

DAN'L DRUCE, BLACKSMITH

By W. S. Gilbert

This play first opened September 11, 1876, at the Haymarket Theatre.

An incident in the First Act was suggested by George Eliot's Novel "Silas Marner."

CHARACTERS

SIR JASPER COMBE, *a Royalist Colonel*

DAN'L DRUCE

RUBEN HAINES, *a Royalist Sergeant*

GEOFFREY WYNYARD, *a Merchant Sailor*

MARPLE

JOE RIPLEY, *a Fisherman*

SERGEANT and SOLDIER *of the Parliamentary Army*

DOROTHY

The First Act is supposed to take place shortly after the Battle of Worcester.

An interval of fourteen years between the First and Second Acts.

ACT I.

A RUINED HUT ON THE NORFOLK COAST

ACT II.

DAN'L DRUCE'S FORGE

ACT III.

INTERIOR OF DRUCE'S COTTAGE

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Interior of DAN'L DRUCE's hut, a tumble-down old shanty, of the rudest description; with very small wood fire. The whole place is as squalid and miserable as possible. Wind and snow without. Rain and wind heard each time door is opened. Night.*

Rip. (without). Hullo! Dan'l, art within? (*Knocks.*) Dan'l, I say, open, will you? (He kicks the door open.) Why, the hut's empty. Where's the old devil gone, I wonder? Come in, master, out of the storm.

Enter MARPLE.

Don't be afeard (*MARPLE shuts door*); he'll be a bit rusty, to be sure, at our coming in without leave, but that'll blow off sooner than the gale outside.

Mar. Is the man away?

Rip. Nay, he's never a hundred yards from this; he's hauling up his boat on the beach, maybe, or taking in his nets, and making all snug and taut for the night; and well he may, for the devil's let loose, and there'll be mischief afore morning. The devil likes these here Norfolk coasts, burn him!

Mar. And so Jonas lives here.

Rip. Jonas? No, Dan'l—Dan'l Druce.

Mar. Well, Dan'l Druce, if that's what he calls himself. It's a strange hole for such a man as he!

Rip. It's a fit hole for such a dog as he! A surly, scowling, drunken, miserly, half-starved cur! Never was a sulky hound so far athwart the world's ways as Dan'l Druce. Why, he's as rich as a Jew, and never gave bit nor sup to a soul in the town. Oh, take my word for it, it's a fit hole for such as he. There's only one fitter, and I wish he was in it!

Mar. Stop that cursed red rag of yours, will you?

Rip. Come, come, civil words, master, civil words!

Mar. Set the example. I am this man's brother.

Rip. (aside). Well, you've got the family tongue in your head, anyhow. If you're his brother, maybe you know how he came to live here all alone?

Mar. Maybe I do.

Rip. They say that before he came here—a matter o' three or four years since—he was a decent sort o' body enough, a blacksmith, I do hear, but he got struck half silly like through some had luck, and he's been a changed man ever since.

Mar. Oh, they say that, do they?

Rip. Ay. Well, I don't know what he *was*, but I know what he *is*; that's enough for me. The scowlingest, blackbrowedest, three-corneredest chap I ever see, 'cept as regards children, and he's as fond o' children as a young girl, and the littler they are the more he likes 'em, and they likes him. Now, I'm as tender-hearted as a kitten, but I *hates* children, and they can't abide me. That's odd, ain't it?

Mar. Ay.

Rip. Yes, that's Dan'l Druce's story as far as we knows it down in these parts. Maybe you know more?

Mar. Maybe I do.

Rip. Now, I dare swear there was a woman at the bottom of it all. I never got my chain cable kinked but a woman had a hand in it.

Mar. (coming forward). Hark ye, my lad, you're hard on women. From the look of you, I've a notion no woman ever had much to do with any trouble of yours, saving your mother when she bore you. No, no, your tongue's done all the mischief that ever come to you. You let women alone; I'm sure they never interfere with you.

Enter DAN'L DRUCE. He has a bundle of nets over his shoulder, and he is half tipsy. His appearance is that of a man of fifty, but haggard with want. His hair is long and matted, and he has a beard of some days' growth on his chin.

Dan. Hullo! Who's that? Joe Ripley, eh? Why, Joe Ripley, what dost thou do skulking in other men's huts when they're away? Nothing to lay hands on here, Joe Ripley. And thou'st brought a friend, eh? Didst thee think there was too much plunder for a man to carry that thou'st brought an ass to help thee? There's nowt for thee here. Take thine ugly face into the storm; maybe thou'lt get it battered straight. Come, out wi' 'ee!

Rip. Hold thy peace, man. I want nowt of thine. I've brought thee money for thy two nets.

Dan. Where is it?

Rip. And here's a man as says he's thy brother—and I wish him joy o' his brotherhood! I found him in the village asking for thee, so I brought him to thee. (*MARPLE holds out his hand.*)

Dan. (not heeding him). Gi' me the money.

Mar. Dost thou not know me, Jonas Marple?

Dan. Dead. Dead three years ago.

Mar. Ay, thou gavest thyself out as dead, that *he* might make an honest woman of her.

Dan. Thou liest, she *was* an honest woman, for all she left me. 'Twas him that stole her, God bless her! Jonas Marple died the day she left him. I'm Dan'l Druce.

Rip. I knew there was a woman in it.

Mar. And if Jonas *be* dead, hast thou no word of welcome to Jonas's brother?

Dan. None! (*To RIPLEY.*) Gi' me the money.

Rip. There! Ay, count it; we're all thieves and liars. (*To MARPLE.*) That's his craze. Is it right?

Dan. I dunno, I can't count to-night. Let it be, I'll count it to-morrow. (*To MARPLE.*) How didst thou find me?

Mar. I found thee through this fellow. I was in the town on law business, and I heard men talk of such a one as thou, and I asked and asked, and found out that thou wast the brother who used to work wi' me. I've come to ask thee to come back to us, and be the man thou wast wont to be. Come, man, be thine old self, thou canst not be better; throw off thy present self, thou canst not be worse!

Dan. Not worse? Why, man, I'm a king, alone here! Here I live, free from liars and thieves, alone! alone! What, back to the world, the hollow, lying world? Not I! Back to the rock on which my ship was wrecked? Not I! Back o the den of thieves that stripped me? Not I! No, no; I don't find fish come back to my nets when once they've slipped through the meshes, and I'm no more a fool than my fish. See here—I've lived here nigh upon four years, and 'cepting some such gaping fool as him (*indicating RIPLEY*), I've seen no soul, and no soul's seen me. I've done harm to none, and none's done harm to me. I've told no lies, and no lies ain't been told me. I've robbed no one, and no one's robbed me. Can any one who walks the world say as much? I've lived n the fish I've caught, the garden I've dug, and I've saved money by the nets I've made, not much—a trifle to such as thou, and I've sent it far from here—I never keep it here, no, no. I've no hopes, no cares, no fears. And

thou askest me to go back to the foul old world, the world that poor dead and gone Jonas Marple was robbed in; the bitter black world that blighted his poor harmless life. No! I'm going to bide here.

Mar. Well, as thou wilt, Jonas.

Dan. Dan'l—that's my name, Dan'l Druce. Jonas Marple died the day his wife left him. His wife's a widow, and, may-hap, married again. God bless her!

Rip. Thou'lt do no good wi' him, there's a devil's flare in his eyes; best let him bide.

Dan. Ay, best let him bide. I'm a poor thing of skin and bone; and this here arm, which made light of a forty-pound hammer four years since, is but a soft-roed thing now; but when muscle went out, devil come in; steer clear o' me, and let me bide.

Mar. Thou'rt sadly changed: it's fearsome to see a good honest, hearty soul changed into the white-faced ghost of what he was. Time was when every beggar had the pulling of thy poor purse-strings, and none were turned empty away from the door. To think that Jonas Marple should have earned the name of miser!

Dan. Does it seem so strange to thee? Hast thou e'er known what it is to set thy heart night and day on one object, to dream of it, sleepin' and wakin', to find the hope of it flavouring thy meat and drink, and weavin' itself so into thy life that every thought o' thy brain is born of it, and every deed o' thy hand has some bearin' on it? And havin' done all this, and so fashioned, and twisted, and turned, and trimmed the chances at thy hand that the one hope of thy soul shall be helped on by it, hast thou known what it is to find, at one bitter, black blow, thy hope made hopeless, thy love loveless, thy life lifeless? So did I hope and pray to be blessed with a little child—so was my hope withered when I thought it sure of fulfilment. I had a store of love in my battered heart to *set on some one thing of my creating*; it was there for that end, and for none other. When *she* left me (curse him!) I knew, for certain, that one thing would never be of flesh and blood, and it never will, for the love of my heart is given over to the nest best thing—gold and silver, gold and silver. Ay, brother, I love my gold as other men love their bairns; it's of my making, and I love it, I love it! A mean and sordid love, may-be, but hard, and bad, and base as thou thinkest me, I've prayed a thousand times that my gold might take a living form, that the one harmless old hope of my wrecked life might come true.

Mar. The age of miracles is past, Jonas. Well, I've said my say and done my do. Stay where thou art, and Heaven forgive thee, Jonas Marple.

Dan. (*sternly*). He's dead!

Mar. (*warmly*). He is; dead to the call of reason, dead to the voice of human love, dead to everything that marks a reasoning man off from the beasts that perish. Thou hast well said, Jonas Marple is dead—rest his soul!

Dan. Amen! Now go.

[MARPLE, *after a pause, shrugs his shoulders, and exit with RIPLEY.*

Dan. Ay, he's dead, dead, dead! He died then, that the blackest devil that ever cursed this earth might put her right with the world. Heaven send he has done so! And the bairn! It was promised to me,—promised, but the promise was a lie, a damned black lie—not hers, no, no! not hers, but the double-dyed devil who stole her from me. (*Opens a hole in the floor in front of stool, and takes out a bag of money.*) This is my bairn now (*handling the money*); see, here's another day to thy life, another inch to thy height; grow as thou growest, child, and thou'lt be a golden beauty ere long. Gold, the best thing in the world; "as good as gold,"—why, it's a saying; the best thing on earth to make a bairn of! Here's a child that'll never grow up to bring sorrow on its dad's head, that costs nowt to keep, and never grows so big but you wish it bigger—my bairn! I've worked for thee and

starved for thee that I might see thee grow, and thou hast growed, growed right royally! Lie here, my beauty, lie there in peace; I'll never wake thee but to add to thy life, my bairn, thy beautiful golden bairn!

[The door is suddenly burst open, and SIR JASPER COMBE enters hurriedly, followed by REUBEN as if pursued. They are both very ragged and dirty, dressed in torn and faded Royalist uniforms; SIR JASPER, an officer, REUBEN, a sergeant. REUBEN carries a child of three or four years of age, wrapped in a cloak, so as not to be seen by DAN'L. They close the door hurriedly, and listen for their pursuers. REUBEN places child on locker.]

Jas. At last! safe at last from the yelping bloodhounds! By the Lord Harry, but of many bouts with death this is the bout that had like to have gone hardest with us, Reuben!

Dan. Who and what are ye, jail-birds?

Reu. Hark, sir! I think I hear them again! *(Listening eagerly.)*

Dan. *(very loudly)*. Who and what are ye? *(Going up to them.)*

Jas. *(listening)*. Hold thy fool's tongue, or I'll slit it!

Dan. But—

Reu. *(placing his hand over DAN'L's mouth)*. Nay, it is necessary that some one hold thy tongue, and if thou wilt not do it, I must!

Jas. Listen to me, my friend! *(REUBEN removes his hand from DAN'L's mouth. He again attempts to speak, REUBEN again gags him.)* Nay, cover him up. He will hear the better for that he cannot give tongue the while. Now, keep thine ears open, for this concerns thee: We are proscribed Royalists, and you, miserable man, have harboured us, Heaven help you and, if we are taken here, I, and he, and thou will surely hang—I and he for our sins against the Parliament, thou—for thy virtue in aiding, abetting, and comforting us. Dost thou clearly understand me?

Reu. *(with his hand still over DAN'L's mouth)*. Dost thou clearly understand the Colonel? *(DAN'L cannot answer. REUBEN repeats his question loudly and angrily.)* Dost thou clearly understand the Colonel?

Jas. *(to REUBEN)*. When thou desirest him to be silent it is well to gag him; when thou wouldst have him speak it is judicious to remove the gag!

Reu. As you will, sir. Now then *(removing his hand)*, dost thou clearly understand?

Dan. *(loudly)*. I clearly understand that ye are two marauding devils, who—

Reu. *(hastily clapping his hand over DAN'L's mouth)*. He does *not* understand.

Jas. *(listening)*. They've wheeled about, and their hoofs are dying away in the distance. Reuben, let the old beggar go; he may give tongue now till he split his lungs, if he will. We are safe, at least for the present, Reuben; and see to thy pistol—we may have to stand a siege yet, and this door must be barricaded; but with what?

Dan. *(taking up an iron bar from the fireplace and holding it in a threatening attitude)*. Go your ways, both of ye; or as I am a man I'll brain ye with this bar!

Jas. The very thing! *(Wrenches it easily out of his hand and barricades the door with it, while REUBEN shows DAN'L a pistol.)* There! why, it's made for it! A thousand thanks, old gentleman. *(DAN'L recovers himself, flies at JASPER, who pushes him away; he falls on to a stool.)* Now, master, listen to me, and if you have any respect for yourself, keep your ears open, for I'm speaking words of life and death. We are desperate men in a desperate strait, and little disposed to stand on ceremony, as you may perhaps have remarked. We are flying for our lives, and we desire to cross to France, where my lady is, and where we shall be safe. To carry out this design we have worked our way to the coast, sleeping under hedges and ricks for six bleak days, and tramping in the wind's

eye for six stormy nights, till the fire of life seems to have died out of our bodies, and our legs to have withered from their trunks. You have a stout boat on the beach; when this accursed gale shall have blown itself out you shall have the distinction of working us across to the opposite coast. In the mean time we appoint you our host, and we shall be prepared to look favourably on whatever meat or drink you can set before us.

Dan. Do I look like a man who keeps open house?

Jas. No, hang me if you do.

Dan. If I had my way, I'd hang you, anyhow.

Jas. Ay, and there's many more of your way of thinking.

Dan. I'll be sworn there are. Well, get out o' my hut (*rises*); this is not *your* way; this is not the road to the gallows.

Reu. My good fellow, that's why we took it!

Dan. Who, in the devil's name, are ye?

Jas. I'm a cavalier colonel, a trifle out of repair, and a thought begrimed, maybe, but that'll wash off. Royalist to the backbone, as I proved some time since at Worcester, where my backbone had to bear the brunt of the flight! This is my regiment, the King's Dragoons (*indicating* REUBEN). Come, doff thy hat, King's Dragoons, and salute the gentleman; the credit of the corps is in thy keeping, Reuben, for thou'rt all that's left of it! (*To* DAN'L.) A worthy fellow, this regiment of mine, but somewhat shy and constrained in good company, but he will improve when he sees that flask of Schiedam that thou art about to surprise us with. Now, tell me, art thou for the Parliament?

Dan. No.

Jas. Then thou art for the king?

Dan. It's a lie! I'm for myself.

Jas. And for us.

Dan. Nay, I'll be damned if I am!

Jas. Nay, I'll swear thou'rt for us if thou be not traitor to thyself; for if we hang at all we all hang together. *I'll* see to that. Now, what food have you got?

Dan. None (*sulkily*).

Jas. What can you get?

Dan. Nothing.

Jas. Where are we then?

Dan. Nowhere.

Jas. Harkee, sir, I'm just in that mood that I don't care the flash of a flint whose life is swept out of my way when it comes 1 betwixt me and my wants. I want food—get it.

Dan. I've no food—I'm a beggar.

Jas. Here's a coin—our last—go and get bread, meat, and drink. Now be off, or Reuben here shall whip you with his sword-flat till he drops. (*REUBEN draws.*) And, mark me, if by deed, word, or sign you do aught to give a clue to our hiding-place, I'll burn the hut to the ground, and everything in it.

Dan. But—— (*REUBEN pushes him.*)

Jas. Not a word. Be off, and do your errand—and mind, no treachery, or—— (*JASPER takes a burning log from the fire, and holds it immediately over the hole where DAN'L's money is concealed. DAN'L snatches it from him.*)

Dan. Put that down, put that down, for the love of Heaven—put it down, I say, you'll have the hut afire—and I'll see what I can do, I'll see what I can do.

[*DAN'L throws log on fire and exit.*]

Jas. Whew! I've brought the old devil to his senses. What a life this is! Was ever poor dog so hounded about from pillar' to post as Jasper Combe? and for no better reason than that he is a gentleman, and loves his king!

Reu. Pardon, sir, but I never was accounted a gentleman, and for my king I care not one jot, yet am I hounded much as you are.

Jas. Thou art hounded much as I am because thou thyself art as I am, though in a lower degree. King Charles is my king (*raises hat*)—God bless him!—and I serve him, and am hunted for so doing. Jasper Combe is *thy* king (*REUBEN raises hat*)—God bless him likewise!—and thou servest him, and thou art hunted for so doing. The analogy is complete. Be thou as faithful to thy king as I am to mine, and thy king will reward thee—when my king rewards me! Is the child safe?

Reu. (*uncovering the child, and bringing it down*). Ay, sir, thanks to my cloak; though I'm but a sorry dry-nurse, having taken to it late in life; but it's never too late to learn, and I've learnt this, that babes won't eat ship's biscuits, and strong waters choke them. Their poor little heads can't stand strong waters. I'll marry some day on that piece of knowledge.

Jas. Add this to it, to my dower—that when thou art flying for thy life it's best to leave thy babes behind. A dozen times we might have got away but for being hampered with this squalling abomination. Was ever officer of cavalry accursed with such a ridiculous element of peril?

Reu. Was ever sergeant of horse armed with such a mischief-dealing implement?

Jas. Well, there's no help for it. My lady would have gone mad had I returned to her without it. She is devotedly attached to the child.

Reu. Strange that attachment of some mothers for their children. My mother always disliked me and kept me at a convenient distance; but *she* was a Scotchwoman and not liable to be imposed on.

Jas. Well, we must make the best of a bad job. Whew! How cold it is. I'm chilled to the marrow of my bones. That fellow is taking his leisure over his errand; see, Reuben, if thou canst find aught in the hut.

Reu. Here's a locker, your honour, but close fastened.

Jas. A proof that there's something in it. Start it with thy sword. Stay, I'll do it (*takes up hatchet*); so, gently (*opens locker*). Good, a crust of bread and some dried fish.

Reu. And a bottle of right good Schiedam, that never paid duty, I'll be sworn.

Jas. (*taking it*). And on that account fairly forfeit to the Crown, which, on this occasion, I represent. So, bring an armful of those logs and make a merry blaze, for I ache as though I were trussed in a suit of thumbscrews. (*REUBEN brings wood.*) That's well; ha! ha! Now let us enjoy ourselves. Who would have thought the dingy old pig-stye had so much life in it! It's the first good blaze I've seen since the long-nosed devils fired the old mill we lived in. Come, we'll be jolly. (*REUBEN takes a piece of bread, JASPER snatches it from him.*) Nay, of food there's but enough for one (*JASPER eats; REUBEN takes up bottle and holds it to the light, JASPER snatches it from him*), and of Schiedam there's not nearly enough for one. Why, thou gross and sensuous varlet, canst thou not be jolly without meat and drink? 'Tis always so with the baseborn; of intellectual recreation they have no notion whatever.

Reu. I've eaten nothing for two days, and I'm hungry.

Jas. Thou'lt have to wait till the old scoundrel returns.

Reu. (*at door*). There's no signs of him yet.

Jas. Then give reins to thy voice and hail him. He took the road to the left. (*Exit REUBEN shouting—his voice dies away in the distance.*) Here's a plight for the Lord of Combe-Raven! Stripped of an ancestral mansion and two thousand old acres; hunted to his death by broad-brimmed bloodhounds—separated from his pretty wife by some two hundred miles of barren land

and stormy water, and saddled with a confounded brat that hampers his flight, let him turn whithersoever he will! And say that I cross this accursed Channel—how am I to get to Paris—penniless as I am? When I think of what I have before me, I'm minded to make short work with this world, and try another! By the Lord Harry!—(*stamps impatiently; his foot starts a board over DAN'L's hoard.*) Ha! Why, what's this? Not gold? (*Takes out some.*) Gold—and in profusion! Here's a way out of our difficulties, if Combe-Raven were but the man to take it. The old miser! (*Handling the money.*) Bah—in another week's time we may, perhaps, come down to this sort of thing—who knows? But not yet—no, not yet. (*Throws it into hole.*) Lie there—I'll not meddle with thee, though (*closing hole*) thou'lt be spent on a worse errand than helping Jasper Combe to his wife and his king, I'll be sworn

Enter REUBEN in breathless haste. JASPER quickly covers the hole.

Reu. Yes, sir—we must fly—and that at once.

Jas. What d'ye mean?

Reu. I mean treachery—the old man has played us false!—I hear the horses' hoofs in the distance——

Jas. A thousand devils wring his damnable neck! Run to the boat—get her ready for the sea. I'll join thee at once and we'll launch her together.

Reu. But——

Jas. Well?

Reu. If there's such a thing as a crust of bread, or the tail of a dried mackerel——

Jas. But there's not—be off. (*He watches him out, then quickly turns to the hole in which the money is concealed.*) So—this changes the aspect of affairs. Old fool, thou hast betrayed us, and this is fair plunder. (*Takes it out of the hole.*) With fair luck we may beat across to France to-night, and once there we are safe. But the child—again a clog on our movements! She would surely perish in an open boat on such a night as this. It's a matter of life and death—*her* life as well as mine. It would be murder to take her to sea with us, and it would be murder to remain and fight these fellows with her in our arms. There is no help for it—I must leave her here—this locket will serve to identify her (*putting a locket and chain on her neck*)—and I'll reclaim her when I get across. They'll never harm a child!

Enter REUBEN hurriedly.

Reu. Sir, sir, the troops are upon us—they're not two hundred yards off——

Jas. I'm coming. (*Exit REUBEN. JASPER writes on a piece of paper, and pins it on the child's dress.*) So—lie thou there, and God help thee, little one. I'm loth to leave thee, but it's for life and death—for life and death!

[*JASPER leaps through the window as DAN'L and a Sergeant, with four Soldiers, in Parliamentary uniform, enter at the door.*

Dan. (*sees blaze of log fire*). Fire! fire! He has fired the hut—he has fired the hut!

Ser. Nay, fool, 'tis but thy blazing hearth; thy hut's safe enough. Where are thy prisoners?

Dan. Oh, the reckless prodigal! see how he hath wasted my substance!

Ser. There are no men hidden here. The sons of Belial have escaped. Why, thou hast betrayed us; and if so, thou shalt hang for it. (*2nd Soldier mounts ladder to get into loft.*)

Dan. They were here, but the noise of thy horses' hoofs has alarmed them, and they are gone. I warned thee to tether thy beasts afar, and proceed silently.

1st Sol. See, they are putting off from the beach. (*2nd Soldier descends ladder and makes ready to fire.*)

Dan. My boat, oh, my boat!

Ser. Bring down the Philistines, Nahum; a steady shot under the fifth rib, and may the Lord have mercy on them!

1st Sol. I will even smite them hip and thigh. (*He fires through the window.*) Missed! (*Others fire outside.*) Nay, they're beyond range. May Heaven mercifully overwhelm them in the great waters!

Dan. (*sees hole in floor*). Gone, gone! Sergeant, see; they are gone—they were hidden in here—and they're gone!

Ser. In there? Nay, there's never room for two stout men in that cranny.

Dan. Men? Curse the men! It's my gold—my gold! they've stolen it; they've robbed me! Sixty golden pounds! all I had—all I had! and it's gone! My child! my child! they've stolen my child! (*Weeps passionately on his knees.*)

Ser. Nay, man, see, thy child's safe enough, and a bonny lass she be. (*Taking up child from behind table.*)

Dan. (*raising his head stupidly*). Eh? Why, what's that?

Ser. Thy child! Come, man, be thyself; the child's safe enough. (*Places child on ground.*)

Sol. He's crazed!

Dan. (*stupefied*). That's not mine. My gold is my child! The gold that the infernal villains have taken!

Ser. Here's a paper, and some words writ on it.

Dan. Read—read—I cannot read.

Ser. (*reads*). "Be kind to the child, and it shall profit thee. Grieve not for thy gold—it hath taken this form."

[*Music.*]

Dan. (*on his knees taking the child*). A miracle, a miracle! Down on your knees, down, I say, for Heaven has worked a miracle to save me. This money, for which I toiled night and day, and which I loved and worshipped, was to me as a child—a dear dear child. I prayed that this might be, but scoffers mocked me when I prayed, and said that the days of miracles were passed. But they lied, for my prayer has been hearkened to. See, it has her eyes, her eyes, my darling, my darling! My Heaven-sent bairn, thou hast brought me back to reason, to manhood, to life! (*The Soldiers crowd round him. 1st Soldier offers to touch the child.*) Hands off, hands off! (*All fall back.*) Touch not the Lord's gift! touch not the Lord's gift!

[TABLEAU. DAN'L—the child on the ground before him—soldiers grouped around.]

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The interior of a picturesque old forge. The forge is open at the back, and DRUCE'S cottage is seen through opening. There is a path off. DAN'L DRUCE, a hearty-looking old man of sixty-four, is discovered hammering lustily at a piece of red-hot iron on his anvil.*

Dan. (laying down his hammer). Whew! That job's done! Eh, but I'm that breathed, surelie. Why, Dan'l Druce, if thou'rt worked out like this at twelve o' noon, it's time ye thought of getting a partner into the old forge. But somehow the forge fire seems to strike hotter than o' yore; and the iron of to-day takes more hammerin' than the iron o' thirty year ago. Mebbe I'm growin' old. Well, a body can't hope to live sixty-four year, and leave off a young un arter all. wouldn't be fair on the boys—no, nor the gals neither—eh, Dorothy?

Enter DOROTHY running.

Dor. Oh, father, thou shouldst see the Green, by Raby's End. The village is brave with banners and garlands. I have helped to deck it, father. And Master Maynard, the constable, is mounted on an ale cask to receive Sir Jasper Combe, who should pass on his way to Combe-Raven in half an hour; and the band of music Hath arrived from Norwich, and *they're* all on ale casks too; and they are to play stirring music while the constable readeth an address to his worship!

Dan. It is a merciful provision, Dorothy, lest the address be heard. So Sir Jasper will be here in half an hour, eh?

Dor. Yes, and I long to see him. I have heard that he is a grave gentleman of goodly presence, and beyond measure kindly. He is a righteous landlord, too, so folk say, and giveth largely to the poor.

Dan. He is needed in these parts, for the poor were sorely used by the late squire. I shall be right glad to welcome him, but (*wearily*) I'll not go to Raby's End to do it. (*Sits on stool.*)

Dor. Art thou wearied, father?

Dan. Growin' old, lass, growin' old. It's one o' those blessings that allers comes to him that waits long enough. But I don't grumble, Dorothy. If old age will leave me strength enough to pull at a pipe and empty a tankard—two things thou canst not do for me, Dorothy—why, that's all I ask. My lass can do the rest.

Dor. As I have been to thee so will I be to the end.

Dan. There's no saying, Dorothy. Thou'rt comely, lass, and mebbe, ere long, some smart young lad will whip thee from my arms, and carry thee away to t'other side o' the sunrise. There's mor'n one within a mile o' this who'd give his right arm to do it now.

Dor. Nay, thou art unkind. Did I not tend thee when thou wast hale and strong, and shall I desert thee now that thou hast most need of me?

Dan. (with emotion). My lass, Heaven knows I never needed thee more than when thou wast left at my hut fourteen year since. But I've news to gladden thee—thine old playmate, Geoffrey Wynyard, is returned from sea, and is now on his road from Norwich to see thee.

Dor. Geoffrey returned? Oh, I am right glad! Oh, indeed, father, I am right glad! Truly thou has brought me fair news. And is he well—and hath he prospered?

Dan. Ay, and grewed out o' knowledge. He was but a long-legged lad when he left, but he's a man now, and a goodly one, I warrant thee. See to him when he cometh, for he'll bide here wi' us. (*After a pause.*) My darlin'—thou'lt never leave me?

Dor. Never, while I live!

Dan. God bless thee, my child!

[*Kisses her and exit.*]

Dor. Geoffrey returned! and Geoffrey a stalwart mariner, and grown to man's estate! I can scarce believe it! Of a truth I could weep for very joy! I was but a child when he left, and now—I am seventeen! Geoffrey loved children,—it may be that he will be displeased with me now that I am a woman. I am rejoiced that I am decked in my new gown—it is more seemly than the russet, in which, methinks, I did look pale. Geoffrey a man!—my old playmate a man! Pity that I have not my new shoes, for they are comely; but they do compress my feet, and so pain me sorely. Nevertheless, I will put them on, for it behoveth a maiden to be neatly appalled at all seasons.

Enter GEOFFREY.

Geof. Mistress Dorothy!

Dor. (*turning—she starts.*) Geoffrey! Oh, Geoffrey! (*She rushes towards him.*)

Geof. Mistress Dorothy, I am right glad to hold thy little hand once more. I have had this moment in view for many, many months!

Dor. And I too, Master Geoffrey;—and oh, I am indeed rejoiced!

Geof. How thou art grown! A woman! By my right hand, a very woman!

Dor. Yes, Master Geoffrey, I am a woman now!

Geof. And a fair one, Mistress Dorothy! (*She turns.*) Nay, 'tis but truth; and truth is made to be told. May I not say that thou art fair?

Dor. Yes, Master Geoffrey, if thou thinkest so in good sooth.

Geof. In good sooth I do! It is strange to be back in the old village again, after three years of blue water. And yet it seems but yesterday that we tossed hay together in the five-acre field.

Dor. I think the time must speed more swiftly with those who seek their fortunes in distant lands, for though I have been happy and full of content, yet it seemeth more than three years since thy departure.

Geof. Yet barely three years have gone.

Dor. (*sighing.*) It seemeth more.

Geof. The time hath sped with me despite the long night watches and the never-ending days of a calm tropical sea; for no hour is so long but that I can fill it with thoughts of thee, Mistress Dorothy.

Dor. I am rejoiced to know this, for my mind has often dwelt on thy fortunes. Many a time, when the old forge rocked in the wintry gale, my heart has been sad for thee, and I have lain awake weeping and praying for—for—

Geof. For me?

Dor. For all who go down to the sea in ships.

Geof. In truth, if the sea had no other charm I would be a sailor, that I might have thy prayers, Mistress Dorothy.

Dor. Nay, but if it consisted with thy duty to abandon thy perilous calling, and bide here with us for ever, my poor prayers would still be thine, Master Geoffrey. But thou lovest the sea. (*Sighing.*)

Geof. All sailors love the sea.

Dor. It is strange, for the sea is cold and cruel and fierce, and many brave men are yearly swallowed up of it.

Geof. Dorothy, I love the sea dearly. There is but one love that is stronger in my heart—one love for which I would yield it up for ever and ever. Dear Dorothy, I have loved thee, boy and man, for ten years past; and I shall love thee, come what may, through my life. I came here to-day to tell thee this. I thought how to say it, but all that I thought of is gone—it's my heart that's speaking now and not my tongue. Bear with me, Dorothy, for every hope of my life—every waking and sleeping dream of ten years past—is in the words I'm speaking now.

Dor. Oh, Geoffrey—Geoffrey! I know not what to say!

Geof. Fear not for thy father, for I will quit the sea. Sir Jasper has offered to make me his secretary, and that is why I have come. But say nay, and I must needs go to sea again.

Dor. Oh, Geoffrey—let me think—let me think! Do I love thee? I cannot say. It may be that I do—and yet—thou must not go to sea! Oh, I have given no thought to it. Truly thou art dear to me, for I am rejoiced when thou comest, and I am sorely grieved when thou goest. Is that love?

Geof. Dorothy, let us inquire into this.

Dor. Right willingly, for if I love thee I would fain know it, that I might gladden thine heart by telling thee so.

Geof. Then attend to me, sweetheart, while I paint a picture for thee. We will suppose that I have given up the sea—that I have bought a little farm near at hand, and that I have come to live here, close to thee and thy father, for the rest of my life. Canst thou see the picture I am painting?

Dor. Ay. It is a pleasant picture.

Geof. Living here, close to thee, I naturally see thee very often.

Dor. (*pleased*). Every day?

Geof. Twice—maybe thrice—a day—for my horses need much shoeing, and I always bring them to the forge myself. Is that pleasant?

Dor. Very pleasant. And on Sabbath thou takest me to church?

Geof. Ay, save only when some other village gallant is beforehand with me and offers to escort thee thither, and in such case I am fain to take Farmer Such-a-one's daughter instead.

Dor. Nay, that were needless, for I would have no other escort than thou.

Geof. Yet it behoves one to be neighbourly, and if Farmer Such-a-one says to me, "Come and see Susan, for she's lonely and wants cheering"—

Dor. Susan?

Geof. That's the farmer's daughter.

Dor. Is she fair?

Geof. Very fair. What then?

Dor. Why, then, thou wouldst not go.

Geof. (*slyly*). And wherefore not?

Dor. Wherefore not? Oh, well, wherefore not indeed! Go to Susan if thou wilt, Geoffrey. It is not for me to hinder thee!

Geof. Well, then, I would not go. And so we live on—happy—very, very happy, for, say a year. But a change is at hand. My crops fail, my cattle die, and one evil night my homestead is burnt to the ground, and I am penniless!

Dor. Oh!

Geof. So there is nothing for it but to go to sea again, for three long years!

Dor. No, no, Geoffrey—oh no!

Geof. The time of parting draws near—a few weeks—a few days—a few hours. These few hours we have passed in silence, sitting hand in hand, thou and I. There are tears in my eyes, though I strive to check them, and there are sad thoughts in thine heart, also. Well, at last the horse is at the door, and it is time to go. I am at thy porch—one foot in stirrup—one hurried "God-speed"—and—I am gone!

Dor. Oh no, no, Geoffrey. I cannot bear it.

Geof. Months pass by and no news of me. The village seems blank at first without me, the walks to church seem long and lonely, and the evenings sad and cheerless. At last come tidings of a wrecked ship—thine heart beats quickly, for the name of the ship is the name of mine. Of all the crew but one man is saved, and that man's name—is not Geoffrey Wynyard—for Geoffrey has gone down to his death in the dark waters.

Dor. (*rising—throwing her arms round him*). No, no, Geoffrey, be silent. I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it; have mercy, for I cannot bear it!

Geof. And dost thou love me?

Dor. (*bashfully, hiding her head in his bosom*). Oh, Geoffrey! (*Pause.*)

Geof. Art thou happy there, Dorothy?

Dor. Passing happy! And thou?

Geof. Passing happy. (*He places a ring on her finger.*)

Dor. Oh, Geoffrey, what is this?

Geof. A ring that I have brought thee from Venice, where there are cunning workers in such matters. Let it stay there in earnest of another ring of plainer workmanship that is not beyond the craft of our English goldsmiths to fashion.

Dor. But I know not if I may wear it. It is a vanity—but it is very beautiful. See how it shineth! Oh, pity that I may not wear it, for in truth it is very beautiful.

Geof. Thou hast a silver chain with thy mother's locket on thy neck. Wear it on thy chain. Will it be a vanity if it is concealed beneath thy kerchief?

Dor. Nay; for none will know of it. (*Withdraws a silver locket from her bosom*). See, the clasp will not hold them both. Stay! the locket shall be thine, and thy ring shall take its place. (*Detaches locket and gives it to him. He kisses her.*)

Enter DAN'L DRUCE. They stand confused.

Dan. (*after a pause, sighs deeply*). Tell me all about it, my pretty.

Geof. Master Dan'l—I-

Dan. No, lad—no—not from thee. I'd liefer hear it from my pretty.

Dor. (*going to him and putting her arms round his neck*). Dear father, Geoffrey hath told me that he loveth me, and would fain take me to be his wife—

Dan. Ay, ay, lass—go on—

Dor. He loveth me very dearly, father, and will quit the sea to bide with us here.

Dan. Go on—

Dor. He loveth me so dearly that it would sadden his life if I were to wed with another.

Dan. Well?

Dor. So, dear father, as I would not cause him sorrow I will not wed with another. (*Hiding her face on his shoulder.*)

Dan. So soon! so soon! Nay, hang there a bit longer, my lass; for thou'rt all I have, and thou'rt going from me ower soon, and of thine own free will. Dorothy, oh, Dorothy, the hope and stay of

my poor old life! my saving angel! my saving angel! It's hard to part with thee, Dorothy. He will not love thee as I love thee. (*With an effort.*) I'm but a thankless man. It was to be, and 'twould better fit me to rejoice that thou hast found a brave and honest man to tend thee when I am gone. Get thee within, and dry thine eyes. I'll do thy weeping for thee, Dorothy! (*Exit DOROTHY into the cottage.*) It's come sudden, my lad, it's come sudden, and I doan't rightly know how to shift wi'out her. She's been more than life to me, Dolly has. I was a hard and bitter man when she was left with me fourteen year since,—for I'd been cruelly warped—cruelly warped. But when things are at their worst, like as not they'll mend; and from the time my darling was sent to me (by a miracle as I then thought, for I'd been brought up 'mong folk as see a miracle in 'most everything) a change crep' over me, and bit by bit my cruel old heart growed soft again. I was a foul-tongued fellow then, but I couldna swear afore an angel come straight from heaven. I was cruel and hard, but I couldna sit glowerin' at mankind wi' her little arms round my neck, and her soft cheek agin' my wicked old face. Then it come about that Dolly must be taught her Bible; but I'd no Bible—so, wi' a shamefaced lie on my tongue, I borrowed a good book, and we spelt it out together. And many's the time as the old half-forgotten words come back to me, bit by bit, and I called to mind when I'd first learnt 'em as a child. I laid my head down on the book, and wept like a woman. And as it was for me (God help me!) to teach her right from wrong, I learnt as I taught, and the Light come to us together—the old man and the little child—and as she growed in knowledge, my right self growed in strength—and such as I am—hale, hearty, and happy—livin' by the sweat o' my brow—owin' no man, fearin' none, and lovin' all, why she has made me, God bless her!

Geof. And thou hast never seen her father since?

Dan. No; though for years I never passed a strange face but I peered into it—for I knowed every line o' his, though I never heerd his name. Knowed it! Why, it burnt in my eyeballs, so that I see it in the dark! I seed it everywhere—I seed it in the forge, and be sure I raked it out!—I seed it red-hot on my anvil, and be sure I hammered with a will! After a while (but it was a weary while!) the thought come that mayhap he had perished in the gale, so I thought less about it; and Dolly seemed more like my own. Yet the old fear comes back, odd times, and, oh, Geoffrey, it's like enough she'll be taken from me yet.

Enter DOROTHY from cottage.

Dor. Oh, father, a gentleman, whose horse hath cast a shoe, hath need of thy services in the yard.

Dan. A gentleman, eh?

Dor. It is Master Reuben Haines, Sir Jasper's bailiff. He passed this way twice before to prepare for Sir Jasper's arrival; but that was when thou wast away at Norwich.

Dan. And what manner of man is he?

Dor. A strange man, full of unmeaning jests, who maketh faces at me which doth fright me much, and he rolleth his eyes in a manner fearful to behold.

Dan. A town fashion, Dolly, who knows? Ha! ha! Take no heed of his faces. Make him welcome, for there's no foreseenin'; it may serve us, one day, to stand well with the bailiff! Come, Geoffrey, and lend me a hand. I'll see to his horse.

[GEOFFREY kisses DOROTHY and exit with DAN'L.

Enter REUBEN in riding dress, from cottage.

Reu. Good morrow, pretty Mistress Dorothy! We have not forgotten one another, I see! And how has time sped with thee since I saw thee last? Has it crept, crawled, drawled, dragged, and dawdled for lack of a certain merry old man who whiled away a certain half-hour with thee two months since with curious quip, quaint retort, and surprising conundrum? Dost thou remember that half-hour, Dorothy? *I do.* In the course of it I said many rare things to thee, complimentary and insinuating things of amatory significance and connubial import, neatly disguised, or, as one may say, embalmed, in an outer husk of delicate epigram. And thou didst listen! Ye gods! how thou didst listen! I love a good listener.

Dor. Sir, I do indeed remember your coming; but as for your sayings, I was silent, for I understood them not. Is—is Sir Jasper at hand?

Enter DAN'L DRUCE, unobserved, at back.

Reu. He will be here anon. Some village clowns are plaguing him with an address—a scurvy long one, and writ in very false jingle. I heard the first lines thereof; it began

“Sir Jasper Combe, to welcome you
We do as much as we can do:
Here live and die—to House and Tomb
We welcome you, Sir Jasper Combe!”

It did so move me to laughter that Sir Jasper, who hath no sense of the ridiculous, did order me to ride on. But I doubt not that even he is laughing heartily thereat, by this time!

Dan. (*who has heard the last few lines*). Nay, sir, but if Sir Jasper deserve all that men say of him, he will scarcely hold in scorn that which poor humble folks have writ in his praise.

Reu. (*to DOROTHY*). Who is this old gentleman?

Dan. I am Dan'l Druce,—no gentleman, but a hard-working blacksmith, very much at your honour's service. (*Looking at him.*) I was away when you last come to the village, yet I think I've seen your honour's face.

Reu. It is very like. It is a striking face. I don't like it myself, but others do, so I yield to the majority. It is a good face.

Dan. I cannot recall where I have seen it.

Reu. It signifieth not—thou wilt have plenty of time to study it,—for thou wilt see it every quarter-day whilst thou livest. Despite its inherent goodness, it will come to be a face of evil significance to thee, speaking, as it will, of raised rents, rapid distraint, and uncompromising ejection!

Dan. I'm a punctual tenant, sir, and I fear no man. Dorothy, draw this gentleman some ale while I look to his horse.

[*Exit.*

Reu. And take thy , time, for we are very well thus, eh, Dorothy? (*DOROTHY going.*) Nay, do not go. Never heed the ale. I'd rather take a long look at thy pretty face than a long pull at thy village brew. The one is sweet, I know—the other is sour, I'll swear. Come hither, Dorothy.

Dor. Nay, sir, I—

Reu. I have news to tell thee, Dorothy—thou art a kind of wife of mine, for I have, in a manner, married thee—intellectually and reflectively; or, as one may say, in a mental or moral sense have I married thee. I have, as it were, invented thee as my wife, and the invention is none the less mine because a scurvy mechanic (to wit, the parson) hath not yet hammered in the rivets. (*Aside.*) A quip!

Dor. Sir, I do not rightly understand thy talk, but it seemeth to me that thou makest jest of solemn things.

Reu. Nay, this time I am in earnest. If thou wilt be my wife I will so coil thee, coax thee, cosset thee, court thee, cajole thee, with deftly turned compliment, pleasant whimsy, delicate jest and tuneful madrigal—I will so pleasantly perplex thee with quaint paradox, entertaining aphorism, false conclusion and contradiction in terms—I will so edify thee with joyous anecdote, tales of court and camp, tales of love, hate, and intrigue, tales of murder, rapine, and theft, merry tales, sad tales, long tales, short tales, quip, crank, retort, repartee, and re-joinder, that thy wedded life shall seem one never-ending honey-moon, and thou shalt find but one fault with me—that I clog thee with sweets! (*Takes her round waist.*)

Dor. Nay, sir, I pray you, remove your hand! Sir, you are unmannerly! I pray you, desist!

Enter SIR JASPER; DOROTHY runs to him.

Oh, sir, defend me from this wicked man.

Jas. Why, Reuben Haines, thou art at thine old tricks again!

Reu. At *our* old tricks, your honour!

Jas. Harkee, sirrah. Let bygones go by. Times are changed with me, as thou knowest well, and if thou valuest thy stewardship, adapt thy morals to those of thy master. If thou sayest or doest aught to anger this gentle maiden, I'll lay my whip across thy shoulders, as I have done oftentimes ere this.

Reu. (aside). We are virtuous now, but time was when we would have angered her in company.

Dor. Nay, sir, I pray you, bear with him.

Reu. (aside). She pleadeth for me! Bless her pretty face, she pleadeth for me!

Jas. Has the rascal, then, found favour in thine eyes?

Dor. (aside to SIR JASPER). Oh no; but whenever he cometh to the forge he sayeth such strange things, and looketh at me with such strange looks, that I fear he is sorely afflicted, and not to be held accountable for his deeds.

Jas. (laughing heartily). Why, in truth, I sometimes think so too. (*To REUBEN.*) Get thee to the inn, sir; we shall lie there to-night: as for the whipping, why the maiden's inter-cession hath saved thee this once.

Reu. She pleadeth for me! Bless their hearts, they're all alike! They all plead for me! [Exit REUBEN. *Jas.* And now, pretty maiden, tell me, who art thou?

Dor. So please your worship, I am Dorothy Druce, only daughter of Dan'l Bruce, the blacksmith, and your worship's tenant.

Jas. (looking kindly at her). He's a kind father to thee, I'll be sworn.

Dor. He is kind to me and to all. In very truth I think he must be the best man in the whole world.

Jas. And thou tendest him very carefully?

Dor. Yes, indeed. I am with him from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof; and we love each other with a love that passeth all telling.

Jas. (after a pause). Dorothy, I once had a little child who promised to grow up to be just such a pretty lass as thou. But we—we were separated many years ago, and I have never seen her since!

Dor. Oh, poor gentleman!

Jas. Poor, indeed—for I declare to thee, Dorothy, that I would give all my substance, were it ten times what it is, to have her with me in my old age. But though I have sought her high and low for

many a weary year, I have found no tidings of her; and so I must needs go on to the end—a solitary old man, uncared for and alone! There's a doleful tale, little Dorothy!

Dor. Indeed, it is passing sad, and my heart bleeds for your worship. I am even more grieved for thy daughter, who hath lost the fostering care and guidance of so worthy a gentleman. I am sure she would have loved your worship very dearly.

Jas. (moved). I know not. It may be so, and yet—I showed myself but a careless and unloving father to her when we were parted. But her mother died of grief—and—and I would fain make amends, I would fain make amends! Yes, Dorothy, it would have gone hard with me but I would have made her love me!

Enter DAN'L.

Who is this good fellow?

Dor. It is my father, of whom I spoke unto your worship. Father, this is Sir Jasper Combe.

Dan. (heartily). At your worship's service, Sir Jasper. I've naught to say, sir, but what's been said by better men—"Welcome to Combe-Raven." I'll go bail my Dorothy's said it already.

Jas. Indeed, she has given me a very kindly greeting, Master Druce. I was telling thy daughter how I came to be wifeless and childless; and how, desolate as I am, I envy thee thy good fortune in having so fair a little nurse to cosset thee in thine old age. Take heed, though, that she be not taken from thee, and at brief notice too, one of these days! (*During this speech DAN'L. has gradually recognized SIR JASPER. He is stupefied with terror, and staggers back on anvil.*) I say, take care that she be not taken from thee one of these days.

Dan (still stupefied). By whom? Taken from me by whom?

Jas. (laughing). Oh, never fear me, Dan'l—by some far younger man than I!

Dan. Ay, ay—to be married. Ah, mebbe, mebbe!

Dor. Father, is aught amiss?

Dan. (faintly). No, lass, no; take no heed o' me.

Dor. (leading him to stool). My father hath been working in the heat of the day, and he is faint.

Dan. Yes, I've—I've been working hard. Take no heed o' me. I'm better now. I'm an old man, and weaker than o' yore. Take no heed.

Jas. I'll send thee strong wines that shall put the courage and strength of youth into thine old heart, Dan'l Druce. There, there, bear up, man. And Dorothy must come to the Hall, Dan'l. Old Bridget shall take good care of her; and I own I should like to see how the old place would shine in the sunlight shed by so fair a little lady. There, be of good cheer, man; I did but jest when I spake of thy daughter leaving thee.

Dan. Ay, ay—thou didst but jest, eh?

Jas. Why, to be sure. (*Aside.*) To think that those few light words should have so shaken him. (*Looking at DOROTHY.*) Well, I can understand it. (*To DAN'L, after a pause.*) Master Druce, I'm an old man now, and a very grave and sober old man too. I had a fair young wife once; she had eyes like thy daughter's eyes. There's a strange whim in my head, but I'm an old man, and—and—and—may I kiss thy little daughter?

Dan. (much moved). Ay, ay, thou—thou mayst kiss her if thou wilt!

[DOROTHY goes up to SIR JASPER, who kisses her on the forehead.]

Jas. God bless thee, maiden. Dan'l Druce, I thank thee!

[Exit SIR JASPER.]

Dor. Oh, father, didst thou hear? I am to go to the Hall! I have heard that it is a goodly place, as big as a village, and bravely decked with velvets and rich silks and pictures and vast mirrors! Oh, I long to see the mirrors! Then the gardens are beyond everything fair to view, and there are deer in the park, and a spacious lake, and carriages and horses too! Oh, it must be brave to live in so fair a place!

Dan. (in a broken voice). Why, Dorothy—these things are but vanities. Oh, Dorothy, my darling, be content with thy lot!

Dor. Nay, father—but indeed I envy not Sir Jasper. I grieve to think how solitary the poor gentleman must be, all alone in so vast a house, with neither wife nor child to solace him in his old age!

Dan. (anxiously). Did he tell thee of his child?

Dor. Ay, speaking gravely, yet kindly, as of a sorrow still unhealed. And when he told me how he lost the maiden many years ago, and how he has vainly sought her ever since, my heart yearned to him, for the tears glistened in his eyes. Me-thinks a daughter must needs love such a father, for he is a noble gentleman.

Dan. Nay, thou knowest him not. He did not deal rightly by the girl. He left her to perish—to perish, Dolly—that he might save his own life. He is rightly served. The sins of his youth are visited upon him in his old age. It is just, it is just. *I would not have quitted thee, my child, my child!*

Dor. In truth, I am very sure of that. I cannot think that there is in this world peril or necessity so dire as to part us twain!

Dan. Thou'lt never leave me, Dolly?

Dor. Never!

Dan. Come what may?

Dor. Come what may! (*He kisses her.*)

[Exit DOROTHY.]

Dan. (looking after her). Oh, it's hard, arter so long; for the heart o' my body is not so dear to me as yon poor little girl! Oh, Dolly, it canna be right,—it canna be right. Thou'st taken to me as to a father. If thou wast my own flesh and blood thou couldst not be dearer to me, nor I to thee. And now—arter so long.—It canna be right.

Enter GEOFFREY.

Geof. Why, Master Druce, thou hast tears in thine eyes!

Dan. Ay, lad, and cause for 'em in my heart! Geoffrey, there's a heavy blow come on me. I—I told thee of the cruel thankless father who left my girl wi' me—my Dorothy—*thy* Dorothy

Geof. Yes!

Dan. I—I have seen him, Geoffrey! Here—here, I have seen him! Him as thou'rt here to meet,—that's Dolly's father!

Geof. Sir Jasper! Impossible!

Dan. Yes, I tell thee, 'twas him. He didn't know me—but *I knowed him!* Geoffrey—my only hope lies wi' thee. Thou must wed Dorothy—ay, at once too. He cannot take her from *thee*, and we will all go hence to a place of safety—to-morrow—to-morrow!

Geof. (after a pause). Master Druce, thou art a tender-hearted, right-doing man,—and it's not for a boy like me to shape thy course.

Dan. Why, what dost thou mean?

Geof. If this man, Sir Jasper Combe, is indeed her father—

Dan. Her father? He cast her from him! He left her to perish! Her father? Heaven had given him the richest treasure that Heaven can give, and he flung it into my lap as he'd fling a coin to a beggar! The trust that he forsook I took up. The child that he plucked from his bosom I took to mine. There let it bide, Geoffrey Wynyard, there let it bide!

Geof. Yet bethink thee—the poor lone gentleman hath paid a bitter price for his wickedness; and though he did a cruel and reckless thing in abandoning her, yet grief and penitence have wrought a great change in him, and the laws of Heaven and of man give him a right over her that none may gainsay.

Dan. And have I earned no right in these fourteen years? Why, think what she is to me! what we are to each other! She has vouchsafed me her love, and for it I kneel down and worship her! She has turned my heart to man, and for it I kneel down and worship her. She has shown me the Truth, and for it I kneel down and worship her. We are life and death, body and soul, all in all to each other. And now thou wouldst have me say to this unworthy man, "Here is the daughter thou didst abandon in thy peril. For fourteen years I have reared her as mine own; but as thou didst beget her, so take her; I did but hold her in trust for thee that thou mightest reclaim her when it seemed good to thee to do so." It may be that this is my duty, Geoffrey Wynyard; but I canna do it—I canna do it.

Geof. Thy case is a hard one—it is not for me to judge.

Dan. Thou hast rightly said it is not for thee to judge. Moreover, bethink thee, thou lovest her. If this man, her father, reclaims her, he will take her from thee, and raise her to a station as far above thine as thine is above hers.

Geof. Art thou so sure that Sir Jasper is indeed her father?

Dan. That's true! that's very true! I know not that he is her father! I cannot tell that. We judge men by their deeds, Geoffrey, not their words; and he may have lied. Come, that's well thought of, Geoffrey! But we'll go hence, Dolly and I—no one shall know—thou shalt join us later; and when thou and she are married, and he cannot take her from thee, why then, maybe, we'll—oh, Geoffrey—thou wilt not betray me—thou wilt not betray *her*! Promise me that!

Geof. (*sighing*). I promise!

Dan. (*turns*). Remember, Geoffrey, thou'st promised.

[*Exit.*

Geof. In truth I am in a sore strait; for Sir Jasper is a man of proud blood, who would laugh to scorn such humble love as mine. And oh, Dorothy, if thou art taken from me, why, my life may go too! And if I cannot yield thee up, how can I ask him to do so! Oh, Dan'l Druce, Dan'l Druce, my heart is with thine in this thing, and I'll keep thy secret, never fear!

Enter REUBEN.

Reu. Why, whom have we here in Dorothy's house? A whelp—a very whelp, cur, or puppy, to be beckoned to, whistled to, frowned at, scowled at, whipped with whips, beaten with sticks, and slapped with the flat of hand!

Geof. Your servant, sir. Who are you?

Reu. Why, sir, I am an old horse-soldier, and yet not so very old neither but that I can wield quarter-staff or give the Cornish fling as well as another. No mere trooper neither, but a sergeant of horse, if you please; and one that hath cut his way through war's intestine, as a hot knife cuts butter.

One who has so snicked, chipped, chopped, slashed, cut, drilled, and carbonaded, with sword, with pistolet, with mace, with arquebus, with petronel, and with what-not, that he'd make no more of passing a rapier through that boy's body of thine than of spitting a penny herring. And now, sir, who are you?

Geof. Why, sir, I am a sailor, and I hate brag.

Reu. Come, come, civil words, young master, lest we quarrel; and when I quarrel, sextons lay in tolling grease and grave-diggers strip to their work. Dost thou know this Dan'l Druce?

Geof. I do.

Reu. A comfortable old man, they tell me, and one who can portion his pretty Dorothy. Pretty Dorothy and I are very good friends. She listens when I talk, which many won't. (*GEOFFREY makes an angry gesture.*) And talking of pretty Dorothy, we have here a bauble or locket, or, as one may say, a trinket that belongeth to her, I'll go bail. (*Picking up locket which GEOFFREY dropped.*)

Geof. Sir, that locket is mine.

Reu. It is very like—it is very like, yet for that I have but thy word. I care for no man's word—no, not even for mine own, for though it is as good as another's, yet it is worth nothing. If the trinket be thine, describe it with circumstance, and I will give it up to thee.

Enter DAN'L, unperceived. He listens in great agitation.

Geof. It is fashioned like a heart, and bears an inscription "To the best loved of all," and it is dated seventeen years since. It is a love-token, sir, and I desire you to yield it up without further parley.

Reu. (who has recognized it). Why, surely, I should know this locket well. From whom did you receive it?

Geof. (taking it from him). That is a question that I have no will to answer. It is a token of betrothal—let that suffice.

Reu. But it don't suffice. Do you know who I am? I am bailiff to Sir Jasper Combe—

Geof. Sir Jasper Combe!

Reu. Ay; and I recognize that locket as one that he placed about the neck of his missing daughter the very day he abandoned her. Come, sir, from whom did you receive it? It is a love-token—a token of betrothal. To whom are you betrothed?

Geof. (much agitated). I decline to say.

Enter DOROTHY at back. DAN'L stops her, and motions her to be silent. They both listen together.

Reu. Shall I hazard a conjecture or guess? Thou art here, making free in the blacksmith's forge. The blacksmith hath a daughter—her name is Dorothy. Shall we say that it is to Dorothy that thou art betrothed?

Geof. (with an effort to speak unconcernedly). What, Dorothy Druce? No, no, Master Bailiff, not Dorothy Druce!

[*DOROTHY expresses surprise and pain.*]

Reu. And yet I noticed that when I spake lightly of her thou didst start in anger, and flush up in a fashion ridiculous to behold. I have the eye of a hawk.

Geof. (confused). Oh—for that—it is true that I have laughed and jested with Dorothy, but you know we sailors have a special license for such love frolics. We mean nothing by them. It is said of us that we have a wife in every port—well. that's a slander, but at least I'll plead guilty to a sweetheart in every village.

[DOROTHY weeps on DAN'L'S bosom.

Reu. Ha! Thou art a shameless young reprobate by thine own showing. It will go hard but Sir Jasper will elicit the truth. We shall meet again!

[Exit REUBEN.

DAN'L and DOROTHY come forward, DAN'L trembling with rage, DOROTHY weeping.

Dan. So, Geoffrey Wynward! The blow that is to bring me to my grave has been dealt by thine hand! The secret which was thine and mine has been revealed by thee! Oh, thief of more than hard-earned gold! Oh, slayer of more than human life, are there no laws to fit such crime as thine!

Dor. Father! father! hurt him not!

Geof. Master Druce—indeed, I knew not

Dan. Thou knewest not! Will there be more mercy in this man's heart because thou knewest not? Will the last years of my poor old lonely life be less desolate because thou knewest not?

Dor. Oh, father, father, what sayest thou?

Dan. Nay, girl, stop me not! (*Taking up a hammer.*) Geoffrey Wynyard, there are injuries that laws can measure, and laws are made for 'em. There are injuries that no laws can measure, and wi' them we deal ourselves, and wreak our vengeance wi' our own right hands. (*To DOROTHY, who interposes.*) Stand aside, girl; I'm a weak old man, but there's devil enough in me to deal wi' such as him.

[DOROTHY, kneeling, holds his arm

Dor. No, no, father, yield not to thy wrath—he hath denied me—he hath dealt lightly with my love—and there's an end. Oh, harm him not, oh, harm him not! Pardon him, even as I pardon him; and let him depart in peace.

Dan. (with a violent effort to be calm). Ay, ay, thou recallest me to myself. He hath dealt lightly wi' thy love—and there's an end. Heed not the words I spake; they were empty words, and had no meaning—heed them not. Geoffrey Wynyard, thou hast spoken lightly of my child, thou hast denied her who gave thee her heart. It was ill done. Quit my roof and let me see thee no more. I—I pardon thee. Go.

Geof. Master Druce, have pity, for my tongue is tied—I—I may not speak!

Dan. Go!

Geof. Dorothy, one word. Hear what I have to say.

Dor. (with an effort). Geoffrey, thou hast denied me. I love thee—but—thou must go!

[GEOFFREY goes out sadly. When he has gone, DOROTHY falls sobbing at DAN'L'S feet.

Dan. My child! My child!

[Music.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Interior of DRUCE'S cottage. Time, evening. DOROTHY is discovered pale and weak, sitting by the fire, reading an old and tattered letter, her head resting in her hand. DAN'L discovered at back—he has a bundle and stick in his hand as if prepared for a journey. He is pale and anxious.*

Dan. Eventide, and he's not yet come to claim her. It's weary waitin' for a blow that is to fall, and we'll wait no longer. It's hard to have to creep away from the old forge, like a thief in the night, and begin the weary struggle anew, God knows where! But that it should ha' come through him whom I loved like a son, and whom I'd ha' taken to my heart as a son—it's doubly hard it should ha' come through him! (*Looking at DOROTHY.*) Poor maiden! She thinks him false to her. Well, it's better so. I'll keep that thought alive; 'twill account for much that I may not explain. One word would lift that sorrow from her gentle heart; but it must not be spoke—not yet—not yet! (*Aloud.*) What art thou readin', lass?

Dor. It is the letter he wrote to me from Morocco, two years since. I am bidding farewell to it ere I destroy it—for he is betrothed to another, and I may not keep it now. He spake to me in jest! Oh, father, it's hard to bear.

Dan. Ay, ay—hard to bear, Dolly—hard to bear.

Dor. And to vaunt his unfaithfulness in the ears of a very stranger! It was a cruel boast—for I loved him with all my heart!

Dan. Better learn the truth now than later—as I did—as I did. Early fall, light fall, Dolly. When my sorrow come it had like to ha' crushed the life out o' me—but thou'rt young, lily child, and time will heal thy wound.

Dor. If he had but known how I loved him,—but in truth I knew it not myself. It is hard to bear, for he had truth in his face, and I doubted nothing!

Dan. Trust no faces, Dolly—they lie—they lie.

Dor. Nay, but it is not like thee to say these bitter things.

Dan. More like me than thou wettest of, Dolly. I have told thee what I was afore thou earnest to me—the past fourteen year are gone like a dream, and I'm wakin' from it, Dolly, I'm wakin' from it. (*Takes up his bundle.*)

Dor. Why, father, art thou going away?

Dan. Ay, lass,—we're both goin' away.

Dor. (*surprised*). To-night?

Dan. To-night. Make thy bundle, for time presses.

Dor. But whither are we going?

Dan. Whither? What odds whither, so that we leave this place! Out into the cold world—it matters little where. Thou'lt fret here—it's better to take thee hence—for a time—only for a time. Get thy bundle quickly—take all thou hast. I'll tell thee more anon—we've no time to lose.

Dor. (*going*). As thou wilt, father. (*Aside.*) To-night! Oh, Geoffrey, Geoffrey, this is indeed the end!

[*Exit.*

Dan. Poor child, poor child! My heart smites me for deceivin' her—for harmful as he's been to me, he never had thought for aught but her. I'm a'most sorry I was so rough wi' him—he did not

know—but the harm's done, and there's no undoin' it! So, old forge, the time has come when thou and I must part for ever! May he who comes arter me have as good cause to love thee as I have, for I have been ower happy here! (Weeping.

)

REUBEN has entered and overheard the last few lines.

Reu. What, Dan'l Druce on the eve of a journey? Nay, thou'lt take no journey to-night, I promise thee. Unstrap thy pack and burn thy staff; for thou'lt eat here, drink here, sleep here, make money here, lose money here, laugh with joy, frown with anger, groan with pain—mope here, sicken here, dwindle here, and die here; take an old warrior's word for it!

Dan. Reuben Haines, art thou here to take her from me?

Reu. No, Master Dan'l, I am *not* here to take her from thee—and yet, in a sense, *yes*, Master Dan'l, I *am* here to take her from thee. Weigh these words well, and store them away in the museum of thy mind, for they are rare words—containing, as they do, truth commingled with wisdom, which is an observable union, as these qualities consort but rarely together—for he hath no wisdom who tells the plain truth, and he hath no need to tell the plain truth who hath wisdom enough to do without it. It is a paradox.

Dan. (*impatiently*). To the devil wi' thy chop-logic, I canna wait for it. Speak out, and let me know the best and the worst. Does—does thy master know?

Reu. He does *not* know, as yet. And why does he not know? Because the mighty should be merciful—and I have refrained.

Dan. If thou art not mocking at my sorrow, speak plainly.

Reu. Then observe. I am a Potent Magician, or, if thou preferrest it, a Benevolent Fairy, who hath certain gifts to dispose of. On the one hand, I have Family Union, Domestic Happiness, and Snug Old Age—on the other, Blank Misery, Abject Despair, and Desolation, utter and complete. Which shall I give to Sir Jasper, and which to thee? Now, I am a pleasant old gentleman—well to do—not so very old neither, yet old enough to marry. Dorothy and I are good friends; she listens to me when I talk, which many won't; it is a good sign and augurs well, for I love a good listener. How say you? Come, give me *thy* daughter, and I will give thee Sir Jasper's daughter. (*Aside.*) Ha! ha! It is neatly put. It is a quip.

Dan. Give thee my Dorothy! (*With an effort to be calm.*) No, no—it canna be—she is promised. True, I drove him forth; but still she loves him. No, no—I canna do that—I canna do that!

Reu. Reflect. Sir Jasper will take her from thee for ever—thou wilt never behold her again. He will drive thee from thy forge, and thou wilt be a desolate old vagabond, while she is learning day by day to forget thee, and to give her love to another. Thou refusest? It is well done. Brave old man! Thou shrinkest not from the troubles that environ thee, though they threaten to crush thee utterly; and so I say, brave old man! (*Going.*)

Dan. Nay—stay—one moment—give me time to think. How am I to do this thing? And yet—I will consent—that is, if Dorothy will. I will ask her—nay, I will persuade her. God forgive me!

Enter DOROTHY.

Dorothy, my child, come hither. I have somewhat to say to thee. I—I am not long for this world, and when I am gone-- Oh, Dorothy, bear with what I have to say! This man—this Reuben Haines—he loveth thee, and would make thee his wife.

Dor. Oh, father--

Dan. Ay, I know what thou wouldst say—thou lovest Geoffrey, but bear in mind, he loves thee not—he spake slightingly of thee—he did deny thee—he loveth other women; thou didst hear him say as much. See, this man will love thee better than Geoffrey. He—he is not a young man—he is of sober age, and a man of good substance. Oh, Dorothy, my child, have pity on me!

Dor. I cannot answer—I am lost in wonder.

Dan. Dorothy, my little girl—for a reason which I canna tell thee, it concerns my life—ay, my life—that thou shouldst take this man. I—I have been a kind father to thee, have I not? I have asked naught of thee till now. Oh, my child, it is for thine happiness as well as for mine. If thou didst but know! If thou didst but know!

Reu. Behold, maiden, I am worth consideration. I am not as other old men are. In all but years I am a boy—a very boy.

Dor. My father, I know naught of the sorrow that hangs over thee, but it must needs be heavy if thou canst suffer this man to say this thing to me!

Dan. Dorothy—have patience; if to yield up my life would serve thee, I would yield it, ten times told—the time may soon come when I shall prove thee this—for I canna live alone!

Dor. Father, I know naught of this man but what is ill—nevertheless, as thou hast been to me as my father, and I to thee as thy child, bound in all lawful things to obey thee, so will I obey thee even in this. Sir, I cannot love you, for my heart is given, but if my father bids me, I must needs do his bidding. (*Kneels.*) Oh, my father, if the breaking of my heart can save thee, it is thine to break!

Reu. It is dutifully spoken. It is a bargain. Give me thine hand on it, Dan'! Druce. Set thine heart at rest—it is settled.

Dan. (*furiously*). Ay, it is settled. Get thee hence, now and for ever, and do thy worst. Dorothy, forgive me—'twas but for a moment I wavered—I am strong again now. (*To REUBEN.*) Thou hast a master—thou owest him a duty. Go, do it—I'll do mine. We will wait here, she and I, and when the blow comes, we'll bear it together.

Reu. Dan'! Druce, I warn thee

Dan. And I warn thee, Reuben Haines! Quit my roof, and that quickly, if thou settest value on thy blood, for it's ill trifling wi' me now! As yet, I'm master here—'twon't be fur long, but while I am, I'll be obeyed. Get thee hence—take thy damned face out, I tell 'ee, lest I do that which none can undo. Go! Do thy worst!

Reu. Brave old man! Thou deftest me to my very face, and I honour thee for it. There is sore tribulation in store for thee, likewise much bitter wailing and anguish without end. Yet thou shrinkest not. It is well done, and damme, I honour thee for it. Brave old man!

[*Exit REUBEN.*

Dor. Father, thou wast wont to tell me thy sorrow—hide not from me the source of this bitter grief. Am I not in all things thy daughter, and who should comfort thee if I may not?

Dan. My child, I've naught to hide from thee now. The reed on which I leant is broken—and (*Knock. DAN'L starts in terror.*) Who's there?

Geof. (*without*). Master Druce!

Dor. It is Geoffrey.

Dan. He had best not see thee. Get thee hence, I'll open to him.

Dor. Father, deal gently with him for the love I bear him.

[*Exit DOROTHY. DAN'L opens the door.*

Enter GEOFFREY.

Geof. Master Dan'l, I'm going to sea. I have written to refuse the post that Sir Jasper would have given me, and I am going to-night. I come to pray your pardon for the sorrow I have brought npon your home. Give me that before I go.

Dan. Ay, I pardon thee, my lad. Thou didst not know. Heaven prosper thee. Is that all?

Geof. I have something to ask about—about Mistress Dorothy.

Dan. Too late! She is not mine to give. Her father—he's coming fur to take her from me. Oh, Geoffrey, he's comin' to take her from me, and I'm waiting here for the blow to fall! I'm waiting here for my death!

Geof. I did not come to seek her love—I know that that has gone from me for ever. Master Dan'l, she heard me deny her, and she believes that I spake in earnest. I'm going from her now—for ever; there's no chance that she'll ever see me again. I think I should go with a lighter heart if I knew that when I'm gone and there's many a mile of stormy water betwixt us, some one would tell her that I'm not so bad and cruel and heart-less as she thinks me—if some one would tell her that it was for her sake that I denied her—for her sake and for thine. I think I could go with a lighter heart if I knew she would be sure to think rightly of me in the end. That's all I've got to say.

Dan. My lad, I've dealt hardly with thee, but I was sorely put about and not rightly master o' myself. If it lay wi' me, I'd give my girl to thee wi' a light heart; but, my poor lad, it doan't lay wi' me now. He's coming fur to take her from me! (*Knock.*) At last! at last! Sir Jasper is here. Get thee within there. (*Pointing to inner room.*) I have business wi' this man.

[*Exit GEOFFREY into room as DAN'L opens door and admits SIR JASPER and REUBEN.*]

Jas. So, Dan'l Druce, thou art the man who for fourteen long years has hidden my daughter away from me!

Dan. Sir, I am indeed he.

Jas. Oh, shame upon thee—shame upon thee!

Dan. I crave your mercy, for I knew not her father's name till to-day.

Jas. Yet it would seem that, having learnt it, thou wouldst nevertheless have fled with her, had not this good fellow arrested thy flight.

Dan. I have naught to say that your honour's kind heart will not more fitly say for me. We love one another dearly. Truly in the bitterness of my grief I had thought to flee with her, but my better self prevailed, and I stayed.

Reu. Credit him not, sir, for he lieth. He was in the very nick of departure when I interposed, and with stern upbraiding, withering invective, and threat of instant death, did bid him await your honour's commands. The palsied coward trembled and obeyed.

Dan. Nay, sir, this man—this traitorous man—offered to keep the matter from you for ever if I would consent to give him the child to wife. She will herself bear witness to this.

Jas. (*to REUBEN.*) Art thou indeed guilty of this treachery?

Reu. Why, sir, there is a measure of truth even in this fellow's speech, inasmuch as I did indeed say it; but (herein lurks the humour of the thing) I did it but to try him. It was, as it were, a subtle essay or delicate test, prepared and carried out to the life with much ingenuity, in pursuit of the grandest of all studies—the conduct of a man under the influence of extraordinary temptation. I am a philosopher!

Jas. Thy philosophy shall be severely tried. Deliver thy books and papers to Master Geoffrey Wynyard, whom I appoint steward in thy place. Thy stewardship is at an end. Begone!

Reu. But, sir—consider

Jas. Begone, I say, and let me see thee no more!

Reu. (at door). I am a philosopher!

Jas. Begone! (*Exit REUBEN, dolefully.*) Now, Dan'l Druce, if thou hast aught to say in defence of thy conduct, I am pre-pared to hear it.

Dan. Aught to say? No, sir, I've naught to say worth saying. Thou'st seen the maiden—thou'st seen how fair she is—how good she is—how pure, and gentle, and tender, and true she is. That says more for me than I could say for myself. She softened my stubborn heart—she made me a man. I've learnt to look on her as my daughter—she on me as her father. We've bin all in all to each other; and at the thought o' losin' of her my poor old heart's 'most broken in twain. I dunno as I've any more for to say. No, sir, that's all. (*Sighing.*)

Jas. I am sorry for you—but you have brought this grief upon yourself; you have been guilty of gross injustice both to myself and to the girl.

Dan. (furious). What!

Jas. Knowing as you did that enquiries would certainly be made for the child, you nevertheless stole away from the town, and left no clue whatever as to your destination.

Dan. Knowin' as I did! How did I know—what was there for to tell me? Was it the love that her father showed for her when he left her to perish on that stormy Norfolk coast? Did that reckless profligate set such value on his treasure as to make it so sure he would ever come for it agen? Why, he set *his* life afore hers! That he might live he left her to die! Why, she was well quit of such a father! Take her from me, Jasper Combe, if thou'st the heart to do it—but do it wi' a shut mouth; for God knows, with all my sins—and they're many—I done my duty by her!

Jas. Dan'l, I spake harshly—I am sorry for it. You are right. That she was not my own child, but a step-child, matters nothing. I loved her mother dearly. It was my duty to protect the child, and I basely forsook my trust. But for this misdeed I have suffered bitterly. It killed her poor mother, who loved her beyond measure, and on her deathbed I swore to search out the child that I might make amends—and now that after many years of weary searching I have found her, shall I yield her up, even to you? Come, Dan'l, be just, and ask your-self this.

Dan. I have nowt to say agin it, sir. It's right—but it's ower hard—it's ower hard! (*Calls.*) Dorothy, my child, come hither.

Enter DOROTHY.

(*To SIR JASPER.*) I ask your pardon, sir, if I call her my child still, for she's bin more than that to me! (*To DOROTHY.*) Dolly, my lass, there's a change in store for thee—a grand change; thou'rt a lady, ay, a great lady, too. I allers knowed thou wast a lady. (*To SIR JASPER.*) She doan't talk like us common folk, sir! This gentleman, Sir Jasper Combe—he's come to claim thee—he's thy father, Dolly—think o' that! And he's—he's goin' to take thee from me—only to Combe-Raven, Dolly, where I'll come and see thee often. (*To SIR JASPER.*) Thou'lt let me come and see her odd times? (*To DOROTHY.*) And thou'lt come and see me, and there'll be grand doins then, eh, Dolly? There, there, go to thy father—he'll be a kind father to thee, and he'll love thee well, never doubt it—and—and I shall love thee too, and thou'lt have two fathers 'stead o' one, Dolly, that's all! (*She is about to speak.*) Doan't speak! doan't speak; for God's sake, doan't speak! (*He rushes out. DOROTHY stands dumb with surprise.*)

Jas. Dorothy, my child, I am indeed he who should stand to thee in the place of a father. I know that I seem to thee to be doing a hard thing for thou hast learnt to love him, and he hath earned thy love. But, Dorothy, I am childless and alone, wealthy, honoured, and of good repute, yet alone in my old age. Dorothy, come to me—come to me!

Dor. (who has been sobbing through this speech). Oh, sir, for-give me if I seem to speak thoughtlessly, for I am but a poor untaught girl, and I know not how to reply. He has been so good to me, and I love him with all the love of my heart. Oh, sir, it cannot be that after these long years of tender love I am to be taken from him now. Oh, it will kill him! Have pity on him, sir, for it will kill him! I cannot leave him now. I am the very light of his eyes—the very heart of his life (*sobbing*)—I cannot leave him now! Oh, sir, if thou hast no care for him, yet for the love of my mother have pity upon me!

Jas. (after a pause). I had thought my atonement was at an end, but my bitterest punishment is yet to come, and I am to suffer it at thy hands. So be it—it is just! Dorothy, my child, whom I have sought so long, I will not break another heart. Thou art free to go to him who has been more to thee than many fathers.

Dor. Heaven bless thee for those good words; they have sown seed in my heart that will bear thee truer love than could have come in many years passed away from him! Sir, thou hast spared his life. When his wife left him it drove him to the very verge of madness, and this last blow would have ended his life!

Jas. Did his wife leave him?

Dor. Alas! yes, many years since—before I was sent to him,

Jas. And he loved her very dearly too?

Dor. So dearly that he would have taken her to his heart if she had returned to him—so dearly that he called me Dorothy because he read her name in mine eyes.

Jas. Dorothy! was that her name?

Dor. Ay, Dorothy Marple, for that is rightly my father's name. But to save her good fame he gave out that he was dead, and he took the name he now bears.

Jas. (aside). My sin has borne bitter fruit! Oh, Dan'l Druce, give me thy pardon! Dorothy, for the sake of the Dorothy who is dead, give me thy pardon!

Enter DAN'L DRUCE.

Master Druce, Heaven has interposed to save me from unwittingly working on thee a deep and bitter injury. Take the child that is thine own in the eye of God and of man. As she has been thy daughter hitherto, so shall she be thy daughter to the end!

Dan. (amazed). Why, sir—Dorothy, my child—is he not goin' to take thee from me?

Jas. I have no right with her. She is thine, to bless thine old age, and to bring thee comfort to the very last.

Dan. Dorothy—my child—my child! (*Takes DOROTHY in his arms.*) Oh, sir, I know not how to bless thee for this blessing!

Jas. Give me no blessing. I have done thee a wrong that is beyond the power of man to repair. Think of the deepest injury that man's wickedness has ever wrought on thee, and place it to my account. (*DAN'L thunderstruck.*) If it lies within thee to extend the hand of pardon to him who laid waste thine home and made thy life desolate, read in my blighted life the punishment that the sin of my youth has brought upon me in my old age. As I have sinned, so before Heaven I have atoned!

[Exit SIR JASPER.

Dan. (as SIR JASPER'S meaning breaks upon him). Stay! come back—if this be not a devil-born dream, come hack and hear me out. Oh, source of all the sorrow I have known! Oh, black and bitter curse of two poor lives! Thy life for hers—thy cursed life for hers!

Dor. Father, spare him—be merciful—be just. He is an old man now—thou art an old man—is it in the winter of your lives that the heart-burnings of hot youth are to be avenged? He has wronged thee, but he has suffered and will yet suffer. As I have prevailed to turn thee to mankind, so let me, thy daughter—thy daughter indeed—thine own flesh—her own flesh—prevail against this one surviving sorrow. Spare him and pardon him—for her sake and for mine! (*Kneels.*)

Enter GEOFFREY.

Dan. Oh, Dorothy, dead and in heaven, when God took thee. He left an angel behind to plead for thee and for this man! It is Heaven's voice—my anger has gone out of me!

Geof. Dorothy, wilt thou believe now that it was for thy sake and for thy father's that I did deceive thee? (*DOROTHY rises; DAN'L sits.*) Wilt thou believe, now, that I love thee truly and beyond all on earth?

Dor. Oh, Geoffrey! forgive me—forgive me! I acted in haste! I knew not what I did!
(Embracing him.)

Geof. My darling! (*Kisses her.*)

Dor. Art thou happy, Geoffrey?

Geof. Passing happy! and thou

Dor. Passing happy!