

and half of the second verse. Turning to MRS. G.) Now, chorus! Sing,
Pussy!

BOTH TOGETHER. (Con brio, to the horror of the monkeys who are
settling for the night.)--

'Vanity, all is Vanity,' said Wisdom, scorning me--
I clasped my true Love's tender hand and answered
frank and free--ee:--

'If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wi--ise?
(Crescendo.) Vanity let it be!

MRS. G. (Defiantly to the gray of the evening sky.) 'Vanity let
it be!'

ECHO. (From the Fagoo spur.) Let it be!

FATIMA

And you may go into every room of the house and see everything that
is there, but into the Blue Room you must not go.

--The Story of Blue Beard.

SCENE.--The GADSBYS' bungalow in the Plains. Time, 11 A. M. on a Sunday morning. CAPTAIN GADSBY, in his shirt-sleeves, is bending over a complete set of Hussar's equipment, from saddle to picketing-rope, which is neatly spread over the floor of his study. He is smoking an unclean briar, and his forehead is puckered with thought.

CAPT. G. (To himself, fingering a headstall.) Jack's an ass. There's enough brass on this to load a mule--and, if the Americans know anything about anything, it can be cut down to a bit only. 'Don't want the watering-bridle, either. Humbug!--Half a dozen sets of chains and pulleys for one horse! Rot! (Scratching his head.) Now, let's consider it all over from the beginning. By Jove, I've forgotten the scale of weights! Ne'er mind. 'Keep the bit only, and eliminate every boss from the crupper to breastplate. No breastplate at all. Simple leather strap across the breast--like the Russians. Hi! Jack never thought of that!

MRS. G. (Entering hastily, her hand bound in a cloth.) Oh, Pip, I've scalded my hand over that horrid, horrid Tiparee jam!

CAPT. G. (Absently.) Eh! Wha-at?

MRS. G. (With round-eyed reproach.) I've scalded it aw-fully! Aren't you sorry? And I did so want that jam to jam properly.

CAPT. G. Poor little woman! Let me kiss the place and make it well.
(Unrolling bandage.) You small sinner! Where's that scald? I can't see it.

MRS. G. On the top of the little finger. There!--It's a most 'normous big burn!

CAPT. G. (Kissing little finger.) Baby! Let Hyder look after the jam. You know I don't care for sweets.

MRS. G. In-deed?--Pip!

CAPT. G. Not of that kind, anyhow. And now run along, Minnie, and leave me to my own base devices. I'm busy.

MRS. G. (Calmly settling herself in long chair.) So I see. What a mess you're making! Why have you brought all that smelly leather stuff into the house?

CAPT. G. To play with. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. G. Let me play too. I'd like it.

CAPT. G. I'm afraid you wouldn't, Pussy--Don't you think that jam will burn, or whatever it is that jam does when it's not looked after by a clever little housekeeper?

MRS. G. I thought you said Hyder could attend to it. I left him in the veranda, stirring--when I hurt myself so.

CAPT. G. (His eye returning to the equipment.) Po-oor little woman!--Three pounds four and seven is three eleven, and that can be cut down to two eight, with just a lee-tle care, without weakening anything. Farriery is all rot in incompetent hands. What's the use of a shoe-case when a man's scouting? He can't stick it on with a lick--like a stamp--the shoe! Skittles!

MRS. G. What's skittles? Pah! What is this leather cleaned with?

CAPT. G. Cream and champagne and-- Look here, dear, do you really want to talk to me about anything important?

MRS. G. No. I've done my accounts, and I thought I'd like to see what you're doing.

CAPT. G. Well, love, now you've seen and--Would you mind?--That is to say--Minnie, I really am busy.

MRS. G. You want me to go?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear, for a little while. This tobacco will hang in your dress, and saddlery doesn't interest you.

MRS. G. Everything you do interests me, Pip.

CAPT. G. Yes, I know, I know, dear. I'll tell you all about it some day when I've put a head on this thing. In the meantime--

MRS. G. I'm to be turned out of the room like a troublesome child?

CAPT. G. No-o. I don't mean that exactly. But, you see, I shall be tramping up and down, shifting these things to and fro, and I shall be in your way. Don't you think so?

MRS. G. Can't I lift them about? Let me try. (Reaches forward to trooper's saddle.)

CAPT. G. Good gracious, child, don't touch it. You'll hurt yourself. (Picking up saddle.) Little girls aren't expected to handle numdahs. Now, where would you like it put? (Holds saddle above his head.)

MRS. G. (A break in her voice.) Nowhere. Pip, how good you are--and how strong! Oh, what's that ugly red streak inside your arm?

CAPT. G. (Lowering saddle quickly.) Nothing. It's a mark of sorts. (Aside.) And Jack's coming to tiffin with his notions all cut and dried!

MRS. G. I know it's a mark, but I've never seen it before. It runs all up the arm. What is it?

CAPT. G. A cut--if you want to know.

MRS. G. Want to know! Of course I do! I can't have my husband cut to pieces in this way. How did it come? Was it an accident? Tell me, Pip.

CAPT. G. (Grimly.) No. 'Twasn't an accident. I got it--from a man--in Afghanistan.

MRS. G. In action? Oh, Pip, and you never told me!

CAPT. G. I'd forgotten all about it.

MRS. G. Hold up your arm! What a horrid, ugly scar! Are you sure it doesn't hurt now? How did the man give it you?

CAPT. G. (Desperately looking at his watch.) With a knife. I came down--old Van Loo did, that's to say--and fell on my leg, so I couldn't run. And then this man came up and began chopping at me as I sprawled.

MRS. G. Oh, don't, don't! That's enough!--Well, what happened?

CAPT. G. I couldn't get to my holster, and Mafflin came round the corner and stopped the performance.

MRS. G. How? He's such a lazy man, I don't believe he did.

CAPT. G. Don't you? I don't think the man had much doubt about it.

Jack cut his head off.

MRS. G. Cut--his--head--off! 'With one blow,' as they say in the books?

CAPT. G. I'm not sure. I was too interested in myself to know much about it. Anyhow, the head was off, and Jack was punching old Van Loo in the ribs to make him get up. Now you know all about it, dear, and now--

MRS. G. You want me to go, of course. You never told me about this, though I've been married to you for ever so long; and you never would have told me if I hadn't found out; and you never do tell me anything about yourself, or what you do, or what you take an interest in.

CAPT. G. Darling, I'm always with you, aren't I?

MRS. G. Always in my pocket, you were going to say. I know you are; but you are always thinking away from me.

CAPT. G. (Trying to hide a smile.) Am I? I wasn't aware of it. I'm awf'ly sorry.

MRS. G. (Piteously.) Oh, don't make fun of me! Pip, you know what I mean. When you are reading one of those things about Cavalry, by that idiotic Prince--why doesn't he be a Prince instead of a stable-boy?

CAPT. G. Prince Kraft a stable-boy--Oh, my Aunt! Never mind, dear.
You were going to say?

MRS. G. It doesn't matter; you don't care for what I say. Only--only
you get up and walk about the room, staring in front of you, and then
Mafflin comes in to dinner, and after I'm in the drawing-room I can
hear you and him talking, and talking, and talking, about things I
can't understand, and--oh, I get so tired and feel so lonely!--I
don't want to complain and be a trouble, Pip; but I do--indeed I do!

CAPT. G. My poor darling! I never thought of that. Why don't you ask
some nice people in to dinner?

MRS. G. Nice people! Where am I to find them? Horrid frumps! And if I
did, I shouldn't be amused. You know I only want you.

CAPT. G. And you have me surely, Sweetheart?

MRS. G. I have not! Pip, why don't you take me into your life?

CAPT. G. More than I do? That would be difficult, dear.

MRS. G. Yes, I suppose it would--to you. I'm no help to you--no
companion to you; and you like to have it so.

CAPT. G. Aren't you a little unreasonable, Pussy?

MRS. G. (Stamping her foot.) I'm the most reasonable woman in the world--when I'm treated properly.

CAPT. G. And since when have I been treating you improperly?

MRS. G. Always--and since the beginning. You know you have.

CAPT. G. I don't; but I'm willing to be convinced.

MRS. G. (Pointing to saddlery.) There!

CAPT. G. How do you mean?

MRS. G. What does all that mean? Why am I not to be told? Is it so precious?

CAPT. G. I forget its exact Government value just at present. It means that it is a great deal too heavy.

MRS. G. Then why do you touch it?

CAPT. G. To make it lighter. See here, little love, I've one notion and Jack has another, but we are both agreed that all this equipment is about thirty pounds too heavy. The thing is how to cut it down without weakening any part of it, and, at the same time, allowing the trooper to carry everything he wants for his own comfort--socks and

shirts and things of that kind.

MRS. G. Why doesn't he pack them in a little trunk?

CAPT. G. (Kissing her.) Oh, you darling! Pack them in a little trunk, indeed! Hussars don't carry trunks, and it's a most important thing to make the horse do all the carrying.

MRS. G. But why need you bother about it? You're not a trooper.

CAPT. G. No; but I command a few score of him; and equipment is nearly everything in these days.

MRS. G. More than me?

CAPT. G. Stupid! Of course not; but it's a matter that I'm tremendously interested in, because if I or Jack, or I and Jack, work out some sort of lighter saddlery and all that, it's possible that we may get it adopted.

MRS. G. How?

CAPT. G. Sanctioned at Home, where they will make a sealed pattern--a pattern that all the saddlers must copy--and so it will be used by all the regiments.

MRS. G. And that interests you?

CAPT. G. It's part of my profession, y'know, and my profession is a good deal to me. Everything in a soldier's equipment is important, and if we can improve that equipment, so much the better for the soldiers and for us.

MRS.G. Who's 'us'?

CAPT. G. Jack and I; only Jack's notions are too radical. What's that big sigh for, Minnie?

MRS. G. Oh, nothing--and you've kept all this a secret from me! Why?

CAPT. G. Not a secret, exactly, dear. I didn't say anything about it to you because I didn't think it would amuse you.

MRS. G. And am I only made to be amused?

CAPT. G. No, of course. I merely mean that it couldn't interest you.

MRS. G. It's your work and--and if you'd let me, I'd count all these things up. If they are too heavy, you know by how much they are too heavy, and you must have a list of things made out to your scale of lightness, and--

CAPT. G. I have got both scales somewhere in my head; but it's hard to tell how light you can make a headstall, for instance, until you've

actually had a model made.

MRS. G. But if you read out the list, I could copy it down, and pin it up there just above your table. Wouldn't that do?

CAPT. G. It would be awfully nice, dear, but it would be giving you trouble for nothing. I can't work that way. I go by rule of thumb. I know the present scale of weights, and the other one--the one that I'm trying to work to--will shift and vary so much that I couldn't be certain, even if I wrote it down.

MRS. G. I'm so sorry. I thought I might help. Is there anything else that I could be of use in?

CAPT. G. (Looking round the room.) I can't think of anything. You're always helping me, you know.

MRS. G. Am I? How?

CAPT. G. You are you of course, and as long as you're near me--I can't explain exactly, but it's in the air.

MRS. G. And that's why you wanted to send me away?

CAPT. G. That's only when I'm trying to do work--grubby work like this.

MRS. G. Mafflin's better, then, isn't he?

CAPT. G. (Rashly.) Of course he is. Jack and I have been thinking along the same groove for two or three years about this equipment. It's our hobby, and it may really be useful some day.

MRS. G. (After a pause.) And that's all that you have away from me?

CAPT. G. It isn't very far away from you now. Take care the oil on that bit doesn't come off on your dress.

MRS. G. I wish--I wish so much that I could really help you. I believe I could--if I left the room. But that's not what I mean.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) Give me patience! I wish she would go. (Aloud.) I assure you you can't do anything for me, Minnie, and I must really settle down to this. Where's my pouch?

MRS. G. (Crossing to writing-table.) Here you are, Bear. What a mess you keep your table in!

CAPT. G. Don't touch it. There's a method in my madness, though you mightn't think of it.

MRS. G. (At table.) I want to look-- Do you keep accounts, Pip?

CAPT. G. (Bending over saddlery.) Of a sort. Are you rummaging among the Troop papers? Be careful.

MRS. G. Why? I shan't disturb anything. Good gracious! I had no idea that you had anything to do with so many sick horses.

CAPT. G. 'Wish I hadn't, but they insist on falling sick. Minnie, if I were you I really should not investigate those papers. You may come across something that you won't like.

MRS. G. Why will you always treat me like a child? I know I'm not displacing the horrid things.

CAPT. G. (Resignedly.) Very well, then. Don't blame me if anything happens. Play with the table and let me go on with the saddlery. (Slipping hand into trousers-pocket.) Oh, the deuce!

MRS. G. (Her back to G.) What's that for?

CAPT. G. Nothing. (Aside.) There's not much in it, but I wish I'd torn it up.

MRS. G. (Turning over contents of table.) I know you'll hate me for this; but I do want to see what your work is like. (A pause.) Pip, what are 'farcy-buds'?

CAPT. G. Hah! Would you really like to know? They aren't pretty things.

MRS. G. This Journal of Veterinary Science says they are of 'absorbing

interest.' Tell me.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) It may turn her attention.

Gives a long and designedly loathsome account of
glanders and farcy

MRS. G. Oh, that's enough. Don't go on!

CAPT. G. But you wanted to know--Then these things suppurate and
matterate and spread--

MRS. G. Pip, you're making me sick! You're a horrid, disgusting
schoolboy.

CAPT. G. (On his knees among the bridles.) You asked to be told.
It's not my fault if you worry me into talking about horrors.

MRS. G. Why didn't you say--No?

CAPT. G. Good Heavens, child! Have you come in here simply to bully me?

MRS. G. I bully you? How could I! You're so strong. (Hysterically.)
Strong enough to pick me up and put me outside the door and leave me
there to cry. Aren't you?

CAPT. G. It seems to me that you're an irrational little baby. Are you

quite well?

MRS. G. Do I look ill? (Returning to table.) Who is your lady friend with the big gray envelope and the fat monogram outside?

CAPT. G. (Aside.) Then it wasn't locked up, confound it. (Aloud.) 'God made her, therefore let her pass for a woman.' You remember what farcy-buds are like?

MRS. G. (Showing envelope.) This has nothing to do with them. I'm going to open it. May I?

CAPT. G. Certainly, if you want to. I'd sooner you didn't, though. I don't ask to look at your letters to the Deercourt girl.

MRS. G. You'd better not, Sir! (Takes letter from envelope.) Now, may I look? If you say no, I shall cry.

CAPT. G. You've never cried in my knowledge of you, and I don't believe you could.

MRS. G. I feel very like it to-day, Pip. Don't be hard on me. (Reads letter.) It begins in the middle, without any 'Dear Captain Gadsby,' or anything. How funny!

CAPT. G. (Aside.) No, it's not Dear Captain Gadsby, or anything, now. How funny!

MRS. G. What a strange letter! (Reads.) 'And so the moth has come too near the candle at last, and has been singed into--shall I say Respectability? I congratulate him, and hope he will be as happy as he deserves to be.' What does that mean? Is she congratulating you about our marriage?

CAPT. G. Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. G. (Still reading letter.) She seems to be a particular friend of yours.

CAPT. G. Yes. She was an excellent matron of sorts--a Mrs. Herriott--wife of a Colonel Herriott. I used to know some of her people at Home long ago--before I came out.

MRS. G. Some Colonels' wives are young--as young as me. I knew one who was younger.

CAPT. G. Then it couldn't have been Mrs. Herriott. She was old enough to have been your mother, dear.

MRS. G. I remember now. Mrs. Scargill was talking about her at the Duffins' tennis, before you came for me, on Tuesday. Captain Mafflin said she was a 'dear old woman.' Do you know, I think Mafflin is a very clumsy man with his feet.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) Good old Jack! (Aloud.) Why, dear?

MRS. G. He had put his cup down on the ground then, and he literally stepped into it. Some of the tea spirted over my dress--the gray one. I meant to tell you about it before.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) There are the makings of a strategist about Jack, though his methods are coarse. (Aloud.) You'd better get a new dress, then. (Aside.) Let us pray that that will turn her.

MRS. G. Oh, it isn't stained in the least. I only thought that I'd tell you. (Returning to letter.) What an extraordinary person! (Reads.) 'But need I remind you that you have taken upon yourself a charge of wardship'--what in the world is a charge of wardship?--'which, as you yourself know, may end in Consequences--'

CAPT. G. (Aside.) It's safest to let 'em see everything as they come across it; but 'seems to me that there are exceptions to the rule. (Aloud.) I told you that there was nothing to be gained from rearranging my table.

MRS. G. (Absently.) What does the woman mean? She goes on talking about Consequences--'almost inevitable Consequences' with a capital C--for half a page. (Flushing scarlet.) Oh, good gracious! How abominable!

CAPT. G. (Promptly.) Do you think so? Doesn't it show a sort of

motherly interest in us? (Aside.) Thank Heaven, Harry always wrapped her meaning up safely! (Aloud.) Is it absolutely necessary to go on with the letter, darling?

MRS. G. It's impertinent--it's simply horrid. What right has this woman to write in this way to you? She oughtn't to.

CAPT. G. When you write to the Deercourt girl, I notice that you generally fill three or four sheets. Can't you let an old woman babble on paper once in a way? She means well.

MRS. G. I don't care. She shouldn't write, and if she did, you ought to have shown me her letter.

CAPT. G. Can't you understand why I kept it to myself, or must I explain at length--as I explained the farcy-buds?

MRS. G. (Furiously.) Pip, I hate you! This is as bad as those idiotic saddle-bags on the floor. Never mind whether it would please me or not, you ought to have given it to me to read.

CAPT. G. It comes to the same thing. You took it yourself.

MRS. G. Yes, but if I hadn't taken it, you wouldn't have said a word. I think this Harriet Herriott--it's like a name in a book--is an interfering old Thing.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) So long as you thoroughly understand that she is old, I don't much care what you think. (Aloud.) Very good, dear. Would you like to write and tell her so? She's seven thousand miles away.

MRS. G. I don't want to have anything to do with her, but you ought to have told me. (Turning to last page of letter.) And she patronises me, too. I've never seen her! (Reads.) 'I do not know how the world stands with you; in all human probability I shall never know; but whatever I may have said before, I pray for her sake more than for yours that all may be well. I have learnt what misery means, and I dare not wish that any one dear to you should share my knowledge.'

CAPT. G. Good God! Can't you leave that letter alone, or, at least, can't you refrain from reading it aloud? I've been through it once. Put it back on the desk. Do you hear me?

MRS. G. (Irresolutely.) I sh--shan't! (Looks at G's eyes.) Oh, Pip, please! I didn't mean to make you angry--'Deed, I didn't. Pip, I'm so sorry. I know I've wasted your time----

CAPT. G. (Grimly.) You have. Now, will you be good enough to go--if there is nothing more in my room that you are anxious to pry into?

MRS. G. (Putting out her hands.) Oh, Pip, don't look at me like that! I've never seen you look like that before and it hu-urts me! I'm sorry. I oughtn't to have been here at all, and--and--and--(sobbing). Oh,

be good to me! Be good to me! There's only you--anywhere!

Breaks down in long chair, hiding face in cushions.

CAPT. G. (Aside.) She doesn't know how she flicked me on the raw.
(Aloud, bending over chair.) I didn't mean to be harsh, dear--I
didn't really. You can stay here as long as you please, and do what
you please. Don't cry like that. You'll make yourself sick. (Aside.)
What on earth has come over her? (Aloud.) Darling, what's the matter
with you?

MRS. G. (Her face still hidden.) Let me go--let me go to my own room.
Only--only say you aren't angry with me.

CAPT. G. Angry with you, love! Of course not. I was angry with myself.
I'd lost my temper over the saddlery--Don't hide your face, Pussy. I
want to kiss it.

Bends lower, MRS. G. slides right arm round his
neck. Several interludes and much sobbing.

MRS. G. (In a whisper.) I didn't mean about the jam when I came in
to tell you----

CAPT. G. Bother the jam and the equipment! (Interlude.)

MRS. G. (Still more faintly.) My finger wasn't scalded at all.

I--I wanted to speak to you about--about--something else, and--I didn't know how.

CAPT. G. Speak away, then. (Looking into her eyes.) Eh! Wha--at? Minnie! Here, don't go away! You don't mean?

MRS. G. (Hysterically, backing to portiere and hiding her face in its folds.) The--the Almost Inevitable Consequences! (Flits through portiere as G. attempts to catch her, and bolts herself in her own room.)

CAPT. G. (His arms full of portiere.) Oh! (Sitting down heavily in chair.) I'm a brute--a pig--a bully, and a blackguard. My poor, poor little darling! 'Made to be amused only--?

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Knowing Good and Evil.

SCENE.--The GADSBYS' bungalow in the Plains, in June. Punkah-coolies asleep in veranda where CAPTAIN GADSBY is walking up and down. DOCTOR'S trap in porch. JUNIOR CHAPLAIN drifting generally and uneasily through the house. Time, 3.40 A. M. Heat 94 degrees in veranda.