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SF PERUSALS

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

A Tragedy in Four Acts

by

SEAN O'CASEY

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THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

Produced at the Fortune Theatre, London, on the 12th May 1926, with the following cast of characters—

JACK CLITHEROE, a bricklayer—Commandant in the Irish Citizen Army		*David Marris*
NORA CLITHEROE, his wife	Residents in the Tenement	*Eileen Carey*
PETER FLYNN, a labourer—Nora's uncle		*J. A. O'Rourke*
THE YOUNG COVEY, a fitter—Clitheroe's cousin		*Sydney Morgan*
BESSIE BURGESS, a street fruit-vendor		*Sara Allgood*
MRS GOGAN, a charwoman		*Marie O'Neill*
MOLLSER, her consumptive child		*Joyce Chancellor*
FLUTHER GOOD, a carpenter		*Arthur Sinclair*
LIEUT. LANGON, a Civil Servant—of the Irish Volunteers		*Harry Hutchinson*
CAPT. BRENNAN, a chicken butcher—of the Irish Citizen Army		*Felix Irwin*
CORPORAL STODDART, of the Wiltshires		*Edwin Ellis*
SERGEANT TINLEY, of the Wiltshires		*Christopher Steele*
ROSIE REDMOND, a daughter of 'the Digs'		*Kathleen Drago*
A BAR-TENDER		*E. J. Kennedy*
A WOMAN		*No Woman*
THE FIGURE IN THE WINDOW		*Barney Mulligan*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

The Living-room of the Clitheroe flat in a Dublin tenement

ACT II

A Public-house, outside of which a meeting is being held

ACT III

The Street outside the Clitheroe tenement

ACT IV

The Room of Bessie Burgess

Time. Acts I and II, November 1915; Acts III and IV, Easter Week, 1916. A few days elapse between Acts III and IV

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(See also page ii)

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

ACT I

SCENE—*The Home of the Clitheroes. It consists of the front and back drawing-rooms in a fine old Georgian house, struggling for its life against the assaults of time, and the more savage assaults of the tenants. The room shown is the back drawing-room, wide, spacious and lofty. At back is the entrance to the front drawing-room. The space, originally occupied by folding doors, is now draped with casement cloth of a dark purple, decorated with a design in reddish-purple. One of the curtains is pulled aside, giving a glimpse of the front drawing-room, at the end of which can be seen the wide, lofty windows looking out into the street. The room directly in front of the audience is furnished in a way that suggests an attempt towards a finer expression of domestic life. The large fireplace on* L *is of wood, painted to look like marble (the original has been taken away by the landlord). Below the fireplace, on the wall, is a small mirror. On the mantelshelf are two candlesticks of dark carved wood. Between them is a small clock. Over the clock, on wall, is a picture of 'The Sleeping Venus'. On the right of the entrance to the front drawing-room is a copy of 'The Gleaners', on the opposite side a copy of 'The Angelus'. Underneath 'The Gleaners' is a chest of drawers on which stands a green bowl filled with scarlet dahlias and white chrysanthemums. Near to the fireplace is a couch which at night forms a double bed for Clitheroe and Nora. Near the end of the room opposite to the fireplace is a gate-legged table, covered with a cloth. On top of the table a huge cavalry sword is lying. To the* L *above the fireplace is a door which leads to a lobby from which the staircase leads to the hall. The floor is covered with a dark green linoleum. The room is dim except where it is illuminated from the glow of the fire.*

When the CURTAIN *rises,* FLUTHER GOOD *is repairing the lock of the door,* L. *A claw hammer is on a chair beside him, and he has a screw-driver in his hand. He is a man of forty years of age, rarely surrendering to thoughts of anxiety, fond of his 'oil' but determined to conquer the habit before he dies. He is square-jawed and harshly featured; under the left eye is a scar, and his nose is bent from a smashing blow received in a fistic battle long ago. He is bald, save for a few peeping tufts of reddish hair around his ears; and his upper lip is hidden by a scrubby red moustache, embroidered here and there with a grey hair. He is dressed in a seedy black suit, cotton shirt with a soft collar, and wears a very respectable little black bow. On his head is a faded jerry*

hat, which, when he is excited, he has a habit of knocking farther back on his head, in a series of taps. In an argument he usually fills with sound and fury, generally signifying a row. He is in his shirt sleeves at present, and wears a soiled white apron, from a pocket in which sticks a carpenter's two-foot rule. He has just finished the job of putting on a new lock, and, filled with satisfaction, he is opening and shutting the door, enjoying the completion of a work well done. Sitting at the fire, airing a white shirt, is PETER FLYNN. *He is a little, thin bit of a man, with a face shaped like a lozenge; on his cheeks and under his chin is a straggling wiry beard of a dirty-white and lemon hue. His face invariably wears a look of animated anguish, mixed with irritated defiance, as if everybody was at war with him, and he at war with everybody. He is cocking his head in such a way that suggests resentment at the presence of* FLUTHER, *who pays no attention to him, apparently, but is really furtively watching him.* PETER *is clad in a singlet, white whipcord knee-breeches, and is in his stockinged feet.*

A voice is heard speaking outside of the door L (*it is that of* MRS GOGAN *talking to someone*).

MRS GOGAN (*outside the door* L) Who are you lookin' for, sir? Who? Mrs Clitheroe? . . . Oh, excuse me. Oh ay, up this way. She's out, I think: I seen her goin'. Oh, you've somethin' for her. Oh, excuse me. You're from Arnott's . . . I see . . . You've a parcel for her . . . Righto . . . I'll take it . . . I'll give it to her the minute she comes in . . . It'll be quite safe . . . Oh, sign that . . . Excuse me . . . Where? . . . Here? . . . No, there; righto. Am I to put Maggie or Mrs? What is it? You dunno? Oh, excuse me.

MRS GOGAN *opens the door and comes in. She is a doleful-looking little woman of forty, with an insinuating manner and sallow complexion. She is fidgety and nervous, terribly talkative, has a habit of taking up things that may be near her and fiddling with them while she is speaking. Her heart is aflame with curiosity, and a fly could not come into nor go out of the house without her knowing. She has a draper's parcel in her hand; the knot of the twine tying it is untied.*

MRS GOGAN *crosses in front of Fluther, behind the couch, to the table* R, *where she puts the parcel, fingering it till she has the paper off, showing a cardboard box.* PETER, *more resentful of this intrusion than of Fluther's presence, gets up from the chair, and without looking around, his head carried at an angry cock, marches into the room at the back. He leaves the shirt on the back of the chair.*

(*Removing the paper and opening the cardboard box it contains*) I wondher what's this now? A hat! (*She takes out a hat, black, with decorations in red and gold*) God, she's goin' to th' divil lately for style! That hat, now, cost more than a penny. Such notions of upperosity she's getting. (*She puts the hat on her head*) Swank! (*Turning to Fluther*) Eh, Fluther, swank, what!

(FLUTHER *looks over at her, then goes on opening and shutting the door*)

FLUTHER. She's a pretty little Judy, all the same.

MRS GOGAN. Ah, she is, an' she isn't. There's prettiness an' prettiness in it. I'm always sayin' that her skirts are a little too short for a married woman. An' to see her, sometimes of an evenin', in her glad-neck gown would make a body's blood run cold. I do be ashamed of me life before her husband. An' th' way she thries to be polite, with her 'Good mornin', Mrs Gogan,' when she's goin' down, an' her 'Good evenin', Mrs Gogan,' when she's comin' up. But there's politeness an' politeness in it.

FLUTHER. They seem to get on well together, all th' same.

MRS GOGAN. Ah, they do, an' they don't. The pair o' them used to be like two turtle doves always billin' an' cooin'. You couldn't come into th' room but you'd feel, instinctive like, that they'd just been afther kissin' an' cuddlin' each other . . . It often made me shiver, for, afther all, there's kissin' an' cuddlin' in it. But I'm thinkin' he's beginnin' to take things more quietly; the mysthery of havin' a woman's a mysthery no longer . . . She dhresses herself to keep him with her, but it's no use—afther a month or two, th' wondher of a woman wears off.

(MRS GOGAN *takes off the hat, and puts it back in the box; she goes on to rearrange paper round the box, and tie it up again*)

FLUTHER. I dunno, I dunno. Not wishin' to say anything derogatory, I think it's all a question of location: when a man finds th' wondher of one woman beginnin' to die, it's usually beginnin' to live in another.

MRS GOGAN. She's always grumblin' about havin' to live in a tenement house. 'I wouldn't like to spend me last hour in one, let alone live me life in a tenement,' says she. 'Vaults,' says she, 'that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are sheltherin' th' livin'.' 'Many a good one,' says I, 'was reared in a tenement house.' Oh, you know, she's a well-up little lassie, too; able to make a shillin' go where another would have to spend a pound. She's wipin' th' eyes of th' Covey an' poor oul' Pether—everybody knows that—screwin' every penny she can out o' them, in ordher to turn th' place into a babby-house. An' she has th' life frightened out o' them; washin' their face, combin' their hair, wipin' their feet, brushin' their clothes, thrimmin' their nails, cleanin' their teeth—God Almighty, you'd think th' poor men were undhergoin' penal servitude.

FLUTHER (*with an exclamation of disgust*) A-a-ah, that's goin' beyond th' beyonds in a tenement house. That's a little bit too derogatory.

(PETER *enters from the room, back, head elevated and resentful fire in his eyes; he is still in his singlet and trousers, but is now wearing a*

pair of unlaced boots—possibly to be decent in the presence of Mrs Gogan. He comes down C *and crosses, in front of the settee, to the chair in front of the fire; he turns the shirt which he has left to air on the back of the chair, then goes, in front of the couch, to the chest of drawers, back* L, *and opens drawer after drawer, looking for something; as he fails to find it, he closes each drawer with a snap. He jerks out things neatly folded, and shoves them back into the drawers any way)*

PETER (*in anguish, snapping a drawer shut*) Well, God Almighty give me patience.

(PETER *returns, in front of the couch, to the fireplace, gives the shirt a vicious turn on the back of the chair, and goes back, in front of the couch, to the room, back,* FLUTHER *and* MRS GOGAN *watching him furtively all the time*)

MRS GOGAN (*curiously*) I wondher what is he foostherin' for now?

FLUTHER (*coming* C) He's adornin' himself for the meeting tonight. (*He pulls a handbill from one of his pockets, and reads*) 'Great Demonsthration an' Torchlight Procession around places in the City sacred to th' memory of Irish Pathriots to be concluded be a meetin', at which will be taken an oath of fealty to th' Irish Republic. Formation in Parnell Square at eight o'clock.' Well, they can hold it for Fluther. I'm up th' pole; no more dhrink for Fluther. It's three days now since I touched a dhrop, an' I feel a new man already. (*He goes back to the door* L)

MRS GOGAN. Isn't oul' Peter a funny-lookin' little man? . . . Like somethin' you'd pick off a Christmas Tree . . . When he's dhressed up in his canonicals, you'd wondher where he'd been got. God forgive me, when I see him in them, I always think he must ha' had a Mormon for a father! He an' th' Covey can't abide each other; th' pair o' them is always at it, thryin' to best each other. There'll be blood dhrawn one o' these days.

FLUTHER. How is it that Clitheroe himself, now, doesn't have anythin' to do with th' Citizen Army? A couple o' months ago, an' you'd hardly ever see him without his gun, an' th' Red Hand o' Liberty Hall in his hat.

MRS GOGAN. Just because he wasn't made a Captain of. He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspishuous. He was so cocksure o' being made one that he bought a Sam Browne belt, an' was always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him. God, I think he used to bring it to bed with him! But I'm tellin' you herself was delighted that that cock didn't crow, for she's like a clockin' hen if he leaves her sight for a minute. (*While she is talking she takes up a book from the table, looks into it in a near-sighted way, and then leaves it back. She now lifts up the sword, and proceeds to examine it*) Be th' look of it, this must ha'

been a general's sword . . . All th' gold lace an' th' fine figaries on it . . . Sure it's twiced too big for him.

(FLUTHER *crosses from the door* L *behind the couch, back of the table, where* MRS GOGAN *is examining the sword, and looks at it, standing to* L *of Mrs Gogan*)

FLUTHER (*contemptuously*) Ah, it's a baby's rattle he ought to have, an' he as he is, with thoughts tossin' in his head of what may happen to him on th' Day of Judgement.

(PETER *appears at the curtained door, back, sees Mrs Gogan with the sword, and a look of vexation comes on to his face. He comes down* C *to the table, snatches the sword out of Mrs Gogan's hands, and bangs it back on the table. He then returns into the room, back, without speaking*)

MRS GOGAN (*to Peter, as he snatches the sword*) Oh, excuse me. (*To Fluther*) Isn't he the surly oul' rascal, Fluther? (*She wanders from the table, back of the couch, to the chest of drawers, where she stops for a few moments, pulling out drawers and pushing them in again*)

FLUTHER (*leaning against the left side of the table*) Take no notice of him . . . You'd think he was dumb, but when you get his goat, or he has a few jars up, he's vice versa.

(FLUTHER *coughs.* MRS GOGAN, *who has wandered from the chest of drawers, down* L, *to the fireplace, where she is fingering Peter's shirt, turns to look at Fluther, as soon as she hears the cough*)

MRS GOGAN (*with an ominous note in her voice*) Oh, you've got a cold on you, Fluther.

FLUTHER (*carelessly*) Ah, it's only a little one.

MRS GOGAN. You'd want to be careful, all th' same. I knew a woman, a big lump of a woman, red-faced an' round-bodied, a little awkward on her feet; you'd think, to look at her, she could put out her two arms an' lift a two-storied house on th' top of her head; got a ticklin' in her throat, an' a little cough, an' th' next mornin' she had a little catchin' in her chest, an' they had just time to wet her lips with a little rum, an' off she went. (*She begins to look at and handle the shirt*)

FLUTHER (*a little nervously*) It's only a little cold I have; there's nothing derogatory wrong with me.

MRS GOGAN (*warningly*) I dunno; there's many a man this minute lowerin' a pint, thinkin' of a woman, or pickin' out a winner, or doin' work as you're doin', while th' hearse dhrawn be th' horses with the black plumes is dhrivin' up to his own hall door, an' a voice that he doesn't hear is muttherin' in his ear, 'Earth to earth, an' ashes t' ashes, an' dust to dust.'

FLUTHER (*faintly, affected by her talk*) A man in th' pink o' health should have a holy horror of allowin' thoughts o' death to be festherin' in his mind, for (*with a frightened cough*) be God, I think

I'm afther gettin' a little catch in me chest that time—it's a creepy thing to be thinkin' about.

(FLUTHER *sits weakly in the chair* L *of the table*)

MRS GOGAN. It is, an' it isn't; it's both bad an' good . . . It always gives meself a kind o' thresspassin' joy to feel meself movin' along in a mournin' coach, an' me thinkin' that, maybe, th' next funeral 'll be me own, an' glad, in a quiet way, that this is somebody else's.

FLUTHER (*very frightened*) An' a curious kind of gaspin' for breath—I hope there's nothin' derogatory wrong with me.

MRS GOGAN (*examining the shirt*) Frills on it, like a woman's petticoat.

FLUTHER (*panic-stricken*) Suddenly gettin' hot, an' then, just as suddenly, gettin' cold.

MRS GOGAN (*holding out the shirt towards Fluther*) How would you like to be wearin' this Lord Mayor's nightdhress, Fluther?

FLUTHER (*vehemently*) Blast you an' your nightshirt! Is a man fermentin' with fear to stick th' showin' off to him of a thing that looks like a shinin' shroud?

MRS GOGAN (*startled at Fluther's vehemence*) Oh, excuse me.

(PETER *appears at the curtained door, back. He sees his shirt in Mrs Gogan's hand, comes rapidly down* C, *goes in front of the couch to Mrs Gogan, snatches the shirt from her, and replaces it on the back of the chair; he returns the same way to the room, back*)

PETER (*loudly, as he goes to the room, back*) Well, God Almighty give me patience!

MRS GOGAN (*to Peter*) Oh, excuse me.

(*There is heard a cheer from the men working outside on the street, followed by the clang of tools being thrown down, then silence*)

(*Running into the back room to look out of the window*) What's the men repairin' th' streets cheerin' for?

FLUTHER (*sitting down weakly on a chair*) You can't sneeze but that oul' one wants to know th' why an' th' wherefore . . . I feel as dizzy as bedamned! I hope I didn't give up th' beer too suddenly.

(*The* COVEY *comes in by the door* L. *He is about twenty-five, tall, thin, with lines on his face that form a perpetual protest against life as he conceives it to be. Heavy seams fall from each side of his nose, down around his lips, as if they were suspenders keeping his mouth from falling. He speaks in a slow, wailing drawl; more rapidly when he is excited. He is dressed in dungarees, and is wearing a vividly red tie. He comes down* C *and flings his cap with a gesture of disgust on the table, and begins to take off his overalls*)

MRS GOGAN (*to the Covey, as she runs back into the room*) What's after happenin', Covey?

THE COVEY (*with contempt*) Th' job's stopped. They've been mobilized to march in th' demonstration tonight undher th' Plough an' th' Stars.. Didn't you hear them cheerin', th' mugs. They have to renew their political baptismal vows to be faithful in *seculo seculorum.*

FLUTHER (*sitting on the chair* L *of the table, forgetting his fear in his indignation*) There's no reason to bring religion into it. I think we ought to have as great a regard for religion as we can, so as to keep it out of as many things as possible.

THE COVEY (*pausing in the taking off of his dungarees*) Oh, you're one o' the boys that climb into religion as high as a short Mass on Sunday mornin's? I suppose you'll be singin' songs o' Sion an' songs o' Tara at th' meetin', too.

FLUTHER. We're all Irishmen, anyhow; aren't we?

THE COVEY (*with hand outstretched, and in a professorial tone*) Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's. Scientifically speakin', it's all a question of the accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms.

(PETER *comes in from the room, back, with a stiff collar in his hand, comes down* C, *crosses, in front of the couch, to the mirror on the wall* L, *below the fireplace. He stands before the mirror and tries to put on his collar.* FLUTHER *gets up from the chair, goes* C *and stands to* R *of the Covey*)

FLUTHER. Mollycewels an' atoms! d'ye think I'm goin' to listen to you thryin' to juggle Fluther's mind with complicated cunundhrums of mollycewels an' atoms?

THE COVEY (*rather loudly*) There's nothin' complicated in it. There's no fear o' th' Church tellin' you that mollycewels is a stickin' together of millions of atoms o' sodium, carbon, potassium o' iodide, etcetera, that, accordin' to th' way they're mixed, make a flower, a fish, a star that you see shinin' in th' sky, or a man with a big brain like me, or a man with a little brain like you!

FLUTHER (*more loudly still*) There's no necessity to be raisin' your voice; shoutin's no manifestin' forth of a growin' mind.

(FLUTHER *and the* COVEY *turn to look at Peter*)

PETER (*struggling with his collar*) God give me patience with this thing . . . She makes these collars as stiff with starch as a shinin' band of solid steel! She does it purposely to thry an twart me. If I can't get it on to the singlet, how in the name of God am I goin' to get it on the shirt!

(FLUTHER *and the* COVEY *face each other again*)

THE COVEY (*loudly*) There's no use o' arguin' with you; it's education you want, comrade.

FLUTHER (*sarcastically*) The Covey an' God made th' world I suppose, wha'?

THE COVEY (*jeering*) When I hear some men talkin' I'm inclined to disbelieve that the world's eight-hundhred million years old, for it's not long since th' fathers o' some o' them crawled out o' th' sheltherin' slime o' the sea.

MRS GOGAN (*from the room at back*) There, they're afther formin' fours, an' now they're goin' to march away.

FLUTHER (*scornfully taking no notice of Mrs Gogan*) Mollycewels! (*He begins to untie his apron*) What about Adam an' Eve?

THE COVEY. Well, what about them?

FLUTHER (*fiercely*) What about them, you?

THE COVEY. Adam an' Eve! Is that as far as you've got? Are you still thinkin' there was nobody in th' world before Adam an' Eve? (*Loudly*) Did you ever hear, man, of th' skeleton of th' man o' Java?

PETER (*casting the collar from him*) Blast it, blast it, blast it! (*He angrily picks up the collar he has thrown on the floor, goes up* C, *right of the couch, to the chest of drawers, and begins to hunt again in the drawers*)

FLUTHER (*to the Covey, as he viciously folds his apron*) Ah, you're not goin' to be let tap your rubbidge o' thoughts into th' mind o' Fluther.

THE COVEY. You're afraid to listen to th' truth!

FLUTHER (*pugnaciously*) Who's afraid?

THE COVEY. You are!

FLUTHER (*with great contempt*) G'way, you wurum!

THE COVEY. Who's a worum?

FLUTHER. You are, or you wouldn't talk th' way you're talkin'.

(MRS GOGAN *wanders in from the room, back, turns* L, *sees Peter at the chest of drawers, turns back, comes down* C, *goes, in front of the couch, to the fireplace*)

THE COVEY. Th' oul', ignorant savage leppin' up in you, when science shows you that th' head of your god is an empty one. Well, I hope you're enjoyin' th' blessin' o' havin' to live be th' sweat of your brow.

FLUTHER. You'll be kickin' an' yellin' for th' priest yet, me boyo. I'm not goin' to stand silent an' simple listenin' to a thick like you makin' a maddenin' mockery o' God Almighty. It 'ud be a nice derogatory thing on me conscience, an' me dyin', to look back in rememberin' shame of talkin' to a word-weavin' little ignorant yahoo of a red flat Socialist!

MRS GOGAN (*at the fireplace, turning to look at the disputants*) For God's sake, Fluther, dhrop it; there's always th' makin's of a row in the mention of religion. (*She turns her head, and looks at the*

picture of 'The Sleeping Venus', hanging over the mantelpiece. She looks at it intently and a look of astonishment comes on her face) God bless us, it's the picture of a naked woman. (*With a titter*) Look, Fluther.

(FLUTHER *looks over at the fireplace; comes slowly to the fireplace; looks steadily at the picture.* PETER, *hearing what was said, leaves the chest of drawers, and comes down, standing a little behind Fluther and Mrs Gogan, and looks at the picture. The* COVEY *looks on from* C)

FLUTHER. What's undher it? (*Reading slowly*) 'Georgina: The Sleeping Vennis.' Oh, that's a terrible picture . . . Oh, that's a shockin' picture! (*Peering into it with evident pleasure*) Oh, the one that got that taken, she must ha' been a prime lassie!

PETER (*laughing in a silly way, with head tilted back*) Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee!

FLUTHER (*indignantly, to Peter*) What are you hee, hee-in' for? (*Pointing to the picture*) That's a nice thing to be hee, hee-in' at. Where's your morality, man?

MRS GOGAN (*looking intently at it*) God forgive us, it's not right to be lookin' at it.

FLUTHER. It's nearly a derogatory thing to be in th' room where it is.

MRS GOGAN (*giggling hysterically*) I couldn't stop any longer in th' same room with three men, afther lookin' at it!

(MRS GOGAN *goes up stage* L, *and out by the door* L. *The* COVEY, *who has taken off his dungarees, seeing Peter's shirt on the chair, throws his dungarees over it with a contemptuous movement)*

PETER (*roused by the Covey's action*) Where are you throwin' your dungarees? Are you thryin' to twart an' torment me again?

THE COVEY. Who's thryin' to twart you?

(PETER *takes the dungarees from the back of the chair and flings them violently on the floor*)

PETER. You're not goin' to make me lose me temper, me young covey!

(*The* COVEY, *in retaliation, takes Peter's white shirt from the back of the chair, and flings it violently on the floor*)

THE COVEY. If you're Nora's pet aself, you're not goin' to get your own way in everything.

(*The* COVEY *moves to the back end of the table, enjoying Peter's anger*)

PETER (*plaintively, with his eyes looking up at the ceiling*) I'll say nothin' . . . I'll leave you to th' day when th' all-pitiful, all-merciful, all-lovin' God'll be handin' you to th' angels to be

rievin' an' roastin' you, tearin' an' tormentin' you, burnin' an' blastin' you!

THE COVEY. Aren't you th' little malignant oul' bastard, you lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

(PETER *rushes to the table, takes up the sword, draws it from its scabbard, and makes for the* COVEY, *who runs round the table* R, *followed by* PETER)

(*Dodging round the table, to Fluther*) Fluther, hold him there. It's a nice thing to have a lunatic, like this, lashing round with a lethal weapon!

(*The* COVEY, *after running round the table, rushes up* C, *and runs back of the couch, out of the door* L, *which he bangs to behind him in the face of Peter.* FLUTHER *remains near the fireplace, looking on*)

PETER (*hammering at the door, to the Covey, outside*) Lemme out, lemme out. Isn't it a poor thing for a man who wouldn't say a word against his greatest enemy to have to listen to that Covey's twartin' animosities, shovin' poor, patient people into a lashin' out of curses that darken his soul with th' shadow of th' wrath of th' last day!

FLUTHER. Why d'ye take notice of him? If he seen you didn't, he'd say nothin' derogatory.

PETER. I'll make him stop his laughin' an' leerin', jibin' an' jeerin' an' scarifyin' people with his corner-boy insinuations! . . . He's always thryin' to rouse me: if it's not a song, it's a whistle; if it isn't a whistle, it's a cough. But you can taunt an' taunt—I'm laughin' at you; he, hee, hee, hee, hee, heee!

THE COVEY (*jeering loudly through the keyhole*) Dear harp o' me counthry, in darkness I found thee,
The dark chain of silence had hung o'er thee long——

PETER (*frantically to Fluther*) Jasus, d'ye hear that? D'ye hear him soundin' forth his divil-souled song o' provocation? (*Battering at the door* L) When I get out I'll do for you, I'll do for you, I'll do for you!

THE COVEY (*through the keyhole*) Cuckoo-oo!

(NORA *enters by the door* L. *She is a young woman of twenty-three, alert, swift, full of nervous energy, and a little anxious to get on in the world. The firm lines of her face are considerably opposed by a soft, amorous mouth, and gentle eyes. When her firmness fails her, she persuades with her feminine charm. She is dressed in a tailor-made costume, and wears around her neck a silver fox fur*)

NORA (*running in and pushing Peter away from the door*) Oh, can I not turn me back but th' two o' yous are at it like a pair o' fightin'-cocks! Uncle Peter . . . Uncle Peter . . . *Uncle Peter!*

PETER (*vociferously*) Oh, Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter be damned! D'ye think I'm goin' to give a free pass to th' young Covey to

turn me whole life into a Holy Manual o' penances an' martyrdoms?

THE COVEY (*angrily rushing into the room*) If you won't exercise some sort o' conthrol over that Uncle Peter o' yours, there'll be a funeral, an' it won't be me that'll be in th' hearse!

NORA (C *back, between Peter and the Covey, to the Covey*) Are yous always goin' to be tearin' down th' little bit of respectability that a body's thryin' to build up? Am I always goin' to be havin' to nurse yous into th' hardy habit o' thryin' to keep up a little bit of appearance?

THE COVEY. Why weren't you here to see th' way he run at me with th' sword?

PETER. What did you call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine for?

NORA. If th' two o' yous don't thry to make a generous alther-ation in your goin's on, an' keep on thryin' t' inaugurate th' customs o' th' rest o' th' house into this place, yous can flit into other lodgin's where your bowsey battlin' 'ill meet, maybe, with an encore.

(*The* COVEY *comes down, back of the couch to the fire, and sits down in the chair where Peter's shirt had hung; he takes a book from a pocket and begins to read*)

PETER (*to Nora*) Would you like to be called a lemon-whiskered oul' swine?

(NORA *takes the sword from Peter, goes to the table, puts it back in the scabbard, goes to the chest of drawers, back* L, *and leaves it on the chest of drawers*)

NORA (*to Peter*) If you attempt to wag that sword of yours at anybody again, it'll have to be taken off you, an' put in a safe place away from babies that don't know the danger of them things.

(NORA *goes across back, taking off her hat and coat; which she leaves.* PETER *comes down* C, *takes up the shirt from the floor, and goes back* C *towards the room, back*)

PETER (*at the entrance to the room, back*) Well, I'm not goin' to let anybody call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

(PETER *goes into the room, back.* FLUTHER *moves from the fireplace,* L *of the couch, to the door* L, *which he begins to open and shut, trying the movement*)

FLUTHER (*half to himself, half to Nora*) Openin' an' shuttin' now with a well-mannered motion, like a door of a select bar in a high-class pub.

(NORA *takes up the hat and coat from the table, carries them into the room, back, leaves them there, comes out, goes to the dresser, above the table* R, *and puts a few tea things on the table*)

NORA (*to the Covey, as she lays the table for tea*) An', once for all, Willie, you'll have to thry to deliver yourself from th' desire to practice o' provokin' oul' Pether into a wild forgetfulness of what's proper an' allowable in a respectable home.

THE COVEY. Well, let him mind his own business, then. Yesther-day, I caught him hee-hee-in' out of him an' he readin' bits out of Jenersky's *Thesis on th' Origin, Development an' Consolidation of th' Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat.*

NORA. Now, let it end at that, for God's sake; Jack'll be in any minute, an' I'm not goin' to have th' quiet of his evenin' tossed about in an everlastin' uproar between you an' Uncle Pether. (*She crosses back to Fluther* L, *and stands on his* R. *To Fluther*) Well, did you manage to settle the lock yet, Mr Good?

FLUTHER (*opening and shutting the door*) It's betther than a new one, now, Mrs Clitheroe; it's almost ready to open and shut of its own accord.

NORA (*giving him a coin*) You're a whole man. How many pints will that get you?

FLUTHER (*seriously*) Ne'er a one at all, Mrs Clitheroe, for Fluther's on th' wather waggon now. You could stan' where you're stannin' chantin', 'Have a glass o' malt, Fluther; Fluther, have a glass o' malt,' till th' bells would be ringin' th' ould year out an' th' New Year in, an' you'd have as much chance o' movin' Fluther as a tune on a tin whistle would move a deaf man an' he dead.

(*As* NORA *is opening and shutting the door,* MRS BESSIE BURGESS *appears at it. She is a woman of forty, vigorously built. Her face is a dogged one, hardened by toil, and a little coarsened by drink. She looks scornfully and viciously at Nora for a few moments before she speaks*)

BESSIE. Puttin' a new lock on her door . . . afraid her poor neighbours ud break through an' steal . . . (*In a loud tone*) Maybe, now, they're a damn sight more honest than your ladyship . . . checkin' th' children playin' on th' stairs . . . gettin' on th' nerves of your ladyship . . . Complainin' about Bessie Burgess singin' her hymns at night, when she has a few up . . . (*She comes in half-way on the threshold, and screams*) Bessie Burgess 'll sing whenever she damn well likes!

(NORA *tries to shut the door, but* BESSIE *violently shoves it in, and, gripping Nora by the shoulders, shakes her*)

(*Violently*) You little over-dhressed throllope, you, for one pin, I'd paste th' white face o' you!

NORA (*frightened*) Fluther, Fluther!

FLUTHER (*breaking the hold of Bessie from Nora*) Now, now, Bessie, Bessie, leave poor Mrs Clitheroe alone; she'd do no one any harm, an' minds no one's business but her own.

BESSIE. Why is she always thryin' to speak proud things, an' lookin' like a mighty one in th' congregation o' th' people!

(*The* COVEY *looks up from his book, watches the encounter, but does not leave his seat by the fire.*

NORA *sinks down on the back of the couch.* JACK CLITHEROE *enters by the door,* L. *He is a tall, well-made fellow of twenty-five. His face has none of the strength of Nora's. It is a face in which is the desire for authority, without the power to attain it*)

CLITHEROE (*excitedly*) What's up? what's afther happenin'?

FLUTHER. Nothin', Jack. Nothin'. It's all over now. Come on, Bessie, come on.

CLITHEROE (*coming to the couch and bending over Nora; anxiously*) What's wrong, Nora? Did she say anything to you?

NORA (*agitatedly*) She was bargin' out of her, an' I only told her to go up ower that to her own place; an' before I knew where I was, she flew at me, like a tiger, an' tried to guzzle me.

(CLITHEROE *goes close to Bessie, standing in front of the chest of drawers, and takes hold of her arm to get her away*)

CLITHEROE. Get up to your own place, Mrs Burgess, and don't you be interferin' with my wife, or it'll be th' worse for you . . . Go on, go on!

BESSIE (*as Clitheroe is pushing her out*) Mind who you're pushin', now . . . I attend me place of worship, anyhow . . . Not like some of them that go neither church, chapel or meetin' house . . . If me son was home from the threnches, he'd see me righted.

(FLUTHER *takes* BESSIE *by the arm, and brings her out by the door* L. CLITHEROE *closes the door behind them, returns to Nora, and puts his arm around her. The* COVEY *resumes his reading*)

CLITHEROE (*his arm around her*) There, don't mind that old bitch, Nora, darling; I'll soon put a stop to her interferin'.

NORA. Some day or another, when I'm here be meself, she'll come in an' do somethin' desperate.

CLITHEROE (*kissing her*) Oh, sorra fear of her doin' anythin' desperate. I'll talk to her tomorrow when she's sober. A tast o' me mind that'll shock her into the sensibility of behavin' herself!

(NORA *gets up, crosses to the dresser* R, *and finishes laying the table for tea. She catches sight of the dungarees on the floor and speaks indignantly to the Covey.* CLITHEROE *leaves his hat on the chest of drawers, and sits, waiting for tea, on the couch*)

NORA (*to the Covey*) Willie, is that the place for your dungarees?

THE COVEY (*irritably rising, and taking them from the floor*) Ah, they won't do the floor any harm, will they? (*He carries them up* C, *into the room, back, comes back again, down* C, *and sits by the fire*)

(NORA *crosses from the table to the fire, gets the teapot from the hob, and returns to the table*)

NORA (*to Clitheroe and the Covey*) Tea's ready.

(CLITHEROE *and the* COVEY *go to the table and sit down* L *of same, the* COVEY *nearest the audience.* NORA *sits down on* R *of the table, leaving the chair for Peter below, on the same side*)

(*Calling towards the room, back*) Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter, tea's ready!

(PETER *comes in from the room, back. He is in the full dress of the Irish National Foresters: bright green, gold-braided coat, white breeches, black top boots and frilled, white shirt. He carries a large black slouch hat, from which waves a long white ostrich plume, in his hand. He puts the hat on the chest of drawers beside the sword, comes down* C, *goes round the front end of the table, and sits on the vacant seat facing the Covey on the opposite side of the table. They eat for a few moments in silence, the* COVEY *furtively watching Peter with scorn in his eyes;* PETER *knows this, and is fidgety*)

THE COVEY (*provokingly*) Another cut o' bread, Uncle Peter?

(PETER *maintains a dignified silence*)

CLITHEROE. It's sure to be a great meetin' tonight. We ought to go, Nora.

NORA (*decisively*) I won't go, Jack; you can go if you wish.

(*There is a pause*)

THE COVEY (*with great politeness, to Peter*) D'ye want th' sugar, Uncle Peter?

PETER (*explosively*) Now, are you goin' to start your thryin' an' your twartin' again?

NORA. Now, Uncle Peter, you mustn't be so touchy; Willie has only assed you if you wanted th' sugar.

PETER (*angrily*) He doesn't care a damn whether I want th' sugar or no. He's only thryin' to twart me!

NORA (*angrily, to the Covey*) Can't you let him alone, Willie? If he wants the sugar, let him stretch his hand out an' get it himself!

THE COVEY (*to Peter*) Now, if you want the sugar, you can stretch out your hand and get it yourself!

(*There is a pause*)

CLITHEROE. Tonight is th' first chance that Brennan has got of showing himself off since they made a Captain of him—why, God only knows. It'll be a treat to see him swankin' it at th' head of the Citizen Army carryin' th' flag of the Plough an' th' Stars . . . (*Looking roguishly at Nora*) He was sweet on you, once, Nora?

NORA. He may have been . . . I never liked him. I always thought he was a bit of a thick.

THE COVEY. They're bringin' nice disgrace on that banner now.

CLITHEROE (*to Covey, remonstratively*) How are they bringin' disgrace on it?

THE COVEY (*snappily*) Because it's a Labour flag, an' was never meant for politics . . . What does th' design of th' field plough, bearin' on it th' stars of th' heavenly plough, mean, if it's not Communism? It's a flag that should only be used when we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic!

PETER (*with a puff of derision*) P-phuh.

THE COVEY (*angrily, to Peter*) What are you phuhin' out o' you for? Your mind is th' mind of a mummy. (*Rising*) I betther go an' get a good place to have a look at Ireland's warriors passin' by.

(*The* COVEY *goes into the room* L, *and returns with his cap*)

NORA (*to the Covey*) Oh, Willie, brush your clothes before you go.

THE COVEY (*carelessly*) Oh, they'll do well enough.

NORA. Go an' brush them; th' brush is in th' drawer there.

(*The* COVEY *goes to the drawer, muttering, gets the brush, and starts to brush his clothes*)

THE COVEY (*reciting at Peter, as he does so*)

Oh, where's th' slave so lowly,
Condemn'd to chains unholy,
Who, could he burst his bonds at first,
Would pine beneath them slowly?

We tread th' land that . . . bore us,
Th' green flag glitters . . . o'er us,
Th' friends we've tried are by our side,
An' th' foe we hate . . . before us!

PETER (*leaping to his feet in a whirl of rage*) Now, I'm tellin' you, me young Covey, once for all, that I'll not stick any longer these tittherin' taunts of yours, rovin' around to sing your slights an' slandhers, reddenin' th' mind of a man to th' thinkin' an' sayin' of things that sicken his soul with sin! (*Hysterically; lifting up a cup to fling at the Covey*) Be God, I'll——

CLITHEROE (*catching his arm*) Now then, none o' that, none o' that!

NORA (*loudly*) Uncle Pether, Uncle Pether, *Uncle Pether!*

THE COVEY (*at the door* L, *about to go out*) Isn't that th' malignant oul' varmint! Lookin' like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate child of a corporal in th' Mexican army!

(*The* COVEY *goes out by the door* L)

PETER (*plaintively*) He's afther leavin' me now in such a state of agitation that I won't be able to do meself justice when I'm marchin' to th' meetin'.

(NORA *jumps up from the table, crosses the back end of table to the chest of drawers, back, and takes up Peter's sword*)

NORA. Oh, for God's sake, here, buckle your sword on, an' go to your meetin', so that we'll have at least one hour of peace.

(PETER *gets up from the chair, goes over to* NORA, *and she helps him to put on his sword*)

CLITHEROE. For God's sake, hurry him up out o' this, Nora.

PETER. Are yous all goin' to thry to start to twart me now?

NORA (*putting on his plumed hat*) S-s-sh. Now, your hat's on, your house is thatched; off you pop! (*She gently pushes him from her, towards the door* L)

PETER (*going and turning as he reaches the door* L) Now, if that young Covey——

NORA. Go on, go on.

(PETER *goes out by the door* L.

CLITHEROE *goes from the table to the couch and sits down on the end nearest the fire, lights a cigarette, and looks thoughtfully into the fire.* NORA *takes things from the table, and puts them on the dresser. She goes into the room, back, and comes back with a lighted shaded lamp, which she puts on the table. She then goes on tidying things on the dresser*)

(*Softly speaking over from the dresser, to Clitheroe*) A penny for them, Jack.

CLITHEROE. Me? Oh, I was thinkin' of nothing.

NORA. You were thinkin' of th' . . . meetin' . . . Jack. When we were courtin' an' I wanted you to go, you'd say, 'Oh, to hell with meetin's,' an' that you felt lonely in cheerin' crowds when I was absent. An' we weren't a month married when you began that you couldn't keep away from them.

CLITHEROE (*crossly*) Oh, that's enough about th' meetin'. It looks as if you wanted me to go th' way you're talkin'. You were always at me to give up the Citizen Army, an' I gave it up: surely that ought to satisfy you.

NORA (*from dresser*) Aye, you gave it up, because you got the sulks when they didn't make a captain of you. (*She crosses over to Clitheroe, and sits on the couch to his* R. *Softly*) It wasn't for my sake, Jack.

CLITHEROE. For your sake or no, you're benefitin' by it, aren't you? I didn't forget this was your birthday, did I? (*He puts his arms around her*) And you liked your new hat; didn't you, didn't you? (*He kisses her rapidly several times*)

NORA (*panting*) Jack, Jack; please, Jack! I thought you were tired of that sort of thing long ago.

CLITHEROE. Well, you're finding out now that I amn't tired of it yet, anyhow. Mrs Clitheroe doesn't want to be kissed, sure she doesn't? (*He kisses her again*) Little, little red-lipped Nora!

NORA (*coquettishly removing his arm from around her*) Oh, yes, your little, little red-lipped Nora's a sweet little girl when th' fit seizes you; but your little, little red-lipped Nora has to clean your boots every mornin', all the same.

CLITHEROE (*with a movement of irritation*) Oh, well, if we're goin' to be snotty!

(*There is a pause*)

NORA. It's lookin' like as if it was you that was goin' to be . . . snotty! Bridlin' up with bittherness, th' minute a body attempts t'open her mouth.

CLITHEROE. Is it any wondher, turnin' a tendher sayin' into a meanin' o' malice an' spite!

NORA. It's hard for a body to be always keepin' her mind bent on makin' thoughts that'll be no longer than th' length of your own satisfaction.

(*There is a pause*)

(*Standing up*) If we're goin' to dhribble th' time away sittin' here like a pair o' cranky mummies, I'd be as well sewin' or doin' something about th' place. (*She looks appealingly at him for a few moments; he doesn't speak. She swiftly sits down beside him, and puts her arm around his neck. Imploringly*) Ah, Jack, don't be so cross!

CLITHEROE (*doggedly*) Cross? I'm not cross; I'm not a bit cross. It was yourself started it.

NORA (*coaxingly*) I didn't mean to say anything out o' th' way. You take a body up too quickly, Jack. (*In an ordinary tone as if nothing of an angry nature had been said*) You didn't offer me me evenin' allowance yet.

(CLITHEROE *silently takes out a cigarette for her and himself and lights both*)

(*Trying to make conversation*) How quiet th' house is now; they must be all out.

CLITHEROE (*rather shortly*) I suppose so.

NORA (*rising from the seat*) I'm longin' to show you me new hat, to see what you think of it. Would you like to see it?

CLITHEROE. Ah, I don't mind.

(NORA *hesitates a moment, then goes up* C *to the chest of drawers, takes the hat out of the box, comes down* C, *stands front of the couch, looks into the mirror on the wall below the fireplace, and fixes the hat on her head. She then turns to face Clitheroe*)

NORA. Well, how does Mr Clitheroe like me new hat?

CLITHEROE. It suits you, Nora, it does right enough. (*He stands up, puts his hand beneath her chin, and tilts her head up*)

(NORA *looks at him roguishly. He bends down and kisses her*)

NORA. Here, sit down, an' don't let me hear another cross word out of you for th' rest o' the night.

(*The two sit on the couch again,* CLITHEROE *nearest the fire*)

CLITHEROE (*his arms round Nora*) Little red-lipped Nora.

NORA (*with a coaxing movement of her body towards him*) Jack!

CLITHEROE (*tightening his arms around her*) Well?

NORA. You haven't sung me a song since our honeymoon. Sing me one now, do . . . please, Jack!

CLITHEROE. What song? *Since Maggie Went Away?*

NORA. Ah, no, Jack, not that; it's too sad. *When You said You Loved Me.*

(*Clearing his throat,* CLITHEROE *thinks for a moment, and then begins to sing.* NORA, *putting an arm around him, nestles her head on his breast and listens delightedly*)

CLITHEROE (*singing the verses following to the air of 'When You and I were Young, Maggie'*)

Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora,
Displaying their charm to th' bee,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th' glade, Nora,
A robin sang loud from a tree,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' golden-rob'd daffodils shone, Nora,
An' danc'd in th' breeze on th' lea;
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' trees, birds an' bees sang a song, Nora,
Of happier transports to be,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

(NORA *kisses him.*

A knock is heard at the door, R; *a pause as they listen.* NORA *clings closely to Clitheroe. Another knock, more imperative than the first*)

I wonder who can that be, now?

NORA (*a little nervous*) Take no notice of it, Jack; they'll go away in a minute.

(*Another knock is heard, followed by the voice of* CAPTAIN BRENNAN)

THE VOICE OF CAPT. BRENNAN. Commandant Clitheroe, Commandant Clitheroe, are you there? A message from General Jim Connolly.

CLITHEROE (*taking her arms from round him*) Damn it, it's Captain Brennan.

NORA (*anxiously*) Don't mind him, don't mind, Jack. Don't break our happiness . . . Pretend we're not in . . . Let us forget everything tonight but our two selves!

CLITHEROE (*reassuringly*) Don't be alarmed, darling; I'll just see what he wants, an' send him about his business.

NORA (*tremulously; putting her arms around him*) No, no. Please, Jack; don't open it. Please, for your own little Nora's sake!

CLITHEROE (*taking her arms away and rising to open the door*) Now don't be silly, Nora.

(CLITHEROE *opens the door, and admits a young man in the full uniform of the Irish Citizen Army—green suit; slouch green hat caught up at one side by a small Red Hand badge; Sam Browne belt, with a revolver in the holster. He carries a letter in his hand. When he comes in he smartly salutes Clitheroe. The young man is* CAPTAIN BRENNAN. *He stands in front of the chest of drawers*)

CAPT. BRENNAN (*giving the letter to Clitheroe*) A dispatch from General Connolly.

CLITHEROE (*reading. While he is doing so,* BRENNAN'S *eyes are fixed on* NORA, *who droops as she sits on the lounge*) 'Commandant Clitheroe is to take command of the eighth battalion of the I.C.A. which will assemble to proceed to the meeting at nine o'clock. He is to see that all units are provided with full equipment: two days' rations and fifty rounds of ammunition. At two o'clock a.m. the army will leave Liberty Hall for a reconnaissance attack on Dublin Castle.—Com.-Gen. Connolly.' (*In surprise, to Capt. Brennan*) I don't understand this. Why does General Connolly call me Commandant?

CAPT. BRENNAN. Th' Staff appointed you Commandant, and th' General agreed with their selection.

CLITHEROE. When did this happen?

CAPT. BRENNAN. A fortnight ago.

CLITHEROE. How is it word was never sent to me?

CAPT. BRENNAN. Word was sent to you . . . I meself brought it.

CLITHEROE. Who did you give it to, then?

CAPT. BRENNAN (*after a pause*) I think I gave it to Mrs Clitheroe, there.

CLITHEROE. Nora, d'ye hear that?

(NORA *makes no answer*)

(*Standing* C; *there is a note of hardness in his voice*) Nora . . . Captain Brennan says he brought a letter to me from General Connolly, and that he gave it to you . . . Where is it? What did you do with it?

(CAPT. BRENNAN *stands in front of the chest of drawers, and softly whistles 'The Soldiers' Song'*)

NORA (*running over to him, and pleadingly putting her arms around him*) Jack, please Jack, don't go out tonight an' I'll tell you; I'll explain everything . . . Send him away, an' stay with your own little red-lipp'd Nora.

CLITHEROE (*removing her arms from around him*) None o' this nonsense, now; I want to know what you did with th' letter?

(NORA *goes slowly to the couch and sits down again*)

(*Angrily*) Why didn't you give me th' letter? What did you do with it? . . . (*He goes over and shakes her by the shoulder*) What did you do with th' letter?

NORA (*flaming up and standing on her feet*) I burned it, I burned it! That's what I did with it! Is General Connolly an' th' Citizen Army goin' to be your only care? Is your home goin' to be only a place to rest in? Am I goin' to be only somethin' to provide merry-makin' at night for you? Your vanity 'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet . . . That's what's movin' you: because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin', while your little red-lipp'd Nora can go on sittin' here, makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night!

CLITHEROE (*fiercely*) You burned it, did you? (*He grips her arm*) Well, me good lady——

NORA. Let go—you're hurtin' me!

CLITHEROE. You deserve to be hurt . . . Any letther that comes to me for th' future, take care that I get it . . . D'ye hear—take care that I get it!

(CLITHEROE *lets* NORA *go, and she sinks down, crying on the couch. He goes to the chest of drawers and takes out a Sam Browne belt, which he puts on, and then puts a revolver in the holster. He puts on his hat, and looks towards Nora*)

(*At the door* L, *about to go out*) You needn't wait up for me; if I'm in at all, it won't be before six in th' morning.

NORA (*bitterly*) I don't care if you never come back!

CLITHEROE (*to Capt. Brennan*) Come along, Ned.

(*They go out; there is a pause.* NORA *pulls the new hat from her head and with a bitter movement flings it to the other end of the room.*

There is a gentle knock at the door L, *which opens, and* MOLLSER *comes into the room. She is about fifteen, but looks to be only about ten, for the ravages of consumption have shrivelled her up. She is pitifully worn, walks feebly, and frequently coughs. She goes over and sits down* L *of Nora*)

MOLLSER (*to Nora*) Mother's gone to th' meetin', an' I was feelin' terrible lonely, so I come down to see if you'd let me sit with you, thinkin' you mightn't be goin' yourself . . . I do be terrible afraid I'll die sometime when I'm be meself . . . I often envy you, Mrs Clitheroe, seein' th' health you have, an' th' lovely place you have here, an'. wondherin' if I'll ever be sthrong enough to be keepin' a home together for a man.

(*The faint sound of a band playing is heard in the distance outside in the street*)

Oh, this must be some more of the Dublin Fusiliers flyin' off to the front.

(*The band, passing in the street outside, is now heard loudly playing as they pass the house. It is the music of a brass band playing a regiment to the boat on the way to the front. The tune that is being played is 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary'; as the band comes to the chorus, the regiment is swinging into the street by Nora's house, and the voices of the soldiers can be heard lustily singing the chorus of the song*)

It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go;
It's a long way to Tipperary, to th' sweetest girl I know!
Good-bye Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square.
It's a long way to Tipperary, but my heart's right there!

(NORA *and* MOLLSER *remain silently listening. As the chorus ends, and the music is faint in the distance again,* BESSIE BURGESS *appears at the door* L, *which Mollser has left open*)

BESSIE (*speaking in towards the room*) There's th' men marchin' out into th' dhread dimness o' danger, while th' lice is crawlin' about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But yous'll not escape from th' arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day . . . An' ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scatthered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness!

(BESSIE *goes away;* NORA *steals over and quietly shuts the door. She comes back to the lounge and wearily throws herself on it beside Mollser*)

MOLLSER (*after a pause and a cough*) Is there anybody goin', Mrs Clitheroe, with a titther o' sense?

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE—*A public-house at the corner of the street in which the meeting is being addressed from Platform No. 1. One end of the house is visible to the audience. Part of the counter at the back,* L, *extending out towards* L, *occupies one-third of the width of the scene from* R *to* L. *On the counter are glasses, beer-pulls, and a carafe filled with water. Behind the counter, on the back wall, are shelves containing bottles of wine, whiskey and beer. At back* C *is a wide, high, plate-glass window. Under the window is a seat to hold three or four persons seated.* L *are the wide swing-doors. At the wall,* R, *is a seat to hold two persons. There are a few gaudy coloured show-cards on the walls.*

(See the Ground Plan)

A band is heard outside playing 'The Soldiers' Song', before the CURTAIN *rises, and for a few moments afterwards, accompanied by the sounds of marching men.*

The BARMAN *is seen wiping the part of the counter which is in view.* ROSIE REDMOND *is standing at the counter toying with what remains of a half of whiskey in a wine-glass. She is a sturdy, well-shaped girl of twenty; pretty and pert in manner. She is wearing a cream blouse, with an obviously suggestive glad neck; a grey tweed dress, brown stockings and shoes. The blouse and most of the dress are hidden by a black shawl. She has no hat, and in her hair is jauntily set a cheap, glittering, jewelled ornament. It is an hour later.*

BARMAN (*wiping the counter*) Nothin' much doin' in your line tonight, Rosie?

ROSIE. Curse o' God on th' haporth, hardly, Tom. There isn't much notice taken of a pretty petticoat of a night like this . . . They're all in a holy mood. Th' solemn-lookin' dials on th' whole o' them an' they marchin' to th' meetin'. You'd think they were th' glorious company of th' saints, an' th' noble army of martyrs thrampin' through th' sthreets of Paradise. They're all thinkin' of higher things than a girl's garthers . . . It's a tremendous meetin'; four platforms they have—there's one o' them just outside opposite th' window.

BARMAN. Oh, ay; sure when th' speaker comes (*motioning with his hand*) to th' near end, here, you can see him plain, an' hear nearly everythin' he's spoutin' out of him.

ROSIE. It's no joke thryin' to make up fifty-five shillin's a week for your keep an' laundhry, an' then taxin' you a quid for your own room if you bring home a friend for th' night . . . If I could only put by a couple of quid for a swankier outfit, everythin' in th' garden ud look lovely——

(In the window, back, appears the figure of a tall man, who, standing on a platform, is addressing a crowd outside. The figure is almost like a silhouette. The BARMAN *comes to the* L *end of the counter to listen, and* ROSIE *moves* C *to see and listen too)*

BARMAN *(to Rosie)* Whisht, till we hear what he's sayin'.

THE VOICE OF THE MAN. It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms . . . Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood . . . There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!

(The figure, moving towards L, *passes the window, and is lost to sight and hearing. The* BARMAN *goes back to wiping of the counter.* ROSIE *remains looking out of the window)*

ROSIE. It's th' sacred thruth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'.

BARMAN. If I was only a little younger, I'd be plungin' mad into th' middle of it!

ROSIE *(who is still looking out of the window)* Oh, here's th' two gems runnin' over again for their oil!

(The doors L *swing open, and* FLUTHER *and* PETER *enter tumultuously. They are hot and hasty with the things they have seen and heard. They hurry across to the counter,* PETER *leading the way.* ROSIE, *after looking at them listlessly for a moment, retires to the seat under the window, sits down, takes a cigarette from her pocket, lights it and smokes)*

PETER *(splutteringly to the Barman)* Two halves . . . *(To Fluther)* A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Loch Erinn dhry!

FLUTHER. You couldn't feel anyway else at a time like this when th' spirit of a man is pulsin' to be out fightin' for th' thruth with his feet thremblin' on th' way, maybe to th' gallows, an' his ears tinglin' with th' faint, far-away sound of burstin' rifle-shots that'll maybe whip th' last little shock o' life out of him that's left lingerin' in his body!

PETER. I felt a burnin' lump in me throat when I heard th' band playin' *The Soldiers' Song,* rememberin' last hearin' it marchin' in military formation, with th' people starin' on both sides at us, carryin' with us th' pride an' resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone.

FLUTHER. Get th' Dublin men goin' an' they'll go on full force for anything that's thryin' to bar them away from what they're wantin', where th' slim thinkin' counthry boyo ud limp away from th' first faintest touch of compromization!

PETER (*hurriedly to the Barman*) Two more, Tom! . . . (*To Fluther*) Th' memory of all th' things that was done, an' all th' things that was suffered be th' people, was boomin' in me brain . . . Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do somethin' desperate!

FLUTHER. Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches pattherin' on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn; every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, 'You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dhreams of th' past leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a titther o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now!' Looka here. (*He stretches out his arm under Peter's face and rolls up his sleeve*) The blood was *boilin'* in me veins!

(*The silhouette of the tall figure again moves into the frame of the window, speaking to the people*)

PETER (*unaware, in his enthusiasm, of the speaker's appearance; to Fluther*) I was burnin' to dhraw me sword, an' wave it over me——

FLUTHER (*overwhelming Peter*) Will you stop your blatherin' for a minute, man, an' let us hear what he's sayin'!

(*The* BARMAN *comes to the* L *end of the counter to look at the figure in the window:* ROSIE *rises from the seat, stands and looks.* FLUTHER *and* PETER *move towards* C *to see and listen*)

THE VOICE OF THE MAN. Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields . . . Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!

(*The figure moves out of sight and hearing.*

FLUTHER *runs back to the counter and gulps down the drink remaining in his glass;* PETER *does the same, less rapidly; the* BARMAN *leaves the end of the counter;* ROSIE *sits on the seat again*)

FLUTHER (*finishing his drink; to Peter*) Come on, man; this is too good to be missed!

(FLUTHER *rushes across the stage and out by the doors* L. PETER *wipes his mouth and hurries after Fluther. The doors swing open, and the* COVEY *enters. He collides with* PETER C. PETER *stiffens his body, like a cock, and, with a look of hatred on his face, marches stiffly out by the doors* L. *The* COVEY *looks scornfully after Peter, and then crosses to the counter.* ROSIE *sees possibilities in the Covey, gets up and comes to the counter, a little to the* L *of the Covey*)

THE COVEY (*to the Barman*) Give us a glass o' malt, for God's sake, till I stimulate meself from the shock of seeing the sight that's afther goin' out.

ROSIE (*slyly, to the Barman*) Another one for me, Tommy; the young gentleman's ordherin' it in the corner of his eye.

(*The* BARMAN *gets a drink for the Covey, leaves it on the counter;* ROSIE *whips it up. The* BARMAN *catches Rosie's arm, and takes the glass from her, putting it down beside the Covey*)

BARMAN (*taking the glass from Rosie*) Eh, houl' on there, houl' on there Rosie.

ROSIE (*angrily, to the Barman*) What are you houldin' on out o' you for? Didn't you hear th' young gentleman say that he couldn't refuse anything to a nice little bird? (*To the Covey*) Isn't that right, Jiggs?

(*The* COVEY *says nothing*)

Didn't I know, Tommy, it would be all right? It takes Rosie to size a young man up, an' tell th' thoughts that are thremblin' in his mind. Isn't that right, Jiggs?

(*The* COVEY *stirs uneasily, moves a little farther away, and pulls his cap over his eyes*)

(*Moving after him*) Great meetin' that's gettin' held outside. Well, it's up to us all, anyway, to fight for our freedom.

THE COVEY (*to the Barman*) Two more, please. (*To Rosie*) Freedom! What's th' use o' freedom, if it's not economic freedom?

ROSIE (*emphasizing with extended arm and moving finger*) I used them very words just before you come in. 'A lot o' thricksters,' says I, 'that wouldn't know what freedom was if they got it from their mother' . . . (*To the Barman*) Didn't I, Tommy?

BARMAN. I disremember.

ROSIE (*to the Barman*) No, you don't disremember. Remember you said, yourself, it was all 'only a flash in th' pan'. Well, 'flash in th' pan, or no flash in th' pan,' says I, 'they're not goin' to get Rosie Redmond,' says I, 'to fight for freedom that wouldn't be worth winnin' in a raffle!'

THE COVEY (*contemptuously*) There's only one freedom for th' workin' man: conthrol o' th' means o' production, rates of exchange an' th' means of disthribution. (*Tapping Rosie on the shoulder*) Look here, comrade, I'll leave here tomorrow night for you a copy of Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development an' Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat.*

ROSIE (*throwing off her shawl on to the counter, and showing an exemplified glad neck, which reveals a good deal of a white bosom*) If y'ass Rosie, it's heartbreakin' to see a young fella thinkin' of

anything, or admirin' anything, but silk thransparent stockin's showin' off the shape of a little lassie's legs!

(The COVEY *is frightened, and moves away from Rosie along the counter, towards* R. ROSIE *follows, gliding after him in a seductive way)*

(Following him) Out in th' park in th' shade of a warm summery evenin', with your little darlin' bridie to be, kissin' an' cuddlin' *(she tries to put her arm around his neck)*, kissin' an' cuddlin', ay?

THE COVEY *(frightened)* Ay, what are you doin'? None o' that, now; none o' that. I've something else to do besides shinanickin' afther Judies!

(The COVEY *turns to* L *and moves slowly to* L, *away from* ROSIE; *she turns with him, keeping him facing her, holding his arm. They move this way to* C)

ROSIE. Oh, little duckey, oh, shy little duckey! Never held a mot's hand, an' wouldn't know how to tittle a little Judy! *(She clips him under the chin)* Tittle him undher th' chin, tittle him undher th' chin!

THE COVEY *(breaking away and running out by the doors* L) Aye, go on, now; I don't want to have any meddlin' with a lassie like you!

ROSIE *(enraged; returning to the seat at the window)* Jasus, it's in a monasthery some of us ought to be, spendin' our holidays kneelin' on our adorers, tellin' our beads an' knockin' hell out of our buzzums!

(The voice of the COVEY *is heard outside the doors* L *calling in a scale of notes,* 'Cuckoo-ooooo.' *Then the swing-doors open, and* PETER *and* FLUTHER, *followed by* MRS GOGAN, *come in.* MRS GOGAN *carries a baby in her arms)*

PETER *(in plaintive anger, looking towards the door* L) It's terrible that young Covey can't let me pass without proddin' at me! Did you hear him murmurin' 'cuckoo' when he were passin'?

FLUTHER *(irritably; to Peter)* I wouldn't be everlastin' cockin' me ear to hear every little whisper that was floatin' around about me! It's my rule never to lose me temper till it would be dethrimental to keep it. There's nothin' derogatory in th' use o' th' word 'cuckoo', is there?

*(*MRS GOGAN, *followed by* PETER, *goes up to the seat under the window and sits down, Peter to the* R *of Mrs Gogan.* ROSIE, *after a look at those who've come in, goes out by the doors* L)

PETER *(tearfully)* It's not the word, it's the way he says it! He never says it straight out, but murmurs it with curious quiverin' ripples, like variations on a flute.

FLUTHER *(standing in front of the seat)* A' what odds if he gave it

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