man Baker get ... [Stretches arms out full length.] Heaven only knows how much. For saving the Constitution I get ... a good deal. [Hands three feet apart.] For saving in wages and operating expenses your superintendent gets so much. [Hands two feet apart.] For saving human life Ernest Hamilton gets that. [Hands six inches apart.] For saving immortal souls Theodore gets--[Holds up two forefingers an inch apart.] Now, if any one came along and saved the world----

THEODORE: [interrupts ] They crucified Him.

JOHN: Muck-raker, muck-raker.

LUCY: [returning] Tried my best, John, but Helen says she prefers to talk with you alone some time.

JOHN: [furious] She "prefers"? See here! Am I master in my own house or not?

JUDGE: But Helen is a guest in it now. No longer under your control, John. She's the New Woman.

THEODORE: John, you can't stop that girl's marrying Ernest, if she wants to; he's head over heels in love with her.

LUCY: What! We thought he was in love with his work!

THEODORE: He thinks there's no hope for him, poor boy.

LUCY: [to JOHN] And she is mad about him!

JOHN: [to LUCY] And he is on the way out here now!

THEODORE: What! He's coming to see her?

JOHN: No, no, thinks she's still in Paris--so she was when I invited him, damn it--but something had to be done and done delicately. That's why I invited you two.

JUDGE: [bursts out laughing] Beautiful! These lovers haven't met for a month, and to-night there's a moon!

THEODORE: [also laughs] You may as well give in, John. It's the simplest solution.

LUCY: [timidly] Yes, John, she's nearly thirty, and think how she treats all the nice men.

JOHN: Who's doing this? You go tell Helen ... that her Uncle Everett wants to see her!

[Lucy shrugs, starts reluctantly, and lingers listening.

THEODORE: Now, uncle, you have more influence over her than any of us--don't let her know about ... Aunt Julia. Helen thinks the world of you.

JUDGE: Of course not, never let the rising generation suspect the truth about marriage--if you want 'em to marry.

THEODORE: There are other truths than unpleasant truths, Uncle Everett, other marriages than unhappy marriages.

JUDGE: Want me to tell her the truth about your marriage?

LUCY: [at the door] Why uncle! Even you must admit that Theodore and Mary are happy.

[JOHN is too much surprised to notice LUCY'S presence.

JUDGE: Happy? What's that got to do with it? Marriage is a social institution. Theodore said so.... Every time a boy kisses a girl she should first inquire: "A sacrifice for society?" And if he says, "I want to gain character, sweetheart," then--"Darling, do your duty!" and he'll do it.

LUCY: Well, Theodore has certainly done his duty by society--six children!

JUDGE: Then society hasn't done its duty by Theodore--only one salary!

JOHN: The more credit to him! He and Mary have sacrificed everything to their children and the Church--even health!

THEODORE: We don't need your pity! We don't want your praise! Poverty, suffering, even separation, have only drawn us closer together. We love each other through it all! Why, in the last letter the doctor let her write she said, she said--[Suddenly overcome with emotion, turns abruptly.] If you'll excuse me, Lucy ... Sanitarium ... the telephone.

[THEODORE goes into the house.

JUDGE: Not praise or pity but something more substantial and, by George, I'll get it for them!

[Turns to JOHN, who interrupts.

JOHN: See the example he sets to society--I honor him for it.

JUDGE: Fine! but that doesn't seem to restore Mary's radiant health, Theodore's brilliant youth.

LUCY: Ah, but they have their children--think how they adore those beautiful children!

JUDGE: No, don't think how they adore them, think how they rear those beautiful children--in the streets; one little daughter dead from contagion; one son going to the devil from other things picked up in the street! If marriage is a social institution, look at it socially. Why, a marriage like mine is worth a dozen like theirs--to Society. Look at my well-launched children; look at my useful career, as a jackal to Big Business; look at my now perfectly contented spouse!

LUCY: But if you are divorced!

JUDGE: Is the object of marriage merely to stay married?

LUCY: But character, think of the character they have gained.

JUDGE: Oh, is it to gain character at the expense of helpless offspring? Society doesn't gain by that--it loses, Lucy, it loses.... But simply because, God bless 'em, "they love each other through it all," you sentimental standpatters believe in lying about it, do you?

JOHN: [bored, whips out pocket check-book and fountain pen] Oh, talk, talk, talk! Money talks for me.... But they're both so confoundedly proud!

JUDGE: Go on, write that check! [JOHN writes.] They must sacrifice their pride, John. Nothing else left to sacrifice, I'm afraid.

JOHN: Well, you get this to them somehow.

[Hands check to JUDGE.]

JUDGE: Aha! Talk did it.... Five thousand? Generous John!

JOHN: [impatiently] Never mind about me. That problem is all settled; now about Helen.... Lucy! I

thought I told you----

[LUCY, in a guilty hurry, escapes into the house.

JUDGE: John, charity never settles problems; it perpetuates them. You can't cure social defects by individual treatment.

JOHN: [more impatiently] Does talk settle anything?

JUDGE: Everything. We may even settle the marriage problem if we talk honestly. [THEODORE returns from telephoning to the sanitarium.] Theodore, it's all right! John honestly believes in setting an example to society! Crazy to have his sisters go and do likewise!

THEODORE: Splendid, John! I knew you'd see it--an ideal match.

JUDGE: [overriding JOHN] Right, Theodore, ideal. This scientific suitor will shower everything upon her. John honors and admires: A host of servants--I mean sacrifices; carriages and motors--I mean character and morals; just what her brother advocates in Sunday-school--for others. An ideal marriage.

JOHN: [hands in pockets] You think you're awfully funny, don't you? Humph! I do more for the Church, for education, art, science than all the rest of the family combined. Incidentally, I'm not divorced.... But this is a practical world, Theodore, I've got to protect my own.

LUCY: [returning] Helen will be here in a minute.

JOHN: [suddenly getting an idea] Ah! I have it! I know how to keep them apart!

THEODORE: Be careful, John--these two love each other.

JUDGE: Yes, young people still fall in love. Whether we make it hard or easy for them--they will do it. But, mark my words, unless we reform marriage, there is

going to be a sympathetic strike against it--as there is already against having children. Instead of making it harder to get apart, we've got to make it easier to stay together. Otherwise the ancient bluff will soon be called!

LUCY: Sssh! Here she comes.

THEODORE: Please don't talk this way before her.

JUDGE: All right, I'm not divorced yet,... still in the conspiracy of silence.

[HELEN appears at the door. A sudden silence.

HELEN: [kissing THEODORE and JUDGE affectionately] I'm so sorry to hear about dear Mary. [To JUDGE.] But why didn't Aunt Julia come? Is she ill, too?

[Slight panic in the family party.

JUDGE: She's gone to Re-Re-Rio Janeiro--I mean to Santa Barbara--wants a complete change--The Rest Cure. [To THEODORE apart.] Lie number one.

[Another silence. LUCY makes tea for HELEN.

HELEN: [taking the cup] Well, go on!

THEODORE: Go on with what?

HELEN: [stirring tea] Your discussion of marriage.

LUCY: How did you know?

HELEN: Oh, it's in the air. Everybody's talking about it nowadays.

[She sips tea, and the others look conscious.

THEODORE: My dear, marriage is woman's only true career.

HELEN: [raising her shield of flippancy] So Lucy tells me, Cousin Theodore. But a woman cannot pursue her career, she must be pursued by it; otherwise she is unwomanly.



JUDGE: Ahem. As we passed through the library a while ago, I think I saw your little sister being pursued by her career.

HELEN: Yes, uncle, but Jean is a true woman. I'm only a New Woman.

JUDGE: All the same, you'll be an old woman some day--if you don't watch out.

HELEN: Ah, yes, my life's a failure. I haven't trapped a man into a contract to support me.

LUCY: [picks up knitting bag and does her best to look like "just an old-fashioned wife"] You ought to be ashamed! Making marriage so mercenary. Helen, dear, haven't you New Women any sentiment?

HELEN: Enough sentiment not to make a mercenary marriage, Lucy, dear.

JUDGE: Ahem! And what kind of a marriage do you expect to make?

HELEN: Not any, thank you, uncle.

JUDGE: What! You don't believe in holy matrimony?

HELEN: Only as a last extremity, uncle, like unholy divorce.

JUDGE: [jumps] What do you know about that?

HELEN: I know all about it! [Others jump.] I have been reading up on the subject.

[All relax, relieved, but now gather about the young woman.

THEODORE: Come now, simply because many young people rush into marriage without thinking

LUCY: [Overlapping] Simply because these New Women

JOHN: [Overlapping] Simply because one marriage in a thousand ends in divorce--

HELEN: Wait!... One in a thousand? Dear me, what an idealist you are, John! In America, one marriage in

every eleven now ends in divorce. And yet you wonder why I hesitate.

JOHN: One in eleven--rot! [To JUDGE.] All this muck-raking should be suppressed by the Government. "One in eleven!" Bah!

HELEN: [demurely] The Government's own statistics, John.

[They all turn to the JUDGE for denial, but he nods confirmation, with a complacent smile, murmuring: "Two souls with but a single thought."

LUCY: [sweetly knitting] Well, I may be old-fashioned, but it seems to me that nice girls shouldn't think of such things.... Their husbands will tell them all they ought to know about marriage--after they're married.

HELEN: Ah, I see. Nice girls mustn't think until after they rush in, but they mustn't rush in until after they think. You married people make it all so simple for us.

JUDGE: Right! The way to cure all evil is for nice people to close their minds and mouths to it. It's "unpleasant" for a pure mind, and it "leaves a bad taste in the mouth." So there you are, my dear.

JOHN: [coming in strong] Oh, talk, talk, talk! I've had enough. See here, young lady, I offered to pay all your expenses abroad for a year. You didn't seem to appreciate it--well, the trustees of the institute are now to give Doctor Hamilton a year abroad. How do you like that?

[All turn and look at HELEN.

HELEN: Splendid! Just what he needs! Doctor Metchnikoff told me in Paris that America always kills its big men with routine. When do we start?

[She tries to look very businesslike.

JOHN: [springing to his feet] "We!" Do you think you are going?

HELEN: Of course! I'm his assistant--quite indispensable to him.... [To all.] Oh, well, if you don't believe me, ask him!

JOHN: [pacing to and fro] What next! Paris! Alone, with a man!--Here's where I call a halt!

HELEN: But if my work calls me, I don't really see what you have to say about it, John.

JOHN: Better not defy me, Helen.

[He scowls.

HELEN: Better not bully me, John.

[She smiles.

JOHN: I am your brother.

HELEN: But not my owner! [Then, instead of defiance, she turns with animated interest to the others.] You know, all women used to be owned by men. Formerly they ruled us by physical force--now by financial force.... But at last they are to lose even that hold upon us--poor dears!

[Pats JOHN'S shoulder playfully.

JOHN: [amused, but serious] That's all right in theory, but this is a practical world. My pull got you into the institute; my pull can get you out. You give up this wild idea or give up your job!

HELEN: [delighted] What did I tell you? Financial force! They still try it, you see. [To JOHN.] What if I refused to give up either, John?

JOHN: [emphatic] Then as a trustee of the institute I ask for your resignation--right here and now! [Turns away.] I guess that will hold her at home a while.

HELEN: I simply must go to Paris now. I've nothing else to do!

JOHN: [with a confident smile] You will, eh? Who'll

pay your expenses this time?

HELEN: [matter of fact] Doctor Hamilton.

LUCY: Helen! please! You oughtn't to say such things even in joke.

HELEN: He'll take me along as his private secretary, if I ask him.

[A pause. The others look at one another helplessly.]

JUDGE: John, she's got you. You might as well quit.

JOHN: Nonsense. I have just begun. You'll see.

THEODORE: If you're so independent, my dear, why don't you marry your scientist and be done with it?

HELEN: [resents the intrusion but hides her feelings] Can you keep a secret? [They all seem to think they can and gather near.] He has never asked me!

[The family seems annoyed.]

LUCY: [with match-making ardor] No wonder, dear, he has never seen you except in that awful apron. But those stunning dinner gowns John bought you in Paris! My dear, in evening dress you are quite irresistible!

JUDGE: [apart to THEODORE] Irresistible? Pink parasols. What a system!

HELEN: But you see, I don't want him to ask me. I've had all I could do to keep him from it.

[The family seems perplexed.]

JOHN: She's got some sense left.

LUCY: But suppose he did ask you, dear?

HELEN: Why, I'd simply refer the matter to John, of course. If John said, "Love him," I'd love him; if John said, "Don't love him," I'd turn it off like electric light.

[The family is becoming exasperated.]

LUCY: [insinuating] Oh, you can't deceive us. We know how much you admire him, Helen.

HELEN: Oh, no you don't! [The family is amazed.] Not

even he does. Did you ever hear how he risked his life in battle down in Cuba? Why, he's a perfect hero of romance!

JOHN: [mutters] Never even saw a war--mollycoddle germ killer!

HELEN: Not in the war with Spain--the war against yellow fever, John.... No drums to make him brave, no correspondents to make him famous--he merely rolled up his sleeve and let an innocent-looking mosquito bite him. Then took notes on his symptoms till he became delirious.... He happened to be among those who recovered.

[The family is impressed.]

THEODORE: Old-fashioned maidens used to marry their heroes, Helen.

HELEN: [arising, briskly] But this new-fashioned hero gets only two thousand dollars a year, Theodore.

[She turns to escape.]

JOHN: [nodding] I told you she had sense.

THEODORE: Helen! You selfish, too? Why, Mary and I married on half that, didn't we, John?

[He looks around. The family looks away.]

HELEN: [with unintended emphasis] Doctor Hamilton needs every cent of that enormous salary--books, travel, scientific conferences--all the advantages he simply must have if he's to keep at the top and do his best work for the world. The most selfish thing a girl can do is to marry a poor man.

[With that she hurries up the steps.]

THEODORE: [following her] All the same, deep down under it all, she has a true woman's yearning for a home to care for and a mate to love. [She is silently crying.] Why, Helen, dear, what's the matter?

HELEN: [hiding her emotion] Oh, why can't they let

me alone! They make what ought to be the holiest and most beautiful thing in life the most horrible and dishonest. They make me hate marriage--hate it!

[Unseen by HELEN, the BUTLER steps out.

THEODORE: [patting her shoulder] Just you wait till the right one comes along.

BUTLER: [to LUCY Doctor Hamilton has come, ma'am.

HELEN: [with an old-fashioned gasp] Good heavens! [And runs to the family.

LUCY: Show Doctor Hamilton out. [The BUTLER goes.

HELEN: A plot to entrap him! [Running to and fro wildly.] But it's no use! I'm going ... until he's gone! [HELEN runs into the garden.

JUDGE: Fighting hard, poor child.

THEODORE: But what'll we do?

JUDGE: Don't worry--she can't stay away--the sweet thing!

JOHN: Now listen, we must all jolly him up--he'll be shy in these surroundings.

JUDGE: Going to surrender, John?

JOHN: What I am going to do requires finesse.

LUCY: [in a flutter, seeing HAMILTON approach] Oh, dear! how does one talk to highbrows?

JUDGE: Talk to him about himself! Highbrows, lowbrows, all men love it.

[ERNEST HAMILTON, discoverer of the Hamilton antitoxin, is a fine-looking fellow of about thirty-five, without the spectacles or absent-mindedness somehow expected of scientific genius. He talks little but very rapidly and sees everything. It does not occur to him to be shy or embarrassed "in these

surroundings"--not because he is habituated to so much luxury, on three thousand a year, nor because he despises it; he likes it; but he likes other things even more. That is why he works for two thousand a year, instead of working for fat, fashionable fees in private practice.

JOHN meets his distinguished guest at the door--effusively, yet with that smiling condescension which wealthy trustees sometimes show to "scientists, college professors, and that sort of thing."

JOHN: Ah, Doctor Hamilton! Delighted to see you on my little farm at last. Out here I'm just a plain, old-fashioned farmer.

[ERNEST glances about at the magnificence and smiles imperceptibly. He makes no audible replies to the glad welcome, but bows urbanely, master of himself and the situation.

LUCY: Doctor Hamilton! So good of you to come.

THEODORE: How are you, Ernest? Glad to see you.

LUCY: I don't think you've met our uncle, Judge Grey.

JUDGE: [humorously adopting their manner]

Charmed! I've heard so much about you!--from my niece.

LUCY: [to ERNEST'S rescue, like a tactful hostess] A cup of tea, Doctor Hamilton?

ERNEST: [unperturbed by the reference to HELEN] Thanks.

JOHN: [while LUCY makes tea.] Trustee manner I have often desired to express my admiration of your heroism in the war against yellow fever in er--ah--Cuba, when you let an innocent-looking mosquito bite you----

LUCY: [nodding and poisoning sugar-tongs] And then took notes on your symptoms till you became

delirious!

ERNEST: No sugar, thanks.

[He looks from one to another with considerable interest.

JUDGE: No drums to make you famous, no war correspondents to make you brave--I mean the other way round.

ERNEST: [to LUCY poisoning cream pitcher] No cream, please.

JOHN: Senator Root says this one triumph alone saves twenty million dollars a year to the business interests of the United States! I call that true patriotism.

ERNEST: [with a nod of assent to LUCY] Lemon.

THEODORE: [with sincerity] General Wood says it saves more human lives a year than were lost in the whole Spanish War! I call it service.

JUDGE: Colonel Goethals says the Panama Canal could not have been built if it hadn't been for you self-sacrificing scientists. Not only that, but you have abolished forever from the United States a scourge which for more than a century had through periodic outbreaks spread terror, devastation, and death.

[A pause.

ERNEST: [bored, but trying to hide it] The ones who deserve your praise are the four who died to prove that theory... [He smiles.] Of course, you all know their names.... [He looks at JOHN, who looks at JUDGE, who looks at LUCY, who looks at THEODORE. He takes up his cup.] Delicious tea.

THEODORE: Ah, but they didn't do it for fame, for money--that's the beauty of the sacrifice.

ERNEST: [with a smile] Quite so.... That's what Congress told us when we suggested a pension for the widow of the first victim.



ALL: What! Did Congress refuse the pension?

ERNEST: [finishes his tea] They finally voted the sum of seventeen dollars a month for the widow and no less than two dollars a month extra for each of his children....

LUCY: Is that all?

ERNEST: No.... We pestered Congress to death until, a few years ago, they replaced the pension with an annuity of one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month--though some of them said it was a very bad precedent to establish. [Returns cup to LUCY.] No more, thanks, delicious.

[And turns to admire the wide-sweeping view of the farm, hands in pockets.

JOHN: [after a pause] Well, I think our scientists might well be called philanthropists.

ERNEST: Hardly! You see, every one knows the names of philanthropists.... Better let it go at "scientists."

JUDGE: He's right. Philanthropists don't give their lives, they give their names--have 'em carved in stone over their institutes and libraries.

[JOHN approaches and joins his guest.

ERNEST: Charming little farm you have here.

JOHN: Doctor Hamilton, America kills its big men with routine. You are too valuable to the nation to lose--the trustees think you need a year abroad.

ERNEST: That's strange, I came out here to suggest that very thing.... Somebody has been saying kind things about me in Paris. Just had a letter from the great Metchnikoff--wants me to come over and work in the Pasteur! Chance of a lifetime!... You didn't have to jolly me up to consent to that!

JOHN: [pacing terrace with his guest, arm in arm] By the by, my sister is rather keen on science.

ERNEST: Best assistant I ever had. You can pile an awful lot of routine on a woman. The female of the species is more faithful than the male.... She's over there already. We can get right to work.

JOHN: She'll be back before you start.

ERNEST: [stops short] I didn't know that.... Well, what is it?

[JOHN hesitates, turns to the family, all watching with breathless interest.

THEODORE: Don't you see, old chap, under the circumstances it would hardly do for her to go back to Paris with you.

ERNEST: Why not?

LUCY: You're a man.

ERNEST: [smiling] You mean I'm dangerous?

LUCY: But she's a woman.

JUDGE: They mean she's dangerous.

JOHN: My dear fellow, we are going to ask you quite frankly to decline to take her.

ERNEST: [looks about at the circle of anxious faces. He won't let them read him] So that's it, eh?... But it's the chance of a lifetime for her, too. She needs it more than I do. She's had so little chance to do original work.

JOHN: But she's a woman.

ERNEST: Just what has that to do with it?

JOHN: Everything. We have the highest respect for you, Doctor Hamilton, but also ... one must respect the opinions of the world, you know.

ERNEST: [thinks it over] That's right. One must. I forgot to think of that.... It's curious, but when working with women of ability one learns to respect them so much that one quite loses the habit of insulting them. Too bad how new conditions spoil fine old customs....

Suppose you let her go and let me stay. I can find plenty to do here, I fancy.

JOHN: I fear it would offend our generous benefactor, Mr. Baker. He has set his heart on your going abroad, meeting other big men, getting new ideas for our great humanitarian work. [The family exchange glances while JOHN lies on.] Besides, my sister would only go to accommodate you. She particularly desires to stay here this winter. That's why she is returning so soon, you see.

ERNEST: [believes it] Oh, I see.... I'm sure I have no desire to drag her over with me.... [Smiles at himself.] I rather thought the opportunity to continue our experiments together ... but that's all right.

JOHN: Then it's all settled--you agree to go alone?

ERNEST: [a slight pause] Yes, alone. It's quite settled.

JOHN: How soon could you start?

ERNEST: [absently] How soon? Why, just as soon as I get some one to run my department.

JOHN: Could my sister run it?

ERNEST: [smiles] Could she run it? It can't run without her! She's as systematic as [to LUCY]--as a good housekeeper.

JOHN: [with a satisfied look at the others] Then that's all fixed! She'll stay when I tell her that you want her to. Could you arrange to start at once?

ERNEST: [hesitates] By leaving here to-night, I could.

JOHN: [with a triumphant look at the family] Then I'll telephone for your passage--I have a pull with all the steamship lines. [Going.] Of course I hate to cut short your week-end, but I don't want to spoil any scientific careers.

[JOHN hurries in to telephone. ERNEST starts too, as if to stop him but restrains the impulse.]

He stands alone by the door gazing out over the landscape while LUCY, THEODORE, and the JUDGE discuss him in low tones by the tea-table.

LUCY: Can't you see, you stupid men! He's crazy about her--but thinks there's no hope.

THEODORE: When she finds he's leaving for a year ... she'll change her mind about marriage!

[ERNEST comes back to earth and to the house-party.

JUDGE: [to ERNEST, joining them] Ahem! We were just discussing the marriage danger--I mean the marriage problem.

ERNEST: [with a smile] Go right on--don't mind me.

THEODORE: [old-friend manner] See here! When are you ever going to marry?

ERNEST: [modern bachelor's laugh] When am I ever going to get more than two thousand a year?

THEODORE: Bah! what has money got to do with it! Just you wait till the right one comes along.

[HELEN comes along, stealing up the steps from the garden on tiptoe with the grave, absorbed look of a hunter stalking game. She catches sight of the man she wants and stops short, as motionless as if frozen. But not so! Her lovely hands were poised; one of them now goes to her bosom and presses there. There is nothing icy about this New Woman now.

ERNEST: [as unconscious of danger as a mountain-lion on an inaccessible height, smiles easily at his sentimental old friend THEODORE] How do you know "the right one" hasn't come already?

[THEODORE catches sight of HELEN. She

shakes her head in silent pleading, taps a finger  
on her lips, and in a panic flees noiselessly  
across toward the door.

THEODORE: [suppressing a laugh] Then don't let her  
go by!

[HELEN stops at the door and makes a face at  
THEODORE.

ERNEST: [affecting indifference] Oh, I couldn't stop  
her, even if I wanted to.

THEODORE: [turning to wink at HELEN] How do you  
know? Did you ever ask her?

ERNEST: To marry me? Oh, no! She hasn't any money.

THEODORE: [HELEN is dumfounded] Money! You  
wouldn't marry for money!

[HELEN draws near to hear the answer.

ERNEST: You don't suppose I'd marry a woman who  
hadn't any? Most selfish thing a poor man can do.

[HELEN is interested.

THEODORE: Oh, fiddlesticks! You modern young  
people--

ERNEST: [interrupts] Make her a sort of superior  
servant in an inferior home--not that girl!

[HELEN is pleased.

THEODORE: Feministic nonsense! The old-fashioned  
womanly woman----

ERNEST: Sentimental twaddle! What makes it more  
"womanly" to do menial work for men than intellectual  
work with them?

[HELEN delighted, applauds noiselessly.

THEODORE: All the same, I'll bet you wouldn't let a  
little thing like that stand in your way if you really  
cared for a woman enough to marry her.

ERNEST: [benign and secure] But, as it happens, I  
don't. Nothing could induce me to marry.

[HELEN raises her chin, her eyes glitter dangerously.]

THEODORE: So you are going to run away to Europe like a coward?

ERNEST: [smiles patronizingly] Theodore, you are such an incorrigible idealist! I have nothing to be afraid of--I simply do not care to marry!

HELEN: That's just what I said!

[All turn and behold HELEN.]

ERNEST: My heavens!

[He steps back like a coward.]

HELEN: But I agree with you perfectly. [She holds out her hand to him.] I was so afraid you believed in marriage.

[He rushes to her eagerly.]

JUDGE: [as the lovers shake hands] You wronged him. Apologize.

ERNEST: Why--why--all this time, I thought you had the usual attitude.

JUDGE: Wronged her. Both apologize.

HELEN: Why didn't you ever tell me you had such enlightened views?

ERNEST: Why didn't you ever tell me?

JUDGE: Each understands the other now. Everything lovely!

HELEN: Think of the discussions we might have had!

JUDGE: Not too late yet. Julia and I had discussions for a quarter of a century.

HELEN: Don't think I had any hand in this. [Laughs.] I was going to warn you, but now--it is unnecessary now.

ERNEST: Warn me? What do you mean?

HELEN: Can't you see? It was all a plot! [LUCY draws near noiselessly.] A plot to entrap you in marriage!

They had about given me up as a bad job. You were my last hope. They were going to throw me at your head. [Louder but without turning.] Weren't you, Lucy dear?

LUCY: [caught listening, turns abruptly to the others]

These New Women are utterly shameless.

HELEN: [to ERNEST] These old-fashioned women are utterly shameless. After a decent interval, they will all with one accord make excuses to leave us here alone, so that I can--[she comes nearer] ensnare you!

[ERNEST laughs nervously.] Lucy is going to say--

[imitates LUCY'S sweet tones]: "If you'll excuse me, I always take forty winks before dressing." Dressing is the hardest work Lucy has to do. Cousin Theodore will find that he must write to his wife, and Uncle Everett will feel a yearning for the billiard room. [ERNEST is nodding and chuckling.] They're hanging on longer than usual to-day, and I simply must have a talk with you.

ERNEST: Our shop-talk would scandalize 'em!

HELEN: Wait, I'll get rid of them!

[She sits and begins to make tea.

ERNEST: I've had my tea, thanks.

HELEN: Stupid! Sit down. [Indicates a chair close to hers. He takes it cautiously.] We'll have a little fun with them in a minute.

[She is busy now making tea.

THEODORE: [to LUCY and the JUDGE apart] You may be right, Uncle Everett, but upon my word it is the strangest courtship I ever witnessed.

LUCY: They ought to be spanked.

JUDGE: Don't worry, old Mother Nature will attend to that.

LUCY: Well, I may be old-fashioned, but----

JUDGE: [interrupting] But this is merely a new fashion, my dear Lucy. Nature her ancient custom holds, let science say what it will.

HELEN: [handing cup to ERNEST with a glance at the others] Now, then, be attentive to me. [He leans toward her rather shyly, abashed by her nearness. She makes eyes at him reproachfully.] Oh, can't you be more attentive than that? [She acts like a coquette and he looks into her beautiful eyes and while he is doing so she says with a fascinating drawl] Now tell me a-all about anterior poliomyelitis!

ERNEST: [suddenly taken aback, he laughs] Nothing doing since you left.

[And bends close to explain.

LUCY: If you'll excuse me, Doctor Hamilton, I always take forty winks before dressing. We dine at eight.

[Going, she signals to the others. ERNEST and HELEN exchange smiles.

THEODORE: [laughing, to LUCY] Ss't! Don't tell John what's going on! Keep him busy telephoning. [LUCY nods excitedly and almost runs to obey the Church.] Helen, if you and Ernest will excuse me, I really must write to Mary.

[Their shoulders are close together and they seem too absorbed to reply. THEODORE smiles down upon them and signals the JUDGE to come along. The JUDGE, however, shakes his head but waves THEODORE into the house. Uncle Everett looks at the lovers with quizzical interest. He draws near and eavesdrops shamelessly.

HELEN: You oughtn't to have dropped the polio experiments.

ERNEST: You oughtn't to have dropped me--right in



the midst of the experiments. Those agar plates you were incubating dried up and spoiled. You played the very devil with my data.

JUDGE: God bless my soul! what are we coming to?

HELEN: [without turning] It's perfectly proper for your little ears, uncle, only you can't understand a word of it. Won't any one play billiards with you?

JUDGE: But I'm fascinated. It's so idyllic. Makes me feel young again.

HELEN: [to ERNEST] Oh, you have plenty of men assistants who can estimate antitoxin units.

ERNEST: Men assistants lose interest. They are all so confoundedly ambitious to do original work. Why is it women can stand day after day of monotonous detail better than men?

HELEN: Because men always made them tend the home!

JUDGE: Ah, nothing like a good old-fashioned love scene--in the scientific spirit.

HELEN: Uncle, dear! Can't you see that he is paying me wonderful compliments? Haven't you any tact? Go and play Canfield in the library.

JUDGE: [lighting cigar] Very well, I'll leave you to your own devices--and may God, your God, have mercy on your scientific souls.

HELEN: [with sudden animation and camaraderie, thinking they are alone] Now I must tell you what Doctor Metchnikoff said about you and your future!

JUDGE: Sst! [HELEN and ERNEST turn.] My children--[Pause--raises his hand.] Don't forget the scientific spirit!

[The JUDGE saunters off into the garden, smoking.]

ERNEST: How did you ever meet Metchnikoff?

HELEN: [chaffing] I had worked under Hamilton!

They all wanted to meet me.

ERNEST: [with an unmistakable look U'm ... was that why? [Fleeing danger.] Didn't you let them know your part in that discovery? Why, if it hadn't been for you, I should never have stumbled upon the thing at all.

HELEN: Oh, I know my place too well for that! Talk about artistic temperament, you scientists are worse than prima donnas.

ERNEST: [takes printers' proofs out of pocket, hands them to her in silence] Some proofs of a monograph I was correcting on the train. Mind hammering those loose sentences of mine into decent English? You can write--I can't.

HELEN: [reading innocently] "Recent Experiments in Anterior Poliomyelitis by Ernest Hamilton, M.D., Ph.D., and Helen"--what! why, you've put my name with yours!

[Much excited and delighted.

ERNEST: Well, if you object--like a prima donna----

[Takes out pencil to mark on proof.

HELEN: [snatching proofs away] Object? Why, this makes my reputation in the scientific world.

ERNEST: Well, didn't you make mine?

HELEN: [still glowing with pride, but touched by his unexpected generosity] You can't imagine what this means to me. It's so hard for a woman to get any recognition. Most men have but one use for us. If we get interested in anything but them it is "unwomanly"--they call it "a fad." But they've got to take me seriously now. My name with Ernest Hamilton's!

[Points to her name and swaggers back and forth.

ERNEST: [bantering] But then, you see, you are a very

exceptional woman. Why, you have a mind like a man.  
HELEN: Like a man? [Coming close to him, tempting him.] If you had a mind like a woman you would know better than to say that to me!

[Re-enter JUDGE from garden. He smiles and glances at them. The lovers keep quiet as he crosses to the door. Then they look at each other and smile. JUDGE has gone into the house. It is nearly dark. The moon is rising.

ERNEST: [raises eyebrows] They all take for granted that I want to make love to you.

[Smiles but avoids her eyes.

HELEN: [avoids his] Well, you took for granted that I wanted you to!... You are about the most conceited man I ever knew.

ERNEST: How can I help it when you admire me so?

HELEN: I? Admire you?

ERNEST: You're always telling me what great things I'm going to do--stimulating me, pushing me along. Why, after you left, everything went slump. Tell me, why did you leave? Was I rude to you? Did I hurt your feelings?

HELEN: Not in the least. It was entirely out of respect for your feelings.

ERNEST: My feelings? [Laughing.] Oh, I see. You got it into your head that I wanted to marry you!

HELEN: Men sometimes do.

ERNEST: [looks away] I suppose they do.

HELEN: It's been known to happen.

ERNEST: Talk about conceit! Well, you needn't be afraid! I'll never ask you to marry me.

HELEN: [turns and looks at him a moment] You can't imagine what a weight this takes off my mind.

[She looks away and sighs.

ERNEST: [enthusiastically] Yes! I feel as if a veil  
between us had been lifted.

[He looks away and sighs too. Some one begins  
"Tristan and Isolde" on the piano within. The  
moon is up.

HELEN: [after a pause] Suppose we talk about--our  
work.

ERNEST: Yes! Our work. Let's drop the other subject.  
Look at the moon!

[Music and the moonlight flooding them.

HELEN: Seriously, you promise never to mention the  
subject again?

[She keeps her eyes averted.

ERNEST: I promise.

[He keeps his eyes averted.

HELEN: [turning to him with a sudden change to girlish  
enthusiasm] Then I'll go to Paris with you!

ERNEST: [recoils] What's that?

HELEN: Why, Doctor Metchnikoff--he promised me he  
would invite you.

ERNEST: Yes, but--

HELEN: Don't miss the chance of a lifetime!

ERNEST: No, but you--you can't come!

HELEN: [simply] If you need me I can, and you just  
said----

ERNEST: But you mustn't come to Paris with me!

HELEN: Don't you want me with you?

ERNEST: You are to stay at home and run the  
department for me.

HELEN: [stepping back] Don't you want me with you?

ERNEST: [stepping forward, with his heart in voice ]  
Do I want you! [Stops.] But I am a man--you are a  
woman.

HELEN: What of it? Are you one of those small men

who care what people say? No! That's not your reason!  
[She sees that it is not.] What is it? You must tell me.

ERNEST: [hesitates] It's only for your sake.

HELEN: [with feeling] Think of all I've done for your sake. You wouldn't be going yourself but for me! I was the one to see you needed it, I proposed it to Metchnikoff--I urged him--made him ask you--for your sake! And now am I to be left at home like a child because you don't care to be embarrassed with me?

ERNEST: Oh, please! This is so unfair. But I simply can't take you now.

HELEN: [with growing scorn] Oh! You are all alike. You pile work upon me until I nearly drop, you play upon my interest, my sympathy--you get all you can out of me--my youth, my strength, my best! And then, just as I, too, have a chance to arrive in my profession, you, of all men, throw me over! I hate men. I hate you!

ERNEST: And I love you!

[They stare at each other in silence, the moonlight flooding HELEN'S face, the music coming clear.]

HELEN: [in an awed whisper, stepping back slowly] I've done it! I've done it! I knew I'd do it!

ERNEST: No. I did it. Forgive me. I had to do it.

HELEN: Oh, and this spoils everything!

ERNEST: [comes closer] No! It glorifies everything! [He breaks loose.] I have loved you from the first day you came and looked up at me for orders. I didn't want you there; I didn't want any woman there. I tried to tire you out with overwork but couldn't. I tried to drive you out by rudeness, but you stayed. And that made me love you more. Oh, I love you! I love you! I love you!

HELEN: Don't; oh, don't love me!

ERNEST: [still closer] Why, I never knew there could

be women like you. I thought women were merely something to be wanted and worshipped, petted and patronized. But now--why, I love everything about you: your wonderful, brave eyes that face the naked facts of life and are not ashamed; those beautiful hands that toiled so long, so well, so close to mine and not afraid, not afraid!

HELEN: You mustn't! I am afraid now! I made you say it. [Smiling and crying.] I have always wanted to make you say it. I have always sworn you shouldn't.

ERNEST: [pained] Because you cannot care enough?

HELEN: Enough?... Too much.

ERNEST: [overwhelmed] You--love--me!

[He takes her in his arms, a silent embrace with only the bland moon looking on.]

HELEN: It is because I love you that I didn't want you to say it--only I did. It is because I love you that I went abroad--to stay, only I couldn't! I couldn't stay away! [She holds his face in her hands.] Oh, do you know how I love you? No!... you're only a man!

ERNEST: [kissing her rapturously] Every day there in the laboratory, when you in your apron--that dear apron which I stole from your locker when you left me--when you asked for orders--did you know that I wanted to say: "Love me"! Every day when you took up your work, did you never guess that I wanted to take you up in my arms?

HELEN: [smiling up into his face] Why didn't you?

ERNEST: Thank God I didn't! For while we worked there together I came to know you as few men ever know the women they desire. Woman can be more than sex, as man is more than sex. And all this makes man and woman not less but more overwhelmingly desirable and necessary to each other, and makes both

things last--not for a few years, but forever!

[Sound of voices approaching from the garden.  
The lovers separate. It is JEAN and REX, REX  
laughing, JEAN dodging until caught and  
kissed.

JEAN: No, no--it's time to dress.... Be good, Rex--don't!  
[Without seeing HELEN and ERNEST, they  
disappear into the house. HELEN is suddenly  
changed, as if awakened from a spell of  
enchantment.

HELEN: What have we done! This is all moonlight and  
madness. To-morrow comes the clear light of day.

ERNEST: Ah, but we'll love each other to-morrow!

HELEN: But we cannot marry--then or any other to-  
morrow.

ERNEST: Can't? What nonsense!

HELEN: [shaking her head and restraining him] I have  
slaved for you all these months--not because I wanted  
to win you from your work but to help you in it. And  
now--after all--shall I destroy you? No! No!

ERNEST: I love you--you love me--nothing else  
matters.

HELEN: Everything else matters. I'm not a little  
dÃ©butante to be persuaded that I am needed because  
I am wanted! I haven't played with you; I have worked  
with you, and I know! Think of Theodore! Think of  
Lucy! And now poor little Jean. Marry you? Never!

ERNEST: You mean your career?

HELEN: [with supreme scorn] My career? No! yours--  
always yours!

ERNEST: [with the same scorn and a snap of the  
fingers] Then that for my career. I'll go back into  
private practice and make a million.

HELEN: That's just what I said you'd do. Just what you

must not do! Your work is needed by the world.

ERNEST: [wooing] You are my world and I need you.... But there is no love without marriage, no marriage without money.... We can take it or leave it. Can we leave it? No! I can't--you can't! Come! [She steps back slowly.] Why should we sacrifice the best! Come!

HELEN: So this is what marriage means! Then I cannot marry you, Ernest!

ERNEST: You cannot do without me, Helen! [Holds out his arms.] Come! You have been in my arms once. You and I can never forget that now. We can never go back now. It's all--or nothing now. Come! [She is struggling against her passion. He stands still, with arms held out.] I shall not woo you against your will, but you are coming to me! Because, by all the powers of earth and heaven, you are mine and I am yours! Come!

[Like a homing pigeon she darts into his arms with a gasp of joy. A rapturous embrace in silence with the moonlight streaming down upon them. The music has stopped.

JOHN, dressed for dinner, strolls out upon the terrace. He stops abruptly upon discovering them. The lovers are too absorbed to be aware of his presence.

## ACT II

It is the next morning, Sunday. It appears that at JOHN'S country place they have breakfast at small tables out upon the broad, shaded terrace overlooking the glorious view of his little farm. ERNEST and THEODORE, the scientist



and the clergyman, are breakfasting together. The others are either breakfasting in their rooms or are not yet down, it being Sunday. The man of God is enjoying his material blessings heartily. Also he seems to be enjoying his view of the man of science, who eats little and says less.

THEODORE: [with coffee-cup poised] What's the matter with your appetite this morning, Ernest? [ERNEST, gazing up at one of the second-story windows, does not hear. The door opens. He starts. Then, seeing it's only a servant with food, he sighs.] Expecting something? The codfish balls? Well, here they are. [ERNEST refuses the proffered codfish balls, scowls, brings out cigar case, lights cigar, looks at watch, and fidgets.] Oh, I know--you're crazy to go with me--to church! [ERNEST doesn't hear. Creates a cloud of smoke.] Their regular rector is ill. So I agreed to take the service this morning.... Always the way when off for a rest ... isn't it? [No answer. THEODORE gets up, walks around the table, and shouts in ERNEST'S face.] Isn't it?

ERNEST: [startled] I beg your pardon?

THEODORE: [laughs, ERNEST wondering what's the joke] Oh, you're hopeless! [Going.] I can't stand people who talk so much at breakfast.

ERNEST: [suddenly wakes up] Wait a minute. Sit down. Have a cigar. Let's talk about God. [THEODORE stops smiling.] But I mean it. I'd like to have a religion myself.

THEODORE: I had an idea you took no stock in religion.

[Takes the cigar. ERNEST holds a match for him.]

ERNEST: [enthusiastically] Just what I thought, until ...  
well, I've made a discovery, a great discovery!

THEODORE: A scientific discovery?

ERNEST: [with a wave of the hand] It makes all  
science look like a ... mere machine.

THEODORE: Well, if you feel so strongly about it ...  
better come to church after all!

ERNEST: I'm not talking about the Church--I'm talking  
about religion.

THEODORE: You're not talking about religion; you're  
talking about--love.

ERNEST: [quietly] Certainly; the same thing, isn't it?  
I'm talking about the divine fire that glorifies life and  
perpetuates it--the one eternal thing we mortals share  
with God.... If that isn't religious, what is?

[THEODORE smiles indulgently.] Tell me,  
Theodore--you know I wasn't allowed to go to church  
when young, and since then I've always worked on the  
holy Sabbath day, like yourself--does the Church still  
let innocent human beings think there's something  
inherently wrong about sex? [THEODORE drops his  
eyes. ERNEST disgusted with him.] I see! Good  
people should drop their eyes even at the mention of  
the word.

THEODORE: Sex is a necessary evil, I admit, but----

ERNEST: [laughs] Evil! The God-given impulse which  
accounts for you sitting there, for me sitting here? The  
splendid instinct which writes our poetry, builds our  
civilizations, founds our churches--the very heart and  
soul of life is evil. Really, Theodore, I don't know  
much about religion, but that strikes me as blasphemy  
against the Creator.

THEODORE: Very scientific, my boy, very modern;  
but the Church believed in marriage before Science

was born.

ERNEST: As a compromise with evil?

THEODORE: As a sacrament of religion--and so do you!

ERNEST: Good! Then why practise and preach marriage as a sacrament of property? "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man--" Women are still goods and chattels to be given or sold, are they?

THEODORE: Oh, nonsense!

ERNEST: Then why keep on making them promise to "serve and obey"? Why marry them with a ring--the link of the ancient chain? [He smiles.] In the days of physical force it was made of iron--now of gold. But it's still a chain, isn't it?

THEODORE: Symbols, my dear fellow, not to be taken in a literal sense--time-honored and beautiful symbols.

ERNEST: But why insult a woman you respect--even symbolically?

THEODORE: [with a laugh] Oh, you scientists!

ERNEST: [joining in the laugh] We try to find the truth--and you try to hide it, eh? Well, there's one thing we have in common, anyway--one faith I'll never doubt again; I believe in Heaven now. I always shall.

THEODORE: Do you mind telling me why, my boy?

ERNEST: Not in the least. I've been there. [JOHN comes out to breakfast. He is scowling.] Good morning; could you spare me five minutes?

JOHN: [ringing bell] Haven't had breakfast yet.

ERNEST: After breakfast?

JOHN: I've an appointment with young Baker.

ERNEST: [smiles] I'll wait my turn.

JOHN: Going to be pretty busy to-day--you, too, I suppose, if you're sailing to-morrow.

ERNEST: I can postpone sailing. This is more

important.

JOHN: I should hate to see anything interfere with your career.

[LUCY also arrives for breakfast. She "always pours her husband's coffee."

ERNEST: I appreciate your interest, but I'll look out for my "career." [To LUCY.] Could you tell me when your sister will be down?

JOHN: [overriding LUCY] My sister is ill and won't be down at all ... until after you leave.

[LUCY pretends not to hear. THEODORE walks away.

ERNEST: [aroused, but calm] I don't believe you quite understand. It is a matter of indifference to me whether we have a talk or not. Entirely out of courtesy to you that I suggest it.

JOHN: Don't inconvenience yourself on my account.

ERNEST: [shrugs shoulders and turns to THEODORE] Wait, I think I'll sit in church till train time.

THEODORE: [smoothing it over] Come along. I'm going to preach about marriage!

[THEODORE starts off.

ERNEST: [going, turns to LUCY] Thanks for your kindness. Will you ask the valet to pack my things, please? I'll call for them on the way to the station. [To JOHN.] Do you understand? I have no favors to ask of you. You don't own your sister--she owns herself.

[The scientist goes to church.

JOHN: [with a loud laugh, turns to LUCY] Rather impertinent for a two-thousand-dollar man, I think. [Resumes breakfast, picks up newspaper. LUCY says nothing, attending to his wants solicitously.] Bah! what does this highbrow know about the power men of my sort can use ... when we have to? [LUCY cringes

dutifully in silence. JOHN, paper in one hand, brusquely passes cup to LUCY with other.] Helen got her own way about college, about work, about living in her own apartment--but if she thinks she can put this across! Humph! These modern women must learn their place. [LUCY, smiling timidly, returns cup. JOHN takes it without thanks, busied in newspapers. A look of resentment creeps over LUCY'S pretty face, now that he can't see her.] Ah! I've got something up my sleeve for that young woman. [LUCY says nothing, looks of contempt while he reads.] Well, why don't you say something?

LUCY: [startled] I thought you didn't like me to talk at breakfast, dear.

JOHN: Think I like you to sit there like a mummy? [No reply.] Haven't you anything to say? [Apparently not.] You never have any more, nothing interesting.... Does it ever occur to you that I'd like to be diverted?... No!

LUCY: Yes.... Would you mind very much if ... if I left you, John?

JOHN: Left me? When--where--how long?

LUCY: [gathering courage] Now--any place--entirely.

JOHN: [bursts out laughing] What suddenly put this notion in your head?

LUCY: I'm sorry--John, but I've had it--oh, for years. I never dared ask you till now.

JOHN: [still glancing over paper] Like to leave me, would you?... You have no grounds for divorce, my dear.

LUCY: But you will have--after I leave you.

JOHN: [yawns] You have no lover to leave with.

LUCY: [daintily] But couldn't I just desert you--without anything horrid?

JOHN: [reads] No money to desert with.

LUCY: [springs up--at bay] You won't let me escape decently when I tell you I don't want to stay? When I tell you I can't stand being under your roof any longer? When I tell you I'm sick of this life?

JOHN: [gets up calmly] But, you see, I can stand it. I want you to stay. I'm not sick of it. You belong to me.

LUCY: [shrinking away as he approaches] Don't touch me! Every time you come near me I have to nerve myself to stand it.

JOHN: What's got into you? Don't I give you everything money can buy? My God, if I only gave you something to worry about; if I ran after other women like old man Baker----

LUCY: If you only would!--Then you'd let me alone. To me you are repulsive.

JOHN: [taking hold of her] Lucy! You are my wife.

LUCY: [looking him straight in the eye] But you don't respect me, and I--I hate you--oh, how I hate you!

JOHN: [holds her fast] I am your husband, your lawful husband.

LUCY: [stops struggling] Yes, this is lawful--but, oh, what laws you men have made for women!

[The JUDGE comes out, carrying a telegram.

JUDGE: Rather early in the day for conjugal embraces, if you should ask me. [JOHN and LUCY separate.] Makes me quite sentimental and homesick.

[JUDGE raises telegram and kisses it.

LUCY: [calming herself] From Aunt Julia again? Do you get telegrams every day from Reno?

JUDGE: No, but she caught cold. Went to the theatre last night and caught a cold. So she wired me--naturally; got the habit of telling me her troubles, can't break it, even in Reno.

JOHN: I thought she hated the theatre!

JUDGE: So she does, but I'm fond of it; she went for my sake. She's got the habit of sacrificing herself for me.

Just as hard to break good habits as bad.

JOHN: True women enjoy sacrificing themselves.

JUDGE: Yes, that's what we tell them. Well, we ought to know. We make 'em do it. [Brings out a fountain pen and sits abruptly.] That's what I'll tell her. I can hear her laugh. You know her laugh.

LUCY: [rings for a servant] A telegraph blank?

JUDGE: [with a humorous expression he brings a whole pad of telegraph blanks out of another pocket] Carry them with me nowadays. [Begins to write.] Wish I hadn't sold my Western Union, John.

JOHN: I don't believe you want that divorce very much.

JUDGE: It doesn't matter what I want--what she wants is the point. You must give the woman you marry tutti-frutti, divorces--everything.... Why, I've got the habit myself, and God knows I don't enjoy sacrifice--I'm a man! The superior sex!

JOHN: I don't believe you appreciate that wife of yours.

JUDGE: [between the words he's writing] Don't I? It isn't every wife that'd travel away out to Reno--you know how she hates travelling--and go to a theatre--and catch a cold--and get a divorce--all for the sake of an uncongenial husband. [Suddenly getting an idea, strikes table.] I know what gave her a cold. She raised all the windows in her bedroom--for my sake!--I always kept them down for her sake. I'll have to scold her. [Bends to his writing again.] Poor little thing! She doesn't know how to take care of herself without me. I doubt if she ever will.

[Looks over telegram. A SERVANT comes, takes telegram, and goes.]

JOHN: Uncle Everett, I want your advice.

JUDGE: John! do you want a divorce?

JOHN: No, we are not that sort, are we, Lucy? [No answer.] Are we, dear?

LUCY: [after a pause] No, we are not that sort!

JOHN: We believe in the sanctity of the home, the holiness of marriage.

LUCY: Yes, we believe in--"the holiness of marriage!"  
[Turns away, covering her face with her hands and shuddering.]

JOHN: Lucy, tell Helen and Jean to come here. [LUCY goes.] Well, young Baker spoke to me about Jean last night. I told him I'd think it over and give him my decision this morning.

JUDGE: That's right. Mustn't seem too anxious, John. When the properly qualified male offers one of our dependent females a chance at woman's only true career, of course it's up to us to look disappointed.

JOHN: But I didn't bring up the little matter you spoke of.

JUDGE: About that chorus girl?... Afraid of scaring him off?

JOHN: Not at all, but--well, it's all over and it's all fixed. No scandal, no blackmail.

JUDGE: Hum! By the way, got anything on Hamilton?

JOHN: I don't believe in saints myself.

JUDGE: I see.... Good thing, for Jean Rex isn't a saint. I suppose you'd break off the match.

[REX, in riding clothes, comes out. JOHN salutes him warmly. The JUDGE is reading the paper.]

REX: [not eagerly] Well?

JOHN: Well, of course, you realize that you're asking a great deal of me, Rex, but--[Offers hand to REX warmly.] Be good to her, my boy, be good to her.



REX: [shaking hands, forced warmth] Thanks awfully.  
See-what-I-mean? [To JUDGE.] Congratulate me,  
Judge; I'm the happiest of men.

JUDGE: [looking up from newspaper] So I see. Don't  
let it worry you.

[JEAN, in riding costume, comes from the  
house.

JOHN: [signalling JUDGE to leave] If Helen asks for  
me, I'm in the garden.

JUDGE: If any telegrams come for me, I'm writing to  
my wife!

[JEAN and REX alone, they look at each other,  
not very loverlike.

JEAN: [impulsively] You weren't in love with me  
yesterday. You aren't now. You would get out of it if  
you honorably could. But you honorably can't! So you  
have spoken to John; you are going to see it through,  
because you're a good sport.... I admire you for that,  
Rex, too much to hold you to it. You are released.

REX: [amazed] Why--why--you--you don't suppose I  
want to be released?

JEAN: Well, I do!... Yesterday I let you propose to me  
when I cared for some one else. That's not fair to you,  
to me, to him!

REX: [in a sudden fury] Who is he? What do you mean  
by this? Why didn't you tell me?

JEAN: I am telling you now. What have you ever told  
me about yourself?

REX: [blinking] You had no right to play fast and loose  
with me.

JEAN: I'm making the only amends I can. You are free,  
I tell you.

REX: I don't want to be free! He can't have you! You  
are mine! If you think you can make me stop loving

you----

JEAN: [interrupting] Love, Rex? Only jealousy. You've never been in love with me--you've always been in love with Helen. But you couldn't get her, so you took me. Isn't that true, Rex?

REX: [after an uncomfortable pause] I'll be honest with you, too. Yesterday I wasn't really very serious. I felt like a brute afterward. You tried your best to prevent what happened and ran away from me. But now----

JEAN: Don't you know why I ran away? To make you follow. I made you catch me. I made you kiss me. Then you realized that we had been thrown together constantly--deliberately thrown together, if you care to know it--and, well, that's how many marriages are made. But I shan't marry on such terms. It's indecent!

REX: [another pause] I never thought a woman could be capable of such honesty!... Oh, what a bully sport you are! You aren't like the rest that have been shoved at me. Why, I can respect you. You are the one for me.  
[He tries to take her.]

JEAN: [restraining him with dignity] I am sorry, Rex, but I am not for you.

REX: Jean! without you ... don't you see--I'll go straight to the devil!

JEAN: That old, cowardly dodge? Any man who has no more backbone than that--why, I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world.

REX: [frantic to possess what he cannot have] You won't, eh? We'll see about that. I want you now as I never wanted anything in my life, and I'll win you from him yet. You'll see!

[HELEN now appears.]

HELEN: Oh, I beg your pardon. Lucy said John was out here.

JEAN: I'll call him.

[She runs down into the garden.

REX: I'll call him.

[He runs after JEAN. HELEN helplessly watches them go, sighs, standing by the garden steps until JOHN ascends. He looks at HELEN a moment, wondering how to begin. She looks so capable and unafraid of him.

JOHN: If you hadn't gone to college, you could have done what Jean is doing.

HELEN: [with a shrug and a smile] But how proud you must be, John, to have a sister who isn't compelled to marry one man while in love with another. Now, aren't you glad I went to college?

[She laughs good-naturedly at him.

JOHN: Humph! If you think I'd let a sister of mine marry one of old man Baker's two-thousand-dollar employees----

HELEN: Why, John, didn't Ernest tell you? Doctor Hawksbee has offered him a partnership. Just think of that!

JOHN: What! Going back into private practice?

HELEN: But it's such a fashionable practice.

Hawksbee's made a million at it.

JOHN: But the institute needs Hamilton.

HELEN: Ah, but we need the money!

JOHN: [disconcerted] So you are going to spoil a noble career, are you? That's selfish. I didn't think it of you. There are thousands of successful physicians, but there is only one Ernest Hamilton.

HELEN: [laughs] Oh, don't worry, John, he has promised me to keep his two-thousand-dollar job.

JOHN: Ah, I'm glad. You must let nothing interfere with his great humanitarian work. Think what it means to

the lives of little children! Think what it means to the future of the race! Why, every one says his greatest usefulness has hardly begun!

HELEN: Oh, I know all that, I've thought of all that.

JOHN: Now, such men should be kept free from cares and anxiety. What was it you said yesterday? "He needs every cent of his salary for books, travel, all the advantages he simply must have for efficiency." To marry a poor man--most selfish thing a girl could do!

HELEN: Yes, John, that's what I said yesterday.

JOHN: [scoring] But that was before he asked you! [HELEN smiles. He sneers.] Rather pleased with yourself now, aren't you? "Just a woman after all"--heroine of cheap magazine story! Sacrifices career for love!... All very pretty and romantic, my dear--but how about the man you love! Want to sacrifice his career, too?

HELEN: But I'm not going to sacrifice what you are pleased to call my career.... Therefore he won't have to sacrifice his.

JOHN: What! going to keep on working? Will he let the woman he loves work!

HELEN: [demure] Well, you see, he says I'm "too good" to loaf.

JOHN: Humph! who'll take care of your home when you're at work? Who'll take care of your work when you're at home. Look at it practically. To maintain such a home as he needs on such a salary as he has--why, it would take all your time, all your energy. To keep him in his class you'll have to drop out of your own, become a household drudge, a servant.

HELEN: And if I am willing?

JOHN: Then where's your intellectual companionship? How'll you help his work? Expense for him,

disillusionment for both. If you're the woman you pretend to be, you won't marry that man!

HELEN: [strong] The world needs his work, but he needs mine, and we both need each other.

JOHN: [stronger ] And marriage would only handicap his work, ruin yours, and put you apart. You know that's true. You've seen it happen with others. You have told me so yourself!

HELEN: Then that settles it! We must not, cannot, shall not marry. We have no right to marry. I agree with all you say--it would not join us together; it would put us asunder.

JOHN: And you'll give him up? Good! Good!

HELEN: Give him up? Never! The right to work, the right to love--those rights are inalienable. No, we'll give up marriage but not each other.

JOHN: But--but--I don't understand.

HELEN: [straight in his eyes] We need each other--in our work and in our life--and we're to have each other--until life is ended and our work is done. Now, do you understand?

JOHN: [recoiling] Are you in your right mind? Think what you're saying.

HELEN: I have thought all night, John. You have shown me how to say it.

JOHN: But, but--why, this is utterly unbelievable! Why I'm not even shocked. Do you notice? I'm not even shocked? Because everything you have said, everything you have done--it all proves that you are a good woman.

HELEN: If I were a bad woman, I'd inveigle him into marriage, John.

JOHN: Inveigle! Marriage! Are you crazy? ... Oh, this is all one of your highbrow jokes!

HELEN: John, weren't you serious when you said marriage would destroy him?

JOHN: But this would destroy you!

HELEN: Well, even if that were so, which is more important to the world? Which is more important to your "great humanitarian work"?

JOHN: Ah, very clever! A bluff to gain my consent to marrying him--a trick to get his salary raised.

HELEN: [with force] John, nothing you can do, nothing you can say, will ever gain my consent to marrying him. I've not told you half my reasons.

JOHN: My God! my own sister! And did you, for one moment, dream that I would consent to that!

HELEN: Not for one moment. I'm not asking your consent. I'm just telling you.

JOHN: [after scrutinizing her] Ridiculous! If you really meant to run away with this fellow, would you come and tell me, your own brother?

HELEN: Do you suppose I'd run away without telling, even my own brother?

JOHN: [looks at her a moment; she returns his gaze] Bah!--all pose and poppycock! [He abruptly touches bell.] I'll soon put a stop to this nonsense. [Muttering.] Damnedest thing I ever heard of.

HELEN: John, I understand exactly what I'm doing. You never will. But nothing you can do can stop me now.

JOHN: We'll see about that. [The BUTLER appears.] Ask the others to step out here at once; all except Miss Jean and Mr. Baker, I don't want them. Is Doctor Hamilton about?

BUTLER: No, sir, he went to church.

JOHN: All right. [The BUTLER disappears.] To church! My God!

[HELEN pays no attention. She gazes straight out into the future, head high, eyes clear and wide open.

JOHN: First of all, when the others come out, I'm going to ask them to look you in the face. Then you can make this statement to them, if you wish, and--look them in the face.

HELEN: [with quiet scorn] If I were being forced into such a marriage as poor little Jean's, I would kill myself. But in the eyes of God, who made love, no matter how I may appear in the eyes of man, who made marriage, I know that I am doing right.

[LUCY comes out, followed by the JUDGE.

JOHN: [not seeing them. He is loud] Say that to Uncle Everett and Cousin Theodore! Say that to my wife, stand up and say that to the world, if you dare.

LUCY: [to JUDGE] She has told him!

JOHN: [wheeling about] What! did she tell you? Why didn't you come to me at once?

LUCY: [tremulous] She said she wanted to tell you herself. I didn't think she'd dare!

[They all turn to look at HELEN. THEODORE comes back from church alone.

HELEN: It had to be announced, of course.

THEODORE: [advancing, beaming] Announced? What is announced?

[All turn to him in a panic.

LUCY: [hurriedly] Their engagement, Theodore!

JUDGE: [overriding HELEN] Yes, John has given his consent at last--example to society.

[Prods JOHN.

JOHN: [also overrides HELEN] Of course! One of the finest fellows in the world.

THEODORE: [delighted] And withal he has a deep

religious nature. Congratulations. My dear, he'll make an ideal husband.

[Takes both HELEN'S hands, about to kiss her.

HELEN: [can't help smiling] Thank you, cousin, but I don't want a husband.

[A sudden silence.

THEODORE: [looks from one to the other] A lover's quarrel?--already!

JUDGE: [enjoying it] No, Theodore, these lovers are in perfect accord. They both have conscientious scruples against marriage.

JOHN: Conscientious!

JUDGE: So they are simply going to set up housekeeping without the mere formality of a wedding ceremony.

[THEODORE drops HELEN'S hands.

HELEN: [quietly] We are going to do nothing of the sort.

THEODORE: Uncle Everett!

[Takes her hands again.

HELEN: We are not going to set up housekeeping at all. He will keep his present quarters and I mine.

JOHN: But they are going to belong to each other.

THEODORE: [drops HELEN'S hands--aghast] I don't believe it.

JUDGE: [apart to THEODORE] The strike against marriage. It was bound to come.

THEODORE: [to JUDGE But Church and State--  
[indicates self and JUDGE] must break this strike.

HELEN: John is a practical man. He will prove to you that such a home as we could afford would only be a stumbling-block to Ernest's usefulness, a hollow sphere for mine. You can't fill it with mere happiness, Lucy, not for long, not for long.



JUDGE: [restrains THEODORE about to reply] Oh, let her get it all nicely talked out, then she'll take a nap and wake up feeling better. [Whispering.] We've driven her to this ourselves, but she really doesn't mean a word of it. Come, dear child, tell us all about this nightmare.

HELEN: [smiles at the JUDGE] Why, think what would happen to an eager intellect like Ernest Hamilton's if he had to come back to a narrow-minded apartment or a dreary suburb every evening and eat morbid meals opposite a housewife regaling him with the social ambitions of the other commuters. Ugh! It has ruined enough brilliant men already. [JUDGE restrains THEODORE and others who want to interrupt.] Now at the University Club he dines, at slight expense compared with keeping up a home, upon the best food in the city with some of the best scientists in the country.... Marriage would divorce him from all that, would transplant him from an atmosphere of ideas into an atmosphere of worries. We should be forced into the same deadly ruts as the rest of you, uncle. Do you want me to destroy a great career, Theodore?

THEODORE: Do you want to be a blot upon that career?

HELEN: [lightly] I'd rather be a blot than a blight, and that's what I'd be if I became his bride. Ask John.

LUCY: Do you want to be disgraced, despised, ostracized!

HELEN: [smiles at LUCY] A choice of evils, dear; of course, none of those costly well-kept wives on your visiting list will call upon me. But instead of one day at home, instead of making a tired husband work for me, I'll have all my days free to work with him, like the

old-fashioned woman you admire! Instead of being an expense, I'll be a help to him; instead of being separated by marriage and divergent interests, we'll be united by love and common peril.... Isn't that the orthodox way to gain character, Theodore?

JOHN: Oh, this is all damned nonsense! Look here, you've either got to marry this fellow now or else go away and never see him again; never, never!

HELEN: Just what I thought, John. I intended never to see him again. That was why I let you send me abroad. But I'll never, never do it again. [Smiling like an engaged girl.] It was perfectly dreadful! Ernest couldn't get along without me at all, poor old thing. And I, why, I nearly died.

JOHN: Then you'll have to be married, that's all.

THE OTHERS: Why, of course you'll have to, that's all.

HELEN: [nodding] Oh, I know just how you feel about it. I thought so, too, at first, but I can't marry Ernest Hamilton. I love him.

THEODORE: But if you love him truly--marriage, my dear, brings together those who love each other truly.

HELEN: But those who love each other truly don't need anything to bring them together. The difficulty is to keep apart.

[A reminiscent shudder.

JOHN: That's all romantic rot! Every one feels that way at first.

HELEN: At first! Then the practical object of marriage is not to bring together those who love each other, but to keep together those who do not? [To LUCY.] What a dreadful thing marriage must be!

[JUDGE chokes down a chuckle.

JUDGE: Ah, so you wish to be free to separate. Now we have it.

HELEN: To separate? What an idea! On the contrary, we wish to be free to keep together! In the old days when they had interests in common marriage used to make man and woman one, but now it puts them apart. Can't you see it all about you? He goes down-town and works; she stays up-town and plays. He belongs to the laboring class; she belongs to the leisure class. At best, they seldom work at the same or similar trades.

Legally it may be a union, but socially it's a missalliance--in the eyes of God it's often worse.... No wonder that one in eleven ends in divorce. The only way to avoid spiritual separation is to shun legal union like a contagious disease. Modern marriage is divorce. [She turns to go, defiantly.] I've found my work, I've found my mate, and so has he! What more can any human being ask?

[The BUTLER appears.]

BUTLER: [to JOHN] Doctor Hamilton is outside in a taxicab, sir.

JOHN: Show him here at once!

BUTLER: He says he does not care to come in, sir, unless you are ready to talk to him now.

JOHN: Well, of all the nerve! You bet I'm ready!

[Starts off. HELEN starts, too.]

JUDGE: [intercepting them calmly] Wait a minute-- wait a minute. [To SERVANT.] Ask Doctor Hamilton kindly to wait in the library. [The BUTLER goes.] Now, we're all a bit overwrought. [Soothes HELEN, pats her hand, puts arm about her, gradually leads her back.] I still believe in you, Helen, I still believe in him. [To all.] It's simply that he's so deeply absorbed in his great work for mankind that he doesn't realize what he is asking Helen to do.

HELEN: [quietly] So I told him ... when he asked me to

marry him.

ALL: What! He asked you to marry him?

HELEN: Of course! Implored me to marry him. [She adds, smiling.] So absorbed--not in mankind, but in me--that he "didn't realize what he was asking me to do."

LUCY: [utterly amazed] And you refused him! The man who loves you honorably?

HELEN: [demurely] Of course! You don't suppose I'd take advantage of the poor fellow's weakness. Women often do, I admit--even when not in love, sometimes.... Not because they're depraved but dependent.

JOHN: [to all] And then he proposed this wicked substitute! Poisoned her innocent mind--the boulder!

HELEN: But he did nothing of the sort.

JOHN: Oh, your own idea, was it?

HELEN: Of course!

JOHN: [to all] And he is willing to take advantage of the poor child's ignorance--the cad! [To THEODORE.] "Deep religious nature," eh?

THEODORE: I can't believe it of him.

HELEN: He knows nothing about it yet. I haven't even seen him since I made my decision.

[All exchange bewildered glances.]

JOHN: [apart to JUDGE] We've got to get him off to Paris. It's our only hope.

JUDGE: [apart to JOHN] You can't stop her following. She's on the edge of the precipice--do you want to shove her over? You are dealing with big people here and a big passion.

[The BUTLER returns.]

BUTLER: Doctor Hamilton asks to see Miss Helen while waiting.

JUDGE: [calmly to BUTLER] Tell Doctor Hamilton

that Miss Helen will see him here.

[The BUTLER leaves.]

JOHN: Are you crazy! We've got to keep 'em apart--our one chance to save her.

JUDGE: No, bring them together. That is our one chance. Come, we'll go down into the garden and they'll have a nice little talk. Nothing like talk, John, honest talk, to clear these marriage problems.

[Going.]

JOHN: And let them elope? In that taxicab?--not on your life!

[Runs to and fro.]

JUDGE: Come, John, girls never notify the family in advance when they plan elopements. It's not done.

THEODORE: [going] Uncle Everett is right. Ernest will bring her to her senses. He has a deep religious nature.

[JUDGE leads JOHN away to the garden.]

LUCY: [lingering--to HELEN] If you offer yourself on such terms to the man who loves you honorably, he'll never look at you again.

THEODORE: [leading LUCY off to garden] Don't worry! She won't.

[ERNEST rushes out to HELEN.]

HELEN: Ernest!

ERNEST: At last! [He takes her in his arms; she clings to him and gazes into his eyes; a long embrace.] Tell me that you're all right again.

HELEN: [smiling with love and trust] Except that you deserted me, dear, just when I needed you most.

Ernest, Ernest! never leave me again.

ERNEST: Deserted you? Why, your brother said you were ill.

HELEN: Ah, I see ... he was mistaken.

ERNEST: [jubilant and boyish] But never mind now,  
I've got you at last, and I'll never, never let you go.  
You've got to sail with me to-morrow. Together! Oh,  
think! Together.

[Another embrace.

HELEN: Are you sure you love me?

ERNEST: [laughs from sheer joy of her nearness] Am I  
sure? Ten million times more to-day than yesterday.

HELEN: Even so ... it is not, and can never be, as I love  
you.

ERNEST: [with her hands in his, gayly] Then you can  
apologize.

HELEN: Apologize?

ERNEST: For saying, years and years ago--in other  
words, last night--that you didn't think you'd marry me  
after all. [She starts.] Why, what's the matter? You're  
trembling like a leaf. You are ill!

HELEN: No; oh, no.

ERNEST: [tenderly] Still a few lingering doubts? I had  
hoped a good night's rest would put those little  
prejudices to sleep forever.

HELEN: Sleep?

[She shakes her head, gazing at him soberly.

ERNEST: So you could not sleep? Neither could I; I  
was too happy to sleep. I was afraid I'd miss some  
wondrous throbbing thought of your loveliness. [Takes  
her passive hand, puts a kiss in it, and closes it  
reverently while she looks into his eyes without  
moving.] Do you know, I'm disappointed in love. I  
always thought it meant soft sighs and pretty speeches.  
It means an agony of longing, delicious agony, but, oh,  
terrific. [She says nothing.] Dear, dear girl, it may be  
easy for you, but I can't stand much more of this.

HELEN: Nor I.

ERNEST: You must come to Paris with me or I'll stay home. All through the night I had waking visions of our being parted. Just when we had found each other at last. Some terrible impersonal monster stepped in between us and said: "No. Now that you have had your glimpse of heaven--away! Ye twain shall not enter here...." Silly, wasn't it? But I couldn't get the horror of it out of my head.

HELEN: [nodding] Do you know why, Ernest? Because it was in mine. It came from my thought to yours. You and I are attuned like wireless instruments. Even in the old blind days, there in the laboratory I used to read your mind. Shall I tell you the name of the monster that would put us asunder?... Its name is Marriage.

ERNEST: But I need you. You know that. And you need me. It's too late. We are helpless now--in the clutch of forces more potent than our little selves--forces that brought us into the world--forces that have made the world. Whether you will or no, this beautiful binding power is sweeping you and me together. And you must yield.

HELEN: [reaching for his hand] Ah, my dear, could anything make it more beautiful, more binding than it is now?

ERNEST: It is perfect. The one divine thing we share with God. The Church is right in that respect. I used to look upon marriage as a mere contract. It's a religious sacrament.

HELEN: Does the wedding ceremony make it sacred?

ERNEST: That mediæval incantation! No, love, which is given by God, not the artificial form made by man.

HELEN: I knew it! I knew you'd see it--the mistake of all the ages. They've tried to make love fit marriage. It

can't be done. Marriage must be changed to fit love.

[Impulsively.] Yes, I'll go to Paris with you.

ERNEST: [about to take her in his arms] You darling!

HELEN: [steps back But not as your wife.

ERNEST: [stops--perplexed] You mean ... without marriage?

HELEN: I mean without marriage.

[They look into each other's eyes.

ERNEST: A moment ago I thought I loved you as much as man could love woman. I was mistaken in you--I was mistaken in myself. For now I love you as man never loved before. You superb, you wonderful woman!

HELEN: [holds out her hand to be shaken, not caressed] Then you agree?

ERNEST: [kneels, kisses her hand, and arises] Of course not! You blessed girl, don't you suppose I understand? It's all for my sake. Therefore for your sake--no.

HELEN: Then for my sake--for the sake of everything our love stands for!

ERNEST: [laughing fondly] Do you think I'd let you do anything for anybody's sake you're sure, later, to regret?

HELEN: Then don't ask me to marry you, Ernest. We'd both regret that later. It would destroy the two things that have brought us together, love and work.

ERNEST: Nonsense. Nothing could do that.... And besides, think of our poor horrified families! Think of the world's view!

HELEN: Aren't we sacrificing enough for the world--money, comforts, even children? Must we also sacrifice each other to the world? Must we be hypocrites because others are? Must we, too, be



cowards and take on the protective coloring of our species?

ERNEST: Our ideas may be higher than society's, but society rewards and punishes its members according to its own ideas, not ours.

HELEN: Do you want society's rewards? Do you fear society's punishment?

ERNEST: [jubilantly enfolding her] With you in my arms, I want nothing from heaven, I fear nothing from hell; but, my dear [shrugs and comes down to earth with a smile and releases her], consider the price, consider the price.

HELEN: Aren't you willing to pay the price?

ERNEST: I? Yes! But it's the woman, always the woman, who pays.

HELEN: I am willing to pay.

ERNEST: I am not willing to let you.

HELEN: You'll have to be, dear. I shall go with you on my terms or not at all.

ERNEST: [with decision] You will come with me as my wife or stay at home.

HELEN: [gasping] Now? After all I've said, all I've done? Ernest: I've told the family! I relied upon you. I took for granted--Ernest, you wouldn't--you couldn't leave me behind now.

ERNEST: Thanks to you and what you've made of me, I must and will.

HELEN: Ernest!

[Opens her arms to him to take her.]

ERNEST: [about to enfold her--resists] No! If you love me enough for that [points to her pleading hands]--I love you enough for this. [He turns to go.] Come when you're ready to marry me.

HELEN: [shrill, excited, angered] Do you think this has

been easy for me? Do you think I'll offer myself again on any terms? Never!

ERNEST: You must marry me--and you will.

HELEN: You don't know me. Good-by!

ERNEST: Very well!

[ERNEST, afraid to stay, goes at once. She waits motionless until she hears the automobile carrying him away. She immediately turns from stone to tears, with a low wail. In utter despair, hands outstretched she sinks down upon a bench and buries her face in her hands.

HELEN: Oh, Ernest!... How could you?

[LUCY, THEODORE, JUDGE and JOHN all hurry back, all excited.

THEODORE: Did you see his horrified look?

LUCY: Fairly running away--revolted. Ah!

[Points at HELEN. HELEN arises, defiant, confident, calm.

JOHN: [to HELEN] What did I tell you!

LUCY: You have thrown away the love of an honorable man.

THEODORE: Trampled upon the finest feelings of a deep nature.

JOHN: Let this be a lesson to you. You've lost your chance to marry, your chance to work, and now, by heavens! you will cut out "independence" and stay at home, where women belong, and live down this disgrace ... if you can.

LUCY: With one excuse or another--he'll stay away. He'll never come back.

HELEN: [clear and confident as if clairvoyant] He will! He is coming now.... He is crossing the hall.... He is passing through the library.... He's here!

[But she doesn't turn. ERNEST reappears at the door and takes in the situation at a glance.

JOHN: [still turned toward HELEN] He'll never look at you again, and I don't blame him! I'm a man; I know. We don't respect women who sell out so cheap.

ERNEST: You lie! [All turn, astounded. HELEN runs toward ERNEST with a cry of joy. JOHN starts to block her. To JOHN.] Stop! You're not fit to touch her. No man is.

JOHN: [with a sarcastic laugh] Humph! I suppose that's why you ran away.

ERNEST: Yes. To protect her from myself.

JOHN: Then why come back?

ERNEST: To protect her from you! You cowards, you hypocrites! [He rushes down to HELEN, puts his strong arm about shoulder and whispers rapidly.] Just as I started, something stopped me. In a flash I saw ... all this.

HELEN: [clasping his arm with both hands] I made you come! I made you see!

JOHN: [advances menacingly] By what right are you here in my home? By what right do you take my sister in your arms?

ERNEST: By a right more ancient than man-made law! I have come to the cry of my mate. I'm here to fight for the woman I love! [Arm about HELEN, defies the world. To all.] My trip to Paris is postponed. One week from to-day gather all your family here, and in your home we'll make our declaration to the world.

JOHN: In my home! Ha! Not if I know it.

JUDGE: [restraining JOHN] Play for time, John--he'll bring her around.

JOHN: [to ERNEST] Do you mean to marry her or not? Speak my language!

[ERNEST releases HELEN and steps across to JOHN.  
ERNEST: She decides that--not you.

[All turn to HELEN.

HELEN: Never!

JOHN: [shaking off JUDGE. To HELEN.] You'll go  
with this damned fanatic only over my dead body.

HELEN: [high] And that will only cry aloud the thing  
you wish to hide from the world you fear.

[Just now JEAN is seen slowly returning from  
the garden without REX. Her pretty head is  
bent and, busy with her own sad thoughts, she  
is startled by the following:

ERNEST: There are laws to prevent marriage in some  
cases but none to enforce marriage on women--unless  
they will it.

JOHN: [beside himself with rage] Enforce! Do you  
think I'll ever allow a sister of mine to marry a  
libertine?

JEAN: [thinks they are discussing her, and is outraged]  
But I'm not going to marry him! My engagement is  
broken.

[General consternation. Sobbing, JEAN runs  
into house.

JOHN: My God, what next? Lucy, don't let Rex get  
away! You know what he'll do--and when he sobers  
up, it may be too late. [To ERNEST.] As for you, you  
snake, you get right out of here.

JUDGE: [in the sudden silence] Now you've done it,  
John.

ERNEST: Oh, very well, this is your property.

HELEN: But I am not! I go, too!

[She runs to ERNEST.

THEODORE: Don't commit this sin!

JOHN: Let her go! She's no sister of mine.

JUDGE: [the only calm one] If she leaves this house now, it's all up.

JOHN: A woman who will give herself to a man without marriage is no sister of mine.

HELEN: [about to go, turns, leaning on ERNEST] To all Give!... But if I sold myself, as you are forcing poor little Jean to do, to a libertine she does not love, who does not love her--that is not sin! That is respectability! To urge and aid her to entrap a man into marriage by playing the shameless tricks of the only trade men want women to learn--that is holy matrimony. But to give yourself of your own free will to the man you love and trust and can help, the man who loves and needs and has won the right to have you--oh, if this is sin, then let me live and die a sinner!

[She turns to ERNEST, gives him a look of complete love and trust, then bursts into tears upon his shoulder, his arms enfolding her protectingly.]

### ACT III

It is well along in the afternoon of the same busy day of rest. Most unaccountably--until the JUDGE accounts for it later--the terrace has been decked out with festoons and flowers since the excitement of the morning. Japanese lanterns have been hung, though it is not yet time to light them and though it is Sunday in a pious household. Most incongruously and lugubriously, LUCY is pacing to and fro in silent concern.

THEODORE now comes out of the house, also

looking harassed. Lucy turns to him  
inquiringly. He shakes his head sadly.

LUCY: No word from Uncle Everett?

THEODORE: No word. He must have reached town  
long ago, unless he had tire trouble.... It's a bad sign,  
Lucy, a bad sign. He would surely telephone us.

LUCY: Oh, if he only hadn't missed their train!

THEODORE: [hopelessly] Uncle Everett is the only  
one who could have brought them to their senses.

LUCY: It may not be too late. He took our fastest car,  
our best chauffeur.

THEODORE: Detectives are to watch all the steamers  
to-morrow. John telephoned at once.

LUCY: But to-morrow will be too late! And, oh! when  
it all comes out in the newspapers! The ghastly head-  
lines--"well-known scientist, beautiful daughter of a  
prominent family!" Oh! What will people say?

[JOHN, hurried and worried, rushes out  
shouting for LUCY.]

JOHN: Any news? Any news? [THEODORE and  
LUCY give him gestures of despair.] Then it's too late.  
[He, too, paces to and fro in fury. Then bracing up.]  
Well, I found Rex, over at the Golf Club. Terribly cut  
up. But listen; not a drink, not one!... Where's Jean?  
Got to see her at once.

THEODORE: Locked herself up in her room, John,  
crying her little heart out!

JOHN: Rex is a changed man, I tell you. We've got to  
patch it up, and we've got to do it quick!

LUCY: But, John! When the Bakers hear about Helen ...  
Rex marry into our family? Never! We're disgraced,  
John, disgraced!

JOHN: [impatiently] But they're not going to hear about  
Helen. No one knows, and no one will. Helen has

simply returned to Paris to complete her scientific research. My press-agent--he's attending to all that.  
THEODORE: But questions, gossip, rumor--it's bound to come out in time!

JOHN: In time; but meanwhile, if Jean marries Rex, the Bakers will have to stand for it. What's more, they'll make other people stand for it. Backed by the Bakers, no one will dare turn us down.... Our position in the world, my business relations with the old man--everything hangs on little Jean now. Tell her I've simply got to see her. [LUCY hesitates.] Hurry! Rex is coming over later. [He catches sight of the table, festoons, etc.] Heavens! What's all this tomfoolery?

LUCY: [going] Uncle Everett's orders--he wouldn't stop to explain. He left word to summon the whole family for dinner.

[LUCY goes.]

JOHN: [shrilly] The whole family!... To-day of all days!

THEODORE: John! You must not, shall not, force Jean to marry this man.

JOHN: [unappreciated] Haven't I done everything for my sisters? Can't they even marry for me?

THEODORE: The man she loves or none at all.

JOHN: That cub at the law school? No money to keep a wife, no prospects of any. His father's a college professor.

THEODORE: [shaking head sadly] "No love without marriage, no marriage without--money!" Ernest Hamilton's words this morning, when we walked to church.

JOHN: [watching house expectantly] Survival of the fittest, Theodore, survival of the fittest.

THEODORE: The fittest for what?--for making money!

the only kind of fitness encouraged to survive, to reproduce its species.

JOHN: If the ability to make money is not the test of fitness, what is?

THEODORE: Then you are more fit than a hundred Hamiltons, are you? And Rex? How fit is he? Rex never made a cent in his life.

JOHN: He's got it, all the same.... See here! Haven't I enough to worry me without your butting in? Jean's got to marry somebody, sometime, hasn't she?

THEODORE: But not Rex, not if I can prevent it.

JOHN: But you can't--you have nothing to do with it ... except to perform the ceremony and get a big, fat fee for it.

THEODORE: I--marry Jean and Rex? Never!

[JEAN comes out. She is frightened and turns timidly to THEODORE for protection.

JOHN: Jean, don't detain Theodore. He has an important business letter to write. [THEODORE turns to JOHN indignantly.] Your wife's sanatorium bills--better settle up before they dun you again.

THEODORE: With your money?

[Takes JOHN'S check out of pocket, about to tear it.

JOHN: [catching THEODORE'S hand] For Mary's sake, for the children's--don't give way to selfish pride.... Want to kill your wife? Then take her out of the sanatorium. Want to ruin your children? Then take them out of school!... Cash your check, I tell you, and pay your debts!

[THEODORE glances at JEAN, at check. A struggle. At bay, he finally pockets check and dejectedly goes into the house.

JEAN: [with a wet handkerchief in hand] Well? If I



refuse to marry Rex?... Cut off my allowance or merely bully me to death?

JOHN: [kindly] Oh, come! You've filled your romantic little head full of novels. I never force anybody to do anything. [Suddenly breaks out.] My heavens! what's the matter with all of you? I only want to give you and Lucy and Helen and Theodore and the whole family the best of everything in life! And what do I get for it? I'm a brutal husband, a bullying brother, and a malefactor of wealth. Lord! I guess I have some rights, even if I have got money!

JEAN: Rex has money, too. Should that give him the right to women? I, too, have some rights--even though I am a woman.

JOHN: Any woman who can't care enough for a Baker to marry him--Rex is the sort who would do everything in the world for the woman he loves, everything. All the Bakers are like that.

JEAN: But what would he do for the woman he no longer loves?

JOHN: He wasn't fool enough to tell you about that?

JEAN: About what?

JOHN: [halting] Nothing--I thought--I tell you, Rex has reformed.

JEAN: You thought I meant his "past." I meant his future ... and my own.

JOHN: Well, if you expect to find a saint, you'll never get married at all.

JEAN: And if I never married at all?

JOHN: Then what will you do?

JEAN: [with a wail of despair] That's it--then what should I do--what could I do? Oh, it's so unfair, so unfair to train girls only for this! What chance, what choice have I? To live on the bounty of a disapproving

brother or a man I do not love! Oh, how I envy Helen!  
If I only had a chance, a decent chance!

JOHN: Any sensible girl would envy your chance.

You'll never have another like it. You'll never have another at all! Grab it, I tell you, grab it. [REX comes quietly, a determined look on his face, JOHN sees him.] Now, think, before too late, think hard. Think what it means to be an old maid.

[And leaves them abruptly. JEAN stands alone, looking very pretty in girlish distress. REX gazes at her a moment and then with sudden passion he silently rushes over, seizes her in his arms, kisses her furiously.

JEAN: [indignant, struggles, frees herself, and rubs her cheek] Ugh! How could you!

REX: Because I love you!

JEAN: Love! It isn't even respect now.

REX: Has that fellow ever kissed you?

JEAN: I have begged you never to refer to him again.

REX: He has! He has held you in his arms. He has kissed your lips, your cheeks, your eyes!

JEAN: How many women have you held in your arms? Have I ever tried to find out?

REX: Ah! You don't deny it, you can't.

JEAN: I can! He respects me. I don't deserve it, but he does.

REX: Thank heavens! Oh, you don't know how this has tormented me, little Jean. The thought of any other man's coming near you--why, I couldn't have felt the same toward you again, I just couldn't.

JEAN: [bites her lips--then deliberately] Well, then ... other men have come near me ... other men have kissed me, Rex.

REX: [getting wild again] What! When? Where?

JEAN: [laughing cynically] Oh, in conservatories in town, John's camp in the North Woods, motor rides in the country--once or twice out here on this very terrace, when I've felt sentimental in the moonlight.

REX: [recoiling] Oh! Jean! I never supposed you were that sort!

JEAN: [with distaste] Oh, I don't make a habit of it! I'm not that sort. But ... well, this isn't all I could tell you about myself, Rex.

REX: Don't!... Oh, what do you mean--quick.

JEAN: Oh, I've merely been handled, not hurt. Slightly shop-worn but as good as new.

REX: [after a pause, quietly] Jean, what makes you say such horribly honest things to me?

JEAN: Yesterday I did you a great unkindness, Rex. I deserve to suffer for it.... You don't suppose I enjoy talking this way about myself?

REX: I never heard a girl--a nice girl--talk like this before.

JEAN: Naturally not. Usually "nice" girls hide it. It's an instinct in women--to keep up their value.... Often I've had thoughts and feelings which "nice" girls of your artificial ideal are supposed never to have at all. Perfectly natural, too, especially girls of my sort. We have so little to occupy our minds, except men! To have a useful, absorbing occupation--it rubs off the bloom, lowers our price in the market, you see.

REX: Oh, stop!... If you're not going to marry me, say so, but---

JEAN: But I am!... I am not going to be a dependent old maid. [REX, bewildered, only gazes at her.] But, first, I want you to know exactly what you're getting for your money. That seems only businesslike.

REX: [recoils] Would you only marry me for that?

JEAN: I told you I loved another man. Do you want me?

REX: [with jealousy returning] Do I want you! He shan't have you.

[He comes close.

JEAN: Then take me.

REX: [seizes her passionately] I'll make you love me!

[Kisses her triumphantly.] I'll bring a different light into those cold eyes of yours. Wait until you're married! Wait until you're awakened. I'll make you forget that man, all other men. You are to be mine--all mine, all mine! [During this embrace JEAN is quite passive, holds up her cheek to be kissed, and when he seeks her lips she shuts her eyes and gives him her lips. He suddenly stops, chilled; holding her at arms length.] But I don't care to marry an iceberg. Can't you love me a little? Haven't you any sentiment in your cynical little soul ... you irresistible darling!

JEAN: In my soul? Yes! It's only my body I'm selling, you know.

[Then deliberately--clearly without passion--throws her arms about his neck, clinging close and kissing him repeatedly until REX responds.

REX: Look out, here comes the parson.

[THEODORE comes out of the house.

JEAN: Oh, Theodore! Rex and I have come to an understanding.... Will you solemnize our blessed union?

THEODORE: Not unless you truly love each other. Marriage is sacred.

JEAN: [rapidly] A large church wedding--that will make it sacred. A full choral service--many expensive flowers--all the smartest people invited--that always

makes the union of two souls sacred.

THEODORE: Those who truly love--their friends  
should witness the solemn rite, but---

JEAN: [interrupts. To REX] And my wedding gown  
will be white satin with a point-lace veil caught up  
with orange-blossoms and a diamond tiara--"the gift of  
the groom"--that ought to make it solemn.

THEODORE: The white veil is the symbol of purity,  
Jean.

JEAN: [rattling on wildly] Of purity, Rex, do you hear?  
Whenever you see a bride in the white symbol of  
purity she is pure--that proves it. That makes it all so  
beautiful! so sacred! so holy! holy! holy!

[Hysterically turns and runs into the house as  
JOHN comes out.

THEODORE: [following] Jean, you must not, you shall  
not--[JOHN blocks THEODORE. REX runs in after  
JEAN. To JOHN.] John, I warn you! I'll prevent this  
marriage. I'll tell every clergyman in the diocese. I'll  
inform the bishop himself. This marriage would be a  
sacrilege.

JOHN: You dare threaten me--after all I've done for  
you!

THEODORE: Your five thousand was a loan--not a  
bribe--every cent of it will be returned.

JOHN: You can't return it. I wouldn't let you if you  
could. Come, it's all in the family. [THEODORE  
shakes his head.] You know that beautiful Gothic  
chapel old man Baker is building on his estate? He  
likes you. I'll tell him you're just the man he's looking  
for--safe and sane--no socialistic tendencies.

THEODORE: Don't trouble yourself--he offered me the  
place this morning.

JOHN: You didn't refuse it!

THEODORE: I did--this morning. But since my last talk with you I've reconsidered, I've telephoned my acceptance.

JOHN: [genuinely] glad Bully! Great! Why, now you're fixed for life. "Only one kind of fitness encouraged," eh?... Right always triumphs in the end. Never lose your faith again, Theodore.

THEODORE: Right? That whited sepulchre! his mill hands dying like flies, his private life a public scandal!

JOHN: [with a cynical grin] Then why accept his tainted money?

THEODORE: [from his soul] To keep my wife alive. To keep my children out of the streets. To keep myself out of deeper debt to you. That's why I accept it--that's why many a man sells his soul to the devil.... If I had only myself to consider--why, to me a little thing like death would be a blessed luxury. But I, why, John, I cannot afford--even to die. I must compromise and live--live for those dependent on me.... Your five thousand will be returned with interest, but your little sister will not be married to a man she does not want.

JOHN: But Rex wants her and money talks in this world, louder than the Church. Refuse to marry Baker's son and how long will you keep Baker's chapel?... Think it over, Theodore, think it over.

[Suddenly the JUDGE in motor garments covered with dust comes out panting, followed by LUCY calling.

LUCY: Uncle Everett! Uncle Everett!

JUDGE: John! Oh, John!

JOHN: Where is she!

THEODORE: You were too late!

JUDGE: Wait! Give me time to get my breath.

[Fans himself with his cap and mops brow.

JOHN: My detective--didn't he meet their train?

[JUDGE nods yes.

LUCY: But they saw him first?

[JUDGE shakes head no.

THEODORE: Didn't he follow them?

[JUDGE nods yes.

JOHN: Where'd they go? Where are they? Speak, man, speak!

JUDGE: [raises cap and handkerchief] Now, just give me a chance and I'll tell the whole story.... The detective was waiting at the station. He saw them step out of the train. He followed them to the cab-stand. He watched them get into a taxi--jumped into another himself--and away they went, pursued by the detective and blissfully ignorant of his existence.... Even now they don't know they were being watched--or else ... well, they might have taken another course.

LUCY: Quick! Tell us the worst.

JUDGE: [hesitates] Well ... they drove straight to Helen's apartment.

LUCY: And you were too late. I thought so.

JOHN: But my detective?

JUDGE: He followed and reported to me when I reached town.

LUCY: Reported what? Tell us all.

JUDGE: First he saw Ernest help Helen out of the taxi--very tenderly, like this. Little they realized then how every detail was to be reported to you now!

JOHN: Go on! Go on!

JUDGE: Then the detective saw Ernest deliberately----

LUCY: Yes, go on.

JUDGE: Deliberately lift his hat like this, say "good afternoon" just like that, and drive on to his own apartment a mile away.

[There is a sudden silence; the others waiting  
the JUDGE now sits down.]

LUCY: Oh, is that all?

THEODORE: Why, it's exactly as if they were engaged!

JUDGE: No, Theodore, not exactly as if engaged.

JOHN: You're keeping something back from us! Speak!

JUDGE: [gets up from chair] Must I tell you? It's rather  
delicate.... Well, he didn't even step into the vestibule  
to kiss her good-by.

[All look at each other.]

JOHN: But where are they now? Quick!

LUCY: They met later! I knew it.

JUDGE: Yes, it's true. They are alone together at this  
very moment.

ALL: Where! Where?

JUDGE: [pointing to house] There.

JOHN: What! What are they doing here?

JUDGE: [resumes fanning] Discussing the marriage  
problem. [General rejoicing and relief.] Sssh! Not so  
loud, you might interrupt them.

JOHN: [nodding knowingly] Cold feet! Knew he'd lose  
his job.

LUCY: The disgrace. She couldn't face it.

THEODORE: No, conscience. A deep religious nature.  
[They all think it over a moment, each sure of  
his own diagnosis.]

JOHN: [turning to JUDGE with amusement] So!  
Decided the soul-mate theory wouldn't work in  
practice, eh?

THEODORE and LUCY: And they agree to marry?

JUDGE: [stops fanning] Marry? My, no! Nothing like  
that. They think less of marriage than ever now! Helen  
is using woman's sweet indirect influence on Ernest in  
there at this moment!



[All start toward the house impulsively, but on second thoughts they all stop.]

JOHN: Then how on earth did you get them back!

JUDGE: [lighting cigar] Oh, perfectly simple, I promised Helen you'd apologize to Ernest; promised Ernest you'd apologize to Helen. [To LUCY.] Promised both you'd arrange a nice little family party for 'em. They bear no grudge. They're too happy.

LUCY: [horrified. Indicates table] The family party--for them? Horrors!

JUDGE: [tossing away match] Yes, here in your happy home. [The others turn on the JUDGE indignantly.] Well, don't jump on me. I tell you they positively decline to elope until after they tell the whole damn family. Considerate of them, I say. You don't deserve it, if you ask me.

JOHN: [incredulous] Tell the whole ... see here, are they crazy? Are you crazy? Do you think I'm crazy? [Impetuously turns toward the house, a man of action.]

JUDGE: [stopping JOHN] Wait!... You've already done your best to destroy your sister--but you've utterly failed. They have done nothing wrong--as yet. Why, they are the finest, truest, noblest pair of lovers I ever met! Now, aren't they, Theodore?

THEODORE: I can't say that I call Helen's ideas of marriage "noble," exactly!

JUDGE: [grandiloquent] She is willing to sacrifice even marriage for his career. Isn't that noble? And he! willing to sacrifice even his career for marriage. Both noble, if you ask me.

JOHN: [loud] Noble tommy-rot!--a pair of pig-headed, highbrow fools! They don't have to sacrifice anything for anybody. Can't they work together just as well

married as unmarried?

JUDGE: [slyly] That's what I said to her, but you had already convinced her that it was impractical. Work and marriage--"combine the two, and you'll fail at both"--your own warning, John.

JOHN: [angry] B'r'r--you think you're very funny, don't you! But that's my sister in there, planning to be that fellow's mistress--right here in my own house!

Anything funny about that!

JUDGE: [stepping aside] All right, go put a stop to it then! [JOHN starts toward house.] It's your own house--turn her out again. [JOHN stops short.] What are you going to do about it, John? [JOHN has no answer.] Drive little Jean into marriage with a man she does not love--she is an old-fashioned girl. But your other sister--you can't make her marry even the man she does love, unless she sees fit. She is the New Woman! Society can no longer force females into wedlock--so it is forcing them out ... by the thousands! Approve of it? Of course not. But what good will our disapproval do? They will only laugh at you. The strike is on. Few of the strikers will let you see it. Few of the strikers have Helen's courage. But, believe it or not, the strike will spread. It cannot be crushed by law or force. Unless society wakes up and reforms its rules and regulations of marriage, marriage is doomed.... What are you going to do about it? [Silence.] I thought so--nothing. Call them bad women and let it go at that. Blame it all on human nature, made by God, and leave untouched our human institutions, made by man. You poor little pessimists! human nature to-day is better than it ever was, but our most important institution is worse--the most sacred relationship in life has become a jest in the market-place.... You funny little cowards,

you're afraid of life, afraid of love, afraid of truth. You worship lies, and call it God!

JOHN: [interrupts] All right, all right--but we can't change marriage overnight just to suit Helen. What are you going to do about it?

JUDGE: There's just one thing to do. Will you back me up in everything I say?

JOHN: [acknowledging his own defeat] Anything--everything.

JUDGE: Then tell Helen she doesn't have to marry, that, with the best intentions, the Church has made a muddle of monogamy.

JUDGE: That we all admire their consecrated courage and advise their trying this conscientious experiment.

JOHN: Not if I have anything to say about it!

JUDGE: But you haven't. Do please get that through your head.... Theodore, they've talked enough, ask them to step out here and receive John's blessing. [Impatiently.] Go on--I'll fix John. [THEODORE goes. To JOHN, who is about to burst forth.] Oh, see here, did you ever pull a dog into the house against his will?... Let him alone and he'll follow you in, wag his tail, and lick your hand.

JOHN: You mean, they'll come in, be respectable?

JUDGE: Admit that marriage has numerous drawbacks--and they'll see its advantages. Deny it--and they'll see nothing but each other. Marriage is in a bad way, but it's the less of two evils. Marriage must adjust itself to the New Woman--but the New Woman must meanwhile adjust herself to marriage. [Briskly to LUCY.] Now, then, did you send out that hurry call for the family this evening?

LUCY: Yes, they're on their way here now, but Uncle Everett, Doctor Hamilton said, next week.

JUDGE: Yes, I know--it'll be a little surprise party for Helen.... Did you order some music?

LUCY: Yes, the musicians are to be stationed in the library.

JUDGE: Excellent, excellent. [Indicates tables and festoons.] All that junk will help, too. A good Sunday supper this evening, Lucy; your best champagne, John--gay spirits, family affection, warm approval, toasts to the future. Why, all we'll have to do is-- [Breaks off.] Here they come. Now follow my lead. They've done a lot of thinking since you saw them last, but--make one misstep and it's all off.

LUCY: Be nice to her, John. It was just a girlish impulse.

[JOHN opens arms to receive HELEN.]

JOHN: My sister! All is forgiven.

HELEN: [stops short, her lip curls] You forgive me?  
[Before JOHN can reply, THEODORE and ERNEST follow, talking.]

ERNEST: But I tell you he had a perfect right to put me off his property. The thing I can't overlook--[Sees JOHN and LUCY. Points finger at them accusingly.] Theodore has told me what you thought.... Please don't judge us by yourselves again--you licentious-minded married people!

[He shrugs his shoulders with fastidious disgust and turns his back upon them.]

JOHN: [gasping] Well, I'll be damned.

JUDGE: [whispers] Stand for it--he's right.

THEODORE: But Ernest ... I'm bound to say when two people run away together----

ERNEST: Ah, Theodore! you, too? Are all married people alike? Did we want to "run away" as you call it? Did we not ask for a week to think it over? Did we

not stipulate that in any case we must frankly face the family first? But this person--what did he do? he ordered us off his property, like trespassers! What could we do? Sit down in the road and wait a week? Bah! we went home--you suspicious married people, you hypocritical, unspeakable married people! [JUDGE has difficulty in restraining JOHN.] Why, I believe our good friend the Judge here is the only decent-minded, properly married person on your property.

JOHN: [bursting out] Decent-minded--why, he's div----  
[LUCY stops him.]

JUDGE: [steps in] Dev-oted to his wife. Lucy is jealous of what I'm doing for my wife. [Controls laughter.] Now come, we must all just let bygones be bygones. We know your intentions are honorable, your courage admirable; and for whatever was amiss in word, deed, or thought, we all humbly apologize--don't we, John? [JOHN bows uncomfortably.] Lucy? Theodore? And now I want you all to tell Ernest and Helen what you told me--that their arguments against marriage are unanswerable, their logic unimpeachable, and we no longer have the slightest intention or desire to get them divorced by matrimony. [JOHN, THEODORE, and LUCY look dubious. JUDGE crosses over and pinches them. HELEN and ERNEST are utterly bewildered.] Why, we wouldn't let a little thing like marriage come between them for the world, would we, John? would we, Lucy? would we, Theodore?

JOHN: [with an effort] I agree with Uncle Everett entirely.

JUDGE: And you, Theodore?

THEODORE: [in a low voice] Perfectly.

JUDGE: And you, Lucy?

LUCY: [with a nervous glance at JOHN] Absolutely.

JUDGE: [to the lovers] There. You see?

[ERNEST looks from one to the other in amazement.

HELEN: [laughing I don't believe a word of it!

JUDGE: Why not? why not?

HELEN: Very well, then invite the whole family here next Sunday!

JUDGE: They'll be here in an hour.

[Points to tables.

HELEN and ERNEST: [recoiling] In an hour!

JUDGE: Yes, you are to begin your new life together this evening! Isn't it lovely?

HELEN: [gasping] But that's so sudden. Why, we--we aren't ready.

THEODORE: Just as ready as you'll ever be.

JUDGE: Ernest's vacation begins to-morrow--your honeymoon.

HELEN: But, don't you see----

LUCY: Those new Paris clothes John gave you--your trousseau.

ERNEST: Well, but----

JUDGE: And this family gathering this evening, your-- in a manner of speaking--wedding party. [Waving aside all the lovers' objections.] Now, it's all fixed, let's go and dress for the--as it were--ceremony.

ERNEST: [blocks the way. Serious] Wait! Did I ever say I would not marry this woman?

[All stop, turn, exchange glances.

JUDGE: [apart] Ah! a broad-minded chap.

JOHN: [with a wink at JUDGE] Ah! so you think you'd like to marry my sister after all?

ERNEST: Oh, you're an ass! What have I been doing for the past twenty-four hours? Begging her to marry me.

What have you been doing? Preventing it. Why did I postpone sailing for a week? Why did I insist upon the family party? [Comes nearer to JOHN.] You're an idiot.

JUDGE: [pinching JOHN] Stand for it, John. You've got to stand for it. Tell him you love him like a brother ... in-law.

JOHN: [controls himself] Well, I ... I--you have my consent, Doctor Hamilton, I'm sure.

ERNEST: Your consent! What's that got to do with it? [They all turn toward HELEN. ERNEST steps between them.] Now wait!... This morning you tried bullying. Did it work? This afternoon bluffing. Think that will work? [Hand on HELEN'S shoulder.] You can't frighten her into marriage. I've tried that myself. We've got to appeal to some higher motive than self-interest or superstition with this woman, racial motives, unselfish motives. [With force.] But don't talk to me about her being "immoral." I won't stand for it. If you want her to marry, prove the morality of marriage.

THEODORE: The "morality of marriage"! What next?

ERNEST: [to THEODORE] That's what I said--the morality of marriage! This woman is not on trial before you. Marriage is on trial before her, and thus far I'm bound to say you've not made out a good case for it. But simply justify her marrying me, and--I give you my word--you can perform the ceremony this very evening. No license is required in this State, you know.

[This creates a sensation.

JUDGE: Now, what could be fairer than that! [To HELEN.] Do you agree to this?

HELEN: [she nod]s We agree in everything.

JUDGE: Both broad-minded!

HELEN: [quietly] I never said I did not believe in a

legal wedding--[others surprised] for those who can afford the luxury of children.... But for those who have to take it out in working for other people's children all their lives--a ceremony seems like a subterfuge. Without children I don't see how any marriage is ever consummated--socially.

THEODORE: Ah, but this relationship--it's a sacred thing in itself.

HELEN: [sincerely] I know it. I want to do right, Theodore, please believe that I do! But the kind of marriage preached by the Church and practised by the world--does that cherish the real sacredness of this relationship? Of course, I can only judge from appearances, but so often marriage seems to destroy the sacredness--yes, and also the usefulness--of this relationship!

ERNEST: But, my dear girl----

HELEN: [smiles] He thinks so, too. Only he has a quaint, mannish notion that he must "protect me." [To ERNEST, patting his arm.] Haven't you, dear!

[Again she has raised the shield of flippancy.

JUDGE: What did I tell you, Theodore? The old marriage doesn't fit the New Woman. A self-supporting girl like Helen objects to obeying a mere man--like Ernest.

HELEN: [patting the JUDGE'S arm affectionately, too] Uncle Everett, you know nothing about it! You think you understand the new generation. The only generation you understand is the one which clamored for "Woman's Rights." [To ERNEST.] I obey you already--every day of my life, do I not, dear? [Looking up into his face.] You're my "boss," aren't you, Ernest? [To JUDGE.] But I do object to contracting by law for what is better done by love.



JUDGE: [laughs fondly] But suppose the promise to obey were left out?

HELEN: But the contract to love--[To THEODORE.] that's so much worse, it seems to me. Obedience is a mere matter of will, is it not? But when a man promises to love until death----

THEODORE: Are you so cold, so scientific, so unsexed, that you cannot trust the man you love?

HELEN: Why, Theodore, if I didn't trust him I'd marry him! Contracts are not for those who trust--they're for those who don't.

LUCY: [takes HELEN apart] Now, I may be old-fashioned, Helen, but I'm a married woman, and I know men. You never can tell, my dear, you never can tell.

HELEN: Do you think I'd live with a man who did not love me? Do you think I'd live on a man I did not love? [LUCY blinks.] Why, what kind of a woman should I be then! The name wife--would that change it? Calling it holy--would that hallow it?... Every woman, married or not, knows the truth about this! In her soul woman has always known. But until to-day has never dared to tell.

ERNEST: [approaching HELEN] Oh, come now--those vows--they aren't intended in a literal sense. Ask Theodore. Why, no sane person means half of that gibberish. "With all my worldly goods I thee endow"--millions of men have said it--how many ever did it? How many clergymen ever expect them to!... It's all a polite fiction in beautiful, sonorous English.

HELEN: The most sacred relationship in life! Ernest, shall you and I enter it unadvisedly, lightly, and with LIES on our lips?... Simply because others do?

ERNEST: [a little impatient] But the whole world

stands for this. And the world won't stand for that.

HELEN: Is that reverently, soberly, and in the fear of God? No, cynically, selfishly, and in the fear of man. I don't want to be obstinate, I don't like to set myself up as "holier than thou," but, Ernest, unless we begin honestly, we'll end dishonestly. Somehow marriage seems wicked to me.

JUDGE: [nudging] THEODORE How do you like that?

THEODORE: John is right--they've gone mad.

ERNEST: All the same, you've got to marry me--you've simply got to.

HELEN: You are mistaken. I do not have to marry any one. I can support myself.

ERNEST: Then I'm disappointed in you.

HELEN: And I in you.

ERNEST: I thought you were sensible.

HELEN: I thought you were honest.

ERNEST: Honest! You accuse me of dishonesty?

HELEN: You don't believe in "half of that gibberish." Yet you are willing to work the Church for our own worldly advantage! You are willing to prostitute the most sacred thing in life!... If that is not dishonest, what is!

ERNEST: And you are the woman I love and want to marry! In all my life I was never accused of dishonesty before.

HELEN: You never tried to marry before. No one is honest about marriage.

ERNEST: I never shall try again. I'm going to Paris tomorrow and I'm going alone.

HELEN: Then do it. Don't threaten it so often--do it.

ERNEST: I shall. And I'll never come back.

HELEN: Nobody asked you to.

ERNEST: Helen--for the last time--just for my sake--

marry me.

HELEN: For the last time--no! no! NO!! I won't be a hypocrite even for your sake.

[She turns away, he starts off, then stops, rushes over to her.

ERNEST: [holds out ] I can't. You know it. Without you I'm nothing.

HELEN: [taking both his hands] Without you.... Oh, my dear, my dear.

ERNEST: Forgive me, forgive me.

HELEN: It was all my fault.

ERNEST: No, I was a brute. I'm not worthy of you.

HELEN: [covering his lips with her hand] Sssh--I can't stand it--I was perfectly horrid to you. And you were doing it all for my sake. [Laughing and crying.] You dear old thing--I knew it all the time.

[They seem about to embrace.

JUDGE: [shaking with laughter] Was there ever in the world anything like it!... Well, children, see here. He's willing to lie for your sake. She's willing to die for your sake. Now, why not just split the difference and have a civil ceremony for our sake.

THEODORE: No, they will marry for a better reason. Think of the sin of it! [To HELEN.] Have you no sense of sin?

JUDGE: If not, think of the humor of it! Have you no sense of humor?

HELEN: [still drying eyes and smiling to JUDGE] Not a scrap. Neither has Ernest. Have you, dear?

ERNEST: I hope not--judging from those who always say they have.

THEODORE: [solemnly] Helen, look at Ernest--Ernest look at Helen. [The lovers do so.] Look into each other's very souls!... You know, you must know, that in

the eyes of God this thing would be a sin, a heinous sin.

[The lovers gaze deep into each other's eyes in silence.]

ERNEST: [tremulous from the emotion he has just been through] The glory and the gladness I see in this woman's eyes a sin? Her trust in me, my worship of her, our new-found belief in a future life, our greater usefulness together in this--bah! don't talk to me about sin! Such women cannot sin--they love.

JOHN: [tired out] Oh, you can talk all night, but this is a practical world. How long could you keep your job in the institute? Then how'll you live! Private practice? No respectable home will let you inside the door.

ERNEST: I've seen the inside of respectable homes. I want no more. [Taking from his pocket a piece of paper.] This morning I came to ask for your sister's hand in marriage. Your manners did not please me. So I cabled over to Metchnikoff. [Hands cablegram to JOHN.] His answer. Positions await us both at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. That luxurious suite on tomorrow's steamer still waits in my name.

THEODORE: Ernest! Stop! Think! This woman's soul is in your hands.

[ERNEST seems to hesitate. HELEN crosses to him. JUDGE seizes JOHN, whispers, and shoves him across.]

JOHN: Doctor Hamilton! I apologize!... You're a man of the world. You know what this means--she doesn't. She is in your power--for God's sake go to Paris without her.

[JOHN tries to lead HELEN away from ERNEST. She shudders at JOHN'S masterful touch and clings to her lover.]

ERNEST: And leave her here in your power? Never again! You've forced her out of her work--you'd force her into legalized prostitution, if you could, like her innocent little sister. [Snatches HELEN away from JOHN.] No, married or not, she sails with me in the morning. That's final.

[The lovers turn away together.

JUDGE: Where are you going?

HELEN: To ask Marie to pack my trunk.

ERNEST: To telephone for a motor.

JUDGE: But you won't start until after the family party?

ERNEST: Of course not.

[In a sudden silence HELEN and ERNEST walk into the house, leaving the family in despair.

JUDGE: [after a long sigh, to JOHN I knew you'd bungle it, I knew it--but there's still a chance, just one more card to play.

[The BUTLER comes out.

LUCY: Good heavens! Already?

BUTLER: Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby, Doctor and Mrs. Grey, and the Misses Grey.

LUCY: [flurried] And we're not even dressed!

JUDGE: No matter. It's Sunday--many orthodox people ... why, Mr. Baker won't even dine out on Sunday.

[Enter the persons announced. Greetings. "How warm it is for September." ... "And how's the baby, Margaret?" etc.

JOHN and JUDGE apart are planning excitedly. JEAN and REX come out, and finally HELEN, followed by ERNEST.

BUTLER: Dinner is served, ma'am.

[The SECOND MAN touches button. Japanese

lanterns glow, silver shines, and all move  
toward the tables, a happy, united family.

LUCY: [going-to-dinner manner as she leads the way]  
We can hardly go out formally because we're already  
out, you know. Aunt Susan, will you sit over there on  
John's right? Doctor Hamilton by me? Rex on the other  
side?

JOHN: Here, Helen. No, Jean, you are beside Rex, you  
know.

JUDGE: Until married, then you're separated.

LUCY: Cousin Charlie--that's it. [All take their places.]  
Most extraordinary weather for September, isn't it?

JUDGE: [he slaps his cheek] Isn't it?

LUCY: [shocked and hurt] That's the first mosquito I  
have ever known on our place.

JOHN: [indignantly] We never have mosquitoes here.  
You must have been mistaken.

[The servants are passing in and out of house  
with courses. The BUTLER now brings a  
telegram to JUDGE.]

JUDGE: From Julia! [Tears it open eagerly, reads, and  
then shouts.] She's coming back to me, she's coming  
back! Look at that, look at that! [Jumps up and shows  
telegram to JOHN. Then taking it around to LUCY he  
sings to tune of "Merrily we roll along":] Aunt Julia is  
coming back Coming back--coming back Aunt Julia  
is coming back Coming back from Reno.

HELEN: [laughing] From Reno? That sounds like  
divorce, Uncle Everett.

JUDGE: Like divorce? Does that sound like divorce?  
[Takes telegram from LUCY and hands it to HELEN.]  
Read it aloud.

HELEN: [reading] "Dear boy, I can't stand it, either.  
Come to me or I go to you."

JUDGE: [sings during the reading] Coming back from Reno. [Breaks off--to HELEN.] So you thought we wanted a divorce, did you?

HELEN: I never dreamed of such a thing.

JUDGE: [looks at her a moment, then in a burst] Well, I did. The dream of my life--your Aunt Julia's, too. We thought we believed in trial marriage, but we don't--we believe in trial separation!

THEODORE: [uncomfortably] They thought they didn't love each other, but they do, you see.

JUDGE: We don't, we don't, but we can't get along without each other ... got the habit of having each other around and can't break it.... This morning I telegraphed: "Are you doing this just for my sake?" She replied, "Tutti-frutti." [Sings.] Aunt Julia's coming back. Oh, I'm too happy to eat. [Singing, while others eat and drink] Coming back, coming back, Aunt Julia is coming back Coming back from Reno. And I don't care who knows it. The more the better for marriage. The truth--give me more truth, give me more--champagne. [BUTLER fills glass as JUDGE raises it.] Here's to your Aunt Julia, the best wife--I ever had. [All rise, drink, laugh, and sit down.] And I'll never, never get another.... You know I thought maybe I might. Oh, Everett, Everett, you sly dog, you old idiot you!

JOHN: [arises, clearing throat, tapping on glasses for silence] And now, speaking of divorce, I have an engagement to announce. [Some laughter but all quiet down. He smiles at JEAN.] Of course, you can't guess whose. Friends, it is my privilege to announce the engagement of my good friend Rex Baker to my dear sister Jean. [Gentle applause and congratulations. Music begins.] And so I will now ask all to arise and

drink to the health and prosperity of my little sister and my brother-in-law to be! And my best wish is that they will be as happy as my better half and me. [All cheer and drink health standing.] Speech, Rex!

[Some of them playfully try to put him on his feet.

REX: [shaking his head and maintaining his seat] I can't make a speech. I'm too happy for words--See-what-I-mean?

HELEN: [in a low, significant tone] Jean, aren't you going to say something?

JEAN: [arises, all silent, she looks at LUCY, REX, JOHN] Words cannot describe my happiness, either.  
[She resumes her seat, and all gather round to congratulate JEAN and REX.

JOHN: [rapping for quiet] One moment, one moment. Another toast, another toast! [Others quiet down.] We have with us to-night one who, in honoring whom we honor ourselves, one who with capital back of him would soon become the greatest scientist in America! [JUDGE leads applause, "hear, hear!" etc. JOHN raises glass.] To the distinguished guest whom I am proud to welcome to my humble board, to the noble humanitarian whom Mr. Baker delights to honor, to the good friend whom we all admire and trust, Doctor Ernest Hamilton!

[All applaud and about to drink health, JUDGE jumps up.

JUDGE: And to his fair collaborator! the brave woman who at this modern warrior's side daily risks her life for others, handling death and disease in those mighty but unsung battles for the common weal! [Applause.] A New Woman? No, friends, look behind the stupid names the mob would cast, like stones to destroy, look



and you will see your true conservative--willing to appear radical in order to conserve woman's work in the world! willing to appear ridiculous to right ancient wrongs! willing even to appear wrong--for those she loves! Ah, the same old-fashioned woman we all adore, in a form so new we blindly fail to understand her glorious advent before our very eyes! To Helen, the gracious embodiment of all that is sweetest, noblest, and best in womanhood--to Helen! Our lovely Helen!

JOHN: [up again at once] Family approval, social esteem, and an honored career--all this is theirs for the asking! To-day to me they have confessed their love--to-night to you I now announce ... their engagement! Long life and happiness to Helen and Ernest!

[Great enthusiasm--even pounding on the table.

ERNEST arises, looking surprised. JOHN signalling to rest of family to join in.

THE FAMILY

[glasses raised, drowning out ERNEST Long life and happiness, long life and happiness!

ERNEST: [raises hand] Wait! Before you drink this toast.... [The glasses stop midway. Sudden silence.] Your congratulations we appreciate, your kind wishes we desire--but not on false pretences. We are not engaged to be married.

[In the tense silence a shudder ripples the family joy.

REX: [apart to JEAN] Gee! They had a scrap, too?

JOHN: [up, nervously. ERNEST still standing] If I may interrupt.... He has financial reasons--I respect him for it. But this very day the Baker Institute in recognition of Doctor Hamilton's distinguished services to humanity has doubled his salary--doubled it! It's all

right now--it's all right.

REX: [apart to JEAN] Four thousand, eh?... get a very decent touring car for that.

ERNEST: [to all] That is very kind, but that is not the point. True, our mutual needs are such that we cannot live nor work apart, but our convictions are such that we cannot live and work together--in what you have the humor to call "holy wedlock." Now, Helen, the motor is waiting.

[Sensation. Gasps of amazement and horror.

Some jump up from table. A chair is upset.

ERNEST holds HELEN'S wrap. General movement and murmurs.

JOHN: [barring way] You leave this house only over my dead body.

[Others gather around lovers.

JUDGE: [to all] Stand back!... Let him among you who has a purer ideal of love, a higher conception of duty cast the first stone.

[All stop. Silenced.

THEODORE: But this man and this woman would destroy marriage!

JUDGE: [standing beside lovers] No! Such as they will not destroy marriage--they will save it! They restore the vital substance while we preserve the empty shell. Everything they have said, everything they have done, proves it. The promise to love--they could not help it--they took it--I heard them. The instinct for secrecy--they felt it--we all do--but straightway they told the next of kin. [Points to JOHN.] Even when insulted and driven forth from the tribe, they indignantly refused to be driven into each other's arms until you of the same blood could hear them plight their troth! Believe in marriage? Why, there never was, there never will be a

more perfect tribute to true marriage than from this fearless pair you now accuse of seeking to destroy it! [JOHN tries to interrupt, but the JUDGE waves him down.] They have been not only honorable but old-fashioned, save in the one orthodox detail of accepting the authority constituted by society for its protection and for theirs. [To HELEN and ERNEST.] But now, I'm sure, before starting on their wedding journey--another old-fashioned convention they believe in--that, just to please us if not themselves, they will consent to be united in the bonds of holy wedlock by Cousin Theodore who stands ready and waiting with prayer-book in hand.

[Family subsides. Everybody happy.]

THEODORE steps up, opens prayer-book.

THEODORE: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God----"

HELEN: [suddenly loud and clear] Theodore! are you going to marry Rex and Jean?

JOHN: [impatiently] Of course, of course, Mr. Baker's chaplain.

ERNEST: [recoiling] Theodore! You! Are you going to stand up and tell the world that God has joined those two together--GOD?

[THEODORE looks at JOHN but does not deny it and says nothing.]

HELEN: Then you will be blaspheming love--and God who made it. No, you shall not marry us.

ERNEST: [agreeing with HELEN] Some things are too sacred to be profaned.

THEODORE: [overwhelmed] Profaned?... By the Church?

JOHN: Your love too sacred for the Church? The Church has a name for such love! The world a name

for such women!

ERNEST: [about to strike JOHN, then shrugs] A rotten world! A kept Church! Come, let's get away from it all! Come!

[HELEN offers her hand in farewell to LUCY, but JOHN shields her from HELEN'S touch, then to JEAN. REX shields JEAN from contamination, but JEAN weeps.

JUDGE: [barring the way. To ERNEST] Stop! You cannot! The very tie that binds you to this woman binds you to us and to the whole world with hooks of steel! [The lovers are still going, JUDGE ascends steps, facing them.] For the last time! before too late! ERNEST! You know that in the eyes of God you are taking this woman to be your wife.

ERNEST: In the eyes of God, I do take Helen to be my wife--but---

JUDGE: You, Helen! Speak, woman, speak!

HELEN: I take Ernest to be my husband in the eyes of God, but---

JUDGE: [raises his hand augustly and in a voice of authority] Then, since you, Ernest, and you, Helen, have made this solemn declaration before God and in the presence of witnesses, I, by the authority vested in me by the laws of this State do now pronounce you man and wife!

[MR. and MRS. HAMILTON look at each other bewildered. Meanwhile the silence has been pierced, first by a little hysterical scream from JEAN, then the others all wake up and crowd about the happy pair, congratulating them. The women who had snubbed HELEN before cover her with kisses, for now she is fit for their embraces.

JOHN: [to THEODORE] Saved! Saved! Respectable at last, thank God. [Raising his glass and hammering for attention.] Here's to the bride and groom.

[ALL cheer, raise glasses, and drink.

ERNEST: [when the noise dies down. As the others kiss HELEN] A moment ago you were a bad woman. Now [to all] behold! she is a good woman. Marriage is wonderful.

[JOHN and LUCY run to JUDGE and shake hands.

JUDGE: [to JOHN and LUCY, his wife] Yes, Respectability has triumphed this time, but let Society take warning and beware! beware! beware!

## CURTAIN

\* \* \* \* \*

### ADVANCE NOTICE BY THE AUTHOR

One afternoon shortly before the New York "opening" of this comedy a most estimable lady sat down to make me a cup of tea.

"Now, do tell me, what is your play about?" she inquired with commendable enthusiasm. For, being a true woman, she had early achieved the becoming habit of letting members of the superior sex talk about themselves.

"Why Marry?" said I, "tells the truth about marriage."

"Oh, why," she expostulated, "why write unpleasant plays?"

"But it is not 'unpleasant.'"

"Then it isn't true!" she exclaimed. "That is, I mean--I mean--did you say cream or lemon?"

And in the pause which accompanied the pouring of the cream I detected the look of one realizing too late that it is always better to think before speaking.

This little incident, it seemed to me, epitomizes

charmingly the attitude of "our nicest people" toward our fundamental institution. The truth about marriage must be unpleasant. Therefore, tell us something we know isn't true. It will be so much nicer for our young people. It is to be feared, however, that young people who go to see "Why Marry?" in the hope of being shocked do not get their money's worth. I have heard of but two persons who have been scandalized by this play, and they were both old people. One was a woman in the country who had not seen it, but had read the title, and so wrote several indignant letters about it. The other was an elderly bachelor of the type which finds useful occupation in decorating club windows like geraniums. He took his niece to see it, and, deciding at the end of Act II that the play was going to be unpleasant in Act III, took her home at once. The next afternoon she appeared at the matinée with a whole bevy of her own generation and saw the rest of the play. I asked her later if it had shocked any of them.

"Oh, no," she replied, "we are too young to be shocked." That little incident also struck me as socially significant. There never were two generations inhabiting the same globe simultaneously with such widely separated points of view.

\* \* \* \* \*

For several years after this play was first published no theatrical manager on Broadway would produce it. I don't blame them, I want to thank them for it. I doubt if this sort of thing could have appealed to many theatre-goers then, especially as my young lovers are trying to be good, not bad. "Self-expression" and "the right to happiness" do not enter into their plans. The causes of their courageous and, of course, mistaken decision are unselfish and social motives, however futile and

antisocial the results would have been had not their desperate determination been thwarted.... When this play was first published most people were not thinking along these lines. Such ideas were considered radical then. They will soon be old-fashioned--even on the stage. Kind and discriminating as the critics have been in regard to this comedy (a discriminating critic being, of course, one who praises your play), few of them have seen the point which I thought I was making emphatically clear, namely, that we can't cure social defects by individual treatment. Not only the lovers, but all the characters in this play are trying to do right according to their lights. There is no villain in this piece. At least the villain remains "off stage." Perhaps that is why so few see him. You are the villain, you and I and the rest of society. We are responsible for the rules and regulations of the marriage game. Instead of having fun with human nature, I tried to go higher up and have fun with human institutions.

I say "tried," because apparently I did not succeed. The joke is on me. Still, I can get some amusement out of it: for a great many people seem to like this play who would be indignant if they knew what they were really applauding. They think they are merely enjoying "satire on human nature." Now, it is a curious fact that you can always curse human nature with impunity; can malign it, revile it, boot it up and down the decalogue, and you will be warmly praised. "How true to life!" you are told. "I know some one just like that." (It is always some one else, of course.) But dare lay hands on the Existing Order--and you'll find you've laid your hands on a hornet's nest.

You see, most people do not want anything changed--except possibly the Law of Change. They do not object

to finding fault with mankind because "you can't change human nature," as they are fond of telling you with an interesting air of originality. But laws, customs, and ideals can be changed, can be improved. Therefore they cry: "Hands off! How dare you!" Man made human institutions, therefore we reverence them. Whereas human nature was merely made by God. So we don't think so much of it. We are prejudiced, like all creators, in favor of our own creations. After all, there is excellent precedent for such complacency. Even God, we are informed, pronounced his work "all very good" and rested on the seventh day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pretty nearly everything in the play as acted is in the book as published; but by no means all that is in the book could possibly be enacted on the stage in two hours and a half. One scene, a breakfast scene between John and his wife, has been amplified for acting, but all the other scenes as printed here have been shortened for stage purposes and one or two cut out entirely.

The "set" was changed to represent the loggia, instead of the terrace, of John's "little farm." Outdoor scenes are not supposed to be good for comedy. Walls, or a suggestion of them, produce a better psychological effect for the purpose, besides making it possible to speak in quieter, more intimate tones than when the voice spills out into the wings and up into the paint loft.

Near the end of the play a number of relatives, rich and poor, are supposed to arrive for dinner and for influencing by their presence the recalcitrant couple.

That is the way it is printed and that is how it was acted during the first few weeks of the Chicago run. But though the family may have its place in the book, it proved to be an awful nuisance on the stage. No matter



how well these minor parts might be acted (or dressed), their sudden irruption during the last and most important moments of the performance distracted the audience's attention from the principal characters and the main issue. It was not clear who was who. Programmes fluttered; perplexity was observed.... So we decided that the family must be destroyed. It is always a perplexing problem to devise a substitute for the family.

JESSE LYNCH WILLIAMS.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

HELEN: You're about the most conceited man I ever knew. ERNEST: How can I help it, when you admire me so? Frontispiece

FACING PAGE ALL: Then why, why do you want a divorce? JUDGE: Because, damn it, I don't like her 30

JUDGE: You poor little pessimists! Human nature to-day is better than it ever was, but our most important institution is worse--the most sacred relationship in life has become a jest in the market-place 204

JUDGE: We thought we believed in trial marriage. Nothing of the sort--trial separation! What marriage put asunder divorce has joined together 230