WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

A Comedy

J. M. BARRIE
WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS
A Comedy in Four Acts
by
J. M. BARRIE

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SAMUEL FRENCH
LONDON
NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD
WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

Produced on September 3rd, 1908, at The Duke of York's Theatre, London, transferred to the Hicks on December 21st.

JOHN SHAND . . . . . Mr. Gerald du Maurier.
Alick Wylie . . . . . Mr. Henry Vibart.
David Wylie (his Sons) . . . . . { Mr. Sydney Valentine.
James Wylie . . . . . Mr. Edmund Gwenn.
Maggie Wylie (his Daughter) . . . . . Miss Hilda Trevelyan.
Mr. Venables . . . . . Mr. Norman Forbes.
Comtesse de la Briere . . . . . Mrs. Tree.
Lady Sybil Tenterden . . . . . Miss Lillah McCarthy.
Grace (a Maid) . . . . . Miss Madge Murray.

An Elector.
A Manservant.

(Electors, members of the Crowd, etc.)

THE SCENES

ACT I
At the house of the Wylies, who are the proprietors of a Granite Quarry at the Pans, N.B.

ACT II
Shand's Committee Rooms, Glasgow.

ACT III
Mr. Shand's house in London.

ACT IV
The Comtesse's country cottage.
WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

ACT I

Scene.—The parlour of the house of the Wylies, proprietors of the granite quarries at the Pans, a small town in Scotland, on an evening about 1900.

(See the Ground Plan.)

The central piece of furniture is a large round table. It is exactly at c., with horsehair chairs above, below and at each side. Above it hangs a gas chandelier of three jets. Only one has been converted to an incandescent burner, and only this one is lit.

The window, neither high nor wide, is up c., and covered by heavy curtains. To r. of the window, a door to a lobby, in which can be seen, when the door opens, a pendulum clock at the far end, and a hat stand on the r.

Above the fireplace l., a large armchair covered in some warm material. Another larger and finer armchair (too good for the room) is set down stage r.c.

The bookcase, large and well filled, with locked glass doors, is against the r. wall. Below it, a horsehair sofa of the period. Down l., below the fire, a small chintz-covered ottoman with a lid. It is used as a boot chest. There are antimacassars and hand-sewn cushions on armchairs and sofa. There is a small side-board up l.

Without being over-crowded, the room should have the appearance of being well filled with solid furniture, and there should not be too much room for movement. There is, in fact, very little movement in this Act.

The Curtain rises on Alick and James Wylie sitting at the table, playing draughts. The Wylies, though not really wealthy, are the well-to-do people of a small town. They are self-made men of no education, except such as they have picked up, but of shrewd commercial ability, and they must not be played as comic figures.

Aurck, the father, is about sixty, well preserved, grey-whitish whiskers; Davin, the elder son, is about forty, whiskers—no other hair on face. Jamus is about thirty-five, whiskers like Davin, but less profuse. There should be a family resemblance, i.e. we should guess that Jamus at forty will look like Davin—and David at sixty like the father. James is not held of much account by the others. None of them speak dialect, but all have a Scotch accent. They have other Scotch ways, such as a tendency to keep their hands in their trouser pockets and to rattle the money therein. Alick is in the chair l. and James in the chair r. of the table. Both are in tweed clothes. James wears what is obviously
an old house-jacket. But Alick has on a good black coat— he is
the best dressed. They both wear hand-sewn slippers, and Alick
is smoking a briar pipe.

James lolls ungracefully over the table waiting for Alick to
play. James, who is waiting his chance, swiftly makes his move,
and then leans back in his chair rather triumphantly. Gradu-
ally Alick realizes that he is in difficulties. At last he has a good
idea and moves. For a moment James is discomfited and Alick
smokes complacently. Then James rises, Alick half makes
several moves and draws back. James comes and stands behind
him looking over his l. shoulder. Alick looks up and scowls at
him. Then James sits sprawling in the chair C., highly pleased
with himself. Great care must be taken not to overdo this scene.
There should not be much expression on their faces. They should
never be playing at an audience. Above all, they should never
throughout the play have the least idea that they are humorous.
While Alick is still pondering heavily over a move, and James
is chuckling, David enters. The others do not look up, nor does
he look at them. He is dressed like them, but has on a good tweed
coat and boots, like one who has come in. His boots are muddy.
He sits briskly on the sofa R., unlaces his boots and pushes
them off with his feet, kicks his slippers out from under the sofa,
and pushes his feet into them. He then crosses below the table
carrying his boots, puts them in the ottoman, and closes the lid.
He then stands with his back to the fire, warming himself. He
looks at the others, then leans on the mantelpiece, and recites with
the emphasis one gives to a hymn:

David. Oh, let the solid ground
       Not fail beneath my feet,
       Before my life has found
       What some have found so sweet.

(This is unexpected to them, but they do not move positions.)

Alick (seated L. of the table, without looking round, draughtsmen
in hand). What's that you're saying, David?

David. The thing I'm speaking about is love.

(Alick grins without looking round.)

James (in the chair above the table—sitting up). Do you stand
there and say you're in love, David Wylie?

David. Me! What would I do with the thing?

James (with some spirit). I see no necessity for calling it a
thing.

David (derisively). Oho! Has she got you, James?

James (settling himself in the chair sideways—quickly). Nobody
has got me.

David. They'll catch you yet, lad.
JAMES. They'll never catch me. You've been nearer caught yourself. 
ALICK (turning L. to the fireplace). Yes; Kitty Men(z)ies, David.

(JAMES laughs "Ah-ah!")

DAVID (after a sigh of relief). Ah, it was a kind of a shave, that!

ALICK (philosophizing). It's a curious thing, but a man cannot help winking when he hears that one of his friends has been caught. (He sits in the armchair above the fire.)

DAVID. That's so.

JAMES (rather wistful). And fear of that wink is what keeps me and David single men. And yet what's the glory of being single?

DAVID. There's no particular glory in it—but it's safe.

JAMES. Yes, it's lonely, but it's safe. But who did you mean the poetry for, then?

DAVID. For Maggie, of course!

(A pause. JAMES bends forward thoughtfully.)

ALICK. Ay, I thought that.

(The brothers, though keen business men, have one soft spot, a passionate love for their sister MAGGIE. At once they become sentimental and rather miserable.)

DAVID. I saw her reading that poetry and saying the words over to herself.

JAMES (gloomily). She has such a poetical mind.

DAVID. Love. There's no doubt, as that's what Maggie has set her heart on. That Dagont love. And not merely love, but one of these grand noble loves, for tho' Maggie is undersized she has a passion for romance.

JAMES (rising, and wandering away R. by the door, miserably). It's terrible not to be able to give Maggie what her heart is set on. (He crosses down R. and then up R.)

(ALICK and DAVID take no notice of him.)

ALICK (violently). Those eediiots of men!

DAVID (crossing up to above the table). Father, did you tell her who had got the minister of Galashiels?

ALICK. I had to tell her. And then I—I—bought her a seal-skin muff, and I just slipped it into her hands and came away.

(DAVID sits in the chair above the table.)

JAMES (up R.). Of course, to be fair to the man, he never pretended he wanted her. (He moves a little down R.)
DAVID. None of them wants her—that’s what depresses her. I was thinking, Father, I would buy her that gold watch and chain in Snibby’s window.

JAMES (who is still wandering up and down, crossing up to DAVID). You’re too late, David—I’ve got them for her. (He produces them from his pocket.)

DAVID. It’s ill-done of the minister. Many a pound of steak has that man had in this house.

ALICK. You mind the slippers she worked for him?

JAMES (crossing to the armchair R.c.). I mind them fine—she began them for William Cathro. (He sits, depressed.) She’s getting on in years, too, though she looks so young.

(The sound of the clock being wound in the passage is heard.)

ALICK. I never can make up my mind, David, whether her curls make her look younger or older. (He rises and sits on the chair L. of the table.)

DAVID (determinedly). Younger—whisht!—I hear her winding the clock.

(They all look towards the door. Then DAVID turns urgently to JAMES.)

Mind, not a word about the minister to her, James. Don’t even mention religion this day.

JAMES. Would it be like me to do such a thing?

DAVID. It would be very like you. And there’s that other matter—say not a syllable about our having a reason for sitting up late to-night. When she says it’s bedtime, just all pretend we’re not sleepy.

ALICK. Exactly, and when—

(MAGGIE enters. JAMES leans back in his chair immediately, but quietly, without any theatricality. DAVID and ALICK seem to be playing draughts. MAGGIE is small, odd, rather mysterious-looking, with quaint curls that justify ALICK’s uneasiness about her appearance. She is very matter-of-fact, however, in her procedure and has certain old-fashioned Scotch ways and a Scotch accent. She is plainly but neatly dressed in brown.)

MAGGIE (after closing the door, giving a look of surprise—in gentle reproof). James, I wouldn’t sit on the fine chair.

JAMES (rising). I forgot again. (He moves R. and sprawls on the sofa with his head down stage.)

MAGGIE (crossing to the fireplace). You’re late, David—it’s nearly bedtime. (She makes up the fire, brushes the ashes under the tray, wipes her hands with a handkerchief and looks in the glass. She then takes up her knitting, which is on the mantelpiece, and sits in the chair above the fire.)

DAVID. I was kept late at the public meeting.
Alick (cleaning out his pipe and refilling it). Was it a good meeting?

David. Fairish. (With some heat.) That young John Shand would make a speech.

Maggie (knitting). John Shand? Is that the student Shand?

David. The same. It’s true he’s a student at Glasgow University in the winter months, but in summer he’s just the railway porter here. I think it’s very presumptuous of a young lad like that to make a speech when he hasn’t a penny to bless himself with.

Alick. The Shands were always an impudent family—and jealous. (He replaces the jar of the table.) I suppose that’s the reason they haven’t been on speaking terms with us this six years. (Lighting his pipe.) Was it a good speech?

David (generously). It was very fine, Father—but he needn’t have made fun of me!

(James sits up indignantly.)

Maggie. He dared!

David (gloomily). You see, I cannot get started on a speech without saying things like “in rising for to make a few remarks.”

James. What’s wrong with it?

David. He mimicked me and he said, “Will our worthy chairman come for to go for to answer my questions,” and so on, and they roared.

James. The sacket! (He falls back again on the sofa.)

David. I did feel bitterly, Father, the want of education.

(Sincerely, like a man ashamed.)

Maggie. David!

David. Every day I feel it in the very marrow of me.

Maggie. So do I, David.

Alick. And I feel the shame of not having educated you, but when you were young, I was so desperate poor, how could I manage it, Maggie?

Maggie. You couldn’t, you couldn’t.

Alick. No! (He gazes across at the bookcase R.) Ah, to be able to understand these books. To up with them one at a time and scrape them as clean as though they were a bowl of brose!

David (with melancholy pride in the books). There’s five yards of them—five yards of the most learned books in the language—that was my order.

James. Yes, and they were selected (rising) by the minister of Galashiels. He said——

(Alick slams the table and turns his chair to face more down stage.)

David (quickly). James!
(David is looking towards Maggie. The others look round to see if she has noticed.)

James. I mean—I mean—

Maggie (quietly). I suppose you mean what you say, James. I hear, David, that the minister of Galashiels is to be married on that Miss Turnbull.

(They are all on guard now.)

David (carelessly). Ah, so they were saying.

Alick (snapping). All I can say is, she has made a very poor bargain.

Maggie (who continues knitting). I wonder at you, Father. He's a very nice gentleman. I'm sure I hope he has chosen wisely.

James. Not him. (He lies down again, head down stage, on the sofa.)

Maggie. I expect she is full of charm.

Alick. Charm! It's the very word he used.

David. Havering idiot!

Alick (crosses his leg and settles himself). What is charm, exactly, Maggie?

(They all turn towards her.)

Maggie (bearing up bravely). Oh, it's—it's a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else—and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have. Some women—the few—have charm for all, and most have charm for one. (Softly.) And some have charm for none. (She tries to go on knitting—can't—sits quietly—her hands slowly drop into her lap.)

(The brothers are all wanting to be up in arms in her defence. James jumps to his feet.)

James. I have a sister that has charm. (He crosses up C., pulling out the watch and chain.)

Maggie (softly). No, James, you haven't.

(Alick smokes vigorously.)

James (going to her chair). Ha'e, Maggie!

(He gives her the watch. She lets it lie in her hand. James turns away up R.C.)

David (rising, desperate, crosses to her above the chair, puts his arm around her neck). Maggie, would you like a silk?

Maggie. What could I do with a silk? (With a little gust of passion.) You might as well dress up a little brown hen.

(David returns to his chair. James sits r. of the table. Distress
of the brothers. A pause. Alick puts the draughtsmen in the box, folds up the board, box on the top, and carries them up to the sideboard up L., and returns to his chair L. of the table.)

James (after the pause, slapping the table). Bring him here to me.

Maggie. Bring whom, James?

(David kicks James, under the table.)

James (feeling his shin). David, I would be obliged if you wouldn’t kick me beneath the table.

Maggie (calm again, back to the men). Let’s be practical——Let’s go to our beds. (She rises, puts the watch in her pocket and her knitting on the mantel.)

(David and Alick exchange a sly glance. They always rather ignore James, who gives a look on his own account.)

David. I don’t feel very sleepy yet.

(Maggie turns from the mantel in surprise.)

Alick. Nor me, either.

James (who is always cheery, though ignored). You’ve just taken the very words out of my mouth.

David. Good night to you, Maggie.

Alick. Good night!

Maggie (wondering). All of you unsleepy—when, as is well known, ten o’clock is our regular bedtime.

James (smiling). Yes, it’s notorious we go to our beds at ten. That’s what we’re counting on.

(Alick crushes the paper on the table.)

Maggie (taking a pace towards the table). Counting on?

David. You stupid whelp!

James. What have I done?

Maggie (down L.C., looking at them). There’s something up!!

(She looks from one to the other, then turns Alick by the shoulders and looks at him. He tries to avoid her eyes. She moves up L. of David.)

(Putting her hand on David’s shoulder.) You’ve got to tell me, David.

David. Oh, (disgustedly to James)—go out and watch!

Maggie. Watch?

(James rises and crosses to the door, where he turns, defiantly.)

James. May I be allowed to make one observation?

David. Better not!

James. Oh! Then this is my reply——Oh! (He exits.)
(David and Alick sign that they will have to tell Maggie, who moves to R. of the table, and sits.)

David (in his alert business way). Maggie, there are burglars about.

Maggie (clutches the table). Burglars!

David (puts his hand on hers to pacify her). We hadn’t meant for to tell you till we nabbed them, but they’ve been in this room twice of late. We sat up last night waiting for them and we’re to sit up again to-night.

Maggie. The silver plate!

David (rising). It’s all safe as yet. (With his R. foot on the chair, facing her.) That makes us think they were either frightened away these other times, or they are coming to make a clean sweep.

Maggie. How did you get to know about this?

David. It was on Tuesday. The polissman called at the quarry with a very queer story. He had seen a man climbing out at that window (pointing) at ten past two.

Maggie. Did he chase him?

David. It was so dark he lost sight of him at once.

Alick. Tell her about the window.

David (standing L. of his chair). We’ve found out that the catch of the window has been pushed back by slipping the blade of a knife between the woodwork.

Maggie. David! (She sits very upright.)

Alick. The polissman said he was carrying a little carpet bag.

Maggie. The silver plate is gone.

David. No, no. (Moving round to R. of his chair.) We were thinking that very likely he has bunches of keys in the bag.

Maggie. Or weapons!

David. As for that, we have some pretty stout weapons ourselves in the umbrella-stand. So, if you’ll go to your bed, Maggie—— (He pushes his chair in to the table.)

Maggie (rising). Me! and you in danger!

Alick. There’s just one of them.

Maggie. The polissman just saw one.

David (pugnacious). I would be very pleased if there were three of them. (He shakes his fist.)

Maggie (valiantly). I watch with you. (She turns below and to the back of her chair.) I would be very pleased if there were four of them.

David (admiring). And they say she has no charm!

(Re-enter James excitedly on tiptoe. They all turn to him as he closes the door.)

All. Well?

James (in an excited whisper). Out with the light!
Act I] WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

(David stands on his chair and puts out the light. He then crosses to the window and peeps out.)

He’s there!

(Alick backs to the fireplace. James moves down a little, r. Maggie to up r.c.)

I had no sooner gone out than I saw him climbing the garden wall.

Alick. What’s he like?

James. He’s an ugly customer. That’s all I could see. There was a little carpet bag in his hand.

David (still peeping). That’s him.

James. He slunk into the rhododendrons, and he’s there now, watching the window.

David (turning from the window). We have him!

Maggie. Do you think he saw you, James?

James. I couldn’t say, but, in any case, I was too clever for him, I looked up at the stars, and yawned loud at them as if I was tremendous sleepy.

David (who has been listening at the window). Whisht!

(They all listen. A long pause. Evidently they hear something.)

Away with you!

(James goes up very quietly and opens the door. Maggie exits, then Alick. James follows them.)

(To James.) Out with the lobby light.

(James turns it out. David exits, closing the door.

There is a pause of suspense. The clock strikes ten. A window is heard to open softly, the curtains move, and the window is heard to shut.

Then, a man appears, carrying a little carpet bag. He comes down with stealthy movements, putting the bag on the table with his left hand. He crosses to the door and listens, opens the door a little, looks out, and listens again. The hall clock is heard ticking. The man closes the door softly, returns to the table, and mounts the chair above it, striking a match and lighting the gas. Up to now, only vague movements have been seen, but as the lights go up the man can be identified.

He is John Shand, aged twenty-two, and clean-shaven. He wears a shabby overcoat and a cockerel bonnet. Otherwise he is in the well-worn clothes of a railway porter. The impression he gives at present is that of a burglar. He listens, then gets off the chair, opens his bag and stealthily takes out what appears to be a jemmy. It is an ebony ruler. He moves r. to the bookcase, puts down the ruler, and, taking out some keys, opens the bookcase, picks out a large book and returns to the table with it, and his ruler.)
He removes his overcoat and throws it over the large armchair down R.C. He then takes foolscap paper, blotting-paper, pen and ink from his bag, sets them out and puts the bag under the table. He glances at the fire, crosses to it, and puts on some more coal, then returning to R. of the table. After putting a cushion from the armchair on to that R. of the table, he sits, rules some lines on the paper, and blots them. He then opens the large book and studies.

There is a pause. Then David peeps in at the door, and is puzzled. He edges to L. of the doorway, and Alick appears on his R. Then, Maggie between them, and James behind, looking over David’s shoulder.

John deliberately wipes his pen on the tablecloth. The others look at each other in surprise. Then they come forward a little into the room, and check again.

After a pause:

Alick (crossing down R.). When you’re ready, John Shand.

(John starts up, pushing back his chair and turning. James closes the door. Maggie comes down R. of John. David moves to L. of the table, and James to up C. John, realizing he is caught, stands dogged and expressionless.)

James (like a railway porter). Ticket, please!

(John looks at him and then at David.)

David. You can’t think of anything clever for to go for to say now, John.

Maggie. I hope you found the cushion comfortable, young man?

John (who also has a Scotch accent). I have no complaint to make against the cushion.

(Maggie puts the poker on the sofa and returns to R.C.)

Alick (really distressed). A native of the town!! The disgrace to your family. I feel pity for the Shands this night.

(He moves down and sits on the sofa, half back to the audience.)

John (with spirit). I’ll thank you, Mr. Wylie, not to pity my family.

James (standing C., below the window, as if guarding escape). Canny, canny!

Maggie (R.C.). I think you should let the young man explain. It mayn’t be so bad as we thought.

David. Explain away, my Billie. (He works down to the fire and stands there facing him.)

John. Only the uneducated would need an explanation.

(At this, all are indignant.)
I'm a student, (with a little passion) and I'm desperate for want of books. You have all I want here—no use to you but for display—well, I came here to study. (He puts his pen in the ink.) I come twice weekly.

DAVID. By the window?

JOHN. Do you think a Shand would so far lower himself as to enter your door? (He pauses and looks round to ALICK.) Well, is it a case for the police?

JAMES. It is!

MAGGIE. It seems to me it's a case for us all to go to our beds, and leave the young man to study—but not on that cushion. (She puts the cushion back on the chair R. and remains there, R. of the chair, facing up stage.)

JOHN. Thank you, Miss Maggie, but I couldn't be beholden to you. (He closes the book and makes to pack up.)

JAMES (crossing down to the table). My opinion is—he's nobody, so out with him!

JOHN. Yes, out with me. And you'll be cheered to hear I'm likely to be a nobody for a long time to come.

DAVID (suspiciously). Are you a poor scholar?

JOHN (looking at DAVID). On the contrary, I'm a brilliant scholar.

DAVID. It's siller, then?

JOHN. Yes, it's the filthy lucre.

JAMES. Here, no blasphemy!

JOHN (with feeling). My first year at College I lived on a barrel of potatoes and we had just a sofa-bed between two of us—when the one lay down the other had to get up. Do you think it was hardship? It was sublime. But this year I can't afford it. I'll have to stay on here, collecting the tickets of the illiterate, such as you, when I might be with Romulus and Remus among the stars.

JAMES. Havers!

DAVID (in whose head some design is beginning to take shape). Whisht, James!

(Moving towards the table). I must say, young lad, I like your spirit. Now tell me, what's your professor's opinion of your future?

JOHN. They think me a young man of extraordinary promise.

DAVID. You have a name here for high moral character.

JOHN. And justly!

DAVID. Are you serious-minded?

JOHN. I never laughed in my life.

(MAGGIE chuckles and JOHN looks at her, annoyed.)

DAVID (above the chair L. of the table). Who do you sit under in Glasgow?
JOHN. Mr. Flemister of the Sauchiehall High.

DAVID. Are you a Sabbath School teacher?

JOHN. I am!

DAVID. Hum! Hum! One more question. Are you promised?

JOHN. Promised? To a lady?

DAVID. Yes!

JOHN. I've never given one of them a single word of encouragement. I'm too much occupied thinking about my career.

(MAGGIE chuckles. JOHN is annoyed.)

DAVID. So. (He looks at JOHN and MAGGIE.) Father!

(ALICK rises. DAVID moves up R., and indicates by a jerk of the head that he wishes to talk privately with ALICK. MAGGIE moves down R., thinking. DAVID and ALICK exeunt without apology. JOHN watches them off, and then moves below the table.)

JAMES (following to the door). Do you want me, too?

(DAVID and ALICK exeunt as if they had not heard him. ALICK closes the door in his face.)

MAGGIE (crossing to R. of the table). I don't know what maggot they have in their heads, but sit down, young man, till they come back.

JOHN (moving to below the chair L. of the table). My name's Mr. Shand, and till I'm called that I decline to sit down in this house.

MAGGIE. Then I'm thinking, young sir, you'll have a weary wait.

JAMES (crossing to the chair above the table). They've gone out to decide what to do with you.

(JOHN picks up his things.)

They would have liked to have me with them, but they saw the advisability of leaving me in charge. (Sternly.) Are you attending, John Shand?

(ALICK and DAVID are heard laughing, outside.)

JOHN. I am not, James Wylie.

JAMES. Pooh! (He turns up R.C.)

(DAVID and ALICK re-enter with some plan. Their manner is now genial. The lobby light is now on again. JAMES and MAGGIE notice their change of manner. JOHN is also aware of it.)

DAVID (coming to above the table, ALICK on his R.). Well, sit down, Mr. Shand.

JOHN (looking triumphantly at MAGGIE). Mr. Shand!

DAVID (sitting above the table). And pull in your chair.

(John sits L. of the table, ALICK sits R. of the table.)
You’ll have a thimbleful of something to keep the cold out.  
(Briskly.) Glasses, Maggie.

(MAGGIE wonders, but gets glasses and decanter from the sideboard  
up L.)

You’re not a totaller, I hope?  
JOHN (guardedly). I’m practically a totaller.  
DAVID. So are we.

(JOHN looks round at MAGGIE.)

How do you take it?  
(ALICK taps DAVID and indicates MAGGIE.)

Is there any hot water, Maggie?

(MAGGIE crosses to the table with a tray, and stands waiting.)

JOHN. If I take it at all—and I haven’t made up my mind yet  
—I’ll take it cold.

(MAGGIE puts the tray on the table.)

DAVID (to JAMES, who is above and on his R.). You’ll take it  
hot, James?

JAMES (coming forward). No, I——

DAVID (decisively). I think you’ll take it hot, James.

JAMES. I’ll take it hot. (He moves down R. to the sofa.)

DAVID. The kettle, Maggie.

(MAGGIE exits, evidently quietly suspicious. She shuts the door.  
ALICK and DAVID watch her off.)

ALICK. Now, David, quick, before she comes back.  
(JOHN takes up the ruler for protection.)

DAVID. James!

(He points to below the table, and JAMES sits there—leaning his  
head on his hands.)

Mr. Shand, we have an offer to make you.  
JOHN (warningly). No patronage!

ALICK. It’s strictly a business affair.  
DAVID. Leave it to me, Father. It’s this . . .

(To his annoyance, MAGGIE returns with a kettle and puts it on the  
fire and gets her knitting.  ALICK and DAVID exchange glances.)

Maggie, don’t you see that you’re not wanted?

(ALICK puts spoons in the glasses and pours out whisky.)

MAGGIE. I do, David. (She sits doggedly in the armchair L.)

(ALICK and DAVID again exchange glances.)
David. I have a proposition to put before Mr. Shand, and women are out of place in business transactions.

(For reply Maggie begins to knit vigorously.)

Alick. Ay, we'll have to let her bide, David.

David (sternly). Woman! (This has no effect.) Very well, you can sit there, but don't interfere, mind. Mr. Shand, we're willing, the three of us, to lay out three hundred pounds on your education——

John. What's that?

David (emphatically). On condition—that five years from now—Maggie Wylie, if still unmarried—can claim to marry you—should such be her wish—the thing to be perfectly open on her side—but you to be strictly tied down.

John. Hullo!

James. So, so!

David. Now what have you to say? Decide.

(John turns in his chair, looks at Maggie, and turns back.)

John (after the pause). I regret to say——

Maggie. It doesn't matter what he regrets to say, because I decide against it. And I think it was very ill-done of you to make any such proposal.

David (without looking at her). Quiet, Maggie.

John (without looking at her). I must say, Miss Maggie, I don't see what reasons you can have for being so set against it.

Maggie. If you would grow a beard, Mr. Shand, the reasons wouldn't be quite so obvious.

John. I'll never grow a beard.

Maggie. Then you're done for at the start.

John. What!

Alick (together, ad lib.). Come, come!

Maggie. Seeing I have refused the young man——

John. Refused!

David (to Maggie). No reason why we shouldn't have his friendly opinion. Your objections, Mr. Shand . . . ?

(Maggie listens eagerly.)

John. Simply, it's a one-sided bargain. I admit I'm no catch at present, but what could a man of my abilities not soar to with three hundred pounds? Something far above what she could aspire to.

Maggie. Oh, indeed!

David. The position is, that without the three hundred pounds, you can't soar.

John. Ay, you have me there.
JAMES. Ay, that's where we have him. (He leans back in his chair.)

MAGGIE. Yes, but——

ALICK. You see, you're safeguarded, Maggie—you don't need to take him, unless you like—but he has to take you.

JOHN. That's an unfair arrangement, also.

MAGGIE. I wouldn't dream of it without that condition.

JOHN (turning to her). Oh, then you are thinking of it!

MAGGIE. Poof!

DAVID (to JOHN). It's a good arrangement for you, Mr. Shand. The chances are you'll never have to go on with it, for in all probability she'll marry soon.

JAMES (tapping JOHN on the arm). She's tremendous run after.

JOHN. Well, even if that's true, it's just keeping me in reserve in case she misses doing better.

DAVID. That's the situation in a nutshell.

JOHN. Another thing. Supposing I was to get fond of her now?

ALICK. It's very likely.

JOHN. Ay, and then suppose she was to give me the go-by?

DAVID. You have to risk that.

JOHN (looking at MAGGIE). Or, take it the other way; supposing as I got to know her, I could not endure her?

DAVID. You have both to take risks.

JAMES. What you need, John Shand, is a clout on the head.

JOHN (after a pause). Three hundred pounds is no great sum.

(There is a pause, the others seeing his point.)

DAVID. You can take it or leave it.

ALICK. No great sum for a student studying for the ministry!

JOHN. Do you think that with that amount of money I would stop short at being a minister?

DAVID (banging his hand on the table admiringly). That's how I like to hear you speak. A young Scotchman of your ability let loose upon the world with a three-hundred-pound education! What could he not do! It's almost appalling to think of—especially if he went among the English.

JOHN. Nothing could stop me. (Turning to her.) What do you think, Miss Maggie?

MAGGIE (intent on her knitting). I have no thoughts on the subject either way.

JOHN (cautiously). What's her age?

(MAGGIE looks defiantly at JOHN. The brothers look at ALICK.)

She looks youthful, but—they say it's the curls that does it.

DAVID. She's one of those women who are eternally young.

JOHN (turning to him). I can't take that for an answer.

ALICK. She's . . .
DAVID. She’s twenty-five.
JOHN. Ay, I’m just twenty-one.
JAMES. I read in a book that about four years’ difference in the ages is the ideal thing.
JOHN. Blethers!
DAVID. Well, Mr. Shand?
JOHN (slowly, looking at MAGGIE again, then to the others). I’m willing if she’s willing.
DAVID. Maggie?
MAGGIE. There can be no “if” about it. It must be an offer.
JOHN. A Shand give a Wylie such a chance to humiliate him. Never!
MAGGIE. Then all is off!
JAMES
DAVID (ad lib.). Come, come, Mr. Shand.
ALICK
JOHN. No—no!

(All three men rise. JOHN remains seated.)

DAVID (patting JOHN on the shoulder). It’s just a matter of form.
JAMES. That’s all—that’s all. It’s just a matter of—
DAVID. Sit down, James!

(JAMES sits again.)

JOHN (reluctantly—half turning). Miss Maggie—will you?
MAGGIE (doggedly). Is—it—an—offer?
JOHN (dourly). It is.

(ALICK and DAVID sigh with relief and sit again.)

MAGGIE (rising, gratified, with her knitting in her hand). Before I answer, I want first to give you a chance of drawing back.
DAVID. Maggie!

(The Wylies show alarm.)

MAGGIE (bravely). When they said that I had been run after, they were misleading you. I’m without charm. Nobody has ever been after me.
JOHN (looking at the others). Oho!
ALICK. Oh, they will be yet.
JOHN (turning to MAGGIE). It shows, at least, that you haven’t been after them.

(The Wylies exchange glances. ALICK coughs.)

MAGGIE (looking at them). One thing more, David said. I’m twenty-five—I’m twenty-six.
JOHN (turning to the men). Aha!
Maggie. Now be practical. Do you withdraw from the bargain, or do you not?

(A pause. The men are anxious.)

John (heavily). It's a bargain.

(The others are relieved.)

Maggie. Then so be it. (She sits again, pleased.)

David (cheerily). And that's settled. Did you say you would take it hot, Mr. Shand?

John. I think I'll take it neat.

David (rising). Pull in your chair. (He crosses L. for the kettle.)


James. Ay, ay, so, so. (Etc.)

Alick. Don't interrupt me, James.

(David rises from the fireplace, the kettle in his left hand. With his right, he pats Maggie, crosses, pats John's shoulder, and adds hot water to the glasses in which Alick is putting sugar, and takes the kettle back to the fire. Alick hands John his glass. David returns to the table, and the men draw their chairs in to the table and stir their whisky.)

(Holding up his glass.) Here's to you, Mr. Shand, and your career.

John. Thank you. (He turns.) To you, Miss Maggie.

(Maggie nods. The men sip.)

Had we not better draw up a legal document? Lawyer Crosbie could do it—on the quiet.

David. Should we do that, or should we just trust to one another's honour?

James. I say trust to one another's honour.

Alick. Let Maggie decide.

Maggie. I think we would better have a legal document.

(James rattles his spoon in his glass.)

David. We'll have it drawn up to-morrow. Keep quiet, James. I was thinking the best way would be for to pay the money in five yearly instalments.

John. I was thinking, better bank the whole sum in my name at once.

Alick. I think David's plan's the best.

James. I think so, too.

John. I think not. Of course, if it's not convenient to you——

Alick. Convenient?

(The Wylies are hurt.)
DAVID (with business pride). It's perfectly convenient. What do you say, Maggie?

MAGGIE. I agree with John.

(JOHN smiles. The men finish drinking their whisky.)

DAVID. Very well!

ALICK. Yes na, nay na ay, ay, oh yes, umpha ay man, ay, ay.

JOHN (pushing back his chair). Then, as that's settled, I think I'll be stepping.

ALICK. If you would like to sit on at your books——

JOHN. As I can come at any orra time now, I think I'll be stepping. (He rises.)

(The WYLIES rise: JAMES moves down R.)

ALICK. Yes, David, yes. Ay—ay! Umpha! That's so—well—well! Ay!

(ALICK and DAVID cross up to the window. JOHN, moving to R. of the table, puts his things in his bag. MAGGIE goes R.C. for JOHN'S hat and coat.)

MAGGIE (helping him into his coat). Have you a cravat, John?

JOHN. I have! (Taking it from his pocket.)

MAGGIE. You would better put it twice round.

(She helps him to do so. DAVID comes down and shakes hands with JOHN above the table.)

DAVID. Well, good night to you, Mr. Shand. (He crosses to the fireplace.)

ALICK (shaking hands with JOHN). And good luck.

(MAGGIE moves up a little R.)

JOHN. Thank you. The same to you.

(ALICK moves L. to R. of DAVID, and JOHN down R.C. to JAMES and shakes hands and turns again.)

And I'll cry in at your office in the morn's morn before the six-twenty is due, and have the matter put on a business footing. (He is about to shake hands, hesitates, and moves up on her L.)

DAVID. I'll have the document ready for you. I think, Maggie, you might see Mr. Shand out.

MAGGIE. Certainly.

(JOHN has turned mechanically to the window. He checks.)

This way, John.

(Exit MAGGIE. JOHN hesitates, looks round at the men, then follows her off. The others close in together, R. of the fireplace, and slap their pockets, jingling their money.)
WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

Act I

ALICK. Well done, David.

DAVID. He's a fine, frank fellow, and you saw how cleverly he got the better of me about banking the money. (Giving him the highest praise.) I tell you, Father, he has a grand business head.

ALICK. He has! Lads, he's canny, he's cannier than any of us.

JAMES. Except, maybe, Maggie; he has no idea what a remarkable woman Maggie is.

ALICK. Best he shouldn't know. Men are nervous of remarkable women.

JAMES (turns and looks at the door). She's a long time in coming back.

DAVID. It's a good sign. Hah!

(MAGGIE returns, closes the door—pulls the chair straight at R. of the table.)

What sort of a night is it, Maggie?

MAGGIE. It's a little blowy.

(Shes puts the glasses together on the tray, and gets a large dust-cloth which is lying folded up on a bookshelf and proceeds to spread it over the chair R. The men exchange glances covertly.)

ALICK. Ay...mpha. (He yawns.) Ay...ay.

DAVID (stretching himself). Well—well, well, oh yes. It's getting late. (He looks at his watch.) What is it with you, Father?

ALICK (looking at his watch). I'm ten-forty-two.

JAMES (looking at his watch). I'm ten-forty.

DAVID (looking at his watch). Ten-forty-two.

(They wind up their watches.)

MAGGIE. It's high time we were bedded.

(She turns towards the door, stops, comes back to JAMES, ALICK and DAVID down L., and puts her hands on their shoulders, embracing them.)

You're very kind to me.

DAVID (making light of it). Havers.

JAMES (making light of it). Havers.

ALICK (making light of it). Havers.

MAGGIE (looking a little wistfully at them). I'm a sort of sorry for the young man, David.

DAVID. Not at all. You'll be the making of him.

MAGGIE. I'll do my best. (She crosses below and up R. of the table, picks up a book and moves up R.)

DAVID. Are you taking the book to your bed, Maggie?

MAGGIE (in the doorway, her hand on the handle). Yes; I don't want him to know things I don't know myself.
(She exits, closing the door. A pause, in which David and Alick look at each other without expression.)

Alick. Yes—yes. It is so, yes! Well, well, I must go to my beautiful bed. (He crosses and turns at the door.) You'll lift the big coals off, David. (He pulls the front from his shirt.)

(He exits slowly, leaving the door open. David goes to the fire and proceeds to make it right for the night.)

James (up l.c., talking at David's back, who takes no notice). She's queer, Maggie—I wonder how some clever writer has never noticed how queer women are. It's my belief, David, you could write a whole book about them. (Moving towards the door.) It's a most romantical affair. I wonder how it'll turn out?

(There is no answer. He looks at David's back, and pauses.)

It was very noble of her to tell him she's twenty-six.

(There is still no answer.)

James turns, speaking as he goes.) But I thought she was twenty-seven.

(He exits, leaving the door open. David turns out the gas, having first lit a match to guide him to his room. He puts out the lobby light, and is seen by the lighted match going along the passage—looks at the time on the clock—disappears.)

Curtain.
ACT II

Scene.—John Shand’s Committee Rooms. The time is six years later. The place Glasgow. The scene is a hairdresser’s shop, turned, for the nonce, into John Shand’s Committee Rooms. John is standing for Parliament and this is the night of the election, but all the audience should see at first is that we have reached some big moment in his life. The room, which is small, is dismantled of a good deal of its furniture and ornaments, but the fixtures of a barber’s shop remain.

The back wall is mainly glass, partly stained, with a door up L., leading to the outer shop and thence to the street.

In the r. wall, a fire (with guard) and two barber’s basins and chairs. To L. of the door is a small counter, and below it a weighing-machine, or, if not available, an additional barber’s chair, with arms. Another basin down L. Up r.c., a spiral staircase leads upstairs to the Ladies’ Department, as a card indicates. Below the staircase, a plain wooden table and two chairs. The table, and the shop generally, is littered with election placards on which only the words “John Shand, M.A.” are distinguishable to the audience.

Through the passage and the window up L. may be seen stairs to the entrance of the Cowcaddens Club, but this is not essential, though effective if it can be done.

A few moments after the rise of the curtain, the crowd seems to be even more excited, and one or two electors are seen entering, gesticulating, and shouting in the outer shop. They shout such phrases as “John Shand! Civil and Religious Liberty! No Popery!” etc., and exit, merging again with the crowd outside, where the noise and general shouting continues.

Maggie is seen coming down the iron staircase, listening on the steps just facing the audience and in a quiver of excitement. There should be some indication that she is six years older; but she still wears her curls. She is partly in outdoor garments, somewhat (but not excessively) overdressed in velvet or silk; her hat and cloak are on a chair. She should be a queer, mysterious-looking little creature. Her excitement and tension are great, flinging up her hands, clasping them, listens at the door, reels about almost dancing with excitement. David and Alick rush in up L. They are in tweeds, round hats, etc. David’s whiskers have begun to get grey, a bit bald on top—also a bit stouter. They are panting like men who have run. Alick closes the door and leans against it exhausted (against the counter). The sound of the crowd is not shut out. All the following scene should be very quick. David leans on r. of the door. The noise lessens.
MAGGIE. David—have they—is he—? (She crosses down to David's R.) Quick, quick, quick!

DAVID. There's no news yet—

(MAGGIE backs to the table, then down R. and paces to and fro, R. to C.)

MAGGIE. No news. It's terrible. (She paces about.) Oh! Oh! Oh!

ALICK (moving down L.). For God's sake, Maggie, sit down.

MAGGIE (c.). I can't—I can't.

DAVID. Hold her down!

(He crosses to L. of MAGGIE, ALICK to R. DAVID presses her into the chair below the table. JAMES rushes in L.C. His whiskers are longer, his tie in wild disorder, his hat is bashed in. He is now in appearance like the DAVID of Act I. As each door is opened the noise is heard and stops when both doors are closed. Then the crowd are attracted by something and go off R.)

JAMES (wildly. Not to the others). John Shand's the man for you. John Shand's the man for you. John Shand's the man for you. (Down L.C., facing others, about to repeat it.)

(ALICK moves round to the top of the table. MAGGIE rises, moves a little to the front of the table.)

DAVID (crosses, clutching him). Have you heard anything?

JAMES. Not a word.

(MAGGIE sits below the table in a tremble—her appearance agitates them. A pause.)

ALICK. Look at her!

DAVID. Maggie! (He goes on his knees in front of her, pressing her to him in affectionate anxiety.) It was mad of him to dare.

(JAMES crosses to above the table.)

MAGGIE. It was grand of him!

ALICK (moving about, distraught). Insane ambition!

MAGGIE. Glorious ambition!

DAVID. Maggie, Maggie my lamb, best be prepared for the worst.

MAGGIE (husky, but quiet). I am prepared. (She sits up.)

ALICK (moving down R.). Six weary years has she waited for this night.

MAGGIE (husky, but quiet). Six brave years has John toiled for this night.

JAMES (leaning over the table). And you could have had him, Maggie, at the end of five. The document says five.

MAGGIE. Do you think I grudge not being married to him yet? Was I to hamper him till the fight was won?
Act II] WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

David (very serious). But if it's lost?

(Maggie cannot answer.)

Alick (starting). What's that?

(Maggie starts anxiously. The men hurry to the door and open it.)

Listen!

(Maggie rises. There is no sound of the crowd. James opens the door, goes up and opens the outer door. Alick R. and David L., of the lower doorway.)

David. They're terribly still—what can make them so still?

(James looks at them and exits, disappearing up R.)

Alick. They're waiting for the news.

Maggie (speaking as if he were in the room). Did you say you had lost, John?

(Alick turns, looks at David and moves down a step. David follows suit.)

(Like a brave woman, as if to comfort him.) Of course, you would lose the first time, dear John. Six years! (Doggedly.) Very well, we'll begin another six to-night. You'll win yet. (Almost whispering fiercely.) Never give in, John, never give in!

(The crowd is heard approaching from a distance, and now appear outside the shop. The tremendous force and ambition of Maggie are shown in the way she has spoken. She is staring in front of her. The noise of the crowd is heard coming nearer, but it is impossible to say whether they mean success or failure—tension of everybody listening.)

David (turns to the door). I think he's coming!

(Alick moves to R. of the door again. Maggie rises, quivering.)

(The roar draws nearer. James bursts in, up L.O.)

James. He's coming! He's coming! He's coming!

(He dashes out again.)

Alick (to Maggie). He's coming—

(David goes out to the outer shop, followed by Alick. They join in the excitement, as members of the crowd come into the passage. Then Alick returns. Maggie has not moved.)

He's coming! (He moves down L.)

(John is seen pushing through the crowd, James and David leading.)
The brothers burst into the room, gesticulating and shouting. James to down r. David to r.c., above the table. James moves up r. of the table to r. of David. John, who has followed them in, with members of the crowd behind him, stands l.c. He is in a morning-coat and silk hat. His clothes are badly fitting. His voice is hoarse with oratory.

John. I'm in—I'm elected!

(There is much shouting and jostling of the crowd.)

Majority two hundred and forty-eight. I'm John Shand, M.P.!

(He flings his hat in the air. The tumult increases. Alick shows great excitement, and with James and David, after waving their arms round John, go up and hustle the crowd off into the passage and thence to the street. The barber's staff are seen drawing down the blinds of the outer shop. The street door is closed. James and David return and the lower door is closed.)

David (during the above business). Fling yoursel' at the door, Father, and bar them out!

(Together they push the crowd out, and close the outer door and return. Alick closes the lower door.)

Maggie (as the door is closed, moving to the l. end of the table) You're sure you're in, John?

(Alick to above the chair l.c. David above him on his r.)

John (l.c.). Majority, two-forty-eight. I've beaten the baronet. I've done it, Maggie, and not a soul to help me. I've done it alone!

(Maggie laughs and claps her hands hysterically. She totters back to the chair below the table.)

(He speaks to the brothers.) I'm as hoarse as a crow, and I have to address Cowcaddens Club yet. (He sits on the weighing-machine.) David, the spray.

David. Certainly, Mr. Shand. (He goes down l. for the throat spray.)

(Alick fans John with his handkerchief. They are now deferential to him. David comes to John and sprays his throat. Maggie is still half-hysterical in a quiet way; she is gazing straight before her, seeing visions.)

Alick. What are you doing, Maggie?

Maggie. You're not angry with me, John?

John. No, no.

Maggie. But you glowered
Act II] WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

John. I was thinking of Sir Peregrine. Just because I beat him at the poll, he took a shabby revenge——

(They are all attention.)

—congratulated me in French—a language I haven’t taken the trouble to master.

Maggie (rising and moving to c., eagerly). Would it help, John, if you were to marry a woman that could speak French?

John (kindly). Not at all.

(Maggie gets excited again.)

Maggie (excitedly, in not bad French—up l.c.). Mon cher Jean, laissez-moi parler le français, voulez-vous un interprète?

John. Hullo! Hullo!

Maggie. Je suis la soeur française de mes trois frères écossais! (She crosses down to r. Sotto voce:) How do you do, how do you do?

David (surprised). She’s been learning French to help you just as she learned the piano and shorthand.

John (lightly). Well done.

Maggie (grandly pretending to receive people). They’re arriving! (She turns and faces them r.c.)

Alick. Who?

(The others look at her.)

Maggie. Our guests. This is London, and Mrs. John Shand is giving her first reception. (In fine society manner to John, advancing.) Have I told you, darling, who are coming to-night?

Ah, there’s that dear Sir Peregrine...

(She crosses r. to Alick, and takes his hand. He then crosses to r. of John below the table and Maggie moves to the r. end of the table.)

Sir Peregrine, this is a pleasure. J’espère que vous parlez français. So sorry we beat you at the poll. (She continues to pretend to receive people.)

John (who has no humour). I’m doubting the baronet would sit on you, Maggie.

Maggie (still pretending to receive). I’ve invited a lord to sit on the baronet!

David (delighted). You thing! You’ll find the lords expensive.

Maggie. Just a little cheap lord.

(Alick and David enjoy this. James enters up l.c. importantly and Maggie goes to him and closes both doors.)

(Giving him her hand.) My dear Lord Cheap, this is kind of you.

(James stares.)
DAVID. How do, Cheap?

JAMES (bewildered). Maggie—

MAGGIE. Yes, do call me Maggie.

JOHN. It's James, Maggie—it's James.

ALICK (above the table). She's practising her first party, James.

The swells are at the door.

JAMES. That's what I came to say. They are at the door!

JOHN. Who? (He rises.)

JAMES. The swells—in a motor as big as the street.

(MAGGIE is delighted. JAMES gives JOHN three cards. ALICK crosses up and looks through the window at back.)

JOHN (reading a card). Mr. Tenterden.

DAVID. Him that was speaking for you?

JOHN. The same. He's a Whip and an Honourable. (Reading.) Lady Sybil Tenterden.

(MAGGIE looks suspicious.)

(He frowns.) That woman! She's his sister.

MAGGIE (comes to the head of the table L.). A married woman?

JOHN. Catch her! (He reads.) “The Comtesse de la Briere.”

MAGGIE. She must be French.

JOHN. She is. I think she's some relation.

JAMES. But what am I to say to them?

(All look at JOHN. JOHN crosses to R.O. JAMES moves down up C. a little. MAGGIE backs up a step or two.)

JOHN (coolly). Say I'm very busy.

(They are all surprised.)

But if they care to wait—(he throws the cards on the C. table) I hope presently to be able to give them a few minutes.

(MAGGIE looks approvingly at him.)

JAMES (thunderstruck, but admiring). Good God, Mr. Shand!

(JOHN signs loftily to JAMES to convey the message. Exit JAMES, and ALICK follows. DAVID replaces the spray on the basin L.)

JOHN (crossing up B.). I'll go up and let the crowd see me from the window. It's their due.

MAGGIE (above the L. end of the table). But—but—what are we to do with these ladies?

JOHN (at the foot of the stairs). It's your reception, Maggie—this will prove you. (He goes up a few stairs.)

MAGGIE (crossing up to the foot of the stairs). Tell me what you know about this Lady Sybil——
JOHN (looking down at MAGGIE). The only thing I know about her is that she thinks me vulgar.

MAGGIE (bridling). You?

JOHN. She's been at some of my meetings, and I'm told she said that.

MAGGIE. What could the woman mean?

JOHN. I wonder. When I come down I'll ask her.

(He disappears up the stairs. DAVID crosses R., below the table, as ALICK enters, leaving the doors open. MAGGIE comes to above the table.)

ALICK (to MAGGIE, who is growing nervous). They're coming in; at them, Maggie, with your French. (He moves down R. of the counter.)

MAGGIE (she turns, seeing the visitors through the glass panels). It's all slipping from me, Father! (She moves round below the table, down R.B.).

DAVID (gloomily at down R.). I'm sure to say "for to come for to go."

(The visitors, surrounded by the crowd, are now plainly visible. JAMES brings the ladies on to the outer shop door and exits after closing the door. MAGGIE, rehearsing in dumb show, stops at the entrance of the COMTESSE and LADY SYBIL. The COMTESSE is a humorous old lady and a widow; keen, frolicsome and is rather French in clothing. SYBIL is young, beautiful, languorous, with a rather attractive way of drooping her eyelids as if she were going to sleep. The impression she should convey is that of a very nice Society girl, indolent, whose heart has never been stirred, but who would be capable of a noble passion if aroused. Both are in evening dress with wraps. They regard the committee room, not as a house in which they are being received as guests, but simply as a waiting-room, but they are far from meaning to be rude. The COMTESSE checks in the doorway. MAGGIE advances to her a little. DAVID has moved up R. to L. of the staircase.)

COMTESSE (with a very slight French accent). I hope one is not in the way. We were told we might wait.

(She comes down C., with SYBIL on her L.)

MAGGIE (dazzled by their brilliancy—but eager to prove equal to the test). Certainly—I am sure—if you will be so—it is——

(A voice is heard in the distance, then falters. The crowd move off again to R. The COMTESSE and men bow to each other. A man with a high voice is heard again orating outside.)

SYBIL (looking off at the door, making a face). He is at it again, Auntie.

COMTESSE. Mon Dieu! (To the others.) It is Mr. Tenterden,
you understand, making one more of his delightful speeches to the crowd! Would you be so charming as to shut the door?

DAVID. Certainly.

(He closes the inner door. The voice fades. As MAGGIE speaks French, DAVID crosses to above the table, R. end. LADY SYBIL crosses down to the chair L. DAVID brings the chair above the table to L. of it, for the COMTESSE.)

COMTESSE. Merci.

(ALICK signs to MAGGIE to talk to them in French.)

MAGGIE. J'espère que vous—trouvez—cette—réunion—interessante ?

(LADY SYBIL, about to sit, turns as she hears this.)

COMTESSE (crossing up to the chair L. of the table). Vous parlez français! Mais c'est charmant! Voyons, causons un peu. (She sits c.) Racontez-moi tout de ce grand homme, toutes les choses merveilleuses qu'il a faites. (Excitedly.) Je vous en prie, mademoiselle, je vous en prie.

(This is so fast it confuses MAGGIE, to the grief of DAVID and ALICK.)

MAGGIE (R. of the table). Oh—oh—I—I—— Je ne connais pas——

COMTESSE. Forgive me, mademoiselle—I thought you spoke French.

SYBIL (kindly advances). How wicked of you, Auntie! (To MAGGIE.) I assure you, none of us can understand her when she gallops at that pace. (She sits on the weighing-machine.)

MAGGIE (crushed). It doesn't matter. I will tell Mr. Shand you are here. (Going up R. to the stairs.)

SYBIL. Please don't trouble him.

(MAGGIE goes up a few stairs.)

We are really only waiting till my brother recovers and can take us back to our hotel.

MAGGIE. I'll tell him.

(Shes disappears, disquieted, upstairs. ALICK crosses to the door up L.C. but is stopped by DAVID.)

COMTESSE. The lady seems distressed. Is she a relation of Mr. Shand?

DAVID (above the table). Not for to say a relation. She's my sister. Our name is Wylie.

COMTESSE. How do you do? You are the committee man of Mr. Shand?
DAVID. No, no—we're none of your Glesca bodies. We're just friends of his.

COMTESSE (rising and moving R., speaking gaily to the basins). Aha, I know you! Next please!

(The WYLIES grin.)

Sybil, are you asleep?

SYBIL (languorously). Not quite, Auntie.

COMTESSE (to DAVID). Tell me all about this Mr. Shand. (Crossing to c.) Was it here that he—picked up the pin? (Dramatically.)

DAVID. The pin?

COMTESSE (by the chair c.). As I have read, all self-made men always begin by picking up a pin. (She pretends to pick one up dramatically.) After that, as the memoirs say, his rise was rapid. (She sits c. again.)

DAVID. It wasn't a pin he picked up, my lady—it was three-hundred pounds.

ALICK (moving to l.c.). And his rise wasn't so rapid, just at first, David!

DAVID. He had his fight. His original intention was to become a minister—he's university educated, you know—he's not a working-man member—oh, no.

ALICK (coming down a pace). No. But while he was a student he got a place in an iron cementer's business.

COMTESSE. Iron cementer?

DAVID. They scrape boilers.

COMTESSE. The fun men have.

DAVID (impressively). There have been millions made in scraping boilers. (With meaning.) They say, Father, he went into business so as to be able to pay off the three hundred pounds.

ALICK (dryly). So I've heard!

COMTESSE. Aha—it was a loan?

DAVID. No, a gift—of a sort—from some well-wishers. But they wouldn't hear of his paying it off, Father.

ALICK. Not them!

COMTESSE. That was kind, charming.

ALICK (with a look at DAVID). Yes! Well, my lady, he developed a perfect genius for the iron cementing.

DAVID. But his ambition was unsatisfied. (Moving down r. of the table.) Soon he had public life in his eye. As a heckler he was something fearsome they had to seat him on the platform for to keep him quiet. (Below the table.) Soon they had to let him into the chair. After that, he did all the speaking—he cleared all roads before him like a fire-engine—and when this vacancy occurred, you could hardly say it did occur, so quickly did he nip into it. (Crossing to LADY SYBIL, who is yawning.)
Ah, my lady, there are few more impressive sights in the world than a Scotsman on the make.

(ALICK moves to above the table.)

COMTESSE. Mon Dieu! I can well believe it. And now he has said farewell to boilers?

DAVID (down L.c., impressively). Not him! The firm promised if he was elected for to make him their London manager.

COMTESSE. There's a strong man for you, Sybil. (She taps the table.)

(They all look at LADY SYBIL.)

But I believe you are asleep.

SYBIL. Honestly, I'm not. (Sweetly to the others.) Would you mind finding out whether my brother is drawing to a close?

DAVID. Certainly. (He turns up to the door.)

COMTESSE. Thank you.

(Exit DAVID c. Alick follows to the door, calling after him: "David! David!" DAVID closes the door. Aick does not know what to do, is awkward, picks up his hat from the counter and passes it from one hand to the other. The COMTESSE rises and moves down r.c., and turns.)

(To Alick.) Good-bye.

(EXIT Alick, up l.c.)

Don't you love a strong man, sleepy-head?

SYBIL (rising languidly). I never met one.

COMTESSE (chuckling). Neither have I. But if you did meet one? Would he wake you up?

SYBIL (regarding herself in the mirror above the basin l.). I daresay he would find there were two of us.

COMTESSE (crossing towards SYBIL, and surveying her critically). Yes, I think he would! Ever been in love, you cold thing?

SYBIL (facing front). I think if I ever really love it will be like Mary Queen of Scots, who said of her Bothwell that she could follow him round the world in her nightgown.

COMTESSE (affecting horror). My petite!

SYBIL (doggedly). I mean it! (She meets the COMTESSE'S eyes.)

COMTESSE (turning away r.). Oh, it's quite my conception of your character! (Crossing to l. of the table.) Do you know, I am rather sorry for this Mr. John Shand.

SYBIL. Why? (She adjusts her hair at the mirror.)

COMTESSE. That wild bull manner that moves the multitude—they will laugh at it in your House of Commons.

SYBIL (indifferently). I suppose so.

COMTESSE. Yet there is spirit in him. If he had some woman
—if he had you or me to mould him. You could do it almost too well.

SYBIL (lazily). I am not sufficiently interested. (Moving to L.C.) I retire in your favour, Auntie. How would you begin?

COMTESSE. By asking him to drop in—about five, of course. (Sitting in the chair c.) Is there a Mrs. Shand?

SYBIL. I have no idea. But they marry young.

COMTESSE. If there is not, there is probably a lady waiting for him—somewhere—in a boiler! The sort of person who will be the end of him.

SYBIL. I daresay. (She moves to the chair down L.)

(MAGGIE appears, coming down the stairs halfway.)

MAGGIE. Mr. Shand will be down directly. (She comes to the bottom of the stairs, and moves down R.)

COMTESSE (facing her). Thank you. Your brother has been giving us such an interesting account of the great man’s career. (Slyly.) I forgot whether he said Mr. Shand was married.

(MAGGIE checks and turns to the COMTESSE.)

MAGGIE. No, he’s not married, but he will be soon.

COMTESSE (turns to her). Ah! (Feeling her way.) To a friend of yours?

MAGGIE (who is despising herself for her failure). I don’t think much of her.

COMTESSE. In that case, tell me all about her.

SYBIL. It’s no affair of ours.

(The COMTESSE silences her with a glance. SYBIL rises, crosses up and looks off door for the men.)

MAGGIE (below the R. end of the table). There’s not much to tell. She’s common—stupid. One of those who go in for self-culture, and when the test comes, they break down. (Gloomily.) She’s been the ruin of him.

COMTESSE. But is not that sad? Figure to yourself how many men of high promise have been shipwrecked by marrying into the rank from which they sprang.

MAGGIE. I’ve told her that.

COMTESSE. But she will not give him up?

MAGGIE. No.

SYBIL (moving down L.C.). Why should she if he cares for her?

What is her name?

MAGGIE (a little defiant). Her name is Maggie! ... and I never said he cared for her.

SYBIL. Oh! That sort of woman. (She turns down L.)

MAGGIE. Yes, that sort of woman. (She turns to the chair R. of the table.)

COMTESSE (rising and moving L.C.). Well, I am afraid that
Maggie is to do for John.  *(She turns to see John descend the stairs.) Ah, our hero!  

**John** (to L. of the table). Sorry I’ve kept you waiting. The Comtesse? *(He shakes hands with the Comtesse.)*  

Comtesse. And my niece, Lady Sybil Tenterden.  

*(Sybil bows. John crosses L. to her and shakes hands.)*  

She is not really all my niece, I mean I am only half her aunt. Oh, Mr. Shand, what a triumph!  

**John** *(between the two ladies).* Oh, pretty fair, pretty fair. Your brother has just finished addressing the crowd, Lady Sybil.  

**Sybil.** At last! Then we won’t detain Mr. Shand, Auntie. *(She turns and looks in the glass L. again, preparing to go.)*  

Comtesse *(L. of the table).* Only one word. I heard you speak last night. Sublime! Just the sort of impassioned eloquence that your House of Commons loves.  

*(Sybil turns, and gives her a look.)*  

**John.** It’s very good of you to say so.  

Comtesse. But we must run. Bon soir. *(She puts her wrap on—backing to below the chair C.)*  

*(John goes up and opens the door L. Sybil bows.)*  

**John** *(R. of the door, as Sybil is going).* Good night, Lady Sybil. I hear you think I’m vulgar.  

*(Both ladies are taken aback. Sybil looks at the Comtesse and backs a little. A pause.)*  

Comtesse. My dear Mr. Shand—what absurd—  

**John** *(moving down a little C.)* I was told she had said that after hearing me speak.  

Comtesse. Quite a mistake, I—  

**John** *(doggedly, turning to Sybil).* Is it not true?  

**Sybil** *(waking up).* You seem to know, Mr. Shand—and as you press me so unnecessarily—well, yes, that is how you struck me.  

Comtesse. My child!  

**Sybil** *(who is a little agitated, pulling up her gloves).* He would have it!  

**John** *(perplexed—to Sybil).* What’s the matter? I just wanted to know, because if it’s true, I must alter it.  

*(Sybil is impressed.)*  

Comtesse. There, Sybil, see how he values your good opinion.  

**Sybil** *(pleased).* It is very nice of you to put it in that way, Mr. Shand. Forgive me! *(Giving him her hand.)*  

**John.** But I don’t quite understand yet. *(Taking her hand.)*
Of course, it can’t matter to me, Lady Sybil, what you think of me.

(The Comtesse chuckles. Sybil is discomfited, draws her hand away.)

What I mean is, that I mustn’t be vulgar if it would be injurious to my career.

Sybil (slowly). I see. No, of course, I couldn’t affect your career, Mr. Shand!

John (realizing it is in the nature of a challenge—coolly). That’s so, Lady Sybil, meaning no offence.

Sybil. Of course not. (With dangerous graciousness.) And we are friends again?

John. Certainly.

Sybil. Then I hope you will come to see me in London—as I present no terrors.

John (still seeing the challenge). I’ll be very pleased.

Sybil (with a glance at the Comtesse). Any afternoon—about five.

John. Much obliged. And you can teach me—the things I don’t know yet—if you’ll be so kind.

Sybil. If you wish it? I shall do my best.

John. Thank you, Lady Sybil. And who knows, there may be one or two things I can teach you.

Sybil. Yes— (Making a pace towards him.) ... We can help one another. (She offers her hand.) Good-bye till then.

John. Good-bye. Maggie, the ladies are going.

(During this scene Maggie has stood apart, feeling out of it. At the word "Maggie" the Comtesse glances at her, showing that she now guesses who she is, but they bow courteously good-bye.)

Comtesse (softly). Maggie! (To Sybil.) I’ll follow you.

(Sybil exits. John follows her and opens the outer door. When Shand appears at the door men cheer off B. The Comtesse crosses to Maggie below the table.)

Maggie! Are you then the Maggie?

(Maggie nods rather defiantly.)

But if I had known I would not have said those things. (Offering her hand.) Please forgive an old woman.

(Maggie takes her hand and gives one of her peculiar shakes.)

Maggie. It doesn’t matter.

Comtesse. I—I daresay it will be all right. Mademoiselle, if I were you, I would not encourage those tête-à-têtes with Lady Sybil. I am the rude one, but she is the dangerous one—and
I am afraid his impudence has attracted her. Bon voyage, Miss Maggie. (She crosses towards the door l.c.)

MAGGIE. Good-bye. (She crosses up r. to above the table.) But I can speak French! Je puis parler français! Isn't that right?

COMTESSE (turning at l.c.). But yes, it is excellent. C'est très bien!

MAGGIE. Je me suis embrouillée—la dernière fois.

COMTESSE. Good! Shall I speak more slowly?

MAGGIE. No, no. Non, non, faster, faster, vite, vite!

COMTESSE. J'admire votre courage!

MAGGIE. Je comprends chaque mot.

COMTESSE. Parfait! Bravo!

MAGGIE. Voilà!

COMTESSE. Superb! Bravissimo!

(Shé claps her hands delightedly and exits. JOHN is heard off stage, ending a speech. There is cheering. MAGGIE, left alone, is dejected, her little triumph leaving her. After a moment, she crosses to the l. end of the table, buries her face in her hands, then pulls herself together. JOHN, with some of the crowd following, appears in the passage. They cheer and slap his back. He is in a good humour, and shakes hands with one or two, then pushes them back and closes the door. The shouting dies away. JOHN comes down, crosses to MAGGIE, takes her hands and dances. MR. FEIKIE, an elector, bursts into the room up l.c., shouting “John Shand! John Shand!”)

JOHN (turning to him). Mr. Feikie, there's a time and place for everything. You'll find your friends at Cowcaddens Club. You've made a mistake!

(FEIKIE retreats into the passage and exits, closing the outer door. JOHN shuts the lower door.)

(T0 down l.c.) Majority two-forty-eight! Ay, gosh!

MAGGIE. Have you more speaking to do, John?

JOHN. I must run across and address the Cowcaddens Club.

(He crosses to down l. and sprays his throat.) I wonder if I am vulgar, Maggie?

MAGGIE (self-contemptuously, turning up above the table). You are not, but I am.

JOHN (as a matter of fact). Not that I can see.

MAGGIE (moving to l. of the table). Look how over-dressed I am! (Holding out her dress with the l. hand.) I knew it was too showy when I ordered it, but I saw it in a shop window and I could not resist the thing. (Dropping the dress: doggedly.) But I will tone down. I will! (She looks off at the door, then at JOHN.) What did you think of Lady Sybil?

JOHN (facing front, recalling their scene grimly). That young
woman had better be careful. (Turning to Maggie.) She's a bit of a besom, Maggie.

(Maggie laughs to herself and moves down below the table.)

Maggie (wistfully—turning and smiling at him). She's beautiful, John.

John (spraying again). She has a neat way of stretching herself like a swan. For playing with, she would do as well as another. (He replaces the spray on the basin and crosses to the table for his hat.) Ah, well, I'd best go to the Club. (He turns towards the door.)

Maggie (to L. of the table, checking him). You couldn't stay and have a talk for a few minutes?

John (good-naturedly). Certainly, if you want me, Maggie. (He crosses down R.) The longer you keep them waiting, the more they think of you.

Maggie (wistfully, coming down R.C.). When are you to announce that we're to be married, John?

John (manfully—facing the fireplace). I won't be long. (He loads his pipe.) You've waited a year more than you need have done, so I think it's your due I should hurry things now.

Maggie (to whom this is heaven). I think it's noble of you! John. Not at all. (Bus. with pipe.) The nobleness has been yours in waiting so patiently for me. And your brothers would insist on it, at any rate. They're watching me like cats with a mouse.

Maggie. It's so little I've done to help.

John. Three hundred pounds. (He puts away his pouch.)

Maggie. I'm getting one thousand per cent. for it.

John. And very pleased I am you should think so, Maggie. (He sits in the chair R. of the table, lighting his pipe.)

Maggie (going nearer him below the table). Is it terrible hard to you, John?

John (stoutly). It's not hard at all. I can say truthfully, Maggie, that all or nearly all I've seen of you in these six years has gone to increase my respect for you.

Maggie. Respect!

John. And a bargain's a bargain.

Maggie (pathetically, looking away). If it wasn't that you're so glorious to me, John, I would let you off.

(John takes the pipe out of his mouth; there is a gleam in his eye.)

John. In my opinion, we'll be a very happy pair. (He presses down the tobacco.)

Maggie (sitting L. of the table). We know each other so well, don't we?

John (smoking contentedly). I'm an extraordinary queer character, and I suppose nobody knows me well except myself,
but I know you—I know you, Maggie, as well as though I had wandered through you with a lighted candle.

MAGGIE (cunningly). I wonder! And it's not as if there was any other woman you—fancied more.

JOHN. There's none whatever.

MAGGIE (distressed, leaning towards him). If there ever should be—oh, if there ever should be! Some woman with charm!

JOHN (reprovingly—taking his pipe out of his mouth). Maggie, you forget yourself. There couldn't be another woman once I was a married man.

MAGGIE. One has heard of such things.

JOHN. Not in Scotsmen, Maggie. Not in Scotsmen.

MAGGIE. I've sometimes thought, John, that the difference between us and the English is that the Scotch are hard in all other respects but soft with women, and the English are hard with women but soft in all other respects.

JOHN. You've forgotten the grandest moral attribute of a Scotsman, Maggie, and that is that he'll do nothing which might damage his career.

MAGGIE (leaning towards him). Ah, but John, whatever you do you do so tremendously, and if you were to love, what a passion it would be.

JOHN. Well, well, well, there's something in that, I suppose.

MAGGIE (in woe). And then what could I do? For the desire of my life now, John, is to help you to get everything you want. (Pathetically.) Except just that I want you to have me, too!

JOHN (smoking). We'll get on fine, Maggie.

MAGGIE. You're just making the best of it.

JOHN (controlling himself). Not at all. (Rising.) Eh, well, I'd best go to the meeting. (He crosses for his hat below the table and goes up to the door.)

MAGGIE (rising and catching his arm, checking him). Not yet. Can you look me in the face, John, and deny that there is surging within you a mighty desire to be free?

(JOHN is stirred. He pauses, sternly, and then turns L.)

JOHN. Leave these maggots alone, Maggie. (He goes up to the door.)

MAGGIE. It's a shame of me not to give you up.

JOHN. I would consider you a very foolish woman if you did.

MAGGIE (moving up close to him). If I were John Shand, I would no more want to take Maggie Wylie with me through the beautiful door that has opened wide for me than I would want to take an old pair of shoes. Why don't you bang the door in my face, John?

JOHN (after a big breath—looks at her and crosses her to below the table). A bargain's a bargain. (He throws his hat on the table.)
ACT II] WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS 41

(MAGGIE moves about at l.c., breaking into a sort of hysteria with little cries.)

MAGGIE (almost dancing round him—threateningly on his l.). Say one word about—want to get out of it and I'll put the lawyers on you!

JOHN (below the r. end of the table). Have I hinted at such a thing—for years?

MAGGIE. The document holds you hard and fast. (She turns up l. of the table.)

JOHN. It does.

MAGGIE (leaning over the table in her misery, gloating over the havoc she will cause). The woman never rises with the man. I'll drag you down, man. I'll drag you down!

JOHN. Have no fear of that, I won't let you. I'm too strong. (He sits r. of the table.)

(MAGGIE changes to softness and pity. She breaks down, turning from him, leaning on the table.)

MAGGIE. You'll miss the prettiest thing in the world—and all owing to me!

JOHN. What's that?

MAGGIE. Romance.

JOHN. Oh, you woman!

MAGGIE. All's cold and grey without it, man! Them that have had it have slipped in and out of Heaven.

JOHN. You're exaggerating, Maggie.

MAGGIE (looking at him). You've worked so hard, you've had none of the fun that comes to most men long before they're your age.

JOHN. I never was one for fun.

MAGGIE. You have no sense of humour.

JOHN (contentedly). Not a spark.

MAGGIE (wistfully). I've sometimes thought that if you had, it might make you fonder of me. I think one needs a sense of humour to be fond of me.

JOHN (puzzled, leaning forward). I remember reading of someone that said it needed a surgical operation to get a joke into a Scotsman's head.

MAGGIE. Yes, that's been said.

JOHN (puzzled). What beats me to see is, how you could insert a joke with an operation.

(A slight pause.)

MAGGIE (laughing at him, coming down a little l. of the table). But I mean fun with the women, John. Impudent fashionable beauties they could be now running away from you and looking back and crooking their fingers to you to run after them.
JOHN (after a big breath). Eh—h? No, I never had that, no. MAGGIE. It's like missing out all the Saturdays.

JOHN. I can do without them. (A last effort.) You feel sure, I suppose, Maggie, that an older man wouldn't suit you better? (Wistfully.)

MAGGIE. I couldn't feel surer of anything. You're just my ideal.

JOHN (accepting situation). Ay. Well, that's as it should be.

MAGGIE (advancing to below the table). David has the document. It's carefully locked away.

JOHN. Naturally.

MAGGIE (impressively). John, I make you a solemn promise, that in consideration of the circumstances of our marriage, if you should ever fall in love I'll act differently from other wives. I swear it.

(John rises.)

JOHN (decisively). There will be no occasion, Maggie. (He pats her on the shoulder. He looks at the watch.) Eh, well, I must away . . .

MAGGIE (pushes him back in the chair. After a pause—softly). John, David doesn't have the document. He thinks he has, but I have it here. (She produces a legal-looking blue paper.)

JOHN (looking at it heavily). Well do I mind the look of it! Yes, yes, that's it!—Umpha! Ay, ay, ay! Ah! Ha!

MAGGIE (almost in a whisper). I brought it because I thought I might, perhaps, have the womanliness—to give it back to you.

(John draws in his breath—she falters.)

Will you never hold it up against me in the future that I couldn't do that?

JOHN (manfully). I promise you, Maggie, I never will.

MAGGIE. To go back to the Pans and take up my old life there when all these six years my eyes have been centred on this night! To go back there—and wizen and dry up when I might be married to John Shand, M.P.!

JOHN (pats her shoulder). And you will be, Maggie! I give you my word!

MAGGIE. Never—never—never! You're free.

(Shetears up the document and goes L. He stands immovable—sorry for her, but a gleam in his eye. He looks at the paper, picks up a piece, goes towards the door up L.C., and hesitates.)

JOHN (taking a big breath). Maggie!

MAGGIE (turning to him). I'm a fool—a fool to let you go! I tell you you'll rue this day—for you need me. You'll come to grief without me. There's no one can help you as I could have
helped you. I'm essential to your career, and you're blind not to see it.

JOHN (offended). What's that, Maggie? (Crossing down to L. of the table.) In no circumstances would I allow any meddling with my career. (He sits c.)

MAGGIE. You would never have known I was meddling with it. But that's over. (She crosses to above his chair.) Don't be in too great a hurry to marry, John.

JOHN. Maggie!

MAGGIE. Have your fling with the beautiful dolls first. (Ferociously.) Get the whip hand of the haughty ones, John. Give them their licks. Let them have an extra slap, in memory of me! (More quietly but warningly, she puts her R. hand on his shoulder.) And be sure to remember this, that the one who marries you will find you out.

JOHN. Find me out?

MAGGIE. However careful a man is, his wife always finds out his failings.

JOHN (frowning). I don't know, Maggie, to what failings you refer.

(FEIKIE enters up L.C., followed by members of the crowd. They group beyond the door.)

FEIKIE. Here he is! I've got him! I've cornered him.

(More of the crowd enter. The outer shop becomes filled.)

JOHN (who has risen). Presently, Mr. Feikie, I'll come to the club presently.

FEIKIE (coming down L. of JOHN). They're here; they're at our heels!

(MAGGIE is above the table, R. of JOHN.)

JOHN (determinedly). They'll wait my pleasure... (He sweeps them off and closes the door. At the door :) Maggie, take a night to think this over. You are acting under an impulse and I won't take advantage of it.

MAGGIE (up c.). No, I can't go through it again. It ends to-night—and now. (She gets her bonnet and cloak from the upper barber's chair R.) Good luck, John!

(JOHN moves L. of the table. FEIKIE again throws open the door and the crowd surges into the room, to R. and down L.C. to L. MAGGIE, who has moved in to R.C., is lost in the crowd. Some of them assist JOHN to mount the counter, while FEIKIE mounts the chair below the table.)

CROWD (as they enter and fill the stage). Shand! Shand! We're here! Here's to John Shand! The pump for Sir Peregrine! Put him beneath the pump! Hail the conqueror!
Our man! Our man! Shand and plenty! Shand for ever! Majority! Majority!

(Most of the above is indistinguishable as all are shouting at once. But now the voices of Feikie and John predominate as they both commence their speeches together and the crowd shouting dies down. Alick, James and David have pushed their way forward through the crowd and are l.o.)

Feikie. What is it I have to tell you? It is this: our man is in, John Shand is in. From John o' Groats to Land's End—the electric wires flash the news...

(The crowd pushes him off his chair.)

John. Cowcaddens; Cowcaddens; Cowcaddens! Men of this division. We have this night fought the good fight—the victorious fight—and the enemy is smitten hip and thigh.

Crowd. Hurrah!

John. The blow has been struck—

(At this point general uproar ceases and John alone is heard.)

—and we have struck it for the grand old cause of liberty!

(The crowd cheers loudly, until silenced by John, with a gesture.)

Freedom all solace to men gives,
He lives at ease that freely lives.
Grief, sickness, poverty want are all
Summed up within the name of thrall.

(The crowd clap their hands until again silenced by John.)

But, gentlemen, one may have too much even of liberty.

Crowd. No, no!

Feikie. No, no!

John. Yes, Mr. Adamson, one may want to be tied.

Crowd. Never! Never!

A Cotter. Never! Never! John Shand!

John. I say yes, Willie Cameron, and I have found a young lady willing to be tied to me.

Crowd. Oh! Ho! Oh! Ho!

John. I'm to be married.

Various Electors. What? He's to be married! Married!

What's that? Losh! Listen! Quiet!

Feikie. What's her name?

(John checks them with a gesture.)

John. Her name's Miss Wylie.

Crowd. Hooray!

Feikie. Is she a Glasgow woman?
Crowd (ad lib.) Be quiet. Stop your showing. Go on, go on.

(Another gesture from John.)

John. Quiet! She's here now.
Crowd. Where? Where?
John. She was here. (Looking about.) Where are you, Maggie?
Maggie. I'm here, but I'm so little you can't see me.

(James, Alick and David are seen pushing their way through the press from their various positions towards up R.C., looking for Maggie.)

Feikie. Where is she? Is she here?
A Cotter (amid general shouting). Quiet! Keep back! (He presses others back to give David way.)
David (moving from L.C. into the press). Father! James!

(The Wylies get together, arms round each other as in a football scrimmage, and for a moment are lost in the seething crowd. Then they are seen to lift a chair by the legs, Maggie standing on it, above the heads of the crowd. They emerge L.C. not far from John, still standing on the counter.)

(During the above bus.) Have ye a grip of her, Father?
Alick. Yes.
David. Then hoist her up!

(Maggie is now above the heads of the crowd. There is increased excitement.)

Crowd (ad lib.). There she is! I see her! (As Maggie is carried still nearer the counter.) Mrs. Shand! Mrs. Shand! Look at her! She's fine! (Etc. etc.)
John (pointing to Maggie). The future Mrs. John Shand!
Crowd (ad lib.). Speech! Speech! Speech!
John. Quiet! (All quiet.) Being a lady, she can't make a speech...
Crowd (laughing and shouting). Yes, she can! She can!
Maggie (turning to the crowd, holding up her hand). I can make a speech, and I will make a speech! It's in two words, and they're these— (She holds out both arms to them.) My Constituents!

Loud cheers and shouting, waving of hats, as—
The Curtain falls.
ACT III

SCENE 1

SCENE.—The study of JOHN SHAND's house in London.

It is a shallow scene because at the back, through folding doors, c., we have a glimpse of the dining-room, and a long table with chairs along each side and at the end. Only the end chair is vacant. The others are occupied by members of the Ladies' Committee, and in front of each are paper, pens and ink. The table is bestrewn with pamphlets, etc. The Committee are engaged in conversation but we do not hear what they say.

In the study itself, there is a fireplace L. and an armchair above it. Another, smaller, below it. A settee L.C. Slightly below and to R. of this is a mahogany chair with arms. Up R.C. is a table desk with typewriter and telephone. A chair below it. At the R. wall, a bookcase. A door below it. Up L. a table, or it may be a small sideboard. To R. of this a small chair. An oil floor-standard lamp is up R. in the corner by the bookcase.

Other furniture to dress the stage may be added, but the room should not seem overcrowded.

MAGGIE (now Mrs. Shand) is seated above the chair, knitting a stocking. She is in indoor dress, very plain, but in good taste.

The COMTESSE is seated (also in indoor dress) on the settee.

GRACE, the maid, enters through the folding doors up c., and after a glance back, as if surveying the long table, comes down, closing the doors.

GRACE. That is all the Committee now, ma'am. Shall I tell Mr. Shand?

MAGGIE. Yes, please, Grace.

(Grace exits down R. The Comtesse rises, tiptoes to the O. doors, peeps in, and returns to the settee.)

COMTESSE. Sybil, too. My indolent Sybil, member of a committee. But how unlike her! (Returning to L.C.) Tell me, since when has she become a political lady?

MAGGIE. I think it was about the time when John took up the women's cause.

COMTESSE. Ah! (Pointedly moving down R. of the chair L.C.). Mrs. Shand—I must say it—if half I hear be true, your husband is seeing Lady Sybil a great deal too often.

(Maggie hesitates; then resumes her knitting.)

(With a gesture, crossing L. to the fire.) Oh, Mon Dieu, cast that aside—you can buy them at a few francs the pair. (Turning,
down L.) Tell me, why are not you yourself on this ladies' committee?

Maggie. I'm not clever enough to understand the Woman Question.

Comtesse (despising her). Oh!

Maggie. I type his speeches.

Comtesse. But do you know what they are about?

Maggie. He doesn't expect that of me.

Comtesse (moving up below the settee). You foolish one.

(As the Comtesse passes, Maggie has a sharp quizzical look at her and then goes on knitting demurely. John enters R. He is now more polished, well dressed in frock-coat and grey trousers—though not a dandy. He crosses to L. of the table, up R.O.)

Maggie (rising). John, do you remember the Comtesse de la Briere?

John (crossing to the Comtesse). Of course. That night at Glasgow! My election night. (Shaking hands.)

Comtesse (at c., below the settee). It must be quite two years ago, Mr. Shand.

John. Tempus fugit, Comtesse.

Comtesse. I have not been much in this country since then—and I return to find you a coming man.

John. Oh, I don't know, I don't know.

Comtesse (indicating the dining-room). The Ladies' Champion.

(She crosses and sits on the L. end of the settee.)

John (looking in the direction of the dining-room). Well—well! Have you typed my speech, Maggie? (He crosses to the fireplace and turns down stage.)

(Maggie crosses to the table up R.O.)

Maggie (as she crosses). Yes—twenty-six pages. (She takes the speech from a drawer and moves down R.O.)

John. I'm to tell the committee what I propose to say. If you'll excuse me, Comtesse, I'll just see if I know the peroration.

Comtesse (bowing assent). Delighted.

(John crosses to below the R. arm of the settee.)

John. Is this it, Maggie?

(Maggie sits R.O. and turns to end of page 25.)

(Commencing to declaim.) "In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, these are the reasonable demands of every intelligent Englishwoman"—I had better say British woman—"British woman—and I'm proud to nail them to my mast——"

Comtesse. Oho! Defies his leaders!
JOHN. If I can do so without embarrassing the Government.
COMTESSE. Ah! (Long drawn out.)
JOHN (frowning on her). "And I call upon the Front Bench, sir, loyally but firmly—"
COMTESSE. Firm again.
JOHN. "... either to accept my Bill or to promise without delay to bring in one of their own, and if they decline to do so I solemnly warn them that though I will not press the matter to a division just now—"
COMTESSE. Ahem!
JOHN. "I will bring it forward again in the near future."
MAGGIE. Yes—yes, that's it. (She is quiet, but we see she is not satisfied.)
JOHN (crossing to MAGGIE and taking the speech from her). And now, Comtesse, you know that I'm not going to divide the house—and no other body knows. (He crosses down c. with the speech.)
COMTESSE (not greatly interested). I am flattered by your confidence.
JOHN. Well, I've only told you because I don't care who knows now.
COMTESSE (pouting). Oh!
MAGGIE. Why, John?
JOHN (turning to her). I daren't keep the Government in doubt any longer about what I mean to do. I'll show the Whips the speech privately to-night.
MAGGIE (moves down a little towards JOHN). But not to go to a division is hedging, isn't it? Is that strong?
JOHN. To make the speech at all is stronger than most would dare. They would do for me if I went to a division.

(Grace enters r., with a card on a tray. She closes the door and crosses to r. of MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE (not seeing Grace). Bark, but not bite.
JOHN (good-naturedly). Hoots, Maggie, you know nothing about it. You are out of your depth.
MAGGIE (crossing behind him to l.). I suppose that's it. (She picks up her knitting.)

Grace follows her with the tray.)

COMTESSE (looking up at JOHN). But what will the ladies say?
JOHN (at the r. end of the settee). Well, well, they won't like it, but they've got to lump it.

(MAGGIE takes the card and glances at it. The COMTESSE picks up a book from the settee.)

MAGGIE (quietly, to Grace). Wait a moment.

(Grace crosses and stands up r., below the table.)
JOHN. Anyone of importance?
MAGGIE. No. (She moves up c., towards the doors.)
JOHN (handing the speech to MAGGIE). Then I'm ready, Maggie.

(He pulls himself together for his entrance. MAGGIE is amused.
She takes this as an intimation that she is to open the folding
doors, and he makes an effective entrance into the dining-room,
the committee receiving him with ladylike clapping of the hands.
JOHN stands for a moment in the doorway, bowing, and then
disappears to l. MAGGIE closes the doors.)

COMTESSE (chuckling over his exit). Mon Dieu, he is getting on!
(She glances through the book.)
MAGGIE (who has been reflecting over the card). Show him in
here, Grace.

(GRACE exits down r., closing the door. MAGGIE has the speech in
her left hand, the card in her right. She brings the card and
speech together as if she thought this was what it wanted. Then
she quickly pulls the speech away, and puts it into the drawer of
the table, as if to prevent the card from seeing it.)

COMTESSE (who has not seen this business). A visitor?
MAGGIE (reading, up c.). Mr. Charles Venables.
COMTESSE (in surprise). Charles Venables! (She rises.) Do
you know him?
MAGGIE (in an ordinary tone). I think I call to mind meeting
one of that name at the Foreign Office party. (She puts the card
on the table.)

COMTESSE. One of that name! He who is a Minister of your
Cabinet! But since you know him so little, why should he call
on you? (She moves L. and turns at the fireplace.)
MAGGIE (demurely). I wonder. (She looks at the drawer in
which the speech is, and closes it.)

COMTESSE (moving in a little l.c.). A dangerous gentleman!
Well, I shall take care of you, petite.
MAGGIE (coming down to c.). Do you know him?
COMTESSE (chuckling). Oh, I know him. (Chuckling.) The
last time I saw him, he asked me to—to—hem! Ma chérie, it
was thirty years ago!
MAGGIE. Thirty years!
COMTESSE (becoming agitated). I was a pretty woman then!
(Shesits in the armchair l.) I daresay I shall detest him now, but
if I find I do not, I shall drop this book: and then perhaps you
will be so charming as—as not to be here for a little while?
MAGGIE. Was it—a love affair?
COMTESSE (dryly). I am not so sure!

(MAGGIE nods. GRACE enters r. and holds the door open.)

GRACE. Mr. Venables.
(Enter Mr. Venables. Grace exits and closes the door. Mr. Venables is a handsome, courtly, cultured man of sixty-five.)

Maggie (crosses c. to him). How do you do?

(They shake hands in Maggie's peculiar way.)

Venables. I hope you don't mind my calling, Mrs. Shand. We had such a pleasant talk the other evening.

Maggie. I think it's kind of you. Do you know the Comtesse de la Briere?

Venables (startled). The Comtesse de la Briere!

(The Comtesse puts the book up between him and her with her left hand to hide her face. He is a little moved, crosses to the Comtesse, takes her right hand and kisses it. She does not look up.)

Comtesse!

Comtesse (without looking). Thirty years, Mr. Venables.

Venables (gallantly, moving the book from her face). It does not seem so much.

Comtesse (lowering the book to her lap). Let me see—— (She looks at him.) Mon Dieu, it seems all that!

(This relieves the tension and they both laugh.)

Maggie (moving down c. a little more, facing them). The Comtesse has taken a cottage in Surrey for the summer.

Venables. I am overjoyed.

Comtesse. No, Charles, you are not. You no longer care. Fickle one! And it is only thirty years.

Venables (sentimentally). Those heavenly evenings, Comtesse, on the Bosphorus!

Comtesse. I refuse to talk of them. I hate you. (She watches him out of the corner of her eyes and then drops the book as arranged.)

(Venables looks at the book, then at the Comtesse. Maggie turns to her r., crosses and exits r. demurely, closing the door. Venables after watching her off, picks up the book and returns it to the Comtesse, gets a chair from up l., looking at her all the time.)

Venables. It is moonlight, Comtesse, on the Golden Horn! Comtesse. Who are those two young things in a caique?

Venables. Is he the brave Leander, and is she Hero of the Lamp? (He sits on her r.)

Comtesse. No, she is the foolish wife of the French Ambassador—and he is a good-for-nothing British attaché trying to get her husband's secrets out of her.

Venables (after smiling at the truth of it). They part at a certain garden gate.
Comtesse. Oh—Charles—Charles!

Venable. But you promised to come back; I waited there till dawn. (Impressively.) Blanche, if you had come back!

(He leans towards her.)

Comtesse. How is Mrs. Venable?

Venable. She is rather poorly. I think it's gout.

Comtesse. And you?

Venable. I creak a little in the mornings.

Comtesse. So do I. There is such a good man at Wiesbaden——

Venable. My London fellow is better. The way he patched me up last summer——

(They look at each other. Realizing that they are old dotards.)

Oh, Lord, Lord! (He takes her hand.)

Comtesse. Yes, Charles, the game is up! We are two old fogies.

(They pause, looking half-sentimentally, half-humorously at each other.)

(Sharply.) By the way, sir, what are you doing here?

Venable. Oh—ah—ah—ah——

Comtesse. I don't believe it!

Venable (rising, crossing to the fireplace). The same woman——the old delightful candour.

Comtesse. The same man—the old fibs.

(Maggie re-enters R., inquiringly.)

Yes, come in, Mrs. Shand.

(Maggie closes the door and crosses to C.)

I gave had quite enough of him.

Venable. Oh! (He rises.)

Comtesse. I warn you he is here for some crafty purpose.

Venable (crossing above the settee to L.C.). Really, Comtesse, you make conversation difficult. To show that my intentions are innocent——

(Maggie sits on the settee, facing the audience. Venable moves down R. of the settee to C.)

Mrs. Shand, I propose that you choose the subject.

Maggie (pretending to believe it, but really very alert). There!

Venable (clears his throat—slight pause). I——hope your husband is well.

Maggie. Yes, thank you. (Suddenly.) I decide that we talk about him.

Venable. If you wish it.

Comtesse. Be careful—he has chosen the subject.
MAGGIE. You admire John?
VENABLES. Very much. But he puzzles me a little.

(MAGGIE looks surprised.)

You Scots, Mrs. Shand, are such a mixture of the practical and the emotional that you escape out of an Englishman's hands like a trout.

MAGGIE (demurely surprised). Do we?
VENABLES (smiling). Well, not you—but your husband. I have known few men make a worse beginning in the House. He had the most atrocious bow-wow public park manner——

MAGGIE. No, he hadn't!
COMTESSE (laughing). I remember that manner!
VENABLES. At first. But by his second session he had shed all that, and he is now a pleasure to listen to—at times. By the way, Comtesse, have you found any dark intention in that?
(He thinks he is playing with MAGGIE, but the audience guesses she is playing with him.)

COMTESSE. You wanted to know whether he talks over those matters with his wife, and she has told you that he does not.
MAGGIE. I haven't said a word about it, have I?
VENABLES. Not a word. Another thing I admire him for—his impromptu speeches.
MAGGIE (turns to him). What's impromptu?
VENABLES. Unprepared.
MAGGIE. Thank you!
VENABLES. They have contained some grave blunders, not so much of judgment as of taste.
MAGGIE (as if hotly). I don't think so.
VENABLES. Pardon me. But he has righted himself subsequently in the neatest way. I have always found that the man whose second thoughts are good is worth watching. Well, Comtesse, I see you have something to say.

COMTESSE. You are wondering whether (she points to MAGGIE) she can tell you who gives him his second thoughts. (She looks at MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE. Gives them to John! I would like to see anybody try to give thoughts to John.
VENABLES. Quite so.
Comtesse. Anything more, Charles?
Venables. Let me see. (He crosses R.C.) Yes—we are all much edified by his humour. (He turns to look at Maggie.)
Comtesse. His humour? That man?
Maggie (to Comtesse). Why not? (Watching narrowly.)
Venables. I assure you, Comtesse, some of the neat things in his speeches convulse the House. A word has even been coined for them—Shandisms.
Venables. Well, then?
Venables. In conversation he strikes one as being somewhat lacking in humour.
Comtesse. You are wondering who supplies his speeches with the humour.
Maggie. Supplies John! (Pretending surprise.)
Venables. Now that you mention it, some of his Shandisms do have a rather feminine quality.
Comtesse. You have thought it might be a woman!
Venables. Really, Comtesse!
Comtesse. I see it all! Charles, you thought it might be the wife.
Venables (flinging up his hands). I own up!
Maggie (looking at the Comtesse and then at Venables). Me!
Venables (turning away a little to R.). Forgive me, I see I was wrong.

(At this moment Maggie gives him a look unseen, which shows the audience she is duping him. The Comtesse sees this and for the first time is a little suspicious of Macaig.)

Maggie (as if afraid). Have I been doing John any harm?
Venables (turning back to R. of the settee). On the contrary. I am relieved to know that there are no hairpins in his speeches. (He moves down and sits on the settee R. of Maggie.) If he is at home, Mrs. Shand, may I see him? I am going to be rather charming to him.
Maggie (eagerly—rising and moving up L. of the settee to C.). Yes, he is—oh yes—
Venables (as Maggie reaches the double doors). That is to say, Comtesse, if he proves himself the man I believe him to be.

(Maggie is about to open the door but stops. Being doubtful of John's proving this, she casts an eye at the drawer the speech is in. Venables does not see this.)

Maggie. He is very busy just now.
Venables. I think he will see me.
Maggie (moving down to R. of the settee). Is it something about his speech? (Naively.)
Venables (after laughing). Well, yes, it is!
MAGGIE. Then I daresay I could tell you without troubling him, as I've been typing it.

(VENABLES shakes his head three times.)

There's no secret about it. He is to show it to the Whips to-night.
VENABLES (quickly). You are sure of that?
COMTESSE. Yes. I heard him say so—and he repeated the peroration before me.
VENABLES (wondering). Ha!

MAGGIE. I know it by heart. (She pulls herself together, keeps her eyes on VENABLES—she begins to repeat speech quickly, playing a bold trick.) "These are the demands of every intelligent British woman, and I am proud to nail them to my mast—"
COMTESSE. The very words, Charles.
MAGGIE (facing front). "And I don't care how they may embarrass the Government—"

(VENABLES is impressed. It is a surprise to the COMTESSE, who suddenly sees that MAGGIE is playing a game.)

"If the right hon. gentleman will give us his pledge to introduce a similar bill this session, I will willingly withdraw mine—but otherwise I solemnly warn him that I will press the matter now to a division." (She controls herself, but is very anxious lest she may be doing the wrong thing.)
VENABLES (as MAGGIE turns to him). Good man! (Smiling.)

(Relief of MAGGIE. The COMTESSE is astonished.)

COMTESSE (bewildered, though already seeing that MAGGIE is playing a game). Then you are pleased to know that he means to go to a division?
VENABLES. Delighted!

(MAGGIE gives a gratified smile.)
The courage of it will be the making of him!
COMTESSE. Really! (The way he is being duped all through begins to dawn on her.)
VENABLES. Had he been going to hedge we should have disregarded him.

(MAGGIE moves to above the R. end of the settee.)
COMTESSE. Quite so. (She is now enjoying herself immensely, though without letting him see it.)
VENABLES (rising). Mrs. Shand, let us have him in at once. (He crosses down R.)
COMTESSE (rising, expecting fun). Yes—yes!
MAGGIE (to the COMTESSE, moving above the L. end of the settee). No—no.
(Maggie dare not. The Comtesse mischievously crosses below the settee and up to the doors c., opens them, and calls to John.)

Comtesse. Mr. Shand!

(As the Comtesse crosses to call John, Maggie moves across to Venables and starts saying:)

Maggie. But—but——

(The Committee Ladies are seen to turn as the Comtesse calls; John excuses himself to the ladies and comes down at once, shutting the door so that Venables, examining the bookcase R., has not seen who are within. The Comtesse moves L.C., above the settee.)

(Turning.) John!

(John, at C., looks inquiringly at the Comtesse, who indicates Venables. Venables comes forward to R.C. and offers his hand.)

Venables. How are you, Shand?

(John takes his hand.)

John (impressed). Mr. Venables! This is an honour. Sit down—sit down.

(Venables crosses and sits on the L. end of the settee.)

I can guess what you have come about.

Venables. Ah, you Scotsmen!

(The Comtesse moves L. by the armchair, looks at Maggie who is up C., and will not catch her eye, but gasps.)

John (half apologetic, half satisfied). Of course, I know I'm embarrassing the Government a good deal——

Venables (blandly). Not at all, Shand—the Government are very pleased.

John (looking round at Maggie). You don't expect me to believe that!

Venables. I called here to give you the proof of it. You may know that we are to have a big meeting at Leeds on the twenty-fourth, when two ministers are to speak. There is room for a third speaker. And I am authorized to offer that place to you.

John (much surprised). To me?

Venables. Yes.

John (sitting R. of Venables). But it would be—the Government taking me up!

Venables. Don't make too much of it, but it would be an acknowledgment that they look upon you as one of their likely young men.
MAGGIE (crosses to above the r. arm of the settee). John!

JOHN (with emotion). It's a bribe. (Rising.) You are offering me this on condition that I don't make my speech. (To down r.c. and turning to face VENABLES.) How dare you think that I would play my cause false for the sake of my own advancement? I refuse your bribe!

VENABLES (pleased). Good! But you are wrong. There are no conditions, and we want you to make your speech. Now do you accept?

(JOHN hesitates, still suspicious. MAGGIE moves towards him as if to prevent him.)

JOHN. If you make me the same offer after you've read it.

VENABLES. Ah! The canny Scot.

(JOHN crosses to the writing-table up r.c. and brings the speech to VENABLES, who takes it. This should be a moment of tension as MAGGIE is in agony, but dare not object. The COMTESSE feels the drama of it also.)

JOHN. I insist on your reading it first.

VENABLES. By all means.

MAGGIE (distressed, moving round above r. of JOHN). But——

VENABLES. Thank you. (He continues to hold the sheets carelessly in his hand.) But I assure you we look on the speech as a small matter. The important thing is your going to a division.

(JOHN is astonished.)

And we agree to that also. (Looking over the pages of the speech near the end.)

JOHN (staggered). What! (He backs a pace.)

(The COMTESSE is secretly delighted.)

VENABLES. Yes.

JOHN. But—but—why, you have been threatening to excommunicate me if I dared!

VENABLES. All done to test you!

JOHN. Test me!

VENABLES. We know a division on your Bill can have no serious significance. We shall see to that; and so the test was to be whether you had the pluck to divide. Had you been intending to talk big in this speech and then hedge, through fear of the Government, they would have had no further use for you.

(The COMTESSE leans forward.)

JOHN (heavily). I understand!

(He catches the COMTESSE's eye—she is enjoying the situation as much as it worries him, for he knows that the speech will show he
has hedged. Venables turns over the pages carelessly. This is
drama to the others.)

Venables (leaning forward, looking at speech). Any of your
good things in this, Shand?

(John again catches the Comtesse's eye, miserably, and takes a pace
to Venables.)

John. No, I—no—it isn't necessary you should read it now.
Venables (rising). Merely for my own pleasure. I'll look
through it this evening.

(John backs to the r. end of the settee. Venables folds the speech
and puts it in his pocket, moves down r., and buttons up his coat.
The Comtesse is enjoying herself and looks from John to
Maggie.)

Maggie (quietly). That's the only copy there is, John. (Mov-
ing to Venables.) Let me make a fresh one and send it to you
in an hour or two.

Venables. I couldn't put you to that trouble, Mrs. Shand.
I will take good care of it.

Maggie. Wouldn't it be considered to be the property of your
heirs, if anything were to happen to you on the way home?

Venables (laughing aloud). Now, there is forethought.
(Crossing Maggie to c.) Shand, I think after that—— (He
gives him the speech, with a comic bow.)

John (down to r. of Venables). Thank you.

(Much relieved, John puts the speech quickly in his pocket. He
turns and catches the Comtesse's eye, then crosses up r.c.)

Venables. She is Scotch, too, Comtesse!
Comtesse (delighted, as she rises). Yes, she is Scotch, too!
Venables. Though the only persons likely to do for me in
the street, Shand, are your ladies' committee.

John. Oh!

Venables (turning a little down r. to Maggie). Ever since
they punctured my tyres with a gimlet, I can scent them a mile
away.

Comtesse. A mile! Charles! (Coming down a little.) Peep
in there! (Indicating the dining-room.)

Venables. You don't mean——?

(He looks from one to the other and crosses up c. Maggie moves a
little l.c. below the settee as Venables softly opens the dining-
room doors, peeps in, and closes the doors again. He steals, with
burlesque caution, down to Maggie and shakes hands with her,
then with the Comtesse, and crosses r.c. to John, who is r., by
the door, picking up his stick on the way. The Comtesse and
Maggie are amused. Venables gives them a smile over his
shoulder and exits R., John following him out and closing the door.)

Comtesse (whose chance has come at last, moving down C.). So, madam! (With burlesque solemnity.)

Maggie (prepared for her). I don't know what you mean. (She crosses L. to the fire.)

Comtesse. Yes, you do. I mean that there is someone who "helps" our Mr. Shand. (She crosses to Maggie.)

Maggie (looking down at the fire). There's not.

Comtesse. And it is a woman—and it's you.

Maggie (without turning). I help in the little things.

Comtesse. The little things! You are the pin he picked up long ago, and that is to make his fortune; and I question whether your John knows that you help him at all. I shall soon find out, though. (She crosses up R. of the settee.)

Maggie (turning to her). Such nonsense!

(Re-enter John. He closes the door and moves down R., holding the speech up.)

John (triumphant). I've done it again! I've done it again!

Maggie (moving to L.C.). I'm so glad, John.

Comtesse (above the R. end of the settee). And all because you were not going to hedge, Mr. Shand!

John (like a schoolboy—attractively). You won't tell on me, Comtesse? They had just guessed I would be firm because they know I'm a strong man. (He crosses to Maggie L. and pats her on the shoulder.) You little saw, Maggie, what a good turn you were doing me when you said you wanted to make another copy of the speech. (He turns and crosses up R. to the desk.)

Comtesse (watching him). Ah! (She sits at the R. end of the settee.)

(John puts the speech in the drawer again.)

Maggie. How, John?

John. Because now I can alter the end!

Maggie. So you can! (She turns L. to the armchair and picks up her knitting.)

John (going to the double doors, then turning). There's another lucky thing, Maggie, I hadn't told the ladies' committee I was going to hedge—so they need never know. (He moves down R.C.) Comtesse, I tell you there's a little cherub who sits up aloft and looks after the career of John Shand. (He crosses up to the door.)

Comtesse (after looking at Maggie). Where does she sit, Mr. Shand?

John (turning at the door). It's just a figure of speech!

(He exits C. elated, and closes the door. The Comtesse surveys Maggie, who is sitting, quietly knitting.)
Comtesse. It is not down here his little cherub sits, Mrs. Shand—knitting a stocking?

Maggie. No, it isn't.

Comtesse. And when I came in I gave him credit for everything—even for the prettiness of the room!

Maggie. He has beautiful taste.

(The Comtesse is admiring her, though affecting severity.)

Comtesse (rising and crossing to the door R.). Good-bye, Scotchy!

Maggie (rising, stiffly—putting her knitting on the chair). Good-bye, Comtesse—and thank you for coming.

Comtesse. Good-bye, Miss Pin.

Maggie (haughtily). Good-bye. (She rings the bell below the fireplace, then crosses below the settee to C.)

Comtesse (lovingly, crossing and taking Maggie's hands, drawing her towards herself). You sweet little wife. He can't be worthy of it—no man could be worthy of it. Why do you do it?

(Maggie, who has felt the tension of the scene, gives way now before this kindness, and has one of her moments of emotion. She withdraws her hands and buries her face in them for a moment.)

Maggie (raising her face to the Comtesse). He loves to think he does it all himself, that's the way of men. I'm plain and I've no charm. I shouldn't have let him marry me. I'm trying to make up for it.

Comtesse (warmly kissing her). You darling! (She releases Maggie and goes to the door R. and opens it. Then she looks round at Maggie and kisses hand to her, and exits.)

Quick Curtain.

Scene 2

Scene.—The same. An afternoon some days later.

John and Sybil are in the middle of a love scene. She is in outdoor dress, and is seated at the L. end of the settee. He is above the settee, on her R., holding her right hand, along the back of the settee. She is turned slightly away. Both are in deadly earnest, indeed in an excess of it, such as could hardly exist in people with more humour, and this extravagance should make the audience suspect that it may be really no more than calf-love at boiling-point. Their terrific seriousness should have a youthful quality that makes them likeable.

John. Never, no, no, never shall that be said. Oh, my dear, my dear! Even in the House of Commons, be I speaking or listening, it all becomes a blur to me, and then a halo in which I see your face. A frown from you is more to me than another
woman’s praise. In a room, Sybil, I go to you as a cold man to a fire. You fill me like a peal of bells in an empty house.

SYBIL (rising in agitation, looking at the door R. and crossing to R.C.). I should not let you say it—but you say it so beautifully.

JOHN (to R. of the settee). You must have guessed!

SYBIL. I dreamed—I feared—but you were Scotch, and I didn’t know what to think.

JOHN. In those long grinding years I thought my goal was Parliament, but all the time—I see it now—I was crushing through to get to you. Do you know what first attracted me to you? It was your insolence. I thought—“I’ll break her insolence for her!” (He moves to her.)

SYBIL. And I thought—“I’ll break his strength.”

(John tries to embrace her; she backs a pace.)

JOHN. My love!

SYBIL (backing another pace). No, no!

JOHN. And now your cooing voice plays round me—the softness of you in your pretty clothes makes me think of young birds—it is you— (He advances to her, takes her hands again.) Sybil, who inspires my work.

SYBIL. I am so glad—so proud. (She hesitates, then :) I—I must go.

JOHN. And others know it as well as I. Only yesterday, the Comtesse said to me: “No man could get on so fast unaided. Cherchez la femme, Mr. Shand.”

SYBIL. Auntie said that!

JOHN. I said: “Find her yourself, Comtesse.”

SYBIL. And she?

JOHN. She said: “I have found her!” And I said, in my blunt way: “You mean Lady Sybil?”—and she went away laughing.

SYBIL. Laughing?

JOHN. I seem to amuse the woman. (Moving to her.)

SYBIL (shudders and turns to cross to R.). I—I must go

JOHN (checking her with a hand on her arm). Not yet!

SYBIL (turning to him). If Mrs. Shand—— (Shuddering.) It is so cruel to her! Whom did you say she had gone to the station to meet?

JOHN. Her father and brothers, Sybil.

SYBIL (crossing down L.). It is so cruel to them! We must think no more of this. It is madness! (She throws out her arms.)

JOHN (following her to L.C.). It’s fate!

(He catches her hands and draws her into his embrace. She tries to push him off.)

(Firmly.) Sybil, let us declare our love openly!

SYBIL (appalled). You can’t ask that. (She half releases her-
self.) Now in the first moment you tell me of it! (She covers her eyes with her hands.)

JOHN. The one thing I won’t do even for you is to live a life of underhand.

SYBIL (breaking away L.). The blow to her!

JOHN. At least she has always known that I never loved her.

SYBIL (turning to face him). It is asking me to give up everything—everyone—for you.

JOHN. It’s too much?

SYBIL (taking a pace towards him). To a woman who truly loves, even that is not too much.

JOHN (making a movement to her). Ah, Sybil! (He kisses her.)

SYBIL. Oh! It isn’t me that matters—it’s you. If it was to save you—(sitting in the chair L.) but to bring you down—no, no!

JOHN (kneeling at her R.). Nothing can keep me down if I have you to help me.

SYBIL. I am dazed—I don’t know what to say or do.

JOHN. Beloved.

(He takes her R. hand and kisses it; she leans on her arm and buries her face in her L. hand.)

I can’t walk along the streets without looking in all the shops for what I think would become you best—

(At this moment MAGGIE enters R., in out-door things. She stops short on seeing them. There has been no caution in her entrance, but the baize door is noiseless and they do not hear her.)

(JOHN takes a case out of his pocket, opens it and shows a pendant to SYLVIA.) You will take this from me?

SYBIL. A pendant! What a beautiful ruby!

(MAGGIE half closes the door.)

JOHN (taking out the pendant, putting the case in his pocket). It is a drop of my blood.

(MAGGIE has stood by the door, still and quite expressionless, but has trembled a little. She now goes quietly out, closing the door softly, but SYBIL feels that something has happened; she starts, without rising.)

What is it?

SYBIL (looking first at the door C., then at the door R.). I thought—did the door shut?

JOHN (rising). It was shut already.

SYBIL (rising). I thought—

JOHN. There was nothing. (Moving to C.) But I think I hear voices now.
Alick (off). How much should I give the cabman, David? David. Just give him the two shillings and shut the door in his face.

(Sybil crosses to the chair up L.c., crosses for her things and puts on her hat. John crosses to up R.c. Sybil conceals the pendant in her dress. The door is opened rather noisily by Maggie, whose voice is heard before she appears. She enters, her ordinary quiet self.)

Maggie (off). Come this way, David! (After entering.) They've come, John. (Crossing to R.c.) They would help with the luggage.

John. Ah!

(He exits R. Sybil moves L. of the settee to C., looking at John as he crosses.)

Maggie (crossing to her and shaking hands). How do you do, Lady Sybil? This is nice of you.

Sybil (reluctantly shakes hands). I was so sorry not to find you in. (Making a movement to go.)

Maggie. Thank you. (She points to the chair L.) You'll sit down?

Sybil (who hates deceit and would be glad to leave). I think not—your relations—

Maggie (quite quietly). They will be proud to see you are my friend.

(Sybil has no suspicion. Maggie begins to shiver as she looks at her.)

Sybil (sitting on the settee and making conversation). Is it their first visit to London?

Maggie (slowly, standing above the R. end of the settee). I'm glad you are so beautiful. (She is now standing looking quietly but intently at Sybil as if for a lasting memory.)

Sybil. One of them is married now, isn't he?

(No answer. Maggie continues to look at her fixedly—and to shudder.)

Have they travelled from Scotland to-day?

(No answer, but the shuddering continues.)

(Looking at Maggie, leaning back). Mrs. Shand, why do you look at me so?

(The shuddering lessens, but there is no answer. Sybil grows suspicious, rises and backs a little down L., fearfully—speaking almost in a whisper.)

The door did open?
What are you going to do?
MAGGIE (moving down r. of the settee). That would be telling.
Sit down, my pretty.

(SYBIL sits down l., in wonderment. MAGGIE stands above and r. of her. SYBIL shows some alarm as ALICK, DAVID and JAMES enter r. They are dressed in their “best,” of which they are somewhat conscious, and carry silk hats. ALICK also has a brown-paper parcel. They are all very animated and look about them, curiously. DAVID backs down c., ALICK moves l.c. above the settee, while JAMES backs down r. and r.c.)

DAVID. Hey, Maggie! It’s a capital house, Maggie.

(MAGGIE moves up r.c. to above the chair.)

MAGGIE (her usual self). I’m so glad you like it. (To SYBIL.) My father—my brothers—(to the others) Lady Sybil Tenterden.

(They are impressed. ALICK moves down l.c. below the settee. DAVID on his r. JAMES moves to the r. end of the settee.)

SYBIL (pleasantly). How do you do?

(The men bow. MAGGIE crosses up l. of the settee to up r.c., and takes off her hat and coat at the table. DAVID moves to the fireplace, hat in hand. JAMES turns to face MAGGIE.)

JAMES. A ladyship! Well done, Maggie!

ALICK (moving towards JAMES). H’sh, James! (He turns and moves l.c., below the settee.) I remember you, my lady.

(JAMES, a little abashed, moves up c., above the settee.)

MAGGIE (moving a little down r.c., her hat and coat over her arm). Sit down, Father. This is the study.

(ALICK crosses to the chair above the fire and sits. DAVID taps the mantelpiece.)

DAVID. Yes—yes! Very fine imitation.

(MAGGIE goes up into the dining-room and leaves her things there. JAMES sits at the r. end of the settee. MAGGIE returns, and goes to the table up r., SYBIL watching her closely. JOHN enters r., and moves to the chair down r.c.)

SYBIL. You must be tired after your long journey.

DAVID. Tired, your ladyship? We sat on cushioned seats the whole way.

JAMES (feeling the settee). Every seat in this room is cushioned.

(JOHN sits r.c., thinking.)
Maggie (crossing down to c.). You may say all my life is cushioned now, James . . . (Sitting on the L. arm of John’s chair) . . . by this dear man of mine.

(She gives John a loving pressure, then looks at Sybil grimly. The others are glad in Maggie’s happiness.)

John (uncomfortably—to James). And is Elizabeth hearty?

James (primly). She’s very well, I thank you kindly.

Maggie. James is a married man now.

Sybil. Congratulations.

James. I thank you kindly. Ay, I’m married. Ay, ay!

(He sighs and turns away.)

David. That’s so.

(David nudges Alick on the shoulder. They wink and laugh.)

James (looking at David and Alick to see if they are smiling). It wasn’t a case of being caught—it was entirely of my own free will.

David. Quite so!

James (looks to see if they are smiling again and they are—frowns). Is your ladyship married?

Sybil. Alas! No.

David. You blundering fellow! (Politely.) You will be yet, my lady.

(Sybil bows.)

John (uncomfortably). Perhaps they would like you to show them their rooms, Maggie?

Maggie (rising). Yes. (She crosses up c., but stops when David speaks.)

David. We’re avid to see the whole house as well as the sleeping accommodation. (Crosses L.o.) But first, Father. (He slaps his pocket.)

Alick. I take you, David. (He puts his hat on the floor below his chair, rises and produces a shawl from his pocket.) A present for you, Maggie. (He crosses to Maggie with the shawl.)

(Maggie takes the parcel, crosses to the table up r., and opens it.)

Maggie. Oh! Oh!

Alick (to below the L. end of the settee). It wasn’t likely, Mr. Shand, we’d forget the day.

John (looking across at Alick). The day?

David. The second anniversary of your marriage—we came purposely for the day.

(Maggie comes down c., and holds out the shawl for inspection.)

James. It’s a Balmorino lace shawl—the real thing—you would never dare wear it if you knew the cost.
Maggie. Oh! (She crosses to r. with it on her shoulders.)
The beauty! Oh! Oh! Oh!! Look, John. (She turns at
down r.)

John. Ay-one.

Sybil. Very pretty.

Maggie. You dear dears! (She crosses and kisses Alick
at l.)

Alick (bashfully). Havers.

(Maggie kisses David.)

David (bashfully). Havers.

(Maggie crosses the settee to kiss James.)

James (rising, trying to prevent her). Havers.

(Maggie kisses him.)

(Again, after being kissed.) Havers. (He moves up r.c.)

(Maggie then crosses up c.)

John. It's a very fine shawl.

James. You may say so. (Coming down r. of John.) And
what did you give her, Mr. Shand?

John. Me, oh, I—well——

(The others look towards him.)

Maggie (coming down to l. of John). Oh!—he—he—it——

Sybil (sneeringly). Did he forget?

Maggie. Forget? John? No, it's a pendant.

(As soon as she has said it she realizes what she has done, claps her
hand on her mouth. It is a shock to John and Sybil. Maggie
recovered and looks coolly at them.)

Alick. A pendant?

(John looks round at the door, recollecting incident with Sybil.)

James. What's that?

Alick. It's a kind of brooch on a chain.

James. Let's see it.

David. You were slow in speaking of it, Mr. Shand.

(Troubled.)

Maggie. He was shy because he thought you might blame
him for extravagance.

David (relieved). Oh, that's it.

James. Are we not to see it?

Maggie (after a penitent look at John). Did I leave it on the
desk, James?

(James turns up and looks on the desk.)

Or the mantelpiece, David?
(David turns and searches on the mantel. Alick crosses up L. and searches on the table there. Maggie turns to John with an appealing look of sorrow for what she has said—then turns to Lady Sybil and indicates that the pendant must be given up, keeping her eyes on Alick and David all the time.)

James. It's very queer, it's not on the table.

(David moves up to Alick.)

Maggie. Where did you put it, John? (She moves down to the fireplace.)

Alick. It can't be mislaid, surely.

(Maggie holds out a determined hand to Sybil, who produces it from her neck and gives it to her—unseen by the brothers and father. But John sees.)

Maggie (coming down C. holding it up). No, here it is!

(Alick and David come down L.C.)

Alick (taking the pendant). Eh! Preserve me! (He shows it to David on his L.)

(James C. to R. of Maggie.)

Is that stone real, Mr. Shand?

(Maggie passes the pendant to James.)

John (without flinching). Yes.

James. Maggie, ah! Maggie. (Admiring the pendant.)

Real!! (He gives it back to Maggie.)

(Maggie glances at John, then at Sybil.)

Maggie. John says it is a drop of his blood.

John (firmly). And so it is.

David. Well said, Mr. Shand.

Maggie (crossing to the desk R.). And now if you'll all come with me—- (She puts the pendant on the desk.)

(David and Alick cross to the fireplace for their hats. James goes up R.C.)

(Moving down R. and opening the door.) I think John has something he wants to talk over with Lady Sybil. (Boldly.) Or would you prefer, John, to say it before us all?

(David and Alick move to L.C. above the settee.)

John (himself again. Rising and crossing down C., turning with his back to the audience). You'll stay here!

(The Wylies, who were moving towards the door, check at C.)

I prefer to say it before you all.
(He crosses to the fireplace, r. of Sybil, who has risen. Maggie
closes the door, and moves in to r.c.)

Sybil (aside to John). No!
Maggie (quietly, moving to l. of the chair r.c.). Then sit down
again.

(The men, wonderingly, seat themselves. James moves down r. and
sits r.c. David and Alick come slowly to the settee and sit.
Maggie stands c., between the settee and James's chair.)

Sybil (alarmed). Surely you're not——
John. She knows, and it was only for her I was troubled.
Do you think I'm afraid of them? Now we can be open.

(Alick, David and James listen intently.)

David (lowering). What is it? What's wrong, John Shand?
John (firmly, below the l. armchair). It was to Lady Sybil I
gave the jewel, and all my love with it.

(The Wylies are staggered.)

Sybil (to Maggie, moving a pace in). What are you going to
do?
David (rising from the settee). She'll leave it for us to do.
Maggie. You and I are expected to behave like infants, Lady
Sybil, and leave the room while the men decide our fate. (Moving
to above and r. of the chair r.c.) That's not my way. Man's the
oak—woman's the ivy. (Looking across at John.) Which of
us is it that's to cling to you, John?

(For a moment, all still and silent. Then, John rather grandilo-
quently takes Sybil's hand, and looks defiantly at them all.)

David. So. (He strides grimly down l., and turns there, to
watch.)
John (crossing up and opening the door c.). Wait here, Sybil.
Sybil (triumphantly, crossing to the door c. and turning there).
I hesitated—but I am afraid no longer. (Looking at them all.)
Whatever he asks of me I will do. It will mean surrendering
everything for him. (Looking at Maggie.) I am glad it means
all that.

(She exits into the dining-room c. John closes the door.)

Maggie. So that settles it.
Alick (who has been staring grimly out before him). I'm think-
ing that doesn't settle it. (He rises and goes l. of Maggie.)
David (at the fireplace). No, by God. Have you nothing to
say to her, man?
JOHN (coming a little down c.). I have things to say to her, but not before you.

(JAMES rises, moving slowly down r.)

DAVID (sternly). Go, Maggie. Leave him to us. (indicating that he wants her to go.)

MAGGIE. No, David. (crossing to the fireplace.) I want to hear what’s to become of me. (she sits above the fireplace l.) I promise not to take any side.

(ALICK sits in the chair r.c. during the following scene MAGGIE is rather isolated. The others close in slightly on JOHN, who moves down c.)

DAVID (crossing up to the l. end of the settee). How long has this been going on?

JOHN. If you mean, how long has that lady been the apple of my eye... (JAMES makes a movement forward.)

I’m not sure, but I never told her of it until to-day.

MAGGIE (quietly and without too much emotion—her interference always coming in unexpectedly as if she was outside the discussion). I think it wasn’t till about six months ago, John, that she began to be very dear to you. At first you liked to bring in her name when talking to me, so that I could tell you of any little things I might have heard she was doing. But afterwards as she became more and more to you, you avoided mentioning her name.

(DAVID, on the r. of MAGGIE, has turned, listening to her.)

JOHN (surprised). Did you notice that?

MAGGIE. Yes.

JOHN (with true feeling). I tried to be done with it for your sake. I’ve often had a sore heart for you, Maggie.

DAVID. You’re proving it!

MAGGIE. Yes, David, he had; I’ve often seen him looking at me very sorrowfully of late because of what was in his mind, and many a kindly little thing he has done for me that he didn’t use to do.

JOHN. You noticed that too?

MAGGIE. Yes.

DAVID (controlling himself). Well, we won’t go into that, the thing to be thankful for is that it’s ended, ended.

ALICK (also trying conciliation, though his voice breaks). Yes—yes.

JOHN. All useless, sir—it’s not ended—it’s to go on.

DAVID (moving down below the settee, l. of JOHN). There’s a devil in you, John Shand.

JOHN (impassioned). I suppose there is, and I’ve wrestled
with him, do you hear, till I was covered with blood. Did you think he had a walk over, Mr. David?

James (threateningly, advancing to John). Man, I could knock you down!

(Alick rises, and catches hold of James’s arm.)

Maggie. There’s not one of you could knock John down!

David (exasperated). Quiet, Maggie. (Crossing down L.) One would think you were taking his part.

Maggie (rising because John is looking broken—her arms want to protect him though he is looking the other way). Do you expect me to desert him at the very moment that he needs me most?

David. It’s him that’s deserting you.

John. Yes, Maggie, that’s what it is.

(Maggie sits again quietly. The Wylies are at their wits’ end.

. After a slight pause :)

Alick. Where’s your marriage vow?

James (coming to R. of John, between John and Alick). And your prize for moral philosophy?

John (recklessly, to below the settee). All gone whistling down the wind.

James. Englishman! (He turns down R. with angry contempt.)

David (crossing to L. of John). I suppose you understand you'll have to resign your seat.

John. There are hundreds of seats, but there's only one John Shand.

Maggie. That's how I like to hear him speak.

David (putting a hand on John's shoulder). Think, man—I'm old by you, and for long I've had a pride in you. It will be beginning the world again with more against you than there was eight years ago——

John. I have a better head to begin it with than I had eight years ago.

Alick (sitting in the chair R.C.). The woman will have her own money, David! (Hitting at John.)

John. She's as poor as a mouse.

James (going to the desk up R.). We'll go to her friends, and tell them all. They’ll stop it! (He takes up his hat.)

John. She's of age!

James (coming down R.). They'll take her far away.

John. I'll follow and tear her from them.

Alick. Your career——

John (striding up R. of the settee to the door C.). To hell with my career. (He turns.) What can you, or you, or you understand of the passions of a man? I've fought and I've given in! Do you think I don't know I'm on the rocks! When a ship
founders, as I suppose I'm foundering, it's not a thing to yelp at. Peace, all of you!

(John exits c. closing the doors.)

David (moving to the r. end of the settee). It's true what he says. What do I know of the passions of a man? Father, we're up against something we don't understand. (He moves above and l. of Alick's chair.)

Alick. It's something wicked.

David. I daresay it is, but it's something big. (He crosses l.c., above the settee.)

James (crossing to below the settee). It's that d—d charm!

(He sits on the r. arm of the settee, swinging his hat. They all look miserably at Maggie, who remains sitting quietly, looking at the closed door.)

Maggie. That's it. (Turning to look at James). What was it that made you fancy Elizabeth, James?

James. It's a sort of a puzzle.

Maggie. It was her charm.

David. Her charm?

James (pugnaciously). Yes, her charm.

Maggie. She had charm for James.

David. Put on your things, Maggie, and we'll leave this house.

Maggie (with another glance at the doors up c.). Not me, David. (Smiling, she rises.)

(The men are astonished.)

David (l. of the settee). You haven't given in!

Maggie (putting down her knitting). I want you all to go upstairs and let me have my try, now. (She drops down a pace l.)

Alick (rising and crossing l., catching her hand). Maggie! You put new life into me! (He crosses to the door r., in silence.)

Maggie (as Alick reaches the door). I'll save him if I can!

(Alick exits r.)

James (going up to r. of David, above the settee). What will Elizabeth say to this?

David. Go away!

(James turns away r. and exits, leaving the door open.)

(Crossing down to r. of Maggie.) Maggie, does he deserve to be saved after the way he has treated you?

Maggie. You stupid, David! What has that to do with it?

(David pats her on the head, and crosses to the door r., where he turns and looks at her. She smiles and nods at him reassuringly. He exits, closing the door. Maggie runs up c., peeps into the
dining-room, runs back to her chair L., and begins to knit, quite calmly. John appears at the door C., and looks at her wonderingly. Sybil follows him in, on his R., and is also surprised at her calmness and occupation.)

(Without looking up.) Come in, John.

Sybil (moving down C.). Knitting!

Maggie. Sit down, Lady Sybil, and make yourself comfortable.

(Sybil sits on the settee.)

I'm afraid we have put you about.

(John moves to the L. end of the settee, standing there.)

John (earnestly). I'm mortal sorry, Maggie.

Sybil. And I.

Maggie. I'm sure you are. But as it can't be helped I see no reason why we three shouldn't talk the matter over in a practical way. Won't you join her on the sofa, John?

(John sits on the settee L. of Sybil. Both show great surprise at Maggie's way. She continues to knit.)

John. If you could understand, Maggie, what an inspiration Sybil is to me and to my work.

Sybil. I think of nothing else. (She takes John's hand.)

Maggie. That's fine. That's as it should be.

Sybil. I think it sweet the way you are taking this. (She takes her hand away.)

Maggie. Not at all. When were you thinking of leaving me, John?

John. I think, now that it has come to a head, the sooner the better. So long as it's convenient to you, Maggie.

Maggie (calculating). It couldn't well be before Saturday. That's the day the laundry comes home.

Sybil. Laundry?

John. It's the day the House rises. (With feeling.) It may be my last appearance in the House. (He sighs.)

Sybil (eagerly). Please! Don't say that!

Maggie. And you love the House, John, don't you—next to her? It's a pity you can't wait till after your speech at Leeds. Mr. Venables won't have you there after the publicity.

John. What a chance it would have been. But let it go.

Maggie. The meeting is in less than a month—could you not make it such a speech that they would be very loth to lose you?

John (hungrily). That's what was in my mind!

Sybil. And he could have done it!

Maggie. Then we've come to something practical.

Sybil. Practical!
JOHN. No, it wouldn't be fair to you if I was to stay on now.
MAGGIE. Do you think I'll let myself be considered when your career is at stake? A month will soon pass for me. I'll have a lot of packing to do.
SYBIL. Packing!
JOHN. It's noble of you, but I don't deserve it, and I can't take it from you.

(SYBIL watches JOHN.)

MAGGIE (to SYBIL). We must think of something. Now's the time, Lady Sybil, for you to have one of your inspiring ideas.
SYBIL (eagerly). Yes, yes. (Weakly.) But what?

(MAGGIE looks at her.)

MAGGIE (very canny). What do you think of this, John? I'll stay on here with my brothers and you go away somewhere and devote yourself to your speech.
SYBIL (to MAGGIE). Yes. (She looks at JOHN.)
JOHN. That might be! Away from both of you! But where, where could I go?
SYBIL (helplessly, to MAGGIE). Where? Where?
MAGGIE (with sudden idea). I know! (She rises and runs to the telephone up R. Lifting the receiver.) I want eight-three-two-o-seven Mayfair.
JOHN (rises, crosses up to L. of MAGGIE). Don't be in such a hurry, Maggie.
MAGGIE. Is that Lamb's Hotel? Put me on to the Comtesse de la Briere, please.
SYBIL (rising). What do you want with Auntie? (She moves up c.)
MAGGIE. Her cottage in the country would be the very place. She invited John and me.
JOHN. Yes, but——
MAGGIE (arguing). And Mr. Venables is to be there.
JOHN. Oh!
MAGGIE. Think of the impression you could make on him, seeing him daily for three weeks.
JOHN. There's something in that.
SYBIL (as if it were her idea). Yes!

(JOHN glances at her, then back to MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE (into the telephone). Is it you, Comtesse? I'm Maggie Shand.
SYBIL (suddenly). You are not to tell her—about us!
MAGGIE (to her). No. (Into the telephone.) Oh, I'm very well, never was better. Yes, yes—you see, I can't come, because I can't leave my brothers. But John could come to you without me—why not?
JOHN. If she's not keen to have me, I won't go.
MAGGIE (to JOHN). She's very keen. (Into the telephone.) I could come for a day by-and-by to see how you are getting on. Yes—yes—certainly. (To JOHN.) She says she'll be delighted.

JOHN. Maggie.
MAGGIE. Will you hold the line, please, Comtesse? (She puts her hand on the mouthpiece and looks at JOHN.)
JOHN. You're not doing this thinking that my being absent from Sybil for three weeks can make any difference? Of course, it's natural you should want us to keep apart, but—— (He takes SYBIL's hands.)
MAGGIE (grimly). I'm founding no hope on keeping you apart, John.
JOHN. It's what other wives would do.
MAGGIE. I promised to be different.
JOHN. Then tell her I accept.

(He exits into the dining-room. SYBIL crosses up to L. of MAGGIE.)

SYBIL (after hesitation). I think—I think you are very wonderful.
MAGGIE. Sh! Was that John calling you?
SYBIL. Was it?

(She turns and exits up C. MAGGIE lowers the receiver in her hand. Evidently there is something she wants to say to the Comtesse, yet is terrified to say it. She puts down the receiver, runs to the dining-room to assure herself John is out of earshot, and runs back, pulls herself together, and picks up the receiver.)

MAGGIE. Are you there still, dear Comtesse? (She speaks with effort in her natural voice, but is really highly strung.) I want you to invite Lady Sybil also. Yes, for the whole three weeks. No, I'm not mad—as a great favour to me. Yes, I have a very particular reason, but I won't tell you what it is. Oh, call me Scotchy as much as you like, but do consent. Do, do, do! Thank you, thank you! Good-bye. (She replaces the receiver and pulls herself together. She takes up her knitting and crosses to R. of the armchair L.)

SYBIL (re-entering C.). I am going away now, Mrs. Shand.
MAGGIE (crossing to SYBIL, c.). In case I don't see you again, good luck! (She gives SYBIL her hand—then calls to JOHN.)

JOHN!

(SYBIL moves L.C., above the settee. MAGGIE comes down R.C. as JOHN re-enters.)

The Comtesse says she's to invite Lady Sybil to the cottage at the same time.
SYBIL. Me?
JOHN (to the R.C. chair. Surprised). Lady Sybil! Then, of course I won't go, Maggie!

MAGGIE (moving eagerly to JOHN on his R.). What does it matter? Is anything to be considered except the speech? And with her on the spot, John, to help and inspire you—— What a speech it will be!

JOHN. Maggie, you really are a very generous woman.

SYBIL (also moved, coming to L. of the R.C. chair). She is, indeed.

(MAGGIE crosses down and gives one of her handshakes. JOHN crosses R., and opens the door.)

Good-bye. In your own way, I am sure you love him also.

(Another handshake.)

But he and I were made for each other from the beginning of time. You understand that, don't you?

MAGGIE. Could anything be plainer?

(SYBIL, after a momentary hesitation, crosses her to the door R., and exits.)

JOHN (who has been moved by this scene—crosses from the door to MAGGIE, and puts his hand on her shoulder). Maggie, I wish I was fond of you.

MAGGIE (heartily). I wish you were, John.

(JOHN sighs, turns and exits after SYBIL, closing the door. MAGGIE gazes after him adoringly, standing C. with the knitting in her left hand. After a slight pause and a half-unconscious jerk of her wrist, she throws the knitting down L. She has become a grim, remorseless figure now—her decks cleared for action.)

CURTAIN.
ACT IV

SCENE.—A charming room in the Comtesse’s cottage.

Up c., french windows lead to the garden. A strip of lawn, trim hedges, and distant flower-beds can be seen.

At r.c., a settee. Below it a low coffee-stool. To l. of the settee, a small round table. The fireplace is R. Below it, a small armchair.

At l.c., a writing-table, facing down r. A chair above it, and another below it, at the upper end. A door to the rest of the house down l. There are small windows above the door, and above the fireplace is a dainty china cabinet. There are bookcases r. and l. of the french windows.

When the Curtain rises, the Comtesse is seated at the r. end of the settee, playing patience on the low stool. She occasionally glances over her shoulder at John, who, seated l. of the writing-table, is very gloomy. He is turned slightly in his chair to face down stage, leaning his head on his hand, elbow on the table. In his left hand a newspaper at which he has been scanning. He gives a heavy sigh after a longish silence, and puts the paper from him on the table.

Comtesse (looking quizzically at him). I feel it rather a shame to keep you here on such a lovely day, entertaining an old woman.

John (gloomily). I don’t pretend to think I’m entertaining you, Comtesse.

Comtesse (looking at him). But you are, you know.

John. I would be pleased to be told how.

(The Comtesse shrugs her shoulders. A pause. Then another heavy sigh from John.)

Comtesse (as if startled). Again? Why do you not go out on the river?

John slaps his knee and rises.)

John. Yes, I can do that.

Comtesse. And take Sybil with you.

John sits again.)

John. I have been on the river with her twenty times.

Comtesse. Here is a delightful idea. Take her a long walk through the Fairlow woods.

John. We were there twice last week.

Comtesse. There is a romantically damp little arbour at the end of what the villagers called the Lovers’ Lane.
John. One can’t go there every day.

(Comtesse chuckles—John rises, aggrieved.)

I see nothing to laugh at.

Comtesse. Did I laugh? I must have been translating the situation into French.

(The pleasant sound of a lawn-mower is heard off stage in the garden. John exits down L., gloomily. The Comtesse smiles to herself. Venables, in flannels and shirt-sleeves rolled up, appears in the garden from up R., mowing the lawn. As he passes the windows he calls out to the Comtesse “Voilà!” and is moving L., when he catches sight of Maggie, who appears from up R. She is dressed in outdoor May garments, and carries a small dressing-bag. Venables, surprised to see her, shakes hands. She indicates to him that she wants to take the Comtesse by surprise. He nods, amused. Maggie tiptoes in, puts her bag on the R. end of the table L.c., tiptoes across above the settee and puts her hands over the Comtesse’s eyes.)

They are a strong pair of hands whoever they belong to. (She removes Maggie’s hands from her eyes.)

Maggie. And not very white, and biggish for my size. Now guess.

Comtesse. Maggie! (She holds out her arms, delighted and surprised.)

(Maggie crosses round the back of the settee and sits R. of the Comtesse. They embrace.)

Little dear!

(Venables enjoys this scene from outside, then disappears, mowing, to L. The Comtesse takes off Maggie’s hat, and puts it on the table L. of the settee.)

Abominable love, not to let me know you were coming.

Maggie (affecting gaiety). It is a surprise visit. I walked up from the station. (Anxiously, after looking across at the writing-table.) How is—everybody?

Comtesse (meaningly). He is quite well—but, my child, he seems to me to be a most unhappy man!

Maggie (delighted). He does!

Comtesse. Why should that please you, heartless one?

Maggie (doggedly—facing front). I won’t tell you!

Comtesse (turning her by the shoulders and shaking her). I could take you, shake you! Here have I put my house at your disposal for nearly three weeks for some sly Scotch purpose, and you will not tell me what it is.

Maggie. No!

Comtesse (indignantly). Oh, very well then, but I have what
you call a nasty one for you. (She rises, picks the empty vase from the small table, and goes up to the windows, holding it out, and calling :) Charles!

(VENABLES, thinking the vase is a drink, appears up c., from l.)

VENABLES. Just what I wanted. . . .

COMTESSE. Alas, Charles, it is only a flower-vase! I want you to tell Mrs. Shand, Charles——

(VENABLES moves down slightly into the room. MAGGIE moves anxiously to below the l. end of the settee.)

. . . what you think of her husband's speech.

VENABLES (frowning at the COMTESSE). Eh—ah—Shand will prefer to do that himself; I promised the gardener—— (Wanting to get away.) I must not disappoint him. Excuse me—— (He turns up to go.)

COMTESSE (catching hold of him and drawing him down a step or two). You must tell her, Charles.

MAGGIE (quietly). Please—I should like to know.

VENABLES (reluctantly, coming to l. of MAGGIE). If I must—Shand has been writing it here, and by his own wish he read it to me three days ago. The occasion is to be an important one and—well, there are a dozen young men in the party at present, all capable of filling a certain small ministerial post in a sound dull manner. And as he is one of them, I was anxious he should show in this speech of what he is capable.

MAGGIE. And hasn't he?

VENABLES (uncomfortably). I'm afraid he has!

COMTESSE (moving down to the chair l.c.). What's wrong with the speech, Charles?

VENABLES (mopping his face with his handkerchief). Nothing—and he can still deliver it.

(The COMTESSE sits l.c. MAGGIE catches her eye as the COMTESSE gives her a look and says, "Ah!"

It is a powerful, well-thought-out piece of work, such as only a very able man could produce—but it has no special quality of its own—none of the little touches that used to make an old stager like myself want to pat him on the shoulder. He stumps along vigorously enough, but, if I may say so, with a wooden leg. It's as good as the rest of the dozen could have done—but they start with such inherited advantages, Mrs. Shand, that he had to be better.

MAGGIE. Yes, I can understand that.

VENABLES (to MAGGIE). I'm sorry, for he interested me.

(MAGGIE turns down r. as he continues to the COMTESSE.)

His career has set me wondering whether if I had begun as a railway porter, I might not still be calling out, "By your leave."
(Maggie is thinking out her next move. She turns, and crosses quickly above the settee to R. of Venables, who has again turned to go.)

Maggie (to Venables). Mr. Venables, now that I think of it, surely John wrote to me that you were dissatisfied with his first speech?

(The Comtesse starts, slowly rises and turns facing the others.)

And that he was writing another?

Venables (up c. in the window). I have heard nothing of that. In any case, however, I'm afraid——

(The Comtesse moves up L. of Venables.)

Maggie. You said yourself, that his second-speech thoughts are sometimes such an improvement on the first.

Comtesse (close to Venables, in front of the machine). I remember you saying that, Charles.

Venables (c. of the french window). Yes, that has struck me. (He glances at the Comtesse, then at Maggie.) Well, if he has anything to show me. (Putting his hat on.) In the meantime——

(He turns to move the mowing machine, but the Comtesse is in the way.)

(Jocularly.) By your leave, there.

(The Comtesse steps aside. Venables turns the machine and exits R. at the back, mowing. Maggie crosses down and sits L.C., below the writing-table.)

Comtesse (sharply, crossing down to R. of Maggie). What crafty thing are you planning now, Miss Pin? You know as well as I do, there is no such speech.

(Maggie gives a little appealing moan. Then, doggedly :) Maggie. I don't.

Comtesse. It is a duel, is it, little one? (She crosses to R., below the settee, and rings the bell.)

Maggie (rising and following her down to below the L. end of the settee). What are you ringing for?

(The Comtesse turns to below the R. end of the settee. Maggie pulls off her gloves.)

Comtesse. As the challenged one, Miss Pin, I have the choice of weapons. I am going to send for your husband to ask him if he has written such a speech. After which, I suppose you will ask me to leave you while you and he write it together.

Maggie (moans). No! (She hesitates.) You are wrong—but please don't.
Act IV] WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

COMTESSE. You but make me curious, and my doctor says that I must be told everything. (*Smacking her palms together as when addressing a child.*) Tell me everything or——

(MAGGIE crosses to R. of the table, throws her gloves on it, produces a manuscript from her bag, and offers it to the COMTESSE.)

What precisely is that?

MAGGIE (feebly). John's speech. (*She crosses down to below the table.*)

COMTESSE (pointing at her). You have written it yourself?

MAGGIE (not looking at the COMTESSE). It is typed.

COMTESSE (to C.). You guessed that the speech he wrote unaided would not satisfy, and prepared this to take its place.

MAGGIE (stately, facing front). Not at all. It is the draft of his speech that he left at home. That's all.

COMTESSE. With a few trivial alterations by yourself, I swear. (*A slight pause.*) Can you deny it?

MAGGIE (after hesitating—turning). Comtesse, these insinuations are unworthy of you. (*She takes the manuscript, puts it in the bag L., and moves up L. of the table. Then, haughtily :) May I ask where is my husband?

COMTESSE (amused, crossing to the fireplace). I think Your Haughtiness will find him in the Dutch garden. (*She turns and points off up L.*)

(MAGGIE turns.)

That way.

(MAGGIE is going.)

Oh, I see through you. You are not to show him that—(*she points, indicating the speech in the bag), but you are to get him to re-write his speech, and somehow all your additions will be in it. Think not, creature, that you can deceive one so old in iniquity as Blanche de la Briere.

MAGGIE (up in the window C.). I just scorn you to-day.

(*She exits haughtily up C. and L., disappears to L. The COMTESSE chuckles to herself and looks at the bag. Enter THOMAS L.*)

THOMAS. You rang, my lady?

COMTESSE (standing above the table). Did I—— But why?

Oh, yes—but I don't need you now.

(THOMAS turns to go. The COMTESSE has a sudden idea—looks at the bag again.)

Oh, stop.

(THOMAS checks, closing the door. The COMTESSE picks up the bag, hesitates, looks out of the window—mischievously takes out the speech from the bag and gives it to THOMAS.)
Take this to Mr. Venables, please—

(THOMAS crosses up to C. and checks as she speaks again.)
—and say it is from Mr. Shand.

(THOMAS exits at back, looks about him and then disappears to R. leaving the COMTESSE excited over her audacity. She closes the bag, hears MAGGIE coming, crosses, sits on the R. end of the settee and takes up her work. MAGGIE re-enters at the window, from up L.)

(Without turning). Wasn't he there?

MAGGIE (nervously—looking off L.). I didn't see him, but I heard him. She is with him, they are coming this way.

(MAGGIE puts her hand to her heart.)

COMTESSE. Sybil? (Kindly, bent over her work). Shall I get rid of her?

MAGGIE (firmly). No, I want her to be here, too. Now I shall know. (She crosses to above the chair L.C.)

COMTESSE (curious). Know what?

MAGGIE. As soon as I look into his face I'll know. (She moves down below the chair.)

(SYBIL appears in the garden from up L. She enters to C. MAGGIE turns.)

SYBIL. Mrs. Shand! (She moves down a little L.C.)


SYBIL (turning away R.). I wish you wouldn't compliment me so much. (She takes her hat off and puts it on the settee, and sits.)

(JOHN enters down L.; and closes the door. MAGGIE turns to him, sees his expression, and looks happily at the COMTESSE.)

JOHN. You, Maggie? (Moving to her.) You never wrote that you were coming. (He pats her on the shoulder.)

MAGGIE. No, John, it's a surprise visit. I just ran down to say good-bye.

SYBIL (turning). Good-bye? (Alarmed.)

COMTESSE (rising, to down R.). To whom, Maggie?

SYBIL. Auntie, do leave us, won't you?

COMTESSE. Not I. (Sitting down R.) It is becoming far too interesting.

MAGGIE (to R. of the chair L.C.). I suppose there's no reason she shouldn't be told, as she will know so soon, at any rate?

JOHN. That's so. (He sits above the writing-table.)

MAGGIE. It's so simple. (She sits R. of the writing-table.) You see, John and Lady Sybil have fallen in love with one another,
and they are to go off as soon as the meeting at Leeds has taken place.

**COMTESSE.** Mon Dieu! (She rises and moves up a pace.)

**(John and Sybil are uncomfortable.)**

**MAGGIE (very matter-of-fact).** I think that's putting it correctly, John?

**(Sybil turns her head away towards R.)**

**JOHN.** In so far as you know. But I'm not to attend the meeting at Leeds. My speech doesn't find favour. There's something wrong with it.

**COMTESSE.** I never expected to hear you say that, Mr. Shand.

**JOHN (who is rather sympathetic here).** I never expected it myself. I meant to make it the speech of my career but, somehow, my hand has lost its cunning.

**MAGGIE (distressed for him).** Oh!

**COMTESSE.** And you don't know how?

**JOHN.** It's inexplicable. My brain was never clearer.

**COMTESSE.** You might have helped him, Sybil.

**SYBIL (sulkily).** I did.

**COMTESSE (innocently anxious).** But I thought she was such an inspiration to you, Mr. Shand.

**JOHN.** She slaved at it with me.

**COMTESSE.** Strange. (She chuckles. To Maaaie.) So now there is nothing to detain you. (Turning to the bell R.) Shall I send for a cab?

**(Sybil checks her with a gesture. The Comtesse waves her aside.)**

**SYBIL.** Auntie, do leave us.

**COMTESSE.** I can understand your impatience to be gone, Mr. Shand.

**(The Comtesse again sits down R.)**

**JOHN.** I promised Maggie to wait till after the twenty-fourth... and I'm a man of my word.

**MAGGIE (rising and crossing R. a little above her chair).** But I give you back your word, John. You can go now.

**SYBIL.** I—I—but—he must make satisfactory arrangements about you first. I insist on that.

**MAGGIE (turning to Sybil).** Thank you, Lady Sybil, but I have made all my arrangements.

**JOHN.** Maggie, that was my part. (He rises, moving down below the table.)

**MAGGIE.** You see, my brothers feel they can't be away from their business any longer, and so, if it would be convenient to you, John, I could travel north with them by the night train on Wednesday.
Sybil (slowly—rising). I—I— (In despair.) The way you put things. (She moves to below the r. end of the settee.)

John. We said a month. (He crosses r. to l. of Sybil.)

Maggie. My things are all packed. (Moving a little down c.) I think you’ll find the house in good order, Lady Sybil. I have had the vacuum cleaners in. I’ll give you the keys of the linen and the silver plate; I have them in that bag. The carpet on the upper landing is a good deal frayed—and the dining-room ceiling would be the better for a new lick of paint. But——

Sybil (to John). Can’t you stop her?

John. She’s meaning well. (A pace towards her.) Maggie, I know it’s natural to you to value those things, because your outlook on life is bounded by them, but all this jars on me.

Maggie. Does it?

John. Why should you be so ready to go?

Maggie. I promised not to stand in your way.

John (stoutly). You needn’t be in such a hurry. There are four days to run yet.

(The Comtesse, who has been enjoying herself restrainedly, suddenly laughs here. John is offended. All turn and look at the Comtesse.)

It’s just a joke to the Comtesse. (He turns a little up r.c.)

Comtesse. It seems to be no joke to you, Mr. Shand. Sybil, my pet, are you to let him off?

Sybil. Let him off! (Haughtily, startled, though almost crying.) If he wishes it. Do you?

John (about to say “Yes”—manfully). I want it to go on.

(Sybil flashes a look at Maggie—John gives Maggie a look.)

It’s the one wish of my heart. (Turning to Sybil.) If you come with me, Sybil, I’ll do all in a man’s power to make you never regret it.

(Sybil looks triumphantly at Maggie and the Comtesse.)

Maggie. And I can make my arrangements for Wednesday?

(About to turn l.)

Sybil (desperately—with a checking gesture). No, you can’t. Auntie, I’m not going on with this—— (To John.) I’m very sorry for you, John, but I see now—I—couldn’t face it. (She sits and buries her face in the cushions r.)

(Maggie moves below the chair r. of the table.)

Comtesse (noticing John’s big sigh of relief). So that is all right, Mr. Shand.

Maggie (turning to face John over the chair). Don’t you love her any more, John? (She starts to say something else.)

(John does not reply.)
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(Leaning over the L. arm of the chair.) Be practical.

SYBIL (quickly, sitting up). At any rate, I have tired of him. Oh, best to tell the horrid truth—I am ashamed of myself. (She buries her face in her hands.) I have been crying my eyes out over it—I thought I was such a different kind of woman—but I am weary of him. I think him—Oh, so dull.

JOHN (at c., turning slowly to face SYBIL). You are sure that is how you have come to think of me?

SYBIL. I’m sorry, but yes—yes—yes!

JOHN (with immense relief). My God, it’s more than I deserve.

COMTESSE (rising). Congratulations to you both. (She crosses to SYBIL.)

SYBIL. Oh, Auntie. (She covers her face.)

COMTESSE (at the R. end of the settee). Oh, Sybil!

MAGGIE (moving down to the lower end of the writing table). You haven’t read my letter yet, John, have you?

JOHN. No. (He moves to above the chair R. of the table.)

COMTESSE (crossing above the L. end of the settee). May I know to what darling letter you refer?

MAGGIE. It isn’t for you to see. It’s a letter I wrote to him before he left London. I gave it to him closed, not to be opened until his time here was ended.

(JOHN, moving down a pace, takes an unopened letter from his wallet.)

SYBIL. I remember.

JOHN. Am I to read it now?

MAGGIE (putting a hand on his to stop him opening it). Not before them.

COMTESSE (anxiously leaning forward). Every word you say simply makes me more curious. And Sybil also. (She moves round L. of the small table to up R.C.)

SYBIL. Not at all. (She rises, crosses and stands in front of the fireplace.)

(JOHN sits c. and begins to open the envelope.)

MAGGIE (distressed for him). Don’t read it, John—tear it up. (About to take it.)

(JOHN holds it in his right hand away from her. MAGGIE moves round below the table to L. of it.)

JOHN. You make me curious too. (About to read, then hesitates.) And yet I don’t see what can be in it. (He looks at MAGGIE, then at the letter and again at MAGGIE.)

COMTESSE (crossing down R. of JOHN). But you feel a little nervous. Give me the dagger! (She takes the letter.)

MAGGIE (quickly). No, she mustn’t, John. It will hurt you.
JOHN (rather bravely). I daresay it's about time I was being hurt. You can read it out, Comtesse.

COMTESSE (c.). Listen—"Dearest John, it is at my request that the Comtesse is having Lady Sybil at the cottage at the same time as yourself . . ."

JOHN (astounded—sitting back). What? (He looks at Maggie.) COMTESSE (moving up to below the L. end of the settee). Yes, she forced me to invite you together.

SYBIL. She did?

JOHN. But why?

MAGGIE. I promised you not to behave as other wives would do.

JOHN. Eh? But—but—it's not understandable.

COMTESSE (sitting on the settee). I find it so understandable. (Reading.) "You may ask why I do this, John, and my reason is: I think that after a fortnight of Lady Sybil every day and all day——" (a glance at John) "—you will become sick to death of her."

"I am also giving her the chance to help you, and inspire you with your work, so that you may both learn what her help and her inspiration amount to. Of course, if your love is the great strong passion you think it, then this fortnight will but make you love her more than ever, and then I can only say good-bye. But if as I suspect, it is only the calf love of a boy——"'

JOHN (sitting upright). The what?

COMTESSE (repeating innocently). "—the calf love of a boy!! (Reading :) —who does not understand what true love is, then in a month, dear John, you will have had enough of her. Your affectionate wife, Maggie." (She folds up the letter.)

(The mystified Sybil rises, tries to speak, but cannot. She rushes up C. towards the garden. John, who has risen, tries to check her. She pushes him aside and exits to the garden, disappearing to L. John shows some consternation. Maggie is distressed for him, but the Comtesse is amused.)

(Rising, putting letter on the table L. of the settee). And now I think I must go and get Sybil the eau-de-Cologne. (She moves up C.)

JOHN (crushed—to R. of the chair L.C.). It's almost enough to make a man lose faith in himself.

COMTESSE (satirical). Oh, don't say that, Mr. Shand.

(Maggie moves round below the table to below the chair L.C.)

MAGGIE (defending him). You mustn't hurt him. If you haven't loved deep and true, that's just because you have never met a woman yet, John, capable of inspiring it.
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COMTESSE (curiously, moving down to JOHN). Have you not, Mr. Shand? (Putting her hand on his shoulder, looking at him.) Not even now?

JOHN (looking at MAGGIE). I see what you mean, but Maggie wouldn't think better of me for any false pretences. She knows my feelings for her now are neither more nor less than what they have always been.

MAGGIE. I think no one could be fond of me that can't laugh a little at me.

JOHN. How could that help?

COMTESSE (exasperated). I give you up! (She turns up c.) MAGGIE. I admire his honesty.

COMTESSE. Oh, I give you up also. (Turning at the French window to MAGGIE.) Arcades ambo! Scotchies both!

(She exits up c. and to R. MAGGIE turns to face L. JOHN crosses to the little table up R.C.)

JOHN (taking up the letter and looking round at MAGGIE wonderingly). But that letter—it's not like you. (He sits on the settee.) By gosh, Maggie, you're no fool.

MAGGIE (turns quickly, really gratified by the compliment). John!

JOHN. But how could I have made such a mistake, eh? It's not like a strong man. (Suddenly startled.)

(MAGGIE moves to C.)

MAGGIE. What is it?

JOHN. Am I a strong man?

MAGGIE (eagerly). You! Of course you are. And self-made. (Taking a pace to R.C.). Has anybody ever helped you in the smallest way?

JOHN (reassured). No, nobody. (Sitting back.)

MAGGIE (another pace towards R.C.). Not even Lady Sybil?

JOHN. I'm beginning to doubt it. (Doubtfully.) It's very curious, though, that the speech should be disappointing.

MAGGIE. It's just that Mr. Venables hasn't the brains to see how good it is.

JOHN. That must be it. (After a pause, he adds, honestly:) No—Maggie, it's not. Somehow, I seem to have lost my neat way of saying things.

MAGGIE (sitting on the L. arm of the settee, above him). It will come back to you.

JOHN. If you knew how I've tried.

MAGGIE (cautiously). Maybe if you were to try again—and I'll just come and sit beside you—and knit, I think the click of the needles sometimes puts you in the mood.

JOHN. Hardly that. And yet many a Shandism have I knocked off while you were sitting beside me, knitting. I suppose it was the quietness.
MAGGIE. Very likely.

JOHN (looking round at her—suddenly). Maggie.

MAGGIE (standing—a little nervous). What? What is it, John?

JOHN. What if it was you that put them into my head?

MAGGIE (a pace down). Me?

JOHN. Without your knowing it, I mean.

MAGGIE (turning to him). But how?

JOHN. We used to talk bits over—and it may be that you dropped the seed—so to speak.

MAGGIE. John! (Moving slowly to c., as she speaks.) Could it be this—that I sometimes had the idea in a rough womanish sort of way and then—(turning to face him) you polished it up till it came out a Shandism?

JOHN (elated—slapping his knee and rising). I believe you've hit it! God, it nearly makes me laugh, Maggie. To think that you may have been helping me all the time—and neither of us knew it!

(The Comtesse appears in the garden from r.)

MAGGIE. Oh, if only I could make you laugh, John.

(The Comtesse enters at the windows, concealing her amusement.)

COMTESSE (up c.). Mr. Venables wishes to see you, Mr. Shand. He is coming now.

JOHN (grumpily). Oh!

COMTESSE (crosses down c., level with the table). I think it is about the second speech.

JOHN (startled). What second speech?

COMTESSE. I think it is about your speech.

JOHN. He has said all he need say on that subject—and more.

COMTESSE (crosses down c., level with the table). I think it is about the second speech.

(MAGGIE is startled.)

JOHN. What second speech?

(MAGGIE turns, looks at the Comtesse, rushes to the bag and opens it. JOHN moves down r.c. and looks at them.)

MAGGIE (horrified). Comtesse! You have given it to him! COMTESSE. Yes. (Impudently, crossing over r.) Wasn't I meant to?

MAGGIE (below the chair r. of the table. Moaning). Oh!

JOHN (looking from one to the other). What is it? What second speech?

MAGGIE (to Comtesse). Cruel, cruel. (Crossing to c.) You had left the first draft of your speech at home and I brought it here—with a few little things I've added, myself.

JOHN. What's that? (He moves a pace towards her.)
Maggie (backing to the chair r. of the writing-table). Just trifles—things I was to suggest to you—while I was knitting—and then, if you liked any of them you could have polished them—and turned them into something good. John, John—and now she has shown it to Mr. Venables.

John (looking at the Comtesse). As my work.

(The Comtesse nods mischievously.)

Maggie (putting her hand on the back of the chair). It is your work—nine-tenths of it.

John (sternly—crossing l.c. to her and putting his hand on hers). You presumed, Maggie Shand.

(Venables appears in the garden from up r.)

Very well, now, we'll see to what extent you help me.

(Maggie backs a little down l.c., as Venables crosses down to the french windows.)

Venables (entering, with the speech in his hand). My dear fellow!

(John turns, below the chair l.c.)

My dear Shand—I congratulate you! Your hand!

(They shake hands.)

John. The speech?

Venables. You have improved it out of knowledge. It's the same speech, but those new touches make all the difference.

(John sits in the chair l.c., resting his head on his hands.)

Comtesse (moving in a little). Charles!

(She points to John, who is overcome with an emotion which Venables does not understand.)

Mrs. Shand, be proud of him!

Maggie. I am. (Running to John below and on his l.) I am, John.

(John doesn't look up.)

Comtesse. You always said that his second thoughts were best, Charles!

Venables (c.). Didn't I? Didn't I? Those delicious little touches! (To John.) How good that is, Shand, about the flowing tide. (Turning the speech over.)

Comtesse. The flowing tide?

Venables. In the first speech it was something like this—"Gentlemen, the opposition are calling to you to vote for them and the flowing tide, but I solemnly warn you to beware lest the
flowing tide does not engulf you.” (Wagging a finger.) The second way is much better.

Comtesse. What is the second way, Mr. Shand?

(John makes no reply, but raises his head to listen.)

Venable (reading). This is how he puts it now. “Gentlemen, the opposition are calling for you to vote for them and the flowing tide, but I ask you cheerfully to vote for us and damn the flowing tide.”

(Venables and the Comtesse laugh and enjoy the joke. Maggie bows her head miserably.)

Comtesse. It is better, Mr. Shand.

Maggie. I don’t think so.

Venable. Yes, yes, it’s so virile. Only a strong man could have written that. (He chuckles.) Excuse me, I’m off to read the whole thing again . . . but I couldn’t resist rushing here to shake your hand. (He pats John on the back and sees that he is bowed. After looking at the Comtesse.) I think this has rather bowled you over, Shand.

(John, without looking up, nods.)

Well, well, good news doesn’t kill. (He turns up c.)

(The Comtesse coughs.)

Maggie (crosses up L. of Venable). Surely, the important thing about the speech is its strength and knowledge and eloquence—the things that were in the first speech as well as in the second?

Venable (turning to her). That, of course, is largely true. The wit wouldn’t be enough without them, just as they were not enough without the wit. It’s the combination that’s irresistible.

(John has raised his head to listen to this.)

Shand, you are our man—remember that—it’s emphatically the best thing you have ever done. How this will go down at Leeds.

(Exit Venable into the garden and off R.)

Maggie (eagerly, moving to above John). You heard what he said, John? It’s the combination!

(John remains bowed. The Comtesse takes a pace c., wants to remain, but yields to Maggie’s wishes and exits L. John and Maggie are left to what is really a rather tragic situation. He remains seated, bowed, agitated. Her arms flutter over him and she utters little cries of woe.)

Is it so terrible to you, John, to find that my love for you had made me able to help you in the little things?
(John rises—a rather painful figure. At first he is like one who needs air and turns towards B.C.)

John. The little things.

Maggie. John!

John (turning at B.C.) It's strange to me to hear you call me by my name. It's as if I looked on you for the first time.

Maggie (above and r. of the chair l.c.). Look at me, John, for the first time. (Bravely facing him.) What do you see?

John. I see a woman that has brought her husband low.

Maggie. Only that?

John. I see—— (Crossing back to the chair l.c.). I see the tragedy of a man that has found himself out. (He sits with his back to her. Hoarsely :) Maggie, I can't live with you again. (He shudders.)

Maggie. Why did you shiver, John? (Wistfully.)

John. It was at myself for saying I couldn't live with you again——

(Maggie moves down a little, r. of the chair.)

—when I should have been wondering how, all the time, you have lived with me! (Looking wonderingly at her.) And I suppose you have forgiven me all the time.

(Maggie is under such emotion that she can only nod in reply.)

And forgive me still.

(Maggie nods again—he is bowed with remorse, she goes close to his chair lovingly.)

Dear God.

Maggie. Dear John, am I to go—or are you to keep me on? (Kneeling r. of him.) I'm willing to stay, because I'm useful to you—if it can't be a better reason.

John. Maggie, you needn't—— (He draws her to him without looking at her.)

Maggie. It's nothing unusual I have done, John. Every man who is high up loves to think that he has done it all himself, and the wife smiles, and lets it go at that. It's our only joke. Every woman knows that.

(A pause. John's hand falls off her.)

What are you thinking about, John?

John. I was thinking—what a charm there is about you.

Maggie (glowing, sitting back on her heels). Me! Charm! Me! Oh, John, if only you could laugh at me!

John. I can't laugh, Maggie.

(But as he stares at her a strange disorder appears in his face. Maggie feels it must be now or never.)
MAGGIE (leaning forward, her hands on his knees). Laugh, John, laugh. Watch me. See how easy it is! Laugh, man, at your funny little wife. . . .

(Encouraged by her example, JOHN gradually gives way to laughter. She claps her hands encouragingly. The laughter grows in volume. He is saved.)

Curtain.
Carpet on the stage.
Strip in the lobby.
Heavy curtains over the windows.
Rug at the hearth.
Pictures on the walls. (Either side of the windows and over the mantel. Scottish scenes and/or "Kirk" interiors.)
Round table at c.
On it.—Draughts board and pieces.
Folded newspaper.
Tobacco jar for ALICK.
At the Hearth.—Fire-irons.
Coal box and shovel.
4 chairs at the table. 1 ditto up R.C. 1 ditto down R.
A shabby plush-covered armchair above the fire, with antimacassar.
Large handsome plush-covered armchair down R.C. with cushion and antimacassar.
Horsehair sofa at R. wall, with cushion and antimacassar.
1 small ottoman (small and chintz covered, with lid) down L.
Large bookcase at R., behind the sofa. (With locked glass doors.)
In it.—Complete stock of books.
Dust cover.
1 sideboard, up L.
On it.—Whisky decanter, fruit bowl, tray.
In the cupboard of same.—6 whisky glasses.
Sugar-bowl and tongs.
4 teaspoons.
In the Lobby.—Hat stand.
Pendulum clock.
(Chime effect and metronome for "ticking.")
Gas chandelier above the table.
Stage cloth on the stage for the main shop.
Ditto in the outer shop and the passage.

On the Walls.—Barber's advertisements.
  Election posters. (Only "JOHN SHAND, M.A." to be readable.)
  Card with "Ladies' Hairdressing Dept." (at the foot of the stairs).
Spiral staircase leading upstairs (up R.C.)
Plain wood table and 2 chairs (R.C.).
2 barber's basins with chairs at R. wall.
1 ditto at L. wall.

On it.—Throat spray for JOHN.
Weighing-machine with chair (or armchair) at L.C.
Blinds at windows of outer shop.

**PERSONAL PROPERTIES**

**JAMES.**—Three visiting-cards.

**COMTESSE.**—Lorgnette.

**MAGGIE.**—Legal document on blue paper.
Carpet on the stage in the study.
Ditto in the dining-room above.
Rug at hearth.

On the Mantel.—Large marble clock.
   Several ornaments.
   Half-knitted sock, wool and needles (Maggie).

On the Walls.—A few good landscape paintings.

Settee (at l.c.).
   On it.—Cushion, antimacassar, a novel.
Armchair above the fire.
Smaller ditto below the fire.
Mahogany chair with arms down R.C.
Table desk (and chair) up R.C., near the doors.
   On it.—Typewriter and telephone of the period.
In drawer of same.—Copy of John's speech (about 25 pages),
Bookcase R. (filled with handsome books).
Oil-lamp floor-standard (r. of the table desk).
Table (against back wall up l.). Small chair at the same.

In the Dining-room.—Large dining-table with several chairs.
   Paper and ink at each place.
   Pamphlets, books, etc., spread.

Personal Properties

Scene 1

Grace.—Visiting-card on a salver (off r.).
Venable.—Hat, stick, gloves. Gold pince-nez on a ribbon.
Comtesse.—Lorgnette.

Scene 2

John.—Ruby pendant on a gold chain, in a case.
David
James
Alick
Alick.—Brown-paper parcel, containing a shawl.
Carpet on the stage.
Rug at the hearth.
Green strip in the garden, to represent lawn.
Chintz curtains at the French windows.
Below fireplace, an armchair.
Above fireplace, a china cabinet.
Settee at R.C.
  Above it.—A bookcase.
  On it.—Cushions.
  Below it.—Low coffee stool.
  L. of and above it.—Small round table with a book and a small empty vase.
Writing-table up L.C.
  On it.—Inkstand, blotter, pens, small dispatch box, one or two books of reference.
A second bookcase and a corner cupboard up L.
Desk chair above the desk.
Wooden chair with arms below the desk.
On the Walls.—A few etchings and/or good water-colours.
On the Mantel.—Small clock. Some dainty ornaments.

(Note.—Everything in this setting must be characteristic of a cultured Frenchwoman. There must be great taste and daintiness, and a contrast with the settings of Act III, which, though handsome, lacks these qualities.)

Personal Properties

Venables.—Mowing-machine (off up R.).
Maggie.—Small dressing-case, containing the new speech.
John.—Unopened letter in his wallet.
LIGHTING PLOT

ACT I

To Open.—Floats: amber ½, pink ½. Fire spot on. Amber length in lobby.
Nos. 1 and 2 Battens: amber ½, pink ½.
Batten spot No. 52 gold on c. area (table).
Ditto, medium amber, on hearth and armchair.
Cue 1.—As DAVID turns out the light: Quick fade-out of all lighting except fire spot.
Cue 2.—As JAMES turns out the lobby light: Take out amber length.
Cue 3.—As JOHN lights the gas: Quick fade-in of stage lighting as at opening.
Cue 4.—When MAGGIE exits for the kettle and closes the door: Bring in amber length in lobby.
Cue 5.—When DAVID turns out the gas: Quick fade-out as for Cue 1.
Cue 6.—When DAVID turns out the lobby light: Take out amber length.

ACT II

To Open.—Floats, amber ½, pink ½, blue ½.
Nos. 1 and 2 Battens, amber FULL, pink ½, blue ½.
Amber lengths in outer shop and passage.
Battens over the backcloth, blue FULL.
Amber lengths in club-room entrance (up L).
Flood backcloth, No. 18 blue frost.
Fire spot on.
No cues.

ACT III

(Both scenes the same.)

To Open.—Floats, amber ½, white ½.
All Battens: amber FULL, white ½.
Amber lengths on all interior backings.
No cues.

ACT IV

To Open.—Floats, amber ½, white ½.
Nos. 1 and 2 Battens: amber FULL, white ½.
Nos. 3 and 4 Battens (over the garden): amber, white and blue FULL.
Flood backcloth No. 3, amber and white (frost).
Amber lengths on interior backings.
Fire spot out.
No cues.
WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

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