

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.

DOCTOR. (Coming into veranda and touching G. on the shoulder.) You had better go in and see her now.

CAPT. G. (The colour of good cigar-ash.) Eh, wha-at? Oh, yes, of course. What did you say?

DOCTOR. (Syllable by syllable.)

Go--in--to--the--room--and--see--her. She wants to speak to you. (Aside, testily.) I shall have him on my hands next.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (In half-lighted dining-room.) Isn't there any--?

DOCTOR. (Savagely.) Hsh, you little fool!

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Let me do my work. Gadsby, stop a minute! (Edges after G.)

DOCTOR. Wait till she sends for you at least--at least. Man alive, he'll kill you if you go in there! What are you bothering him for?

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (Coming into veranda.) I've given him a stiff brandy-peg. He wants it. You've forgotten him for the last ten hours and--forgotten yourself too.

G. enters bedroom, which is lit by one night-lamp.

Ayah on the floor pretending to be asleep.

VOICE. (From the bed.) All down the street--such bonfires! Ayah, go and put them out! (Appealingly.) How can I sleep with an installation of the C.I.E. in my room? No--not C.I.E. Something else. What was it?

CAPT. G. (Trying to control his voice.) Minnie, I'm here. (Bending over bed.) Don't you know me, Minnie? It's me--it's Phil--it's your husband.

VOICE. (Mechanically.) It's me--it's Phil--it's your husband.

CAPT. G. She doesn't know me!--It's your own husband, darling,

VOICE. Your own husband, darling.

AYAH. (With an inspiration.) Memsahib understanding all I saying.

CAPT. G. Make her understand me then--quick!

AYAH. (Hand on MRS. G's forehead.) Memsahib! Captain Sahib here.

VOICE. Salma do. (Fretfully.) I know I'm not fit to be seen.

AYAH. (Aside to G.) Say 'marneen' same as breakfash.

CAPT. G. Good-morning, little woman. How are we to-day?

VOICE. That's Phil. Poor old Phil. (Viciously.)

Phil, you fool, I can't see you. Come nearer.

CAPT. G. Minnie! Minnie! It's me--you know me?

VOICE. (Mockingly.) Of course I do. Who does not know the man who was so cruel to his wife--almost the only one he ever had?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear. Yes--of course, of course. But won't you speak to him? He wants to speak to you so much.

VOICE. They'd never let him in. The Doctor would give darwaza bund even if he were in the house. He'll never come. (Despairingly.) O Judas! Judas! Judas!

CAPT. G. (Putting out his arms.) They have let him in, and he always was in the house. Oh, my love--don't you know me?

VOICE. (In a half chant.) 'And it came to pass at the eleventh hour that this poor soul repented.' It knocked at the gates, but they were shut--tight as a plaster--a great, burning plaster. They had pasted our marriage certificate all across the door, and it was made of red-hot iron--people really ought to be more careful, you know.

CAPT. G. What am I to do? (Takes her in his arms.) Minnie! speak to me--to Phil.

VOICE. What shall I say? Oh, tell me what to say before it's too late!
They are all going away and I can't say anything.

CAPT. G. Say you know me! Only say you know me!

DOCTOR. (Who has entered quietly.) For pity's sake don't take it too
much to heart, Gadsby. It's this way sometimes. They won't recognise.
They say all sorts of queer things--don't you see?

CAPT. G. All right! All right! Go away now, she'll recognise me; you're
bothering her. She must--mustn't she?

DOCTOR. She will before-- Have I your leave to try--?

CAPT. G. Anything you please, so long as she'll know me. It's only a
question of--hours, isn't it?

DOCTOR. (Professionally.) While there's life there's hope, y'know.
But don't build on it.

CAPT. G. I don't. Pull her together if it's possible. (Aside.) What
have I done to deserve this?

DOCTOR. (Bending over bed.) Now, Mrs. Gadsby! We shall be all right
to-morrow. You must take it, or I shan't let Phil see you. It isn't
nasty, is it?

VOICE. Medicines! Always more medicines! Can't you leave me alone?

CAPT. G. Oh, leave her in peace, Doc!

DOCTOR. (Stepping back,--aside.) May I be forgiven if I've done wrong. (Aloud.) In a few minutes she ought to be sensible; but I daren't tell you to look for anything. It's only--

CAPT. G. What? Go on, man.

DOCTOR. (In a whisper.) Forcing the last rally.

CAPT. G. Then leave us alone.

DOCTOR. Don't mind what she says at first, if you can. They--they--they turn against those they love most sometimes in this.--It's hard, but--

CAPT. G. Am I her husband or are you? Leave us alone for what time we have together.

VOICE. (Confidentially.) And we were engaged quite suddenly, Emma. I assure you that I never thought of it for a moment; but, oh, my little Me!--I don't know what I should have done if he hadn't proposed.

CAPT. G. She thinks of that Deercourt girl before she thinks of me.

(Aloud.) Minnie!

VOICE. Not from the shops, Mummy dear. You can get the real leaves from Kaintu, and (laughing weakly) never mind about the blossoms--Dead white silk is only fit for widows, and I won't wear it. It's as bad as a winding sheet. (A long pause.)

CAPT. G. I never asked a favour yet. If there is anybody to listen to me, let her know me--even if I die too!

VOICE. (Very faintly.) Pip, Pip dear.

CAPT. G. I'm here, darling.

VOICE. What has happened? They've been bothering me so with medicines and things, and they wouldn't let you come and see me. I was never ill before. Am I ill now?

CAPT. G. You--you aren't quite well.

VOICE. How funny! Have I been ill long?

CAPT. G. Some days; but you'll be all right in a little time.

VOICE. Do you think so, Pip? I don't feel well and--Oh! what have they done to my hair?

CAPT. G. I d-d-don't know.

VOICE. They've cut it off. What a shame!

CAPT. G. It must have been to make your head cooler.

VOICE. 'Just like a boy's wig. Don't I look horrid?

CAPT. G. Never looked prettier in your life, dear. (Aside.) How am I to ask her to say good-bye?

VOICE. I don't feel pretty. I feel very ill. My heart won't work. It's nearly dead inside me, and there's a funny feeling in my eyes. Everything seems the same distance--you and the almirah and the table--inside my eyes or miles away. What does it mean, Pip?

CAPT. G. You're a little feverish, Sweetheart--very feverish. (Breaking down.) My love! my love! How can I let you go?

VOICE. I thought so. Why didn't you tell me that at first?

CAPT. G. What?

VOICE. That I am going to--die.

CAPT. G. But you aren't! You shan't.

AYAH to punkah-coolie. (Stepping into veranda after a glance at the bed.) Punkah chor do! (Stop pulling the punkah.)

VOICE. It's hard, Pip. So very, very hard after one year--just one year. (Wailing.) And I'm only twenty. Most girls aren't even married at twenty. Can't they do anything to help me? I don't want to die.

CAPT. G. Hush, dear. You won't.

VOICE. What's the use of talking? Help me! You've never failed me yet. Oh, Phil, help me to keep alive. (Feverishly.) I don't believe you wish me to live. You weren't a bit sorry when that horrid Baby thing died. I wish I'd killed it!

CAPT. G. (Drawing his hand across his forehead.) It's more than a man's meant to bear--it's not right. (Aloud.) Minnie, love, I'd die for you if it would help.

VOICE. No more death. There's enough already. Pip, don't you die too.

CAPT. G. I wish I dared.

VOICE. It says: 'Till Death do us part.' Nothing after that--and so it would be no use. It stops at the dying. Why does it stop there? Only such a very short life, too. Pip, I'm sorry we married.

CAPT. G. No! Anything but that, Min!

VOICE. Because you'll forget and I'll forget. Oh, Pip, don't forget!
I always loved you, though I was cross sometimes. If I ever did anything
that you didn't like, say you forgive me now.

CAPT. G. You never did, darling. On my soul and honour you never did.
I haven't a thing to forgive you.

VOICE. I sulked for a whole week about those petunias. (With a laugh.)
What a little wretch I was, and how grieved you were! Forgive me that,
Pip.

CAPT. G. There's nothing to forgive. It was my fault. They were too
near the drive. For God's sake don't talk so, Minnie! There's such
a lot to say and so little time to say it in.

VOICE. Say that you'll always love me--until the end.

CAPT. G. Until the end. (Carried away.) It's a lie. It must be,
because we've loved each other. This isn't the end.

VOICE. (Relapsing into semi-delirium.) My Church-service has an
ivory-cross on the back, and it says so, so it must be true. 'Till
Death do us part.'--But that's a lie. (With a parody of G.'s
manner.) A damned lie! (Recklessly.) Yes, I can swear as well as
Trooper Pip. I can't make my head think, though. That's because they
cut off my hair. How can one think with one's head all fuzzy?

(Pleadingly.) Hold me, Pip! Keep me with you always and always.

(Relapsing.) But if you marry the Thorniss girl when I'm dead, I'll come back and howl under our bedroom window all night. Oh, bother! You'll think I'm a jackal. Pip, what time is it?

CAPT. G. I--I--I can't help it, dear.

VOICE. How funny! I couldn't cry now to save my life. (G. shivers.) I want to sing.

CAPT. G. Won't it tire you? Better not, perhaps.

VOICE. Why? I won't be bothered about. (Begins in a hoarse quaver):--

'Minnie bakes oaten cake, Minnie brews ale,
All because her Johnnie's coming home from the sea.
(That's parade, Pip.)
And she grows red as rose, who was so pale;
And "Are you sure the church-clock goes?" says she.'

(Pettishly.) I knew I couldn't take the last note. How do the bass chords run? (Puts out her hands and begins playing piano on the sheet.)

CAPT. G. (Catching up hands.) Ahh! Don't do that, Pussy, if you love me.

VOICE. Love you? Of course I do. Who else should it be? (A pause.)

VOICE. (Very clearly.) Pip, I'm going now. Something's choking me cruelly. (Indistinctly.) Into the dark--without you, my heart.--But it's a lie, dear--we mustn't believe it.--For ever and ever, living or dead. Don't let me go, my husband--hold me tight.--They can't--whatever happens. (A cough.) Pip--my Pip! Not for always--and--so--soon! (Voice ceases.)

Pause of ten minutes. G. buries his face in the side of the bed while ayah bends over bed from opposite side and feels MRS. G.'s breast and forehead.

CAPT. G. (Rising.) Doctor Sahib ko salaam do.

AYAH. (Still by bedside, with a shriek.) Ai! Ai! Tuta---phuta! My Memsahib! Not getting--not have got!--Pusseena agya! (The sweat has come.) (Fiercely to G.) TUM jao Doctor Sahib ko jaldi! (You go to the doctor.) Oh, my Memsahib!

DOCTOR. (Entering hastily.) Come away, Gadsby. (Bends over bed.) Eh! The Dev--What inspired you to stop the punkah? Get out, man--go away--wait outside! Go! Here, Ayah! (Over his shoulder to G.) Mind, I promise nothing.

The dawn breaks as G. stumbles into the garden.

CAPT. M. (Reining up at the gate on his way to parade and very soberly.) Old man, how goes?

CAPT. G. (Dazed.) I don't quite know. Stay a bit. Have a drink or something. Don't run away. You're just getting amusing. Ha! Ha!

CAPT. M. (Aside.) What am I let in for? Gaddy has aged ten years in the night.

CAPT. G. (Slowly, fingering charger's headstall.) Your curb's too loose.

CAPT. M. So it is. Put it straight, will you? (Aside.) I shall be late for parade. Poor Gaddy.

CAPT. G. links and unlinks curb-chain aimlessly,
and finally stands staring towards the veranda.
The day brightens.

DOCTOR. (Knocked out of professional gravity, tramping across flower-beds and shaking G.'s hands.) It's--it's--it's!--Gadsby, there's a fair chance--a dashed fair chance! The flicker, y'know. The sweat, y'know! I saw how it would be. The punkah, y'know. Deuced clever woman that Ayah of yours. Stopped the punkah just at the right time. A dashed good chance! No--you don't go in. We'll pull her through yet I promise on my reputation--under Providence. Send a man

with this note to Bingle. Two heads better than one. 'Specially the Ayah! We'll pull her round. (Retreats hastily to house.)

CAPT. G. (His head on neck of M.'s charger.) Jack! I bub--bub--believe, I'm going to make a bub--bub--bloody exhibitiod of byself.

CAPT. M. (Sniffing openly and feeling in his left cuff.) I b-b--believe, I'b doing it already. Old bad, what cad I say? I'b as pleased as--Cod dab you, Gaddy! You're one big idiot and I'b adother. (Pulling himself together.) Sit tight! Here comes the Devil-dodger.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (Who is not in the Doctor's confidence.) We--we are only men in these things, Gadsby. I know that I can say nothing now to help--

CAPT. M. (Jealously.) Then don't say it! Leave him alone. It's not bad enough to croak over. Here, Gaddy, take the chit to Bingle and ride hell-for-leather. It'll do you good. I can't go.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Do him good! (Smiling.) Give me the chit and I'll drive. Let him lie down. Your horse is blocking my cart--please!

CAPT. M. (Slowly without reining back.) I beg your pardon--I'll apologise. On paper if you like.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (Flicking M.'s charger.) That'll do, thanks. Turn

in, Gadsby, and I'll bring Bingle back--ahem--'hell-for-leather.'

CAPT. M. (Solus.) It would have served me right if he'd cut me across the face. He can drive too. I shouldn't care to go that pace in a bamboo cart. What a faith he must have in his Maker--of harness! Come hup, you brute! (Gallops off to parade, blowing his nose, as the sun rises.)

(INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

MRS. G. (Very white and pinched, in morning wrapper at breakfast table.) How big and strange the room looks, and oh how glad I am to see it again! What dust, though! I must talk to the servants. Sugar, Pip? I've almost forgotten. (Seriously.) Wasn't I very ill?

CAPT. G. Iller than I liked. (Tenderly.) Oh, you bad little Pussy, what a start you gave me!

MRS. G. I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G. You'd better not. And now get those poor pale cheeks pink again, or I shall be angry. Don't try to lift the urn. You'll upset it. Wait. (Comes round to head of table and lifts urn.)

MRS. G. (Quickly.) Khitmatgar, bowarchi-khana see kettly lao. Butler, get a kettle from the cook-house. (Drawing down G.'s face to her own.) Pip dear, I remember.

CAPT. G. What?

MRS. G. That last terrible night.

CAPT. G. Then just you forget all about it.

MRS. G. (Softly, her eyes filling.) Never. It has brought us very close together, my husband. There! (Interlude.) I'm going to give Junda a saree.

CAPT. G. I gave her fifty dibs.

MRS. G. So she told me. It was a 'normous reward. Was I worth it? (Several interludes.) Don't! Here's the khitmatgar.--Two lumps or one, Sir?

THE SWELLING OF JORDAN

If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?