

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

A comedy in four acts
Adapted from the 1899 comedy by
C. Haddon Chambers
as found in
the Marks Brothers Dramatic Company archive
at the Perth Museum

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EDITOR'S NOTES

What a hidden treasure I have discovered! Languishing in an actor's trunk for nearly a century, **The Tyranny of Tears** is a funny, witty, vital and only-slightly-sentimental domestic comedy. In places, the play reminds me of the kind of verbal fencing that Oscar Wilde did so well in **An Ideal Husband**. Not that this play is of quite the same quality, but it certainly deserves a spot on the second tier.

The manuscript is a carbon, fairly typed but with numerous typographical and other errors. I have used British spelling throughout, on the assumption that the author did use it when he remembered, but lapsed occasionally into Americanisms.

The play's characters are well-drawn, engaging and very satisfying. They are certainly not the stock characters to be found in most of the other scripts in the Marks Brothers archive, rather they are intelligent and surprising throughout. The plot is very simple and, perhaps to our modern minds, a tempest in a tea-pot, but it is certainly plausible and sustaining, which are basic requirements for a plot.

The play's principal fault lies in the author's inability to keep away from sentiment for its own sake at the end. The last three pages of the original script would make a modern audience cringe, yet I am sure playgoers in their own time wept tears and cheered the homilies. It is not, however, that the sentiments are really unacceptable to modern minds, merely expressed in a way that no longer meets our tastes, and, of course, there is no accounting for taste.

A hasty note: It turns out (Ed. 2004) that the play was written by C. Haddon Chambers and debuted in London in, I think, 1895, moving to Broadway for a run of nearly 200 performances in 1899. Haddon was an Australian, living in England, a contemporary of Oscar Wilde and one of the "smart set" of London society, sometimes socializing with the Prince of Wales.

As always with these scripts, one of the most fascinating things for me has been the glimpse into the lifestyle of the time. An example: it is evident that this play was written very early in the history of the telephone; the detailed instructions on its use in the play and the authentic vocabulary of telephone etiquette of the time is a tidbit that is, in and of itself, worth the effort of restoring this play.

There are, however, many other rewards. Among the pot-boilers and toss-offs that many of the scripts in the Marks Brothers archive are, **The Tyranny of Tears** is an eminently stage-worthy play written by a talented playwright.

In this adaption, I have attempted to smooth over the places where Victorian ideas clash with our own, arriving, I hope, at a script that is stageable today, while staying true to the idea behind the original.

David Jacklin
April 2, 2002
amended May 2004

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

CAST

Mr. Clement Parbury, a writer.
Mr. George Gunning, Parbury's friend.
Colonel Armitage, Mrs. Parbury's father.

Mrs. Mabel Parbury, Parbury's wife.
Miss Hyacinth Woodward, Mr. Parbury's secretary.

Evans, the Parbury's butler.
Caroline, the Parbury's maid.

Ed. *Parbury's* first name is given as *Clement* in MS. but pencilled over to be *Gilbert*; *Mrs. Parbury* is *Mabel*, but pencilled over to be *Sylvia*. *Miss Hyacinth Woodward* has become *Miss Millicent Merryman*; *George Gunning*, *Royal Playford*; *Colonel Armitage*, *Colonel Alvary*. *Evans* remains *Evans*, but *Caroline* appears to have been written out entirely, poor thing.

The Scene

The Parbury's home, Hampstead Heath, England, about 1885-1890.

Act I: Mr. Parbury's study, one summer afternoon.

Act II: the same, after dinner that evening.

INTERMISSION

Act III: the Parbury's garden, the next morning.

Act IV: as Act I and II, noon of the same day.

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS
ACT I.

SCENE:

(Mr. Clement Parbury's study at his house in the neighbourhood of Hampstead Heath. The main entrance leading from the hall is L. A door R. leads to the dining room. A glass door, R.C. opens into a garden. The fireplace is C. The room is comfortably and not severely furnished. The furniture is made up of "odds and ends" selected with taste. The couch down L. is a deep and cosy one; the desk or writing table about R.C. is a large and serviceable one: there is a smaller desk higher up, and near it on wall R. a telephone apparatus. The apartment altogether represents the workshop of a literary man of careless good taste. There is a touch, too, of femininity in its decorations, and a portrait of Mrs. Parbury is the only picture on the walls, which otherwise are mostly hidden by bookcases.) (For a few moments before, and when the curtain rises the noise of street singers is heard. Miss Woodward and Evans are discovered. Miss Woodward is dressed with severe simplicity in a custom of dark color, with linen cuffs and collar: her dark hair is drawn back from her forehead. Her custom, being well cut, does not conceal the graceful outline of her figure. She is a handsome, innocent, yet determined-looking girl of twenty. She is at the window looking out.)

Evans:

(Raising his voice above the outside singers) They wouldn't listen to me, Miss Woodward: (Suddenly the music stops; a pause) Ah, they've listened to Mr. Parbury; (Miss Woodward goes to desk R. sits) Mr. Parbury's a very masterful man—outside his house—isn't he, Miss? (Miss Woodward favours Evans with a clod stare, then resumes work at desk.) (Aside) What an iceberg that young woman is. (Telephone bell rings) (Exit Evans, L.) (Miss Woodward goes to telephone and takes line.)

Miss Woodward:

(Speaking into telephone-very softly) Yes, are you there? Yes, who are you? Speak a little louder, please. Oh. Well? Yes—I don't know—Mr. Parbury's just coming in now—he'll speak to you—keep the line. (She returns to desk)

Parbury:

(L.) Thank Heaven, they're gone. This house is a mistake. With the nerve force one expends in swearing at street singers one might do some good work. Make a note please: look for house in secluded part of country. (Miss Woodward makes note) And make a note: write Times re: street music; suggest Transportation.

The Tyranny of Tears 2

Miss Woodward: The Saturday Sentinel is waiting to speak to you in the telephone.

Parbury: Oh, worrying about the article, I suppose. *(Goes to telephone)* Hullo; hullo; *(Gives them a ring up)* Are you there? *(Crossly)* Are you there? Well? *(Pause; he listens)* Oh, of course! *(Covers the tube; to Miss Woodward)* Still harping on my article. *(Into the tube)* I suppose that's you, Jackson? Oh, well if you'll keep this confounded telephone quiet, and send a man to clear the neighbourhood of street singers, you'll have a chance of receiving the copy in half-an-hour. What? All right, old man. Yes, yes. I'll send it by special messenger. Yes. Goodbye. *(Ring off, and hangs up tube)* That is another mistake—that telephone.

Miss Woodward: I was afraid you would find it so.

Parbury: You were right. You are always right, but my wife thought it would save me a lot of correspondence and a lot of going out. *(Aside with a sigh)* I always liked going out. *(Aloud)* Make a note please: get rid of telephone. Possible solution: bonfire. *(Miss Woodward makes note)* *(Goes to top of table R.C.)* Now, we'll get on, please. I've promised the article in half-an-hour. *(Looks at his watch)* They go to press this afternoon.

Miss Woodward: *(Sits at desk note book before her)* Shall I read the last sentence?

Parbury: Please.

Miss Woodward: *(Reading)* "The pity of it is that Mr. Theodore Bellevue seems to enjoy a positively huge contentment of his own achievement—"

Parbury: *(Thinking)* The pity of it—yes—yes—of his own achievement. Yes. *(Walks the stage)* Achievement. *(Under his breath)* Damn the street singers; damn the telephone. *(Aloud)* What it is? Oh, ah: Contentment of his own achievement—er—er *(Dictates)* "One gathers from the complacency of his manner—*(Pause)*—that his iconoclasm is its own reward—" Er—"What follows is the approval of the unthinking—the applause of the uncultured—" *(Pause)* What's that?

Miss Woodward: The applause of the uncultured.

Parbury: "Makes up—makes up—" *(Pulls his hair)* Er—

(Enter Mrs. Parbury L. She is a pretty fragile woman of about twenty eight, and is charmingly dressed.)

- Mrs. Parbury: I'm not interrupting, am I, darling?
- Parbury: *(Concealing his irritation)* No, darling, but—
- Mrs. Parbury: I'll be ever so quiet. *(Comes to couch sits L.)*
- Parbury: Yes, I know dear—but, I fear—I fear you'll be rather bored. I'm dictating an article that must be finished this afternoon—
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh, I shall like it; go on as if I were not in the room. But, oh, how tumbled your hair is. *(Rise, goes to him)* I must put it straight. Then you'll be able to think better. There; now I can see this clever forehead again. *(Goes to couch and sits)*
- (Parbury walks up C. and back, trying to collect his thoughts; then he looks at Mrs. Parbury with the wish in his face that she were not there; finally he goes over to Miss Woodward and speaks in a lowered voice.)*
- Parbury: *(At the top of the table R.)* What was that last?
- Miss Woodward: *(Reading in a lowered voice)* “What follows is the approval of the unthinking. The applause of the uncultured makes up—”
- Parbury: Yes, yes. Makes up. *(Fidgeting)* Makes up—*(Vaguely)* What does it make up? I'm damned if I know what it does make up now. I've forgotten.
- Miss Woodward: *(Looking up at him with discreet sympathy after a glance at Mrs. Parbury)* Shall I go back a little?
- Parbury: Please do. Cut the other; it doesn't make up anything.
- Miss Woodward: *(Reading)* “One gathers from the complacency of his manner that his iconoclasm is its own reward.”
- Parbury: Thanks. Where's his article? *(Miss Woodward rises gives him an open magazine, and resumes her seat. After glancing at the magazine, and still in a low voice)* “His smug self-sufficiency—“ *(Pauses)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Darling, I can't hear you. *(Pause. Parbury's and Miss Woodward's eyes meet.)*
- Parbury: Can't you, dear? I suppose I must, unconsciously, have lowered my

The Tyranny of Tears 4

voice.

Mrs. Parbury: I'm sure you did.

Parbury: I've an idea. *(Comes behind her and touches her shoulders caressingly)* Suppose I finish the article quickly and give it to you to read before sending it away?

Mrs. Parbury: Yes, do.

Parbury: *(Looks at her, expecting her to move, but she doesn't.)* Well, dear?

Mrs. Parbury: *(Wondering)* Well?

Parbury: You—you're not going?

Mrs. Parbury: Going?

Parbury: Yes, dear, I thought—

Mrs. Parbury: *(With great reproach, and looking as if about to cry)* Clement. *(She rises and with trembling hands begins to gather up her fancy work.)*

Parbury: *(Relenting)* Don't go, dear, unless you wish to.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Trembling and tearful)* I certainly don't wish to remain where I am unwelcome.

Parbury: *(Reproachfully)* Mabel.

Mrs. Parbury: I thought I had a right to be where my husband was—that the privileges of a wife were at least equal to those of a secretary.

Parbury: *(In a low voice)* Hush, dear. *(Turns to Miss Woodward who has been a secret but attentive observer of the scene)* Miss Woodward, would you kindly run what we have down into type? We'll finish presently.

(Miss Woodward rises, takes her notes and crosses to door, L. At the screen she pauses a moment, shrugs her shoulders, and exits L. Parbury passes his arm around Mrs. Parbury.)

Mrs. Parbury: *(Freeing herself)* Oh, no. You wished me to go, and I'm going.

Parbury: It doesn't matter, now. *(Grimly)* The article hasn't a million to one

chance of being finished this afternoon.

Mrs. Parbury: Why did you send Miss Woodward away?

Parbury: *(Puts magazine on table)* Frankly?

Mrs. Parbury: Of course.

Parbury: Because I hate scenes before other people.

Mrs. Parbury: Scenes. What do you mean?

Parbury: *(C.)* What? Isn't there to be a scene? How splendid.

Mrs. Parbury: *(L.C.)* I don't understand the humour you are in.

Parbury: I'm in a capital humour, dear. You've saved me for the moment from a savage attack on the work of a man whom I respect and admire.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Going)* You mean simply that I've interrupted your work. You will not have reason to complain again.

Parbury: Wait, dear.

Mrs. Parbury: No, no. There are things one can't get over. Perhaps you can explain why it is that Miss Woodward's presence doesn't disturb you, while mine does.

Parbury: Easily. Miss Woodward is a mouse.

Mrs. Parbury: I hate mice.

Parbury: I mean she is a table—a chair—a desk—a dictionary—a something useful that is always in the right place at the right moment, and yet of whose presence one is pleasantly unconscious. She is a triumph of the negative.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Her face turned from him)* And I?

Parbury: Positive, my love—quite positive; you bristle with emotion. When you are in the room, one knows it. *(Mrs. Parbury takes out handkerchief and begins to cry. Pause. Parbury, who has gone to desk, looks round inquiringly then comes down gently and sees what she is doing.)*
Exactly.

The Tyranny of Tears 6

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Wiping her eyes)* Of course, I quite understand. You do not love me.
- Parbury: *(Comes to her, concealing his impatience)* But I do; I do.
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh no, you don't. When we were first married you didn't object to my being in the room when you were working.
- Parbury: I admit I didn't say so then. I was younger and had more patience – and stronger nerves.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Turning to him with a gleam of anger)* Then you admit you have always had objections to my presence in your study?
- Parbury: *(Smoothly)* I admit I have always felt that a writing man's writing hours are sacred hours.
- Mrs. Parbury: They shouldn't be sacred from his wife.
- Parbury: *(Gently)* They should be sacred to his wife, dear. *(Slight pause)* If you were a writing woman, you would understand what I mean.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'm sure I'm very sorry I am not a genius, but you understood that when you married me, didn't you?
- Parbury: Yes, darling, I quite understood that. *(He appears to say this quite unconsciously. Mrs. Parbury turns to him deeply offended, then suddenly moves up to leave the room. He quickly meets her, C., takes her hands.)* I only knew you were the only woman in the world for me.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Struggling to free her hands)* Don't, please. I'm going.
- Parbury: Where?
- Mrs. Parbury: To send Miss Woodward to you, since you prefer her society to mine.
- Parbury: But, I tell you I'm scarcely conscious of the girl's existence. Anyway, it was you who brought her here. You may remember I proposed to have a male secretary.
- Mrs. Parbury: Yes; to make a companion of at my expense. You were always a man's man. If I had had more experience, I would have known by the host of men friends you had when we married.

- Parbury: *(Cheerily)* I haven't them now, dear.
- Mrs. Parbury: You mean—that I—*(Struggling to release her hands)* You are most brutal. Let me go.
- Parbury: Not while you are angry, dear. *(Gently forces her into chair R.C. There is another slight pause. She is certainly angry, but she doesn't attempt to leave the chair. He looks down at her, and lays a hand lightly on her hair.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Brushing his hand away)* Please, don't do that. I am not a child. *(Parbury takes a chair and sits next to her. Pause)* Perhaps you will tell me why you have used your superior strength to keep me here against my will?
- Parbury: *(Taking her hand.)* Do you know that I'm very much in love with you?
- Mrs. Parbury: You in love with me? You don't know what love is. All you feel at the moment is the sort of insolent pity the strong have for the weak.
- Parbury: You weak, darling? Oh, come. You know better than that. You can't be unconscious of your power.
- Mrs. Parbury: I really don't understand you.
- Parbury: I only meant to remind you that after all you do always get your own way. I'm really very glad, for I'm sure your way must always be the best way. Oh, the power and determination of this little hand. *(Holding her hand)* Do let me, with the deepest submission, kiss "the mailed fist". *(He kisses her hand)*
- Mrs. Parbury: I shall try to bear it patiently, though I think you are making fun of me.
- Parbury: I think I'm making love to you.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Suddenly taking one of his hands in hers)* Oh, if only you loved me in the way I love you.
- Parbury: I love you in a most excellent way.
- Mrs. Parbury: But it's different—you don't understand. I love to breathe the air you breathe, to hear your voice even when it's dictating a dry article. You

don't grudge me that, do you?

Parbury: Why, of course not, darling.

Mrs. Parbury: I love this room because it is yours and when you are out—

Parbury: *(Gently patting her hand)* Which is not often, dear.

Mrs. Parbury: When you are out, I always stay here, because here I get most of you; even the thin odour of cigarette smoke is dear to me. Smoke now.

Parbury: Shall I?

Mrs. Parbury: *(Gives him cigarette from his case on table, and lights it)* That's delightful. *(Sniffs the smoke)* But only because it's you. I used to detest tobacco.

Parbury: *(Smiling)* You dear. *(Puts his arm around her.)*

Mrs. Parbury: You understand a little now, don't you? *(Putting her head on his shoulder.)*

Parbury: Perfectly.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Rising)* And you are not angry any more?

Parbury: Was I angry?

Mrs. Parbury: Horribly.

Parbury: I'm sorry.

Mrs. Parbury: Not vexed about the article?

Parbury: Bother the article. I knew it hadn't a million to one chance.

Mrs. Parbury: And it doesn't matter?

Parbury: Not in the least.

Mrs. Parbury: Then, we may have tea in here?

Parbury: *(C.)* Rather; let's go the pace.

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Goes to him, standing before him and her hands at her sides)* Kiss me. *(He kisses her. She throws her arms round him and whispers to him. He whispers a word in reply. They both laugh slightly and he playfully pinches her cheek)* Brute. *(She smooths her hair and goes to door L.; turns at door and blows him a kiss, to which he responds)* *(Exit Mrs. Parbury L.)*
- Parbury: *(Standing for a moment, C. a whimsical look on his face)* Dear little woman. *(Pause)* What a pity she cries so much. *(Puts chair up, R. goes to desk and turns over pages of magazine, still continuing his thought)* What a pity, what a pity. *(Enter Miss Woodward carrying loose type-written MS. Parbury glances up from his magazine as she places the leaves on the desk.)* Oh. Thanks.
- Miss Woodward: Do you wish to finish the article now?
- Parbury: Impossible; tea will be taken here in a few minutes.
- Miss Woodward: *(With a touch of indignant surprise)* Here? Oh, I beg your pardon.
- Parbury: Not at all; I said here. *(Throws down magazine goes up to fire-place C. Miss Woodward permits a slight groan to escape her)* Eh?
- Miss Woodward: Nothing. I didn't speak. *(Sits at desk. Parbury looks at her suddenly and keenly as though he had never noticed her before. Slight pause. She arranges papers on desk. He is leaning against the mantel-piece.)*
- Parbury: Do you know, Miss Woodward, I believe you are more disappointed about that article than I am.
- Miss Woodward: I was certainly very interested.
- Parbury: Why?
- Miss Woodward: It was so strong; I admire strength.
- Parbury: *(Smiling)* You are not then quite the machine one gets into the habit of imagining secretaries to be?
- Miss Woodward: *(Meeting his eye calmly and fearlessly for a moment)* I should like to be what you wish me to be.
- Parbury: *(A little disconcerted)* Humph. *(Stands with his hands in his pocket looking at her, while she is busy at the desk)*

(The door L. suddenly opens. Parbury starts almost violently. Mrs. Parbury puts her head into the room.)

Mrs. Parbury: Darling, I've got rid of a would-be intruder for you. I thought you'd like to know.

Parbury: Thank, you dear. Who was it?

Mrs. Parbury: A horrid person named Gunning. There's the creature's card. *(Throws card into room on to chair by door L.)* I knew you'd be pleased, darling. Tea in five minutes. *(Exit Mrs. Parbury, closing door.)*

Parbury: Gunning. Not George, surely. *(Quickly gets the card)* It is. My dear old friend; I wouldn't miss seeing him for worlds. *(Rushes to window, open it, and bends out)* Why, there he is, going across the lawn. *(Shouts)* George! George! Hi! Gunning!

Gunning: *(OFF; very distant)* Hullo, Clement.

Parbury: *(Going off)* Wait a moment old chap.

(Miss Woodward goes up and looks through window, comes down, and with her handkerchief dusts a photograph of Parbury which stands on mantel up L.C. then looks at the compatriot Mrs. Parbury, which is C. on wall over mantel, shrugs her shoulders.)

(Enter Parbury and Gunning R. through window.)

Parbury: *(Speaking as they enter)* Quite a mistake, I assure you, my dear fellow. My wife gave orders that I was not to be disturbed, thinking I was engaged upon an important piece of work.

Gunning: *(Looking at Miss Woodward)* Won't you present me to Mrs.—

Parbury: *(Hastily)* To Miss Woodward, my secretary—certainly. Mr. Gunning, Miss Woodward. *(Crosses to top of table R.C. Gunning puts his hat on chair L.)* You might very kindly get rid of some of this correspondence for me. *(Takes a bundle of letters from desk)* “Dear Sir, I would esteem it a great favour if you would send me your photograph, together with your autograph.” *(Throws letter aside, and reads another)* “My dear sir, I have read with the greatest interest and the highest pleasure your deservedly successful novel, ‘The Overthrow of Harvey Masterton’, and feel convinced that if you knew

the story of my life—” (*Repeats business*) No one can deal with these people like Miss Woodward.

Gunning: (*Taking off his gloves*) What is your method, Miss Woodward?

Miss Woodward: It is Mr. Parbury’s: perfect civility, consistent with finality. (*Sits at desk and writes letters.*)

Gunning: Excellent. (*Sits and addresses Parbury*) I suppose being a popular author entails a lot of correspondence.

Parbury: Awful.

Gunning: (*L.C.*) For my part, my correspondence is practically nil.

Parbury: I have noticed it with pain.

Gunning: Oh, I’d have written to you, but what was the good of it? I’m not literary. I’m not married.

Parbury: And so you’ve kept away for five years.

Gunning: About that. (*Sits on arm of sofa, L.C.*)

Parbury: Five years and three months, for I’ve been married all that time, and you neither came to my wedding or called on me afterwards.

Gunning: I was discreet.

Parbury: Discreet? Damned unfriendly, I call it,—your pardon, Miss Woodward— considering the years we had been pals.

Gunning: Well, the rest of our old set stuck to you, anyway. What has become of them? Take Wybrow for instance—an awful good chap.

Parbury: Wybrow, Wybrow—what has become of Wybrow?

Gunning: Never comes here, eh?

Parbury: Well, he did a few times, some years ago, but—

Gunning: I understand. A little Bohemian.

Parbury: (*Quickly*) Not for me, George, I assure you.

- Gunning: No, no, of course not, my dear chap. Exit Bohemian Wybrow. Then there was Carson—one of the best?
- Parbury: *(Warmly)* Wasn't he a good fellow?
- Gunning: Capital. Where is he?
- Parbury: Married, you know.
- Gunning: So I heard. You meet constantly, of course?
- Parbury: No, we met them at Brighton one winter some years ago, but I don't think our wives quite—you understand, don't you?
- Gunning: Yes, yes, I understand. You dropped the Carsons. But Burleigh—
- Parbury: Burleigh, ah!
- Gunning: There was a great spirit, if you like. He was your best man.
- Parbury: Yes, he gave me his watch. *(Pulling out his watch and displaying it)*
- Gunning: Which you still wear. Touching constancy. When did you see him last?
- Parbury: Wait a moment. What's all this interrogation for?
- Gunning: Idle curiosity, if you like—study of life, if you like. Come, out with it. When did you last have dear old Tom Burleigh to dinner?
- Parbury: *(Almost defiantly)* The day we returned from our honeymoon. *(Slightly awkward pause)*
- Gunning: *(Musingly)* About five or six years ago.
- Parbury: Of course, I see a lot of him at the clubs. That is to say, I used to when I was still a club man.
- Gunning: Which now you are not?
- Parbury: Which now I am not. What does a man want with a club when he has a home of his own?
- Gunning: Excellent sentiment, but neither the sentiment nor the words are your

own, Clement. *(Their eyes meet and they burst into laughter)* I know, I know: “the husband’s old friends are the wife’s worst enemies.” and “what I say about Clubs is, down with them.” *(Laughs, sits on sofa L.C.)*

Parbury: *(Suddenly serious)* What the devil are you laughing at George? You don’t presume—

Gunning: I—why, of course not, my dear chap. Only now you see how wise I was not to intrude after your marriage, not to wait for my comeuppance as the other poor boys did. I knew something.

Parbury: You always did, you brute. I believe you were born knowing something. *(Leans on back of sofa; lowers his voice)* But seriously, George, I assure you, she’s the best little woman in the world.

Gunning: Why, of course; it would be impious to suggest otherwise. *(Exit Miss Woodward R. His eyes follow her off)* A perfect wife, a charming secretary. You’re a lucky fellow, Clement.

Parbury: Is Miss Woodward charming? On my word, I hadn’t noticed it, but I’m in love with my wife, you see.

Gunning: Of course, you would be the last to discover that your secretary was personally pleasing.

Parbury: You’re a sinister scoundrel, George, and coarse to a fault. Now, tell me what you’ve been up to—shedding your illusions, apparently.

Gunning: I’ve had none to lose since I grew up. I got rid of mine about the time of the measles and whooping cough.

Parbury: It’s a pity.

Gunning: Not at all. One can’t attain the proper philosophical attitude towards life while carrying illusions about with you.

Parbury: So much for the journey of the soul. What of the body? Where have you been venturing?

Gunning: Around the world twice since I saw you last.

Parbury: What did you see on the other side?

- Gunning: Just what one sees on this side; there is always a man—and a woman.
- Parbury: I know you were in Upper India last year, for the papers were full of a rather fine thing you did—saved a lot of lives—
- Gunning: Oh, don't mention that.
- Parbury: An ordinary, mandy, commonplace, heroic, English sort of thing.
- Gunning: One is carried away by impulse.
- Parbury: And so we keep our impulses even when we lose our illusions; I'm glad of that anyway. *(He comes behind Gunning, takes him by the shoulders and shakes him)* Old fool. I can't help liking you as much as ever.
- Gunning: *(Looking up with genuine pleasure.)* Really?
- Parbury: Honestly.
- Gunning: *(Rises and puts his hand on Parbury's shoulders)* Well, I'm glad, because I've often been weak enough to regret not seeing you. As for your literary success, I suppose I ought to congratulate you, but I always knew you'd be a great man, because you never bored me.
- Parbury: *(Drily)* Thanks so much. Now, tell me how you found me.
- Gunning: By means of an illustrated press interview with Mr. Clement Parbury copyright. The author of "The Overthrow of Harvey Something" at his pretty retreat at Hampstead copyright. Snapshot of Mr. Parbury at work copyright. View of the study from the garden—view of the garden from the study copyright.
- Parbury: Shut up. You make me blush.
- Gunning: Forgive me. It's only envy. It's the envious people who call this a vulgar age, I suppose. *(Enter Evans, L. He places occasional table for tea in front of sofa L.C. and exits L.)*
- Parbury: Now, you are to see my wife. How do you imagine her? Large, I suppose, with huge hands and feet and a beetling brow?
- Gunning: I'm content to wait. *(Re-enter Evans L. with tea service.)*

- Parbury: When you have had tea, you will go away to dress. You will return here to dinner at eight.
- Gunning: I think not.
- Parbury: One moment. You will probably meet only my wife's father, Colonel Armitage, and your dinner will be a fairly plain one, but I promise that your palate will not be outraged.
- Gunning: I really think not, old man. I remember the fate of poor Burleigh. And I never even gave you a watch.
- Parbury: George, you hurt me. *(Slight pause)* Then you refuse?
- Gunning: I make conditions.
- Parbury: What are they?
- Gunning: That you come yachting with me from tomorrow 'til the end of the week. I've hired a charming little twenty-tonner, one after your own heart—that is, if your heart or my memory hasn't entirely changed.
- Parbury: Good, we'll drink of the vintage '36, brush up our swearing vocabulary, and I'll teach you to gain perspective. *(His face suddenly falling)* Oh, the deuce.
- Gunning: What's the matter? What are you afraid of?
- Parbury: Oh, nothing. Nothing in the whole world.
- Gunning: *(Slapping him on the back)* Hero.
- (Enter Mrs. Parbury L. wearing a bright smile, which fades when she sees Gunning.)*
- Parbury: Mabel, I want to introduce my old friend, George Gunning. My wife, George. *(Gunning crosses to Mrs. Parbury.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: How do you do? I'm very pleased. *(She gives him simultaneously a cold smile and a stiff handshake.)*
- Gunning: I'm delighted to meet Clement's wife.
- Mrs. Parbury: You'll let me give you some tea? *(Goes to tea-table; sits on sofa)*

Gunning: Thank you. *(Aside to Parbury)* She's charming. *(Parbury digs him in the ribs. Gunning goes to tea-table. Parbury sits at desk.)*

Mrs. Parbury: *(Handing Gunning a tea cup)* I've given you no sugar.

Gunning: I'll take one piece.

(Enter Miss Woodward, R. with MS. which she hands to Parbury)

Parbury: Thank you. *(He reads and signs a letter.)*

Mrs. Parbury: Clement, come for your tea.

Parbury: In one moment, dear.

Mrs. Parbury: Miss Woodward, you will take tea?

Miss Woodward: Thank you, yes.

(Tea is poured; pause)

Parbury: You've often heard me speak of Gunning, Mabel; we were at Cambridge together.

Mrs. Parbury: Oh, yes, I remember. *(To Gunning)* You were very great friends?

Gunning: Inseparables.

Parbury: I should say so.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Uneasily)* Indeed.

Parbury: *(Comes over and takes his tea)* You see, Gunning had been my fag at Harrow, and my ill-treatment of him inspired a dog-like devotion. *(To Miss Woodward)* Let me take your cup. *(Adds in a lower voice)* I've an idea. *(Miss Woodward goes to desk.)*

Gunning: Let me. *(Assists Mrs. Parbury with the tea service.)*

Parbury: *(To Miss Woodward in a low voice)* I think I can finish the article in three sentences. Take your notes into the other room; I'll join you in a moment. *(Miss Woodward gathers her notes and exits R.)*

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Pouring out a fresh cup of tea for Gunning)* But, of course, it's not in the nature of things that college friendships, however strong, can last forever. Time estranges, doesn't it, Mr. Gunning, and fate drives people into different—well, different ways of life, doesn't it? Some men marry soon. Are you married, Mr. Gunning?
- Gunning: Alas, no, Mrs. Parbury.
- Parbury: He has too much respect for your sex, dear. Forgive me for three minutes. *(Exit Parbury R.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Not married? Well, I should have thought—
- Gunning: That I'm old enough to know better? I admit it. *(Sits R.C.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Well, I was going to say that in marriage a man changes so much. He becomes more—more—
- Gunning: *(Gently)* Oh, no doubt, Clement has improved immensely.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'm so glad you recognize that. You may smoke, Mr. Gunning, if you care to.
- Gunning: Thank you. I'll steal one of Clement's cigarettes, if I may. *(Takes cigarette from box on desk.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Of course, Clement was always good and strong and clever. It only wanted marriage to—to—
- Gunning: Perfect him?
- Mrs. Parbury: Well, I was going to say to complete him, but it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?
- Gunning: Quite, quite.
- Mrs. Parbury: I found my happiness when I married Clement.
- Gunning: Had you been looking for it?
- Mrs. Parbury: Of course. Isn't that every woman's duty?
- Gunning: Yes, yes. And, every man's.

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Less confidently.)* Well, yes, I should think so.
- Gunning: And one's happiness, once found, is worth fighting for.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Firmly)* Worth fighting very hard for.
- Gunning: *(Drily)* Of course.) *(Aside)* Poor Burleigh.
- Mrs. Parbury: You, I suppose, have never met a woman who could make you always happy.
- Gunning: I have never met a woman whom I was sure of being able always to make happy.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Slightly embarrassed)* Oh.
- Gunning: And, anyway, the state of marriage has always appeared to me a state of warfare.
- Mrs. Parbury: Mr. Gunning, you little know—
- Gunning: I admit the case of you and Clement to be an exceptional one. I'm talking of ordinary cases—the average marriage; there you will find, according to my observation, an endless war of self interests, of opposing emotions, of irreconcilable nervous organisations.
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: Viewed from the hill-tops, a rather pitiful sort of war, in which can be won neither the full joys of love nor the complete glories of battle.
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: I remain single, Mrs. Parbury, quite without happiness—except in the reflection that I am neither an oppressor exercising a daily tyranny, nor a slave rightly struggling to be free.
- Mrs. Parbury: Of course, I don't in the least agree with you. *(The telephone bell rings)* *(Rising)* There's someone on the telephone. Forgive me. *(Goes to telephone and puts the communicator to her ear)* Are you there? Yes. Who are you? The article. Yes. No, you can't have it today. No, it hasn't a million to one chance to be finished. *(To Gunning with a smile)* That's Clement's slang, not mine. *(Again into telephone)* What? *(Enter Parbury and Miss Woodward R.)* I say, it hasn't a

million to one chance of being finished.

Parbury: What? Who is it?

Mrs. Parbury: It's the Saturday Sentinel.

Parbury: But, my dear, the article is finished. *(Rushes to telephone)* *(Miss Woodward and Gunning are laughing. Mrs. Parbury stands C. rather confused)* *(At telephone)* Hullo—hullo—Are you there? *(Rings violently)* Hullo—oh. Is that you, Jackson? What's the matter? *(Rather a long pause. He smiles while listening)* No, no, not at all, my dear chap. What was said was "It's a million to one you'll have the copy in half-an-hour." Eh? Yes, those were the very words . . . no, quite a mistake, you don't listen properly. A messenger has just gone off in a cab with it. What? Yes. *(Laughs)* All right. Goodbye.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Seeing Miss Woodward laughing)* I really don't know what there is to laugh at, Miss Woodward.

Miss Woodward: I was only smiling at the messenger in the cab. *(Folds M.S. and puts it in envelope)*

Parbury: Yes, send someone at once, please, Miss Woodward. *(Exit Miss Woodward R.)*

Mrs. Parbury: It wasn't my fault, dear. You know you did use those words.

Parbury: My fault, entirely. *(Aside)* Have you told her?

Gunning: What?

Parbury: About the yachting?

Gunning: Why, of course not. That's your affair, dear fellow.

Parbury: *(His hand on Gunning's shoulder)* Mabel, dear, we're going yachting for a few days. I think I want a little change.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Coming toward them brightly)* Oh, what a good idea. When do we go? *(Parbury and Gunning look at each other)* Are you coming, Mr. Gunning? *(Parbury presses Gunning forward. Gunning looks around at Parbury reproachfully. Parbury goes up stage.)*

Gunning: *(Embarrassed)* Well, it's my yacht, Mrs. Parbury, but she's very

small—only a little tub of a thing; and—(*Looks at his watch*) By Jove, I'll never be able to dress and get back for dinner if I don't hurry. (*Gets his hat and glove L. Goes up quickly*) I need only say *au revoir*. Don't trouble, Clement, I'll find my way out—*au revoir*. (*Exit Gunning L. Mrs. Parbury who is puzzled sits on sofa.*)

Parbury: (*Calling after Gunning*) Dinner at eight, remember.

Gunning: (*Outside*) All right. (*Mrs. Parbury X to sofa on exit*)

Parbury: (*Shuts the door*) Capital fellow, George Gunning. (*Comes to back of sofa*)

Mrs. Parbury: What does he mean by a little tub of a thing? Surely we're not—

Parbury: No, dear, certainly not. You're quite right. I wouldn't think of letting you run any risks.

Mrs. Parbury: Then, we're not going.

Parbury: No, dear. That is to say, Gunning and I are going.

Mrs. Parbury: (*Rising aghast*) Without me?

Parbury: (*Laughing*) Only for a few days, of course. Quite. (*His laugh becomes feebler.*)

Mrs. Parbury: But—you never go away without me.

Parbury: I haven't, hitherto, but—

Mrs. Parbury: Well? (*Appears about to cry.*)

Parbury: I've been working very hard, you know, lately. I feel I want a change.

Mrs. Parbury: (*Tearfully*) It doesn't occur to you that I want a change?

Parbury: Well, have one, dear. Aunt Martha would be delighted to have you at Oaklands.

Mrs. Parbury: I don't want to go to Aunt Martha. How would you like to go to Aunt Martha?

Parbury: (*Suppressing a groan*) What is it you do want?

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Quickly.)* You. I want to be with you. It's very simple—it's not asking very much. If you don't like my being with you, why did you marry me? *(Taking out her handkerchief)*
- Parbury: Now, dear, please don't cry. *(Aside)* If she does, I'm done for. *(Aloud)* It's only common sense that you can't go knocking about with a couple of men in a tub of a boat.
- Mrs. Parbury: Of course. I quite know that you don't love me. *(Bursts into tears sits on sofa.)*
- Parbury: *(With real irritation)* Oh, damn it. *(Goes up but quickly turns and comes down to her)* 'Pon my soul, you make me almost hate—*(He stops himself.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Of course, you hate me. Your old friend has done that. You are breaking my heart!
- Parbury: *(Who has recovered control of his temper and resumes his natural bantering tone)* Not at all, dear. *(Sits at his desk and affects to be busy)* I was only going to say that I hated—now, what the deuce was it I hated—oh, I know—to see a woman cry. I do think a woman is wise who does her crying in private—*(She looks at him)*—and yet—I wonder—they know best—millions to one they know best. I must write something about it.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Rises goes to top of table R. She is wiping her eyes, her back to him. Pause.)* Of course, you're going all the same?
- Parbury: *(Affecting great occupation)* Going? Going where?
- Mrs. Parbury: With Mr. Gunning. *(Pause. She continues to cry gently)*
- Parbury: Oh, yachting, you mean. Not I. I'm staying here.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Comes toward him gladly, her arms extended)* Clement.
- Parbury: Eh? Oh, forgive me for a few moments. *(Writes)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Reproachfully)* I was only going to kiss you.
- Parbury: *(Writing)* All right, dear—presently—presently. There's a dear girl.

(Mrs. Parbury exits, slowly, silently, looking back at him. He

*doesn't look up but goes on writing. When the door closes, he
puts down his pen)*

Oh, the tyranny of it. The tyranny of it.

MEDIUM CURTAIN

End of Act One

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

ACT II

SCENE: *(The same as ACT I. Evening after dinner the same day. The room is lighted with lamps, but as it is a still-warm evening, the curtains are not drawn over the glass door which leads into the garden and is open.)(Enter Evans R. He places cigars and cigarettes on occasional table, and lights a small spirit cigar lamp. Exit)(Voices of ladies and a ripple of laughter heard from the drawing room, and for a moment the sound made by fingers running lightly over the keys of a the piano. Enter Colonel Armitage followed by Gunning and Parbury. Armitage goes to mantelpiece. Gunning selects the easiest chair in the room. Parbury goes to occasional table. Armitage is a well-preserved man of sixty-five, very carefully dressed—something of an elderly dandy.)*

Parbury: Cigarette or cigar, George?

Gunning: Thanks, I have a cigarette *(Takes one from his case and lights it)*

Parbury: Colonel?

Armitage: Thank you, I'll have a cigar. I think, however, I'll—er—smoke it in the garden. Mabel has a limited appreciation of tobacco.

Parbury: Oh, Mabel won't mind. She's quite educated.

Armitage: Not as far as a rum-dipped Cuban, I fancy. *(He strolls to the glass door, lights his cigar, and steps out. For a few moments, he is still seen, then he wanders away.)*

Gunning: Nice old chap, your father-in-law.

Parbury: Isn't he? I'm fond of him. *(Pause; they smoke in silence, Parbury standing at mantel-piece)* What are you thinking of?

Gunning: I'm not thinking. I'm digesting. I had an excellent dinner.

(Enter Evans with coffee etc. Gunning takes coffee.)

Evans: Cognac, sir, or *crème de menthe*?

- Gunning: Cognac. *(He takes a glass)* Thank you.
- Parbury: Colonel, here's your coffee.
- Armitage: *(OFF)* I'll have it out here, if I may.
- Evans: Yes, sir. *(Exit Evans, taking Armitage's coffee into the garden.)*
- Gunning: I've wired for the champagne.
- Parbury: *(Uneasily)* Oh, yes. *(Slight pause)*
- Gunning: I notice the barometer has kept up well.
- Parbury: Really? Good. *(Slight pause)*
- Gunning: Yes, we ought to have capital weather.
- Parbury: Capital. *(He is very embarrassed)* If it doesn't rain, it'll be pretty—er—fine. *(Drinks, puts his cup on mantelpiece.)*
- Gunning: *(Favours him with a slow stare)* What's the matter, old man?
- Parbury: Nothing in the world. Why?
- Gunning: Oh, it doesn't matter. But I think the change will do you good. *(Slight pause)* By the way, would tomorrow afternoon suit you to get started?
- Parbury: *(Standing with his back to the fireplace, looking up at the ceiling.)* I'm not going, old man.
- Gunning: *(Indifferently)* Oh.
- (Re-enter Evans R., from garden and exit R. Silence 'till he has gone)*
- Parbury: Well, you don't seem surprised.
- Gunning: *(Affects a yawn)* I never permit myself to be surprised.
- Parbury: Or disappointed.
- Gunning: Oh, yes, I own I'm disappointed. I looked for a good time for a few

days. You are the only one of the old lot available, and you were the best of them. I can't bear the new lot. They wear strange colours, drop their "G"'s and get on one's nerves.

Parbury: I'm really sorry, George.

Gunning: Don't bother. One simply goes alone. (*Discreetly*) The calls of business are often irresistible.

Parbury: Don't rot. You know what the situation is.

Gunning: Mine is one of those intelligences that never know without information.

Parbury: I'll supply it. (Sits on arm chair R. of table.)

Gunning: Don't, if it matters.

Parbury: I will, though it does matter. (*Pause; grimly*) My wife wept.

Gunning: Unanswerable argument.

Parbury: Quite. George, what the devil is a man to do?

Gunning: I knew a man who interfered between a husband and wife who were disagreeing. The husband and wife each got a black eye. The man got two.

Parbury: You might at least talk.

Gunning: Oh, certainly.

Parbury: You know the situation.

Gunning: Well, if one dare say so, I fancy you are suffering from the tyranny of a fascinating egoism.

Parbury: I'm suffering from the tyranny of tears.

Gunning: What I don't understand is how a man of your strong nature arrived where you are.

Parbury: I'll make an effort to tell you. To begin with, I suppose I'm fairly good natured.

Gunning: Oh, yes.

Parbury: Or say, if you like, of indolent habit, which after all often passes for the same thing. Then of course, I was in love—I am still. One drifted. It's easy to give way in little things—really not unpleasant when you're in love. And then there's one's work, which fills the mind and makes the little things appear smaller than they are. I say, one drifted.

Gunning: Sometimes, if I know you, you rebelled. What then?

Parbury: *(Promptly)* Tears. And over such absurdly paltry things. Oh, the farcical tragedy of it all. I wished to go shooting for a few days. Tears. I fancied dining and spending the evening with an old chum. Tears. I would go on a walking tour for a week. Tears. Some one would ask me for three day's hunting. Tears. Tears, you understand, always on hand. Tears—tears—tears— *ad—(Pulling himself up)* No.

Gunning: *(Quietly)* No. Not *ad nauseam*?

Parbury: No. That would be a low thing to say. *(Goes up R.C. Takes stopper out of decanter.)*

Gunning: Do you know, Clement, I really like you, tremendously.

Parbury: Thanks, old man. Have some more brandy.

Gunning: No, thanks. *(Pause)* Don't stop. I'm interested.

Parbury: That's all. I drifted, almost unconsciously, right up to today, for all the world like the man in the story-book, who drifted in his boat towards Niagra. To-night, I'm conscious. I'm awake. I can feel the water gliding along the boat's keel. I can see Niagra. I don't like it. What the devil's one to do?

Gunning: Get out and walk. *(Pause; they smoke)*

Parbury: Of course, I must change it all. I must, but it will be beastly.

Gunning: Beastly. When do you begin?

Parbury: When occasion serves. I can't go back over this yachting business. I've said I'm not going.

Gunning: Quite right. *(Slight pause)*

Parbury: Oh, if the exigent woman only knew—if they only knew—(*Enter Colonel Armitage R.*) Talking of brandies, this is Hennessy, '63. Have some, Colonel.

Armitage: Perhaps half a glass. (*Takes brandy and sits*)

(Enter Mrs. Parbury L. from drawing room.)

Mrs. Parbury: Miss Woodward and I are boring each other. Shall we come to you, or will you come to us? (*Gunning and Armitage rise; enter Miss Woodward L.*) There, the question's answered. (*Sits on sofa L.*)

(Miss Woodward goes to desk.)

Gunning: (*To Mrs. Parbury*) You were playing the piano, just now?

Mrs. Parbury: Yes, but I play wretchedly, now-a-days. I gave up practising when we married.

Gunning: One should never give up an accomplishment.

Armitage: You used to play charmingly, Mabel.

Mrs. Parbury: You thought so, dear, and that was enough for me. (*She rises and crosses to C.*) Why don't we sit in the garden? It's a perfect night.

(Armitage strolls off to garden. Mrs. Parbury goes to Parbury who is standing by fireplace.)

(In a low voice) Are you angry?

Parbury: (*As they go out into the garden*) I, angry with you? Nonsense. (*He pats her head*) Poor little woman. Poor little woman. (*Exit Mr. and Mrs. Parbury*)

Gunning: (*Crossing to R.C. top of the table*) Are you not coming, Miss Woodward?

Miss Woodward: No, thank you. I have some work to do.

Gunning: But you seem to me to be always working.

Miss Woodward: I needn't, you know. I do it because I like it.

- Gunning: What are you doing now?
- Miss Woodward: Correcting proof sheets of a new novel. It will save Mr. Parbury the trouble of doing it tomorrow.
- Gunning: I wanted you to talk to me.
- Miss Woodward: What about?
- Gunning: Yourself.
- Miss Woodward: I'm not interesting.
- Gunning: On the contrary.
- Miss Woodward: What do you wish to know?
- Gunning: All about you. May I? *(Sits L. of table)*
- Miss Woodward: Will you go away and leave me to work if I tell you?
- Gunning: Yes.
- Miss Woodward: *(Putting down her pen and resting her cheek on her hand)* I'm the thirteenth daughter of a parson. Why my parents had thirteen daughters, I don't know; but I suppose it was because they are very poor. We were all given the names of flowers—Rose, Lily, Tulip, Mignonette—I can't remember them all—but Hyacinth fell to my lot. Why we were called after flowers, I don't know; but I suppose it was because we are none of us the least like flowers. My eldest sister married my father's curate. I don't know why, but I suppose because she came first and is the plainest of the family.
- Gunning: *(Laughing)* Yes, well.
- Miss Woodward: *(Speaking in an even, emotionless way)* Two other of my sisters run a Kindergarten and one other is a governess. Personally, I would be a domestic servant. The others remain at home, help in the house, and wait for husbands. I fear they will wait in vain, because there are so many women in our part of the country and so few men. For my part, I seized an early opportunity of learning shorthand and typewriting—and—well, here I am. Now you know the story of my life. *(She returns to her work)*

Gunning: I'm afraid it was deuced impertinent of me to ask.

Miss Woodward: No, only eminently manlike.

(Pause; she works; he smokes)

Gunning: And, so you have found your happiness.

Miss Woodward: Oh, no. I've only just started to look for it.

Gunning: Oh, ho! Ambitious.

Miss Woodward: Have you ever been very poor?

Gunning: Yes, at one time—had to pawn things.

Miss Woodward: I mean, being one of fifteen in a family—large inferior roasts to last for days—hot, cold, hashed, minced, shepherd's pie—*(Gunning shudders at this)*—too much potatoes—too much boiled rice—too much bread and dripping—too much weak tea—too much polishing up—too much darning on little material—and forever giving thanks out of all proportion to the benefits received. I wish some one would write the history of a hat or a frock—I mean a hat or a frock that has marched steadily and sullenly under various guises through an entire family such as ours, from the mother down to the youngest sister. What might be written of the thoughts that had been thought under such a hat, or of the heart that had felt under such a frock.

Gunning: Why don't you write the story?

Miss Woodward: Perhaps some day I shall. *(Returns to her work)* In the meantime, you ought to go. You promised, you know. You have nothing more to learn. I don't think in all my life I've talked so much about myself as I have to you, a stranger. *(She keeps her eyes on her work)*

Gunning: You have been engagingly frank. I do hope I shall have another opportunity.

Miss Woodward: Not at all likely, Mr. Gunning. *(Pause. Still without looking up)* Goodnight.

(Gunning looks at her, goes up to the window, looks at her again.)

Gunning: *(At window)* Goodnight, Miss Woodward. *(Exit to garden R.)*

(Miss Woodward goes on with her work for a few moments, then drops her face on her hand in her favourite attitude.)

Miss Woodward: *(Soliloquizing)* Rather than go back, I—well, I know I'd rather die. *(She looks over the pages for a moment or two then yawns lightly; she gathers her pages together and places a paperweight over them)* That will have to do. *(She rises looks off R.)* There was actually a man ready to take a sort of languid interest in me. Quite a new experience. *(She takes up Parbury's photograph and speaks to it)* You don't take any interest in me of any kind, do you? *(To the photograph)* You never will, and I don't think I want you to. But, I do want to stay near you, too. But, I do not want to stay near you, because you are so strong—*(Enter Mrs. Parbury from garden carrying the Colonel's cup and saucer.)*—and so weak and so kind and so foolish.

(Mrs. Parbury has come down and is watching her unobserved. Miss Woodward slowly raises the photograph to her lips. The cup and saucer drop from Mrs. Parbury's hand to the floor and are broken. Miss Woodward, much startled, slowly turns toward Mrs. Parbury and their eyes meet. There is a pause. Suddenly with a quick movement, Mrs. Parbury snatches the photograph from Miss Woodward.)

Mrs. Parbury: How dare you? How dare you? *(Long pause. She is almost breathless then she partly gains self-control)* What train do you intend taking?

Miss Woodward: *(X to R.C.)* I don't understand you.

Mrs. Parbury: I mean, for your home, of course.

Miss Woodward: *(Moves as if she had received a blow, and clasps her hands together)* I am not going home.

Mrs. Parbury: Oh, indeed you are. You don't propose to stay here, do you?

Miss Woodward: Why shouldn't I?

Mrs. Parbury: How dare you ask that when I just caught you in the act of kissing my husband's photograph?

Miss Woodward: That was in a moment of abstraction. I wasn't even thinking of Mr. Parbury.

- Mrs. Parbury: Oh! And you the daughter of a clergyman. (*She goes up and fetches the timetable from bookcase and offers it to Miss Woodward*) Here is the A.B.C.
- Miss Woodward: (*Turning away*) I have no use for it just now, thank you.
- Mrs. Parbury: Then, I'll look out an early train for you, myself. (*Sits L.*) Let me see—(*Turning over leaves*)—Carfields, Worcestershire, isn't it? Here it is. 7:20? I suppose that's too early. 9:35, that will do. Please understand you are to take the 9:35 from Paddington in the morning.
- Miss Woodward: (*Firmly*) I shall do nothing of the kind.
- Mrs. Parbury: (*Ignoring the remark*) In the meanwhile, there is no necessity that my husband should know the reason of your going. You can make some excuse. I wouldn't have him know for worlds.
- Miss Woodward: Of course, he shall never know from me—but I want you to quite understand, Mrs. Parbury, that I am not going to Carfields, tomorrow. Rather than go home under the circumstances I would starve in the gutter.
- Mrs. Parbury: Well, you must find a lodging until you get other employment. You will have month's salary, of course. Anyway, I'm determined you leave this house in the morning. (*Goes up C. puts A.B.C. on chair L.C.*)
- Miss Woodward: Is there any real occasion for my leaving?
- Mrs. Parbury: Haven't you sufficient delicacy of feeling left to tell you that?
- Miss Woodward: (*Warmly*) I don't think I need lessons of delicacy of feeling from you. (*Slight pause*) I'm sorry I said that, and I'm sorry, too, about the photograph. I think it all might be forgotten.
- Mrs. Parbury: Forgotten.
- Miss Woodward: After all, I'm only a girl; and I've worked very hard for Mr. Parbury. I think you might be more lenient.
- Mrs. Parbury: (*At fireplace*) I'm sorry for you, Miss Woodward; but I owe a duty to myself and my husband. You must go in the morning. (*She moves to return to the garden.*)

Miss Woodward: *(Crosses to L.C.)* Mrs. Parbury.

Mrs. Parbury: Well?

Miss Woodward: I suppose I ought to be a lady and go, because you say so, the mistress of the house. But I don't feel a bit like a lady just now. I only feel like a poor girl whose chances in life are being ruined for a very small and innocent folly.

Mrs. Parbury: Well, what does all this mean?

Miss Woodward: *(Fiercely)* It means that I am in Mr. Parbury's employment, not yours, and that I will take my dismissal from him only.

Mrs. Parbury: Oh, I can promise you that. *(She calls into the garden)* Clement. *(Exit Mrs. Parbury to garden R. Miss Woodward throws a hard look after her. Then her eye falls on the broken cup and saucer. She stoops to pick it up and throw it in a waste paper basket. Then she goes to desk, sits and works on proof sheets as before.)*

(Enter Mr. and Mrs. Parbury R.)

Parbury: Working again, Miss Woodward? Really, you are indefatigable.

Miss Woodward: I'm only correcting these proof sheets.

Mrs. Parbury: No doubt Miss Woodward wishes to finish the work tonight—as she is leaving tomorrow.

Parbury: Leaving tomorrow?

Miss Woodward: I think Mrs. Parbury is mistaken.

Parbury: *(To Mrs. Parbury)* What do you mean, dear?

Mrs. Parbury: I wish her to go.

Parbury: Why?

Mrs. Parbury: I can't tell you. It is not a thing you would understand. It is simply impossible for her to remain. In her heart, she knows I am right. *(Slight pause. Parbury goes to Miss Woodward.)*

Parbury: Are you satisfied here?

- Miss Woodward: Perfectly.
- Parbury: You have no wish to go away?
- Miss Woodward: Not while you wish me to remain.
- Parbury: Do you know why my wife wishes you to go?
- Miss Woodward: Yes.
- Parbury: Will you kindly tell me?
- Miss Woodward: I'm sorry, I can't. I've promised. But—*(With a look at Mrs. Parbury)*—I don't think that Mrs. Parbury's reasons are adequate. *(Pause. Parbury is thoughtful)*
- Parbury: *(To Mrs. Parbury)* Have you any more to say?
- Mrs. Parbury: I have only to repeat that it is quite impossible for Miss Woodward to stay.
- Parbury: Well, I have made up my mind that there is something very foolish under all this, and I shall not allow it to deprive me of Miss Woodward's services. *(Mrs. Parbury looks surprised)* I don't mind saying in her presence that she is invaluable to me. I should never be able to replace her. *(Sense of relief on Miss Woodward's part)* Now, come. *(Looking from one to the other)* What is it? A tiff? A stupid misunderstanding? Oh, you women! Why will you fuss about little things? Make it up, do. Shake hands, cry, embrace, kiss or whatever your pet method may be. Weep, if you like, though personally I'd rather you didn't. Anyway, as far as I am concerned the incident is closed. *(He turns to go.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Doggedly)* Miss Woodward leaves this house in the morning.
- Parbury: *(Looks at his wife for a moment, then turns to Miss Woodward)* Miss Woodward, would you be so very kind—*(He opens the door for her with great courtesy. Miss Woodward bows, and exits L. He comes to C.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Turning to him with assumed brightness)* Now, darling, it will be different. Of course, I couldn't say much before her. You were quite right to be nice and courteous to her, now she is going.

- Parbury: But I assure you, she is not. *(They are C. Mrs. Parbury takes his arm caressingly)*
- Mrs. Parbury: But she is. Believe me, she is. Of course, we don't want to be hard on her, and she shall have a month's salary and a strong recommendation.
- Parbury: *(Disengaging his arm)* My dear Mabel, I absolutely refuse to act in the dark. I hate mysteries. If you care to tell what all this bother is about, I'll judge for myself what's the right thing to do. *(Sits on sofa)*
- Mrs. Parbury: I can't—it's impossible. There are some things that men can't be trusted to know about. You must leave this matter to me. *(Sits next to him)*
- Parbury: That I quite decline to do. *(She again takes his arm and talks rapidly, gradually rather hysterically, towards the end appearing about to cry.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Darling, do listen. You don't understand. You have never been like this with me before. I'm sure I'm not asking very much. You can easily get another secretary. And you shall have a man one, as you originally wanted to. You were right, dear—you often are. *(Parbury rises; crosses to R. of table. Mrs. Parbury follows him)* Darling, do be reasonable. I've been a good wife to you, haven't I? I've always respected your wishes, and not bothered you more than I could help. This is only a little thing, and you must let me have my own way. You must trust me absolutely, dear. You know that anything I would do for you would be only for your own good, for you know that I love you. *(She takes out her handkerchief)* I adore you, darling. You must give way—you must—you must.
- Parbury: *(Stepping back from her)* If you cry, I shall leave the room. *(Sits R. begins to write.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(With her back to the audience in a low voice)* I wasn't going to cry.
- Parbury: I'm glad to hear it. *(Mrs. Parbury puts her handkerchief away and turns)*
- Mrs. Parbury: I have no intention to cry, dear. *(Parbury still writes. Pause. She comes L. of table toward desk)* Shall I write out an advertisement for you, dear?

- Parbury: What for?
- Mrs. Parbury: For a new secretary—a man.
- Parbury: No. My mind's made up. I shall not change my secretary.
- Mrs. Parbury: Clement.
- Parbury: *(Rises and goes to her)* Listen, my dear Mabel. Perhaps I'm a good deal to blame for the pain you are going to suffer now, and I'm sorry for you. In many ways, you are the best little woman in the world. I've been weak and yielding, and I've gradually allowed you to acquire a great deal more power than you know how to use wisely.
- Mrs. Parbury: Really, Clement! You must be raving.
- Parbury: Listen, my dear, listen. What's been the result? You've taken from me my habits. You've taken from me my friends. You've taken from me my clubs. You've taken from me my self-esteem, my joy in life, my high spirits, the cheery devil that God implanted in me; but, damn it, you will leave me my secretary!
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Excitedly walking the stage)* Oh, I understand now. You use this exaggerated language; you make these cruel accusations; you work yourself into a passion, because you have grown to think more of Miss Woodward than me. *(She ends walk at L.C.)*
- Parbury: Now, you know that to be a purely fantastic interpretation of what I said. *(She takes out handkerchief)* I observe with pain that you are about to cry again.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Puts handkerchief in her sleeve controls her anger, and becomes very determined)* You are quite wrong. Probably, I shall never again know the relief of tears. Your callousness and obstinacy seem to have dried up all the tenderness in me. Miss Woodward leaves this house in the morning, or I leave it, tonight.
- Parbury: *(Coming to her)* Oh, come, come, Mabel. That is too ridiculous.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'm very, very serious. Please, for your own sake, understand that. Which is it to be?
- Parbury: There, dear, let's drop it now. Don't you think domestic squabbles like this, besides being boring, are just a little—may one say it—vulgar?

Let's go back to the garden.

Mrs. Parbury: Which is it to be?

Parbury: *(Shrugs his shoulders)* Of course, you know I'm decided. Miss Woodward stays.

Mrs. Parbury: Very well. *(She goes to bell L. of fireplace and rings. Parbury goes up, takes a book, and negligently turns leaves over, secretly watching his wife.)* I needn't keep you from your friend, Mr. Gunning, any longer.

Parbury: I'm all right here, dear. I'm perfectly contented. *(He turns over leaves)* There is such a wise passage here. I'd like to read it to you. *(She makes a gesture of irritation)* No? Well, it must keep.

(Pause until enter Evans L.)

Mrs. Parbury: Where is Caroline?

Evans: She's in her room, ma'am.

Mrs. Parbury: Tell her I shall want her to pack my things for me.

Evans: Yes, ma'am. All or part of them?

Mrs. Parbury: I'll come up stairs and show her.

Evans: Yes, ma'am. *(Exit L. Slight pause)*

Parbury: *(Rising from his leaning attitude against table up stage, putting down the book, coming down two steps)* My dear, you know this is impossible. Be reasonable.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Firmly)* Which is it to be?

Parbury: *(With a gesture conveys that the subject is closed and returns to his former attitude)* I think I have a right to ask what you propose doing.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Crossing to the sofa)* I propose going home with my father.

(The laugh of the Colonel is heard in the garden. Then he appears at the entrance still laughing. Gunning appears behind him. The Colonel enters. Gunning remains at window)

smoking.)

- Armitage: *(To Parbury)* That's really the funniest thing I've heard for years. Have you heard that story, Clement?
- Parbury: What story?
- Armitage: Story of—*(Then he sees Mrs. Parbury)* Oh, quite a drawing-room story, believe me, dear.
- Mrs. Parbury: Father, I wish to speak to you.
- Armitage: Certainly. What is it, dear? *(Crosses to sofa L. sits. Parbury exchanges a look with Gunning.)*
- Gunning: *(Coming down quickly)* Mrs. Parbury, I must reluctantly say goodnight. Your charming house is almost in the country, and I've to get back to London. I thank you for—
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Rise X to L.C. Interrupting)* Please, don't go, Mr. Gunning. It's quite early, and Clement and you, as such very old friends, must still have a great deal to talk about.
- Parbury: *(Taking Gunning's arm)* No, George. You really mustn't go. *(Leads him up to window R.)*
- Gunning: I assure you, my dear chap—
- Parbury: *(Interrupting)* But, I make it a personal favour. Dear student of life, stay and observe. *(They remain at window)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Dear father, I wish you to take me home with you tonight.
- Armitage: *(Surprised)* Certainly, dear, but—
- Mrs. Parbury: Don't ask me any questions. *(Puts her hand on his shoulder)* You love me, don't you?
- Armitage: Naturally, my dear, but nowadays, of course, I take second place.
- Mrs. Parbury: I thought so too, but I was wrong. Wait for me a few minutes. *(Starts to go L.)*
- Armitage: *(Hesitatingly, after glancing at Parbury then at his daughter)* One moment, Mabel. This is all so sudden.

- Mrs. Parbury: Father, do you hesitate to receive me?
- Armitage: Good heavens, no, but Clement—
- Mrs. Parbury: Shhh. *(Puts her hand over his mouth)*
- Armitage: Oh. I was thinking, my dear, that unfortunately, there is no mother to receive you now. I'm only an old bachelor these days and you'll be—er—er—give me a word.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Kisses him and goes to door L. She looks across the room at her husband, and then whispers to herself)* He'll never let me go.
- Parbury: *(Crossing to L. of Gunning)* She'll not go, my dear fellow.
- Gunning: Humph. You think not! Anyway, I must.
- Parbury: Don't.
- Gunning: The domestic atmosphere is volcanic, and I feel—er—er—give me a word.
- Parbury: Remorseful.
- Gunning: Not really, no. This all just so awfully sudden.
- Parbury: Nonsense, it had to come. You must see me through it now.
- Gunning: How beastly selfish you married men are. *(They come down)*
- Armitage: I'm in a difficulty.
- Parbury: You mean about Mabel, Colonel?
- Armitage: Yes.
- Parbury: She proposes going home with you.
- Armitage: Yes.
- Parbury: *(Smiling confidently)* I don't think she'll go. *(Enter Evans L.)*
- Evans: *(To Colonel)* Your carriage, sir. *(Parbury looks uneasy; Exit Evans L.)*

- Armitage: *(Whistles, looks at his watch)* I think she means it. I ordered my man to wait in the Avenue till he was called for. Mabel has evidently had him called. *(Parbury is thoughtful)* I don't wish to be in the least degree meddlesome, but, well, there it is.
- Parbury: The question, I suppose, is what's it all about?
- Armitage: Well, yes. I suppose that's it; although I don't in the least wish to know.
- Parbury: You hear, George? What's it all about?
- Gunning: *(Down R. almost angrily)* Now, how the deuce should I know? Colonel, you would be very kind if you would use your authority to prevent Clement dragging me into his domestic difficulties. Married men have a cowardly way of endeavouring to involve their friends. Perhaps you have noticed it?
- Armitage: I have, Mr. Gunning. My experience of married life extended over a period of 26 years.
- Gunning: May one discreetly express the hope that they were very happy years?
- Armitage: Very happy years, with, however, I must admit, intermittent storms. Mabel's mother was one of the best women in the world, but, if I may say so without disloyalty, she was just a little—a little—er—give me a word.
- Parbury: Would the word exigent apply?
- Armitage: Admirably. Perhaps you have noticed in Mabel the slightest tendency? Eh?
- Parbury: Well, well.
- Armitage: Her mother's jealousy, too, was something amazing. I hope I'm not conceited, but in those days I was just a little—er—popular, and perhaps I ought not confess it, a little—er—give me a word.
- Gunning: Human? *(They laugh slightly; Gunning moves D.R.)*
- Armitage: *(With affected severity)* Clement, I hope you are not too human?
- Parbury: Quite the contrary, I assure you, Colonel.

Armitage: Then why—I suppose, after all, it is my duty to ask—why does Mabel come home with me tonight?

Parbury: She is simply using pressure to get her own way in the matter in which I think her way the wrong way.

Armitage: *(Rise)* Gad, they do like their own way, don't they? Well, no doubt she'll be more reasonable tomorrow. I think I may trust you.

Parbury: You may—absolutely. *(Enter Mrs. Parbury. She has put on a hat and cloak; the Colonel moves to her)*

Mrs. Parbury: *(Going to Gunning)* You'll forgive me, I'm sure, Mr. Gunning. Goodnight. You'll have Clement all to yourself.

Gunning: Goodnight, Mrs. Parbury. *(They shake hands. Parbury joins her C.)*

Parbury: *(In a low voice)* Don't go, Mabel. It's very foolish.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Softening)* You could prevent me, if you wished.

Parbury: *(Deliberately obtuse)* I am opposed to all violence.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Hard again)* Which is it to be?

Parbury: *(Firmly)* My way, dear. *(Goes up C. to fireplace)*

Mrs. Parbury: *(Alone C.)* Good heavens, he'll really let me go. *(Hesitates for a moment, then draws herself up)* Come, father. *(Crossing to front of sofa)*

Armitage: Goodnight, Mr. Gunning. Goodnight, Clement.

Parbury and Gunning: Goodnight, Colonel.

(Exeunt Mrs. Parbury and the Colonel)

Parbury: *(Comes down, a little astonished)* By Jove, she's really going.

(Gunning sits. Parbury stands C. listening. Pause. Then there is the noise of the carriage door being shut.)

Evans: *(OFF)* Home.

(Parbury, somewhat unsteadily, lights a cigarette. He then

catches Gunning's eye. They look at each other.)

MEDIUM CURTAIN

End of Act II

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

ACT III

SCENE: *(The rose garden at Parbury's house. A garden table, seat, and chairs. The next morning.) (Enter Miss Woodward. She is dressed simply, but less severely than before. Her hair is dressed more loosely. She carries a little basket full of roses. She places some roses upon the table, which is laid for two for breakfast. She plucks more roses and fastens them on her dress. Meanwhile she hums an air and conveys the impression of being happier than in the previous acts) (Enter Gunning L. He wears a light morning suit, a round hat and brown boots, and carries a stick and gloves.)*

Gunning: Good morning, Miss Woodward.

Miss Woodward: Good morning. *(They shake hands)*

Gunning: Shall I resist the temptation to pay you a compliment?

Miss Woodward: *(Gathering more roses)* Yes, please.

Gunning: I thought you would say so. All the same, I feel it to be a deprivation.

Miss Woodward: Isn't that remark itself the cloven foot of compliment?

Gunning: Eh? Well, perhaps it is. I'm sorry.

Miss Woodward: And therefore unlike you.

Gunning: Unlike me? What does that mean?

Miss Woodward: That it isn't much in your way to pay women compliments.

Gunning: I hope you are doing me an injustice.

Miss Woodward: I don't think so. You haven't a very lofty opinion of women as a sex, have you?

Gunning: Pretty—pretty well; but what makes you think so?

Miss Woodward: I heard you talk, you know, yesterday afternoon.

- Gunning: Oh, yes. One does talk a lot of rot, sometimes, doesn't one?
- Miss Woodward: Yes. (*Embarrassed pause*)
- Gunning: Is Mr. Parbury down, yet?
- Miss Woodward: No, but he is sure to be in a few minutes. He is generally early. Breakfast, as you see, will be served here. Perhaps—perhaps you would rather wait indoors.
- Gunning: No; I'll stay here if I may . . . I'm afraid we made rather a late night of it.
- Miss Woodward: Really?
- Gunning: Three o'clock.
- Miss Woodward: You had much to talk about. I envy people with pleasant memories.
- Gunning: I don't remember that we talked much of old times. I think we talked of the present. (*Crosses and sits L. of table*)
- Miss Woodward: (*Rather hardly*) Then my envy has flown.
- Gunning: You are right. This affair is rather boring.
- Miss Woodward: (*Innocently*) What affair, Mr. Gunning?
- Gunning: Miss Woodward, you are a triumph of the inscrutable.
- Miss Woodward: (*Leaning on chair R.C.*) I'm sure that is very clever, because I can't quite understand it.
- Gunning: Quite seriously, Miss Woodward, you interest me more than any person I ever met.
- Miss Woodward: Do you always say that to girls, Mr. Gunning?
- Gunning: No. Why?
- Miss Woodward: You ought to. I think it is very encouraging. (*She picks another rose*)
- Gunning: (*Doubtfully*) Ahem.
- Miss Woodward: Are you quite sure you wouldn't rather wait indoors?

Gunning: Oh, quite. I like being here.

Miss Woodward: But, I'm sure you must find it difficult talking down to one's level. I often think that the very wise must be very lonely.

Gunning: *(Rising)* What an extremely unpleasant remark.

Miss Woodward: Is it? I'm sorry. *(She sighs, rises)* We don't seem to get on very well, do we?

Gunning: *(With sincerity and coming close to her)* I'd like to get on well with you.

(Pause. They look at each other's faces)

Will you give me a rose?

Miss Woodward: No, Mr. Gunning.

Parbury: *(OFF)* Are you there, George? *(Miss Woodward gets letters from table)*

Gunning: Yes.

Parbury: *(OFF)* You may serve breakfast, Evans. *(Enter Parbury L.)* Good morning. I hope I haven't kept you waiting. Oh, you are here, Miss Woodward. Good morning. *(Looks at the table.)* And you have managed to find us some roses. How very kind of you. *(Miss Woodward gives him letters. He runs them over)* No, no, no, no; will you kindly see what they're all about? *(She is about to go)* Oh, not now—after breakfast will do.

Miss Woodward: I have breakfasted, thank you.

Parbury: Really? I suppose I'm horribly late. *(Looks at his watch, then, noticing the roses she carries in her hand)* How very beautiful they are. Look, George. *(She selects one and hands it to him)* For me? Thank you. *(He fastens it in his buttonhole)*

(Exit Miss Woodward R. Parbury crosses to C.)

(To Gunning) Lovely, isn't it?

Gunning: *(Cross R. to table; gruffly)* Yes, it's all right.

- Parbury: What's the matter? Cross?
- Gunning: Not at all, but, really, you married men are very tiresome.
- Parbury: Oh, I see—wanted a rose yourself. Shall I call Miss Woodward back and ask for you?
- Gunning: Don't trouble. I've done that myself.
- Parbury: You have? Ha, ha! (*Begins to laugh but stops suddenly*) Oh. (*Holding his head*) Dear, dear, what a head I have.
- Gunning: You haven't asked after my head.
- Parbury: (*Sits at table*) Your pardon. How is it?
- Gunning: (*Sits at table*) I'd like to sell it this morning. Do you know, Clement, I'm not quite certain about that whiskey of yours.
- Parbury: I am. It's fifteen years old. (*Enter Evans R. with breakfast tray*) But you always had a way of mixing your drinks overnight and growling in the morning.
- Gunning: (*Drawing up his chair above table*) Put it down to that, if you like. I do know that I always had a way of disliking you in the morning. I find that I don't appear to have grown out of it.
- Parbury: I'm so glad. I hate being too popular. (*Evans offers bacon to Mr. Parbury. He pushes the dish away.*) Take it away. Have some bacon, George? (*Takes a piece of toast, looks at it and puts it down.*)
- Gunning: Thank you. (*Helps himself to bacon. Exit Evans R. with bacon dish*)
- Parbury: I must say that I think your display of temper is in the worst possible taste under the circumstances.
- Gunning: (*Buttering toast*) What do you mean, under the circumstances?
- Parbury: You know what I mean. How much sleep do you think I've had?
- Gunning: I'm sure I don't know. What concerns me is that you detained me in this outlandish place—what county is it?—till past three o'clock and then insisted, with alcoholic tears in your eyes, on my returning to breakfast.
- Parbury: Tea or coffee?

- Gunning: Tea—no. Coffee—no. Neither.
- Parbury: Have some hot milk. *(Offers him the jug)*
- Gunning: Ugh. Don't. *(Takes an egg and shells it)*
- Parbury: *(Lifts the lid of the tea pot, then of the coffee pot, and closes them gently with a look of distaste)* No, not this morning. Still we must drink something. What shall it be?
- Gunning: I am your guest.
- Parbury: Perhaps, we had better split a bottle.
- Gunning: Please, be frank. Do you mean beer or champagne?
- Parbury: Champagne, of course. *(He calls loudly)* Evans! Evans!
- Gunning: *(Holding his head)* Good 'eavens.
- Evans: *(Entering R.)* Yes, sir?
- Parbury: Bring a bottle of champagne.
- Evans: *(Starting ever so slightly)* Cham—
- Parbury: *(Irritably)* Champagne and glasses.
- Evans: *(Recovering his composure)* Yes, sir. *(Exit Evans R., wearing a discreet smile.)*
- Parbury: It's a thing I haven't done in years: take wine in the morning.
- Gunning: Five years?
- Parbury: Exactly.
- Gunning: In what I may venture to describe as the pre-domestic period, it was rather a way of yours.
- Parbury: You mean ours.
- Gunning: Ours, if you prefer. Where's the salt?
- Parbury: There it is, right before your eyes. Why don't you look?

- Gunning: Pass the mustard, please. What a good chap you were in those days.
- Parbury: Yes. Strange, you were always—
- Gunning: Always what?
- Parbury: Toast?
- Gunning: Thanks, I've got some. Always what?
- Parbury: It's quite pleasant out here, isn't it?
- Gunning: Delightful. You were saying I was always—
- Parbury: Oh, it doesn't matter.
- Gunning: Of course, being about me, it wouldn't matter.
- Parbury: I'm afraid of offending you.
- Gunning: You couldn't do that?
- Parbury: Well, I was going to say you were always rather sour-natured.
- Gunning: Really? *(He takes up a daily paper and glances through it, continuing to do so while Parbury speaks.)*
- Parbury: And that has a disturbing influence on others of happier nature. *(Taking an egg.)*
- Gunning: *(Drawlingly)* Yes. *(He continues to read.)*
- Parbury: Take yesterday, for instance. Of course, you didn't intend it. I wouldn't suggest that for a moment, but, damn it, look at the result.
- Gunning: *(In the same manner as before)* Yes. *(He reads.)*
- Parbury: *(Taking the top off his boiled egg)* Simply deplorable. I've broken loose from my moorings. I'm at the mercy of every breeze. I feel that I've lost moral stability. Confound it, why doesn't that champagne come?
- (Enter Evans with champagne, pours out two glasses and hands them to Gunning and Parbury and exits)*
- Parbury: I'm not quite certain that for a man like me—*(Gunning groans and*

returns to his newspaper) A man, if I may say so, of generous instincts and large sympathies—a groove isn't a good thing, even if it be a little narrow. Of course, for a man of your nature, it's a different matter.

Gunning: *(Suddenly puts down the paper, draws his chair closer to the table and takes an egg with apparent cheerfulness)* What were you saying, old man?

Parbury: Nothing?

Gunning: *(Affecting heartiness)* Let's talk about you.

Parbury: *(Fingering the rose in his buttonhole)* Dear, dear, how cross you are, today.

Evans: *(Entering R.)* Excuse me, sir, may I speak to you?

Parbury: Yes—what is it?

Evans: It's about cook, sir.

Parbury: What's the matter with her?

Evans: Well, sir, so to speak, she wants to know where she stands.

Parbury: *(Looks at Evans, then at Gunning, back to Evans)* How can I help her?

Evans: I mean, sir, or rather, she means, sir, now mistress has gone away—

Parbury: I presume my wife has a right to go away for a few days without cook's permission.

Evans: Yes, sir, certainly. But, excuse me, sir, there's been gossip. Servants is as nervous as race horses, sir, and cook's nerves is particularly sensible. So to speak, dismorlisation's set up in the kitchen.

Parbury: Well, you had better go and set it down again, and don't bother me anymore.

Evans: Yes, sir, certainly. Excuse me, sir, I was to ask you who cook is to take her orders from.

Parbury: In my wife's absence, from me, of course.

Evans: Not from Miss Woodward, sir.

Parbury: *(Starting slightly)* Why? Has Miss Woodward given any orders?

Evans: No, sir, but cook thought—

Parbury: That will do, Evans.

Evans: Yes, sir. *(Pause. Exit Evans L.)*

(There is a pause. Parbury and Gunning exchange looks.)

Gunning: Devilish awkward.

Parbury: What bores servants are. They're so thoroughly moral. *(Parbury slowly drinks a glass of wine. Gunning also drinks. Parbury re-fills the glasses.)*

(Enter Colonel Armitage L.)

Armitage: Am I an intruder?

Parbury: Not in the least, Colonel. *(He rises and shakes hands)* Good morning.

Armitage: *(At back of table C.)* Good morning, Mr. Gunning.

Gunning: Good morning, Colonel. *(They shake hands)*

Parbury: Have you breakfasted?

Armitage: Thanks, yes but poorly. I didn't go to bed till four.

Parbury: Nor did I.

Gunning: Nor I.

Armitage: And then I had but little sleep.

Parbury: The same with me.

Gunning: And with me.

Armitage: *(With a touch of asperity)* Your troubles, Clement, you have, of course, brought up yourself, but I think it's a little hard on your friends that they should be made to suffer on your account.

Gunning: Hear, hear. *(They all sit, Gunning L. of table, Parbury above, Armitage*

R..)

(Enter Evans with fruit. Gunning and Parbury each take an apple.)

Armitage: *(Tapping the champagne bottle with his cane)* What's this? Some new kind of table water, I suppose.

Parbury: Champagne.

Armitage: Champagne at this hour? Well, I suppose you know best how to regulate your life. Have you an extra glass?

Parbury: Another glass, Evans.

Evans: Yes, sir. *(Exit Evans.)*

Armitage: It's a thing I haven't done for years.

Parbury: I trust, Colonel, you won't accuse me of leading you from the path of morning abstinence?

Armitage: Really, Clement, I think this display of ill humour is scarcely—er—give me a word.

Gunning: In good taste.

Armitage: Exactly. In good taste, considering that we are suffering from the effects of your domestic—er—er—

Gunning: Maladministration.

Armitage: Maladministration—exactly.

Gunning: I quite agree with you, Colonel.

Armitage: Look at your friend, here. If he'll allow me to say so, he's put on ten years since yesterday. Look at me. Last evening, I suggest—I hope I'm not conceited—I suggest I didn't look a day over forty-seven.

Gunning: Not an hour.

Armitage: While today—what would you say, Mr. Gunning?

Gunning: *(Looks at him critically, then falls back in his chair)* Fifty-two. *(Parbury*

looks savagely at Gunning, throws his apple on table, and turns away.)

Armitage: I feared so! But, I like you for your frankness. *(He cuts a cigar)*

(Enter Evans, with tumbler on tray; he places the tumbler on the table and collects the breakfast things. Pause. Armitage lights his cigar with a match. Evans hands him the champagne.)

Armitage: You haven't asked me if I have a message for you.

Parbury: *(Lifting his eyebrows toward Evans) Prenez-garde.*

Gunning: *(Loudly)* You mean about Newmarket.

Armitage: Eh? *(After an obvious glance at Evans.)* Oh! Yes, Allerton doesn't run any of his horses; death in the family, you know.

Parbury: So I heard. That will do, Evans. You may leave the champagne. *(They all keep their glasses.)*

Evans: Yes, sir. *(Exits Evans with breakfast tray, L.)*

Parbury: *(Watches Evans off; then to Armitage)* Of course, you know I'm really most concerned about Mabel. How is she?

Armitage: I told you that I was up practically all night with her.

Parbury: Was she ill?

Armitage: Bodily, no. We supped in the kitchen at two. It's amazing how emotion stimulates the appetite. No, Clement, her indisposition is of the mind. She wept.

Parbury: All the time?

Armitage: All the time. *(Slight pause, then he adds with a sigh)* I had rather a trying night. *(They all drink champagne; Gunning rises, bends near a rose bush, and hums the air of the music hall song "'E' 'as my sympathy".)*

Armitage: I'm not without experience. Poor dear, Mabel's mother, for instance, one of the best women in the world—she would cry at times. If she got well off the scratch, she was—er—hard to beat. Mind you, I'll be fair; I was much to blame—very much to blame. But as for Mabel, bless you, that dear child could have given her poor mother 14 for handicap and still—er—what's the expression?

Gunning: Romped home.

Armitage: That's it. Romped home. *(He catches Gunning's irony)* Ha, ha! Romped home! She did, too! Ha, ha!

Parbury: Come, Colonel, give me the message.

Armitage: I have no message for you. I may tell you, you are not in very great favour. *(Gunning smiles)* You're not well spoken of, Clement.

Parbury: Oh. Perhaps, my wife had a good word for Gunning.

Armitage: With regard to Mr. Gunning, I think the word "serpent" was employed. *(Parbury laughs quietly; Gunning becomes serious)* All the same, I have a message for him.

Gunning: Really?

(Armitage, not very subtly, rolls his eyes several times toward the house, indicating that Parbury is to leave.)

Parbury: *(Rising)* In that case, I'll get out of the way. I shall be in my study—if I'm wanted.

Armitage: *(Comes C.)* Very well. But I must say, Clement, that I find you, very much to my surprise and regret, just a little—a little—er—give me a word.

Gunning: Obdurate.

Armitage: Thanks, yes—obdurate; and, dearly fond as I am of my daughter, I think I have a right to ask how long you intend leaving your wife on my hands.

Gunning: Perfectly reasonable—perfectly.

Parbury: Shut up, George. *(He goes to Armitage)* My dear old friend—

Armitage: *(Interrupting)* Hear me out, please. My dear daughter is, of course, always more than welcome at my home, but I trust that you will not misunderstand me when I say I require notice. Since I regained my liberty—I mean, since the death of your wife's mother—I've drifted into my own—er—er—

Gunning: Little ways?

Armitage: Indeed: little ways. This affair has deranged my plans. Without being

indiscreet, I may tell you that I've had to send telegrams.

Gunning: Deuced hard lines.

Parbury: Send her back to me, Colonel. Restore at once your happiness and mine by using your authority. Tell her that cook is in revolt, that Evans is impertinent, and that the servants is dismorlized. Tell her that I only want my own way when I know I am absolutely right, as in this case. And above all, tell her that I prefer her society to that of a second-class cynic who bellows for champagne at ten o'clock in the morning. *(Exit Parbury R.)*

Gunning: With regard to your son-in-law, Colonel, you have my respectful sympathy.

Armitage: *(Cross to R. of table, sits)* A good fellow, but, uhm, obdurate. *(He lowers his voice)* I may tell you, in confidence, Gunning, that I had been looking forward to keeping a rather pleasant appointment, tonight.

Gunning: *(Falling into the confidential manner)* Really?

Armitage: Yes, rather pleasant—rather pleasant. *(He takes a miniature from his pocket and looks at it.)*

Gunning: *(Leaning toward him)* Might one venture to—?

Armitage: *(Keeping the miniature away from him)* Oh, no, no, no, no. Wouldn't be fair. Oh, no. Besides, you might know her hus—you might—er—

Gunning: Yes, yes, of course; one can't be too discreet.

Armitage: *(Quickly)* Not, mind you, that there's anything the whole world mightn't know, only she—er—she's not happy at home, and a quiet evening at a theatre—you understand?

Gunning: Quite, quite.

Armitage: Now you, my dear fellow, can do me a friendly turn.

Gunning: I should be delighted to, but I don't see—

Armitage: I'll explain. My daughter wishes me to see you. She seems to think that you hold the key of the situation.

Gunning: But, I don't. I should very much object to holding the key.

Armitage: Never mind, never mind. See her and do your utmost to make it up between her and Clement.

Gunning: It's no business of mine.

Armitage: To put it bluntly, I shall not be able to keep my appointment tonight if I still have my daughter on my hands.

Gunning: It would be a pity, but . . .

Armitage: In which case, my friend would be vexed—very vexed. I should have mentioned that, on her mother's side, my friend is Spanish.

Gunning: *(Smiling)* That decides me. *(Shakes hands)* Where is your daughter now?

Armitage: She's there, my boy; quite close. We walked over the heath together. One moment. *(He brings a chair forward)* Would you kindly lend me your arm? *(With Gunning's assistance, he mounts the chair, then he raises his hat on a stick)* That's the signal that the coast is clear. Trust an old campaigner. There she is. I say, put that wine away. *(Gunning puts bottle under the table R.C. and places the glasses on table and covers them over with serviette)* It's all right. Thank you. Thank you. *(As Gunning helps him down.)* Remember, my dear fellow, that I've trusted you implicitly. My happiness is in your hands. If we men didn't stand shoulder to shoulder in these little matters, society would—er—would—

Gunning: Crumble to dust.

Armitage: Exactly. Dust.

(Enter Mrs. Parbury. Advancing cautiously, she bows very stiffly to Gunning, who takes his hat off.)

Gunning: Good morning, Mrs. Parbury.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Coldly)* Good morning.

Armitage: Well, I'll leave you. There's nothing further I can do for you at present, dear.

Mrs. Parbury: You might stay in the garden and give me a signal if Clement is coming. I have no intention of meeting him under the circumstances.

Armitage: Very well. I'll give you an unmistakable signal. I'll sing "The Song of Araby." *(Exit Armitage R. above house)*

Mrs. Parbury: *(Grimly)* Well, Mr. Gunning, I hope you are satisfied with your work.

Gunning: My work, Mrs. Parbury? Come, come.

Mrs. Parbury: Oh, I hope you won't dispute that. Clement and I were living together in perfect harmony, in perfect happiness, until you turned up yesterday.

Gunning: Like a bad penny, eh?

Mrs. Parbury: I was going to say, like the snake in the garden. *(Turns and sits L.)*

Gunning: Better still. Our conversation doesn't open propitiously. Don't you think it would conduce to the comfort of us both if we didn't pursue it any further?

Mrs. Parbury: Isn't it a little cowardly?

Gunning: I acknowledge cowardice—in regard to other people's affairs.

Mrs. Parbury: Yesterday, you were a hero.

Gunning: Believe me, Mrs. Parbury, you are mistaken. I didn't interfere in any way.

Mrs. Parbury: You did worse.

Gunning : How?

Mrs. Parbury: You sneered.

Gunning: Really, Mrs. Parbury?

Mrs. Parbury: You aired opinions to me—pernicious opinions. I have a right to assume that you aired the same opinions to Clement, over whom you have some sort of influence.

Gunning: I?

Mrs. Parbury: Not, I think, a good influence, Mr. Gunning. I've been thinking things over since midnight. I've discovered that your influence over Clement is the influence of ridicule—the ridicule of the untamed for the tamed.

Gunning: Say of the disreputable for the respectable, if you like, Mrs. Parbury.

Mrs. Parbury: Thank you. That quite expresses my present opinion. Of course, it is in your power at least to modify it.

- Gunning: I should be grateful if you would show me the way.
- Mrs. Parbury: You are not sincere.
- Gunning: ‘Pon my word, I am. (*Mrs. Parbury raises her hand protestingly*) No, but really—I assure you, dear Mrs. Parbury—I’m not nearly such a bad fellow as you think. What can I do?
- Mrs. Parbury: Something—anything to remove Miss Woodward from this house.
- Gunning: Miss Woodward? (*Rises*) What has she to do with your quarrel with Clement?
- Mrs. Parbury: Everything. Sit down. (*He does so. She makes sure that they are unobserved, then takes a chair near him*) Mr. Gunning, strange as it may appear after all that has occurred—(*Lowering her voice*)—I am going to trust you.
- Gunning: You are very kind.
- Mrs. Parbury: That wretched girl is in love with Clement.
- Gunning: (*Starting from his chair as if shot*) What!
- Mrs. Parbury: Sit down. Sit down.
- Gunning: Miss Woodward is in love with—
- Mrs. Parbury: Sit down, please, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: (*Laughs, sitting*) No, no, no. I simply can’t believe it.
- Mrs. Parbury: Why not?
- Gunning: It seems such a monstrous absurdity. (*Laughs*)
- Mrs. Parbury: (*Drawing herself up*) I see nothing monstrously absurd in any one falling in love with my husband. I did.
- Gunning: Oh, of course—a charming old chap; but she’s such an original girl.
- Mrs. Parbury: (*Indignant*) You infer that I am not.
- Gunning: Not at all, Mrs. Parbury. You are really most interesting.
- Mrs. Parbury: I don’t think you are very tactful.

- Gunning: I'm a boor—a perfect boor.
- Mrs. Parbury: You appear to take an interest in Miss Woodward.
- Gunning: *(Confused)* Only the interest of a student. I still think you must be mistaken.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Emphatically)* I caught her in the act of kissing his photograph.
- Gunning: You saw her—*(Laughs)* My dear Mrs. Parbury, a mistaken . . .
- Mrs. Parbury: A fact. When pressed, she didn't deny it.
- Gunning: Does Clement know?
- Mrs. Parbury: No, I thought it wise not to tell him.
- Gunning: *(Heartily)* You were right, very right.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'm glad you think so.
- Gunning: Some men are so weak.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Drawing herself up again)* Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: So easily flattered.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(With more emphasis)* Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: In nine cases out of ten, it's vanity that leads men astray.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(With growing wrath)* Mr. Gunning, you are speaking of my husband.
- Gunning: Yes, yes, yes. Dear old Clement has his share of vanity, of course. *(Aside)* Damn him. *(Rises and goes R.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Rising indignantly)* How dare you speak like that of my husband! A less vain man doesn't exist, and what small faults he has concern only him and me—and not you in any way. *(Rise and start to exit)*
- Gunning: I beg ten thousand pardons, Mrs. Parbury. Of course, you know Clement far better than I do. Please, don't go.
- Mrs. Parbury: I shall certainly not remain to hear my husband abused.
- Gunning: But I assure you—

- Mrs. Parbury: *(Crosses to R.)* Clement vain, indeed.
- Gunning: No, no; a mistake. Do sit down, again.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Crosses to L.C.)* You might, with advantage, look for vanity nearer home, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: Perfectly true, perfectly true. *(He places her chair for her)*
- Mrs. Parbury: As for the weakness you were good enough to credit my husband with—
- Gunning: Nothing but a slip of the tongue. Do sit down.
- Mrs. Parbury: No doubt you have accustomed yourself to judging other men from your own standpoint.
- Gunning: That's quite true. You are always right. Won't you sit? *(She sits. He sighs with relief, takes a chair himself)*
- Mrs. Parbury: What do you propose?
- Gunning: I'm waiting for a suggestion from you.
- Mrs. Parbury: This brazen hussy—
- Gunning: That expression seems to me to be unnecessarily harsh, Mrs. Parbury.
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh, of course, if you defend the girl.
- Gunning: Pardon me, but I have an old-fashioned prejudice against speaking ill of those not present.
- Mrs. Parbury: I didn't observe it when you spoke of my husband.
- Gunning: *(Laughing)* Fairly hit. Come, let's be practical. Miss Woodward must not remain in this house, and Clement must not know the truth. On these points we are quite agreed.
- Mrs. Parbury: Quite.
- Gunning: Very well. I'll see Clement. I have an idea.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Rises)* You'll not tell him you've seen me.
- Gunning: *(Rises)* Certainly not.

Mrs. Parbury: Remember, above all, it's most important to our future happiness that Clement should be the first to give way.

Gunning: Oh, I'll remember that.

Mrs. Parbury: And, Mr. Gunning, if you succeed, I'll try to forget the mischief you've created, and will ask you to come and see us—*(She shakes hands with him)*—occasionally.

Gunning: Thank you so much.

(Voice of Colonel Armitage outside singing "I'll sing thee songs of Araby.")

Mrs. Parbury: *(Cross to C.)* That's father's signal. I am going to walk on the heath. I'm far too proud to allow myself to be discovered. He might think I want to come back.

(Exit Mrs. Parbury L. U. Voice of Armitage, still singing, comes nearer until he enters with Parbury, with the words "Or charm thee to a tear." Unseen by Parbury, Gunning points out to the Colonel the direction in which Mrs. Parbury has gone.)

Armitage: *(In a low voice to Gunning)* Will it be all right?

Gunning: I hope so.

Armitage: *(Going to L.)* Well, I'll finish my constitutional. I'll look in again, Clement, in the hope that you will then be able to tell me how long this extremely uncomfortable state of affairs is to last. *(Exit Armitage, L., singing until he is well off.)*

Parbury: Give me a cigarette, George. *(Gunning hands him a cigarette, then takes a cigarette himself. They both smoke. There is a short silence.)*

Parbury: Not a stroke of work. It's absurd. *(Throws cigarette on ground in rage.)*

Gunning: You are not happy?

Parbury: Not particularly.

Gunning: Then, how can you expect to do imaginative work?

Parbury: Quite so.

The Tyranny of Tears 60

Gunning: I'm afraid you've made a mistake, old chap.

Parbury: Why?

Gunning: You know I'm your friend.

Parbury: Of course.

Gunning: Apart from all chaff.

Parbury: Yes, yes.

Gunning: Well, you've gone too far.

Parbury: *(Looks at him)* You think so?

Gunning: Yes. By a petulant discontent, you've precipitated an awkward crisis.

Parbury: You see it in that light, now?

Gunning: Yes. I've been thinking things over, Clement. *(Sits on L. of table)* After all, the love of a good woman is a priceless possession.

Parbury: You appear to have dropped into the platitudinous.

Gunning: *(With much gravity)* Don't jest over so sacred a thing, Clement.

Parbury: *(After eyeing Gunning keenly for a moment.)* You have changed your views since yesterday.

Gunning: Only the unimaginative never change their views.

Parbury: You think, then, I've been wrong?

Gunning: Very.

Parbury: I should have gone on putting up with the existing conditions?

Gunning: They might have been worse. They *are* worse.

Parbury: Submitting to the old tyranny?

Gunning: A wholesome discipline, believe me.

Parbury: What of our spoiled yachting cruise?

- Gunning: I ought never to have proposed it. Think what a loving wife must suffer under the circumstances—lying awake at night, listening to the wind howling in the chimneys and sobbing in the trees. It doesn't bear thinking of.
- Parbury: Quite so, quite so: and about our dear old friends, whom I was obliged to drop. You may remember you made some very strong comments on my weakness, yesterday.
- Gunning: I was hasty. I admit it.
- Parbury: Wybrow, for instance—an awful good chap.
- Gunning: A tavern wit—a Johnsonian spirit—eminently out of place on the domestic hearth.
- Parbury: Well, take Carson—one of the best.
- Gunning: Foolishly married a woman your wife couldn't get on with. You admitted it.
- Parbury: But Burleigh—a truly great spirit—your own words.
- Gunning: Burleigh? Just because a man gives you a watch, you needn't thrust him down your wife's throat.
- Parbury: What an old fraud you are, George.
- Gunning: Not at all. One sees things more clearly in the morning.
- Parbury: Well, since you've resigned your attitude of nonintervention, what do you advise?
- Gunning: Discreet surrender.
- Parbury: I'm to send for my wife?
- Gunning: Exactly.
- Parbury: Unconditionally?
- Gunning: Of course. Why impose conditions on a loving, trusting, caring woman? *(Leans on table)* Damn it, old man, show a little heart.
- Parbury: You know it means the sacrifice of my secretary?
- Gunning: Well.

Parbury: Well.

Gunning: *(A little embarrassed; he drops his cigarette and places his foot on it)* It's obvious that Miss Woodward can't stay on here in your wife's absence.

Parbury: I've thought of that.

Gunning: You hear what Evans said. The servants are talking already—and if the servants are talking this morning, the neighbours will be talking this afternoon, and the entire north-west of London by the evening.

Parbury: Quite true—quite true. *(Rises and crosses C.)*

Gunning: I suppose you don't wish to compromise the girl.

Parbury: Certainly not—certainly not. *(He goes slowly over to Gunning and looks him in the face, smiling)* And so that's your secret.

Gunning: What do you mean?

Parbury: All this solicitude for my happiness—this sudden change of your point of view—this miraculous conversion of the cynic into the peacemaker—all inspired by a pair of blue eyes. An arrow from Cupid's bow has winged its way into the wooden heart—

Gunning: Don't talk rot. *(Rise)*

Parbury: Don't be offended. I like it. It pleases me. Think of it. One dull evening in a suburban home, one morning's encounter in a rose-garden, and the thing's done. I tell you I like it. It's so natural, so human—so splendidly unlike you. Let me help. What can I do? She's coming now with some letters for me to sign. "Were it ever so airy a tread, your heart would hear her and beat." Isn't it so? Shall I speak to her for you? Better still, shall I leave you alone together?

Gunning: *(Fixing his hat on more firmly and taking his stick)* You bore me. *(Rises and crosses to L.C.)* I'm going.

(Enter Miss Woodward. She carries some typewritten letters and stands waiting for Parbury.)

Parbury: One moment, old man. *(He looks in Gunning's face, then speaks in a lower voice)* Don't let it pass unrecorded. You have permitted yourself a blush.

Gunning: *(Trying to pass him)* Don't be an idiot.

- Parbury: *(Restraining him)* It's a beautiful, touching truth. The philosopher—the man who has gained perspective—the student who sits perched on a lofty ledge and looks down pityingly on the rest of us, is actually blushing—blushing like a poor, simple, human heart. *(Laughs loudly)*
- Gunning: Go to the devil. *(Exits R.)*
- Parbury: *(Turing to Miss Woodward. He goes to her)* Forgive my laughter, Miss Woodward, but it isn't often one surprises a philosopher in a blush. Now, let us see. *(He sits and takes the letters. Miss Woodward remains standing by him. He reads. Interrupting himself after a moment, he laughs slightly)* Dear old George. *(He continues reading, then signs the letter. He looks over another and says:)* Excellent. *(And signs it. Then he quickly signs the other letters, sits back in his chair and says:)* Thank you. *(Miss Woodward gathers up the letters)* I'm afraid that's all the work I can do today. I'd like to have gone on with the novel, but it seems the mood won't come.
- Miss Woodward: I'm very sorry.
- Parbury: The time is out of joint.
- Miss Woodward: Oh, curséd spite. *(She laughs a little. Pause)* I wish I could do something.
- Parbury: No, no. Don't you trouble. It'll all come right presently. By the way, what a good fellow Gunning is.
- Miss Woodward: Is he?
- Parbury: Don't you think so? *(Looking at her)*
- Miss Woodward: I've seen so little of him; but I'm sure he must be when you say so. *(She is going R.)*
- Parbury: Wait one moment, Miss Woodward. I know there was something else I wanted to say to you. *(She comes back)* *(He rises and paces stage thoughtfully)* Oh, yes; I know. I'm afraid my domestic complications have made things a little uncomfortable for you here.
- Miss Woodward: *(Astonished, drops letter on table)* I don't—don't understand.
- Parbury: I mean that you probably feel it rather awkward to actually live, night and day, in the house in my wife's absence.
- Miss Woodward: *(Blankly)* Oh, yes, yes; I suppose.

- Parbury: I don't know much about these matters; but I do know that you women are very sensitive, and apt to worry about what people might say.
- Miss Woodward: *(In the same manner as before)* Yes, of course.
- Parbury: I thought so. Well, it occurred to me that perhaps under present circumstances it would be better if—
- Miss Woodward: You mean for me to go away.
- Parbury: Yes.
- Miss Woodward: *(In a low voice)* If I had been wise, I'd have expected it.
- Parbury: I mean, of course, to sleep only. Mrs. Howlands, at Parkhurst House just down here, lets some of her rooms, I know, and, probably, she has a vacant bedroom. I'll send down presently and see what can be done. In fact, I'll send Evans now. *(Is about to go.)*
- Miss Woodward: Mr. Parbury.
- Parbury: *(Stopping)* Yes.
- Miss Woodward: Don't send, please.
- Parbury: Oh, I see. You'd rather go yourself.
- Miss Woodward: I would rather go altogether.
- Parbury: Miss Woodward, what is it for? What have I done?
- Miss Woodward: Nothing that hasn't been perfect kindness to me.
- Parbury: Then why do you wish to go, now? I know I can't expect to have you always because you will someday get married.
- Miss Woodward: I shall never get married.
- Parbury: Nonsense. Of course you will, and the man who gets you will, in my opinion, be a very lucky fellow; but until that day, I certainly looked forward to having the benefit of your services.
- Miss Woodward: I'm sorry if I disappoint you. Please, forgive me, and let me go.
- Parbury: But really, Miss Woodward, I must beg you for some sort of explanation.

Last night, you acknowledged you were perfectly satisfied. You wished to remain.

Miss Woodward: You have unconsciously shown me, today, that I was wrong.

Parbury: Indeed. I would be glad to know how. Oh, how weary one gets of mysteries. *(Miss Woodward sits L. of table, her head droops lower)* *(He walks the stage then looks at Miss Woodward and pauses; he goes to her and speaks more gently)* I beg your pardon. I fear I spoke impatiently. Do understand that I only wish for your own good. I admit, in our relations, I've hitherto rather been selfish. I'm afraid writing men are apt to be so. I've allowed you to study my wishes and feelings and nerves all the time, without giving any thought to yours. I'll try to be more considerate in the future, if you'll only regard me as an elder brother and tell me what is troubling you, now.

Miss Woodward: I'm sorry, but I can't. I'm ashamed that you should worry about me, at all.

Parbury: Is it anything to do with Mr. Gunning?

Miss Woodward: Nothing at all. How could it be?

Parbury: Miss Woodward, I don't like to press you, but this general cloud of mystery is seriously affecting my nerves. At least tell me—I make it a personal favour—the cause of the quarrel between my wife and you.

Miss Woodward: It's possible that Mrs. Parbury may tell you after I've gone. I'd rather you despised me then than now.

Parbury: *(Wonderingly)* Despise you? *(Their eyes meet; pause)*

Miss Woodward: *(Passionately)* Please don't—don't even try to guess.

Parbury: *(The light breaking in on him slowly)* I think I understand.

(Miss Woodward turns up stage and stands with head bowed, her back to audience. There is a long pause. At first, Parbury doesn't appear ill-pleased. He looks down at the rose in his buttonhole and begins to hold it, half-tenderly, to his face. Then his face becomes grave, and he slowly removes the flower from his coat, and places it on the table against which Miss Woodward is standing. He takes one of her hands.)

Parbury: I don't ask anything—I don't guess anything, my dear . . . child—my little sister. I was wrong to press you to tell me your trouble; for what could a hardened, rough-natured man do with the secrets of a young girl's heart?

Miss Woodward: Don't speak like that; only say that I may go.

Parbury: Yes. (Goes over L.)

Miss Woodward: Thank you. (*Sees the rose where he has placed it. After a slight pause she takes it up. During the following, she slowly picks it to pieces, dropping the petals on the ground.*)

Parbury: (*Coming down to back of the table and speaking very gently*) I suppose there must soon come a time to every girl of heart who goes out alone into the world—a time when life seems to press hardly upon her; weariness of the unaccustomed stress makes her heart falter, and when she longs to take rest for a time in the old childhood, in the home she perhaps once thought to be dull and dreary, in the mother's arms that have always been ready to open with love for her.

Miss Woodward: Don't. (*Sinks into chair R. of table. Buries her face in her hands*)

Parbury: Perhaps you feel that that time has come now. If so, go for a little while and get fresh strength for the battle of life. Come back to the fight soon. You are bound to succeed, because you have talent, and ambition, and courage. (*Slight pause. He takes her hand*) Don't cry. There is nothing you have lost or suffered yet quite worth a tear—(*Enter Mrs. Parbury L., Gunning and Armitage*) Nothing quite worth a tear.

(He is bending toward her. Mrs. Parbury who is slightly in advance of Armitage and Gunning stops near Miss Woodward and Parbury, brought up short by seeing their intimate position. Parbury draws back from Miss Woodward, who remains up-right and motionless. Gunning and Armitage, who exchange glances, remain L. Miss Woodward crosses L. to go)

Mrs. Parbury: (*In a low voice speaking low with deep emotion*) I suppose. . . I have still a right to. . .ask for some explanation?

Parbury: Of what, dear?

Mrs. Parbury: Of this familiarity.

Parbury: You shouldn't mistake sympathy for familiarity. I was only giving Miss Woodward some advise for her affairs.

Mrs. Parbury: What affairs?

Parbury: I said her affairs, not ours.

Mrs. Parbury: If that is all the explanation—(*Turns away L.*)

Miss Woodward: Wait a moment. Mr. Parbury very kindly and very properly advised me to go home for a time—(*She comes down to Mrs. Parbury and speaks to her alone*)—and I—I descended to your level—I cried.

QUICK CURTAIN

End of Act III.

THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

ACT IV

SCENE: *(Same as ACT 1 and 2.)*

(Upon the curtain rising, Miss Woodward is discovered at the desk. A luncheon gong is immediately heard. Miss Woodward looks up and listens for a moment, then shrugs her shoulders and resumes her work. She opens a drawer and then writes)

Miss Woodward: *(Writing)* Drawer four, reviews favourable of "Harvey Masterton". In top corner, tied in bundle, reviews unfavourable.

(She closes and locks that drawer and unlocks another, looks into it for a moment, turns over its contents then shrugs her shoulders and writes)

A variety of photographs of Mrs. Parbury and two packets of letters marked "Private". How touching. *(She closes the drawer with a bang and opens another)*

(Enter Evans L.)

Evans: *(C.)* Excuse me, Miss, but have you heard the luncheon gong?

Miss Woodward: Yes, thank you.

Evans: It's been struck twice, 'specially for you, Miss.

Miss Woodward: Who told you to strike it the second time?

Evans: Mr. Parbury, Miss.

Miss Woodward: And, who sent you, now?

Evans: Mrs. Parbury asked me to tell you they're at lunch. They're the only words that's been spoken since they sat down. It's rather trying to the nerves, Miss, waiting on people that only open their mouths to eat.

Miss Woodward: You will please say that I don't want any lunch.

Evans: Yes, Miss.

Miss Woodward: Has Emma packed my things?

- Evans: She's packing them now, Miss.
- Miss Woodward: *(Glancing at an A.B.C. which is on the desk)* Will you please order a cab for me—let me see—*(Consulting the book)* Four-twenty—say, at half past three?
- Evans: Yes, Miss. Excuse me, Miss, but we're all very sorry you're going, particularly cook. Cook's very strong in her attachments.
- Miss Woodward: *(Looking into a drawer)* It's very kind of cook.
- Evans: Cook's words was "This'll be a dull 'ouse when the little sunbeam's gone."
- Miss Woodward: That will do, Evans.
- Evans: Excuse me, Miss, it was meant kindly. We was all on your side in this. *(A pause. Miss Woodward is obstinately silent, and goes on working.)* Can't I get you something, Miss?
- Miss Woodward: Yes. Ask cook to kindly make me a sandwich.
- Evans: Sandwich of mutton or 'am, Miss?
- Miss Woodward: Ham, please. *(Exit Evans L.)* It's sure to be cold mutton tonight. *(She writes)* Old manuscripts. *(Closes door)* There, that's all in order for him. *(Rises)* I know there are some books of mine here. I may as well have them. *(Goes towards book shelves but stops when she comes to the occasional table on which is the photo of Mr. Parbury. She stretches out her hand and takes the photo gingerly. Then she looks around to see if she is observed)* Poor thing. Was it outraged by a kiss? What a shame. But it's all right now. *(Puts it back with care)* No one shall hurt it. It's perfectly safe—perfectly safe. *(She goes to bookshelf)* Keats—mine. *(Takes a volume)* Matthew Arnold—mine. *(Enter Evans with the sandwiches, milk etc. on a small tray which he places on the desk.)* Jane Eyre—mine. I think that's all. *(Brings the books down and places them on desk)* Thank you, Evans. *(She sits.)*
- Evans: Cook thought you would care for a piece of that cake, Miss.
- Miss Woodward: I would. Thank cook for me.
- Evans: Yes, Miss. *(He goes to door)* There's still a hominous silence at the luncheon table, Miss.
- Miss Woodward: *(Taking a sandwich)* That's all right, Evans. *(Exit Evans L.)* After all, one must have food. *(She takes a respectable bite out of a sandwich)* And who could overpectimate the comsolations of literature? *(Opens a book and reads.)*

Takes another bite of a sandwich.)

(Enter Mrs. Parbury L.)

Mrs. Parbury: *(C.)* Why won't you come to lunch, Miss Woodward? But, oh, I see you're having something here.

Miss Woodward: *(For a moment slightly confused)* I—I—*(Drinks some of her milk)* I have a railway journey before me. *(She rises)*

Mrs. Parbury: All the more reason you should come and lunch properly.

Miss Woodward: You are very kind, but I am in no mood for merriment.

Mrs. Parbury: Merriment.

Miss Woodward: Aren't you all merry? I'm so sorry. I thought it would be all right, now that I'm going away.

Mrs. Parbury: I'm afraid that won't make any difference. You speak as though you had a grievance against me.

Miss Woodward: Oh, no. I suppose it's the other way around.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Sits on sofa)* Perhaps it ought to be, but somehow I don't feel it acutely. I feel only a dull pain. It's a terrible thing, Miss Woodward, for a young married woman to suddenly realize that her happiness is gone. I feel that I have aged many years in the last few hours.

Miss Woodward: So do I. I'm sadder but healthier. *(Finishes the milk)*

Mrs. Parbury: It's so much worse for me.

Miss Woodward: Oh, of course, our own troubles are the worst. That is what has been called "the vanity of grief".

Mrs. Parbury: *(Rises and crosses to C.)* Well, Miss Woodward, I'll say goodbye. I bear you no ill-will, now—really I don't; and I shall always be glad to hear that you are doing well, although naturally, under the circumstances, I can hold out no hope of your coming back to me.

Miss Woodward: *(In amazement)* You, Mrs. Parbury, hold out hopes of my returning here? Do you think there is enough money in the Bank of England to induce me to do that?

- Mrs. Parbury: I didn't mean it unkindly. I was only trying to say a nice, womanly thing, and to show you that I didn't blame you much for falling in love with my husband.
- Miss Woodward: I never did.
- Mrs. Parbury: Oh, Miss Woodward, you know I saw you, here. (*Pointing to Parbury's photograph*) It was the greatest shock of my life.
- Miss Woodward: (*With a little laugh*) I suppose it was.
- Mrs. Parbury: Then how can you say—
- Miss Woodward: (*Gravely*) It was only a motherly kiss.
- Mrs. Parbury: (*Turning away*) It seems impossible to talk with you. I used to think you a serious-minded person. (*Starts to go L.*)
- Miss Woodward: Please, don't go, Mrs. Parbury. I'm quite serious. I'll explain.
- Mrs. Parbury: (*Turning*) Well?
- Miss Woodward: (*Hesitating*) I'm not sure you'll like the explanation.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'll take the risk. (*Comes down, sits on sofa*) Go on, please.
- Miss Woodward: The interest that I began to take in Mr. Parbury sprang in the way of what has been called the maternal instinct.
- Mrs. Parbury: If you go through the world exercising maternal instinct on other women's husbands, Miss, you'll end badly.
- Miss Woodward: I don't propose doing so. I'm going home to try it on my sisters.
- Mrs. Parbury: If you had known anything about life, you would have seen that I have sufficient maternal instinct for the needs of my husband.
- Miss Woodward: Yes, I see that. Please don't be angry, but I didn't think it found the right expression. It was very impudent of me, I know.
- Mrs. Parbury: Very.
- Miss Woodward: It seemed to me that you smoothed his hair when he would rather have it rough, and roughed it when he'd rather have it smooth. (*Demurely*) I think that expresses what I mean. I have a beastly way of noticing everything, and I

began to feel sorry for Mr. Parbury, and, being quite as egotistical as most girls, I began to think I should have made him a better wife than you.

Mrs. Parbury: Well. *(Rises)*

Miss Woodward: Perhaps, in the remotest of my heart, I think so still.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Indignant)* Well!

Miss Woodward: But, I never loved him—never in the least degree.

(Mrs. Parbury, during the foregoing, has listened with anger gathering in her face but at the end and after an apparent momentary struggle with herself, she bursts into laughter.)

I'm glad you are not angry.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Still laughing)* It's impossible to be angry. And, so, because you thought his wife bored him, you gave his photograph a nice, motherly kiss? That was very sweet of you, I'm sure.

Miss Woodward: It was well meant, Mrs. Parbury, and you must always remember that I didn't know you were looking.

Mrs. Parbury: *(Laughing sits on the sofa)* Why do you make me laugh when you must know that my heart is breaking—that I have lost my happiness for ever? *(Pause; she begins to laugh again)* *(Rises)* I thought you a designing hussy, and you are only a very quaint and harmless girl. *(Laughs)*

(Enter Gunning L. Keeps door open.)

Gunning: I'm afraid I'm in the way.

Mrs. Parbury: Not at all. We have said all we had to say to each other. *(Moves L.)* Oh, how that girl has made me laugh. *(Exit Mrs. Parbury L., laughing. Gunning shuts the door.)*

Miss Woodward: Goodbye, Mr. Gunning. *(At table, gathering her books together.)*

Gunning: I want a little talk with you.

Miss Woodward: I'm sorry. I can't give you the time.

Gunning: Oh, yes, you will, Miss Woodward.

- Miss Woodward: Indeed? I admit my position is a lowly one, but that doesn't lessen your presumption. *(Goes toward the door)*
- Gunning: *(With conviction)* You won't go.
- Miss Woodward: But, I will.
- Gunning: My dear Miss Woodward, believe me, you will not.
- Miss Woodward: You don't propose using force, I suppose?
- Gunning: Certainly not.
- Miss Woodward: *(Going to door L.)* Goodbye, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: You know you are dying to hear what I have to say.
- Miss Woodward: Indeed, I'm not.
- Gunning: Oh, yes, you are. And further, a certain innate graciousness I have observed in you will prevent you going. You are saying to yourself, "Mr. Gunning has evinced a genuine interest in me. It would be rude of me to refuse him a few minutes to talk."
- Miss Woodward: *(Slowly comes to sofa and puts books down)* I certainly don't wish to be rude.
- Gunning: Of course not.
- Miss Woodward: *(Sits on sofa)* And anyway I want to eat my piece of cake. Will you pass it, please? *(He passes the plate)* Thank you. I hope you won't mind my eating.
- Gunning: Not at all. I like it.
- Miss Woodward: Not that I fear it would make any difference if you did.
- Gunning: No, certainly not. Go on being natural, please. *(Pause. He watches her nibbling the cake)* Shall I ring for a fresh piece?
- Miss Woodward: No, thank you. I'm used to this piece, now. *(She glances up at him)* You needn't be disconcerted, Mr. Gunning.
- Gunning: I'm not a bit.
- Miss Woodward: You look it a little.

Gunning: Do I?

Miss Woodward: And you know you didn't detain me here to watch me eat cake.

Gunning: No, although you do it very nicely. I want to ask you what you think of me.
(Leaning on back of chair R.C.)

Miss Woodward: I haven't thought of you.

Gunning: Well, I'd like you to begin.

Miss Woodward: I'm afraid I haven't time, now.

Gunning: It might be to your interest, though I don't say positively that it would be.

Miss Woodward: Explain. *(Turns to him)*

Gunning: I think I ought, first, to tell you something about myself.

Miss Woodward: *(In mock alarm)* Not the story of your life? My cab will be here soon.

Gunning: You told me yours, last night.

Miss Woodward: You asked me to. I haven't asked you.

Gunning: You needn't reproach me for taking an interest in you.

Miss Woodward: I don't; but you make such a fuss about it, as if it were a sort of miracle.

Gunning: *(Crossly takes plate from her lap and cake from her hand; puts them on table R.)* Oh well, I suppose I oughtn't to detain you, Miss Woodward. You are evidently anxious to go back to your twelve sisters and the hat and frock you told me about.

Miss Woodward: *(Rises)* You needn't throw the family poverty in my face, although it serves me right for giving my confidence to a comparative stranger.

Gunning: Miss Woodward, I humbly beg your pardon.

Miss Woodward: Although the home be grubby, I daresay we are as happy as you. We believe in things, anyway—you don't.

Gunning: Don't judge me by a hasty remark. Besides, I had an alternative to suggest.

Miss Woodward: You? *(Gunning smiles and nods)* You don't want a secretary, do you?

- Gunning: I—I wanted to tell you in a different way, but you won't let me. I want you as my wife.
- Miss Woodward: Your wife, Mr. Gunning?
- Gunning: It may appear sudden and cold-blooded—but your cab is coming.
- Miss Woodward: You've taken my breath away. How exciting it is when it does come. I really don't know what to say. I know there is a usual thing. It isn't "To what am I indebted for this honour", is it?
- Gunning: I don't know. I've never asked a girl before.
- Miss Woodward: We don't know each other in the least.
- Gunning: That's where we would start with a big advantage. We'd have all the pleasure of finding each other out. Anyway, you are not displeased.
- Miss Woodward: Oh, no; either way, I score. If I say yes, I suppose I'll make a good match.
- Gunning: Pretty good.
- Miss Woodward: And if I say no, I shall at least be able to boast of a proposal.
- Gunning: That's so.
- Miss Woodward: Not that there's much satisfaction in that to a practical mind.
- Gunning: No. *(Goes to her)* Try the other.
- Miss Woodward: But, we don't love each other.
- Gunning: Another big advantage! Love is the rock upon which so many well-intentioned young persons split. They engage to marry each other while the intelligence is perverted, the reason unbalanced, and the judgement obscured by an overpowering sentiment. They enter into a solemn, life-binding contract in a highly emotional and altogether unusual moral condition. The disastrous results of such folly we see examples of daily. We will escape that snare. *(He comes close to her)* Of course, if the sentiment should subsequently come, if that particular emotion should by chance supervene, we'll deal with it as best we can.
- Miss Woodward: *(Sits on arm of sofa.)* Still there must be something in love-making. I remember my sister and the curate seemed to have a very good time. We all thought them funny, but I know they liked it.

Gunning: I made love to you in the garden, this morning.

Miss Woodward: Did you? I thought it was pity, and resented it.

Gunning: You refused me a rose, and gave one—

Miss Woodward: I refused you a rose because I thought you pitied me, and gave one to Mr. Parbury because I pitied him.

Gunning: I'd like you to pity me.

Miss Woodward: I haven't the time now. *(Leaves him)* I mean to say no.

Gunning: *(Following her)* You are afraid.

Miss Woodward: Of what?

Gunning: Of what people call my "nasty, sneering way", for instance.

Miss Woodward: *(Confidently)* Oh, I could deal with that, all right.

Gunning: I'm sure you could. *(Goes near her)* Say yes, Hyacinth. *(She is about to give in.)*

(Enter Evans L.)

Evans: Your cab is here, Miss.

Gunning: *(To her in a low voice)* Send it away. *(She hesitates)* Do.

Miss Woodward: Thank you, Evans. Let it wait. *(She moves to C. with a satisfied smile.)*

Evans: Yes, Miss. *(Exit L.)*

Miss Woodward: Goodbye, Mr. Gunning. If you were entirely different from what you are, I think I could have liked you; or if I were entirely different from what I am, I think I might have married you. But you are hopelessly modern and cold-blooded, and I am only an old-fashioned, sentimental, healthy English girl, and a healthy English girl doesn't want to make experiments. She wants to be loved.

(Suddenly Gunning throws his arm round her and bends forward to kiss her. She quickly raises her clenched hand as if to strike him in the face. He looks her in the eyes without flinching.)

Gunning: You say you're a sentimental English girl. Well, I am a sentimental English boy.

Miss Woodward: Oh, come.

Gunning: I am, Hyacinth. Or, at least, for the first time in my life, I am becoming one, but I shall never succeed without your help, my dear. Never. Say yes.

Miss Woodward: *(Softly)* Perhaps. *(Her hand slowly drops; he kisses her.)*

Armitage: *(Outside L.)* No, my dear. I can't wait any longer.

Gunning: *(In a low voice to her)* The garden. Will you come and find me a rose?

Miss Woodward: Yes.

(Miss Woodward and Gunning exeunt. Enter Colonel Armitage L., Mrs. Parbury and Mr. Parbury. Mrs. Parbury comes down L. and sits, Armitage remains C. They are all silent and uneasy. A considerable pause, during which they are occupied with avoiding each others eyes.)

Armitage: A cheerful day.

Parbury: Yes.

Mrs. Parbury: Very. *(Another uneasy pause)*

Armitage: Well, I must be going.

Parbury: Don't go.

Mrs. Parbury: Please, stay, father. *(Another pause)*

Armitage: *(With much irritation)* Well, you see I'm staying.

Mrs. Parbury: Thank you.

Parbury: Thank you, Colonel.

Armitage: But I should like to know what the devil for?

Mrs. Parbury: Father.

Parbury: Colonel.

- Armitage: I really think I have cause to be angry. A more depressing function than your luncheon party today I've never experienced. I think I have a right to a little cheerfulness in my middle age. I'm sure I've earned it. I've had a great deal to put up with in my life.
- Parbury: No doubt, no doubt.
- Armitage: Of course, I've always expected my full share of trouble. That I have felt to be only right and manly. *(Pause; he looks at Clement)* As for my late dear wife, her heart was rarely deaf to a proper expression of regret. The memory of her I feel to be a blessing to this day. *(He blows his nose sympathetically)* One thing I can tell you, dear Mabel, that when your mother and I made it up—well, we made it up. I am not without some agreeable recollections—most agreeable. *(Pause. He comes to Mrs. Parbury)* I trust you won't require me tonight, my dear. I have to attend . . . a Masonic banquet.
- Mrs. Parbury: No, father. I shan't want you.
- Armitage: Then, goodbye—*(Aside to her)* Be true to your own good heart. Your dear mother was—sometimes. *(He kisses her and then goes to Parbury)* Goodbye, Clement. *(Aside to him)* Bear up; I've been there myself. *(He goes; aside at door)* Rather tactful, I think—rather tactful. *(There is a constrained silence. Mrs. Parbury is particularly uneasy. After a moment, Parbury rises, lights a cigarette, and stands at mantel-piece.)*
- Mrs. Parbury: Am I in the way, dear? Do you want to work?
- Parbury: No. *(Rises, goes up R.)* Today must be a holiday.
- Mrs. Parbury: Holidays are meant to be happy days.
- Parbury: I suppose so.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Very sadly)* Our happy days are gone. I suppose they will never come back.
- Parbury: It would be wiser to look for new ones than to weep over the old ones.
- Mrs. Parbury: I'll not cry, dear; I promise you that. *(Pause, suddenly rises and turns to him)* Clement, we can't start again?
- Parbury: Perhaps. But we must consider first where we now are and the direction in which we are to go.
- Mrs. Parbury: Perhaps, in your heart, you are blaming me more than I deserve—I mean about Miss Woodward.

- Parbury: You chose to keep the motives of your conduct a secret from me.
- Mrs. Parbury: I may have been wrong. I saw her kiss your photograph.
- Parbury: *(Starts slightly)* Why didn't you tell me? *(Pause)* Why didn't you tell me?
- Mrs. Parbury: I thought—I thought it would be wiser not to.
- Parbury: What have I ever done to earn so low an estimate of my character from you—that I am not to be trusted with the knowledge that a foolish girl has kissed my photograph?
- Mrs. Parbury: Nothing, dear; nothing. But I was jealous—furious—I am sorry. *(She is half turned to him. He smiles very kindly, and half makes a step forward as if to take her in his arms, then restrains himself; drooping)* You are very angry with me.
- Parbury: I am very, very pained.
- Mrs. Parbury: Can't you forgive?
- Parbury: Yes, that is forgiven.
- Mrs. Parbury: You say you forgive, but you don't make me feel it. *(Slight pause; he is obviously tempted to come to her, but does not)* Won't you forget too, and let us go back?
- Parbury: We can never go back.
- Mrs. Parbury: Love counts for something.
- Parbury: *(Comes to her)* Does love without respect count very much? Did you like the old way? We were both less than people.
- Mrs. Parbury: I . . . I thought I was happy then.
- Parbury: Because you never dreamed that my love had worn very badly.
- Mrs. Parbury: *(Startled)* Clement . . . you can say that? *(Goes to him.)*
- Parbury: If, today, we are honest with each other, we may save ourselves from living that most hideous of all states of existence: the man and woman wearing the venerated ghost of a public smile, who are walking in hell. They may have started as beautifully as we did. Their love was not slain as by a blow. It was pecked to a cupboard skeleton by littleness: little jealousies, little insults,

little intolerances, little tyrannies. The thin outside petals of courtesy, hollow words, endearment before others, mask hearts poisoned with bitterness; rancour; swift thoughts, black as murder; and the final dull monotony of aching hatred.

Mrs. Parbury: Clement, you terrify me. *(C. R.)* I am ashamed. If I have lost a particle of your love, I'll win it back—if there is any way.

Parbury: Of course, there is a way—a very pleasant way, strewn with the flowers of reasonableness, of tolerance, of trust. If, rising in the morning, we say, not “I will find happiness today” but “I will give happiness today”, then the way is most assuredly a happy one. *(As he speaks these words, with deep sympathy, standing a little away from her, she gradually draws nearer to him.)*

Mrs. Parbury: May we walk that way together, Clement? *(He takes her in his arms and kisses her)*

(Enter Miss Woodward and Gunning. Gunning wears a rose in his coat)

Gunning: Really—I beg your pardon. Is everything all right?

Mrs. Parbury: Oh, don't trouble about us any more. We're reconciled. *(She remains in her husband's arms)* Mr. Gunning, Miss Woodward . . .

(Gunning turns smiling to Miss Woodward and takes her hand)

Miss Woodward: *(Smiling back upon Gunning)* Oh, don't trouble about us any more. We're engaged.

MEDIUM CURTAIN

End of Play