THE BENDING OF THE BOUGH
By George Moore
Edited by Robert Becker

George Moore (1852-1933) was a creative Irish writer of modernist fiction, memoir, essay, drama and poetry. He was a contributor to several "movements" and is fondly remembered as a purist who made art for art's sake.

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Preface

For some time the necessity of explaining the intentions of the Irish Literary Theatre has been pressing upon us. So I take advantage of the publication of my play, *The Bending of the Bough*, to explain why Mr. Martyn, Mr. Yeats, and myself prefer to have our plays produced in Dublin rather than in London. It must seem singular to many that we should choose to produce plays in Dublin, where there are few people and very little money, rather than in London, where the audience is unlimited and the purse too, which is always forthcoming when amusements are for sale. Well, it is because we believe London to be too large, too old, and too wealthy to permit of any new artistic movement, and this belief rests upon knowledge of the art history of the world, and some experience of London theatrical conditions. And the essence of our experience of London theatrical conditions is our appreciation of the importance of the fact that whereas Ibsen and Maeterlinck, the great dramatic poets of modern time, have failed completely on the London stage, the ordinary dramatic writer, by the aid of scenery, dresses, and a little dialogue, provides an entertainment which pleases every one. The consistent failure — a failure extending now over ten years — of him whom we regard as the greatest dramatic writer since Shakespeare and of all writers whose work rises above the commonplace, signifies to us that London has ceased to be a place where the work of a poet is appreciated on the stage. We have therefore turned our backs upon London as men turn their backs on a place which has ceased to interest them. But we did not decide on our homeward journey without having considered the reformation of London. After some doubts, some hesitation, it suddenly came upon us that it was impossible. It was suddenly borne in upon us that England had produced her dramatic literature (since Shakespeare only two plays have outlived a generation); England seems to us to have reached the age of manhood, an age at which a nation ceases to produce art, for art belongs to the youth of a nation as empire belongs to its manhood, if it attains to manhood.

In the middle of the century we enjoyed a pleasant St. Martin summer, but though leaves retain their summer green a long while, we read in the August leaf the sered September leaf, and in the September leaf the October leaf, listless and red and yellow. And now in artistic England the pallor of centuries shines in the inactive autumn air. The thrush is silent, the nightingale has flown, and the robin sits on the coral hedge piping his little roundelay. Nothing can revive the season; it will never come again; art knows no sweet returning. Empire, like autumn, is splendid, but silent woods are sad, and in our eagerness for the song of the thrush and the blackbird we fain would detect an accent of their music in the scream of the jay and the cry of the swallow. It were better to delight a moment in the little candour of the robin, and to admire the coral hedge as the gift of the irreparable year. England can say with pride: “England has produced a full measure of music, poetry, painting, and drama; she has completed her spiritual and is now fashioning her material destiny; nations like individuals have two destinies, and who shall deny that the building of an empire is not as important as the singing of a song?

England has sung enough; no songs are like her songs, and now she is engaged on the work of her middle age."

But for some reason, so deep in the heart that we cannot define it, the glory of empire does not compensate for the loss of the song and the bust; without them the crown is incomplete and its glory the pallor of ashes.

We become aware of this as we cross Trafalgar Square, whence can be seen on either side the towers of Westminster and the domes of the National Gallery. Looking from one to the other it seems to us strange that no one in a hundred years will be concerned to know how any one of the men who sit deliberating the fate of a continent lived and died: whether he lived married or single, whether his life was a happy or a sorry one, whether he died in exile or in Carlton House Terrace, and that we should be so deeply concerned to know something of the lives of men who drew a few heads, brushed in a few skies and trees, or sang a few songs? Why should we be so eager to know why Shelley left his first wife, why Sir Joshua never married, and be so little curious about the lives of the politicians who sat at Westminster in the supreme moments of the eighteenth century? I can think of no other reason except that the traffic of ministers is with this world, whereas dreams and visions and aspirations come from beyond the world. The things of this world are forgotten; and we remember a nation for its art rather than for its colonies. The Hollanders founded like ourselves an empire, but the names of their colonies, though known to us, are not often upon our lips, and never in our hearts. But Rembrandt is a name to ponder on, its very sound lifts us out of the trance of our daily life; and the names Hals, Ruysdael and Van der Meer are always with us, nearer and more intimate than the names of our brothers or sisters or friends.

Art is produced in the youth of a nation, when the nation is small, when national enthusiasm is awakening, and visions draw into a national focus, and the intellect of every one is akin. With the Assyrian, the Chinese, the Persian, the Roman, and the British empires contrast Egypt, Greece, the Italian States, Venice, Holland, and the English Island. Greece and Holland present perfect and typical examples of the birth of art in nations. It was in 450 B.C. that the Greeks drove the Persians out of Greece, and then an art began before which every art since has bowed reverently, and learned something; and at the end of the sixteenth century the Hollanders raised the sea-banks and rescued their country from the Spaniards, and immediately art flowered like the springtime, suddenly and everywhere; and in a country no larger than Greece thirty great painters were born within the little span of some thirty or forty years; and since then there has been no further painting; in Holland, and in the countries of Titian and Velasquez no one is now found who can draw a nose with even tolerable decorum.

Then whither in her flight from England will art betake herself? Eastward there are the Russian and the German empires and behind them the Chinese. All Europe has been visited and art

never returns to where she has once been; even Italy cannot be cited in disproof of this, for in Italy in Roman times art was a Greek importation, and all the Roman statues were the work of Greek artists. So whither will art go? In what country will art suddenly appear! In the Soudan, or in the Transvaal? Or will art rest for a space in this forlorn Atlantic island, re-knitting herself to the tradition which existed before England was, in gold ornaments, and scroll work, and in many tales of chivalry? Will there be a re-blossoming of the ancient language, or shall we save some accent of Shelley's tongue which has declined elsewhere into neologisms and archaisms. That art has left England there can be no doubt. Art has left France and Germany and Russia; it is still in Norway, and when it leaves Norway it must find another small nation, one which has not yet achieved its destiny — a nation such as Greece was before Marathon, such as England was before the Armada and again before Trafalgar. In the Western Hemisphere Ireland is the only place which seems to fulfil these conditions, but Ireland maybe is still too poor to nourish an art, for although art shuns wealth, art needs some ease of life. But Ireland is just beginning to find her way into easy subsistence; for the first time for centuries starvation and oppression seem fading from her face. The language is reviving, serious poetry is beginning again, and plays, written without desire of gain, for love of art, are offered to the Irish rather than to the English public.

It is impossible to write plays in England except for money, and all that is done for money is mediocre. It was with the Renaissance that money came into art. The Greeks did not build the Parthenon for money, nor did the French build Chartres Cathedral for money; the recompense in either case was the joy of art, and as money entered into art the work of the artist slipped out of his control into that of the mob. It took four centuries to accomplish this change; we had to wait four hundred years for a world fashioned according to the image and likeness of the mob, and now in all save the individual arts, such as lyric poetry and easel pictures, the face of the mob is plainly stamped. The decorative arts, architecture, and mural painting, inlaid furniture, painted porcelain, and metal work have so declined that no one buys them as they are made now; the most ordinary people have come to understand that they must buy eighteenth century furniture and old silver and china, and that a thousand pounds will not buy a design for a clock that is not an old one, or a copy of an old one, nor a design for a chair, or a sofa, or a pair of candlesticks. The mob has become rich; and it imposes its tastes; and those who are not of the mob retire more and more into the past. As life becomes numerous and rich, it becomes garish and vulgar. But though the modern handicrafts appeal to ten times as large a custom as did the beautiful work of the eighteenth century, still their custom is relatively small compared to that from which the dramatic writer suffers. So it is to dramatic writing we must look to discover the depths to which an art can sink when it is written and produced at the mutual dictation of the gallery boy, who for a shilling demands oblivion of his day's work, and the stockbroker, who for 10s. 6d. demands such amusement as will enable him to safely digest his dinner. All who write for the English stage must write practically at the dictation of these two. The same audience goes everywhere, and the same fare is consequently served everywhere at the same prices.

And to liberate the theatre from the thraldom of money is the truly great adventure which awaits the rich man. But the rich man does not choose a theatre for his charity — a hospital, a college, or a picture gallery is chosen in preference. The wisdom of leaving money to a hospital may not be questioned, but it may be asked if a fine performance of Shakespeare or Ibsen or Maeterlinck does not rouse the listener out of the lethargy of real life as effectively as a course of lectures on Shakespeare or Sophocles or Ibsen or Maeterlinck in which some learned professor expounds superficial opinions regarding these writers. Is it sure that the gift of pictures and the gift of a gallery stimulate intellectual enterprise as much as the gift of a theatre? Is not painting the most occult of all the arts? Are there not a hundred men who can distinguish between good literature for one who can distinguish between the National Gallery and the Royal Academy? Does not the ordinary man prefer a waxwork show or the work of the scenepainter, with limelight and dresses, to either? It has been said that villagers would prefer a circus to a Parish Council. This may be true, but how much more true it is that 90 per cent. of those who visit the Louvre or the National Gallery would find more amusement in the old Doré Gallery. Indeed, the old Doré Gallery not only pleased the public more than any other, but it provided the public with more intellectual stimulus than any other. The public is genuinely moved by Doré, and hardly at all by Titian; none except those who have given a large part of their lives to the study of painting can be moved by Holbein or Titian. We have only to look into our hearts to learn how true this is. Titian and Holbein convey little meaning to the youthful mind; Doré does; and my stages of comprehension were many before I understood why Ingres is a greater painter than Cabanel. But the aesthetic sense of the working man does not develop; he likes the same false, crude emotion at forty as he did at twenty. Nor are “women, ecclesiastics, and persons of quality” more erudite in art; and it is open to doubt if there are very many dukes in England who could tell a Titian from a Veronese. There are at the present moment two pictures attributed to Van Eyck on view in the New Gallery. They are not genuine pictures, but how many years does it take to see that they are not genuine, and he who cannot see at a glance that they are not Van Eyck’s has not advanced beyond Gustave Doré. Yet we, the most practical nation in the world, spend large sums of money upon an art about which 90 per cent. do not know the A B C.

The Luxembourg Museum is a flagrant example of how money is wasted upon the art of painting. This collection is chiefly composed of pictures which attracted attention at the Annual Exhibitions of painting in the Champs Elysées. Every year the State buys the picture which represents best the artistic interest of the moment, the picture which represents what is known in the studios as "the movement.” But works of genius are never in the movement, and we become aware of this if we look at Bastien Lepage’s picture of *The Haymakers*, a complete and excellent example of a picture typifying a movement. We see at once that it is a capable piece of work, as we should see, if we understood the art of embalming, that certain mummies are capably embalmed while others are not; the picture is dry, and faded, and tedious to look at as a mummy, and like a mummy has only an historical value. It tells us that in such a year the

artistic question that occupied men's minds was *Ie plein air*, and it demonstrates to perfection that *le plein air* was a will-o'-the-wisp. Then if we turn to the pictures which were bought because they appealed to the taste of the public the spectacle is still more forlorn. We pass along wondering. Seeing them is like reading through the popular songs of twenty or thirty years ago — songs which delighted our fathers, but do not delight us. The merit of the songs of yester year are not less than the merits of this year's songs, but they have not been so lately printed, that is really all that can be said; and on the point of novelty the public never errs. Never is it in doubt which is the old and which is the new, and never does it hesitate. And for a reason which never has been explained, and which I fear never will be explained, the last picture painted, the last book published, and the last play produced, exercise, quite apart from any artistic value or any discernible charm, a fascination for the public, the mysterious fascination of novelty; and upon us too, only we do not yield ourselves to the charm of mere novelty so easily as the public. The public has no standard, it merely seeks amusement; and if this be granted, the question arises if an art should be entirely abandoned to the licentious (I use the word in its grammatical sense) taste of the public. Between the painter and the public there is the private patron; three or four picture-buyers kept the pre-Raphaelite movement alive, but between the dramatists and the public there is no one.

The majority decides what art shall live, but this majority is composed of the minorities of successive generations. So is it really open to doubt that Sir Henry Tate and Mr. Chantry would have conferred a lesser obligation upon this country if they had given the interest of their money, £12,000 a year, to a theatre, on conditions that it should produce Shakespeare (with a minimum of scenery and dresses), Ibsen, and Maeterlinck, and all acting plays of literary merit which did not seem to appeal to the crude taste of the passing moment? If Sir Richard Wallace had considered the impulse that an endowed theatre would give to London intellectual life, he might have decided to put up his collection of pictures and make such disposal of the three or four or five hundred thousand pounds which it would have fetched in the auction-room. London would thereby be poorer by many beautiful pictures, but London intellectual life would not have suffered — the National Gallery will be always a sufficient source of knowledge for those engaged in the study of the art of painting. Then, again, the desire of the giver would be better accomplished by the gift of a theatre than by the gift of a picture gallery. A theatre endowed with twelve thousand pounds a year, under the conditions indicated, would confer upon the giver a constant immortality; his name would be held for ever blessed by lovers of dramatic literature, for he would be the eternal life of the pure, impassioned dramatic aspiration of the nation. It is at once a joy and a sadness to think of the generations of young men who, if we had an endowed theatre, would walk into the night, exalted after a performance of some marvellous masterpiece, delighting in the memory of him who had given them the greatest of earthly joys — the joy of art.

The mistake began long ago, two hundred and fifty years ago, when the Puritan tried to suppress the theatre; that could not be done, for the theatre is inherent in man; it would have been better if the Puritan had applied himself to the redemption of the theatre, for in abandoning it to the taste of the licentious mob he aggravated the evil and now the Puritan joins hands with the artist in condemning the theatre. These two have always been represented as hostile forces, whereas when we look below the surface we find them to be in agreement, only expressing themselves differently. Their criticism of the theatre rests on the same ground — they both wish art to be serious, and the arguments for and against the theatre are held by the artist and the Puritan; the public merely seeks to be amused. The arguments by which the Puritan defends his hatred of the theatre are often weak, they are sometimes absurd, but he knows, as the artist knows, that the manager can only save himself from bankruptcy by offering to the public the amusement of scenery and dresses. Scenery is painting with the intellectual side of painting left out, just as modern dramatic writing is writing with the intellectual side, commonly called literature, left out; and modern acting is merely the personality of the actor and actress with the intellectual side of acting, the impersonation of character, left out. And as the theatre has identified itself with the life of the senses rather than that of the intellect, it has become popular, for the crowd desires the life of the senses: the senses are the life of the crowd, and the accusations of immorality that we have heard raised against Ibsen, against all who have sought the life of the intellect on the stage, are merely the voice of the crowd crying that its prescriptive right to the life of the senses in the theatre shall not be infringed upon. It is not the Puritan who cries out that *Ghosts* shall be forbidden, but the average man. It is the Puritan and the artist who cry out together against the sensualism of the variety entertainment, and it is the supporter of the variety entertainment who bans Sophocles' noble poem. But the Puritans have had this play performed in their churches in America. The parable of the fire stolen from heaven is the eternal symbol of the persecution of the artist by the world. Immorality is never persecuted — the world cannot persecute itself; nothing is persecuted in this world except the intelligence.

Only sport has escaped the thraldom of money. In art the word "amateur" has been turned from its beautiful original significance, and is used as a term of reproach, being applied to those who do not make their living by the practice of their art. Only in sport does the amateur obtain a distinction. Lord Harris is not thought less of because he did not make a fortune out of cricket; nor is Lord de Grey reproached with not making pheasant shooting pay; nor was Lord Falmouth considered a fool because he ran his horses to please himself. Sport and religion retain in England the dignity of bringing their own reward; and it is our ambition, though we scarcely dare admit it, to contrive such theatrical conditions as will raise dramatic writing to the level of pheasant shooting. Our enterprise is, therefore, the very opposite of every other theatrical enterprise. We should like the Irish Literary Theatre to exist on the generosity of two or three individuals who would spend money upon it as they would upon their pheasant shooting. We want public enthusiasm, and we believe that we can obtain it more easily if we are independent

of the public for support. We believe that in artistic enterprise there should be, if possible, a slight loss at the end of the year. Above all, we believe that we should make sacrifices for art as we do for religion, that part of the joy of art is the sacrifice. St. Teresa's words that she would wish for a flame to burn up heaven, and water to quench hell, so that she might worship goodness for its own sake, are, with some modifications, as applicable to the artist as to the saint.

GEORGE MOORE.

ACT THE FIRST.

The Meeting Hall of the Corporation. MACNEE *sets down a large bucket in front and then begins leisurely to sweep the floor.* JOHN CLORAN *enters carrying sonic papers. . .*

CLORAN (*with importance*).

What are you doing here, Macnee? I'm expecting the Corporation every minute.

MACNEE.

I'm sweeping the floor for the Corporation.

CLORAN.

You should have finished long ago.

MACNEE.

Has the Corporation never been behind with its work?

CLORAN.

The Corporation has never been more hard-worked; the Corporation will be engaged this morning with most important matters; and the most important resolutions will be passed.

MACNEE.

What are the resolutions about?

CLORAN.

I'm too busy now to explain.

MACNEE.

I think you'd find them hard to explain.

CLORAN.

That'll do. It isn't my business to argue with a man like you.

MACNEE.

Ah, you're a proud man to be Town Clerk, but I can tell you this Corporation you think so fine isn't respected much in the town.

CLORAN.

You are, no doubt, a sound authority as to the feeling of our town.

MACNEE.

I'm in the way of hearing the many, and, believe me, if you don't begin to do the people some good, none of you will long remain where you are.

CLORAN.

Oh indeed! I suppose your associates, the proletariat, are discontented because there is not more unanimity among the members of our Corporation. Well, what do you expect? You don't suppose that where there are so many men of equal intelligence, ability and push that they will sink their individual opinions to follow the opinions of one of their number who is no better than anybody else.

MACNEE.

How long have they been tearing each other in pieces, I should like to know. When will they begin to think of the good of the town?

CLORAN.

All their opinions are for the good of our town.... But what we want is somebody who will offer a superior opinion. We want a leader — a man whose superiority will unite us in the best interests of our town. And we shall find him, if we haven't found him already.

MACNEE.

You mean young Mr. Jasper Dean?

CLORAN.

The very man. He has been elected aiderman for a ward, and to-day he is to take his seat here for the first time as a member of our Corporation.

MACNEE.

Well, he's a good deal spoken of; they say he is a great scholar.

CLORAN.

He carried all before him at Oxford. He has one thing in his favour.

MACNEE.

What is that, Mr. Cloran?

CLORAN.

He is a very fine gentleman and comes of a good old family.

MACNEE.

There are too many fine gentlemen already in this country.

CLORAN.

Yes, but I hear the members coming in.

MACNEE.

I must be going. They don't want to see the people here. [*Exit carrying his bucket.*

CLORAN.

He is always trying to push himself forward! I am sure he would like to sit with the Corporation.

(*Enter* ALDERMAN JAMES POLLOCK *and* ALDERMAN MICHAEL LEECH.*)*

POLLOCK.

A dangerous man. I tried to get the Corporation to give him the sack.

LEECH.

He was in quite a good position once; it was politics that brought him to this menial work. That's so, isn't it, Cloran?

POLLOCK.

Isn't the Mayor here yet?

CLORAN.

No, Alderman Leech, he is very late to-day.

POLLOCK.

Any news, Cloran?

CLORAN.

Not a word, Aiderman Pollock.

POLLOCK.

Nothing about our claim against Southhaven?

CLORAN.

Only a letter received this morning which I shall lay before the Corporation. But it leaves matters pretty nearly where they were, sir.

LEECH (*to* POLLOCK).

Ferguson has to some extent succeeded in forcing us to pursue this matter.

POLLOCK.

To-day he is to bring on a resolution to start our steamers again, regardless of our agreement. If Southhaven takes action against us for breach of contract we are to answer by a counteraction for non-fulfilment of contract.

LEECH.

No one will support such a resolution. It would mean involving the town in two costly lawsuits.

POLLOCK.

And lose us our connection with Southhaven.

(ALDERMAN RALF KIRWAN *enters*.)

We are talking about Aiderman Ferguson's resolution.

LEECH.

That, in defiance of our agreement with Southhaven, we shall start our line of steamers again. Do you believe that any one in his senses will support his resolution?

KIRWAN.

I do not think the resolution a wise one at the moment. But what matter? As well as another it will supply fuel for dissension.

LEECH.

If you do not believe in municipal life why do you come here?

KIRWAN.

I often ask myself that question. I suppose because hope is undying, and every time I come here I come believing that the miracle has happened, that we shall find a leader waiting us.

CLORAN.

Gentlemen, gentlemen! Ah, gentlemen, I declare there is not one of you but is entitled to lead.

KIRWAN.

No, Cloran, there is not one among us who can lead, and among the failures I include myself.

CLORAN.

But you have hopes, Aiderman Kirwan. Report says that you speak highly of young Mr. Dean, our new aiderman.

POLLOCK.

It appears that he has taken up all your ideas enthusiastically.

LEECH.

It appears that you have found a disciple at last.

POLLOCK.

But why should he succeed with your ideas better than you've succeeded with them yourself? No, Kirwan, he won't do, there is not the stuff of a leader in him. You agree with me, Michael?

LEECH.

I do indeed, James. He is nothing particular. And we ought to know, aren't we his relations?

POLLOCK.

The only thing I ever heard in his favour is that he has become friends with Hardman, and is going to marry his niece — an excellent connection.

KIRWAN.

What you put to his good account I put to his bad, so you see we think as differently on this as on other subjects. Yes, he distinguished himself at Oxford, and the great man learns only what he wants to learn, the mediocre man can learn what others think he should learn. Oh, there is a great deal to be said against Dean.

(ALDERMAN VALENTINE FOLEY *enters*.)

FOLEY.

Good morning, good morning. Now tell me what you think of Ferguson's resolution. I am not sure that I approve of it, but it is full of interest. Quite a sensational resolution. I'd like to see it supported even if it is not carried. Oh, for a little more unanimity, for some kindly feeling, avoidance of personal attack even when we disagree!

KIRWAN.

But the last number of your paper, Foley, contained an attack against every one.

FOLEY.

You read my articles in the *Denouncer*: they were all mine, the whole of the back page was mine. What did you think of it?

KIRWAN.

I thought that you were an advocate of union.

FOLEY.

So I am, but not of union with traitors. The sense of our wrongs fills me with indignation, but to right them all I would not hold out my hand to any one with whom I could not entirely agree.

CLORAN.

The last number of the *Denouncer* was a glorious one, full of fury against the enemies of our town. The people say that you have a mission.

FOLEY.

Do they? (*Pause*.) I always felt that I had a mission.

POLLOCK.

What is your mission?

FOLEY.

No man can define his mission, you must feel your mission (*looking round*); it must be a terrible thing not to feel that you have a mission.

KIRWAN.

You're a journalist, Foley, to the finger-tips, which arc inky. You exist in the day, in the very hour.

FOLEY.

And what is life but an accumulation of days and hours?

KIRWAN.

In the eyes of most people it is no more. Would that those who believe this would act up to their theory. The mission of this day, if it has a mission, is surely the settlement of our claims against Southhaven.

LEECH.

So far I will go with you. That it is impossible not to be indignant at the manner in which our seaport has been ruined at the advantage of Southhaven.

FOLEY.

And yet you and Pollock have voted against every measure for re-establishing the line of steamers which Southhaven has filched from us.

KIRWAN.

Filched? No; we agreed to sell our steamers. The accounts rendered by Southhaven are not satisfactory — cheated if you will. I like to preserve these nice differences — a cheat is not a thief.

POLLOCK.

Even in joke we should not use such words against our neighbour, nor do anything that might injure our neighbour.

LEECH.

There are so many interests involved, you know.

KIRWAN.

Certain members of our Corporation hold shares in the Southhaven line.

FOLEY.

This raises a very interesting question. Don't you think that our duty towards ourselves and our duties towards the State would make an excellent subject for an article?

LEECH.

And our duties towards our families.

FOLEY.

True, true, I am glad you mentioned it.

KIRWAN.

There would be no difficulty in considering the collective interests of the town if one had not one's old particular desires and those of the lady upstairs to consider too.

POLLOCK.

You're a bachelor; all reformers are bachelors, all extreme reformers have been bachelors.

FOLEY.

The State and the family arc for ever at war: the summer of the State is the winter of the family — two forces always at war.

POLLOCK.

I only hold a few shares in the Southhaven line. I should not mind running the risk of reducing their value if I could only feel that our dear neighbours were not going to suffer.

LEECH.

Quite so. What should we be without our neighbour, our rich neighbour? And is it not nearly sure that if we insist on the fulfilment of the bargain we made with Southhaven we shall lose as much as we gain?

KIRWAN.

Here we love our neighbour — well, not more than ourselves, but much better than we love the interests of our town.

LEECH.

Kirwan, do you mean to say that the Corporation doesn't consider the best interests of the town? that, having regard for their own private interests, certain aidermen do not press the claims that our town have against Southhaven?

KIRWAN.

For many reasons the claim is not pressed — for social reasons, for pecuniary reasons; and the principal reason of all is because we are hopelessly divided, because we have not found a leader.

LEECH.

There are plenty of leaders. Our friend here (*pointing to* POLLOCK).

KIRWAN.

Plenty who desire to lead, but no leader.

LEECH.

The question is whether we should insist in demanding our pound of flesh — the clause is vaguely worded, you admit that, Kirwan.

KIRWAN.

I see that you wish to abide in the good wishes of Southhaven; you prefer her good wishes to the pound of flesh.

(*Enter the* MAYOR *and* ALDERMAN THOMAS FERGUSON.)

MAYOR.

Well, of course, Aiderman Ferguson, you may bring forward your motion; but I fancy it will meet with a good deal of opposition.

FERGUSON.

I will carry it in spite of opposition.

KIRWAN.

That is what every mover of contentious matter thinks.

FERGUSON.

Aiderman Kirwan again criticises. Why doesn't he come forward with a proposal himself?

KIRWAN.

None of us could make a proposal that the others would not tear to pieces; they would gather about it like hounds about a fox.

FERGUSON.

And so you spend your time thinking, Aiderman Kirwan?

KIRWAN.

If I've thought well, I've done everything that is required.

FERGUSON.

We want action.

KIRWAN.

If I've thought well, some one else will act well.

(*Enter ALDERMAN DANIEL LAWRENCE* and *JASPER DEAN followed by other aldermen and several town councillors. Then the public crowd into the place allotted to them*.)

LAWRENCE.

My dear Jasper Dean, I haven't seen you for a long time — how well you are looking! I never saw you looking so well in my life. I am delighted you have become a member of our Corporation. We want men of your position and education — yes, we want your Southhaven ideas.

DEAN.

I never met with any ideas in Southhaven. It was here that I met ideas for the first time. (*He lays his hand on* KIRWAN'S *shoulder*.)

LAWRENCE.

I am sorry you don't think better of Southhaven, you know our interests are so inseparably connected.

(*The* MAYOR *and the Corporation all now take their places*.)

MAYOR.

Mr. Cloran, will you read the minutes of the last meeting?

CLORAN.

Yes, your Worship. (*Reads from a large book*.) "At the last regular meeting, present the Worshipful the Mayor Aiderman — "

FERGUSON.

That'll do. Let us get on to the business of to-day.

LAWRENCE.

Really, Aiderman Ferguson —

MAYOR.

Order, order!

FOLEY.

What is the good of taking up our time by reading all those minutes?

KIRWAN.

They might have been read in less time than this dispute has taken.

ALL.

That'll do. Enough.

CLORAN.

Then I am not to read them, your Worship?

FERGUSON.

Of course not.

MAYOR.

(*Looking around*.) Well, I suppose not.

CLORAN.

Names of aidermen present and minutes taken as read.

(*Laughter, during which he hands the book to the* MAYOR.)

MAYOR.

Is it your wish, gentleman, that I sign these minutes which Aiderman Ferguson won't have read?

LAWRENCE.

It is most illegal.

FERGUSON.

Oh, illegal be hanged!

KIRWAN.

Sign them, sign them, and let us get to work.

MAYOR.

Well — I suppose I must. (*Signs the minutes in the book.*) Mr. Cloran, have you written, as directed, to the authorities in Southhaven?

CLORAN.

Yes, your Worship, in accordance with your resolution at last meeting, I wrote and have received this answer from the Town Clerk.

MAYOR.

Well, read it them. Silence, gentlemen.

CLORAN.

(*Reading the letter.*) "SIR, — In reply to your communication, in which you demand on the part of your Corporation a definite answer from our Corporation to your repeated claims, I am directed by our Corporation in the first place to remind you that it is very unusual for us to state definitely beforehand the course of action which we may eventually deem prudent to pursue. Our Corporation wish you to understand that our well-known integrity (*laughter*) and generosity in our dealings with other bodies have hitherto rendered such a demand as yours hurtful and superfluous; and that we might have been led to expect from the unanimity of interests which exists between our two towns a complete disappearance of all doubt as to the possibility of our acting in any other than in a just and generous spirit towards you. Finally, I am expressing the very general feeling of our Corporation when I now demand of you such trust in this matter of dispute as past experience should warrant you in bestowing upon us, and remain, &c., &c."

FERGUSON.

We will certainly give that pack of rogues such trust as experience warrants us — which means just no trust at all.

KIRWAN.

Our position is not advanced one jot by that letter.

FOLEY.

They will never pay this money unless they are made to.

LAWRENCE.

The Southhaven Corporation is at least as honourable as our own, and I am sure that they will pay anything that is really due.

MAYOR.

May be so, but that letter is a most evasive letter.

LAWRENCE.

Southhaven never disappoints one's just expectations.

FERGUSON.

Well, I hope they won't disappoint yours, that's all.

LAWRENCE.

What do you mean, sir?

FERGUSON.

Don't you expect the appointment of solicitor to the Southhaven Corporation, which is now robbing us? For how long have you not been sniffing after it?

LAWRENCE.

How dare you, sir! Mr. Mayor, I protest, I protest in the name of my honourable profession — (*uproar and cries of "Place-hunter!"*)

MAYOR.

Order, order! (*Continued uproar*.) Order, order! At this rate we shall never finish, and there are some of us who want to catch the four o'clock train. Let us now proceed to discuss what action we shall take in reference to the letter you have just heard read. What are your opinions as to the line of action we should adopt?

LAWRENCE.

Mr. Mayor, I submit that this is an affair in which we ought to proceed with the greatest caution. (*Murmurs and applause*.) We cannot foretell what may be the consequences if we rush into any rash action. Our substance and our safety, I may say, depend upon our neighbour. Are not our savings invested in the very line of steamers with which some mischievous persons among us propose to interfere?

POLLOCK.

Very true. No one of any standing would wish to interfere with the line of steamers.

LEECH.

Yes, it would be a disreputable thing to do, and at the same time fatal to our interests.

LAWRENCE.

Of course it would; but, to put the question of our interests altogether aside, think of the regard and gratefulness we are bound to feel for a great town like Southhaven.

LEECH.

To be sure. I forgot that. That is far more important than our mere interests.

FOLEY.

I repudiate it altogether! What have we to be grateful for? I should like to know.

LAWRENCE.

All fashion, all society, all culture comes from Southhaven. I ask, What would Northhaven be without Southhaven? Our wives and daughters, their season, what would become of it? have these things not to be considered?

KIRWAN.

We have exchanged our arts, our language, and our ancient aristocracy for shoddy imitation.

FOLEY.

Mr. Mayor, I intended to support Aiderman Ferguson's resolution, that we should answer this letter by the purchase of several ocean-going steamers. At the same time I feel it my duty to move that those holding shares in the Southhaven line shall be compensated.

FERGUSON.

Compensation! That would be putting a premium on dishonesty.

LEECH.

Explain, explain!

FERGUSON.

Mr. Mayor, one moment —

FOLEY.

I am in possession of the meeting.

FERGUSON.

(*Shouting*.) Mr. Mayor, I have some observations to make. (*There are cries among the Corporation and people for* FERGUSON *and* FOLEY. *Those for* FERGUSON *preponderate; and* FOLEY *sits down*.)

MAYOR.

(*Thumping the table.*) Silence! Silence!

FERGUSON.

Mr. Mayor, this matter before the Corporation would be easily settled if only we could agree to one thing — the restoration of our line of steamers.

LAWRENCE.

You want to ruin us by severing our connection with our Southhaven neighbours, who can carry our goods better than we could ourselves.

DEAN.

Mr. Mayor, may I say a few words?

MAYOR.

Certainly, Aiderman Dean. Silence, gentlemen, please!

DEAN.

Mr. Mayor, if one so new at municipal business as I am might presume to advise gentlemen so experienced, I would suggest that each of us should keep more strictly to the question before us.

KIRWAN.

Hear, hear.

DEAN.

We have really nothing to do with any question except whether we shall decide or not decide to enforce the payment of what is due to us. Each man among us may fight for whatever he wishes when the thief has been run down. (*Cheers*.) The matter is very simple, and I am glad that you all seem to be of my opinion.

LAWRENCE.

Not all, by any means, Aiderman Dean.

FERGUSON.

Yes, all except a few place-hunters.

KIRWAN.

Is our town to surrender every advantage for the sake of a few officials? (*Cheers*.)

DEAN.

Mr. Mayor, we have nothing to do with officials. What interest can it be to us whether this or that official, however excellent, is or is not making money by our connection with Southhaven? Every town, every people, every race that has ever risen to greatness has asked one first question of its public men and of all other men who belong to it, "Are you for us or against us?" The answer can only be yes or no.

LAWRENCE.

Aiderman Dean, I'm afraid you are not a sound politician. I thought you were a different man, sir.

DEAN.

My thought is for the good of this people as a whole. Has not this people become a proverb, a symbol of poverty as it were, and does it not call us to its help? (*Cheers*.) If you will listen to me with patience I am sure that we shall agree upon a policy. Our ancestors were ready to endure to the utmost for their convictions. Cannot we agree together to do and to endure the little that is required of us?

LAWRENCE.

Well, what is this policy? what is this grand discovery?

DEAN.

That each man should, for the moment, put aside every question that divides us, and above all that we should pass a general act of oblivion as it were, and forget our private quarrels, however justified (*cheers*), till this great work has been completed. (*Cheers*.)

LAWRENCE.

We are far too independent for that.

DEAN.

It is because we are becoming so independent that we understand the necessity of being united, (*Cheers*.) We are discovering that we can only escape from dependence on petty interests and petty animosities by sharing in the greater life of our race and of our town. We must cease to think of ourselves as individuals, and think of ourselves as so many members belonging to the body of our town.

FERGUSON.

Very true — very true.

DEAN.

It is very encouraging to know that you agree with me. Well, then, admitting that I am right, how ought you to meet the present crisis? What is our public capacity? We are the Corporation of a northern town, situated on a western coast on the brink of a natural harbour; and, until a few years ago, we enjoyed the fruits of this good position. Our town was a most important packet station, it had full control of its own dealing with the world at large; it was independent of outside help or hindrance. But we sold our steamers to Southhaven, a large and prosperous town many miles further south, for a certain advantage, including sums of money that have been paid and a much larger sum that has not been paid. In past times, and we are all (no matter what our party) agreed upon this, the mainly Celtic people of this town and countryside were oppressed, killed, and pillaged by the mainly Saxon people of that more wealthy and powerful town, but this is a commercial age, and it has been found sufficient to cheat us. The clause in our agreement referring to the harbour dues is loosely worded, but we have taken counsel's opinion, and it has been held that our case is a good one; but this case has not been pressed because some think that if we did press it Southhaven might say, Take back your line of steamers and return those advantages and those sums of money which we have given you. Others hoped for posts in that wealthy municipality, or had vested money in its line of steamers. It has also been suggested that certain not very clearly defined social advantages which we are supposed to derive from our connection with Southhaven might be taken from us, and I have reason to believe that strong social influence has been exerted to prevent our claim from being pressed. Our women folk are particularly open to such influences, they understand better than we do the value of class prejudice and family interest. I have now sketched in outline the main facts of our case against Southhaven, and I think I have included nothing with which a single member of this Corporation will disagree.

LAWRENCE.

Mr. Mayor, I do not agree to it. I agree to nothing.

DEAN.

I will not question now the wisdom of the sale of our steamers. I will not go into the question whether or not we should, so soon as the money has been paid, close our agreement with Southhaven, and start our steamers again, as we have a right to do. Several of my colleagues and I myself do not agree with my friend Mr. Kirwan and with the majority of the members of the Corporation on this point. We have been opposed, for reasons which I need not enter into here, and we are still opposed to the agitation for re-establishing our line of steamers. But we are all agreed, the most extreme of every section is agreed, that we should be paid our rightful percentages on the harbour dues of Southhaven.

LAWRENCE.

Indeed, sir, what is really owing ought to be paid. We are all agreed to that, but what is it that is really owing?

DEAN.

To hear Alderman Lawrence admit even so much is satisfactory. For many years Southhaven evaded the issue by furnishing no accounts. When the accounts were at last forced from her, our accountants perceived that she owed us a very large sum of money. It is most important, too, that, although Southhaven contested the results our accountants came to after an exhaustive examination, the accountants that she herself called in, after they had carefully checked every item, corroborated our accountants on almost every detail.

LAWRENCE.

But all the Southhaven accountants did not. There was one man who held out, who disputed the admission of certain items.

DEAN.

What would the evidence of one man against the evidence of ten amount to in a court of law? (*Hear, hear, and a cheer from the crowd at the back.*) Well, Mr. Mayor, we have made several appeals to our rich debtors for payment. In what spirit has she received our appeals? We have all heard her Town Clerk's letter to-day. Is it a candid letter? Is it the answer of a town that wishes to act justly? Are we to be thus put off and played with while our town is impoverished by

defalcations? (*Tremendous cheers*.) No, sir, we will not consent to such treatment. After all, what have we but our town? Do we not stand or fall together? If she is ruined shall not we — yes, every class among us — be ruined too? (*Hear, hear*.) We must cast to the winds the deference to Southhaven that makes us weak, and, above all, we must sink our personal and our class differences. We have only to agree upon taking legal proceedings, and the law will do the rest.

FERGUSON.

I'll unite with any one on that.

SEVERAL VOICES.

We are all with you! We are all ready to unite!

DEAN.

I am overjoyed to hear it, for I look upon it as so necessary to obtain this subsidy that although, as you know, I am opposed to the restoration of the packet station and have always with my family been a staunch supporter of our connection with Southhaven; still, if the authorities of that port evade the law by any means and deny us justice and cast us back upon civic ruin, I for one do solemnly declare that I am prepared to advocate the buying of new vessels and to run them in defiance of all existing agreements. (*Tremendous and prolonged cheering and enthusiasm.*) Mr. Mayor, I beg to move that immediate legal proceedings be taken for the recovery of this debt of so many years' accumulation.

FERGUSON.

I second that resolution. (*Cheers*.)

LAWRENCE.

Mr. Mayor, it is with very considerable pain that I have listened to the able speech of my respected and cultured young friend, Aiderman Dean. I feel it is a disadvantage to all respectable people in our town and a disadvantage to his own family that such rare abilities as his should not be used in a cause more fit for the approbation of right-thinking people. Indeed, my cars could hardly make me believe it when I heard him wander to such an extent from right principles as to advocate action so discourteous towards a Corporation whose friendship is of paramount importance to us. (*Murmurs*.) I sincerely trust that our Corporation will do nothing to alienate the sympathy of our wealthy neighbours, (*Uproar*.)

SEVERAL VOICES.

Put the resolution! Put the resolution!

LAWRENCE.

Shall I not be listened to?

FERGUSON.

We have heard too much from you long ago.

LAWRENCE.

Mr. Mayor, I protest. (*Uproar, during which he is forced to sit down.*)

POLLOCK.

It is very extraordinary how Jasper has brought the Corporation with him.

LEECH.

Most extraordinary — because he really hasn't much in him, you know.

POLLOCK.

I think his arguments quite wrong. However, I suppose we cannot go against such an unanimous burst of opinion.

LEECH.

Oh no — besides he is one of the family, and it wouldn't look well if we took an active part in opposing him.

MAYOR.

Let all who are in favour of the resolution say "Aye."

SEVERAL VOICES.

Aye! Aye!

MAYOR.

The contrary say "No."

LAWRENCE.

No! (*Laughter*.)

MAYOR.

The "ayes" have it (*taking out his watch*). We shall catch the four o'clock train after all.

(*Laughter and wild excitement. Several gather with congratulations around* JASPER DEAN, *while all move out of the room*.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT THE SECOND.

Drawing-room in JASPER DEAN'S *house.* MISS CAROLINE *and* MISS ARABELLA DEAN *are seated by an afternoon tea-table.*

ARABELLA.

So the day has come at last, Caroline, and our task is ended. Jasper is now a man. To-day he enters public life and he is going to be married.

CAROLINE.

Quite so, Arabella. But I'm anxious for him to be here to meet Miss Fell. I told him not to be later than three.

ARABELLA.

So the little boy who came to us sixteen years ago when our poor brother died is now a man, and passes beyond our keeping?

CAROLINE.

Not beyond our influence, I trust, our teaching will survive in him.

ARABELLA.

It is strange to look back upon it all — our bickerings about what he should eat and what he should wear, when he should get up and when he should go to sleep. It was a pleasant task, and I'm sorry it is ended. And what he should learn too. That was your department. Now we shall never quarrel any more over him. You will never accuse me again of ruining him with too much indulgence, and I shall never say that you are ruining him with too much severity.

(*Enter* MRS. BESSIE POLLOCK *and* MRS. SARAH LEECH.)

CAROLINE.

She has not arrived. But come in. She does not like the sea and is coming round by train; she missed the connection at Rossborough, but she telegraphed that she was coming by a later one. We're expecting her every minute.

ARABELLA.

We were talking about dear Jasper. In a moment like the present one looks back; the simplest things seem so wonderful, and we wonder how it all happened.

MRS. LEECH.

You have every reason to be satisfied with the result.

CAROLINE.

He distinguished himself at Oxford, and I began his education. I taught him to read and write, and before he went to school I learnt a little Latin so that I might teach him his declensions and verbs. Did you see his article on conciliation in the *Denouncer*? Aiderman Foley thought very highly of it.

MRS. LEECH.

But is it true? may we venture to ask if there is anything in the rumour that Jasper's marriage will not be the only marriage in the family?

CAROLINE.

Since you do not put your question directly, it is clear that you think it an impertinence.

ARABELLA.

I am sure that Sarah did not mean to be impertinent.

CAROLINE.

I used the word in its strict grammatical sense. If Sarah wants to know what I think of Mr. Foley, I will tell her that I think him an estimable man whose literary knowledge should be of great use to Jasper.

MRS. POLLOCK.

Jasper I think you said went to school at Southhaven. Now what do you think of their schools?

CAROLINE.

A Southhaven accent is essential, and if a boy does not quite pick it up he acquires a sort of ante-accent, which is the next best thing.

MRS. LEECH.

But at school Jasper gave trouble. There was some talk of insubordination.

CAROLINE.

We don't pretend that in bringing Jasper up we reached perfection. We sincerely hope that your own boys will turn out as satisfactorily.

ARABELLA.

Then he went to Oxford?

CAROLINE.

Oxford is most important; Oxford weens a boy from local influences, and teaches him to act with his class and to consider the interests of his class and his family.

MRS. POLLOCK.

And to-day is the fruition of all your teaching and love.

CAROLINE.

I hope I have rendered him fit to take a leading part in public life, Bessie.

MRS. LEECH.

If he is really all you wanted to make him he will never take the lead anywhere.

CAROLINE.

Really, Sarah?

MRS. LEECH.

I only meant that your teaching will not qualify him to lead the popular party. You know what they say, that he has fallen under the influence of Kirwan, and has adopted all his ideas.

CAROLINE.

Jasper is safe against Kirwan's influence, and will not be carried away by the enthusiasm so common in this country.

MRS. POLLOCK.

You're pleased, of course, at this marriage?

CAROLINE.

You know who she is — niece of George Hardman, Mayor of Southhaven, which they say owes us all this money.

ARABELLA.

We're most anxious to become acquainted with her; that is why Jasper has asked her to stay with us.

CAROLINE.

She is very much admired; quite a notable figure in society, and very rich. (MRS. LEECH *and* MRS. POLLOCK *get up to leave*.) No, don't go. She cannot be long now, and Jasper will be sure to bring back James and Michael after the meeting, so she will be introduced to quite a number of the family.

MRS. LEECH.

We're all cousins. I am my husband's first cousin, and sister to Bessie's husband, so what relation is Jasper to me?

CAROLINE.

Don't let us go into cousinship and aunts, it will never end.

(*A knocking is heard at the street door.*)

MRS. POLLOCK.

There she is.

(*The* MAID *enters*.)

MAID.

Miss Fell.

(*Miss* MILLICENT FELL *enters, exit the* MAID.)

CAROLINE.

(*To* MILLICENT.) We are delighted to see you, my dear.

MILLICENT.

Thank you, you are very kind. (*To* ARABELLA.) How do you do?

ARABELLA.

These are our cousins — Mrs. Bessie Pollock and Mrs. Sarah Leech.

MILLICENT.

How do you do? How do you do?

MRS. LEECH.

(*Aside lo* MRS. POLLOCK.) That cloak is the latest fashion. They're all wearing them at Southhaven. Do you like it?

ARABELLA.

Jasper says you have a great interest in this northern town and country, Miss Fell.

MILLICENT.

Oh, yes. I was always interested in your northern landscape even before I knew Jasper. Your old castles, your legends, your romance and your wit is a welcome relief after the solid prose of commercial Southhaven.

ARABELLA.

We are so sorry that Jasper is not here to meet you. We were only just saying so when you arrived.

MILLICENT.

Where is Jasper?

CAROLINE.

He is at a meeting of the Corporation. You have no idea of the political success he is having. I wonder if you will approve. It all turns on —

MILLICENT.

You must tell me about it. I need hardly say how interested I am in all his work.

(*Enter* ALDERMAN JAMES POLLOCK *and* ALDERMAN MICHAEL LEECH.)

CAROLINE.

James, this is Miss Millicent Fell.

MILLICENT.

(*To* POLLOCK *and* LEECH.) How do you do? How do you do?

POLLOCK.

You must find our town, Miss Fell, rather poor-looking after your handsome, opulent town.

MILLICENT.

No, indeed. After the manufactures of Southhaven the picturesque beauty of your landscape comes upon one's eyes very pleasantly.

LEECH.

I am glad you think so. But in my eyes prosperity is an essential part of beauty.

MRS. POLLOCK.

Have you come from the Corporation, James?

POLLOCK.

Yes, yes. The proceedings are finished. (*Aside to* MRS. POLLOCK.) It is all decided. We're going to begin an action against Southhaven.

ARABELLA.

I wonder Jasper isn't here.

POLLOCK.

(*Laughing*.) Oh, Jasper; he has been carrying all before him.

CAROLINE.

Why, what has he done?

POLLOCK.

He has succeeded in uniting us all for once. He leads the whole Corporation.

LEECH.

Yes, it seems a wonderful thing; but he has done it. I am sure no one would ever have thought he could.

MILLICENT.

I always knew he only wanted an opportunity to prove himself great.

ARABELLA.

He is great.

CAROLINE.

Arabella, such undue expressions of admiration only tend to render their object ridiculous.

M ILLI CENT.

Oh, I hate reservations in admiration. Why cannot one say a man is great when we feel that he is?

MRS. POLLOCK.

I wonder you should say that. In Southhaven I've always found every one so reticent.

POLLOCK.

You have, doubtless, had many opportunities, Miss Fell, of judging the abilities of Jasper.

MILLICENT.

Yes. We have been acquainted for some time. We met at Oxford. My cousin, George Hardman, junior, was a friend of his there. He brought him during one vacation to stay at his father's the Mayor's house. That is how I first met Jasper.

CAROLINE.

You always live at Southhaven with your uncle the Mayor, don't you, my dear?

MILLICENT.

Oh, yes — he is like a father to me.

MRS. LEECH.

Ah!

(*There is a noise of voices outside*.)

ARABELLA.

Here is Jasper coming.

(*Enter* ALDERMEN JASPER DEAN *and* RALPH KIRWAN.)

DEAN.

(*At the door, to* KIRWAN.) That's just it; the man who is at once polite and firm is irresistible in diplomacy. Diplomacy is but a union of the two qualities.

(*Perceives* MILLICENT *and advances.*)

DEAN.

Oh, Millicent, so you have come at last. I hope you had a pleasant journey.

MILLICENT.

You know I hate the sea; the railway was more than usually tedious; we missed the connection at Rossborough. But here I am. Jasper dear, I hear that you have made a most successful first appearance in public life.

DEAN.

There is every hope of success. This is my friend Aiderman Kirwan.

KIRWAN.

(*Bowing*.) He has exceeded our wildest expectations, Miss Fell.

DEAN.

I am indeed so fortunate as to have all the people with me.

MILLICENT.

I hear that you carry every one with you.

DEAN.

I am glad that my success coincided with your arrival in Northhaven, that you were here to congratulate me.

MILLICENT.

It was fortunate, was it not? But I don't know yet what has happened.

ARABELLA.

Yes, we are dying to hear the story of your triumph.

MILLICENT.

Do tell us, Jasper, how it all happened. What was it that led to your success?

DEAN.

I thought you all knew that to-day the Corporation were to consider our claims against Southhaven.

MILLICENT.

Oh, I have heard my uncle often speak about that. But he says there is nothing in your claims.

DEAN.

He says that, does he?

MILLICENT.

Yes — why, Jasper?

DEAN.

Because to-day our Corporation had to deliberate over a letter on this subject from the Town Clerk of your uncle's Corporation.

MILLICENT.

I suppose this letter explained all the bearings of the case.

CAROLINE.

What did you say, Jasper, to succeed so wonderfully in uniting every one?

DEAN.

I explained that we had a legal right to the payment of our claims and urged that the law should be set in motion.

KIRWAN.

It seems very simple, doesn't it?

POLLOCK.

Yes, indeed; and the wonder is that no one ever before could do what he has done.

DEAN.

(*Turning to* MILLICENT.) Until now every one was at variance.

MILLICENT.

That has always been so in Northhaven.

KIRWAN.

It could not be otherwise; the many various attractions of the larger town distract our interests from our own town.

DEAN.

Yes; and, Millicent, the great public enthusiasms which once moved our people have faded in recent years, and when public enthusiasms are faded, men care for nothing but their private hatreds and their miserable private interests.

CAROLINE.

But that is a foolish thing to say, Jasper. A man must look after his private interests and the interests of his family. I am sure you are with me on this point, Miss Fell.

KIRWAN.

It is all these private interests that have ruined our town, and because of them nobody who did not come from outside all our cliques could unite us.

DEAN.

Yes, that is true; but, Millicent, you must not suppose that this town is worse than other towns on account of its squabbles. It is as all other towns are when the fire burns low. It is a little image of the world. (CAROLINE *is about to intervene*.) Very likely I'm wrong, aunt, but that can't be helped.

CAROLINE.

Why can't it be helped?

DEAN.

Come, Kirwan, to the study, I want to show you a rough draft of a letter for our solicitor to send to Southhaven; but I'm forgetting. (*Looks at* KIRWAN.) Here is the man.

KIRWAN.

My dear Jasper, I do not wish it.

DEAN.

Here is the man. He preached in the wilderness and what he preached has come to pass, though no one heard him. It is a mistake to think that words are lost if they do not fall into the ears, for even those thoughts survive and have influence that never find their way into words. A thought is a spiritual thing.

CAROLINE.

My dear Jasper, what do you mean?

DEAN.

Something that he has taught me to understand. Listen to him, and you will all understand. Say something, Kirwan, tell my Aunt Caroline your ideas. She is most anxious to understand.

CAROLINE.

I understand very well, sir, you're going to take advantage of some vaguely worded clause in an agreement to bring an action against Southhaven, and alienate every respectable person from our town. To talk about preaching in the wilderness is merely the usual rhetoric of the county. Ideas! what you are after is a sum of money.

KIRWAN.

The significance of the fact, the sum of money which is owed to us, should be understood. This sum of money is a symbol, behind it there is something more, far more, precious than the material prosperity that the money will bring; the material prosperity we want and sorely, for we want to liberate the mind and we can only do that through the body. This money will be the liberation of many ideas which poverty holds in slavery, and the ideas thus liberated will urge the race to its appointed destiny.

DEAN.

Aunt Caroline, I hope you've understood that the one thing of moment is the cause itself, that the cause is above us all, and behind every action; and that we can only be happy when we are in union with the cause, for the cause is our real selves, that part of us which shall not pass away. (*Turning to* KIRWAN.) And the destiny of the race, tell them what that is.

KIRWAN.

My dear Jasper, these are questions that we find interesting to ponder, but we must not intrude them upon the drawing-room. These ladies will excuse us. Come, show me the letter that you speak of!

[*Exuent* DEAN *and* KIRWAN.

LEECH.

Well, Caroline, Jasper seems to be coming out of his shell.

CAROLINE.

I should say that he seems to be trying to get into Kirwan's shell.

LEECH.

You kept him shut up so long in your own shell, Caroline, that it is not surprising that he has got into the first empty shell he came across.

MILLICENT.

But you would not call Kirwan's an empty shell, would you?

MRS. LEECH.

I should call it a shell that has been long looking out for a boarder.

MILLICENT.

A shell, I should say (to somewhat change the metaphor), that has been long loaded but into which Nature omitted to put a fuse. Jasper is the fuse.

MRS. LEECH.

I'm tired of Kirwan's ideas and hope Jasper will explode them all.

MILLICENT.

I was amused at the interpretation he gave to the sum of money; not only the money was nothing, but the benefit that the poor would gather from it was nothing. Beyond the gold there was a light, a supernatural light; I think he suggested the light of Paradise. But it may have been merely Tir-nan-og shining behind a sum of money.

LEECH.

Very admirably put. Your quick wits see through the glamour of the Celt.

MILLICENT.

I do not want to depreciate what Jasper has done, but if the issue were a noble one I should be better pleased.

POLLOCK.

(*To* LEECH.) His was certainly a very flagrant bid for leadership.

LEECH.

We could all have been leaders if we had not hesitated.

POLLOCK.

We did well to hesitate, but I must be going. Goodbye, Michael!

LEECH.

So must I. Goodbye, James.

(*Exeunt amidst general leave-takings* ALDERMAN JAMES POLLOCK *and* MRS. POLLOCK, ALDERMAN MICHAEL LEECH *and* MRS. LEECH.

CAROLINE (*to* MILLICENT).

Now that they've all gone will you tell me what you think of this matter? I will come and sit down by you.

MILLICENT.

Well, every one seems agreed that Kirwan has obtained an extraordinary influence over Jasper; and I don't like that.

CAROLINE.

Yes, but what interests me more for the moment is the effect that this sudden resolve to carry our claim into the law courts will have upon the people of Southhaven.

MILLICENT.

Mr. Aiderman Kirwan's visions will irritate and no doubt alienate our town if he tries to carry them into effect in a law court.

CAROLINE.

But does not this strike you as being very serious?

MILLICENT.

I really don't know; I suppose it is since you say so, but I have no knowledge of political matters. Perhaps you'll think it silly, but I'm disappointed that the agitation should be more Kirwan's idea than Jasper's idea.

CAROLINE.

Jasper has never been the same since he met that man. If Jasper had not met you before he met Kirwan —

ARABELLA.

Really, Caroline, you are going too far. I'm sure that Aiderman Kirwan has never sought to influence Jasper except in political matters, and even in that direction you exaggerate his influence.

CAROLINE.

Have it so, Arabella, have it so; but I think I ought to warn Miss Fell. Moreover, I think that Mr. Hardman ought to be told of the political situation, and I would suggest that Miss Fell should write to him.

MILLICENT.

I think that Jasper would resent any interference. Don't you think so?

ARABELLA.

I certainly think so.

CAROLINE.

If these movements are not checked at once there is no saying how far they will go.

ARABELLA (*to* MlLLICENT).

Would you not like to come to your room?

CAROLINE.

Then I'll take the responsibility on myself.

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID.

Aiderman Foley, Miss.

(*Enter* FOLEY. *Exit* MAID.)

CAROLINE.

I hope, Valentine, that you have not lent your aid to this abominable agitation which will unite all parties in Southhaven against us?

[*Exuent* MILLICENT *and* ARABELLA.

FOLEY.

Well, you see, Caroline, that popular enthusiasm runs so high; one's emotions overrule one's reasons, and I really do feel that —

CAROLINE.

I shall telegraph the facts of the case to Mr. Hardman. (*She goes to the table, writes the message.* FOLEY *waits in the middle of the stage*.) Here it is, Valentine. Take it at once to the office.

(*As he goes out the* CURTAIN *falls*.)

ACT THE THIRD.

The same as last act, JASPER DEAN'S *drawing-room. Enter* DEAN *and* KIRWAN. *Voices heard cheering* DEAN *in the street.*

DEAN.

My name is upon their lips, but it is you they are cheering.

KIRWAN.

Very likely. The man who cheers never knows whom he is cheering.

(*Enter* MACNEE.)

MACNEE.

I spoke to you at the door, sir, but you did not hear me. I hope you'll excuse me for having followed you upstairs.

KIRWAN (*aside to* DEAN).

You know this man, I introduced you to him just now.

DEAN.

Well, I hope all is going well for the meeting, Macnee?

MACNEE.

It was about that that I wanted to speak. I've sounded them, sir, and you can reckon all the clubs. It will be the biggest and the most determined meeting ever held in the town, sir.

KIRWAN.

You've seen about the posters.

MACNEE.

Yes, sir; any further orders?

DEAN.

No; I feel I can leave everything to you.

KIRWAN.

Thank you, my man.

[*Exit* MACNEE.

DEAN (*throwing himself into an armchair*).

At last a quiet half-hour in which to live. I got up this morning seeing the day before me as a long battle in which my will went out to conquer numerous enemies, sometimes drawn up in battle array, and sometimes one by one in single combat.

KIRWAN.

That is public life. How does it strike you?

DEAN.

The first thing that strikes me is a sense of unreality; my real self is not here. Macnee, who has only just gone out, seems to me like something I have dreamed.

KIRWAN.

I love their simple minds and their mysterious subconscious life — the only real life. To be with them is to be united to the essential again. To hear them is as refreshing as the breathing of the earth on a calm spring morning.

DEAN.

But they understand nothing of our ideals — that man, for instance.

KIRWAN.

The earth underfoot does not understand our words, but it understands as we may not. So it is with the people.

DEAN.

I envy you your deep sympathies and their sudden simplifications of the world.

KIRWAN.

Unfortunately I have not the magnetism that moves the people.

DEAN.

I often wonder why your love and sympathy, which are much deeper than mine, should not reach them, should not appeal to them, as readily as mine.

KIRWAN.

It is for that very reason; your appeal is stronger because you are not of the people; you are the romantic element outside them, the delight they follow always.

DEAN.

Looking at you I often wonder how it is that the whole world does not know of you. It seems to me to be a pity that you have decided that the world shall not know you. Your name is always on my tongue — I talk about you, I tell people how wonderful you are.

KIRWAN.

And their answer is, What has he done?

DEAN.

Sometimes.

KIRWAN.

I could have done many things. I could have written, I dare say, but perhaps after all literature is a temptation. It is a pleasure.

DEAN.

And yet it was from your writings I learnt that although our country can do without any one of us, not one of us can do without his country.

KIRWAN.

All begins in a sense of the boding sacredness of the land under foot. I think I have made that clear.

DEAN.

The sacredness of the hills, I understand; but the people are alien still.

KIRWAN.

If you understand one you are very near to understanding the other. The landscape is the visible image of the mind of its people, created by the imaginations of the race.

DEAN.

For all is thought, all proceeds from thought, and all returns to thought, the world is but our thought.

KIRWAN.

And the thought of our ancestors.

DEAN.

When I talk with you, Kirwan, life seems to widen, the horizon seems lifted, it is thrown back. I was struck the other day when you told my aunt, who did not understand you in the least, that the question we are now agitating is not merely the payment of a debt of money, but a step on the way, on the long road which leads —

KIRWAN.

Whither the race is trending.

DEAN.

But the destiny of the race, what does that really mean?

KIRWAN.

That which is you, which is me, and which is leading us. It is a quality which never ceases among us; each of us bears his spark of the magical power; now and then a spark blazes up into a flame, and the fire fades down to a spark; but the last spark always remains.

DEAN.

It was from you that I heard these things for the first time, and I had only to look within myself to see that they were true. I used to think that material prosperity, that long, settled life, all the things they have at Southhaven, were the only important things. But for a long time back, before I met you, I was conscious of a vague disquietude — that was how the change began in me, in a vague disquietude. I tried to convince myself that it was I who was at fault, and I struggled with my feelings, I battled with my heart, but without avail; I had to give way at last; and once I let myself go, my life, like a tree released from rocks and planted in natural soil, shot up, and as leaves my thoughts lifted themselves and saluted the sun. It is such joy to allow the truth into one's mind, to think for one's self, to be true to one's self. It was like a sudden change of light, and all that had seemed right was suddenly changed to wrong, and what I had thought despicable became right and praiseworthy.

KIRWAN.

Over there if one shuts one's eyes all is pitch blackness, but here, if one shuts them, there is still light.

DEAN.

And the things which I had thought beautiful grew vile, small, and the whole world trivial and black and barren as a handful of gravel.

KIRWAN.

You were dissatisfied even with the earth under your feet; the air was empty of supersensuous life. We are lonely in a foreign land because we are deprived of our past life; but the past is about us here; we see it at evening glimmering among the hollows of the hills.

DEAN.

We miss that sense of kinship which the sight of our native land awakens in us; the barren mountains over there, so lonely, draw me by their antique sympathy; and the rush of the river awakens echoes of old tales in my heart; truly our veins are as old as our rivers. But if I had not met you, Kirwan, I should have known nothing of these things. What should I have been if I had not met you? I dare not think. I should have lived without a dream in my heart, like Aunt Caroline. You remember the seemingly accidental way we met, yet when I met you I seemed to have always known you, and what you said seemed to be just what I was waiting to hear.

KIRWAN.

Everything comes to him who waits. However narrow the circle of our lives we need not wander beyond it, to meet all we need. I did not seek you in Southhaven, I waited here at the foot of these northern mountains, and you came inevitably.

DEAN.

You expected me, then?

KIRWAN.

I expected some one.

DEAN.

But you are not satisfied, not altogether. You sometimes think I am a wanderer, a will-of-the-wisp whose course is zigzag, and that I will light up the way but for a moment.

KIRWAN.

Our lowlands are full of these merry gentlemen, and our skies are full of meteors.

DEAN.

Yes indeed, yes indeed; we all begin by thinking we are fixed stars, and then begin our erratic courses; we know not why or whither we wander, we were born to wander perhaps. Kirwan, I want to tell you about myself, I want to open my heart to you so that you who are wise may tell me what I really am.

KIRWAN.

I have received many confidences, many have opened their hearts and with an unreserve that would surprise you.

DEAN.

Faith is what I need; outside of faith no life exists, unbelief is an empty gulf. I have discovered that. And it is that I may get faith that I seek you so constantly, it is for this that I watch, and that I listen; and the desire of faith in me is so great that my very pores open like thirsting flowers when you speak. It is faith that ennobles, and those who have not faith are conscious of their baseness and of the baseness of life. When I am with you, Kirwan, all seems true, holy, and worthy, but when you
leave me to myself, when I live among worldlings, the beliefs you have inspired within me die like the leaves and flutter away.

KIRWAN.

As you become the voice of the people the personal voice which you dread will die out of your heart.

DEAN (*looking up*).

Ah…. The instincts of Macnee are surer than reason, and we have to take up the great national chain to free ourselves from the little chains of personal interests. Life is a strange intricacy of chains.

KIRWAN.

There are only two chains, the material and the spiritual. I have always told those who come to tell me how interested they are in spiritual things, that there is but one way to attain the spiritual, and that is by sacrifice.

DEAN.

I'm thinking that if I am to become a leader of men, and give effect to your teaching, I must believe at once in the self-sufficiency and in the destiny of our race. The immediate influence behind me is you, I am your tool; other influences are behind you, and you are their tool. I am called to perform a task and to perform it I need not believe much in myself; I am nothing, but I must believe in the sacredness of the land underfoot; I must see in it the birthplace of noble thought, heroism and beauty, and divine ecstasies. These are souls, and in a far truer sense than

we are souls; this land is the birthplace of our anterior selves; at once ourselves and our gods. Our gods have not perished; they have but retired to the lonely hills; and since I've known you, Kirwan, I've seen them, there, at evening; they sit there brooding over our misfortunes, waiting for us to become united with them and with each other once more. You taught me to understand these things; and I think that I do not misinterpret your teaching.

KIRWAN.

If the moment has arrived, you will suffice. Your speech which carried the Corporation with you and your speeches to the people do not convince me so much of your individual capacity as that the moment has come, and that you really are part and parcel of the movement of a nation. Your ideas are merely personal, it is Macnee's ideas that are universal and valid.

DEAN.

Some day I shall believe as implicitly as you do in the great unity of things; I wish to feel when I look at the stars shining, or the flowers growing, that all is a great harmonious song, singing through space and through the ages; and that each race has its destiny; and that as no race has looked so long and so steadfastly through the shells of things out into the beyond, as our race, that it will be the first to attain this supreme end; we know the end is union with something beyond, though words may not further define it; we feel it throbbing always like a pulse within us. But, Kirwan, I should have met you earlier. The truths which you have spoken have not fallen on barren soil, but they have not taken root yet, and I fear every moment lest the wind should come and blow them away.

(*Enter* MILLICENT.)

Oh, Millicent, here you are. I wish you had come a little sooner, the conversation has been so interesting, Kirwan has been saying most interesting things.

KIRWAN.

I think that on this occasion you have done most of the talking yourself, Jasper.

DEAN.

I was but repeating the ideas I learnt from you. It is a joy to me to hear them spoken. When you do not speak them, I have to speak them myself lest I should forget them.

MILLICENT.

Jasper is very modest. Even when he speaks quite original ideas he willingly attributes them to some one else. But on what subject were you saying such interesting things that it was a pity I was not here to hear them?

DEAN.

We were talking of the spiritual destiny of the Celtic race, because of its spiritual inheritance it is greater than any other race; and we were talking too of the necessity of faith, if we would see anything but baseness in life. But one cannot enumerate. It was perhaps the emotion in us that made us think what we were saying was interesting. Set down in cold print our conversation would seem ordinary enough.

MILLICENT.

I know how interested you are in such subjects, Jasper, and some of the emotions of which you speak still linger in your eyes. Then I heard Mr. Kirwan speak of these things the other day.

DEAN.

He only said a few words.

MILLICENT.

But you had told me about your friend, and in a measure I know his ideas, and I spent this morning reading the Cuchullin epic. The description of Cuchullin at the ford is most moving. Even the horse, the grey of Macha, refuses to be harnessed for the last battle, and when he reproaches it, it comes weeping tears of blood.

KIRWAN.

You have read the tale aright. It is an emotion that comes straight out of the heart which is the essential quality of our literature. There are a thousand tales told by greater tellers, but there are no tenderer tales in the world than ours. The Cuchullin epic is full of tenderness so deep that the deadliest conflicts are softened by it. Cuchullin laments over the fallen Fardia with as passionate a grief as Dierdre over Naisi; this tenderness enters into every tale; it is the thread on which all are strung. But I should hardly have thought that Southhaven would appreciate this quality.

MILLICENT.

Southhaven is not all of a piece, there is tenderness there as here. Do you not think that with time and with modern means of communication race characteristics must soften down? After all there is but one race — humanity.

KIRWAN.

Humanity is over and above, but I believe that each race has its destiny, and that a destiny may be spiritual or material.

MILLICENT.

But with inter-marriages these wide differences disappear.

KIRWAN.

Only in so far as that the spiritual dissolves the materialistic race. The Franks settled in France in hundreds of thousands, but the stronger genius of the Celt easily melted the inferior, and France is as Celtic to-day as she was before the Saxon invasion, and it is the same here. (*Pause*.)

MILLICENT.

I wonder if I shall become absorbed? Jasper, do you think you are equal to the task? (*To* KIRWAN, *who has got up to go*.) Why are you going?

KIRWAN.

I feel I'm in a harsh humour, I always go when I feel it coming upon me.

DEAN.

But where are you going? When shall I see you again? There are many things I must see you about.

KIRWAN.

You'll find me at my lodgings. I must go, I have some pressing work to finish by this evening.

DEAN.

Why not write in my study? you will find everything you require and no one will disturb you.

KIRWAN.

It will save time, thank you.

MILLICENT.

He seems indispensable in your life. I don't think I should like to give my room, where all my papers are, to any one to make himself at home in.

DEAN.

I have to talk to him about some business presently. He lives such a long way off and he will be more comfortable there. And then I like to have him in the house; while he is here the atmosphere seems purer, brighter.

MILLICENT.

And while you are talking to me, you will be thinking of how soon you will be able to get back to him.

DEAN.

Millicent! You are not jealous of Kirwan? You will get to like him as much as I do and his presence you'll find as indispensable as I do. He was a little harsh, I admit that. You see the worst of Kirwan in the first meetings! When I met him the first time he was harsh to me, it was only by degrees that he allowed me to see the beauty of his nature.

MILLICENT.

A sort of ugly dog which you end by getting fond of — when he has left off biting you.

DEAN.

Yes, there is something of that in Kirwan. But can't you see the sweetness of his nature showing through?

MILLICENT.

I think I can see that, given certain conditions, he would attract many. I can see that he was just the man who would attract you at the present moment. You're so different.

DEAN.

Really, I've often thought that we're alike. I seemed to discover all that I had been unconsciously seeking in him.

MILLICENT.

You're a man of many ideas and you will try them all; he is clearly a man of one idea.

DEAN.

You must see him again — you don't wish to?

MILLICENT.

Yes, I do. But I don't think he likes me — and I'm sure he's opposed to our marriage.

DEAN.

My dear Millicent, Kirwan is a great friend and anxious about my public life; but he would never dream of interfering with my private life.

MILLICENT.

Can we separate the two?

DEAN.

I don't know. But did you not hear what he said about the inter-marriage of different races, that the weaker race disappears after a few generations?

MILLICENT.

My dear Jasper, you're talking ridiculously.

DEAN.

It is a fact that those who settle in this country become characteristically Celtic. For it is not a question of race, it is the land itself that makes the Celt; and you will soon begin to feel the fascination of this dim, remote land steal over you. When these tiresome politics are over it will be my delight to teach you our heroic past. We will see together the golden work of the fourth century, and we will stray together round many a ruined porch covered with beautiful scroll-work. And we will sail into the west, and I will show you where Conhullen wooed Schya the queen of warrior women.

MILLICENT.

Yes, we'll do all these things, but now you must listen to something more prosaic. I came to tell you that I'm expecting my uncle Hardman this afternoon.

DEAN.

Coming to-day?

MILLICENT.

You don't seem pleased?

DEAN.

You sec our business with Southhaven, our claims against Southhaven, make it difficult for me to meet him. Oh, I daresay it will make no difference. What has brought him over?

MILLICENT.

Your aunt said—

DEAN.

Aunt Caroline still interfering in my life — in my ideas?

MILLICENT.

I half agreed, Jasper, that she should send the telegram; in any case I take the entire responsibility. I'm sure it would be well for you to hear what my uncle Hardman has to say before you commit yourself any further in this agitation.

DEAN.

When you talk like that, Millicent, you remind me too closely of my aunt Caroline. It makes me think that in marrying you I shall fall into what I am trying to escape from. She never could think of me in any other light than as so much clay which she could gradually mould into her idea of what a man should be; when I came home from Oxford she expected me to be that, nothing more and nothing less.

MILLICENT.

And it was this influence so diligently exercised that rendered you susceptible to Kirwan's influence?

DEAN.

No doubt it counted largely. It was the inevitable reaction from an education which taught me to consider nothing but class and family interests. At home and at school I was in revolt, and life was so unsympathetic that I thought I was unfitted for life; but since I met Kirwan, since I entered public life —

MILLICENT.

You're quite happy. Perhaps, Jasper, you're more fitted for public life than for married life?

DEAN.

How so?

MILLICENT.

Married life is private life.

DEAN.

Yes; but they do not conflict. I should be sorry to think that.

MILLICENT.

Tell me, Jasper, what is your idea of life?

DEAN.

I see you as the centre of my life, that to which all things lead up and that from which all things shall proceed. I never thought of marrying any particular woman until I met you. But life as I conceived it was always married life, life within the family circle. Why do you ask? Because you thought that I had led a life such as most young men are supposed to lead?

MILLICENT.

No, that wasn't the reason. I did not think that.

DEAN.

Well, then, why did you ask?

MILLICENT.

I don't think that family life is Kirwan's idea of life.

DEAN.

You surely don't think that Kirwan — What an idea! A purer man never was born.

MILLICENT.

Very likely. But I don't think that life within the family circle is his ideal.

DEAN.

True, he never married. I daresay you are right, though I should be puzzled to say why.

MILLICENT.

You have spoken on so many subjects, I wonder if you ever spoke on this subject?

DEAN.

No, I don't think it ever was mentioned. But I feel you are right all the same.

MILLICENT.

Kirwan is no doubt a very clever man, but he is a monomaniac, he hates women; he has no conception of private life; he has spent his life in hotels and public meetings. But are you prepared to do the same? If you are, you had better not marry.

DEAN.

This jealousy of Kirwan is — is unexpected, and quite unreasonable.

MILLICENT.

No, it is not unreasonable; and nothing in this world concerns me more intimately, and I should be a weak fool indeed if I were to let it pass. You are a man of original mind and talent, Jasper, but you let yourself be absorbed by this man; and the strange thing is that it is your pleasure to allow him to absorb you.

DEAN.

I should have been nothing without Kirwan.

MILLICENT.

Every scholar thinks the same of his schoolmaster.

DEAN.

Maybe you're right. I hadn't thought of that. I suppose so. Admiration of the schoolmaster is inherent in us all.

MILLICENT.

But in a few years we wear through his ideas, and then he seems paltry enough.

DEAN.

And then we get another schoolmaster unless we close our education, and I suppose it is every one's ambition not to do that. But, Millicent, how does my interest in Kirwan's ideas affect you?

MILLICENT.

You deliberately put on his soul, and though you will put it off sooner or later, something of it will sink in, will become part of you.

DEAN.

And then?

MILLICENT.

Then you will see me with Kirwan's eyes, and that I do not wish — I do not intend. I recognise Kirwan as my enemy. His challenge was clear and direct.

DEAN.

His challenge!

MILLICENT.

Yes; his challenge was very explicit, and he has taught you hatred of my town, of the south, and he has induced you to embark in a lifelong adventure against both.

DEAN.

But political questions —

MILLICENT.

Do not concern women. That no doubt is Kirwan's theory. There is nothing on God's earth that does not concern women. Our concern may be different from yours, but it is equal. Kirwan is limiting your life to this place. Dear, I want a wider sphere for your talent.

DEAN.

But to succeed in Southhaven would mean nothing to me. We are nothing outside of our own race and the traditions and the destiny of the race.

MILLICENT.

Those are Kirwan's ideas.

DEAN.

It does not matter whose ideas they are. Are they true?

MILLICENT.

They are true to him. Are you sure that they are true to you? And if this agitation be pursued we shall have to live here always. I daresay that social life means little to you, or you may have grown tired of it, and when you are tired of public affairs you would like a family circle wherein to renew your energies. But what should I be here? You see, you ask me to give up my pursuits, my friends, everything, my life. And what shall I get in exchange?

DEAN.

It is impossible for me to answer that question.

MILLICENT.

I did not put the question to embarrass you. The answer is your love. But your love, much as I covet it, is not sufficient. I want your life, Jasper. I want to share it. I cannot consent to be either a sensuality, a housekeeper, or both. Do you understand?

DEAN.

Yes, I understand.

MILLI CENT.

What I say is reasonable, I know I'm right. My heart tells me that I am, and my heart now is the heart of every woman in the world. I will make sacrifice for you, Jasper. "Thy people shall be my people," but I will not yield any part of my right to share your life. I will be no fly on the wheel: you must choose between me and Kirwan. I will share you no more with him than with another woman. It would be worse, for he absorbs the best part of you.

DEAN.

Do you mean that I'm to give up my friend?

MILLICENT.

No, I'm not so unreasonable as that. I only want your friend to take his proper place in your life, that is all.

DEAN.

I hardly know you to-day, Millicent.

MILLICENT.

How am I different?

DEAN.

It is like coming across a hard and unyielding streak in a beautiful piece of satinwood. (*She goes up the stage*.)

DEAN.

Are you going? (*She goes to him and puts her hands on his shoulders*.)

MILLICENT.

Jasper, we shall always be united.

DEAN.

Yes, we shall always be united. I know it.

(*Miss* CAROLINE DEAN *enters*.)

CAROLINE.

I'm interrupting an agreeable conversation.

DEAN.

Well, perhaps you are, Aunt Caroline.

CAROLINE.

Then I'll go away again.

DEAN.

No, stay. I've some business with Kirwan. He is writing in my study. I'll go to him. [*Exit* O. P.

CAROLINE.

I came to tell you that your uncle may now arrive at any moment. Did you tell Jasper that I had telegraphed to Mr. Hardman?

MILLICENT.

Yes.

CAROLINE.

Was he very angry?

MILLICENT.

No — well, rather, but I told him that I acquiesced.

CAROLINE.

Ah, then he forgot. Your hands were on his shoulders, but I could see you were divided. Not about the sending of the telegram, I hope.

MILLICENT.

No, not about that. Jasper is greatly changed. I seem divorced from his ideas and his interests, and I had hoped to share them all. Now I cannot enter into his life at all.

CAROLINE.

Did you tell him that?

MILLICENT.

Yes; I told him that if I was not to share his life that I did not care to marry him.

CAROLINE.

And did you tell him he would alienate himself from all respectable people?

MILLICENT.

Yes; I said that we should have to live here always.

CAROLINE.

Did you say that he would lose all your friends? Did you mention that?

MILLICENT.

I mentioned everything, but my first interest in him is himself.

CAROLINE.

You don't think that he loves you less?

MILLICENT.

I'm sure that he thinks of me differently; now I am merely a joy in his life which he would not willingly be without, but I am no longer his chief interest in life, and I know why.

CAROLINE.

You mean Kirwan?

MILLICENT.

Yes, and I told him so.

CAROLINE.

How did you put it?

MILLICENT.

I told him that if he were going to give up his life to Kirwan that he had better not marry. What is so strange is that he delights in allowing Kirwan to absorb him; if he is not speaking Kirwan's ideas he does not care to speak at all. Unless I can win him from Kirwan I shall be no more than a servant in his life, and he, unless he shakes off Kirwan, will be no more than a shadow of Kirwan. I would help Jasper, I would direct his energy.

CAROLINE.

You would take Kirwan's place?

MILLICENT.

I would prevent Kirwan from taking mine. Jasper is a leader of men and —

CAROLINE.

There I think you're mistaken. The natural centre of Jasper's life is marriage, and if Kirwan succeeds in turning him from marriage he is ruined.

MILLICENT.

I think he is a leader of men, but I want him to bear forth his own ideas and not Kirwan's.

CAROLINE.

You will never induce him to give up Kirwan.

MILLICENT.

Then I will give him up.

CAROLINE.

Better induce him to give up this agitation.

MILLICENT.

I care little about the agitation. I am thinking of my share in his life, that is the problem before me.

CAROLINE.

But in winning him away from this agitation you will win him from Kirwan. Kirwan's interest in Jasper is merely a political one, only his country interests him. He has no friend.

MILLICENT.

But I have no reason to urge why he should abandon his present politics — no sufficient reason. I am helpless.

(*A bell is heard*.)

CAROLINE.

Very likely that is Mr. Hardman (*runs to window*). Yes, the boat is in; I see them wheeling the mails into the post-office.

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID.

Mr. George Hardman.

(*Enter* HARDMAN. *Exit* MAID.)

MILLICENT.

Oh, how do you do, uncle? This is Miss Caroline Dean.

HARDMAN.

I received your telegram last night, Miss Dean. Millicent knows all about it, of course.

MILLICENT.

Miss Dean consulted me before sending it. I could see that she was very anxious.

HARDMAN.

Well, I came at once.

CAROLINE.

I hope you don't think that we exaggerated the importance of this agitation?

HARDMAN.

It doesn't matter if you did. To-day was comparatively a free day and I was glad of an excuse to get away; the trip will do me good.

CAROLINE.

I felt that no one would bring such knowledge of the world to bear on this matter as you,

HARDMAN.

It is serious. But there's nothing so difficult in this world that it can't be arranged by practical men, as my worthy friend Aiderman Lawrence would say.

CAROLINE.

It was a great sorrow to me to find Jasper allying himself to all the needy adventurers of our town.

MILLICENT.

They are not all needy adventurers. Several of your own family and Aiderman Foley —

CAROLINE.

Aiderman Foley will regret the support he is giving to this agitation.

HARDMAN.

I see that at least on one important particular you are not agreed. I must see Jasper, I must see the others and find out exactly how the matter stands. (*Pause*.)

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID.

A gentleman who wishes to see Mr. Dean, miss.

(*Enter* MACNEE.)

CAROLINE.

Good Heavens!

MILLICENT.

Mr. Dean is in the study.

(*The* MAID *crosses the stage with* MACNEE, *and opens study door. Exit* MACNEE. MAID *crosses the stage, and exit*.)

CAROLINE.

These people are constantly about the house now. (*Pause*.) I'm sure you would like lunch, Mr. Hardman?

HARDMAN.

I started early in the morning, and a sea breeze awakes the appetite.

CAROLINE.

Then I'll go and see if I cannot get them to bring up lunch at once. [Exit.

HARDMAN.

Now tell me, Millicent, what it is all about, why did Miss Dean telegraph to me? Did she do so at your suggestion?

MILLICENT.

Yes, I could see that she was alarmed at the part Jasper is taking in politics. That is one reason.

HARDMAN.

And then?

MILLICENT.

There is another reason, though I was then only vaguely conscious of it; since I have discovered it.

HARDMAN

Surely not that Jasper is changed towards you?

MILLICENT.

Now Jasper looks at life from a different side, so he has changed towards me.

HARDMAN.

He has not said that he is.

MILLICENT.

No, nor do I suppose that he knows that he is.

HARDMAN.

This does not sound very serious.

MILLICENT.

But it is; a woman knows everything that concerns her. Jasper is quite different. He seems to have receded from actual life, he seems to live only in abstractions.

HARDMAN.

Very solid kind of abstractions — an action at law to extort a large sum of money.

MILLICENT.

He has fallen under the influence of Kirwan, and he sees and hears at present with Kirwan's eyes and ears. So I really have ceased to care to marry Jasper. I was telling Miss Dean so when you came in.

HARDMAN.

Who is this man Kirwan?

MILLICENT.

Jasper is but his mouthpiece, I can tell you no more. I'm very unhappy.

HARDMAN.

My dear Millicent… Where is this man!

MILLICENT.

(*Recovering herself quickly*.) He is in there, in the study with Jasper. Let us talk of something else. I told Jasper that I had heard you say there is nothing in this claim. Is that so?

HARDMAN.

Well, it is just one of those vexations — but, putting aside the public question for a moment, it occurs to me that a large part of your money is invested in house property in Southhaven, and the extra rate that would have to be levied to meet this claim would reduce your income considerably. You have money too invested in our line of steamers.

MILLICENT.

I wonder if it ever occurred to Jasper that one of the results of this agitation would be to reduce my income?

HARDMAN (*walking tip the stage*).

No man in his senses would put himself at the head of an agitation, the first result of which would be to reduce his wife's income. (*Returning to* MILLICENT.) You will speak to him on this subject, you will tell him what I say?

MILLICENT.

Of course.

HARDMAN.

I knew we should find a way out of the difficulty.

MILLICENT.

Now I feel happier; before all was dark and vague. At last I begin to see my way. Thank you, uncle. How clever you are!

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID.

Lunch is ready, sir.

(*Immediately after enter* MISS CAROLINE DEAN. *Exit* MAID.)

CAROLINE.

I hope that you and Millicent together will be able to persuade Jasper.

HARDMAN.

Not a doubt of it, not a doubt of it, Miss Dean. The whole thing might be described as a wild-goose chase, and I am hungry enough to eat the wild goose if you have nothing else.

CAROLINE.

But what has happened? You looked so serious when you arrived.

HARDMAN.

I'll tell you at lunch. Where is Jasper?

MILLICENT.

He is in the study and does not wish to be disturbed.

[*Exeunt* HARDMAN *and* MILLICENT *and* CAROLINE. *The* MAID *crosses the stage and knocks at the study door*.)

MAID.

Lunch is ready, sir. (*The MAID returns, exit* P.)

(*Enter* DEAN, KIRWAN *and* MACNEE. *Exit* MACNEE C.)

KIRWAN.

Whether she be clever or charming is a matter of the hour and the day. What should give us pause is that in accepting her one is accepting life, and life is what we should fly from.

DEAN.

Fly from life, how can we?

KIRWAN.

Life, always hungry, follows eager to devour us, and only three men, a Hindu, a Greek, and a Jew escaped; the others, the great ones, the greatest ones, lost some part of themselves in the jaws of life. Woman is life in its most typical form, and family life a wolfish pack.

DEAN.

How strangely you think, Kirwan! You look to the very end; nothing stays or turns aside your thought.

KIRWAN.

We must choose between thought and the conventions. Come, let us go downstairs; they'll be able to tell us if a married man would be justified in setting aside private interests for public duty. [*Exeunt*.

CURTAIN.

ACT THE FOURTH.

A sitting-room in the principal hotel of the town. GEORGE HARDMAN *anxious and restless. The* WAITER *enters.*

WAITER.

Alderman Daniel Lawrence wants to see you, sir.

HARDMAN.

He has come at last. (*To the* WAITER.) Show him up.

(*Exit the* WAITER. DANIEL LAWRENCE *enters*.)

LAWRENCE.

My dear Mayor, I'm so glad to see you. How well you are looking! I never saw you looking better in my life.

HARDMAN.

Thank you, Alderman Lawrence, thank you. I am very glad to see you. I hope you are well!

LAWRENCE.

As well as can be expected in these anxious times, Mayor.

HARDMAN.

Beautiful weather, isn't it? (*Pause*.) You will excuse me sending for you in this hurried way. I wish especially to consult you about the unjustifiable agitation that is going on in this town. You are an able man, Alderman Lawrence — a man of the world and of affairs. You know this town well. Tell me, how do you think this agitation will end?

LAWRENCE.

I think it will succeed.

HARDMAN.

You do?

LAWRENCE.

That is my opinion.

HARDMAN.

You are a staunch friend of ours. What is your advice?

LAWRENCE.

I advise payment before the law is set in motion; otherwise you will have to pay enormous costs in addition to the original payment.

HARDMAN.

Oh, this is impossible!

LAWRENCE.

Why?

HARDMAN.

No member of our Corporation could propose such a thing without being politically discredited for life.

LAWRENCE.

Well, I don't see what else you can do.

HARDMAN.

You know this town well, Alderman Lawrence, cannot you think of some device?

LAWRENCE.

You set me a most difficult task.

HARDMAN.

Just consider. I always maintain that Southhaven has not appreciated your merits as it should have.

LAWRENCE.

Now that you have touched upon it, I will say it to you, as a friend, that Southhaven has done nothing to encourage me, considering the extremely unpopular part I play here from time to time in her interest.

HARDMAN.

You know the post of solicitor to our Corporation is just vacant. The emoluments are very handsome.

LAWRENCE.

I know, my dear Mayor, I know.

HARDMAN.

The appointment will surely be given to the lawyer who does the best service to our town.

LAWRENCE.

Quite so. I have often thought what a pleasant thing it would be to have that appointment.

HARDMAN.

Besides, remember there is a very handsome retiring pension.

LAWRENCE.

Yes; I have always considered a pension as the fine flower of an appointment.

HARDMAN.

And still with such a prize before you, can you not find a means of winning it?

LAWRENCE.

My dear Mayor, how you torture me!

HARDMAN.

Come, come, Alderman Lawrence, there must be some way out of this difficulty.

LAWRENCE.

Well, really I am put to the pin of my collar. Have you yet seen the Corporation?

HARDMAN.

Only a few of them, and then not in a business way.

LAWRENCE.

Perhaps it might come to something if you were to meet them in a body?

HARDMAN.

Or perhaps one by one — just casually, you know. Who are the most likely to be influenced?

LAWRENCE.

You see, popular excitement has risen to such a pitch that not one of them would dare, even if he were inclined, to take your advice. Moreover, the secession of an Alderman would make little difference, but if Jasper could be induced to abandon the movement there would be such a scramble among the rest for leadership that everything else would be forgotten.

HARDMAN.

Nothing can be done with Jasper. I've never seen any one so determined. Millicent's money is invested in Southhaven house property and in our steamers. I put it to Jasper. I said, "It is quite impossible for you to continue at the head of an agitation which will reduce the value of her property."

LAWRENCE.

I quite understand; and Jasper, what did he say?

HARDMAN.

He spoke of private interests clashing with public interests, and that if each individual case were to be considered the State could not exist, and so on.

LAWRENCE.

Ah, I think he must be a little mad, I've often thought so. Such a thing was never heard of before. A crusade to reduce the value of your wife's property! Good Heavens! And then I've always heard that he was deeply attached to Miss Fell.

HARDMAN.

I believe he is, but for the moment he is so carried away by popular enthusiasm, he is like a cork on a wave. He was of course very much shocked when I told him, and he said that it made his position very difficult.

LAWRENCE.

But he remained firm. Ahem!

HARDMAN.

Is there no one who is shaky in his convictions regarding this unfortunate business?

LAWRENCE.

There is a certain erratic creature called Foley, who is not of much account, however, except for his newspaper.

HARDMAN.

Yes, now I remember, my niece told me that he seems doubtful of the justice of Dean's action, and that she thought she might have influenced him.

LAWRENCE.

I have no doubt of it. He is one of those people who have a difficulty in not going over to the side of any sympathetic person they meet. Ferguson says of him that "everybody he talks to leaves the mark of his five fingers on his face." If only Miss Fell could see her way — to — well, a little flirtation — ever so little — just a little sympathy in her voice, you know — it might do wonders.

HARDMAN.

My dear Alderman, you don't know what you are talking about. My niece flirt with Foley! Quite impossible!

LAWRENCE.

Quite so, quite so, I am trying to think of a way out of this difficulty. Perhaps after all it is not necessary. The tender spot in Foley's heart is Miss Caroline Dean's fortune. I think if Dean shows even the least sign of wavering, and above all, if he can suggest some literary or economic idea which will not be injurious to Southhaven, and may help to preserve Foley's good name with the mob, I think he will come over to our side — to Miss Caroline Dean's side. Her politics are fortunately very decided.

HARDMAN.

Is he, then, incarnate insincerity?

LAWRENCE.

On the contrary, he finds it so easy to be sincere about any idea, that he sees no reason why he should not prefer the ideas which suit his interests best. Why, he is sincerity itself; sincerity is a prevalent vice in this town, and Foley is a striking example. Our public life would be much more continuous if there were more people with sufficient strength of will to say one thing and believe another. (*They walk to and fro*.) Here is an idea! If you were to meet the Corporation in a body you might reason with them, and in the course of the argument the weak spots would begin to appear; you might put your views to them quietly and with tact.

HARDMAN.

They are as obdurate —

LAWRENCE.

I have never seen them so obdurate.

HARDMAN.

But this matter, like every other matter, is a question of compromise.

LAWRENCE.

If you have anything to propose.

HARDMAN.

What would they take?

LAWRENCE.

If I could only think of something that you might offer!

HARDMAN.

I wish you could. (*They walk up and down thinking*.)

LAWRENCE.

What do you think, my dear Mayor, if you were to — well, to buy a house here, and grounds, and to say that you would stay part of the year with them, and spend money in entertaining?

HARDMAN.

I'd willingly do that (*looking round*), for I like the place; but I don't think they'd accept my company as an equivalent for the supposed debt.

LAWRENCE.

No, perhaps not! (*Sits, and falls into an attitude of deep thought*.) Anything to be done in the tourist line? Excursion steamers! No, you think not. Very likely not. The opening up of the country! (*Changes his position. Pause*.) Let me see, what are the questions that have been agitated lately? There has been, among other things, a good deal of talk about a tramway line running from the centre of the poorer parts of the town. What do you think of that?

HARDMAN.

I should be very glad to supply the capital. Ah! if they would accept a tramway, if that could be arranged! That's a very happy thought of yours, my dear Alderman! And I can send them some cart-loads of seed potatoes — an early kind, you know — for those impoverished nursery gardens to the west of your town.

LAWRENCE.

That will do nicely, my dear Mayor. Potatoes do not stir up any dangerous fermentation of ideas. The tramway is very much needed, and you could weigh the certain advantages of the tramway, with the risk of long legal proceedings. After all, nothing is certain in law. Now let me see, the Corporation is sitting at present. Supposing I were to go now, and ask all the members to meet you here when their business is finished?

HARDMAN.

Or do you think it would be better if I were to go and meet them? What do you think?

LAWRENCE.

Oh no, that would be too public and formal. The meeting ought to be friendly, convivial — you understand. You know all our Corporation, don't you, my dear Mayor?

HARDMAN.

Yes, I think I have met them all.

LAWRENCE.

And have no doubt come to an opinion as to their abilities. There is Ferguson, a lawyer: he considers himself a veritable Blackstone on legal procedure. He and Foley have always been at each other's throats, and the marvel is how Jasper ever induced them to unite in a common policy.

HARDMAN.

I quite understand.

LAWRENCE.

Kirwan you know about. He is at the bottom of the whole mischief. It was he who set Jasper's imagination aflame. He is a compound of literature, patriotism, and belief in what he calls the spiritual inheritance of the race.

HARDMAN.

Nothing to be done with him?

LAWRENCE.

Nothing. Pollock and Leech support Jasper because the second cousin of one married the third cousin of Jasper's mother, and they take the opinion of the family, and like to support what they call their class.

HARDMAN.

The weakest point is the natural antagonism of Foley and Ferguson. I see, I see.

(*The* WAITER *enters*.)

WAITER.

The Misses Dean. [*Exit* WAITER.

(*Enter* Miss CAROLINE *and* Miss ARABELLA DEAN.)

CAROLINE.

Mr. Hardman, how is your dear niece? How do you do, Alderman Lawrence?

(HARDMAN *goes to the* WAITER *and speaks to him in dumb show*.)

LAWRENCE.

How do you do, Miss Dean? How well you're looking! I never saw you looking better in my life.

CAROLINE.

Don't say that, Alderman Lawrence, I feel ten years older. I am sure I'm looking wretched, and not without sufficient reason. This has been a terrible blow to me, as you may easily imagine. After all my teaching — no one ever was brought up more carefully than Jasper — to see Jasper turn against his family and his class. Oh, it is very sad! Within the last few days my whole life seems to have crumbled before my eyes.

LAWRENCE.

Kirwan —

CAROLINE.

It was all his doing. He is the origin of it all. Don't mention the man's name. I abhor the man himself — his literature, his politics, and his religion, if you can call such beliefs as his a religion.

ARABELLA.

Our life since Millicent left us has been most wretched.

CAROLINE.

Jasper does not speak to me when we meet; we sit down to meals in silence. I must say, though, that Arabella has supported me; she had the strength to tell Jasper that although she would always love him, she could not entirely approve of an agitation which would reduce the value of Miss Fell's property.

ARABELLA.

It is this that Jasper feels most sorely; if it had not been for this he would not have cared —

CAROLINE.

If he never spoke to another respectable person. And that odious man coming about the house! Alderman Lawrence, can you not help us?

LAWRENCE.

That is exactly what I'm trying to do, Miss Dean. I'm going to bring the Corporation here for a conference with Mr. Hardman.

CAROLINE.

If they would only listen to reason! But I've lost hope.

LAWRENCE.

I've great hopes of success. [*Exit*

CAROLINE.

How is Millicent? Shan't we see her?

HARDMAN.

Won't you sit down, Miss Dean?

CAROLINE.

I'm so excited and worried that I'm better standing up. But Arabella might like to sit down. Well — I'll sit down. I should like to see Millicent.

HARDMAN.

She is in her room. I don't think she is feeling very well. Perhaps you will excuse her.

CAROLINE.

She knows it was not our fault.

HARDMAN.

She knows that.

CAROLINE.

The mistake was her leaving us. If she had only remained I am sure she would have succeeded in winning Jasper over. You see, we know Jasper better than you can know him. You and she take Jasper to be a determined, strong-minded man; he is not in the least that.

HARDMAN.

I've noticed no signs of weakness in Jasper; there is more grit in him than I thought. He is against me, I do not approve; he is as wrong-headed as you like, but he is not weak.

ARABELLA.

He is deeply attached to Millicent; there can be no question about that.

CAROLINE.

Yet he is more than ever determined in his politics. For her to leave us was a mistake; I'm convinced of it. She ought not to have broken off her engagement.

HARDMAN.

But what else could she do? She was asked not only to give up all her friends, her social position in Southhaven, but also to consent to lose a considerable portion of her property. Really, Miss Dean, I don't think that I need insist further.

CAROLINE.

I know all that; but if she had remained with us she might have persuaded him.

HARDMAN.

He did not flinch, he told her to her face.

CAROLINE.

I know, I know. But if Millicent would consent to marry Jasper she would soon get her way with him. Once he was removed from the influence of this maleficent Kirwan

HARDMAN.

The risk is really too great; I could not advise such a course.

ARABELLA.

I've always thought that I understood Jasper, but in the last few days he speaks with a strange voice that I do not recognise at all.

HARDMAN.

Quite so; I confess I was taken by surprise.

CAROLINE.

Jasper is a rich man. Unless the loss to her property be very considerable he could compensate her.

HARDMAN.

Only by diminishing his own income.

ARABELLA.

Caroline and I would make sacrifices.

CAROLINE.

My dear Arabella, our incomes would not suffice, and Jasper would not allow us.

(WAITER *enters*.)

WAITER.

Alderman Jasper Dean.

(*Enter* DEAN.)

DEAN.

Oh, I do not find you alone. You have invited the Corporation to meet you, and I thought that I would come over before our business was finished. I did not expect to meet my aunts here.

CAROLINE.

Wc will go.

ARABELLA.

Jasper, have you come to see Millicent?

DEAN.

Yes, I hope to see her.

HARDMAN.

Millicent is in her room; she is not very well to-day and does not propose to receive visitors.

DEAN.

I hoped, Mr. Hardman — I came here in hopes —

ARABELLA.

We too came here in hopes. How can you expect a girl to marry you when you are doing everything you can to deprive her of her property?

DEAN.

That you, Aunt Arabella, who have always been kind, should turn against me at last! (*He repulses her*.) Mr. Hardman, you are a stranger, and will understand better than my relations. I feel keenly the difficulty of my position; it is most painful; it is almost unbearable.

HARDMAN.

My dear Jasper, I easily guess that you must suffer, for I know that you're fond of Millicent; I may say even that I appreciate the pluck you are showing in very trying circumstances.

DEAN.

Thank you for that. That is the first word of sympathy (*looking at his aunts*) I have had.

HARDMAN.

The worst of it is that you are sacrificing your life for no object.

DEAN.

No object! Ah, if you knew! But you look at life from a different side.

HARDMAN.

You enter your house like a rioter, and having thrown your furniture out of the window you stand there surprised to find that you have not changed the face of the world. We change nothing. The enthusiasms which have lit your imagination will pass away; soon you will be sitting over the embers. I have invited your Corporation to meet me. I intend to try to arrive at some sort of compromise; if you oppose me you will go to the wall; for I'm appealing to the grosser instincts which are always with us, which are the world we live in.

(*Enter* WAITER.)

WAITER.

The members of the Corporation are below, sir.

HARDMAN.

Very well; show them up. (*Exit* WAITER.) Well, Jasper? You're undecided.

DEAN.

No, I'm not undecided. There's always a right and a wrong way, and the wrong way always seems the more reasonable.

(*Enter* ALDERMAN DANIEL LAWRENCE, ALDERMAN JAMES POLLOCK, ALDERMAN MICHAEL LEECH, MAYOR JOSEPH TENCH, ALDERMAN RALPH KIRWAN, FERGUSON, VALENTINE FOLEY, *and various Town Councillors, the Town Clerk,* JOHN CLORAN. The WAITER brings in tray with glasses, &c.)

LAWRENCE.

My dear Mr. Hardman, I suppose it is superfluous for me to introduce our respected Mayor and Corporation?

HARDMAN.

Indeed, we are no strangers, gentlemen, you are welcome. How is Alderman Ferguson, my courteous friend? — ah, a noted authority on municipal procedure too. And here is the new journalism — Alderman Foley, how do you do, sir? Ah, Alderman Kirwan, the beginning of modern Celtic literature. (*He shakes hands with other members*.) How do you do, Alderman Leech? Gentlemen, won't you have some refreshments? (*They help themselves largely to liquor*.)

(FOLEY *comes down stage to speak to* MISS CAROLINE DEAN.)

CAROLINE.

I am sorry, Mr. Foley, that you have taken a pronounced part in this agitation.

FOLEY.

My dear Miss Dean, I do not pretend that it is an eternal truth. But there is some truth in everything, though the truth of to-day is not always that of yesterday.

CAROLINE.

Truth is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow.

FOLEY.

There are the eternal verities, to be sure; but they are not the business of the newspapers. Our ideas are borne in upon us like the leaves on the wind; we express them; we have to think of the need of the moment. Popular feeling is to-day for this movement, to-morrow it may be against it.

ARABELLA.

But we should not change our practice of life.

FOLEY.

Our practice of life is, alas! often mean enough, but the intolerable is not to have large and noble views of what life should be and to expound those views in language as — as —

ARABELLA.

As eloquent as space will allow.

CAROLINE.

At all events I hope you will give a fair hearing to the proposals Mr. Hardman intends to make, and you will come to see me soon I hope.

FOLEY.

I shall have much pleasure. (*They shake hands*.)

CAROLINE.

(*Going up the stage and meeting* MR. HARDMAN.) Goodbye, Mr. Hardman; I came here in the hopes of inducing my nephew to abandon an agitation which every one must sec is entirely unsafe. I regret, Mr. Hardman, that my influence has proved of no avail. Arabella, are you coming?

[*Exuent* Miss CAROLINE *and* Miss ARABELLA DEAN.

HARDMAN.

(*Coming down the stage*.) If you have made up your minds to decline every proposal whatever it may be, I will not weary you with any one. Let us talk of other things. I hear that the year promises to be an excellent one.

KIRWAN.

You press alms upon us, whereas we desire only that you should pay your debts.

FOLEY.

I am here as a representative of the Press, gentlemen, and it would be impossible for me to decline to hear Mr. Hardman's proposal. I hope that Mr. Alderman Ferguson will see the unreason of saying he does not agree to proposals which he has not yet heard.

FERGUSON.

Alderman Foley is very quick to jump down my throat. I only meant that nothing short of our strict rights would satisfy me.

HARDMAN.

I suppose you mean that very little short of your strict rights will satisfy you, for compromise enters into all human affairs.

FERGUSON.

Nothing but our strict rights.

HARDMAN.

Even the law courts cannot give you what you believe to be your strict rights. The costs will be enormous, even if you win; and the law is proverbially uncertain.

FERGUSON.

Upon a point of law, sir, I can assure you that you have no case; and upon a point of law these gentlemen will be guided by me.

HARDMAN.

I wished to discuss this matter quietly among ourselves. I assure you that there are arguments.

FERGUSON.

Everything that can be said has been said; is not that so, Dean?

DEAN.

I think so. But if Mr. Hardman has any offer to make, I shall be glad to hear it.

HARDMAN.

I should like to hear Alderman Foley's opinion upon a little matter which Alderman Lawrence and myself were discussing this morning. The town is in eminent need of a new tramway leading to the quarter of the poorest people, it would be a great benefit to them. Now, it seems to me that —

KIRWAN.

What you say, Mr. Hardman, is quite true; the tramway is wanted, and it would likewise prove an excellent investment for Southhaven capital.

HARDMAN.

If it is in that spirit my proposals are met, it would be useless for me to proceed further. (*Looking in the direction of* FOLEY.) Alderman Foley, without desiring you to commit yourself to an opinion, I hope I can rely on you for a fair statement of my proposal. The people should know my offer.

FOLEY.

I should be wanting in my duty to the public if I were to allow my private feelings to prevent me from publishing every matter of news.

KIRWAN.

But, Alderman Foley, I thought we had all agreed on the one line of action.

FOLEY.

I shall place the matter impartially before my readers. The interests of the Press must be safeguarded.

HARDMAN.

I am glad to see that Alderman Foley is not of your opinion on the question of compromise, and you may be sure that not a few of your townspeople will blame you for neglecting the solid interests of your town.

KIRWAN.

Alderman Foley has shown no sign of wavering that I know of, and it would only matter to him if he did. Our townspeople are solid behind us, as will be seen at the great mass meeting at the Town Hall to-morrow.

HARDMAN.

Then what further boon? I offer to supply the capital of the tramway, and Mr. Lawrence proposed this morning that I should take a house and grounds and spend part of the year with you. But I should like to hear Mr. Jasper Dean's opinion. Does he believe that compromise is impossible?

DEAN.

I've really nothing further to add. I think Mr. Alderman Ferguson touched the root of the question when he said that he did not believe it would be possible to compromise this matter. Your offer of the tramway convinces me he is right. As Mayor Tench has said, we stand by the finding of the accountants.

LAWRENCE.

But the accountants were not all agreed that certain harbour dues should be charged.

DEAN.

That is a point of law on which we have had the best advice. (*Turning excitedly to* HARDMAN.) We are resolved to fight this to the end.

LAWRENCE.

I am sure, gentlemen, that with patience this discussion will lead to an amicable settlement.

TENCH.

Did you ever see the Corporation so united before? As for the tramway, we shall have plenty of money to build that for ourselves, when we have been paid what is owed to us. Won't we, Alderman Dean?

DEAN.

(*Absently*.) What? Yes, of course.

LAWRENCE.

Take my advice, and come to terms when you can. A change of affairs might happen that would upset all your calculations. Then you might find yourselves in a worse state than ever.

FERGUSON.

I must be going too. Goodbye, Mr. Hardman. Your cigars are excellent!

HARDMAN.

Your demands are outside the pale of practical politics.

KIRWAN.

That is your answer to all our demands.

LAWRENCE.

Oh, my dear Mr. Hardman! Oh, my dear colleagues of the Corporation, where are you going? Where are you going?

TENCH.

I am afraid, Mr. Hardman, we cannot stay any longer.

HARDMAN.

(*As the Corporation are bowing and departing*.) Well, gentlemen, I hope we part good friends, in spite of all differences in opinion. I will see you downstairs.

(*Exeunt all except* DEAN *and* KIRWAN.)

KIRWAN.

The choice was difficult, but you proved equal to the task of choosing.

DEAN.

Shall I regret?

KIRWAN.

No, you will not regret, but while the blood is young it will cry out. Miss Fell is the temptation that Southhaven sent you, and she sends to each some insidious temptation. Southhaven is

always beside us to tempt us in our moments of weakness. No sooner do we become united behind any man than she comes to him with her hands full of bribes.

(*Enter* MILLICENT.)

MILLICENT.

I heard that you were here. But you are engaged — it doesn't matter.

DEAN.

But Miss Fell. (*To* KIRWAN.) Miss Fell wishes to speak to me. I'll see you presently. I'll call for you on my way home. [*Exit* KIRWAN

MILLICENT.

I did not like to go away without seeing you. My uncle told you that I could not see you.

DEAN.

Yes; I understood that you did not wish to see me.

MILLICENT.

But I changed my mind. I felt that I must see you.

DEAN.

And, Millicent, I felt that I must see you.

MILLICENT.

Tell me about the meeting. I can see there was no compromise. You would yield nothing.

(*They sit on two chairs halfway up the stage facing the audience*.)

DEAN.

As Kirwan says, there are but two ways, the right and the wrong, and no compromise is possible.

MILLICENT.

So we are parted.

DEAN.

There is no reason why we should be if —

MILLICENT.

Let us not go over it all again; all that can be said has been said.

DEAN.

Alas. And our happiness is a mere matter of money — money which neither of us cares much about; and yet this money puts me in a wretched plight.

MILLICENT.

That I may lose a few hundred pounds or all I have got matters nothing compared to —

DEAN.

To what?

MILLICENT.

To the fact that you do not love me enough. This money we could do without, but I cannot marry a man who has resolved that his life shall be Kirwan's apparitor and satellite. My friends, my pursuits, my family, I can give up, but I cannot give up myself; and am I not an inheritance of ideas which you hate, which you used not to hate, but which you have learnt to hate? Everything divides us, and yet we're very dear to each other.

DEAN.

That is the misery of it.

MILLICENT.

Ah, if you had never met Kirwan!

DEAN.

I should be quite different, no doubt, and many things which lie heavy on my heart would pass by lightly enough.

MILLICENT.

My uncle, who is a clever man, compared you to a rioter who breaks into his own house and, having wrecked it, looks out of the window surprised to find the world exactly the same as before.

DEAN.

He said the same to me, and from his point of view the image is a striking one.

MILLICENT.

He said you were following a chimera.

DEAN.

Do we not all follow chimeras, he as much as I? Is it so sure that the material world which he follows is less chimerical than the spiritual truths which I strive to follow?

MILLICENT.

I do not trouble about such things, I only know that —

DEAN.

At all events we have no proof that spiritual truths are illusory, whereas we know that the world is.

MILLICENT.

Yes; it slides like sand under our feet, even I have perceived that.

DEAN.

The difficulty in life is the choice, and all the wonder of life is in the choice.

MILLICENT.

Between what?

DEAN.

The world within us and the world without us. You are the world that is outside of me, I am the world that is outside of you. (*Pause*.) Do you understand?

MILLICENT.

Yes; I think I do. (*Pause*.)

DEAN.

Now tell me of what you're thinking, Millicent.

MILLICENT.

I was thinking how we think of all these things, and how we act just as if we hadn't thought of them at all. So this is the end. It was to part like this that I met you at Oxford.

DEAN.

Ah, the day I met you as you sauntered across the sunny old quadrangle, that Sunday morning!

MILLICENT,

And the day we went on the river! We rowed by the ruins of Godstone nunnery where fair Rosamund ended her days. We talked of her strange beauty and looked across the yellow meadows.

DEAN.

That happy day! My soul was in all the air. I felt that something had befallen me — something momentous, something that would never happen again. Millicent, we cannot part. You said the other day that we were united. I feel that we are.

MILLICENT.

You say so now (*they get up*), but to-morrow you would regret it — not to-morrow, perhaps, but sooner or later. Kirwan has shown you the way, and your feet have begun to travel the way which it would be a lifelong regret to turn back from. You would feel at the end of the journey that you had not walked in life, but alongside of life.

DEAN.

I shall be unhappy whichever is my choice.

MILLICENT.

I don't wish to ruin any one's life, nor do I wish any one to ruin mine.

DEAN.

To ruin your life!

MILLICENT.

Yes; I too have a life to ruin, though I am only a woman. Can I not see you five years hence looking across the table at me, even at your children, and regretting that you had sacrificed your country for them? Go to your country, it shall not be said that I have robbed it.

DEAN.

I am not equal to the sacrifice. I cannot forego the joy of you, Millicent.

MILLICENT.

You think so now. To-morrow your heart will rejoice secretly in your escape. (*She is about to go.*) Here is my uncle. Goodbye. (*She goes out by one door as* HARDMAN *and* LAWRENCE *enter by another.*)

HARDMAN.

Well, Jasper, I hope that Millicent has convinced you that as you have only one life to live you had better live it.

DEAN.

That we should live our lives there can be no question, but in which direction we may live them the most fully is a question which neither she nor I have been able to settle. [*Exit*

(*They sit down on the same two chairs*.)

LAWRENCE.

What has happened? (HARDMAN *shrugs his shoulders*.) One has given way, but which? We're in their hands; they hold us in the hollow of their hands.

HARDMAN.

Perhaps neither has given way.

LAWRENCE.

One must have given way. The yielding one is the hinge on which the world swings. My idea that you should meet the Corporation wasn't a bad one, was it? (HARDMAN *doesn't answer*.) Do you think that Jasper will give way? It is generally the woman that yields. And if she yields my appointment is lost. (*They get up*.)

HARDMAN.

The appointment may yet be yours. Goodbye for the present, my dear Alderman.

(LAWRENCE *goes out and* HARDMAN *stands looking after him*.)

CURTAIN.

ACT THE FIFTH.

The same as in the Second and Third Acts. MISS CAROLINE DEAN *and Miss* ARABELLA DEAN *discovered talking,* KIRWAN *standing at the back of the stage*.

ARABELLA.

From the beginning I thought that you were inclined to overdo it; not only were the hours of study, but the very hours of recreation were arranged by you.

CAROLINE.

Wild nature is abominable; beauty and morals are cultivation. You train a tree, you train a horse, why should you not train a child?

ARABELLA.

He was bound to break through your severity. I don't think he was right, Caroline, but a man of genius gets loose somehow —

CAROLINE.

Jasper is not a man of genius.

ARABELLA.

Jasper is very young. We do not know what he will become —

CAROLINE.

There will be no becoming; he will remain what he is for a while, and then deteriorate.

ARABELLA.

I daresay you think, Caroline, if it had not been for me you would have succeeded.

CAROLINE.

You never helped me, you always gave way to him; I have myself heard you urge him to follow his own inclination.

ARABELLA.

We are divided on the question whether we can mould a soul, or if, without our aid and despite our hindrance, a soul takes the shortest cut to its own destiny.

CAROLINE.

It must be right to teach what we believe to be right; and the proof of this is that we all teach. Our teaching may be a benevolent neutrality like yours, a general go-as-you-please, or a disciplined teaching like mine; but in either case we teach.

ARABELLA.

Yes, teaching seems as essential to teacher as to pupil. I daresay you are right, Caroline.

CAROLINE.

I at least think that I am right, and you have no clear convictions —

ARABELLA.

I have no clear convictions on this point, perhaps; on no point are my convictions as clear as yours.

(KIRWAN *comes down on the stage*.)

KIRWAN.

I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but time is flying. I'm afraid he'll be late.

CAROLINE.

You are very forgetful, Alderman Kirwan; can you not remember that my desire is that he shall not go to this meeting?

ARABELLA.

Do wait a little. Do wait, he will be disappointed if he misses you.

KIRWAN.

The meeting has begun, and it is a matter of vital importance that he should be there.

ARABELLA.

(*Rising*.) Where can he be? His study door is locked; he must have gone to the meeting, for he is nowhere about the house.

KIRWAN.

It is very strange.

ARABELLA.

Wait a little longer, unless you think you know where you can find him.

KIRWAN.

(*To* CAROLINE.) Let us differ amicably, Miss Dean, since we must differ. I believe all your fears to be groundless, and that the result will prove them to be so even to you. But the man who loses his opportunity, loses himself. (*He goes up the stage*.)

CAROLINE.

Arabella, why did you ask him to stay? You have no consideration for my feelings. (*She gels up*, ARABELLA *detains her*.)

ARABELLA.

He's Jasper's greatest friend.

CAROLINE.

Jasper looks to him as to a god, and drinks down every word he utters as eagerly as if he were listening to a divine utterance.

ARABELLA.

Kirwan is the first man of ideas that Jasper met.

CAROLINE.

Really, Arabella, I understand you no longer. At the University —

ARABELLA.

I don't think that Jasper was ever interested in learning, it was something else that interested him in Kirwan.

CAROLINE.

Something else! What else? hatred of respectable people and a preference for abominable folklore to Greek culture. All our labours in vain, my early teaching and the teaching of the most learned professors in Southhaven wasted!

ARABELLA.

But, Caroline, you have never read our Gaelic literature. I have been with him on his quests.

CAROLINE.

Yes, taking down ridiculous stories from the lips of old crooning women sitting by peat fires.

ARABELLA.

You have not heard his explanation of the value of these old wives' tales as you call them. All literature begins, he says, in such tales. For no man originates — a nation does that just as the earth produces the marble the sculptor carves.

KIRWAN.

(*Comes down the stage*.) I cannot wait any longer; the meeting has begun.

ARABELLA.

What shall we tell Jasper?

KIRWAN.

I don't think there is anything to tell him. It is clear that he does not intend to go to the meeting. He has put his faith in the joys of the flesh and the world.

ARABELLA.

Will he be the unhappier for that?

CAROLINE.

He thinks too much of happiness; he should rather try to consider what is right for him to do.

KIRWAN.

For once we find ourselves in agreement, Miss Dean (*turning to* ARABELLA). Tell him nothing. Yes, tell him that I will not reproach him.

ARABELLA.

Thank you, Alderman Kirwan, thank you.

CAROLINE.

And what are you going to do, Alderman Kirwan — nothing?

KIRWAN.

I am going to the meeting to see the disaster. I am a collector of broken causes.

CAROLINE.

You are going there to lead, this is your opportunity.

ARABELLA.

No one can take Jasper's place. You will be beaten, Alderman Kirwan.

CAROLINE.

Really, Arabella, you begin to strain my patience.

KIRWAN.

She understands better than you do, Miss Dean. I cannot lead. My opinions are too well known, and when I write them or speak them people merely say, "There is Alderman Kirwan again, how many years has he been saying that now?" and they yawn and talk about something else.

CAROLINE.

But Jasper merely expressed your ideas.

KIRWAN.

I know that, but that was just what was wanted, a new
man to speak old thoughts, that is what the world always wants.

CAROLINE.

I don't understand.

KIRWAN.

I daresay you don't; but I say that in losing Jasper we have lost everything. The very strength of personality that makes union so hard among us might have made us a great people if he but dared to lead us. He preferred — well, goodbye, Miss Dean, goodbye. (*Aside as he goes out*.) He might have been remembered in times to come, we should have told our children about him. [*Exit*.

CAROLINE.

We're saved, we're saved.

ARABELLA.

But if he succeeds in leading after all and Hardman is defeated?

CAROLINE.

Oh! what do I care as long as it is not Jasper who defeats him, and we are safe with our Southhaven friends and with respectable people here. Jasper will now be able to take the lead in respectable causes.

ARABELLA.

Respectable causes! is a cause ever respectable?

CAROLINE.

What do you mean, Arabella? You are as enigmatical as our unfortunate nephew.

ARABELLA.

It would seem to me that a cause is lost when it becomes respectable.

CAROLINE.

Did you hear Kirwan say that, Arabella? It sounds like one of his acute observations.

ARABELLA.

No, I did not hear Kirwan say that, but I daresay it is one of the things he would say.

CAROLINE.

You never hear me expressing any one else's views.

ARABELLA.

No, I will say that for you. You bring people round to your views. It seems that you completed Alderman Foley's conversion yesterday.

CAROLINE.

He saw, of course, that I could not consent unless he joined the respectable party.

ARABELLA.

Yes, Caroline; but I wonder if Jasper will look favourably on the alliance.

CAROLINE.

Alderman Foley's grandfather, I have reason for knowing, was in a much better position than Valentine's father, and as for Jasper, it would ill-become him to criticise me after having done all he could to disgrace his family. Had it not been for my influence Alderman Foley might have remained on the popular side.

ARABELLA.

It would not matter, everything depends on Jasper. Do you intend to tell him?

CAROLINE.

Of course he'll know some day.

(*Enter* JASPER.)

ARABELLA.

Oh, Jasper, Alderman Kirwan has been here looking for you.

DEAN.

That was he whom I heard talking.

ARABELLA.

I tried your door; it was locked.

DEAN.

Yes, I locked the door; where is he?

ARABELLA.

He is gone to the meeting.

CAROLINE.

I persuaded him to go there and lead in your absence.

ARABELLA.

Aren't you going, Jasper? (*He walks to the window and looks out, and returns like a man uncertain of his next action, worried and nervous.*)

DEAN.

What did Kirwan say?

ARABELLA.

He seemed distressed that he did not find you; he believed so entirely in you, Jasper. I asked him if there was any message he could give you, and he said there was none.

DEAN.

Did he say anything else?

ARABELLA.

I don't remember anything else. Ah! he said that you were not to be afraid, that he would not reproach you. He was very kind.

DEAN.

He's always that. He knows that I shall reproach myself. Did he say anything else!

CAROLINE.

I cannot understand the attention that is paid to his slightest word; every word is treasured up like a pearl examined, looked at from this side and that, and then put away to be quoted on some future occasion.

DEAN.

Kirwan is the noblest of men, and every word that falls from his lips should be treasured up. His words are pearls indeed, but unhappily they sometimes fall where pearls proverbially fall.

CAROLINE.

Jasper!

DEAN.

I'm not thinking of you, Aunt Caroline, I'm thinking of us all. (*Sitting down*.) Oh! Kirwan, that you should have begotten so unworthy a disciple (*Getting up*.) That I should be able to see so clear, and should be so unable to act. I'm like a hound in a leash. I strain at the thong but it does not break, and I am choking.

ARABELLA.

You will make yourself ill, dear; shall I fetch you a glass of water?

DEAN.

No, no. I was speaking in metaphors. It's ridiculous to give way like this, but when one speaks of Kirwan I'm overcome, that is all.

ARABELLA.

Let us not speak of him, then.

DEAN.

On the contrary, let us speak of him! If we cannot act like him, we can at least admire. All his life he has sacrificed the world to his ideas, and to do that is holiness. To see the right way and to follow it always without wavering is the sublime life.

CAROLINE.

I know that in your opinion, Jasper, I am a very inferior person, but you cannot accuse me of wavering in my ideas.

DEAN.

Alas! Aunt Caroline, you never had an idea in your life. You mistook worldly advantage for ideas.

CAROLINE.

Then if you're so sure of what is right, why don't you go to the meeting? However wrong my ideas may be, I have not abandoned them; in that at least I have the inestimable advantage of resembling Alderman Kirwan.

DEAN.

Yes, you are steadfast, whereas I am a weak creature that errs. But I do not blaspheme, I do not deny the truth as you do. But, Aunt Caroline, let us not reproach each other; let us rather pity each other. You see a little clearer on one side than I do; perhaps I see clearer on another side when I look towards Kirwan, my master, whom I am too weak to follow.

ARABELLA.

But, Jasper, you seem terribly distressed. Do you think it would make you happy to go to this meeting?

DEAN.

Yes, in the long run, years hence, but the entanglements of the moment hold me.

ARABELLA.

Dear Jasper, tell me about it; it has to do with Millicent has it not?

DEAN.

Yes, it has to do with her. I promised her not to go to this meeting, that is all! It doesn't sound sufficient for this fuss, but life is, as you know, a trivial affair, and we are trivial beings.... I'm going with her and Hardman to Southhaven. We shall be married and —

ARABELLA.

You will be happy.

DEAN.

Happy! Ah! I have chosen the delight of the passing hour; I've not known how to do the one needful thing.

ARABELLA.

What is that?

DEAN.

To sacrifice the passing hour to the idea. I wonder how all this will seem to me ten years hence?

CAROLINE.

It's at all events satisfactory that you are not going to disgrace your family for the sake of feelings which you may never live to experience.

DEAN.

I know well which is the honourable course; but this obsession, this intolerable obsession! Oh, if I could throw it off! (*A sound of tumult is heard outside in the streets, and he goes to the window*.) The streets are moving. Numbers must have failed to get into the hall. Kirwan told me there would not be room for every one. (*Coming down the stage*.) Kirwan has the will and not the power, I have the power and not the will. The shallow and the light-souled are always the chosen of the people, and the shallow and the light-souled betray the people, because they are as God made them. (*Turning away from the window*.) It is now too late.

ARABELLA.

Then let us try to forget. Let us have done with thinking. Let us be happy. You're going away to-night; we shall not see you again for a long while.

DEAN.

If it had to happen again I should act as I have acted. We do not make ourselves, and however weak we are we have to put up with ourselves; the burden is not of our choosing. Not only have we to bear the burden of our real selves, we have to bear that of our acquired selves, and that is the heaviest burden of all. That is the burden that I now bear, the burden of early contradictions of my inclinations, and the imposition of ideas which were not mine by nature, or sufficiently akin to me to become mine.

ARABELLA.

But, Jasper dear, you have no cause of complaint against me. I always wished you to develop yourself according to your inclinations, which were always good and pure.

DEAN.

Yes, dear aunt, you were always sympathetic, and had it not been for you I should have left home long ago. Perhaps it would have been better if I had.

CAROLINE.

Then neither was right. But since you have discarded my advice and repudiated my teaching I do not see how I can be held accountable for your failure.

DEAN.

I would not shift the blame upon any one. I'm thinking it out, that is all. Kirwan was the first noble mind I ever met, the first brain and energy, and my hope in myself is based on the fact that I was attracted to him at once. So much good there is in me. Yes, I recognised and acclaimed the true, the noble, the steadfast, the holy. So I cannot be entirely bad. But the influence of years is not shaken off at once, and I fell back into materialism; I am powerless to rise out of it for the moment; it will take years for me to free myself, but later on, years hence, I will come back and prove myself a worthy disciple. Tell Kirwan that Aunt Arabella.

ARABELLA.

I will tell him; but, Jasper dear, you make us feel very sad. Years hence is a long while. May we not smile now? You're going to marry the girl you love. Come here and sit by us, and let us talk about her.

DEAN.

Yes, I love Millicent, and I would do well to love her, for I have nothing but Millicent now.

CAROLINE.

I'm sorry, Jasper, that my influence has forced you into marrying the girl you love, for that is the charge against me.

DEAN.

My business now is to make Millicent happy, and I'll think no more lest I should fail in that as in other things, so let us sit together as you say, and talk of happiness and wedding bells. (*He sits beside them*.)

CAROLINE.

I have to tell you, Jasper, that I have promised to marry Alderman Foley.

DEAN.

Alderman Foley!

CAROLINE.

Do you not approve?

DEAN.

I'm in no mood for questioning any one's desires. I am outside of my real self, and you may tell a fellow-sufferer why you were tempted into this marriage.

CAROLINE.

Alderman Foley has been devoted for years, and this is the recompense of his devotion.

DEAN.

A very splendid way of putting it. I wonder you do not add that this is how you propose to redeem the family from the disgrace I have brought upon it

ARABELLA.

Enough of recriminations. It is well known that everybody objects to everybody else's marriage.

CAROLINE.

I do not object to Jasper's. It is Jasper who objects to mine.

DEAN.

Well, aunt, I hope you'll be happy. You ought to be, for I'm sure there is no shadow of doubt on your mind that you have done the right thing. (*Sounds of tumuli in the street, the women run to the window*.)

ARABELLA.

The meeting must have broken up, there is a great crowd. The crowd with the band is going towards the other crowd, and there is Alderman Kirwan running.

CAROLINE.

Do you know, Arabella, I think he is running away from the crowd. I believe he is coming in here.

DEAN.

I cannot bring myself to meet him, I could not look him in the face. I will go. Do not say I'm here. And you, Aunt Caroline, try to be as little triumphant as possible. The victorious should pity the vanquished, to do so adds lustre to victory. [*Exit*.

(*Enter* KIRWAN *with coat torn and hat broken in. He sits down in deep depression*.}

KIRWAN.

Miss Dean, excuse this hasty entrance. The maid had the door open watching the crowd and I came straight up. I had to escape them — they would have killed me.

CAROLINE.

Oh, Mr. Kirwan, I hope you're not hurt!

(*He shakes his head*.}

ARABELLA.

But won't you tell us about the meeting?

KIRWAN.

Oh, like many another meeting, tumult among the many, a few in despair.

CAROLINE.

But was not a leader chosen when Jasper's absence was discovered?

KIRWAN.

In spite of my own better judgment I tried to unite them for a common end, and Ferguson accused me of keeping Jasper away to make myself the leader, and then they all wanted to be leaders and so the row began. (*Furious tumult outside and sounds of glass broken, stones are thrown through the window.*) The mob is chasing the Corporation up the street.

CAROLINE.

Mercy! We shall be murdered. Where are the police? (*The bell rings.*)

ARABELLA.

Who are these coming in?

(*Enter* ALDERMAN FERGUSON *torn and bloody,* ALDERMAN POLLOCK *rather drunk and excited, and* MICHAEL LEECH *and* MAYOR TENCH, *their coats soiled and torn. The stage begins to darken slowly.*)

FERGUSON.

It is some consolation that though I have not become leader myself, I have kept every one else from leading.

POLLOCK.

The day will come when the people will require common sense, then they will think of the old stock, they will come to Alderman Pollock. Hurrah for Alderman Pollock!

TENCH.

Come over here, James, and sit down, I'm afraid you're not very well.

FERGUSON.

Where is Jasper? why was he not at the meeting?

CAROLINE.

I hope you're not hurt, Alderman Ferguson!

FERGUSON.

If only Jasper had a thimbleful of courage I should not be in this plight. But I knew he was no good after yesterday. To think of these fools wanting to be leaders! That such mice should be ambitious!

ARABELLA.

Who was it that hurt you? May I get you something?

FERGUSON.

Thank you, I feel rather faint.

(ARABELLA *rings; the* MAID *enters*. ARABELLA *gives her order; the* MAID *enters immediately after with tray and glasses*.)

ARABELLA.

And you, Alderman Pollock, you will have something too?

POLLOCK.

Yes, thank you, I think I will. It happened as we were trying to get outside. That ruffian Macnee was cheering for Kirwan and I ventured to ask him a question.

FERGUSON.

And his arguments were decisive.

POLLOCK.

He pushed me, I fell, and the others walked on top of me. I always said he was a dangerous man, and warned the Corporation against employing him. I fancy I'm bleeding somewhere. (*He pulls up his sleeve and examines his arm*.)

ARABELLA.

And you, my dear Mayor, how did it happen? You have lost your hat?

TENCH.

Yes, I lost it at the top of the stairs; it fell off and rolled down the steps.

POLLOCK.

I had no chance whatever.

TENCH.

Would you mind telling me if there's a cut here at the back of my neck, it feels a bit sore?

CAROLINE.

I will get some sticking-plaster in a moment if you require it. But Alderman Ferguson is going to tell us how it all happened.

ARABELLA.

Tell us how it all happened.

FERGUSON.

I had no sooner got possession of the platform than I was attacked by an organised body of the greatest blackguards in the town. I believe they were sent there by Lawrence, though he did not dare to show his face. I had to oppose you at the meeting, Kirwan, but if you will advocate a restoration of our line of steamers we can work together.

KIRWAN.

We can do nothing without a leader.

FERGUSON.

That is indeed true. When will Providence send us a leader? (*Cheers for* LAWRENCE *outside*.)

KIRWAN.

The people are cheering Lawrence — listen!

(*They all listen*.)

POLLOCK.

Lawrence is the leader of the people. It is his voice they like, and I like to hear it myself when I am drunk.

KIRWAN.

I believe that is he walking at the head of the mob. How has this popularity come about?

FERGUSON.

When Jasper Dean deserted us the mob turned like a greedy pike and swallowed the first bait.

KIRWAN.

Then the tramway has been accepted as an equivalent.

FERGUSON.

That or the residence. Oh, that residence! I can see all the plush footmen and the matrons and their charges making obeisance to the largest export trade in the world.

(*A ring. Enter* ALDERMAN FOLEY.)

CAROLINE.

I hope you're not hurt, my dear Valentine?

FOLEY.

My dear Caroline, thanks to you, I found myself once more with the majority. Alderman Lawrence has carried all but the most extreme of the people with him. You've no idea of the ovation he's receiving; the town will be lighted up, and a banquet is preparing. He told me to tell you and your sister that he expected to have the pleasure of your company.

FERGUSON.

We would like to hear how you were persuaded to the other side.

FOLEY.

That is a matter for the next number of the *Denouncer*. I've no fear whatever but that my readers will approve of my conduct. At all events as much as your supporters seem to have approved of yours. (*Turning towards the others*.) After some friends had gone among the people and explained matters a little Alderman Lawrence addressed them from the pediment of the statue of Patriotism in front of the Town Hall, and told them how he had arranged to lay down the tramway from the centre of the city to the poorer quarters which has given us all so much trouble. Mayor Hardman has promised to find the money.

FERGUSON.

Tell us about the residence. What office are you going to take in that establishment?

FOLEY.

(*Answers* FERGUSON *with a glance, then turning to the others*.) I then addressed the people. I told them that the Aidermen of Southhaven would bring their wives here during the summer and spend a little money among them, and that Mr. Hardman might be induced to live amongst us occasionally.

CAROLINE.

You've given an excellent account of these proceedings, Valentine. Now, will you tell us where are Mr. Hardman and Millicent?

FOLEY.

They are at the Railway Hotel waiting for Jasper. After the banquet Jasper is going with them to Southhaven. I do not expect my friends here to agree with me, but I hope that in time they too will learn what I have learnt, that the State is founded on such happy lives as Jasper's and Miss

Fell's will be, that our private interests are the foundation of the State, and that he who does the best for himself does the best for the State in the long run.

KIRWAN.

You've quite caught the master's accent. With one's eyes shut one would swear it was he who is speaking.

FOLEY.

And you? You will go on repeating the same ideas for another ten years and then the end. Since I have known you, you have not acquired a single new idea. (*Turning to the others*.) I have the pleasure to announce to you all that I'm going to be married. Miss Dean and I have decided to make our engagement public.

KIRWAN.

Let nothing disturb the happiness of this evening. (*The stage continues to darken*.) Let all the bitterness, the dregs of our late folly, be forgotten among us; we are all at peace now.

FOLEY.

(*To* CAROLINE.) But where is Jasper? His presence is essential. I hope he will not disappoint this meeting of friends. Is he at home, Miss Dean?

ARABELLA.

I'm afraid to venture out in the present condition of the street. You said that Alderman Lawrence had invited us to supper. You will use your influence, Alderman Foley, to protect us.

FOLEY.

I'm afraid that that would strain my influence, great as it is, and for an insufficient end. Those who want to restore our line of steamers are always dangerous; we can go out through the back door. Come, Miss Dean, and come, Miss Arabella Dean, let us delay no longer. The supper will be getting cold.

CAROLINE.

Valentine, give me your arm!

FERGUSON.

(*To* KIRWAN.) This marriage at all events cannot lessen Alderman Foley's reputation for austerity. Come, Pollock. (*He rouses him*.) Don't you want any supper?

POLLOCK.

Yes, indeed I do! Alderman Pollock will always drink the health of the happy bride and bridegroom. (*He goes out clinging to* FERGUSON, TENCH *follows limping*. KIRWAN *remains alone on the stage*. JASPER DEAN *enters from the other side. The stage is in twilight*.)

DEAN.

Kirwan…. I hoped to get away without meeting you; but we cannot escape our punishment. But, Kirwan, you who see deep into the heart, can you find nowhere an excuse for me? Kirwan, have you never been in love?

KIRWAN.

Yes, and I have been faithful to my love.

DEAN.

I understand. All men are not as high and as steadfast as you, Kirwan. You must judge others by a different standard. I have failed, I know, but is my failure irreparable? Is there nothing for me to do now except to be happy?

KIRWAN.

There is an antiquarian society, you might join it, and advocate the preservation of our antiquities. But if I were you, I would not vex my mood with anything except the matter in hand. You've chosen to be happy, be a success in what the world calls success.

DEAN.

But the cause I have abandoned, is it lost for ever? Can I not return?

KIRWAN.

The cause is not lost, but the next opportunity will come to a new man.

DEAN.

Goodbye, Kirwan! (*He turns to go. Turning back.*) And you, what are you going to do?

KIRWAN.

For the moment our hopes are ended, our ideas gone by. What remains now? I will go home and write a violent attack on some personal friend; if I do not I shall not be in the fashion.

DEAN.

On me?

KIRWAN.

Oh no, not on you; nor does it matter on whom, so long as the attack be bitter.

END OF THE PLAY.

AFTERWORD

This ebook of *The Bending of the Bough* contains authentic text of the first English edition — London: T. Fisher Unwin, 21 February 1900.

The text was transcribed from the printed first edition and edited by Robert S. Becker, PhD, on behalf of George Moore Interactive LLC. Original spelling is preserved; printing errors are eliminated. Paragraph indents are replaced with single-line spaces.