

ACT II

The same room lighted more brilliantly an hour later in the evening. On one side a table covered with packs of cards, pyramids, etc., at which the CONJURER in evening dress is standing quietly setting out his tricks. A little more in the foreground the DUKE; and HASTINGS with a number of papers.

HASTINGS. There are only a few small matters. Here are the programmes of the entertainment your Grace wanted. Mr. Carleon wishes to see them very much.

DUKE. Thanks, thanks. [Takes the programmes.]

HASTINGS. Shall I carry them for your Grace?

DUKE. No, no; I shan't forget, I shan't forget. Why, you've no idea how businesslike I am. We have to be, you know. [Vaguely.] I know you're a bit of a Socialist; but I assure you there's a good deal to do--stake in the country, and all that. Look at remembering faces now! The King never forgets faces. [Waves the programmes about.] I never forget faces. [Catches sight of the CONJURER and genially draws him into the discussion.] Why, the Professor here who performs before the King [puts down the programmes]--you see it on the caravans, you know--performs before the King almost every night, I suppose....

CONJURER. [Smiling.] I sometimes let his Majesty have an evening off. And turn my attention, of course, to the very highest nobility. But naturally I have performed before every sovereign potentate, white and black. There never was a conjurer who hadn't.

DUKE. That's right, that's right! And you'll say with me that the great business for a King is remembering people?

CONJURER. I should say it was remembering which people to remember.

DUKE. Well, well, now.... [Looks round rather wildly for something.] Being really businesslike....

HASTINGS. Shall I take the programmes for your Grace?

DUKE. [Picking them up.] No, no, I shan't forget. Is there anything else?

HASTINGS. I have to go down the village about the wire to Stratford. The only other thing at all urgent is the Militant Vegetarians.

DUKE. Ah! The Militant Vegetarians! You've heard of them, I'm sure. Won't obey the law [to the CONJURER] so long as the Government serves out meat.

CONJURER. Let them be comforted. There are a good many people who don't get much meat.

DUKE. Well, well, I'm bound to say they're very enthusiastic. Advanced, too--oh, certainly advanced. Like Joan of Arc.

[Short silence, in which the CONJURER stares at him.]

CONJURER. Was Joan of Arc a Vegetarian?

DUKE. Oh, well, it's a very high ideal, after all. The Sacredness of Life, you know--the Sacredness of Life. [Shakes his head.] But they carry it too far. They killed a policeman down in Kent.

CONJURER. Killed a policeman? How Vegetarian! Well, I suppose it was, so long as they didn't eat him.

HASTINGS. They are asking only for small subscriptions. Indeed, they prefer to collect a large number of half-crowns, to prove the popularity of their movement. But I should advise....

DUKE. Oh, give them three shillings, then.

HASTINGS. If I might suggest....

DUKE. Hang it all! We gave the Anti-Vegetarians three shillings. It seems only fair.

HASTINGS. If I might suggest anything, I think your Grace will be wise not to subscribe in this case. The Anti-Vegetarians have already used their funds to form gangs ostensibly to protect their own meetings. And if the Vegetarians use theirs to break up the meetings--well, it will look rather funny that we have paid roughs on both sides. It will be rather difficult to explain when it comes before the magistrate.

DUKE. But I shall be the magistrate. [CONJURER stares at him again.] That's the system, my dear Hastings, that's the advantage of the system. Not a logical system--no Rousseau in it--but see how well it works! I shall be the very best magistrate that could be on the Bench. The others would be biassed, you know. Old Sir Lawrence is a Vegetarian himself; and might be hard on the Anti-Vegetarian roughs. Colonel Crashaw would be sure to be hard on the Vegetarian roughs. But if I've paid both of 'em, of course I shan't be hard on either of 'em--and there you have it. Just perfect impartiality.

HASTINGS. [Restrainedly.] Shall I take the programmes, your Grace?

DUKE. [Heartily.] No, no; I won't forget 'em. [Exit HASTINGS.] Well, Professor, what's the news in the conjuring world?

CONJURER. I fear there is never any news in the conjuring world.

DUKE. Don't you have a newspaper or something? Everybody has a newspaper now, you know. The--er--Daily Sword-Swallower or that sort of thing?

CONJURER. No, I have been a journalist myself; but I think journalism and conjuring will always be incompatible.

DUKE. Incompatible--Oh, but that's where I differ--that's where I take larger views! Larger laws, as old Buffle said. Nothing's incompatible, you know--except husband and wife and so on; you must talk to Morris about that. It's wonderful the way incompatibility has gone forward in the States.

CONJURER. I only mean that the two trades rest on opposite principles. The whole point of being a conjurer is that you won't explain a thing that has happened.

DUKE. Well, and the journalist?

CONJURER. Well, the whole point of being a journalist is that you do explain a thing that hasn't happened.

DUKE. But you'll want somewhere to discuss the new tricks.

CONJURER. There are no new tricks. And if there were we shouldn't want 'em discussed.

DUKE. I'm afraid you're not really advanced. Are you interested in modern progress?

CONJURER. Yes. We are interested in all tricks done by illusion.

DUKE. Well, well, I must go and see how Morris is. Pleasure of seeing you later.

[Exit DUKE, leaving the programmes.]

CONJURER. Why are nice men such asses? [Turns to arrange the table.] That seems all right. The pack of cards that is a pack of cards. And the pack of cards that isn't a pack of cards. The hat that looks like a gentleman's hat. But which, in reality, is no gentleman's hat. Only my hat; and I am not a gentleman. I am only a conjurer, and this is only a conjurer's hat. I could not take off this hat to a lady. I can take rabbits out of it, goldfish out of it, snakes out of it. Only I mustn't take my own head out of it. I suppose I'm a lower animal than a rabbit or a snake. Anyhow they can get out of the conjurer's hat; and I can't. I am a conjurer and nothing else but a conjurer. Unless I could show I was something else, and that would be worse.

[He begins to dash the cards rather irregularly about the table. Enter

PATRICIA.

PATRICIA. [Coldly] I beg your pardon. I came to get some programmes. My uncle wants them.

[She walks swiftly across and takes up the programmes.]

CONJURER. [Still dashing cards about the table.] Miss Carleon, might I speak to you a moment? [He puts his hands in his pockets, stares at the table; and his face assumes a sardonic expression.] The question is purely practical.

PATRICIA. [Pausing at the door.] I can hardly imagine what the question can be.

CONJURER. I am the question.

PATRICIA. And what have I to do with that?

CONJURER. You have everything to do with it. I am the question: you....

PATRICIA. [Angrily.] Well, what am I?

CONJURER. You are the answer.

PATRICIA. The answer to what?

CONJURER. [Coming round to the front of the table and sitting against it.] The answer to me. You think I'm a liar because I walked about the fields with you and said I could make stones disappear. Well, so I can. I'm a conjurer. In mere point of fact, it wasn't a lie. But if it had been a lie I should have told it just the same. I would have told twenty such lies. You may or may not know why.

PATRICIA. I know nothing about such lies.

[She puts her hand on the handle of the door, but the CONJURER, who is sitting on the table and staring at his boots, does not notice the action, and goes on as in a sincere soliloquy.]

CONJURER. I don't know whether you have any notion of what it means to a man like me to talk to a lady like you, even on false pretences. I am an adventurer. I am a blackguard, if one can earn the title by being in all the blackguard societies of the world. I have thought everything out by myself, when I was a guttersnipe in Fleet Street, or, lower still, a journalist in Fleet Street. Before I met you I never guessed that rich people ever thought at all. Well, that is all I have to say. We had some good conversations, didn't we? I am a liar. But I told you a great deal of the truth.

[He turns and resumes the arrangement of the table.]

PATRICIA. [Thinking.] Yes, you did tell me a great deal of the truth. You told me hundreds and thousands of truths. But you never told me the truth that one wants to know.

CONJURER. And what is that?

PATRICIA. [Turning back into the room.] You never told me the truth about yourself. You never told me you were only the Conjuror.

CONJURER. I did not tell you that because I do not even know it. I do not know whether I am only the Conjuror....

PATRICIA. What do you mean?

CONJURER. Sometimes I am afraid I am something worse than the Conjuror.

PATRICIA. [Seriously.] I cannot think of anything worse than a conjurer who does not call himself a conjurer.

CONJURER. [Gloomily.] There is something worse. [Rallying himself.] But that is not what I want to say. Do you really find that very unpardonable? Come, let me put you a case. Never mind about whether it is our case. A man spends his time incessantly in going about in third-class carriages to fifth-rate lodgings. He has to make up new tricks, new patter, new nonsense, sometimes every night of his life. Mostly he has to do it in the beastly black cities of the Midlands and the North, where he can't get out into the country. Now and again he does it at some gentleman's country-house, where he can get out into the country. Well, you know that actors and orators and all sorts of people like to rehearse their effects in the open air if they can. [Smiles.] You know that story of the great statesman who was heard by his own gardener saying, as he paced the garden, "Had I, Mr. Speaker, received the smallest intimation that I could be called upon to speak this evening...." [PATRICIA controls a smile, and he goes on with overwhelming enthusiasm.] Well, conjurers are just the same. It takes some time to prepare an impromptu. A man like that walks about the woods and fields doing all his tricks beforehand, and talking all sorts of gibberish because he thinks he is alone. One evening this man found he was not alone. He found a very beautiful child was watching him.

PATRICIA. A child?

CONJURER. Yes. That was his first impression. He is an intimate friend of mine. I have known him all my life. He tells me he has since discovered she is not a child. She does not fulfil the definition.

PATRICIA. What is the definition of a child?

CONJURER. Somebody you can play with.

PATRICIA. [Abruptly.] Why did you wear that cloak with the hood up?

CONJURER. [Smiling.] I think it escaped your notice that it was raining.

PATRICIA. [Smiling faintly.] And what did this friend of yours do?

CONJURER. You have already told me what he did. He destroyed a fairy tale, for he created a fairy tale that he was bound to destroy. [Swinging round suddenly on the table.] But do you blame a man very much, Miss Carleon, if he enjoyed the only fairy tale he had had in his life? Suppose he said the silly circles he was drawing for practice were really magic circles? Suppose he said the bosh he was talking was the language of the elves? Remember, he has read fairy tales as much as you have. Fairy tales are the only democratic institutions. All the classes have heard all the fairy tales. Do you blame him very much if he, too, tried to have a holiday in fairyland?

PATRICIA. [Simply.] I blame him less than I did. But I still say there can be nothing worse than false magic. And, after all, it was he who brought the false magic.

CONJURER. [Rising from his seat.] Yes. It was she who brought the real magic.

[Enter MORRIS, in evening-dress. He walks straight up to the conjuring-table; and picks up one article after another, putting each down with a comment.

MORRIS. I know that one. I know that. I know that. Let's see, that's the false bottom, I think. That works with a wire. I know that; it goes up the sleeve. That's the false bottom again. That's the substituted pack of cards--that....

PATRICIA. Really, Morris, you mustn't talk as if you knew everything.

CONJURER. Oh, I don't mind anyone knowing everything, Miss Carleon. There is something that is much more important than knowing how a thing is done.

MORRIS. And what's that?

CONJURER. Knowing how to do it.

MORRIS. [Becoming nasal again in anger.] That's so, eh? Being the high-toned conjurer because you can't any longer take all the sidewalk as a fairy.

PATRICIA. [Crossing the room and speaking seriously to her brother.] Really, Morris, you are very rude. And it's quite ridiculous to be rude. This gentleman was only practising some tricks by himself in the garden. [With a certain dignity.] If there was any mistake, it was mine. Come, shake hands, or whatever men do when they apologize. Don't be silly. He won't turn you into a bowl of goldfish.

MORRIS. [Reluctantly.] Well, I guess that's so. [Offering his hand.] Shake. [They shake hands.] And you won't turn me into a bowl of goldfish anyhow, Professor. I understand that when you do produce a bowl of goldfish, they are generally slips of carrot. That is so, Professor?

CONJURER. [Sharply.] Yes. [Produces a bowl of goldfish from his tail pockets and holds it under the other's nose.] Judge for yourself.

MORRIS. [In monstrous excitement.] Very good! Very good! But I know how that's done--I know how that's done. You have an india-rubber cap, you know, or cover....

CONJURER. Yes.

[Goes back gloomily to his table and sits on it, picking up a pack of cards and balancing it in his hand.]

MORRIS. Ah, most mysteries are tolerably plain if you know the apparatus. [Enter DOCTOR and SMITH, talking with grave faces, but growing silent as they reach the group.] I guess I wish we had all the old apparatus of all the old Priests and Prophets since the beginning of the world. I guess most of the old miracles and that were a matter of just panel and wires.

CONJURER. I don't quite understand you. What old apparatus do you want so much?

MORRIS. [Breaking out with all the frenzy of the young free-thinker.] Well, sir, I just want that old apparatus that turned rods into snakes. I want those smart appliances, sir, that brought water out of a rock when old man Moses chose to hit it. I guess it's a pity we've lost the machinery. I would like to have those old conjurers here that called themselves Patriarchs and Prophets in your precious Bible....

PATRICIA. Morris, you mustn't talk like that.

MORRIS. Well, I don't believe in religion....

DOCTOR. [Aside.] Hush, hush. Nobody but women believe in religion.

PATRICIA. [Humorously.] I think this is a fitting opportunity to show you another ancient conjuring trick.

DOCTOR. Which one is that?

PATRICIA. The Vanishing Lady!

[Exit PATRICIA.]

SMITH. There is one part of their old apparatus I regret especially being lost.

MORRIS. [Still excited.] Yes!

SMITH. The apparatus for writing the Book of Job.

MORRIS. Well, well, they didn't know everything in those old times.

SMITH. No, and in those old times they knew they didn't. [Dreamily.] Where shall wisdom be found, and what is the place of understanding?

CONJURER. Somewhere in America, I believe.

SMITH. [Still dreamily.] Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The deep sayeth it is not in me, the sea sayeth it is not with me. Death and destruction say we have heard tell of it. God understandeth the way thereof and He knoweth the place thereof. For He looketh to the ends of the earth and seeth under the whole Heaven. But to man He hath said: Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. [Turns suddenly to the DOCTOR.] How's that for Agnosticism, Dr. Grimthorpe? What a pity that apparatus is lost.

MORRIS. Well, you may just smile how you choose, I reckon. But I say the Conjuror here could be the biggest man in the big blessed centuries if he could just show us how the Holy old tricks were done. We must say this for old man Moses, that he was in advance of his time. When he did the old tricks they were new tricks. He got the pull on the public. He could do his tricks before grown men, great bearded fighting men who could win battles and sing Psalms. But this modern conjuring is all behind the times. That's why they only do it with schoolboys. There isn't a trick on that table I don't know. The whole trade's as dead as mutton; and not half so satisfying. Why he [pointing to the CONJURER] brought out a bowl of goldfish just now--an old trick that anybody could do.

CONJURER. Oh, I quite agree. The apparatus is perfectly simple. By the way, let me have a look at those goldfish of yours, will you?

MORRIS. [Angrily.] I'm not a paid play-actor come here to conjure. I'm not here to do stale tricks; I'm here to see through 'em. I say it's an old trick and....

CONJURER. True. But as you said, we never show it except to schoolboys.

MORRIS. And may I ask you, Professor Hocus Pocus, or whatever your name is, whom you are calling a schoolboy?

CONJURER. I beg your pardon. Your sister will tell you I am sometimes mistaken about children.

MORRIS. I forbid you to appeal to my sister.

CONJURER. That is exactly what a schoolboy would do.

MORRIS. [With abrupt and dangerous calm.] I am not a schoolboy, Professor. I am a quiet business man. But I tell you in the country I come from, the hand of a quiet business man goes to his hip pocket at an insult like that.

CONJURER. [Fiercely.] Let it go to his pocket! I thought the hand of a quiet business man more often went to someone else's pocket.

MORRIS. You....

[Puts his hand to his hip. The DOCTOR puts his hand on his shoulder.]

DOCTOR. Gentlemen, I think you are both forgetting yourselves.

CONJURER. Perhaps. [His tone sinks suddenly to weariness.] I ask pardon for what I said. It was certainly in excess of the young gentleman's deserts. [Sighs.] I sometimes rather wish I could forget myself.

MORRIS. [Sullenly, after a pause.] Well, the entertainment's coming on; and you English don't like a scene. I reckon I'll have to bury the blamed old hatchet too.

DOCTOR. [With a certain dignity, his social type shining through his profession.] Mr. Carleon, you will forgive an old man, who knew your father well, if he doubts whether you are doing yourself justice in treating yourself as an American Indian, merely because you have lived in America. In my old friend Huxley's time we of the middle classes disbelieved in reason and all sorts of things. But we did believe in good manners. It is a pity if the aristocracy can't. I don't like to hear you say you are a savage and have buried a tomahawk. I would rather hear you say, as your Irish ancestors would have said, that you have sheathed your sword with the dignity proper to a gentleman.

MORRIS. Very well. I've sheathed my sword with the dignity proper to a gentleman.

CONJURER. And I have sheathed my sword with the dignity proper to a conjurer.

MORRIS. How does the Conjurer sheath a sword?

CONJURER. Swallows it.

DOCTOR. Then we all agree there shall be no quarrel.

SMITH. May I say a word? I have a great dislike of a quarrel, for a reason quite beyond my duty to my cloth.

MORRIS. And what is that?

SMITH. I object to a quarrel because it always interrupts an argument. May I bring you back for a moment to the argument? You were saying that these modern conjuring tricks are simply the old miracles when they have once been found out. But surely another view is possible. When we speak of things being sham, we generally mean that they are imitations of things that are genuine. Take that Reynolds over there of the Duke's great-grandfather. [Points to a picture on the wall.] If I were to say it was a copy....

MORRIS. Wal, the Duke's real amiable; but I reckon you'd find what you call the interruption of an argument.

SMITH. Well, suppose I did say so, you wouldn't take it as meaning that Sir Joshua Reynolds never lived. Why should sham miracles prove to us that real Saints and Prophets never lived. There may be sham magic and real magic also.

[The CONJURER raises his head and listens with a strange air of intentness.

SMITH. There may be turnip ghosts precisely because there are real ghosts. There may be theatrical fairies precisely because there are real fairies. You do not abolish the Bank of England by pointing to a forged bank-note.

MORRIS. I hope the Professor enjoys being called a forged bank-note.

CONJURER. Almost as much as being called the Prospectus of some American Companies.

DOCTOR. Gentlemen! Gentlemen!

CONJURER. I am sorry.

MORRIS. Wal, let's have the argument first, then I guess we can have the quarrel afterwards. I'll clean this house of some encumbrances. See here, Mr. Smith, I'm not putting anything on your real miracle notion. I say, and Science says, that there's a cause for everything. Science will find out that cause, and sooner or later your old miracle will look mighty mean. Sooner or later Science will botanise a bit on your turnip ghosts; and make you look turnips yourselves for having taken any. I say....

DOCTOR. [In a low voice to SMITH.] I don't like this peaceful argument of yours. The boy is getting much too excited.

MORRIS. You say old man Reynolds lived; and Science don't say no. [He turns excitedly to the picture.] But I guess he's dead now; and you'll no more raise your Saints and Prophets from the dead than you'll raise the Duke's great-grandfather to

dance on that wall.

[The picture begins to sway slightly to and fro on the wall.

DOCTOR. Why, the picture is moving!

MORRIS. [Turning furiously on the CONJURER.] You were in the room before us. Do you reckon that will take us in? You can do all that with wires.

CONJURER. [Motionless and without looking up from the table.] Yes, I could do all that with wires.

MORRIS. And you reckoned I shouldn't know. [Laughs with a high crowing laugh.] That's how the derved dirty Spiritualists do all their tricks. They say they can make the furniture move of itself. If it does move they move it; and we mean to know how.

[A chair falls over with a slight crash.

[MORRIS almost staggers and momentarily fights for breath and words.

MORRIS. You ... why ... that ... every one knows that ... a sliding plank. It can be done with a sliding plank.

CONJURER. [Without looking up.] Yes. It can be done with a sliding plank.

[The DOCTOR draws nearer to MORRIS, who faces about, addressing him passionately.

MORRIS. You were right on the spot, Doc, when you talked about that red lamp of yours. That red lamp is the light of science that will put out all the lanterns of your turnip ghosts. It's a consuming fire, Doctor, but it is the red light of the morning. [Points at it in exalted enthusiasm.] Your priests can no more stop that light from shining or change its colour and its radiance than Joshua could stop the sun and moon. [Laughs savagely.] Why, a real fairy in an elfin cloak strayed too near the lamp an hour or two ago; and it turned him into a common society clown with a white tie.

[The lamp at the end of the garden turns blue. They all look at it in silence.

MORRIS. [Splitting the silence on a high unnatural note.] Wait a bit! Wait a bit! I've got you! I'll have you!... [He strides wildly up and down the room, biting his finger.] You put a wire ... no, that can't be it....

DOCTOR. [Speaking to him soothingly.] Well, well, just at this moment we need not inquire....

MORRIS. [Turning on him furiously.] You call yourself a man of science, and you

dare to tell me not to inquire!

SMITH. We only mean that for the moment you might let it alone.

MORRIS. [Violently.] No, Priest, I will not let it alone. [Pacing the room again.] Could it be done with mirrors? [He clasps his brow.] You have a mirror.... [Suddenly, with a shout.] I've got it! I've got it! Mixture of lights! Why not? If you throw a green light on a red light....

[Sudden silence.

SMITH. [Quietly to the DOCTOR.] You don't get blue.

DOCTOR. [Stepping across to the CONJURER.] If you have done this trick, for God's sake undo it.

[After a silence, the light turns red again.

MORRIS. [Dashing suddenly to the glass doors and examining them.] It's the glass! You've been doing something to the glass!

[He stops suddenly and there is a long silence.

CONJURER. [Still without moving.] I don't think you will find anything wrong with the glass.

MORRIS. [Bursting open the glass doors with a crash.] Then I'll find out what's wrong with the lamp.

[Disappears into the garden.

DOCTOR. It is still a wet night, I am afraid.

SMITH. Yes. And somebody else will be wandering about the garden now.

[Through the broken glass doors MORRIS can be seen marching backwards and forwards with swifter and swifter steps.

SMITH. I suppose in this case the Celtic twilight will not get on the chest.

DOCTOR. Oh, if it were only the chest!

Enter PATRICIA.

PATRICIA. Where is my brother?

[There is an embarrassed silence, in which the CONJURER answers.

CONJURER. I am afraid he is walking about in Fairyland.

PATRICIA. But he mustn't go out on a night like this; it's very dangerous!

CONJURER. Yes, it is very dangerous. He might meet a fairy.

PATRICIA. What do you mean?

CONJURER. You went out in this sort of weather and you met this sort of fairy, and so far it has only brought you sorrow.

PATRICIA. I am going out to find my brother.

[She goes out into the garden through the open doors.

SMITH. [After a silence, very suddenly.] What is that noise? She is not singing those songs to him, is she?

CONJURER. No. He does not understand the language of the elves.

SMITH. But what are all those cries and gasps I hear?

CONJURER. The normal noises, I believe, of a quiet business man.

DOCTOR. Sir, I can understand your being bitter, for I admit you have been uncivilly received; but to speak like that just now....

[PATRICIA reappears at the garden doors, very pale.

PATRICIA. Can I speak to the Doctor?

DOCTOR. My dear lady, certainly. Shall I fetch the Duke?

PATRICIA. I would prefer the Doctor.

SMITH. Can I be of any use?

PATRICIA. I only want the Doctor.

[She goes out again, followed by DR. GRIMTHORPE. The others look at each other.

SMITH. [Quietly.] That last was a wonderful trick of yours.

CONJURER. Thank you. I suppose you mean it was the only one you didn't see through.

SMITH. Something of the kind, I confess. Your last trick was the best trick I have ever seen. It is so good that I wish you had not done it.

CONJURER. And so do I.

SMITH. How do you mean? Do you wish you had never been a conjurer?

CONJURER. I wish I had never been born.

[Exit CONJURER.

[A silence. The DOCTOR enters, very grave.

DOCTOR. It is all right so far. We have brought him back.

SMITH. [Drawing near to him.] You told me there was mental trouble with the girl.

DOCTOR. [Looking at him steadily.] No. I told you there was mental trouble in the family.

SMITH. [After a silence.] Where is Mr. Morris Carleon?

DOCTOR. I have got him into bed in the next room. His sister is looking after him.

SMITH. His sister! Oh, then do you believe in fairies?

DOCTOR. Believe in fairies? What do you mean?

SMITH. At least you put the person who does believe in them in charge of the person who doesn't.

DOCTOR. Well, I suppose I do.

SMITH. You don't think she'll keep him awake all night with fairy tales?

DOCTOR. Certainly not.

SMITH. You don't think she'll throw the medicine-bottle out of window and administer--er--a dewdrop, or anything of that sort? Or a four-leaved clover, say?

DOCTOR. No; of course not.

SMITH. I only ask because you scientific men are a little hard on us clergymen. You don't believe in a priesthood; but you'll admit I'm more really a priest than this Conjurer is really a magician. You've been talking a lot about the Bible and the Higher Criticism. But even by the Higher Criticism the Bible is older than the

language of the elves--which was, as far as I can make out, invented this afternoon. But Miss Carleon believed in the wizard. Miss Carleon believed in the language of the elves. And you put her in charge of an invalid without a flicker of doubt: because you trust women.

DOCTOR. [Very seriously.] Yes, I trust women.

SMITH. You trust a woman with the practical issues of life and death, through sleepless hours when a shaking hand or an extra grain would kill.

DOCTOR. Yes.

SMITH. But if the woman gets up to go to early service at my church, you call her weak-minded and say that nobody but women can believe in religion.

DOCTOR. I should never call this woman weak-minded--no, by God, not even if she went to church.

SMITH. Yet there are many as strong-minded who believe passionately in going to church.

DOCTOR. Weren't there as many who believed passionately in Apollo?

SMITH. And what harm came of believing in Apollo? And what a mass of harm may have come of not believing in Apollo? Does it never strike you that doubt can be a madness, as well be faith? That asking questions may be a disease, as well as proclaiming doctrines? You talk of religious mania! Is there no such thing as irreligious mania? Is there no such thing in the house at this moment?

DOCTOR. Then you think no one should question at all.

SMITH. [With passion, pointing to the next room.] I think that is what comes of questioning! Why can't you leave the universe alone and let it mean what it likes? Why shouldn't the thunder be Jupiter? More men have made themselves silly by wondering what the devil it was if it wasn't Jupiter.

DOCTOR. [Looking at him.] Do you believe in your own religion?

SMITH. [Returning the look equally steadily.] Suppose I don't: I should still be a fool to question it. The child who doubts about Santa Claus has insomnia. The child who believes has a good night's rest.

DOCTOR. You are a Pragmatist.

Enter DUKE, absent-mindedly.

SMITH. That is what the lawyers call vulgar abuse. But I do appeal to practise.

Here is a family over which you tell me a mental calamity hovers. Here is the boy who questions everything and a girl who can believe anything. Upon which has the curse fallen?

DUKE. Talking about the Pragmatists. I'm glad to hear.... Ah, very forward movement! I suppose Roosevelt now.... [Silence.] Well, we move you know, we move! First there was the Missing Link. [Silence.] No! First there was Protoplasm--and then there was the Missing Link; and Magna Carta and so on. [Silence.] Why, look at the Insurance Act!

DOCTOR. I would rather not.

DUKE. [Wagging a playful finger at him.] Ah, prejudice, prejudice! You doctors, you know! Well, I never had any myself.

[Silence.]

DOCTOR. [Breaking the silence in unusual exasperation.] Any what?

DUKE. [Firmly.] Never had any Marconis myself. Wouldn't touch 'em. [Silence.] Well, I must speak to Hastings.

[Exit DUKE, aimlessly.]

DOCTOR. [Exploding.] Well, of all the.... [Turns to SMITH.] You asked me just now which member of the family had inherited the family madness.

SMITH. Yes; I did.

DOCTOR. [In a low, emphatic voice.] On my living soul, I believe it must be the Duke.

CURTAIN