

SCENE III.

(Capt. H. Harry. Later Bessie).

Harry Hagberd (thirty-one, tall, broad shoulders, shaven face, small moustache. Blue serge suit. Coat open. Grey flannel shirt without collar and tie. No waistcoat. Belt with buckle. Black, soft felt hat, wide-brimmed, worn crushed in the crown and a little on one side. Good nature, recklessness, some swagger in the bearing. Assured, deliberate walk with a heavy tread. Slight roll in the gait. Walks down. Stops, hands in pockets. Looks about. Speaks.) This must be it. Can't see anything beyond. There's somebody. (Walks up to Capt. Hagberd's gate?) Can you tell me... (Manner changes. Leans elbow on gate?) Why, you must be Capt. Hagberd himself.

Capt. H. (In garden, both hands on spade, peering, startled). Yes, I am.

Harry (Slowly). You've been advertising in the papers for your son, I believe.

Capt. H. (Off his guard, nervous). Yes. My only boy Harry. He's coming home tomorrow. (Mumbles.) For a permanent stay.

Harry (Surprised). The devil he is! (Change of tone?) My word! You've grown a beard like Father Christmas himself.

Capt. H. (Impressively). Go your way. (Waves one hand loftily?) What's that to you. Go your way. (Agitated?) Go your way.

Harry. There, there. I am not trespassing in the street--where I stand--am I? Tell you what, I fancy there's something wrong about your news. Suppose you let me come in--for a quiet chat, you know.

Capt. H. (Horrorified). Let you--you come in!

Harry (Persuasive). Because I could give you some real information about your son. The--very--latest--tip. If you care to hear.

Capt. H. (Explodes). No! I don't care to hear. (Begins to pace to and fro, spade on shoulder. Gesticulating with his other arm.) Here's a fellow--a grinning town fellow, who says there's something wrong. (Fiercely.) I have got more information than you're aware of. I have all the information I want. I have had it for years--for years--for years--enough to last me till to-morrow! Let you come in, indeed! What

would Harry say?

(Bessie Carvil appears at cottage door with a white wrap on her head and stands in her garden trying to see).

Bessie. What's the matter?

Capt. H. (Beside himself). An information fellow. (Stumbles.)

Harry (Putting out arm to steady him, gravely). Here! Steady a bit! Seems to me somebody's been trying to get at you. (Change of tone.) Hullo! What's this rig you've got on?... Storm canvas coat, by George! (He gives a frig, throaty laugh.) Well! You are a character!

Capt. H. (Daunted by the allusion, looks at coat). I--I wear it for--for the time being. Till--till--to-morrow. (Shrinks away, spade in hand, to door of his cottage.)

Bessie (Advancing). And what may you want, sir?

Harry (Turns to Bessie at once; easy manner). I'd like to know about this swindle that's going to be sprung on him. I didn't mean to startle the old man. You see, on my way here I dropped into a barber's to get a twopenny shave, and they told me there that he was something of a character. He has been a character all his life.

Bessie (Wondering). What swindle?

Capt. H. A grinning fellow! (Makes sudden dash indoors with the spade. Door slams. Affected gurgling laugh within.)