

Juno and the Paycock

A Tragedy in Three Acts

CHARACTERS

'CAPTAIN' JACK BOYLE
 JUNO BOYLE, his wife
 JOHNNY BOYLE } their children
 MARY BOYLE }
 'JOKER' DALY } residents in
 MRS MAISIE MADIGAN } the tenement
 'NEEDLE' NUGENT, a tailor
 MRS TANCRED
 JERRY DEVINE
 CHARLES BENTHAM, a schoolteacher
 AN IRREGULAR MOBILISER
 TWO IRREGULARS
 A COAL-BLOCK VENDOR
 A SEWING-MACHINE MAN
 TWO FURNITURE-REMOVAL MEN
 TWO NEIGHBOURS

PLACE AND TIME

Act I. The living apartment of a two-roomed tenancy of the Boyle family, in a tenement house in Dublin.
Act II. The same.
Act III. The same.

A few days elapse between Acts I and II, and two months between Acts II and III.

During Act III the curtain is lowered for a few minutes to denote the lapse of one hour. Period of the play, 1922.

ACT I

The living-room of a two-room tenancy occupied by the Boyle family in a tenement house in Dublin. Left, a door leading to another part of the house; left of door a window looking into the street; at back a dresser; farther to right at back, a window looking into the back of the house. Between the window and the dresser is a picture of the Virgin; below the picture, on a bracket, is a crimson bowl in which a floating votive light is burning. Farther to the right is a small bed partly concealed by cretonne hangings strung on a twine. To the right is the fireplace; near the fireplace is a door leading to the other room. Beside the fireplace is a box containing coal. On the mantelshelf is an alarm clock lying on its face. In a corner near the window looking into the back is a galvanised bath. A table and some chairs. On the table are breakfast things for one. A teapot is on the hob and a frying-pan stands inside the fender. There are a few books on the dresser and one on the table. Leaning against the dresser is a long-handled shovel — the kind invariably used by labourers when turning concrete or mixing mortar. JOHNNY BOYLE is sitting crouched beside the fire. MARY with her jumper off — it is lying on the back of a chair — is arranging her hair before a tiny mirror perched on the table. Beside the mirror is stretched out the morning paper, which she looks at when she isn't gazing into the mirror. She is a well-made and good-looking girl of twenty-two. Two forces are working in her mind — one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance — slight though it be — with literature. The time is early forenoon.

MARY [looking at the paper]. On a little by-road, out beyant* Finglas,* he was found.

MRS BOYLE enters by door on right; she has been shopping and carries a small parcel in her hand. She is forty-five years of age, and twenty years ago she must have been a pretty woman; but her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class; a look of listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance. Were circumstances favourable, she would probably be a handsome, active and clever woman.

MRS BOYLE. Isn't he come in yet?

MARY. No, mother.

MRS BOYLE. Oh, he'll come in when he likes; struttin' about the town like a paycock* with Joxer, I suppose. I hear all about Mrs Tancred's son is in this mornin's paper.

MARY. The full details are in it this mornin'; seven wounds he had – one enterin' the neck, with an exit wound beneath the left shoulder-blade; another in the left breast penetratin' the heart, an' . . .

JOHNNY [*springing up from the fire*]. Oh, quit readin' for God's sake! Are you losin' all your feelin's? It'll soon be that none of you'll read anythin' that's not about butcherin'! [*He goes quickly into the room on the left.*]

MARY. He's gettin' very sensitive, all of a sudden!

MRS BOYLE. I'll read it myself, Mary, by an' by, when I come home. Everybody's sayin' that he was a Diehard* – thanks be to God that Johnny had nothin' to do with him this long time. . . . [*Opening the parcel and taking out some sausages, which she places on a plate*] Ah, then, if that father o' yours doesn't come in soon for his breakfast, he may go without any; I'll not wait much longer for him.

MARY. Can't you let him get it himself when he comes in?

MRS BOYLE. Yes, an' let him bring in Joxer Daly along with him? Ay, that's what he'd like an' that's what he's waitin' for – till he thinks I'm gone to work, an' then sail in with the boul'* Joxer, to burn all the coal an' dhrink all the tea in the place, to show them what a good Samaritan he is! But I'll stop here till he comes in, if I have to wait till tomorrow mornin'.

VOICE OF JOHNNY INSIDE. Mother!

MRS BOYLE. Yis?

VOICE OF JOHNNY. Bring us in a dhrink o' wather.

MRS BOYLE. Bring in that fella a dhrink o' wather, for God's sake, Mary.

MARY. Isn't he big an' able enough to come out an' get it himself?

MRS BOYLE. If you weren't well yourself you'd like somebody to bring you in a dhrink o' wather. [*She brings in drink and returns.*] Isn't it terrible to have to be waitin' this way! You'd think he was bringin' twenty poun's a week into the house the way he's going on. He wore out the Health Insurance long ago, he's afther wearin' out the unemployment dole, an', now he's thryin' to wear out me! An'

constantly singin', no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin' up a Novena* for a job!

MARY [*tying a ribbon fillet-wise around her head*]. I don't like this ribbon, Ma; I think I'll wear the green – it looks better than the blue.

MRS BOYLE. Ah, wear whatever ribbon you like, girl, only don't be botherin' me. I don't know what a girl on strike wants to be wearin' a ribbon round her head for, or silk stockin's on her legs either; it's wearin' them things that make the employers think they're givin' you too much money.

MARY. The hour is past now when we'll ask the employers' permission to wear what we like.

MRS BOYLE. I don't know why you wanted to walk out* for Jennie Claffey; up to this you never had a good word for her.

MARY. What's the use of belongin' to a Trades Union if you won't stand up for your principles? Why did they sack her? It was a clear case of victimisation. We couldn't let her walk the streets, could we?

MRS BOYLE. No, of course you couldn't – you wanted to keep her company. Wan victim wasn't enough. When the employers sacrifice wan victim, the Trades Unions go wan better be sacrificin' a hundred.

MARY. It doesn't matter what you say, Ma – a principle's a principle.

MRS BOYLE. Yis; an' when I go into oul' Murphy's tomorrow, an' he gets to know that, instead o' payin' all, I'm goin' to borry* more, what'll he say when I tell him a principle's a principle? What'll we do if he refuses to give us any more on tick*?

MARY. He daren't refuse – if he does, can't you tell him he's paid?

MRS BOYLE. It's lookin' as if he was paid, whether he refuses or no.

JOHNNY appears at the door on left. He can be plainly seen now; he is a thin, delicate fellow, something younger than MARY. He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt.

JOHNNY. I was lyin' down; I thought you were gone. Oul' Simon Mackay is thrampin' about like a horse over me head, an' I can't sleep with him – they're like thunder-claps in me brain! The curse o' – God forgive me for goin' to curse!

MRS BOYLE. There, now; go back an' lie down again an' I'll bring you in a nice cup o' tay.

JOHNNY. Tay, tay, tay! You're always thinkin' o' tay. If a man was dyin', you'd thry to make him swally a cup o' tay! [*He goes back.*]

MRS BOYLE. I don't know what's goin' to be done with him. The bullet he got in the hip in Easter Week* was bad enough; but the bomb that shatthered his arm in the fight in O'Connell Street* put the finishin' touch on him. I knew he was makin' a fool of himself. God knows I went down on me bended knees to him not to go ager the Free State.*

MARY. He stuck to his principles, an', no matter how you may argue, ma, a principle's a principle.

VOICE OF JOHNNY. Is Mary goin' to stay here?

MARY. No, I'm not goin' to stay here; you can't expect me to be always at your beck an' call, can you?

VOICE OF JOHNNY. I won't stop here be meself!

MRS BOYLE. Amn't I nicely handicapped with the whole o' yours! I don't know what any o' yours ud do without your ma. [*I'o JOHNNY*] Your father'll be here in a minute, an' if you want anythin', he'll get it for you.

JOHNNY. I hate assin' him for anythin' . . . He hates to be assed to stir. . . . Is the light lightin' before the picture o' the Virgin?

MRS BOYLE. Yis, yis! The wan inside to St Anthony isn't enough, but he must have another wan to the Virgin here!

JERRY DEVINE enters hastily. *He is about twenty-five, well set, active and earnest. He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all. MARY seizes her jumper and runs hastily into room left.*

JERRY [*breathless*]. Where's the Captain, Mrs Boyle, where's the Captain?

MRS BOYLE. You may well ass a body that: he's wherever Joxer Da.y is - dhrinkin' in some snug* or another.

JERRY. Father Farrell is just after stoppin' to tell me to run up an' get him to go to the new job that's goin' on in Rathmines; his cousin is foreman o' the job, an' Father Farrell was speakin' to him about poor Johnny an' his father bein' so idle so long, an' the foreman told

Father Farrell to send the Captain up an' he'd give him a start - I wonder where I'd find him?

MRS BOYLE. You'll find he's ayther in Ryan's or Foley's.

JERRY. I'll run round to Ryan's - I know it's a great house o' Joxer's. [*He rushes out.*]

MRS BOYLE [*piteously*]. There now, he'll miss that job, or I know for what. If he gets win' o' the word, he'll not come back till evenin', so that it'll be too late. There'll never be any good got out o' him so long as he goes with that shouldher-shruggin' Joxer. I killin' meself workin', an' he sthruutin' about from mornin' till night like a paycock!

The steps of two persons are heard coming up a flight of stairs. They are the footsteps of CAPTAIN BOYLE and JOXER. CAPTAIN BOYLE is singing in a deep, sonorous, self-honouring voice.

THE CAPTAIN. Sweet Spirit, hear me prayer! Hear . . . oh . . . hear . . . me prayer . . . hear, oh, hear . . . Oh, he . . . at . . . oh, he . . . ar . . . me . . . pray . . . er!*

JOXER [*outside*]. Ah, that's a darlin' song, a daaarin' song!

MRS BOYLE [*viciously*]. Sweet spirit hear his prayer! Ah, then, I'll take me solemn affeydavey,* it's not for a job he's prayin'! [*She sits down on the bed so that the cretonne hangings hide her from the view of those entering.*]

The CAPTAIN comes in. He is a man of about sixty; stout, grey-haired and stocky. His neck is short, and his head looks like a stone ball that one sometimes sees on top of a gate-post. His cheeks, reddish-purple, are puffed out, as if he were always repressing an almost irrepressible ejaculation. On his upper lip is a crisp, tightly cropped moustache; he carries himself with the upper part of his body slightly thrown back, and his stomach slightly thrust forward. His walk is a slow, consequential strut. His clothes are dingy, and he wears a faded seaman's cap with a glazed peak.

BOYLE [*to JOXER, who is still outside*]. Come on, come on in, Joxer; she's gone out long ago, man. If there's nothing else to be got, we'll furrage out a cup o' tay, anyway. It's the only bit I ge: in comfort when she's away. 'Tisn't Juno should be her pet name at all, but Deirdre of the Sorras,* for she's always grousin'.*

ACT I

JOXER steps cautiously into the room. He may be younger than the CAPTAIN but he looks a lot older. His face is like a bundle of crinkled paper; his eyes have a cunning twinkle; he is spare and loosely built; he has a habit of constantly shrugging his shoulders with a peculiar twitching movement, meant to be ingratiating. His face is invariably ornamented with a grin.

JOXER. It's a terrible thing to be tied to a woman that's always grousin'. I don't know how you stick it – it ud put years on me. It's a good job she has to be so often away, for [with a shrug] when the cat's away, the mice can play!

BOYLE [with a commanding and complacent gesture]. Pull over to the fire, Joxer, an' we'll have a cup o' tay in a minute.

JOXER. Ah, a cup o' tay's a darlin' thing, a daaarlin' thing – the cup that cheers but doesn't* . . . [JOXER'S rhapsody is cut short by the sight of MRS BOYLE coming forward and confronting the two cronies. Both are stupefied.]

MRS BOYLE [with sweet irony – poking the fire, and turning her head to glare at JOXER]. Pull over to the fire, Joxer Daly, an' we'll have a cup o' tay in a minute! Arc you sure, now, you wouldn't like an egg? JOXER. I can't stop, Mrs Boyle; I'm in a desperate hurry, a desperate hurry.

MRS BOYLE. Pull over to the fire, Joxer Daly; people is always far more comfortable here than they are in their own place. [JOXER makes hastily for the door.]

BOYLE [stirs to follow him; thinks of something to relieve the situation – stops, and says suddenly] Joxer!

JOXER [at door ready to bolt]. Yis?

BOYLE. You know the foreman o' that job that's goin' on down in Killesther, don't you, Joxer?

JOXER [puzzled]. Foreman – Killesther?

BOYLE [with a meaning look]. He's a butty* o' yours, isn't he?

JOXER [the truth dawning on him]. The foreman at Killesther – oh yis, yis. He's an oul' butty o' mine – oh, he's a darlin' man, a daarin' man.

BOYLE. Oh, then, it's a sure thing. It's a pity we didn't go down at breakfast first thing this mornin' – we might ha' been working now; but you didn't know it then.

JOXER [with a shrug]. It's betther late than never.

BOYLE. It's nearly time we got a start, anyhow; I'm fed up knockin' round, doin' nothin'. He promised you – gave you the straight tip?

ACT I

JOXER. Yis. 'Come down on the blow o' dinner',* says he, 'an' I'll start you, an' any friend you like to brin' with you.' 'Ah,' says I, 'you're a darlin' man, a daaarlin' man.'

BOYLE. Well, it couldn't come at a betther time – we're a long time waitin' for it.

JOXER. Indeed we were; but it's a long lane that has no turnin'.

BOYLE. The blow-up for dinner is at one – wait till I see what time it 'tis. [He goes over to the mantelpiece, and gingerly lifts the clock.]

MRS BOYLE. Min' now, how you go on fiddlin' with that clock – you know the least little thing sets it astray.

BOYLE. The job couldn't come at a betther time; I'm feelin' in great fettle, Joxer. I'd hardly believe I ever had a pain in me legs, an' last week I was nearly crippled with them.

JOXER. That's betther an' betther; ah, God never shut wan door but He opened another!

BOYLE. It's only eleven o'clock; we've lashins o' time.* I'll slip on me oul' moleskins afther breakfast, an' we can saunter down at our ayse. [Putting his hand on the shovel] I think, Joxer, we'd betther bring our shovels?

JOXER. Yis, Captain, yis; it's betther to go fully prepared an' ready for all eventualities. You bring your long-tailed shovel, an' I'll bring me navy. We mighten' want them, an', then agen, we might: for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, an' for want of a horse the man was lost* – aw, that's a darlin' proverb, a daaarlin' . . . [As Joxer is finishing his sentence, MRS BOYLE approaches the door and JOXER retreats hurriedly. She shuts the door with a bang.]

BOYLE [suggestively]. We won't be long pullin' ourselves together agen when I'm working for a few weeks. [MRS BOYLE takes no notice.] The foreman on the job is an oul' butty o' Joxer's; I have an idea that I know him meself. [Silence] . . . There's a button off the back o' me moleskin trousers. . . . If you leave out a needle an' thread I'll sew it on meself. . . . Thanks be to God, the pains in me legs is gone, anyhow!

MRS BOYLE [with a burst]. Look here, Mr Jackie Boyle, them yarns won't go down with Juno. I know you an' Joxer Daly of an oul' date, an' if you think you're able to come it over me with them fairy tales, you're in the wrong shop.

BOYLE [coughing subduedly to relieve the tenseness of the situation]. U-u-u-ugh!

MRS BOYLE. Butty o' Joxer's! Oh, you'll do a lot o' good as long as you continue to be a butty o' Joxer's!

BOYLE. U-u-u-ugh!

MRS BOYLE. Shovel! Ah, then, me boyo, you'd do far more work with a knife an' fork than ever you'll do with a shovel! If there was c'er a genuine job goin' you'd be dh'other way about – not able to lift your arms with the pains in your legs! Your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin'* about all the day like a paycock!

BOYLE. It ud be better for a man to be dead, betther for a man to be dead.

MRS BOYLE [*ignoring the interruption*]. Everybody callin' you 'Captain', an' you only want on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus!

BOYLE. Are you never goin' to give us a rest?

MRS BOYLE. Oh, you're never tired o' lookin' for a rest.

BOYLE. D'ye want to dhrive me out o' the house?

MRS BOYLE. It ud be easier to dhrive you out o' the house than to dhrive you into a job. Here, sit down an' take your breakfast – it may be the last you'll get, for I don't know where the next is goin' to come from.

BOYLE. If I get this job we'll be all right.

MRS BOYLE. Did ye see Jerry Devine?

BOYLE [*testily*]. No, I didn't see him.

MRS BOYLE. No, but you seen Joxer. Well, he was here lookin' for you.

BOYLE. Well, let him look!

MRS BOYLE. Oh, indeed, he may well look, for it ud be hard for him to see you, an' you stuck in Ryan's snug.

BOYLE. I wasn't in Ryan's snug – I don't go into Ryan's.

MRS BOYLE. Oh, is there a mad dog there? Well, if you weren't in Ryan's you were in Foley's.

BOYLE. I'm telling you for the last three weeks I haven't tasted a dhrop of intoxicatin' liquor. I wasn't in ayther wan snug or dh'other – I could swear that on a prayer-book – I'm as innocent as the child unborn!

MRS BOYLE. Well, if you'd been in for your breakfast you'd ha' seen him.

BOYLE [*suspiciously*]. What does he want me for?

MRS BOYLE. He'll be back any minute an' then you'll soon know.

BOYLE. I'll dhrop out an' see if I can meet him.

MRS BOYLE. You'll sit down an' take your breakfast, an' let me go to me work, for I'm an hour late already waitin' for you.

BOYLE. You needn't ha' waited, for I'll take no breakfast – I've a little spirit left in me still!

MRS BOYLE. Are you goin' to have your breakfast – yes or no?

BOYLE [*too proud to yield*]. I'll have no breakfast – you can keep your breakfast. [*Plainly*] I'll knock out* a bit somewhere, never fear.

MRS BOYLE. Nobody's goin' to coax you – don't think that. [*She vigorously replaces the pan and the sausages in the press.*]

BOYLE. I've a little spirit left in me still.

JERRY DEVINE enters hastily.

JERRY. Oh, here you are at last! I've been searchin' for you everywhere. The foreman in Foley's told me you hadn't left the snug with Joxer ten minutes before I went in.

MRS BOYLE. An' he swearin' on the holy prayer-book that he wasn't in no snug!

BOYLE [*to JERRY*]. What business is it o' yours whether I was in a snug or no? What do you want to be gallopin' about afther me for? Is a man not allowed to leave his house for a minute without havin' a pack o' spics, pimps an' informers cantherin' at his heels?

JERRY. Oh, you're takin' a wrong view of it, Mr Boyle; I simply was anxious to do you a good turn. I have a message for you from Father Farrell: he says that if you go to the job that's on in Rathmines, an' ask for Foreman Mangan, you'll get a start.

BOYLE. That's all right, but I don't want the motions of me body to be watched the way an' ashtronomer ud watch a star. If you're folleyin' Mary aself, you've no perceogative* to be folleyin' me. [*Suddenly catching his thigh*] U-ugh, I'm afther gettin' a terrible twinge in me right leg!

MRS BOYLE. Oh, it won't be very long now till it travels into your left wan. It's miraculous that whenever he scents a job in front of him, his legs begin to fail him! Then, me bucko, if you lose this chance, you may go an' furrage for yourself!

JERRY. This job'll last for some time too, Captain, an' as soon as the foundations are in, it'll be cushy* enough.

BOYLE. Won't it be a climbin' job? How d'ye expect me to be able to go

up a ladder with these legs? An', if I get up a self, how am I goin' to get down agen?

MRS BOYLE [*viciously*]. Get wan o' the labourers to carry you down in a hod! You can't climb a ladder, but you can skip like a goat into a snug!

JERRY. I wouldn't let myself be let down that easy, Mr Boyle; a little exercise, now, might do you all the good in the world.

BOYLE. It's a doctor you should have been, Devine – maybe you know more about the pains in me legs than meself that has them?

JERRY [*irritated*]. Oh, I know nothin' about the pains in your legs; I've brought the message that Father Farrell gave me, an' that's all I can do.

MRS BOYLE. Here, sit down an' take your breakfast, an' go an' get ready; an' don't be actin' as if you couldn't pull a wing out of a dead bee.

BOYLE. I want no breakfast, I tell you; it ud choke me afther all that's been said. I've a little spirit left in me still.

MRS BOYLE. Well, let's see your spirit, then, an' go in at wanst an' put on your moleskin trousers!

BOYLE [*moving towards the door on left*]. It ud be better for a man to be dead! U-ugh! There's another twinge in me other leg! Nobody but meself knows the sufferin' I'm goin' through with the pains in these legs o' mine! [*He goes into the room on left as MARY comes out with her hat in her hand.*]

MRS BOYLE. I'll have to push off now, for I'm terrible late already, but I was determined to stay an' hunt that Joxer this time. [*She goes off.*]

JERRY. Are you going out, Mary?

MARY. It looks like it when I'm putting on my hat, doesn't it?

JERRY. The bitther word agen, Mary.

MARY. You won't allow me to be friendly with you; if I thry, you deliberately misunderstand it.

JERRY. I didn't always misunderstand it; you wcre often delighted to have the arms of Jerry around you.

MARY. If you go on talkin' like this, Jerry Devine, you'll make me hate you!

JERRY. Well, let it be either a weddin' or a wake!* Listen, Mary, I'm standin' for the Secretaryship of our Union. There's only one opposin' me; I'm popular with all the men, an' a good speaker – all are sayin' that I'll get elected.

MARY. Well?

JERRY. The job's worth three hundred an' fifty pounds a year, Mary. You an' I could live nice an' cosily on that; it would lift you out o' this place an' . . .

MARY. I haven't time to listen to you now – I have to go. [*She is going out, when JERRY bars the way.*]

JERRY [*appealingly*]. Mary, what's come over you with me for the last few weeks? You hardly speak to me, an' then only a word with a face o' bitherness on it. Have you forgotten, Mary, all the happy evenins that were as sweet as the scented hawthorn that sheltered the sides o' the road as we sauntered through the country?

MARY. That's all over now. When you get your new job, Jerry, you won't be long findin' a girl far better than I am for your sweetheart.

JERRY. Never, never, Mary! No matter what happens, you'll always be the same to me.

MARY. I must be off; please let me go, Jerry.

JERRY. I'll go a bit o' the way with you.

MARY. You needn't, thanks; I want to be by meself.

JERRY [*catching her arm*]. You're goin' to meet another fella; you've clicked with * someone else, me lady!

MARY. That's no concern o' yours, Jerry Devine; let me go!

JERRY. I saw yous comin' out o' the Cornflower Dance class, an' you hangin' on his arm – a thin, lanky strip of a Micky Dazzler, * with a walkin' stick an' gloves!

VOICE OF JOHNNY [*loudly*]. What are you doin' there – pullin' about everything!

VOICE OF BOYLE [*loudly and viciously*]. I'm puttin' on me moleskin trousers!

MARY. You're hurtin' me arm! Let me go, or I'll scream, an' then you'll have the oul' fella out on top of us!

JERRY. Don't be so hard on a fella, Mary, don't be so hard.

BOYLE [*appearing at the door*]. What's the meanin' of all this hhillaboo?*

MARY. Let me go, let me go!

BOYLE. D'ye hear me – what's all this hhillaboo about?

JERRY [*plaintively*]. Will you not give us one kind word, one kind word, Mary?

BOYLE. D'ye hear me talkin' to yous? What's all this hhillaboo for?

JERRY. Let me kiss your hand, your little, tiny, white hand!

BOYLE. Your little, tiny, white hand – are you takin' leave o' your

senses, man? [MARY breaks away and rushes out.] This is a nice goin' s on in front of her father!

JERRY. Ah, dhry up, for God's sake! [He follows MARY.]

BOYLE. Chiselurs* don't care a damn now about their parents, they're bringin' their father's grey hairs down with sorra to the grave,* an' laughin' at it. Ah, I suppose it's just the same everywhere – the whole worl's in a state o' chassits!* [He sits by the fire.] Breakfast! Well, they can keep their breakfast for me. Not if they went down on their bended knees would I take it – I'll show them I've a little spirit in me still! [He goes over to the press, takes out a plate and looks at it.] Sassage! Well, let her keep her sassage. [He returns to the fire, takes up the teapot and gives it a gentle shake.] The tea's wet right enough. [A pause; he rises, goes to the press, takes out the sausage, puts it on the pan, and puts both on the fire. He attends the sausage with a fork. Singing]

When the robins nest agen,

And the flowers are in bloom,

When the Springtime's sunny smile seems to banish all

sorrow an' gloom;

'Then me bonny blue-ey'd lad, if me heart be true till then –

He's promised he'll come back to me,

When the robins nest agen!*

[He lifts his head at the high note, and then drops his eyes to the pan. Singing]

When the . . .

Steps are heard approaching; he whips the pan off the fire and puts it under the bed, then sits down at the fire. The door opens and a bearded man looking in says

You don't happen to want a sewin' machine?

BOYLE [furiously]. No, I don't want e'er a sewin' machine! [He returns the pan to the fire, and commences to sing again. Singing]

When the robins nest agen,

And the flowers they are in bloom,

He's . . .

[A thundering knock is heard at the street door.] There's a terrible ratherraraa* – that's a stranger – that's nobody belongin' to the house. [Another loud knock.]

JOXER [sticking his head in at the door]. Did ye hear them ratherrarahs?

BOYLE. Well, Joxer, I'm not deaf.

JOHNNY [appearing in his shirt and trousers at the door on left; his face is anxious and his voice is tremulous]. Who's that at the door; who's that at the door? Who gave that knock – d'ye you hear me – are you deaf or dhruunk or what?

BOYLE [to JOHNNY]. How the hell do I know who 'tis? Joxer, stick your head out o' the window an' see.

JOXER. An' mebbe get a bullet in the kisser?* Ah, none o' them thricks for Joxer! It's betther to be a coward than a corpse!

BOYLE [looking cautiously out of the window]. It's a fella in a trench coat.

JOHNNY. Holy Mary, Mother o' God, I . . .

BOYLE. He's goin' away – he must ha' got tired knockin'. [Johnny returns to the room on left.]

BOYLE. Sit down an' have a cup o' tay, Joxer.

JOXER. I'm afraid the missus ud pop in on us agen before we'd know where we are. Something's tellin' me to go at wanst.

BOYLE. Don't be superstitious, man; we're Dublin men, an' not boyos that's only afther comin' up from the bog o' Allen* – though if she did come in, right enough, we'd be caught like rats in a thrap.

JOXER. An' you know the sort she is – she wouldn't listen to reason – an' wanse bitten twice shy.

BOYLE [going over to the window at back]. If the worst came to the worst, you could dart out here, Joxer; it's only a dhrop of a few feet to the roof of the return room,* an' the first minute she goes into dh'other room I'll give you the bend, an' you can slip in an' away.

JOXER [yielding to the temptation]. Ah, I won't stop very long anyhow. [Picking up a book from the table] Whose is the buk?

BOYLE. Aw, one o' Mary's; she's always readin' lately – nothin' but thrash, too. There's one I was lookin' at dh'other day; three stories, *The Doll's House, Ghosts*, an' *The Wild Duck** – buks only fit for chiselurs!

JOXER. Didja ever rade *Elizabeth*, or *Th' Exile o' Sibayria*?* . . . Ah, it's a darlin' story, a daarin' story!

BOYLE. You eat your sassage, an' never min' *The' Exile o' Sibayria*.

Both sit down; BOYLE fills out tea, pours gravy on JOXER'S plate, and keeps the sausage for himself.

JOXER. What are you wearin' your moleskin trousers for?

BOYLE. I have to go to a job, Joxer. Just afther you'd gone, Devine kem runnin' in to tell us that Father Farrell said if I went down to the job that's goin' on in Rathmines I'd get a start.

JOXER. Be the holy, that's good news!

BOYLE. How is it good news? I wonder if you were in my condition, would you call it good news?

JOXER. I thought . . .

BOYLE. You thought! You think too sudden sometimes, Joxer. D'ye know, I'm hardly able to crawl with the pains in me legs!

JOXER. Yis, yis; I forgot the pains in your legs. I know you can do nothin' while they're at you.

BOYLE. You forget; I don't think any of yous realise the state I'm in with the pains in my legs. What ud happen if I had to carry a bag o' cement?

JOXER. Ah, any man havin' the like of them pains id be down an' out, down an' out.

BOYLE. I wouldn't mind if he had said it to meself; but, no, oh no, he rushes in an' shouts it out in front o' Juno, an' you know what Juno is, Joxer. We all know Devine knows a little more than the rest of us, but he doesn't act as if he did; he's a good boy, sober, able to talk an' all that, but still . . .

JOXER. Oh ay; able to argufy, but still . . .

BOYLE. If he's runnin' afther Mary, aself, he's not goin' to be runnin' afther me. Captain Boyle's able to take care of himself. Afther all, I'm not gettin' brought up on Virol.* I never heard him usin' a curse; I don't believe he was ever dhrunk in his life – sure he's not like a Christian at all!

JOXER. You're afther takin' the word out o' me mouth – afther all, a Christian's natural, but he's unnatural.

BOYLE. His oul' fella was just the same – a Wicklow man.*

JOXER. A Wicklow man! That explains the whole thing. I've met many a Wicklow man in me time, but I never met wan that was any good.

BOYLE. 'Father Farrell', says he, 'sent me down to tell you.' Father Farrell! . . . D'ye know, Joxer, I never like to be beholden to any o' the clergy.

JOXER. It's dangerous, right enough.

BOYLE. If they do anything for you, they'd want you to be livin' in the Chapel* . . . I'm goin' to tell you somethin', Joxer, that I wouldn't tell to anybody else – the clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country.

JOXER. You could sing that if you had an air to it!

BOYLE [*becoming enthusiastic*]. Didn't they prevent the people in '47* from seizin' the corn, an' they starvin'; didn't they down Parnell,* didn't they say that hell wasn't hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the Fenians? We don't forget, we don't forget them things, Joxer. If they've taken everything else from us, Joxer, they've left us our memory.

JOXER [*emotionally*]. For mem'ry's the only friend that grief can call its own, that grief . . . can . . . call . . . its own!

BOYLE. Father Farrell's beginnin' to take a great intherest in Captain Boyle; because of what Johnny did for his country, says he to me wan day. It's a curious way to reward Johnny be makin' his poor oul' father work. But that's what the clergy want, Joxer – work, work, work for me an' you; havin' us mulin'* from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues! Job! Well, let him give his job to wan of his hymn-singin', prayer-spoutin', craw-thumpin'* Confraternity* men!

The voice of a COAL-BLOCK VENDOR is heard chanting in the street.

VOICE OF THE COAL VENDOR. Blocks . . . coal-blocks! Blocks . . . coal-blocks!

JOXER. God be with the young days when you were steppin' the deck of a manly ship, with the win' blowin' a hurricane through the masts, an' the only sound you'd hear was 'Port your helm!' an' the only answer, 'Port it is, sir!'

BOYLE. Them was days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin' was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism. Ofen, an' ofen, when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlin-spike,* an' the win's blowin' fierce an' the waves lashin' an' lashin', till you'd think every minute was goin' to be your last, an' it blowed – blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use. . . .

JOXER. Aw, it's a darlin' word, a daarin' word.

BOYLE. An', as it blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question – what is the stars, what is the stars?

VOICE OF THE COAL VENDOR. Any blocks, coal-blocks; blocks, coal-blocks!

JOXER. Ah, that's the question, that's the question – what is the stars? BOYLE. An' then, I'd have another look, an' I'd ass meself – what is the moon?

JOXER. Ah, that's the question – what is the moon, what is the moon?

Rapid steps are heard coming towards the door. BOYLE makes desperate efforts to hide everything; JOXER rushes to the window in a frantic effort to get out; BOYLE begins to innocently tilt 'Oh, me darlin' Jennie, I will be thure to thee', when the door is opened, and the black face of the COAL VENDOR appears.

THE COAL VENDOR. D'yez want any blocks?

BOYLE [*with a roar*]. No, we don't want any blocks!

JOXER [*coming back with a sigh of relief*]. That's afther puttin' the heart across me – I could ha' sworn it was Juno. I'd betther be goin', Captain; you couldn't tell the minute Juno'd hop in on us.

BOYLE. Let her hop in; we may as well have it out first as at last. I've made up me mind – I'm not goin' to do only what she damn well likes.

JOXER. Them sentiments does you credit, Captain; I don't like to say anything as between man an' wife, but I say as a butty, as a butty, Captain, that you've stuck it too long, an' that it's about time you showed a little spunk.

How can a man die betther than facin' fearful odds,

For th' ashes of his fathers an' the temples of his gods?*

BOYLE. She has her rights – there's no denyin' it, but haven't I me rights too?

JOXER. Of course you have – the sacred rights o' man!

BOYLE. Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance.

JOXER. Be firm, be firm, Captain; the first few minutes'll be the worst: if you gently touch a nettle it'll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a lad of mettle, an' as soft as silk remains!*

VOICE OF MRS BOYLE OUTSIDE. Can't stop, Mrs Madigan – I haven't a minute!

JOXER [*flying out of the window*]. Holy God, here she is!

BOYLE [*packing the things away with a rush in the press*]. I knew that fella ud stop till she was in on top of us! [*He sits down by the fire.*]

MRS BOYLE [*enters hastily; she is flurried and excited*]. Oh, you're in – you must have been only afther comin' in?

BOYLE. No, I never went out.

MRS BOYLE. It's curious, then, you never heard the knockin'. [*She puts her coat and hat on bed.*]

BOYLE. Knockin'? Of course I heard the knockin'.

MRS BOYLE. An' why didn't you open the door, then? I suppose you were so busy with Joxer that you hadn't time.

BOYLE. I haven't seen Joxer since I seen him before. Joxer! What ud bring Joxer here?

MRS BOYLE. D'ye mean to tell me that the pair of yous wasn't collogin' together* here when me back was turned?

BOYLE. What ud we be collogin' together about? I have somethin' else to think of besides collogin' with Joxer. I can swear on all the holy prayer-books . . .

MRS BOYLE. That you weren't in no snug! Go on in at wanst now, an' take off that moleskin trousers o' yours, an' put on a collar an' tie to smarten yourself up a bit. There's a visitor comin' with Mary in a minute, an' he has great news for you.

BOYLE. A job, I suppose; let us get wan first before we start lookin' for another.

MRS BOYLE. That's the thing that's able to put the win' up you. Well, it's no job, but news that'll give you the chance o' your life.

BOYLE. What's all the mysthery about?

MRS BOYLE. G'win an' take off the moleskin trousers when you're told! [*BOYLE goes into room on left. MRS BOYLE tidies up the room, puts the shovel under the bed, and goes to the press.*] Oh, God bless us, looka the way everything's thrun* about! Oh, Joxer was here, Joxer was here!

MARY enters with CHARLIE BENTHAM; he is a young man of twenty-five, tall, good-looking, with a very high opinion of himself generally. He is dressed in a brown coat, brown knee-breeches, grey stockings, a brown sweater, with a deep blue tie; he carries gloves and a walking-stick.

MRS BOYLE [*fussing round*]. Come in, Mr Benthams; sit down, Mr Benthams, in this chair; it's more comfortable than that, Mr Benthams. Himself'll be here in a minute; he's just takin' off his trousers.

MARY. Mother!

BENTHAM. Please don't put yourself to any trouble, Mrs Boyle — I'm quite all right here, thank you.

MRS BOYLE. An' to think of you knowin' Mary, an' she knowin' the news you had for us, an' wouldn't let on; but it's all the more welcome now, for we were on our last lap!

VOICE OF JOHNNY INSIDE. What are you kickin' up all the racket for?

BOYLE [*roughly*]. I'm takin' off me moleskin trousers!

JOHNNY. Can't you do it, then, without lettin' th' whole house know you're takin' off your trousers? What d'ye want puttin' them on an' takin' them off again?

BOYLE. Will you let me alone, will you let me alone? Am I never goin' to be done thryin' to please th' whole o' yours?

MRS BOYLE [*to BENTHAM*]. You must excuse th' state o' the place, Mr Benthams; th' minute I turn me back that man o' mine always makes a litter o' th' place, a litter o' th' place.

BENTHAM. Don't worry, Mrs Boyle; it's all right, I assure . . .

BOYLE [*inside*]. Where's me braces; where in th' name o' God did I leave me braces? . . . Ay, did you see where I put me braces?

JOHNNY [*inside, calling out*]. Ma, will you come in here an' take da away ou' o' this or he'll dhrove me mad.

MRS BOYLE [*going towards the door*]. Dear, dear, dear, that man'll be lookin' for somethin' on th' day o' Judgement. [*Looking into room and calling to BOYLE*] Look at your braces, man, hangin' round your neck!

BOYLE [*inside*]. Aw, Holy God!

MRS BOYLE [*calling*]. Johnny, Johnny, come out here for a minute.

JOHNNY. Ah, leave Johnny alone, an' don't be annoyin' him!

MRS BOYLE. Come on, Johnny, till I introduce you to Mr Benthams. [*To BENTHAM*] My son, Mr Benthams; he's after goin' through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout* in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm was blew off in the fight in O'Connell Street. [*JOHNNY comes in.*] Here he is, Mr Benthams; Mr Benthams, Johnny. None can deny he done his bit for Ireland, if that's goin' to do him any good.

JOHNNY [*boastfully*]. I'd do it agen, ma, I'd do it agen; for a principle's a principle.

MRS BOYLE. Ah, you lost your best principle, me boy, when you lost your arm; them's the only sort o' principles that's any good to a workin' man.

JOHNNY. Ireland only half free'll never be at peace while she has a son left to pull a trigger.

MRS BOYLE. To be sure, to be sure — no bread's a lot better than half a loaf. [*Calling loudly in to BOYLE*] Will you hurry up there?

BOYLE enters in his best trousers, which aren't too good, and looks very uncomfortable in his collar and tie.

MRS BOYLE. This is my husband; Mr Boyle, Mr Benthams.

BENTHAM. Ah, very glad to know you, Mr Boyle. How are you?

MRS BOYLE. Ah, I'm not too well at all; I suffer terrible with pains in me legs. Juno can tell you there what . . .

MRS BOYLE. You won't have many pains in your legs when you hear what Mr Benthams has to tell you.

BENTHAM. Juno! What an interesting name! It reminds one of Homer's glorious story of ancient gods and heroes.

BOYLE. Yis, doesn't it? You see, Juno was born an' christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an' Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, 'You should ha' been called Juno', an' the name stuck to her ever since.

MRS BOYLE. Here, we can talk o' them things agen; let Mr Benthams say what he has to say now.

BENTHAM. Well, Mr Boyle, I suppose you'll remember a Mr Ellison of Santry — he's a relative of yours, I think.

BOYLE [*viciously*]. Is it that prognosticator an' procrastinator! Of course I remember him.

BENTHAM. Well, he's dead, Mr Boyle . . .

BOYLE. Sorra many'll* go into mournin' for him.

MRS BOYLE. Wait till you hear what Mr Benthams has to say, an' then, maybe, you'll change your opinion.

BENTHAM. A week before he died he sent for me to write his will for him. He told me that there were two only that he wished to leave his property to: his second cousin, Michael Finnegan of Santry, and John Boyle, his first cousin, of Dublin.

BOYLE [*excitedly*]. Me, is it me, me?

BENTHAM. You, Mr Boyle; I'll read a copy of the will that I have here with me, which has been duly filed in the Court of Probate. [*He takes a paper from his pocket and reads*]

6th February 1922

This is the last Will and Testament of William Ellison, of Santry, in the County of Dublin. I hereby order and wish my property to be sold and divided as follows:

£20 to the St Vincent de Paul Society.*

£60 for Masses for the repose of my soul (5s. for each Mass).

The rest of my property to be divided between my first and second cousins.

I hereby appoint Timothy Buckley, of Santry, and Hugh Brierly, of Coolock, to be my Executors.

(Signed) WILLIAM ELLISON

HUGH BRIERLY

TIMOTHY BUCKLY

CHARLES BENTHAM, NT*

BOYLE [*eagerly*]. An' how much'll be comin' out of it, Mr Bentham? BENTHAM. The Executors told me that half of the property would be anything between £1500 and £2000.

MARY. A fortune, father, a fortune!

JOHNNY. We'll be able to get out o' this place now, an' go somewhere we're not known.

MRS BOYLE. You won't have to trouble about a job for awhile, Jack.

BOYLE [*fervently*]. I'll never doubt the goodness o' God agen.

BENTHAM. I congratulate you, Mr Boyle [*They shake hands*].

BOYLE. An' now, Mr Bentham, you'll have to have a wet.

BENTHAM. A wet?

BOYLE. A wet — a jar — a bough!*

MRS BOYLE. Jack, you're speakin' to Mr Bentham, an' not to Joxer.

BOYLE [*solemnly*]. Juno . . . Mary . . . Johnny . . . we'll have to go into mournin' at wanst. . . . I never expected that poor Bill ud die so sudden. . . . Well, we all have to die some day . . . you, Juno, today . . . an' me, maybe, tomorrow. . . . It's sad, but it can't be helped. . . . *Requiescat in pace* . . . or, usin' our oul' tongue like St Patrick or St Bridget, *Guh sayeree jeeea ayera!**

MARY. Oh, father, that's not Rest in Peace; that's God save Ireland. BOYLE. U-u-ugh, it's all the same — isn't it a prayer? . . . Juno, I'm done with Joxer; he's nothin' but a prognosticator an' a . . .

JOXER [*climbing angrily through the window and bounding into the room*]. You're done with Joxer, are you? Maybe you thought I'd stop on the roof all the night for you! Joxer out on the roof with the win' blowin' through him was nothin' to you an' your friend with the collar an' tie!

MRS BOYLE. What in the name o' God brought you out on the roof; what were you doin' there?

JOXER [*ironically*]. I was dhreamin' I was standin' on the bridge of a ship, an' she sailin' the Antarctic Ocean, an' it blowed, an' blowed, an' I lookin' up at the sky an' sayin', what is the stars, what is the stars?

MRS BOYLE [*opening the door and standing at it*]. Here, get ou' o' this, Joxer Daly; I was always thinkin' you had a slate off.*

JOXER [*moving to the door*]. I have to laugh every time I look at the deep-sea sailor; an' a row on a river ud make him sea-sick!

BOYLE. Get ou' o' this before I take the law into me own hands!

JOXER [*going out*]. Say aw rewaawr,* but not goodbye. Lookin' for work, an' prayin' to God he won't get it! [*He goes*].

MRS BOYLE. I'm tired tellin' you what Joxer was; maybe now you see yourself the kind he is.

BOYLE. He'll never blow the froth off a pint o' mine agen, that's a sure thing. Johnny . . . Mary . . . you're to keep yourselves to yourselves for the future. Juno, I'm done with Joxer. . . . I'm a new man from this out. . . . [*Clasping MRS BOYLE'S hand, and singing emotionally*]

O, me darlin' Juno, I will be thrue to thee;
Mc own, me darlin' Juno, you're all the world to me.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

The same, but the furniture is more plentiful, and of a vulgar nature. A glaringly upholstered armchair and lounge; cheap pictures and photos everywhere. Every available spot is ornamented with huge vases filled with artificial flowers. Crossed festoons of coloured paper chains stretch from end to end of ceiling. On the table is an old attaché case. It is about six in the evening, and two days after the First Act. BOYLE, in his shirt-sleeves, is volupuously stretched on the sofa; he is smoking a clay pipe. He is half asleep. A lamp is lighting on the table. After a few moments' pause the voice of JOXER is heard singing softly outside at the door — 'Me pipe I'll smoke, as I thrive me moke — are you there, Mor . . . ee . . . ar . . . i . . . tee!'*

BOYLE [*leaping up, takes a pen in his hand and busies himself with papers*].

Come along, Joxer, me son, come along.

JOXER [*putting his head in*]. Are you be yourself?

BOYLE. Come on, come on; that doesn't matter; I'm masher now, an' I'm goin' to remain masher. [JOXER comes in.]

JOXER. How d'ye feel now, as a man o' money?

BOYLE [*solemnly*]. It's a responsibility, Joxer, a great responsibility.

JOXER. I suppose 'tis now, though you wouldn't think it.

BOYLE. Joxer, han' me over that attackey* case on the table there. [JOXER hands the case.] Ever since the Will was passed I've run hundreds o' dockyments through me han's — I tell you, you have to keep your wits about you. [*He busies himself with papers.*]

JOXER. Well, I won't disturb you; I'll dhrup in when . . .

BOYLE [*hastily*]. It's all right, Joxer, this is the last one to be signed today. [*He signs a paper, puts it into the case, which he shuts with a snap, and sits back pompously in the chair.*] Now, Joxer, you want to see me; I'm at your service — what can I do for you, me man?

Mrs Madigan riz on the blankets an' table* for you, an' she says you're to be in no hurry payin' it back.

BOYLE. She won't be long without it; I expect the first cheque for a couple o' hundhrd any day. There's the five bob* for yourself — go on, take it, man; it'll not be the last you'll get from the Captain. Now an' agen we have our differ, but we're there together all the time.

JOXER. Me for you, an' you for me, like the two Musketeers.*

BOYLE. Father Farrell stopped me today an' tole me how glad he was I fell in for the money.

JOXER. He'll be stoppin' you ofen enough now; I suppose it was 'Mr Boyle with him?

BOYLE. He shuk me be the han' . . .

JOXER [*ironically*]. I met with Napper Tandy, an' he shuk me be the han'!

BOYLE. You're seldom astray, Joxer, but you're wrong shipped this time. What you're sayin' of Father Farrell is very near to blasphemey. I don't like anyone to talk disrespectful of Father Farrell.

JOXER. You're takin' me up wrong, Captain; I wouldn't let a word be said agen Father Farrell — the heart o' the rowl,* that's what he is; I always said he was a darlin' man, a daarin' man.

BOYLE. Comin' up the stairs who did I meet but that bummer,* Nugent. 'I seen you talkin' to Father Farrell,' says he, with a grin on him. 'He'll be folleyin' you,' says he, 'like a Guardian Angel from this out' — all the time the oul' grin on him, Joxer.

JOXER. I never seen him yet but he had the oul' grin on him!

BOYLE. 'Mr Nugent,' says I, 'Father Farrell is a man o' the people, an' as far as I know the History o' me country, the priests was always in the van of the fight for Ireelan's freedom.'

JOXER [*fervently*].

Who was it led the van, Soggart Aroon?*

Since the fight first began, Soggart Aroon?

BOYLE. 'Who are you tellin'?' says he. 'Didn't they let down the Fenians, an' didn't they do in Parnell? An' now . . . ' You ought to be ashamed o' yourself,' says I, interruptin' him, 'not to know the History o' your country.' An' I left him gawkin'* where he was.

JOXER. Where ignorance's bliss 'tis folly to be wise*; I wondher did he ever read *The Story o' Ireland*.*

BOYLE. Be J. L. Sullivan? Don't you know he didn't.

JOXER. Ah, it's a darlin' buk, a daarin' buk!

BOYLE. You'd better be goin', now, Joxer; his Majesty, Bentham'll be here any minute, now.

JOXER. Be the way things is lookin', it'll be a match between him an'

Mary. She's thrun over Jerry altogether. Well, I hope it will, for he's a darlin' man.

BOYLE. I'm glad you think so - I don't. [*Irritably*] What's darlin' about him?

JOXER [*nonplussed*]. I only seen him twiced; if you want to know me, come an' live with me.

BOYLE. He's too dignified for me - to hear him talk you'd think he knew as much as a Boney's Oraculum.* He's given up his job as teacher, an' is goin' to become a solicitor in Dublin - he's been studyin' law. I suppose he thinks I'll set him up, but he's wrong shipped. An' th' other fella - Jerry's as bad. The two o' them ud give you a pain in your face, listenin' to them; Jerry believin' in nothin', an' Benthams believin' in everythin'. One that says all is God an' no man; an' th' other that says all is man an' no God!

JOXER. Well, I'll be off now.

BOYLE. Don't forget to dhrup down afther awhile; we'll have a quiet jar, an' a song or two.

JOXER. Never fear.

BOYLE. An' tell Mrs Madigan that I hope we'll have the pleasure of her organisation at out little entertainment.

JOXER. Righto; we'll come down together. [*He goes out.*]

JOHNNY comes from room on left, and sits down moodily at the fire. BOYLE looks at him for a few moments, and shakes his head. He fills his pipe.

VOICE OF MRS BOYLE AT THE DOOR. Open the door, Jack; this thing has me nearly kilt with the weight.

BOYLE opens the door. MRS BOYLE enters carrying the box of a gramophone, followed by MARY carrying the horn and some parcels. MRS BOYLE leaves the box on the table and flops into a chair.

MRS BOYLE. Carryin' that from Henry Street was no joke.

BOYLE. U-u-ugh, that's a grand-lookin' instrument - how much was it?

MRS BOYLE. Pound down, an' five to be paid at two shillin's a week. BOYLE. That's reasonable enough.

MRS BOYLE. I'm afraid we're runnin' into too much debt; first the furniture, an' now this.

BOYLE. The whole lot won't be much out of £2000.

MARY. I don't know what you wanted a gramophone for - I know Charlie hates them; he says they're destructive of real music.

BOYLE. Destructive of music - that fella ud give you a pain in your face. All a gramophone wants is to be properly played; its thrue wonder is only felt when everythin's quiet - what a gramophone wants is dead silence!

MARY. But, father, Jerry says the same; afther all, you can only appreciate music when your ear is properly trained.

BOYLE. That's another fella ud give you a pain in your face. Properly thrained! I suppose you couldn't appreciate football unless your fut was properly thrained.

MRS BOYLE [*to MARY*]. Go on in ower that an' dress or Charlie'll be in on you, an' tea nor nothin'll be ready. [*MARY goes into room left.*]

MRS BOYLE [*arranging table for tea*]. You didn't look at your new gramophone, Johnny?

JOHNNY. 'Tisn't gramophones I'm thinking of.

MRS BOYLE. An' what is it you're thinkin' of, allanna?*

JOHNNY. *Nothin', nothin', nothin'. repetition*

MRS BOYLE. Sure, you must be thinkin' of somethin'; it's yourself that has yourself the way y'are; sleepin' wan night in me sisther's, an' the nex' in your father's brother's - you'll get no rest goin' on that way.

JOHNNY. I can rest nowhere, nowhere, nowhere.

MRS BOYLE. Sure, you're not thryin' to rest anywhere.

JOHNNY. Let me alone, let me alone, let me alone, for God's sake. [*A knock at street door.*]

MRS BOYLE [*in a flutter*]. Here he is; here's Mr Benthams!

BOYLE. Well, there's room for him; it's a pity there's not a brass band to play him in.

MRS BOYLE. We'll han' the tea round, an' not be clusthered round the table, as if we never seen nothin'. [*Steps are heard approaching, and*

MRS BOYLE, opening the door, allows BENTHAM to enter.] Give your hat an' stuck to Jack, there . . . sit down, Mr Benthams . . . no, not there . . . in th' easy chair be the fire . . . there, that's betther. Mary'll be out to you in a minute.

BOYLE [*solemnly*]. I seen be the paper this mornin' that Consols* was down half per cent. That's serious, min' you, an' shows the whole country's in a state o' chassis.

MRS BOYLE. What's Consols, Jack?

BOYLE. Consols? Oh, Consols is - oh, there's no use tellin' women what Consols is - th' wouldn't undherstand.

BENTHAM. It's just as you were saying, Mrs Boyle. [MARY enters, charmingly dressed.] Oh, good evening, Mary; how pretty you're looking!

MARY [archly]. Am I?

BOYLE. We were just talkin' when you kem in, Mary; I was tellin' Mr Bentham that the whole country's in a state o' chassis.

MARY [to BENTHAM]. Would you prefer the green or the blue ribbon round me hair, Charlie?

MRS BOYLE. Mary, your father's speakin'.

BOYLE [rapidly]. I was jus' tellin' Mr Bentham that the whole country's in a state o' chassis.

MARY. I'm sure you're frettin', da, whether it is or no.

MRS BOYLE. With all our churches an' religions, the worl's not a bit the better.

BOYLE [with a commanding gesture]. Tay! [MARY and MRS BOYLE dispense the tea.]

MRS BOYLE. An' Ireelan's takin' a leaf out o' the worl's buk; when we got the makin' of our own laws* I thought we'd never stop to look behind us, but instead of that we never stopped to look before us! If the people ud folley up their religion better there'd be a better chance for us - what do you think Mr Bentham?

BENTHAM. I'm afraid I can't venture to express an opinion on that point, Mrs Boyle; dogma has no attraction for me.

MRS BOYLE. I forgot you didn't hold with us: what's this you said you were?

BENTHAM. A Theosophist, * Mrs Boyle.

MRS BOYLE. An' what in the name o' God's a Theosophist?

BOYLE. A Theosophist, Juno, 's a - tell her, Mr Bentham, tell her.

BENTHAM. It's hard to explain in a few words: Theosophy's founded on the Vedas,* the religious books of the East. Its central theme is the existence of an all-pervading Spirit - the Life-Breath. Nothing really exists but this one Universal Life-Breath. And whatever even seems to exist separately from this Life-Breath, doesn't really exist at all. It is all vital force in man, in all animals, and in all vegetation. This Life-Breath is called the Prawna.*

MRS BOYLE. The Prawna! What a comical name!

BOYLE. Prawna; yis, the Prawna. [Blowing gently through his lips] That's the Prawna!

MRS BOYLE. Whist, whist, Jack.

BENTHAM. The happiness of man depends upon his sympathy with

this Spirit. Men who have reached a high state of excellence are called Yogi.* Some men become Yogi in a short time, it may take others millions of years.

BOYLE. Yogi! I seen hundreds of them in the streets o' San Francisco. BENTHAM. It is said by these Yogi that if we practise certain mental exercises we would have powers denied to others - for instance, the faculty of seeing things that happen miles and miles away.

MRS BOYLE. I wouldn't care to meddle with that sort o' belief; it's a very curious religion, altogether.

BOYLE. What's curious about it? Isn't all religions curious? - if they weren't, you wouldn't get any one to believe them. But religions is passin' away - they've had their day like everything else. Take the real Dublin people, frinstance: they know more about Charlie Chaplin* an' Tommy Mix* than they do about SS. Peter an' Paul!

MRS BOYLE. You don't believe in ghosts, Mr Bentham?

MARY. Don't you know he doesn't, mother?

BENTHAM. I don't know that, Mary. Scientists are beginning to think that what we call ghosts are sometimes seen by persons of a certain nature. They say that sensational actions, such as the killing of a person, demand great energy, and that energy lingers in the place where the action occurred. People may live in the place and see nothing, when someone may come along whose personality has some peculiar connection with the energy of the place, and, in a flash, the person sees the whole affair.

JOHNNY [rising swiftly, pale and affected]. What sort o' talk is this to be goin' on with? Is there nothin' better to be talkin' about but the killin' o' people? My God, isn't it bad enough for these things to happen without talkin' about them! [He hurriedly goes into the room on left.]

BENTHAM. Oh, I'm very sorry, Mrs Boyle; I never thought . . .

MRS BOYLE [apologetically]. Never mind, Mr Bentham, he's very touchy. [A frightened scream is heard from JOHNNY inside.] Mother of God, what's that? [He rushes out again, his face pale, his lips twitching, his limbs trembling.]

JOHNNY. Shut the door, shut the door, quick, for God's sake! Great God, have mercy on me! Blessed Mother o' God, shelter me, shelter your son!

MRS BOYLE [catching him in her arms]. What's wrong with you? What ails you? Sit down, sit down, here, on the bed . . . there now . . . there now.

MARY. Johnny, Johnny, what ails you?

JOHNNY. I seen him, I seen him . . . kneelin' in front o' the statue . . . merciful Jesus, have pity on me!

MRS BOYLE [to BOYLE]. Get him a glass o' whisky . . . quick, man, an' don't stand gawkin'. [BOYLE gets the whisky.]

JOHNNY. Sit here, sit here, mother . . . between me an' the door.

MRS BOYLE. I'll sit beside you as long as you like, only tell me what was it came across you at all?

JOHNNY [after taking some drink]. I seen him . . . I seen Robbie Tancred kneelin' down before the statue . . . an' the red light shinin' on him . . . an' when I went in . . . he turned an' looked at me . . . an' I seen the woun's bleedin' in his breast . . . Oh, why did he look at me like that? . . . it wasn't my fault that he was done in . . . Mother o' God, keep him away from me!

MRS BOYLE. There, there, child, you've imagined it all. There was nothin' there at all – it was the red light you seen, an' the talk we had put all the rest into your head. Here, dhrink more o' this – it'll do you good . . . An', now, stretch yourself down on the bed for a little. [To BOYLE] Go in, Jack, an' show him it was only in his own head it was.

BOYLE. [making no move]. E-e-e-e-eh; it's all nonsense; it was only a shadda he saw.

MARY. Mother o' God, he made me heart lep!

BENTHAM. It was simply due to an overwrought imagination – we all get that way at times.

MRS BOYLE. There, dear, lie down in the bed, an' I'll put the quilt across you . . . e-e-e-eh, that's it . . . you'll be as right as the mail in a few minutes.

JOHNNY. Mother, go into the room an' see if the light's lightin' before the statue.

MRS BOYLE [to BOYLE]. Jack, run in an' see if the light's lightin' before the statue.

BOYLE [to MARY]. Mary, slip in an' see if the light's lightin' before the statue. [MARY hesitates to go in.]

BENTHAM. It's all right; Mary, I'll go. [He goes into the room; remains for a few moments, and returns.] Everything's just as it was – the light burnin' bravely before the statue.

BOYLE. Of course; I knew it was all nonsense. [A knock at the door. Going to open the door.] E-e-e-e-eh.

He opens it, and JOXER, followed by MRS MADIGAN, enters. MRS MADIGAN is a strong, dapper little woman of about forty-five; her face is almost always a widespread smile of complacency. She is a woman who, in manner at least, can mourn with them that mourn, and rejoice with them that do rejoice. When she is feeling comfortable, she is inclined to be remisscent; when others say anything, or following a statement made by herself, she has a habit of putting her head a little to one side, and nodding it rapidly several times in succession, like a bird pecking at a hard berry. Indeed, she has a good deal of the bird in her, but the bird instinct is by no means a melodious one. She is ignorant, vulgar and forward, but her heart is generous withal. For instance, she would help a neighbour's sick child; she would probably kill the child, but her intention would be to cure it; she would be more at home helping a drayman to lift a fallen horse. She is dressed in a rather soiled grey dress and a vivid purple blouse; in her hair is a huge comb, ornamented with huge coloured beads. She enters with a gliding step, beaming smile and nodding head. BOYLE receives them effusively.

BOYLE. Come on in, Mrs Madigan; come on in; I was afraid you weren't comin' . . . [Slyly] There's some people able to dhress, ay, Joxer?

JOXER. Fair as the blossoms that bloom in the May, an' sweet as the scent of the new-mown hay. . . . Ah, well she may wear them.

MRS MADIGAN [looking at MARY]. I know some as are as sweet as the blossoms that bloom in the May – oh, no names, no pack dhrrill.

BOYLE. An' now I'll intrhroduce the pair o' yours to Mary's intended: Mr Bentham, this is Mrs Madigan, an oul' back-parlour neighbour, that, if she could help it at all, ud never see a body shuk!

BENTHAM [rising, and tentatively shaking the hand of MRS MADIGAN]. I'm sure, it's a great pleasure to know you, Mrs Madigan.

MRS MADIGAN. An, I'm goin' to tell you, Mr Bentham, you're goin' to get as nice a bit o' skirt* in Mary, there, as ever you seen in your puff.* Not like some of the dhressed-up dolls that's knockin' about lookin' for men when it's a skelpin* they want. I remember, as well as I remember yestherday, the day she was born – of a Tuesday, the 25th o' June, in the year 1901, at thirty-three minutes past wan in the day by Foley's clock, the pub at the corner o' the street. A cowl'd day it was too, for the season o' the year, an' I remember sayin' to Joxer, there, who I met comin' up th' stairs, that the new arrival in Boyle's ud grow up a hardy chiselur if it lived, an' that she'd be

somehthin' one o' these days that nobody suspected, an' so signs on it,* here she is today, goin' to be married to a young man lookin' as if he'd be fit to commensurate in any position in life it ud please God to call him!

BOYLE [*effusively*]. Sit down, Mrs Madigan, sit down, me oul' sport. [*To BENTHAM*] This is Joxer Daly, Past Chief Ranger of the Dear Little Shamrock Branch of the Irish National Foresters, an oul' front-top neighbour, that never despaired, even in the darkest days of Ireland's sorra.

JOXER. *Nil desperandum*,* Captain, *nil desperandum*.

BOYLE. Sit down, Joxer, sit down. The two of us was ofen in a tight corner.

MRS BOYLE. Ay, in Foley's snug!

JOXER. An' we kem out of it flyin', we kem out of it flyin', Captain.

BOYLE. An' now for a dhrink - I know yous won't refuse an oul' friend.

MRS MADIGAN [*to MRS BOYLE*]. Is Johnny not well, Mrs . . .

MRS BOYLE [*warningly*]. S-s-s-sh.

MRS MADIGAN. Oh, the poor darlin'.

BOYLE. Well, Mrs Madigan, is it tea or what?

MRS MADIGAN. Well, speakin' for meself, I jus' had me tea a minute ago, an' I'm afraid to dhrink any more - I'm never the same when I dhrink too much tay. Thanks, all the same, Mr Boyle.

BOYLE. Well, what about a bottle o' stout or a dhrop o' whiskey?

MRS MADIGAN. A bottle o' stout ud be a little too heavy for me stummock afther me tay. . . . A-a-ah, I'll thry the ball o' malt.*

[*BOYLE prepares the whiskey.*] There's nothin' like a ball o' malt occasional like - too much of it isn't good. [*To BOYLE, who is adding water*] Ah, God, Johnny, don't put too much wather on it! [*She drinks.*] I suppose yous'll be lavin' this place.

BOYLE. I'm looking for a place near the sea; I'd like the place that you might say was me cradle, to be me grave as well. The sea is always callin' me.

JOXER. She is callin', callin', callin', in the win' an' on the sea.

BOYLE. Another dhrop o' whisky, Mrs Madigan?

MRS MADIGAN. Well, now, it ud be hard to refuse seein' the suspicious times that's in it.

BOYLE [*with a commanding gesture*]. Song! . . . Juno . . . Mary . . .

Home to our Mountains'!

MRS MADIGAN [*enthusiastically*]. Hear, hear!

JOXER. Oh, that's a darlin' song, a daarin' song!

MARY [*bashfully*]. Ah no, da; I'm not in a singin' humour. MRS MADIGAN. Gawn* with you, child, an' you only goin' to be marrid; I remember as well as I remember yestherday - it was on a lovely August evenin', exactly, accordin' to date, fifteen years ago, come the Tuesday folleyn' the nex' that's comin' on, when me own man - *the Lord be good to him* - an' me was sittin' shy together in a doty little nook* on a country road, adjacent to The Stiles. 'That'll scratch your lovely, little white neck', says he, ketchin' hold of a danglin' bramble branch, holdin' clusters of the loveliest flowers you ever seen, an' breakin' it off, so that his arm fell, accidental like, roun' me waist, an' as I felt it tightenin', an tightenin', an' tightenin', I thought me buzzom was every minute goin' to burst out into a roysterin' song about

The little green leaves that were shakin' on the threes,
The gallivantin' buttherflies, an' buzzin' o' the bees!

BOYLE. Ordher for the song!

MRS BOYLE. Come on, Mary - we'll do our best.

MRS BOYLE and MARY stand up, and choosing a suitable position, sing simply 'Home to our Mountains'. * They bow to the company, and return to their places.

BOYLE [*emotionally, at the end of the song*]. 'Lull . . . me . . . to . . . rest!'

JOXER [*clapping his hands*]. Bravo, bravo! Darlin' girulls, darlin' girulls!

MRS MADIGAN. Juno, I never seen you in betther form.

BENTHAM. Very nicely rendered indeed.

MRS MADIGAN. A noble call, a noble call!

MRS BOYLE. What about yourself, Mrs Madigan?

After some coaxing, MRS MADIGAN rises, and in a quavering voice sings the following verse:

If I were a blackbird I'd whistle and sing;

I'd follow the ship that my thrue love was in;

An' on the top riggin', I'd there build me nest,

An' at night I would sleep on me Willie's white breast!

Becoming husky, amid applause, she sits down.

MRS MADIGAN. Ah, me voice is too husky now, Juno; though I remember the time when Maisie Madigan could sing like a nightingale at ma'in' time. I remember as well as I remember yestherday, at a party given to celebrate the comin' of the first chiselur to Annie an' Benny Jameson — who was the barber, yous may remember, in Henrietta Street, that, afther Easter Week, hung out a green, white an' orange pole, an' then, when the Tans started their jazz dancin', whipped it in agen, an' stuck out a red, white an' blue wan instead, givin' 'An' You'll Remember Me'* with the top non-political — singin' 'An' You'll Remember Me'* with the top notes quiverin' in a dead hush of petrified attention, folleyed be a clappin' o' han's that shuk the tumblers on the table, an' capped by Jameson, the barber, sayin' that it was the best rendherin' of 'You'll Remember Me' he ever heard in his natural!

BOYLE [*peremptorily*]. Ordher for Joxer's song!

JOXER. Ah no, I couldn't; don't ass me, Captain.

BOYLE. Joxer's song, Joxer's song — give us wan of your shut-eyed wans.

JOXER [*settles himself in his chair; takes a drink; clears his throat; solemnly closes his eyes, and begins to sing in a very querulous voice*].

She is far from the lan' where her young hero sleeps,

An' lovers around her are sighin' [*He hesitates*.]

An' lovers around her are sighin' . . . sighin' . . .
sighin' . . . [*A pause*.]

BOYLE [*imitating JOXER*].

And lovers around her are sighin'!*

What's the use of you thryin' to sing the song if you don't know it?

MARY. Thry another one, Mr Daly — maybe you'd be more fortunate.

MRS MADIGAN. Gawn, Joxer; thry another wan.

JOXER [*starting again*].

I have heard the mavis singin' his love song to the morn;

I have seen the dew-dhrop clingin' to the rose jus' newly born;

but . . . but . . . [*frantically*] To the rose jus' newly born . . .
newly born . . . born.*

JOHNNY. Mother, put on the gramophone, for God's sake, an' stop Joxer's bawlin'.

BOYLE [*commandingly*]. Gramophone! . . . I hate to see fellas thryin' to do what they're not able to do. [BOYLE arranges the gramophone, and is about to start it, when voices are heard of persons descending the stairs.]

MRS BOYLE [*warringly*]. Whisht, * Jack, don't put it on, don't put it on yet; this must be poor Mrs Tancred comin' down to go to the hospital — I forgot all about them bringin' the body to the church tonight. Open the door, Mary, an' give them a bit o' light.

MARY opens the door, and MRS TANCRED — a very old woman, obviously shaken by the death of her son — appears, accompanied by several NEIGHBOURS. The first few phrases are spoken before they appear.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. It's a sad journey we're goin' on, but God's good, an' the Republicans* won't be always down.

MRS TANCRED. Ah, what good is that to me now? Whether they're up or down — it won't bring me darlin' boy from the grave.

MRS BOYLE. Come in an' have a hot cup o' tay, Mrs Tancred, before you go.

MRS TANCRED. Ah, I can take nothin' now, Mrs Boyle — I won't be long afther him.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Still an' all, he died a noble death, an' we'll bury him like a king.

MRS TANCRED. An' I'll go on livin' like a pauper. Ah, what's the pains I suffered bringin' him into the world to carry him to his cradle, to the pains I'm sufferin' now, carryin' him out o' the world to bring him to his grave!

MARY. It would be better for you not to go at all, Mrs Tancred, but to stay at home beside the fire with some o' the neighbours.

MRS TANCRED. I seen the first of him, an' I'll see the last of him.

MRS BOYLE. You'd want a shawl, Mrs Tancred; it's a cowl'd night, an' the win's blowin' sharp.

MRS MADIGAN [*rushing out*]. I've a shawl above.

MRS TANCRED. Me home is gone now; he was me only child, an' to think that he was lyin' for a whole night stretched out on the side of a lonely counthry lane, with his head, his darlin' head, that I ofen kissed an' fondled, half hidden in the wather of a runnin' brook.

An' I'm told he was the leader of the ambush where me nex' door neighbour, Mrs Mannin', lost her Free State soldier son.* An' now here's the two of us oul' women, standin' one on each side of a scales o' sorra, balanced be the bodies of our two dead darlin' sons. [MRS MADIGAN returns, and wraps a shawl around her.] God bless you, Mrs Madigan. . . . [She moves slowly towards the door.] Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on the pair of us! . . . O Blessed Virgin, where were you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets, when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets! . . . Sacred Heart of the Crucified Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone . . . an' give us hearts o' flesh!* . . . Take away this murderin' hate . . . an' give us Thine own eternal love! [They pass out of the room.]

MRS BOYLE [explanatorily to BENTHAM]. That was Mrs Tancred of the two-pair back; her son was found, e'er yestherday, lynin' out beyant Finglas riddled with bullets. A Diehard he was, be all accounts. He was a nice quiet boy, but lattherly he went to hell, with his Republic first, an' Republic last an' Republic over all. He often took tea with us here, in the oul' days, an' Johnny, there, an' him used to be always together.

JOHNNY. Am I always to be havin' to tell you that he was no friend o' mine? I never cared for him, an' he could never stick me. It's not because he was Commandant of the Battalion that I was Quarther-Master of, that we were friends.

MRS BOYLE. He's gone now – the Lord be good to him! God help his poor oul' creature of a mother, for no matter whose friend or enemy he was, he was her poor son.

BENTHAM. The whole thing is terrible, Mrs Boyle; but the only way to deal with a mad dog is to destroy him.

MRS BOYLE. An' to think of me forgettin' about him bein' brought to the church tonight, an' we singing' an' all, but it was well we hadn't the gramophone goin', anyhow.

BOYLE. Even if we had aself. We've nothin' to do with these things, one way or t'other. That's the Government's business, an' let them do what we're payin' them for doin'.

MRS BOYLE. I'd like to know how a body's not to mind these things; look at the way they're afther leavin' the people in this very house. Hasn't the whole house, nearly, been massacred? There's young Dougherty's husband with his leg off; Mrs Travers that had her son blew up be a mine in Inchegeela, in County Cork; Mrs Mannin' that lost wan of her sons in an ambush a few weeks ago, an' now, poor Mrs Tancred's only child gone west with his body made a

collander* of. Sure, if it's not our business, I don't know whose business it is.

BOYLE. Here, there, that's enough about them things; they don't affect us, an' we needn't give a damn. If they want a wake, well, let them have a wake.* When I was a sailor, I was always resigned to meet with a wathery grave; an' if they want to be soldiers, well, there's no use o' them squealin' when they meet a soldier's fate.

JOXER. Let me like a soldier fall – me breast expandin' to th' ball!* MRS BOYLE. In wan way, she deserves all she got; for lately, she let th' Diehards make an open house of th' place; an' for th' last couple of months, either when th' sun was risin' or when th' sun was settin', you had CID* men burstin' into your room, assin' you where were you born, where were you christened, where were you married, an' where would you be buried!

JOHNNY. For God's sake, let us have no more o' this talk.

MRS MADIGAN. What about Mr Boyle's song before we start th' gramophone?

MARY [getting her hat, and putting it on]. Mother, Charlie and I are goin' out for a little shtroll.

MRS BOYLE. All right, darlin'.

BENTHAM [going out with MARY]. We won't be long away, Mrs Boyle.

MRS MADIGAN. Gwan, Captain, gwan.

BOYLE. E-e-e-e-ch, I'd want to have a few more jars in me, before I'd be in fettle for singin'.

JOXER. Give us that poem you writ t'other day. [To the rest] Aw, it's a darlin' poem, a daarin' poem.

MRS BOYLE. God bless us, is he startin' to write poetry!

BOYLE [rising to his feet]. E-e-e-e-ch. [He recites in an emotional, consequential manner the following verses]

Shawn an' I were friends, sir, to me he was all in all.
His work was very heavy and his wages were very small.
None bether on th' beach as Docker, I'll go bail,
'Tis now I'm feelin' lonely, for today he lies in jail.

He was not what some call pious – seldom at church
or prayer;

For the greatest scoundrels I know, sir, goes every
Sunday there.

Fond of his pint – well, rather, but hated the Boss
by creed

But never refused a copper* to comfort a pal in need.

E-e-e-eh. [*He sits down.*]

MRS MADIGAN. Grand, grand; you should folly* that up, you should folly that up.

JOXER. It's a daarin' poem!

BOYLE [*delightedly*]. E-e-e-eh.

JOHNNY. Are yous goin' to put on th' gramophone tonight, or are yous not?

MRS BOYLE. Gwan, Jack, put on a record.

MRS MADIGAN. Gwan, Captain, gwan.

BOYLE. Well, yous'll want to keep a dead silence.

*He sets a record, starts the machine, and it begins to play 'If You're Irish Come into the Parlour'. * As the tune is in full blare, the door is suddenly opened by a brisk, little bald-headed man, dressed circumspically in a black suit; he glares fiercely at all in the room; he is 'NEEDLE' NUGENT, a tailor. He carries his hat in his hand.*

NUGENT [*loudly, above the noise of the gramophone*]. Are yous goin' to have that thing bawlin' an' the funeral of Mrs Tancred's son passin' the house? Have none of yous any respect for the Irish people's National regard for the dead? [*BOYLE stops the gramophone.*]

MRS BOYLE. Maybe, Needle Nugent, it's nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, an' a little more regard for the livin'.

MRS MADIGAN. We don't want you, Mr Nugent, to teach us what we learned at our mother's knee. You don't look yourself as if you were dyin' of grief; if y'ass Maisie Madigan anything, I'd call you a real thrue Diehard an' live-soft Republican, atrendin' Republican funerals in the day, an' stoppin' up half the night makin' suits for the Civic Guards*!

Persons are heard running down the street, some saying 'Here it is, here it is.' NUGENT withdraws, and the rest, except JOHNNY, go to the window looking into the street, and look out. Sounds of a crowd coming nearer are heard; portion are singing

To Jesus' Heart all burning
With fervent love for men,
My heart with fondest yearning
Shall raise its joyful strain.
While ages course along,

Blest be with loudest song
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
By every heart and tongue.

MRS BOYLE. Here's the hearse, here's the hearse!

BOYLE. There's t'oul' mother walkin' behin' the coffin.

MRS MADIGAN. You can hardly see the coffin with the wreaths.

JOXER. Oh, it's a daarin' funeral, a daarin' funeral!

MRS MADIGAN. We'd have a betther view from the street.

BOYLE. Yes - this place ud give you a crick in your neck.

They leave the room, and go down. JOHNNY sits moodily by the fire. A

YOUNG MAN enters; he looks at JOHNNY for a moment.

YOUNG MAN. Quarter-Masther Boyle.

JOHNNY [*with a start*]. The Mobiliser!

YOUNG MAN. You're not at the funeral?

JOHNNY. I'm not well.

YOUNG MAN. I'm glad I've found you; you were stoppin' at your aunt's; I called there but you'd gone. I've to give you an orther to attend a Battalion Staff meetin' the night afther tomorrow.

JOHNNY. Where?

YOUNG MAN. I don't know; you're to meet me at the Pillar* at eight o'clock; then we're to go to a place I'll be told of tonight; there we'll meet a mothor that'll bring us to the meeting. They think you might be able to know somethin' about them that gave the bend* where Commandant Tancred was shelterin'.

JOHNNY. I'm not goin', then. I know nothing about Tancred.

YOUNG MAN [*at the door*]. You'd better come for you own sake - remember your oath.

JOHNNY [*passionately*]. I won't go! Haven't I done enough for Ireland! I've lost me arm, an' me hip's destroyed so that I'll never be able to walk right agen! Good God, haven't I done enough for Ireland?

YOUNG MAN. Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland! [*He goes.*]

Family in the distance the crowd is heard saying

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee;
Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed [*etc.*]

CURTAIN

The same as Act II. It is about half-past six on a November evening; a bright fire burns in the grate; MARY, dressed to go out, is sitting on a chair by the fire, leaning forward, her hands under her chin, her elbows on her knees. A look of dejection, mingled with uncertain anxiety, is on her face. A lamp, turned low, is lighting on the table. The voice light under the picture of the Virgin gleams more redly than ever. MRS BOYLE is putting on her hat and coat. It is two months later.

MRS BOYLE. An' has Bentham never even written to you since – not one line for the past month?

MARY [tonelessly]. Not even a line, mother.

MRS BOYLE. That's very curious. . . . What came between the two of you at all? To leave you so sudden, an' yous so great together. . . . To go away t' England, an' not to even leave you his address. . . .

The way he was always bringin' you to dances, I thought he was mad afther you. Are you sure you said nothin' to him?

MARY. No, mother – at least nothing that could possibly explain his givin' me up.

MRS BOYLE. You know you're a bit hasty at times, Mary, an' say things you shouldn't say.

MARY. I never said to him what I shouldn't say, I'm sure of that.

MRS BOYLE. How are you sure of it?

MARY. Because I love him with all my heart and soul, mother. Why, I don't know; I often thought to myself that he wasn't the man poor Jerry was, but I couldn't help loving him, all the same.

MRS BOYLE. But you shouldn't be frettin' the way you are; when a woman loses a man, she never knows what she's afther losin', to be sure, but, then, she never knows what she's afther gainin', either. You're not the one girl of a month ago – you look like one pinin' away. It's long ago I had a right to bring you to the doctor, instead of waitin' till tonight.

MARY. There's no necessity, really, mother, to go to the doctor; nothing serious is wrong with me – I'm run down and disappointed, that's all.

MRS BOYLE. I'll not wait another minute; I don't like the look of you at all. . . . I'm afraid we made a mistake in throwin' over poor Jerry. . . . He'd have been betther for you than that Bentham.

MARY. Mother, the best man for a woman is the one for whom she has the most love, and Charlie had it all.

MRS BOYLE. Well, there's one thing to be said for him – he couldn't have been thinkin' of the money, or he wouldn't ha' left you. . . . it must ha' been somethin' else.

MARY [wearily]. I don't know, mother. . . . only I think. . . .

MRS BOYLE. What d'ye think?

MARY. I imagine. . . . he thought. . . . we weren't. . . . good enough for him.

MRS BOYLE. An' what was he himself, only a school teacher? Though I don't blame him for fightin' shy of people like that Joxer fella an' that oul' Madigan wan* – nice sort o' people for your father to introduce to a man like Mr Bentham. You might have told me all about this before now, Mary; I don't know why you like to hide everything from your mother; you knew Bentham, an' I'd ha' known nothin' about it if it hadn't bin for the Will; an' it was only today, afther long coaxin', that you let out that he's left you.

MARY. It would have been useless to tell you – you wouldn't understand.

MRS BOYLE [hurt]. Maybe not. . . . Maybe I wouldn't understand. . . . Well, we'll be off now. [*She goes over to door left, and speaks to BOYLE inside.*] We're goin' now to the doctor's. Are you goin' to get up this evenin'?

BOYLE [*from inside*]. The pains in me legs is terrible! It's me should be poppin' off to the doctor instead o' Mary, the way I feel.

MRS BOYLE. Sorra mend you!* A nice way you were in last night – carried in in a frog's march, dead to the world. If that's the way you'll go on when you get the money it'll be the grave for you, an' asylum for me and the Poorhouse for Johnny.

BOYLE. I thought you were goin'?

MRS BOYLE. That's what has you as you are – you can't bear to be spoken to. Knowin' the way we are, up to our ears in debt, it's a wonder you wouldn't ha' got up to go to th' solicitor's an' see if we could ha' gotten a little o' the money even.

BOYLE [*shouting*]. I can't be goin' up there night, noon an' mornin', can I? He can't give the money till he gets it, can he? I can't get blood out of a turnip,* can I?

MRS BOYLE. It's nearly two months since we heard of the Will, an' the money seems as far off as ever. . . . I suppose you know we owe twenty pounds to oul' Murphy?

BOYLE. I've a faint recollection of you tellin' me that before.

MRS BOYLE. Well, you'll go over to the shop yourself for the things in future – I'll face him no more.

BOYLE. I thought you said you were goin'?

MRS BOYLE. I'm goin' now; come on, Mary.

BOYLE. Ey, Juno, ey!

MRS BOYLE. Well, what d'ye want now?

BOYLE. Is there e're a bottle o' stout left?

MRS BOYLE. There's two o' them here still.

BOYLE. Show us in one o' them an' leave t'other there till I get up. An'

throw us in the paper that's on the table, an' the bottle o' Sloan's

Liniment* that's in th' drawer.

MRS BOYLE [*getting the liniment and the stout*]. What paper is it you want – the *Messenger*?

BOYLE. *Messenger!* The *News o' the World!** [*MRS BOYLE brings in the things asked for, and comes out again.*]

MRS BOYLE [*at door*]. Mind the candle, now, an' don't burn the house over our heads. I left t'other bottle o' stout on the table. [*She puts bottle of stout on table. She goes out with MARY. A cork is heard popping inside.*]

A pause, then outside the door is heard the voice of JOXER tilting softly: 'Me pipe I'll smoke, as I thrive me make . . . are you . . . there . . . Mor . . . ee . . . ar . . . i . . . teee!' A gentle knock is heard, and after a pause the door opens, and JOXER, followed by NUGENT, enters.

JOXER. Be God, they must be all out; I was thinkin' there was somethin' up when he didn't answer the signal. We seen Juno an' Mary goin', but I didn't see him, an' it's very seldom he escapes me. NUGENT. He's not goin' to escape me – he's not goin' to be let go to the fair altogether.

JOXER. Sure, the house couldn't hold them lately; an' he goin' about like a matherpiece of the Free State country; forgettin' their friends; forgettin' God – wouldn't even lift his hat passin' a chapel!* Sure they were bound to get a dhrop! An' you really think there's no money comin' to him afther all?

NUGENT. Not as much as a red rex,* man; I've been a bit anxious this long time over me money, an' I went up to the solicitor's to find out all I could – ah, man, they were goin' to throw me down the stairs. They toul' me that the oul' cock himself had the stairs worn away

comin' up afther it, an' they black in the face tellin' him he'd get nothin'. Some way or another that the Will is writ he won't be entitled to get as much as a make!*

JOXER. Ah, I thought there was somethin' curious about the whole thing; I've bin havin' s'hrange dhreams for the last couple o' weeks. An' I notice that that Bentham fella doesn't be comin' here now – there must be somethin' on the mat there too. Anyhow, who, in the name o' God, ud leave anythin' to that oul' bummer? Sure it ud be unnatural. An' the way Juno an' him's been throwin' their weight about for the last few months! Ah, him that goes a borrowin' goes a sorrowin'!*

NUGENT. Well, he's not goin' to throw his weight about in the suit I made for him much longer. I'm tellin' you seven pouns aren't to be found growin' on the bushes these days.

JOXER. An' there isn't hardly a neighbour in the whole street that hasn't lent him money on the strength of what he was goin' to get, but they're after backing the wrong horse. Wasn't it a mercy o' God that I'd nothin' to give him! The softy I am, you know, I'd ha' lent him me last juice!* I must have had somebody's good prayers. Ah, afther all, an honest man's the noblest work o' God!* [*BOYLE coughs inside.*] Whisht, damn it, he must be inside in bed.

NUGENT. Inside o' bed or outside of it, he's goin' to pay me for that suit, or give it back – he'll not climb up my back* as easily as he thinks.

JOXER. Gwan in at wanst, man, an' get it off him, an' don't be a fool.

NUGENT [*going to door left, opening it and looking in*]. Ah, don't disturb yourself, Mr Boyle; I hope you're not sick?

BOYLE. Th' oul' legs, Mr Nugent, the oul' legs.

NUGENT. I just called over to see if you could let me have anything off the suit?

BOYLE. E-e-e-eh, how much is this it is?

NUGENT. It's the same as it was at the start – seven pouns.

BOYLE. I'm glad you kem, Mr Nugent; I want a good heavy topcoat – Irish frieze, if you have it. How much would a topcoat like that be, now?

NUGENT. About six pouns.

BOYLE. Six pouns – six an' seven, six an' seven is thirteen – that'll be thirteen pouns I'll owe you.

JOXER slips the bottle of stout that is on the table into his pocket. NUGENT

rushes into the room, and returns with suit on his arm; he pauses by the door.

NUGENT. You'll owe me no thirteen pouns. Maybe you think you're better able to owe it than pay it!

BOYLE [*frantically*]. Here, come back to hell ower that – where're you goin' with them clothes o' mine?

NUGENT. Where am I goin' with them clothes o' yours? Well, I like your damn cheek!

BOYLE. Here, what am I goin' to dhress meself in when I'm goin' out?

NUGENT. What do I care what you dhress yourself in! You can put yourself in a bolsther cover, if you like. [*He goes towards the other door, followed by JOXER.*]

JOXER. What'll he dhress himself in! Gentleman Jack an' his frieze coat! [*They go out.*]

BOYLE [*inside*]. Ey, Nugent; ey, Mr Nugent, Mr Nugent! [*After a pause BOYLE enters hastily, buttoning the braces of his moleskin trousers; his coat and vest are on his arm; he throws these on a chair and hurries to the door on right.*] Ey, Mr Nugent, Mr Nugent!

JOXER [*meeting him at the door*]. What's up, what's wrong, Captain? BOYLE. Nugent's been here an' took away me suit – the only things I had to go out in!

JOXER. Tuk your suit – for God's sake! An' what were you doin' while he was takin' them?

BOYLE. I was in bed when he stole in like a thief in the night, an' before I knew even what he was thinkin' of, he whipped them from the chair an' was off like a redshank!*

JOXER. An' what, in the name o' God, did he do that for?

BOYLE. What did he do it for? How the hell do I know what he done it for? – jealousy an' spite, I suppose.

JOXER. Did he not say what he done it for?

BOYLE. Amn't I afther tellin' you that he had them whipped up an' was gone before I could open me mouth?

JOXER. That was a very sudden thing to do; there mus' be somethin' behin' it. Did he hear anythin', I wondher?

BOYLE. Did he hear anythin'? – you talk very queer, Joxer – what could he hear?

JOXER. About you not gettin' the money, in some way or t'other?

BOYLE. An' what ud prevent me from gettin' th' money?

JOXER. That's jus' what I was thinkin' – what ud prevent you from gettin' the money – nothin', as far as I can see.

BOYLE [*looking round for bottle of stout, with an exclamation*]. Aw, holy God!

JOXER. What's up, Jack?

BOYLE. He must have afther lifted the bottle o' stout that Juno left on the table!

JOXER [*horrified*]. Ah no, ah no; he wouldn't be afther doin' that now.

BOYLE. An' who done it then? Juno left a bottle o' stout here, an' it's gone – it didn't walk, did it?

JOXER. Oh, that's shockin'; ah, man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn!*

MRS MADIGAN [*appearing at the door*]. I hope I'm not disturbin' you in any discussion on your forthcomin' legacy – if I may use the word – an' that you'll let me have a barny* for a minute or two with you, Mr Boyle.

BOYLE [*uneasily*]. To be sure, Mrs Madigan – an oul' friend's always welcome.

JOXER. Come in the evenin', come in th' mornin'; come when you assed, or come without warnin'*, Mrs Madigan.

BOYLE. Sit down, Mrs Madigan.

MRS MADIGAN [*ominously*]. Th' few words I have to say can be said standin'. Puttin' aside all formularies,* I suppose you remember me lendin' you some time ago three pouns that I raised on blankets an' furniture in me uncle's?*

BOYLE. I remember it well. I have it recorded in me book – three pouns five shillings from Maisie Madigan, raised on articles pawned; an' item: fourpence, given to make up the price of a pint, on th' principle that no bird ever flew on wan wing; all to be repaid at par, when the ship comes home.

MRS MADIGAN. Well, ever since I shoved in the blankets I've been perishin' with th' cowl'd, an' I've decided, if I'll be too hot in th' next' world aself, I'm not goin' to be too cowl'd in this wan; an' consequently, I want me three pouns if you please.

BOYLE. This is a very sudden demand, Mrs Madigan, an' can't be met; but I'm willin' to give you a receipt in full, in full.

MRS MADIGAN. Come on, out with th' money, an' don't be jack-actin'.

BOYLE. You can't get blood out of a turnip, can you?

MRS MADIGAN [*rushing over and shaking him*]. Gimme me money, y'oul' reprobate, or I'll shake the worth of it out of you!

BOYLE. Ey, houl' on, there; houl' on, there! You'll wait for your money now, me lassie!

MRS MADIGAN [looking around the room and seeing the gramophone]. I'll wait for it, will I? Well, I'll not wait long; if I can't get th' cash, I'll get th' worth of it. [She snatches up the gramophone.]

BOYLE. Ey, ey, there, wher' you goin' with that?

MRS MADIGAN. I'm goin' to th' pawn to get me three quid five shillings; I'll brin' you th' ticket, an' then you can do what you like, me bucko.

BOYLE. You can't touch that, you can't touch that! It's not my property, an' it's not ped for yet!

MRS MADIGAN. So much th' better. It'll be an ayse to me conscience, for I'm takin' what doesn't belong to you. You're not goin' to be swankin' it like a paycock with Maisie Madigan's money – I'll pull some o' th' gorgeous feathers out o' your tail! [She goes off with the gramophone.]

BOYLE. What's th' world comin' to at all? I ass you, Joxer Daly, is there any morality left anywhere?

JOXER. I wouldn't ha' believed it, only I seen it with me own two eyes. I didn't think Maisie Madigan was that sort of woman; she has either a sup taken,* or she's heard somethin'.

BOYLE. Heard somethin' – about what, if it's not any harm to ass you?

JOXER. She must ha' heard some rumour or other that you weren't goin' to get th' money.

BOYLE. Who says I'm not goin' to get th' money?

JOXER. Sure, I don't know – I was only sayin'.

BOYLE. Only sayin' what?

JOXER. Nothin'.

BOYLE. You were goin' to say somethin' – don't be a twister.*

JOXER [angrily]. Who's a twister?

BOYLE. Why don't you speak your mind, then?

JOXER. You never twisted yourself – no, you wouldn't know how!

BOYLE. Did you ever know me to twist; did you ever know me to twist?

JOXER [fiercely]. Did you ever do anythin' else! Sure, you can't believe a word that comes out o' your mouth.

BOYLE. Here, get out, ower o' this; I always knew you were a prognosticator an' a procrastinator!

JOXER [going out as JOHNNY comes in]. The anchor's weighed, farewell, rec. . . mem. . . ber . . . me.* Jacky Boyle, Esquire, infernal rogue an' damned liar.

JOHNNY. Joxer an' you at it agen? – when are you goin' to have a little respect for yourself, an' not be always makin' a show of us all?

BOYLE. Are you goin' to lecture me now?

JOHNNY. Is mother back from the doctor yet, with Mary?

[MRS BOYLE enters; it is apparent from the serious look on her face that something has happened. She takes off her hat and coat without a word and puts them by. She then sits down near the fire, and there is a few moments' pause.]

BOYLE. Well, what did the doctor say about Mary?

MRS BOYLE [in an earnest manner and with suppressed agitation]. Sit down here, Jack; I've something to say to you . . . about Mary.

BOYLE [awed by her manner]. About . . . Mary?

MRS BOYLE. Close that door there and sit down here.

BOYLE [closing the door]. More trouble in our native land, is it? [He sits down.] Well, what is it?

MRS BOYLE. It's about Mary.

BOYLE. Well, what about Mary – there's nothin' wrong with her, is there?

MRS BOYLE. I'm sorry to say there's a gradle* wrong with her.

BOYLE. A gradle wrong with her! [Peevishly] First Johnny an' now Mary; is the whole house goin' to become an hospital! It's not consumption, is it?

MRS BOYLE. No . . . it's not consumption . . . it's worse.

JOHNNY. Worse! Well, we'll have to get her into some place ower this, there's no one here to mind her.

MRS BOYLE. We'll all have to mind her now. You might as well know now, Johnny, as another time. [To BOYLE] D'ye know what the doctor said to me about her, Jack?

BOYLE. How ud I know – I wasn't there, was I?

MRS BOYLE. He told me to get her married at wanst.

BOYLE. Married at wanst! An' why did he say the like o' that?

MRS BOYLE. Because Mary's goin' to have a baby in a short time.

BOYLE. Goin' to have a baby! – my God, what'll Bentham say when he hears that?

MRS BOYLE. Are you blind, man, that you can't see that it was Bentham that has done this wrong to her?

BOYLE [passionately]. Then he'll marry her, he'll have to marry her!

MRS BOYLE. You know he's gone to England, an' God knows where he is now.

BOYLE. I'll folly him, I'll folly him, an' bring him back, an' make him

do her justice. The scoundrel, I might ha' known what he was, with his Yogeas an' his Prawna!

MRS BOYLE. We'll have to keep it quiet till we see what we can do.

BOYLE. Oh, isn't this a nice thing to come on top o' me, an' the state I'm in! A pretty show I'll be to Joxer an' to that oul' wan, Madigan! Amn't I afther goin' through enough without havin' to go through this!

MRS BOYLE. What you an' I'll have to go through I'll be nothin' to what poor Mary'll have to go through; for you an' me is middlin' old, an' most of our years is spent; but Mary'll have maybe forty years to face an' handle, an' every wan of them'll be tainted with a bitter memory.

BOYLE. Where is she? Where is she till I tell her off? I'm tellin' you when I'm done with her she'll be a sorry girl!

MRS BOYLE. I left her in me sister's till I came to speak to you. You'll say nothin' to her, Jack; ever since she left school she's earned her livin', an' your fatherly care never troubled the poor girl.

BOYLE. Gwan, take her part agen her father! But I'll let you see whether I'll say nothin' to her or no! Her an' her readin'! That's more o' th' blasted nonsense that has the house fallin' on top of us! What did th' likes of her, born in a tenement house, want with readin'? Her readin's afther bringin' her to a nice pass - oh, it's madnin', madnin', madnin'!

MRS BOYLE. When she comes back say nothin' to her, Jack, or she'll leave this place.

BOYLE. Leave this place! Av, she'll leave this place, an' quick too!

MRS BOYLE. If Mary goes, I'll go with her.

BOYLE. Well, go with her! Well, go, th' pair o' yours! I lived before I seen you, an' I can live when yous are gone. Isn't this a nice thing to come rollin' in on top o' me afther all your prayin' to St Anthony an' the Little Flower! An' she's a Child o' Mary, * too - I wonder what'll the nuns think of her now? An' it'll be bellows'd all over th' district before you could say Jack Robinson; an' whenever I'm seen they'll whisper, 'That's th' father of Mary Boyle that had th' kid be th' swank* she used to go with; d'ye know, d'ye know?' To be sure they'll know - more about it than I will meself!

JOHNNY. She should be dhruven out o' th' house she's brought disgrace o'!

MRS BOYLE. Hush, you, Johnny. We needn't let it be bellows'd all over

the place; all we've got to do is to leave this place quietly an' go somewhere where we're not known an' nobody'll be th' wiser.

BOYLE. You're talkin' like a two-year-oul', woman. Where'll we get a place ou' o' this - places aren't that easily got.

MRS BOYLE. But, Jack, when we get the money . . .

BOYLE. Money - what money?

MRS BOYLE. Why, oul' Ellison's money, of course.

BOYLE. There's no money comin' from oul' Ellison, or any one else. Since you've heard of wan trouble, you might as well hear of another. There's no money comin' to us at all - the Will's a wash-out!

MRS BOYLE. What are you sayin', man - no money?

JOHNNY. How could it be a wash-out?

BOYLE. The boyo that's afther doin' it to Mary done it to me as well. The thick* made out the Will wrong; he said in th' Will, only first cousin an' second cousin, instead of mentionin' our names, an' now any one that thinks he's a first cousin or second cousin t' oul' Ellison can claim the money as well as me, an' they're springin' up in hundreds, an' comin' from America an' Australia, thinkin' to get their whack* out of it, while all the time the lawyers is gobblin' it up, till there's not as much as ud buy a stockin' for your lovely daughter's baby!

MRS BOYLE. I don't believe it, I don't believe it, I don't believe it!

JOHNNY. Why did you say nothin' about this before?

MRS BOYLE. You're not serious, Jack; you're not serious!

BOYLE. I'm tellin' you the scholar, Bentham, made a banjax* o' th' Will; instead o' sayin', 'th' rest o' me property to be divided between me first cousin, Jack Boyle, an' me second cousin Mick Finnegan, o' Santhry', he writ down only, 'me first an' second cousins', an' the world an' his wife are afther th' property now.

MRS BOYLE. Now I know why Bentham left poor Mary in th' lurch; I can see it all now - oh, is there not even a middlin' honest man left in th' world?

JOHNNY [to BOYLE]. An' you let us run into debt, an' you borrowed money from everybody to fill yourself with beer! An' now you tell us the whole thing's a washout! Oh, if it's thrue, I'm done with you, for you're worse than me sister Mary!

BOYLE. You hole your tongue, d'ye hear? I'll not take any lip from you. Go an' get Bentham if you want satisfaction for all that's afther happenin' us.

JOHNNY. I won't hole me tongue, I won't hole me tongue! I'll tell you what I think of you, father an' all as you are . . . you . . .

MRS BOYLE. Johnny, Johnny, for God's sake, be quiet!

JOHNNY. I'll not be quiet, I'll not be quiet; he's a nice father, isn't he? is it any wonder Mary went astray, when . . .

MRS BOYLE. Johnny, Johnny, for my sake be quiet – for your mother's sake!

BOYLE. I'm goin' out now to have a few dhrinks with th' last few makes I have, an' tell that lassie o' yours not to be here when I come back; for if I lay me eyes on her, I'll lay me hans on her, an' if I lay me hans on her, I won't be accountable for me actions!

JOHNNY. Take care somebody doesn't lay his hans on you – y'oul' . . .

MRS BOYLE. Johnny, Johnny!

BOYLE [at door, about to go out]. Oh, a nice son, an' a nicer daughter, I have. [Calling loudly upstairs] Joxer, Joxer, are you there?

JOXER [from a distance]. I'm here, More. . . ee. . . i. . . tee!

BOYLE. I'm goin' down to Foley's – are you comin'?

JOXER. Come with you? With that sweet call me heart is stirred; I'm only waiting for the word, an' I'll be with you, like a bird! [BOYLE and JOXER pass the door going out.]

JOHNNY [throwing himself on the bed]. I've a nice sither, an' a nice father, there's no bettin' on it. I wish to God a bullet or a bomb had whipped me ou' o' this long ago! Not one o' yours, have any thought for me!

MRS BOYLE [with passionate remonstrance]. If you don't whisht, Johnny, you'll drive me mad. Who has kep' th' home together for the past few years – only me? An' who'll have to bear th' biggest part o' this throuble but me? – but whinin' an' whingin' isn't goin' to do any good.

JOHNNY. You're to blame yourself for a gradle of it – givin' him his own way in everything, an' never assin' to check him, no matter what he done. Why didn't you look afther th' money? why . . .

There is a knock at the door; MRS BOYLE opens it; JOHNNY rises on his elbow to look and listen; two men enter.

FIRST MAN. We've been sent up be th' Manager of the Hibernian Furnishing Company, Mrs Boyle, to take back the furniture that was got a while ago.

MRS BOYLE. Yous'll touch nothin' here – how do I know who yous are?

FIRST MAN [showing a paper]. There's the ordher, ma'am. [Reading] A chest o' drawers, a table, wan easy an' two ordinary chairs; wan mirror; wan chesterfield divan, an' a wardrobe an' two vases. [To his comrade] Come on, Bill, it's afther knockin' -off time already.

JOHNNY. For God's sake, mother, run down to Foley's an' bring father back, or we'll be left without a stick. [The men carry out the table.]

MRS BOYLE. What good would it be? – you heard what he said before he went out.

JOHNNY. Can't you thry? He ought to be here, an' the like of this goin' on.

MRS BOYLE puts a shawl around her, as MARY enters.

MARY. What's up, mother? I met a man carryin' away the table, an' everybody's talking about us not gettin' the money after all.

MRS BOYLE. Everythin's gone wrong, Mary, everythin'. We're not gettin' a penny out o' the Will, not a penny – I'll tell you all when I come back; I'm goin' for your father. [She runs out.]

JOHNNY [to MARY, who has sat down by the fire]. It's a wonder you're not ashamed to show your face here, afther what has happened.

JERRY enters slowly; there is a look of earnest hope on his face. He looks at MARY for a few moments.

JERRY [softly]. Mary! [MARY does not answer.] Mary, I want to speak to you for a few moments, may I? [MARY remains silent; JOHNNY goes slowly into room on left.] Your mother has told me everything, Mary, and I have come to you. . . . I have come to tell you, Mary, that my love for you is greater and deeper than ever. . . .

MARY [with a sob]. Oh, Jerry, Jerry, say no more; all that is over now; anything like that is impossible now!

JERRY. Impossible? Why do you talk like that, Mary?

MARY. After all that has happened.

JERRY. What does it matter what has happened? We are young enough to be able to forget all those things. [He catches her hand] Mary, Mary, I am pleading for your love. With Labour, Mary, humanity is above everything; we are the Leaders in the fight for a new life. I want to forget Bentham, I want to forget that you left me – even for a while.

MARY. Oh, Jerry, Jerry, you haven't the bitter word of scorn for me after all.

JERRY [*passionately*]. Scorn! I love you, love you, Mary!

MARY [*rising, and looking him in the eyes*]. Even though . . .

JERRY. Even though you threw me over for another man; even though you gave me many a bitter word!

MARY. Yes, yes, I know; but you love me, even though . . . even though . . . I'm . . . goin' . . . goin' . . . [*He looks at her questioningly, and fear gathers in his eyes.*] Ah, I was thinkin' so. . . . You don't know everything!

JERRY [*poignantly*]. Surely to God, Mary, you don't mean that . . . that . . . that . . .

MARY. Now you know all, Jerry; now you know all!

JERRY. My God, Mary, have you fallen as low as that?

MARY. Yes, Jerry, as you say, I have fallen as low as that.

JERRY. I didn't mean it that way, Mary . . . it came on me so sudden, that I didn't mind what I was sayin' . . . I never expected this — your mother never told me. . . . I'm sorry . . . God knows, I'm sorry for you, Mary.

MARY. Let us say no more, Jerry; I don't blame you for thinkin' it's terrible. . . . I suppose it is. . . . Everybody'll think the same . . . it's only as I expected — your humanity is just as narrow as the humanity of the others.

JERRY. I'm sorry, all the same . . . I shouldn't have troubled you. . . . I wouldn't if I'd known. . . . If I can do anything for you . . . Mary . . . I will. [*He turns to go, and halts at the door.*]

MARY. Do you remember, Jerry, the verses you read when you gave the lecture in the Socialist Rooms some time ago, on Humanity's Strife with Nature?

JERRY. The verses — no; I don't remember them.

MARY. I do. They're runnin' in me head now —

An' we felt the power that fashion'd

All the lovely things we saw,

That created all the murmur

Of an everlasting law,

Was a hand of force an' beauty,

With an eagle's tearin' claw.

Then we saw our globe of beauty

Was an ugly thing as well,

A hymn divine whose chorus

Was an agonisin' yell;

Like the story of a demon,

That an angel had to tell;

Like a glowin' picture by a

Hand unsteady, brought to ruin;

Like her craters, if their deadness

Could give life unto the moon;

Like the agonising horror

Of a violin out of tune.*

[*There is a pause, and JERRY goes slowly out.*]

JOHNNY [*returning*]. Is he gone?

MARY. Yes. [*The two men re-enter.*]

FIRST MAN. We can't wait any longer for t'oul' fella — sorry, Miss, but we have to live as well as th' nex' man. [*They carry out some things.*]

JOHNNY. Oh, isn't this terrible! . . . I suppose you told him everything . . . couldn't you have waited for a few days? . . . he'd have stopped th' takin' of the things, if you'd kep' your mouth shut. Are you burnin' to tell every one of the shame you've brought on us?

MARY [*snatching up her hat and coat*]. Oh, this is unbearable! [*She rushes out.*]

FIRST MAN [*re-entering*]. We'll take the chest o' drawers next — it's the heaviest.

The voice light flickers for a moment, and goes out.

JOHNNY [*in a cry of fear*]. Mother o' God, the light's afther goin' out! FIRST MAN. You put the win' up me the way you bawled that time. The oil's all gone, that's all.

JOHNNY [*with an agonising cry*]. Mother o' God, there's a shot I'm afther gettin'!

FIRST MAN. What's wrong with you, man? Is it a fit you're takin'? JOHNNY. I'm afther feelin' a pain in me breast, like the tearin' by of a bullet!

FIRST MAN. He's goin' mad — it's a wonder they'd leave a chap like that here by himself.

TWO IRREGULARS* enter swiftly; they carry revolvers; one goes over to JOHNNY; the other covers the two furniture men.

FIRST IRREGULAR [to the men, quietly and incisively]. Who are you? – what are you doin' here? – quick!

FIRST MAN. Removin' furniture that's not paid for.

IRREGULAR. Get over to the other end of the room an' turn your faces to the wall – quick! [The two men turn their faces to the wall, with their hands up.]

SECOND IRREGULAR [to JOHNNY]. Come on, Sean Boyle, you're wanted; some of us have a word to say to you.

JOHNNY. I'm sick, I can't – what do you want with me?

SECOND IRREGULAR. Come on, come on; we've a distance to go, an' haven't much time – come on.

JOHNNY. I'm an oul' comrade – you wouldn't shoot an oul' comrade.

SECOND IRREGULAR. Poor Tancred was an oul' comrade o' yours, but you didn't think o' that when you gave him away to the gang that sent him to his grave. But we've no time to waste; come on – here, Dermot, ketch his arm. [To JOHNNY] Have you your beads?*

JOHNNY. Me beads! Why do you ass me that, why do you ass me that?

SECOND IRREGULAR. Go on, go on, march!

JOHNNY. Are you goin' to do in a comrade? – look at me arm, I lost it for Ireland.

SECOND IRREGULAR. Commandant Tancred lost his life for Ireland.

JOHNNY. Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me! Mother o' God, pray for me – be with me now in the agonies o' death! . . . Hail, Mary, full o' grace . . . the Lord is . . . with Thee.

They drag out JOHNNY BOYLE, and the curtain falls. When it rises again the most of the furniture is gone. MARY and MRS BOYLE, one on each side, are sitting in a darkened room, by the fire; it is an hour later.

MRS BOYLE. I'll not wait much longer . . . what did they bring him away in the mothor for? Nugent says he thinks they had guns . . . is me troubles never goin' to be over? . . . If anything ud happen to poor Johnny, I think I'd lose me mind. . . . I'll go to the Police Staion, surely they ought to be able to do somethin'. [Below is heard the sound of voices.] Whisht, is that something? Maybe, it's your father, though when I left him in Foley's he was hardly able to lift his head. Whisht!

A knock at the door, and the voice of MRS MADIGAN, speaking very softly:

Mrs Boyle, Mrs Boyle. [MRS BOYLE opens the door.] Oh, Mrs Boyle, God an' His Blessed Mother be with you this night!

MRS BOYLE [calmly]. What is it, Mrs Madigan? It's Johnny – something about Johnny.

MRS MADIGAN. God send it's not, God send it's not Johnny!

MRS BOYLE. Don't keep me waitin', Mrs Madigan; I've gone through so much lately that I feel able for anything.

MRS MADIGAN. Two polismen* below wantin' you.

MRS BOYLE. Wantin' me; an' why do they want me?

MRS MADIGAN. Some poor fella's been found, an' they think it's, it's . . .

MRS BOYLE. Johnny, Johnny!

MARY [with her arms round her mother]. Oh, mother, mother, me poor, darlin' mother.

MRS BOYLE. Hush, hush, darlin'; you'll shortly have your own throuble to bear. [To MRS MADIGAN] An' why do the polis think it's

Johnny, Mrs Madigan?

MRS MADIGAN. Because one o' the doctors knew him when he was attendin' with his poor arm.

MRS BOYLE. Oh, it's thrue, then; it's Johnny, it's me son, me own son!

MARY. Oh, it's thrue, it's thrue what Jerry Devine says – there isn't a God, there isn't a God; if there was He wouldn't let these things happen!

MRS BOYLE. Mary, you mustn't say them things. We'll want all the help we can get from God an' His Blessed Mother now! These things have nothin' to do with the Will o' God. Ah, what can God do agen the stupidity o' men!

MRS MADIGAN. The polis want you to go with them to the hospital to see the poor body – they're waitin' below.

MRS BOYLE. We'll go. Come, Mary, an' we'll never come back here agen. Let your father furrage for himself now; I've done all I could an' it was all no use – he'll be hopeless till the end of his days. I've got a little room in me sister's where we'll stop till your throuble is over, an' then we'll work together for the sake of the baby.

MARY. My poor little child that'll have no father!

MRS BOYLE. It'll have what's far better – it'll have two mothers.

A ROUGH VOICE SHOUTING FROM BELOW. Are yous goin' to keep us waitin' for yous all night?

MRS MADIGAN [*going to the door, and shouting down*]. Take your hour, there, take your hour! If yous are in such a hurry, skip off, then, for nobody wants you here – if they did yous wouldn't be found. For you're the same as yous were under the British Government – never where yous are wanted! As far as I can see, the Polis as Polis, in this city, is Null an' Void!

MRS BOYLE. We'll go, Mary, we'll go; you to see your poor dead brother, an' me to see me poor dead son!

MARY. I dhread it, mother, I dhread it!

MRS BOYLE. I forgot, Mary, I forgot; your poor oul' selfish mother was only thinkin' of herself. No, no, you mustn't come – it wouldn't be good for you. You go on to me sither's an' I'll face th' ordeal meself. Maybe I didn't feel sorry enough for Mrs Tancred when her poor son was found as Johnny's been found now – because he was a Diehard! Ah, why didn't I remember that then he wasn't a Diehard or a Stater, but only a poor dead son! It's well I remember all that she said – an' it's my turn to say it now: What was the pain I suffered, Johnny, bringin' you into the world to carry you to your cradle, to the pains I'll suffer carryin' you out o' the world to bring you to your grave! Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin, where were you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets, when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets? Sacred Heart o' Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone, and give us hearts o' flesh! Take away this murderin' hate, an' give us Thine own eternal love! [*They all go slowly out.*]

There is a pause; then a sound of shuffling steps on the stairs outside. The door opens and BOYLE and JOXER, both of them very drunk, enter.

BOYLE. I'm able to go no farther. . . . Two polis, ey . . . what were they doin' here, I wondher? . . . Up to no good, anyhow . . . an' Juno an' that lovely daughtar o' mine with them. [*Taking a sixpence from his pocket and looking at it*] Wan single, solitary tanner left out of all I borreyed. . . . [*He lets it fall.*] The last o' the Mohecans. . . . The blinds is down, Joxer, the blinds is down!

JOXER [*walking unsteadily across the room, and anchoring at the bed*]. Put all . . . your troubles . . . in your oul' kit-bag . . . an' smile . . . smile . . . smile!*

BOYLE. The country'll have to steady itself . . . it's goin' . . . to hell. . . . Wherc'r all . . . the chairs . . . gone to . . . steady itself,

Joxer. . . . Chairs'll . . . have to . . . steady themselves. . . . No matter . . . what any one may . . . say. . . . Irelan' sober . . . is Irelan' . . . free.*

JOXER [*stretching himself on the bed*]. Chains . . . an' . . . slaveree* . . . that's a darlin' motto . . . a daaarin' . . . motto!

BOYLE. If th' worst comes . . . to th' worse . . . I can join a . . . flyin' . . . column.* . . . I done . . . me bit . . . in Easter Week . . . had no business . . . to . . . be . . . there . . . but Captain Boyle's Captain Boyle!

JOXER. Breathes there a man with soul . . . so . . . de . . . ad . . . this . . . me . . . o . . . wn, me nat . . . ive l . . . an'!*

BOYLE [*subsiding into a sitting posture on the floor*]. Commandant Kelly died . . . in them . . . arms . . . Joxer. . . . Tell me Volunteer buttries . . . says he . . . that . . . I died for . . . Irelan'!

JOXER. D'jevr rade 'Willie . . . Reilly . . . an' His Own . . . Colleen . . . Bawn?*' It's a darlin' story, a daaarin' story!

BOYLE. I'm telling you . . . Joxer . . . th' whole worl's . . . in a terr . . . ible state o' . . . chassis!

CURTAIN