

## CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS [*starting up in the wildest consternation*] But that will soil her hands. I cant bear that, Morell: it's a shame. I'll go and fill them. [*He makes for the door*].

MORELL. Youd better not. [*Marchbanks stops irresolutely*]. She'd only set you to clean my boots, to save me the trouble of doing it myself in the morning.

BURGESS [*with grave disapproval*] Dont you keep a servant now, James?

MORELL. Yes: but she isnt a slave; and the house looks as if I kept three. That means that everyone has to lend a hand. It's not a bad plan: Prossy and I can talk business after breakfast while we're washing up. Washing up's no trouble when there are two people to do it.

MARCHBANKS [*tormentedly*] Do you think every woman is as coarse-grained as Miss Garnett?

BURGESS [*emphatically*] Thats quite right, Mr Morchbanks: thats quite right. She is coarse-grained.

MORELL [*quietly and significantly*] Marchbanks!

MARCHBANKS. Yes?

MORELL. How many servants does your father keep?

MARCHBANKS [*pettishly*] Oh, I dont know. [*He moves to the sofa, as if to get as far as possible from Morell's questioning, and sits down in great agony of spirit, thinking of the paraffin*].

MORELL [*very gravely*] So many that you dont know! [*More aggressively*] When theres anything coarse-grained to be done, you just ring the bell and throw it on to somebody else, eh?

MARCHBANKS. Oh, dont torture me. You dont even ring the bell. But your wife's beautiful fingers are dabbling in paraffin oil while you sit here comfortably preaching about it: everlasting preaching! preaching! words! words! words!

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BURGESS [*intensely appreciating this retort*] Har, har! Devil a better! [*Radiantly*] Ad you there, James, straight.

*Candida comes in, well aproned, with a reading lamp trimmed, filled, and ready for lighting. She places it on the table near Morell, ready for use.*

CANDIDA [*brushing her finger tips together with a slight twitch of her nose*] If you stay with us, Eugene, I think I will hand over the lamps to you.

MARCHBANKS. I will stay on condition that you hand over all the rough work to me.

CANDIDA. Thats very gallant; but I think I should like to see how you do it first. [*Turning to Morell*] James: youve not been looking after the house properly.

MORELL. What have I done—or not done—my love?

CANDIDA [*with serious vexation*] My own particular pet scrubbing brush has been used for blackleading. [*A heart-breaking wail bursts from Marchbanks. Burgess looks round, amazed. Candida hurries to the sofa*]. Whats the matter? Are you ill, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS. No: not ill. Only horror! horror! horror! [*He bows his head on his hands*].

BURGESS [*shocked*] What! Got the orrors, Mr Morchbanks! Oh, thats bad, at your age. You must leave it off grajally.

CANDIDA [*reassured*] Nonsense, papa! It's only poetic horror, isnt it, Eugene [*petting him*]?

BURGESS [*abashed*] Oh, poetic orror is it? I beg your pordon, I'm shore. [*He turns to the fire again depreciating his hasty conclusion*].

CANDIDA. What is it, Eugene? the scrubbing brush? [*He shudders*] Well, there! never mind. [*She sits down beside him*]. Wouldnt you like to present me with a nice new one, with an ivory back inlaid with mother-of-pearl?

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MARCHBANKS [*softly and musically, but sadly and longingly*]. No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat: a tiny shallow to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot! to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and dont need to be filled with paraffin oil every day.

MORELL [*harshly*] And where there is nothing to do but to be idle, selfish and useless.

CANDIDA [*jarred*] Oh James! how could you spoil it all?

MARCHBANKS [*firing up*] Yes, to be idle, selfish, and useless: that is, to be beautiful and free and happy: hasnt every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? Thats my ideal: whats yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live to these hideous rows of houses? Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub.

CANDIDA [*quaintly*] He cleans the boots, Eugene. You will have to clean them tomorrow for saying that about him.

MARCHBANKS. Oh, dont talk about boots! Your feet should be beautiful on the mountains.

CANDIDA. My feet would not be beautiful on the Hackney Road without boots.

BURGESS [*scandalized*] Come, Candy! dont be vulgar. Mr Morchbanks aint accustomed to it. Youre givin him the orrors again. I mean the poetic ones.

*Morell is silent. Apparently he is busy with his letters: really he is puzzling with misgiving over his new and alarming experience that the surer he is of his moral thrusts, the more swiftly and effectively Eugene parries them. To find himself beginning to fear a man whom he does not respect afflicts him bitterly.*

## CANDIDA

*Miss Garnett comes in with a telegram.*

PROSERPINE [*handing the telegram to Morell*] Reply paid. The boy's waiting. [*To Candida, coming back to her machine and sitting down*] Maria is ready for you now in the kitchen, Mrs Morell [*Candida rises*]. The onions have come.

MARCHBANKS [*conclusively*] Onions!

CANDIDA. Yes, onions. Not even Spanish ones: nasty little red onions. You shall help me to slice them. Come along.

*She catches him by the wrist and runs out, pulling him after her. Burgess rises in consternation, and stands aghast on the hearth-rug, staring after them.*

BURGESS. Candy didnt oughter anidle a hearl's nevvly like that. It's goin too fur with it. Lookee ere, James: do e often git taken queer like that?

MORELL [*shortly, writing a telegram*] I dont know.

BURGESS [*sentimentally*] He talks very pretty. I awlus had a turn for a bit of poetry. Candy takes arter me that-a way. Huseter make me tell er fairy stories when she was ony a little kiddy not that igh [*indicating a stature of two feet or thereabouts*].

MORELL [*preoccupied*] Ah, indeed. [*He blots the telegram and goes out*].

PROSERPINE. Used you to make the fairy stories up out of your own head?

*Burgess, not deigning to reply, strikes an attitude of the haughtiest disdain on the hearth-rug.*

PROSERPINE [*calmly*] I should never have supposed you had it in you. By the way, I'd better warn you, since youve taken such a fancy to Mr Marchbanks. He's mad.

BURGESS. Mad! What! Im too!

PROSERPINE. Mad as a March hare. He did frighten me, I can tell you, just before you came in that time. Havent you noticed the queer things he says?

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BURGESS. So thats what the poetic orrors means. Blame me if it didnt come into my ed once or twyst that he was a bit horff is chump! [*He crosses the room to the door, lifting up his voice as he goes*]. Well, this is a pretty sort of asylum for a man to be in, with no one but you to take care of him!

PROSERPINE [*as he passes her*] Yes, what a dreadful thing it would be if anything happened to you!

BURGESS [*loftily*] Dont you haddress no remarks to me. Tell your hemployer that Ive gone into the gorden for a smoke.

PROSERPINE [*mocking*] Oh!

*Before Burgess can retort, Morell comes back.*

BURGESS [*sentimentally*] Goin for a turn in the gording to smoko, James.

MORELL [*brusquely*] Oh, all right, all right. [*Burgess goes out pathetically in the character of a weary old man. Morell stands at the table, turning over his papers, and adding, across to Properpine half humorously, half absently*] Well, Miss Prossy, why have you been calling my father-in-law names?

PROSERPINE [*blushing fiery red, and looking quickly up at him half scared, half reproachful*] I—[*she burst into tears*].

MORELL [*with tender gaiety, leaning across the table towards her, and consoling her*] Oh, come! come! come! Never mind, Pross: he is a silly old fathead, isnt he?

*With an explosive sob, she makes a dash at the door and vanishes, banging it. Morell, shaking his head resignedly, sighs, and goes wearily to his chair, where he sits down and sets to work, looking old and careworn.*

*Candida comes in. She has finished her household work and taken off the apron. She at once notices his dejected appearance, and posts herself quietly at the visitor's chair,*

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looking down at him attentively. She says nothing.

MORELL [*looking up, but with his pen raised ready to resume his work*] Well? Where is Eugene?

CANDIDA. Washing his hands in the scullery under the tap. He will make an excellent cook if he can only get over his dread of Maria.

MORELL [*shortly*] Ha! No doubt. [*He begins writing again.*]

CANDIDA [*going nearer, and putting her hand down softly on his to stop him as she says*] Come here, dear. Let me look at you. [*He drops his pen and yields himself to her disposal. She makes him rise, and brings him a little away from the table, looking at him critically all the time*]. Turn your face to the light. [*She places him facing the window*]. My boy is not looking well. Has he been overworking?

MORELL. Nothing more than usual.

CANDIDA. He looks very pale, and grey, and wrinkled, and old. [*His melancholy deepens; and she attacks it with wilful gaiety*] Here: [*pulling him towards the easy chair*] youve done enough writing for today. Leave Prossy to finish it. Come and talk to me.

MORELL. But—

CANDIDA [*insisting*] Yes, I must be talked to. [*She makes him sit down, and seats herself on the carpet beside his knee*]. Now [*patting his hand*] youre beginning to look better already. Why must you go out every night lecturing and talking? I hardly have one evening a week with you. Of course what you say is all very true; but it does no good: they dont mind what you say to them one little bit. They think they agree with you; but whats the use of their agreeing with you if they go and do just the opposite of what you tell them the moment your back is turned? Look at our congregation at St Dominic's! Why do they come

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to hear you talking about Christianity every Sunday? Why, just because theyve been so full of business and money-making for six days that they want to forget all about it and have a rest on the seventh ; so that they can go back fresh and make money harder than ever ! You positively help them at it instead of hindering them.

MORELL [*with energetic seriousness*] You know very well, Candida, that I often blow them up soundly for that. And if there is nothing in their churchgoing but rest and diversion, why dont they try something more amusing ? more self-indulgent? There must be some good in the fact that they prefer St Dominic's to worse places on Sundays.

CANDIDA. Oh, the worse places arnt open ; and even if they were, they darent be seen going to them. Besides, James dear, you preach so splendidly that it's as good as a play for them. Why do you think the women are so enthusiastic ?

MORELL [*shocked*] Candida !

CANDIDA. Oh, *I* know. You silly boy : you think it's your Socialism and your religion ; but if it were that, theyd do what you tell them instead of only coming to look at you. They all have Prossy's complaint.

MORELL. Prossy's complaint! What do you mean, Candida?

CANDIDA. Yes, Prossy, and all the other secretaries you ever had. Why does Prossy condescend to wash up the things, and to peel potatoes and abase herself in all manner of ways for six shillings a week less than she used to get in a city office? She's in love with you, James : thats the reason. Theyre all in love with you. And you are in love with preaching because you do it so beautifully. And you think it's all enthusiasm for the kingdom of Heaven on earth ; and so do they. You dear silly !

MORELL. Candida : what dreadful ! what soul-destroying cynicism ! Are you jesting? Or—can it be?—are you jealous?

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CANDIDA [*with curious thoughtfulness*] Yes, I feel a little jealous sometimes.

MORELL [*incredulously*] Of Prossy ?

CANDIDA [*laughing*] No, no, no, no. Not jealous of anybody. Jealous for somebody else, who is not loved as he ought to be.

MORELL. Me ?

CANDIDA. You ! Why, you're spoiled with love and worship : you get far more than is good for you. No : I mean Eugene.

MORELL [*startled*] Eugene !

CANDIDA. It seems unfair that all the love should go to you, and none to him ; although he needs it so much more than you do. [*A convulsive movement shakes him in spite of himself*]. Whats the matter ? Am I worrying you ?

MORELL [*hastily*] Not at all. [*Looking at her with troubled intensity*] You know that I have perfect confidence in you, Candida.

CANDIDA. You vain thing ! Are you so sure of your irresistible attractions ?

MORELL. Candida : you are shocking me. I never thought of my attractions. I thought of your goodness, of your purity. That is what I confide in.

CANDIDA. What a nasty uncomfortable thing to say to me ! Oh, you are a clergyman, James : a thorough clergyman !

MORELL [*turning away from her, heart-stricken*] So Eugene says.

CANDIDA [*with lively interest, leaning over to him with her arms on his knee*] Eugene's always right. He's a wonderful boy : I have grown fonder and fonder of him all the time I was away. Do you know, James, that though he has not the least suspicion of it himself, he is ready to fall madly



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in love with me ?

MORELL [*grimly*] Oh, he has no suspicion of it himself, hasnt he ?

CANDIDA. Not a bit. [*She takes her arms from his knee, and turns thoughtfully sinking into a more restful attitude with her hands in her lap*]. Some day he will know : when he is grown up and experienced, like you. And he will know that I must have known. I wonder what he will think of me then.

MORELL. No evil, Candida. I hope and trust, no evil.

CANDIDA [*dubiously*] That will depend.

MORELL [*bewildered*] Depend !

CANDIDA [*looking at him*] Yes : it will depend on what happens to him. [*He looks vacantly at her*]. Dont you see ? It will depend on how he comes to learn what love really is. I mean on the sort of woman who will teach it to him.

MORELL [*quite at a loss*] Yes. No. I dont know what you mean.

CANDIDA [*explaining*] If he learns it from a good woman, then it will be all right : he will forgive me.

MORELL. Forgive ?

CANDIDA. But suppose he learns it from a bad woman, as so many men do, especially poetic men, who imagine all women are angels ! Suppose he only discovers the value of love when he has thrown it away and degraded himself in his ignorance ! Will he forgive me then, do you think ?

MORELL. Forgive you for what ?

CANDIDA [*realizing how stupid he is, and a little disappointed, though quite tenderly so*] Dont you understand ? [*He shakes his head. She turns to him again, so as to explain with the fondest intimacy*]. I mean, will he forgive me for not teaching him myself ? For abandoning him to the bad women for the sake of my goodness, of my purity,

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as you call it? Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons: mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day. [*She is about to rise*].

MORELL. His words!

CANDIDA [*checking herself quickly in the act of getting up*]  
Whose words?

MORELL. Eugene's.

CANDIDA [*delighted*] He is always right. He understands you; he understands me; he understands Prossy; and you, darling, you understand nothing. [*She laughs, and kisses him to console him. He recoils as if stabbed, and springs up*].

MORELL. How can you bear to do that when—Oh, Candida [*with anguish in his voice*] I had rather you had plunged a grappling iron into my heart than given me that kiss.

CANDIDA [*amazed*] My dear: what's the matter?

MORELL [*frantically waving her off*] Don't touch me.

CANDIDA. James!!!

*They are interrupted by the entrance of Marchbanks with Burgess, who stop near the door, staring.*

MARCHBANKS. Is anything the matter?

MORELL [*deadly white, putting an iron constraint on himself*] Nothing but this: that either you were right this morning, or Candida is mad.

BURGESS [*in loudest protest*] What! Candy mad too! Oh, come! come! come! [*He crosses the room to the fireplace, protesting as he goes, and knocks the ashes out of his pipe on the bars*].

## CANDIDA

*Morell sits down at his table desperately, leaning forward to hide his face, and interlacing his fingers rigidly to keep them steady.*

CANDIDA [*to Morell, relieved and laughing*] Oh, you're only shocked! Is that all? How conventional all you unconventional people are! [*She sits gaily on the arm of the chair*].

BURGESS. Come: be've yourself, Candy. What'll Mr Morchbanks think of you?

CANDIDA. This comes of James teaching me to think for myself, and never to hold back out of fear of what other people may think of me. It works beautifully as long as I think the same things as he does. But now! because I have just thought something different! look at him! Just look! [*She points to Morell, greatly amused*].

*Eugene looks, and instantly presses his hand on his heart, as if some pain had shot through it. He sits down on the sofa like a man witnessing a tragedy.*

BURGESS [*on the hearth-rug*] Well, James, you certainly haint as himpressive lookin as usu'l.

MORELL [*with a laugh which is half a sob*] I suppose not. I beg all your pardons: I was not conscious of making a fuss. [*Pulling himself together*] Well, well, well, well, well! [*He sets to work at his papers again with resolute cheerfulness*].

CANDIDA [*going to the sofa and sitting beside Marchbanks, still in a bantering humor*] Well, Eugene: why are you so sad? Did the onions make you cry?

MARCHBANKS [*aside to her*] It is your cruelty. I hate cruelty. It is a horrible thing to see one person make another suffer.

CANDIDA [*petting him ironically*] Poor boy! have I been cruel? Did I make it slice nasty little red onions?

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] Oh, stop, stop: I dont mean my-

## CANDIDA

self. You have made him suffer frightfully. I feel his pain in my own heart. I know that it is not your fault : it is something that must happen ; but dont make light of it. I shudder when you torture him and laugh.

CANDIDA [*incredulously*] I torture James ! Nonsense, Eugene : how you exaggerate ! Silly ! [*She rises and goes to the table, a little troubled*]. Dont work any more, dear. Come and talk to us.

MORELL [*affectionately but bitterly*] Ah no : I cant talk. I can only preach.

CANDIDA [*caressing his hand*] Well, come and preach.

BURGESS [*strongly remonstrating*] Aw no, Candy. Ang it all !

*Lexy Mill comes in, anxious and important.*

LEXY [*hastening to shake hands with Candida*] How do you do, Mrs Morell ? So glad to see you back again.

CANDIDA. Thank you, Lexy. You know Eugene, dont you ?

LEXY. Oh yes. How do you do, Marchbanks ?

MARCHBANKS. Quite well, thanks.

LEXY [*to Morell*] Ive just come from the Guild of St Matthew. They are in the greatest consternation about your telegram.

CANDIDA. What did you telegraph about, James ?

LEXY [*to Candida*] He was to have spoken for them tonight. Theyve taken the large hall in Mare Street and spent a lot of money on posters. Morell's telegram was to say he couldnt come. It came on them like a thunderbolt.

CANDIDA [*surprised, and beginning to suspect something wrong*] Given up an engagement to speak !

BURGESS. Fust time in his life, I'll bet. Aint it, Candy ?

LEXY [*to Morell*] They decided to send an urgent telegram to you asking whether you could not change your mind. Have you received it ?

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MORELL [*with restrained impatience*] Yes, yes : I got it.  
LEXY. It was reply paid.

MORELL. Yes, I know, I answered it. I cant go.

CANDIDA. But why, James ?

MORELL [*almost fiercely*] Because I dont choose. These people forget that I am a man : they think I am a talking machine to be turned on for their pleasure every evening of my life. May I not have one night at home, with my wife, and my friends ?

*They are all amazed at this outburst, except Eugene. His expression remains unchanged.*

CANDIDA. Oh, James, you musnt mind what I said about that. And if you dont go youll have an attack of bad conscience tomorrow.

LEXY [*intimidated, but urgent*] I know, of course, that they make the most unreasonable demands on you. But they have been telegraphing all over the place for another speaker ; and they can get nobody but the President of the Agnostic League.

MORELL [*promptly*] Well, an excellent man. What better do they want ?

LEXY. But he always insists so powerfully on the divorce of Socialism from Christianity. He will undo all the good we have been doing. Of course you know best ; but—[*he shrugs his shoulders and wanders to the hearth beside Burgess*].

CANDIDA [*coaxingly*] Oh, do go, James. We'll all go.

BURGESS [*grumblingly*] Look ere Candy ! I say ! Lets stay at home by the fire, comfortable. He wont need to be more'n a couple-o-hour away.

CANDIDA. Youll be just as comfortable at the meeting. We'll all sit on the platform and be great people.

EUGENE [*terrified*] Oh please dont let us go on the plat-

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form. No: everyone will stare at us: I couldnt. I'll sit at the back of the room.

CANDIDA. Dont be afraid. Theyll be too busy looking at James to notice you.

MORELL. Prossy's complaint, Candida ! Eh ?

CANDIDA [*gaily*] Yes : Prossy's complaint.

BURGESS [*mystified*] Prossy's complaint ! What are you talkin about, James ?

MORELL [*not heeding him, rises ; goes to the door ; and holds it open, calling in a commanding tone*] Miss Garnett.

PROSERPINE [*in the distance*] Yes, Mr Morell. Coming. *They all wait, except Burgess, who turns stealthily to Lexy.*

BURGESS. Listen ere, Mr Mill. Whats Prossy's complaint? Whats wrong with er ?

LEXY [*confidentially*] Well, I dont exactly know ; but she spoke very strangely to me this morning. I'm afraid she's a little out of her mind sometimes.

BURGESS [*overwhelmed*] Why, it must be catchin ! Four in the same ouse !

PROSERPINE [*appearing on the threshold*] What is it, Mr Morell ?

MORELL. Telegraph to the Guild of St Matthew that I am coming.

PROSERPINE [*surprised*] Dont they expect you ?

MORELL [*peremptorily*] Do as I tell you.

*Proserpine, frightened, sits down at her typewriter, and obeys. Morell, now unaccountably resolute and forceful, goes across to Burgess. Candida watches his movements with growing wonder and misgiving.*

MORELL. Burgess : you dont want to come.

BURGESS. Oh, dont put it like that, James. It's ony that it aint Sunday, you know.

MORELL. I'm sorry. I thought you might like to be intro-

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duced to the chairman. He's on the Works Committee of the County Council, and has some influence in the matter of contracts. [*Burgess wakes up at once*]. You'll come ?

BURGESS [*with enthusiasm*] Cawrse I'll come, James. Aint it awlus a pleasure to ear you !

MORELL [*turning to Prossy*] I shall want you to take some notes at the meeting, Miss Garnett, if you have no other engagement. [*She nods, afraid to speak*]. You are coming, Lexy, I suppose ?

LEXY. Certainly.

CANDIDA. We're all coming, James.

MORELL. No : you are not coming ; and Eugene is not coming. You will stay here and entertain him—to celebrate your return home. [*Eugene rises, breathless*].

CANDIDA. But, James—

MORELL [*authoritatively*] I insist. You do not want to come ; and he does not want to come. [*Candida is about to protest*]. Oh, dont concern yourselves : I shall have plenty of people without you : your chairs will be wanted by unconverted people who have never heard me before.

CANDIDA [*troubled*] Eugene : wouldnt you like to come ?

MORELL. I should be afraid to let myself go before Eugene : he is so critical of sermons. [*Looking at him*] He knows I am afraid of him : he told me as much this morning. Well, I shall shew him how much afraid I am by leaving him here in your custody, Candida.

MARCHBANKS [*to himself, with vivid feeling*] Thats brave. Thats beautiful.

CANDIDA [*with anxious misgiving*] But—but— Is anything the matter, James ? [*Greatly troubled*] I cant understand—

MORELL [*taking her tenderly in his arms and kissing her on the forehead*] Ah, I thought it was I who couldnt understand, dear.

### ACT III

*Past ten in the evening. The curtains are drawn, and the lamps lighted. The typewriter is in its case : the large table has been cleared and tidied : everything indicates that the day's work is over.*

*Candida and Marchbanks are sitting by the fire. The reading lamp is on the mantelshelf above Marchbanks, who is in the small chair, reading aloud. A little pile of manuscripts and a couple of volumes of poetry are on the carpet beside him. Candida is in the easy chair. The poker, a light brass one, is upright in her hand. Leaning back and looking intently at the point of it, with her feet stretched towards the blaze, she is in a waking dream, miles away from her surroundings and completely oblivious of Eugene.*

MARCHBANKS [*breaking off in his recitation*] Every poet that ever lived has put that thought into a sonnet. He must : he cant help it. [*He looks to her for assent, and notices her absorption in the poker*]. Havnt you been listening ? [*No response*]. Mrs Morell !

CANDIDA [*starting*] Eh ?

MARCHBANKS. Havnt you been listening ?

CANDIDA [*with a guilty excess of politeness*] Oh yes. It's very nice. Go on, Eugene. I'm longing to hear what happens to the angel.

MARCHBANKS [*letting the manuscript drop from his hand to the floor*] I beg your pardon for boring you.

CANDIDA. But you are not boring me, I assure you. Please go on. Do, Eugene.

MARCHBANKS. I finished the poem about the angel quarter of an hour ago. Ive read you several things since.

CANDIDA [*remorsefully*] I'm so sorry, Eugene. I think the



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poker must have hypnotized me. [*She puts it down*].

MARCHBANKS. It made me horribly uneasy.

CANDIDA. Why didnt you tell me? I'd have put it down at once.

MARCHBANKS. I was afraid of making you uneasy too. It looked as if it were a weapon. If I were a hero of old I should have laid my drawn sword between us. If Morell had come in he would have thought you had taken up the poker because there was no sword between us.

CANDIDA [*wondering*] What? [*With a puzzled glance at him*] I cant quite follow that. Those sonnets of yours have perfectly addled me. Why should there be a sword between us?

MARCHBANKS [*evasively*] Oh, never mind. [*He stoops to pick up the manuscript*].

CANDIDA. Put that down again, Eugene. There are limits to my appetite for poetry : even your poetry. Youve been reading to me for more than two hours, ever since James went out. I want to talk.

MARCHBANKS [*rising, scared*] No : I mustnt talk. [*He looks round him in his lost way, and adds, suddenly*] I think I'll go out and take a walk in the park. [*He makes for the door*].

CANDIDA. Nonsense : it's closed long ago. Come and sit down on the hearth-rug, and talk moonshine as you usually do. I want to be amused. Dont you want to ?

MARCHBANKS [*half in terror, half enraptured*] Yes.

CANDIDA. Then come along. [*She moves her chair back a little to make room*].

*He hesitates ; then timidly stretches himself on the hearth-rug, face upwards, and throws back his head across her knees, looking up at her.*

MARCHBANKS. Oh, Ive been so miserable all the evening, because I was doing right. Now I'm doing wrong ; and I'm happy.

## CANDIDA

CANDIDA [*tenderly amused at him*] Yes : I'm sure you feel a great grown-up wicked deceiver. Quite proud of yourself, arnt you ?

MARCHBANKS [*raising his head quickly and turning a little to look round at her*] Take care. I'm ever so much older than you, if you only knew. [*He turns quite over on his knees, with his hands clasped and his arms on her lap, and speaks with growing impulse, his blood beginning to stir*]. May I say some wicked things to you ?

CANDIDA [*without the least fear or coldness, and with perfect respect for his passion, but with a touch of her wise-hearted maternal humor*] No. But you may say anything you really and truly feel. Anything at all, no matter what it is. I am not afraid, so long as it is your real self that speaks, and not a mere attitude : a gallant attitude, or a wicked attitude, or even a poetic attitude. I put you on your honor and truth. Now say whatever you want to.

MARCHBANKS [*the eager expression vanishing utterly from his lips and nostrils as his eyes light up with pathetic spirituality*] Oh, now I cant say anything : all the words I know belong to some attitude or other—all except one.

CANDIDA. What one is that ?

MARCHBANKS [*softly, losing himself in the music of the name*] Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida. I must say that now, because you have put me on my honor and truth ; and I never think or feel Mrs Morell : it is always Candida.

CANDIDA. Of course. And what have you to say to Candida ?

MARCHBANKS. Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times. Dont you feel that every time is a prayer to you ?

CANDIDA. Doesnt it make you happy to be able to pray ?

MARCHBANKS. Yes, very happy.

## CANDIDA

CANDIDA. Well, that happiness is the answer to your prayer. Do you want anything more ?

MARCHBANKS. No : I have come into heaven, where want is unknown.

*Morell comes in. He halts on the threshold, and takes in the scene at a glance.*

MORELL [*grave and self-contained*] I hope I dont disturb you.

*Candida starts up violently, but without the smallest embarrassment, laughing at herself. Eugene, capsized by her sudden movement, recovers himself without rising, and sits on the rug hugging his ankles, also quite unembarrassed.*

CANDIDA. Oh, James, how you startled me! I was so taken up with Eugene that I didnt hear your latchkey. How did the meeting go off ? Did you speak well ?

MORELL. I have never spoken better in my life.

CANDIDA. That was first rate ! How much was the collection ?

MORELL. I forgot to ask.

CANDIDA [*to Eugene*] He must have spoken splendidly, or he would never have forgotten that. [*To Morell*] Where are all the others ?

MORELL. They left long before I could get away : I thought I should never escape. I believe they are having supper somewhere.

CANDIDA [*in her domestic business tone*] Oh, in that case, Maria may go to bed. I'll tell her. [*She goes out to the kitchen*].

MORELL [*looking sternly down at Marchbanks*] Well ?

MARCHBANKS [*squatting grotesquely on the hearth-rug and actually at ease with Morell : even impishly humorous*] Well ?

MORELL. Have you anything to tell me ?

## CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS. Only that I have been making a fool of myself here in private whilst you have been making a fool of yourself in public.

MORELL. Hardly in the same way, I think.

MARCHBANKS [*eagerly, scrambling up*] The very, very, very same way. I have been playing the Good Man. Just like you. When you began your heroics about leaving me here with Candida—

MORELL [*involuntarily*] Candida!

MARCHBANKS. Oh yes: I've got that far. But dont be afraid. Heroics are infectious: I caught the disease from you. I swore not to say a word in your absence that I would not have said a month ago in your presence.

MORELL. Did you keep your oath?

MARCHBANKS [*suddenly perching himself on the back of the easy chair*] It kept itself somehow until about ten minutes ago. Up to that moment I went on desperately reading to her—reading my own poems—anybody's poems—to stave off a conversation. I was standing outside the gate of Heaven, and refusing to go in. Oh, you cant think how heroic it was, and how uncomfortable! Then—

MORELL [*steadily controlling his suspense*] Then?

MARCHBANKS [*prosaically slipping down into a quite ordinary attitude on the seat of the chair*] Then she couldnt bear being read to any longer.

MORELL. And you approached the gate of Heaven at last?

MARCHBANKS. Yes.

MORELL. Well? [*Fiercely*] Speak, man: have you no feeling for me?

MARCHBANKS [*softly and musically*] Then she became an angel; and there was a flaming sword that turned every way, so that I couldnt go in; for I saw that that gate was really the gate of Hell.

## CANDIDA

MORELL [*triumphantly*]. She repulsed you !

MARCHBANKS [*rising in wild scorn*] No, you fool : if she had done that I should never have seen that I was in Heaven already. Repulsed me ! You think that would have saved us ! virtuous indignation ! Oh, you are not worthy to live in the same world with her. [*He turns away contemptuously to the other side of the room*].

MORELL [*who has watched him quietly without changing his place*] Do you think you make yourself more worthy by reviling me, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS. Here endeth the thousand and first lesson. Morell : I dont think much of your preaching after all : I believe I could do it better myself. The man I want to meet is the man that Candida married.

MORELL. The man that— ? Do you mean me ?

MARCHBANKS. I dont mean the Reverend James Mavor Morell, moralist and windbag. I mean the real man that the Reverend James must have hidden somewhere inside his black coat : the man that Candida loved. You cant make a woman like Candida love you by merely buttoning your collar at the back instead of in front.

MORELL [*boldly and steadily*] When Candida promised to marry me, I was the same moralist and windbag you now see. I wore my black coat ; and my collar was buttoned behind instead of in front. Do you think she would have loved me any the better for being insincere in my profession ?

MARCHBANKS [*on the sofa, hugging his ankles*] Oh, she forgave you just as she forgives me for being a coward, and a weakling, and what you call a snivelling little whelp and all the rest of it. [*Dreamily*] A woman like that has divine insight : she loves our souls, and not our follies and vanities and illusions, nor our collars and coats, nor any other of the rags and tatters we are rolled up in. [*He reflects on this*

## CANDIDA

*for an instant ; then turns intently to question Morell*]. What I want to know is how you got past the flaming sword that stopped me.

MORELL. Perhaps because I was not interrupted at the end of ten minutes.

MARCHBANKS [*taken aback*] What !

MORELL. Man can climb to the highest summits ; but he cannot dwell there long.

MARCHBANKS [*springing up*] It's false : there can he dwell for ever, and there only. It's in the other moments that he can find no rest, no sense of the silent glory of life. Where would you have me spend my moments, if not on the summits ?

MORELL. In the scullery, slicing onions and filling lamps.

MARCHBANKS. Or in the pulpit, scrubbing cheap earthenware souls ?

MORELL. Yes, that too. It was there that I earned my golden moment, and the right, in that moment, to ask her to love me. I did not take the moment on credit ; nor did I use it to steal another man's happiness.

MARCHBANKS [*rather disgustedly, trotting back towards the fireplace*] I have no doubt you conducted the transaction as honestly as if you were buying a pound of cheese. [*He stops on the brink of the hearth-rug, and adds, thoughtfully, to himself, with his back turned to Morell*] I could only go to her as a beggar.

MORELL [*staring*] A beggar dying of cold ! asking for her shawl !

MARCHBANKS [*turning, surprised*] Thank you for touching up my poetry. Yes, if you like : a beggar dying of cold, asking for her shawl.

MORELL [*excitedly*] And she refused. Shall I tell you why she refused ? I can tell you, on her own authority. It was

## CANDIDA

because of—

MARCHBANKS. She didnt refuse.

MORELL. Not !

MARCHBANKS. She offered me all I chose to ask for : her shawl, her wings, the wreath of stars on her head, the lilies in her hand, the crescent moon beneath her feet—

MORELL [*seizing him*] Out with the truth, man : my wife is my wife : I want no more of your poetic fripperies. I know well that if I have lost her love and you have gained it, no law will bind her.

MARCHBANKS [*quaintly, without fear or resistance*] Catch me by the shirt collar, Morell : she will arrange it for me afterwards as she did this morning. [*With quiet rapture*] I shall feel her hands touch me.

MORELL. You young imp, do you know how dangerous it is to say that to me ? Or [*With a sudden misgiving*] has something made you brave ?

MARCHBANKS. I'm not afraid now. I disliked you before : that was why I shrank from your touch. But I saw today—when she tortured you—that you love her. Since then I have been your friend : you may strangle me if you like.

MORELL [*releasing him*] Eugene : if that is not a heartless lie—if you have a spark of human feeling left in you—will you tell me what has happened during my absence ?

MARCHBANKS. What happened ! Why, the flaming sword [*Morell stamps with impatience*]—Well, in plain prose, I loved her so exquisitely that I wanted nothing more than the happiness of being in such love. And before I had time to come down from the highest summits, you came in.

MORELL [*suffering deeply*] So it is still unsettled. Still the misery of doubt.

MARCHBANKS. Misery ! I am the happiest of men. I desire nothing now but her happiness. [*In a passion of sentiment*]

## CANDIDA

Oh, Morell, let us both give her up. Why should she have to choose between a wretched little nervous disease like me, and a pig-headed parson like you ? Let us go on a pilgrimage, you to the east and I to the west, in search of a worthy lover for her : some beautiful archangel with purple wings—

MORELL. Some fiddlestick ! Oh, if she is mad enough to leave me for you, who will protect her ? who will help her ? who will work for her ? who will be a father to her children ? [*He sits down distractedly on the sofa, with his elbows on his knees and his head propped on his clenched fists*].

MARCHBANKS [*snapping his fingers wildly*] She does not ask those silly questions. It is she who wants somebody to protect, to help, to work for ; somebody to give her children to protect, to help and to work for. Some grown up man who has become as a little child again. Oh, you fool, you fool, you triple fool ! I am the man, Morell : I am the man. [*He dances about excitedly, crying*] You dont understand what a woman is. Send for her, Morell : send for her and let her choose between—[*The door opens and Candida enters. He stops as if petrified*].

CANDIDA [*amazed, on the threshold*] What on earth are you at, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS [*oddly*] James and I are having a preaching match ; and he is getting the worst of it.

*Candida looks quickly round at Morell. Seeing that he is distressed, she hurries down to him, greatly vexed.*

CANDIDA. You have been annoying him. Now I wont have it, Eugene : do you hear ? [*She puts her hand on Morell's shoulder, and quite forgets her wifely tact in her anger*]. My boy shall not be worried : I will protect him.

MORELL [*rising proudly*] Protect !

CANDIDA [*not heeding him : to Eugene*] What have you been saying ?



## CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS [*appalled*] Nothing. I—

CANDIDA. Eugene ! Nothing ?

MARCHBANKS [*piteously*] I mean—I—I'm very sorry. I wont do it again : indeed I wont. I'll let him alone.

MORELL [*indignantly, with an aggressive movement towards Eugene*] Let me alone ! You young—

CANDIDA [*stopping him*] Sh !—no : let me deal with him, James.

MARCHBANKS. Oh, youre not angry with me, are you ?

CANDIDA [*severely*] Yes I am : very angry. I have a good mind to pack you out of the house.

MORELL [*taken aback by Candida's vigor, and by no means relishing the position of being rescued by her from another man*] Gently, Candida, gently. I am able to take care of myself.

CANDIDA [*petting him*] Yes, dear : of course you are. But you mustnt be annoyed and made miserable.

MARCHBANKS [*almost in tears, turning to the door*] I'll go.

CANDIDA. Oh, you neednt go : I cant turn you out at this time of night. [*Vehemently*] Shame on you ! For shame !

MARCHBANKS [*desperately*] But what have I done ?

CANDIDA. I know what you have done : as well as if I had been here all the time. Oh, it was unworthy ! You are like a child : you cannot hold your tongue.

MARCHBANKS. I would die ten times over sooner than give you a moment's pain.

CANDIDA [*with infinite contempt for his puerility*] Much good your dying would do me !

MORELL. Candida, my dear : this altercation is hardly quite seemly. It is a matter between two men ; and I am the right person to settle it.

CANDIDA. Two men ! Do you call that a man ! [*To*

## CANDIDA

Eugene] You bad boy!

MARCHBANKS [*gathering a whimsically affectionate courage from the scolding*] If I am to be scolded like a boy, I must make a boy's excuse. He began it. And he's bigger than I am.

CANDIDA [*losing confidence a little as her concept for Morell's dignity takes the alarm*] That cant be true. [To Morell] You didnt begin it, James, did you?

MORELL [*contemptuously*] No.

MARCHBANKS [*indignant*] Oh!

MORELL [*to Eugene*] You began it: this morning. [*Candida, instantly connecting this with his mysterious allusion in the afternoon to something told him by Eugene in the morning, looks at him with quick suspicion. Morell proceeds, with the emphasis of offended superiority*] But your other point is true. I am certainly the bigger of the two, and I hope, the stronger, Candida. So you had better leave the matter in my hands.

CANDIDA [*again soothing him*] Yes, dear; but—[troubled] I dont understand about this morning.

MORELL [*gently snubbing her*] You need not understand, my dear.

CANDIDA. But James, I [*the street bell rings*]—Oh bother! Here they all come. [*She goes out to let them in*].

MARCHBANKS. [*running to Morell*] Oh, Morell, isnt it dreadful? She's angry with us: she hates me. What shall I do?

MORELL [*with quaint desperation, walking up and down the middle of the room*] Eugene: my head is spinning round. I shall begin to laugh presently.

MARCHBANKS [*following him anxiously*] No, no: she'll think Ive thrown you into hysterics. Dont laugh.

*Boisterous voices and laughter are heard approaching.*

## CANDIDA

*Lexy Mill, his eyes sparkling, and his bearing denoting unwonted elevation of spirit, enters with Burgess, who is greasy and self-complacent, but has all his wits about him. Miss Garnett, with her smartest hat and jacket on, follows them ; but though her eyes are brighter than before, she is evidently a prey to misgiving. She places herself with her back to her typewriting table with one hand on it to steady herself, passing the other across her forehead as if she were a little tired and giddy. Marchbanks relapses into shyness and edges away into the corner near the window, where Morell's books are.*

LEXY [*exhilarated*] Morell : I must congratulate you. [*Grasping his hand*] What a noble, splendid, inspired address you gave us ! You surpassed yourself.

BURGESS. So you did, James. It fair kep me awake to the lars' word. Didnt it, Miss Gornett ?

PROSERPINE [*worriedly*] Oh, I wasnt minding you : I was trying to make notes. [*She takes out her note-book, and looks at her stenography, which nearly makes her cry*].

MORELL. Did I go too fast, Pross ?

PROSERPINE. Much too fast. You know I cant do more than ninety words a minute. [*She relieves her feeling by throwing her note-book angrily beside her machine, ready for use next morning.*]

MORELL [*soothingly*] Oh well, well, never mind, never mind, never mind. Have you all had supper ?

LEXY. Mr Burgess has been kind enough to give us a really splendid supper at the Belgrave.

BURGESS [*with effusive magnanimity*] Dont mention it, Mr Mill. [*Modestly*] Youre arty welcome to my little treat.

PROSERPINE. We had champagne. I never tasted it before. I feel quite giddy.

MORELL [*surprised*] A champagne supper ! That was very

## CANDIDA

handsome. Was it my eloquence that produced all this extravagance ?

LEXY [*rhetorically*] Your eloquence, and Mr Burgess's goodness of heart. [*With a fresh burst of exhilaration*] And what a very fine fellow the chairman is, Morell ! He came to supper with us.

MORELL [*with long drawn significance, looking at Burgess*] O-o-o-h ! the chairman. Now I understand.

*Burgess covers with a deprecatory cough a lively satisfaction with his own diplomatic cunning. Lexy folds his arms and leans against the head of the sofa in a high-spirited attitude after nearly losing his balance. Candida comes in with glasses, lemons, and a jug of hot water on a tray.*

CANDIDA. Who will have some lemonade ? You know our rules : total abstinence. [*She puts the tray on the table, and takes up the lemon squeezer, looking enquiringly round at them*].

MORELL. No use, dear. They all had champagne. Pross has broken her pledge.

CANDIDA [*to Proserpine*] You dont mean to say youve been drinking champagne !

PROSERPINE [*stubbornly*] Yes I do. I'm only a beer teetotaller, not a champagne teetotaller. I dont like beer. Are there any letters for me to answer, Mr Morell ?

MORELL. No more tonight.

PROSERPINE. Very well. Goodnight, everybody.

LEXY [*gallantly*] Had I not better see you home, Miss Garnett ?

PROSERPINE. No thank you. I shant trust myself with anybody tonight. I wish I hadn't taken any of that stuff. [*She takes uncertain aim at the door ; dashes at it ; and barely escapes without disaster*].

BURGESS [*indignantly*] Stuff indeed ! That gurl dunno

## CANDIDA

what champagne is ! Pommery and Greeno at twelve and six a bottle. She took two glasses amost straight horff.

MORELL [*anxious about her*] Go and look after her, Lexy.

LEXY [*alarmed*] But if she should really be—Suppose she began to sing in the street, or anything of that sort.

MORELL. Just so : she may. Thats why youd better see her safely home.

CANDIDA. Do, Lexy : theres a good fellow. [*She shakes his hand and pushes him gently to the door*].

LEXY. It's evidently my duty to go. I hope it may not be necessary. Goodnight, Mrs Morell. [*To the rest*] Goodnight. [*He goes Candida shuts the door*].

BURGESS. He was gushin with hextra piety hisself arter two sips. People carnt drink like they huseter. [*Bustling across to the hearth*] Well, James : it's time to lock up. Mr Morchbanks : shall I ave the pleasure of your company for a bit o the way ome ?

MARCHBANKS [*affrightedly*] Yes : I'd better go. [*He hurries towards the door ; but Candida places herself before it, barring his way*].

CANDIDA [*with quiet authority*] You sit down. Youre not going yet.

MARCHBANKS [*quailing*] No : I—I didnt mean to. [*He sits down objectly on the sofa*].

CANDIDA. Mr Marchbanks will stay the night with us, papa.

BURGESS. Oh well, I'll say goodnight. So long, James. [*He shakes hands with Morell, and goes over to Eugene*]. Make em give you a nightlight by your bed, Mr Morchbanks : itll comfort you if you wake up in the night with a touch of that complaint of yores. Goodnight.

MARCHBANKS. Thank you : I will. Goodnight, Mr Burgess. [*They shake hands. Burgess goes to the door*].

## CANDIDA

CANDIDA [*intercepting Morell, who is following Burgess*] Stay here, dear : I'll put on papa's coat for him. [*She goes out with Burgess*].

MARCHBANKS [*rising and stealing over to Morell*] Morell : theres going to be terrible scene. Arnt you afraid ?

MORELL. Not in the least.

MARCHBANKS. I never envied you your courage before. [*He puts his hand appealingly on Morell's forearm*]. Stand by me, wont you ?

MORELL [*casting him off resoiutely*] Each for himself, Eugene. She must choose between us now.

*Candida returns. Eugene creeps back to the sofa like a guilty schoolboy.*

CANDIDA [*between them, addressing Eugene*] Are you sorry ?

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] Yes. Heartbroken.

CANDIDA. Well, then, you are forgiven. Now go off to bed like a good little boy : I want to talk to James about you.

MARCHBANKS [*rising in great consternation*] Oh, I cant do that, Morell. I must be here. I'll not go away. Tell her.

CANDIDA [*her suspicions confirmed*] Tell me what ? [*His eyes avoid hers furtively. She turns and mutely transfers the question to Morell*].

MORELL [*bracing himself for the catastrophe*] I have nothing to tell her, except [*here his voice deepens to a measured and mournful tenderness*] that she is my greatest treasure on earth—if she is really mine.

CANDIDA [*coldly, offended by his yielding to his orator's instinct and treating her as if she were the audience at the Guild of St Matthew*] I am sure Eugene can say no less, if that is all.

MARCHBANKS [*discouraged*] Morell : she's laughing at us.

MORELL [*with a quick touch of temper*] There is nothing

## CANDIDA

to laugh at. Are you laughing at us, Candida ?

CANDIDA [*with quiet anger*] Eugene is very quick-witted, James. I hope I am going to laugh ; but I am not sure that I am not going to be very angry. [*She goes to the fire-place, and stands there leaning with her arm on the mantel-piece, and her foot on the fender, whilst Eugene steals to Morell and plucks him by the sleeve*].

MARCHBANKS [*whispering*] Stop, Morell. Dont let us say anything.

MORELL [*pushing Eugene away without deigning to look at him*] I hope you dont mean that as a threat, Candida.

CANDIDA [*with emphatic warning*] Take care, James. Eugene : I asked you to go. Are you going ?

MORELL [*putting his foot down*] He shall not go. I wish him to remain.

MARCHBANKS. I'll go. I'll do whatever you want. [*He turns to the door*].

CANDIDA. Stop ! [*He obeys*]. Didnt you hear James say he wished you to stay ? James is master here. Dont you know that ?

MARCHBANKS [*flushing with a young poet's rage against tyranny*] By what right is he master ?

CANDIDA [*quietly*] Tell him, James.

MORELL [*taken aback*] My dear : I dont know of any right that makes me master. I assert no such right.

CANDIDA [*with infinite reproach*] You dont know ! Oh, James ! James ! [*To Eugene, musingly*] I wonder do you understand, Eugene ! [*He shakes his head helplessly, not daring to look at her*]. No : youre too young. Well, I give you leave to stay : to stay and learn. [*She comes away from the hearth and places herself between them*]. Now, James ! whats the matter ? Come : tell me.

## CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS [*whispering tremulously across to him*]  
Dont.

CANDIDA. Come. Out with it !

MORELL [*slowly*] I meant to prepare your mind carefully, Candida, so as to prevent misunderstanding.

CANDIDA. Yes, dear : I am sure you did. But never mind : I shant misunderstand.

MORELL.. Well—er—[*he hesitates, unable to find the long explanation which he supposed to be available*].

CANDIDA. Well ?

MORELL [*blurring it out boldly*] Eugene declares that you are in love with him.

MARCHBANKS [*frantically*] No, no, no, no, never. I did not, Mrs Morell : it's not true. I said I loved you. I said I understood you, and that he couldnt. And it was not after what passed there before the fire that I spoke : it was not, on my word. It was this morning.

CANDIDA [*enlightened*] This morning !

MARCHBANKS. Yes. [*He looks at her, pleading for credence, and then adds simply*] That was what was the matter with my collar.

CANDIDA. Your collar? [*Suddenly taking in his meaning she turns to Morell, shocked*]. Oh, James: did you—[*she stops*]?

MORELL [*ashamed*] You know, Candida, that I have a temper to struggle with. And he said [*shuddering*] that you despised me in your heart.

CANDIDA [*turning quickly on Eugene*] Did you say that ?

MARCHBANKS [*terrified*] No.

CANDIDA [*almost fiercely*] Then James has just told me a falsehood. Is that what you mean ?

MARCHBANKS. No, no: I—I—[*desperately*] it was David's wife. And it wasnt at home : it was when she saw him dancing before all the people.



## CANDIDA

MORELL [*taking the cue with a debater's adroitness*] Dancing before all the people, Candida ; and thinking he was moving their hearts by his mission when they were only suffering from—Prossy's complaint. [*She is about to protest : he raises his hand to silence her*]. Dont try to look indignant, Candida—

CANDIDA. Try !

MORELL [*continuing*] Eugene was right. As you told me a few hours after, he is always right. He said nothing that you did not say far better yourself. He is the poet, who sees everything ; and I am the poor parson, who understands nothing.

CANDIDA [*remorsefully*] Do you mind what is said by a foolish boy, because I said something like it in jest ?

MORELL. That foolish boy can speak with the inspiration of a child and the cunning of a serpent. He has claimed that you belong to him and not to me ; and, rightly or wrongly, I have come to fear that it may be true. I will not go about tortured with doubts and suspicions. I will not live with you and keep a secret from you. I will not suffer the intolerable degradation of jealousy. We have agreed—he and I—that you shall choose between us now. I await your decision.

CANDIDA [*slowly recoiling a step, her heart hardened by his rhetoric in spite of the sincere feeling behind it*] Oh ! I am to choose, am I ? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.

MORELL [*firmly*] Quite. You must choose definitely.

MARCHBANKS [*anxiously*] Morell : you dont understand. She means that she belongs to herself.

CANDIDA [*turning on him*] I mean that, and a good deal more, Master Eugene, as you will both find out presently. And pray, my lords and masters, what have you to offer for my choice ? I am up for auction, it seems. What do you bid,

## CANDIDA

James ?

MORELL [*reproachfully*] Cand—[*He breaks down : his eyes and throat fill with tears : the orator becomes a wounded animal*]. I cant speak—

CANDIDA [*impulsively going to him*] Ah, dearest—

MARCHBANKS [*in wild alarm*] Stop : it's not fair. You musnt shew her that you suffer, Morell. I am on the rack too ; but I am not crying.

MORELL [*rallying all his forces*] Yes : you are right. It is not for pity that I am bidding. [*He disengages himself from Candida*].

CANDIDA [*retreating, chilled*] I beg your pardon, James : I did not mean to touch you. I am waiting to hear your bid.

MORELL [*with proud humility*] I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman.

CANDIDA [*quite quietly*] And' you, Eugene? What do you offer ?

MARCHBANKS. My weakness. My desolation. My heart's need.

CANDIDA [*impressed*] Thats a good bid, Eugene. Now I know how to make my choice.

*She pauses and looks curiously from one to the other, as if weighing them. Morell, whose lofty confidence has changed into heart-breaking dread at Eugene's bid, loses all power of concealing his anxiety. Eugene, strung to the highest tension, does not move a muscle.*

MORELL [*in a suffocated voice : the appeal bursting from the depths of his anguish*] Candida !

MARCHBANKS [*aside, in a flash of contempt*] Coward !

CANDIDA [*significantly*] I give myself to the weaker of

## CANDIDA

the two.

*Eugene divines her meaning at once : his face whitens like steel in a furnace.*

MORELL [*bowing his head with the calm of collapse*] I accept your sentence, Candida.

CANDIDA. Do you understand, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS. Oh, I feel I'm lost. He cannot bear the burden.

MORELL [*incredulously, raising his head and voice with comic abruptness*] Do you mean me, Candida ?

CANDIDA [*smiling a little*] Let us sit and talk comfortably over it like three friends. [*To Morell*] Sit down, dear. [*Morell, quite lost, takes the chair from the fireside : the children's chair*]. Bring me that chair, Eugene. [*She indicates the easy chair. He fetches it silently, even with something like cold strength and places it next Morell, a little behind him. She sits down. He takes the visitor's chair himself, and sits inscrutable. When they are all settled she begins, throwing a spell of quietness on them by her calm, sane, tender tone*]. You remember what you told me about yourself, Eugene : how nobody has cared for you since your old nurse died : how those clever fashionable sisters and successful brother of yours were your mother's and father's pets : how miserable you were at Eton : how your father is trying to starve you into returning to Oxford : how you have had to live without comfort or welcome or refuge : always lonely, and nearly always disliked and misunderstood, poor boy !

MARCHBANKS [*faithful to the nobility of his lot*] I had my books. I had Nature. And at last I met you.

CANDIDA. Never mind that just at present. Now I want you to look at this other boy here : my boy ! spoiled from his cradle. We go once a fortnight to see his parents. You should come with us, Eugene, to see the pictures of the

## CANDIDA

hero of that household. James as a baby! the most wonderful of all babies. James holding his first school prize, won at the ripe age of eight! James as the captain of his eleven! James in his first frock coat! James under all sorts of glorious circumstances! You know how strong he is (I hope he didnt hurt you): how clever he is: how happy. [*With deepening gravity*] Ask James's mother and his three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but be strong and clever and happy. Ask me what it costs to be James's mother and three sisters and wife and mother to his children all in one. Ask Prossy and Maria how troublesome the house is even when we have no visitors to help us to slice the onions. Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James and spoil his beautiful sermons who it is that puts them off. When there is money to give, he gives it: when there is money to refuse, I refuse it. I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him, and stand sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out. I make him master here, though he does not know it, and could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so. [*With sweet irony*] And when he thought I might go away with you, his only anxiety was—what should become of me! And to tempt me to stay he offered me [*leaning forward to stroke his hair caressingly at each phrase*] his strength for my defence! his industry for my livelihood! his dignity for my position! his—[*relenting*] ah, I am mixing up your beautiful cadences and spoiling them, am I not, darling? [*She lays her cheek fondly against his*].

MORELL [*quite overcome, kneeling beside her chair and embracing her with boyish ingenuousness*]. It's all true, every word. What I am you have made me with the labor of your hands and the love of your heart. You are my wife my mother, my sisters: you are the sum of all loving care to me.

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CANDIDA [*in his arms, smiling, to Eugene*] Am I your mother and sister to you, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS [*rising with a fierce gesture of disgust*] Ah, never. Out, then, into the night with me !

CANDIDA [*rising quickly*] You are not going like that, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS [*with the ring of a man's voice—no longer a boy's—in the words*] I know the hour when it strikes. I am impatient to do what must be done.

MORELL [*who has also risen*] Candida : dont let him do anything rash.

CANDIDA [*confident, smiling at Eugene*] Oh, there is no fear. He has learnt to live without happiness.

MARCHBANKS. I no longer desire happiness : life is nobler than that. Parson James : I give you my happiness with both hands : I love you because you have filled the heart of the woman I loved. Goodbye. [*He goes towards the door*].

CANDIDA. One last word. [*He stops, but without turning to her. She goes to him*]. How old are you, Eugene ?

MARCHBANKS. As old as the world now. This morning I was eighteen.

CANDIDA. Eighteen ! Will you, for my sake, make a little poem out of the two sentences I am going to say to you ? And will you promise to repeat it to yourself whenever you think of me ?

MARCHBANKS [*without moving*] Say the sentences.

CANDIDA. When I am thirty, she will be forty-five. When I am sixty, she will be seventy-five.

MARCHBANKS [*turning to her*] In a hundred years, we shall be the same age. But I have a better secret than that in my heart. Let me go now. The night outside grows impatient.

CANDIDA. Goodbye. [*She takes his face in her hands ; and as he divines her intention and falls on his knees, she kisses*

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*his forehead. Then he flies out into the night. She turns to Morell, holding out her arms to him]. Ah, James!*

*They embrace. But they do not know the secret in the poet's heart.*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO *THE WORKS OF*  
*BERNARD SHAW*

*By A. C. Ward*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, the greatest of the many Irishmen who have written fine plays in the English language, was born in Dublin on 26 July 1856. His father, George Carr Shaw, the youngest son in a family of thirteen children, became a minor official in the Dublin law courts, but after a few years he retired on a small pension and went into business unsuccessfully as a corn merchant. He married the daughter of an Irish landowner, who soon found that her husband was a drunkard and incapable of earning enough money to provide for her and the three children who were born to them, George Bernard Shaw and his two sisters.

Mrs. Shaw had a remarkably good singing voice, and from her and her friends young Bernard learned much good operatic music, and this was to be very useful to him afterwards. When he was sixteen his mother and sisters left Dublin and went to live permanently in London, where Mrs. Shaw supported herself and her daughters by giving music lessons and singing at concerts.

In the meantime Bernard Shaw had been to school in Dublin until he was fifteen. He then became a clerk and cashier in a land agent's office there until April 1876, when he followed his mother to London. When he understood that his father was unqualified to be the controlling head of the family, and that his mother was more devoted to music than to her children, he developed that extraordinary independence of mind and spirit which was to enable him, as a man, to look upon mankind and its affairs without being swayed either by custom or by other people's conventional ideas of right and wrong.

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Though he received little mother-love from Mrs. Shaw, the love of music that he gained from her soon proved itself useful in London, where one of his first regular positions when he took up journalism was as music critic on *The Star*, a London evening newspaper. Both as a critic of music and, a few years later, as a critic of plays for *The Saturday Review*, a weekly periodical, he wrote essays of a very high quality which are still read and praised, more than fifty years after they were first printed.

When Shaw himself turned to the writing of plays, he heard with the inner ear of a musician the words that he set down to be spoken by the actors, and his sentences consequently run with a rhythmical ease that makes them easy and pleasant to speak and hear. It is for this reason that the many very long speeches in Shaw's plays are able to hold our attention, whereas speeches of a similar length by other modern playwrights are often tedious, even though the subjects they deal with may be as important as Shaw's. The finest example of the influence of opera on his dramatic work is Act III of *Man and Superman*, of which more will be said below.

After settling in London, Bernard Shaw found it very difficult to live by writing, and for the first ten years he had to rely mainly upon his mother for food and lodging. Yet during those years he was laying the foundations of his career, joining political societies and addressing public meetings, sometimes at street corners. One day in September 1884 he went to a hall in the City of London to hear a lecture by the American economist Henry George (author of a well-known book *Progress and Poverty*) who advocated that national revenue should be raised by a single tax on land values, instead of by numerous taxes on a variety of things. Henry George's lecture converted Shaw to Socia-



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lism, and almost at once he joined the newly-founded Fabian Society. The Fabians wanted to bring about a gradual evolutionary change, not a sudden and violent revolutionary one, from capitalism to socialism, and they had a powerful influence on British political life during the next forty or fifty years.

Round about the time Shaw joined the Fabian Society he also met Mrs. Annie Besant, whose ardent support of independence for India did much to make the British public aware that the Indian peoples' desire for political freedom could not be ignored. Mrs. Besant was a great admirer of Shaw, and she soon joined him as a member of the Fabian Society, until her enthusiasm and energies were diverted to the support of Theosophy. She made herself the English leader of the theosophists and strengthened her ties with India through the theosophists there.

In his early years as a socialist Bernard Shaw believed that if the condition of civilized societies was to be improved, it must be done by legislation aiming at equality, reducing in various ways the fortunes of the rich in order to help and uplift the poor. Though he continued to preach equality for the remainder of his long life, as he grew older he trusted less in the power of Acts of Parliament to increase human welfare and happiness. He came round to the opinion that the first things required in the making of a Good Society is not so much good laws as good men and women—men and women, that is, who are righteous in spirit and not merely well intentioned and kindhearted. Good people will make good laws, but good laws passed by a few do not necessarily make a good society.

While he was still a boy, Shaw had abandoned the Christian religion as it was practised by the churches, which he believed had strayed far from the teachings of Christ. But

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though he would not call himself a Christian, many of his strongest convictions and most of his personal conduct were those of a religious man. His sense of the sacredness of life, animal as well as human; his purity of living—he ate no flesh, drank no alcohol, smoked no tobacco; his kindness in generosity to his fellows (though he opposed charity on the ground that it was usually only a cheap substitute for social justice); his insistence that it is the duty of all men to strive to leave the world a better place than they found it, to hand on to future generations the torch of life burning more brightly—all these beliefs, though Shaw would have claimed that they were based on reason not on faith, were so powerful in him as a guide to conduct that they had the force of a religion.

He became a vegetarian when he was twenty-five. His reading of the works of the English poet Shelley had some influence in leading him to refrain from eating meat, but the stronger motive was his deep feeling that 'animals are our fellow creatures', not to be slain for human food.

Politics and journalism occupied Bernard Shaw until 1898 when he reached the age of forty-two. His first attempts at creative literary work produced five unsuccessful novels between 1879 and 1883, and in 1885 he made his first attempt to write a play, but left it unfinished. Seven years later he completed it and on 9 December 1892 it was performed in London. Called *Widowers' Houses*, this play dealt with the evils of London slums, in which at that time many filthy and decaying houses were owned by landlords who lived at ease elsewhere on the rents squeezed from poor and wretched tenants.

A play on such a subject—on, that is, a genuine social evil—was something entirely new in the English theatres. It had no success, and when in the following years Shaw

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went on to write other plays about real human problems, such as prostitution (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*), war (*Arms and the Man*), religious intolerance (*The Devil's Disciple*), revenge (*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*), and so on, he was extremely unpopular with many people, and years were to pass before his plays brought him enough money to live on. For a gradually increasing number of people, however, he became a leader in new ways of thought and a champion of intellectual freedom.

Until Bernard Shaw began to write for the theatre, there had been no modern British dramatist who took current social, political, and religious problems as subjects for plays. He started out with the conviction that the emotional tangles of men and women had received far too much attention on the stage, and he made up his mind to do in English what Henrik Ibsen had been doing in Norwegian since about 1875; namely, to write plays discussing public affairs which touched the lives of very large numbers of people.

Not until a season of intellectual drama was started at the Court Theatre in London in 1904 were Bernard Shaw's plays brought to the notice of a large audience. The experiment was so successful that it continued until 1907, by which time there had been 711 performances of eleven of Shaw's plays there. *John Bull's Other Island* (a comedy about Irish politics) was the first play by Shaw that became popular.

It was at the same theatre that *Man and Superman* was produced on 23 May 1905. In the character of Henry Straker, the chauffeur, it introduced a new type of working man who understood and delighted in modern machinery and was destined to be more important in the technological age then approaching than the landed aristocracy who had for centuries been the ruling class. *Man and Superman*,

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called by Shaw 'A Comedy and a Philosophy', is full of ideas which were then new and startling, but we can only glance here at Act III, which is a kind of dream happening to some of the characters who appear in the first two acts. Act III introduces three persons from the old Spanish legend of Don Juan—Juan himself ; Donna Anna, one of the many women he loved and betrayed ; and the ghost of Anna's father, whom Don Juan had killed in a duel. They meet and converse with the Devil in Hell. Mozart, the great eighteenth-century Austrian composer, wrote an opera [*Don Giovanni*] based on the Don Juan legend, and the sounds of Mozart's music were in Bernard Shaw's ears while he was writing the many extremely long speeches for this scene in Hell, which begins where Mozart's opera ends. The opinions expressed by the four characters during their argument, which lasts for about ninety minutes in performance on the stage, were invented wholly by Shaw. It is often said that the characters in his plays are merely mouthpieces for Shaw's personal opinions, but this cannot be true, because in each of his plays the different characters put forward opinions which conflict with each other, and Shaw leaves the reader (or the spectator in the theatre) to decide which is right. In the 'Don Juan in Hell' scene the Devil tries to convince the others that human beings are so stupid and bad that nothing can save them from destruction. Don Juan claims that, on the contrary, there is in Man a spirit which inspires him to struggle upward towards the evolution of the Superman, who will be far wiser and better than Man is now. That spirit is named 'the Life Force' in Bernard Shaw's plays.

The discussion between the Devil and Don Juan and the others is a serious philosophical argument such as no other dramatist would have dared to write for the stage, since no

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one but Shaw would have thought it possible to make an audience listen to pure argument for so long. He succeeded, partly because he could be witty and amusing and make people laugh even while he was dealing with the most serious topics, and partly because he built up his great scenes just as a composer builds up the music in an opera or a symphony. Shaw introduces a subject for discussion, then another subject a little later on—as a composer brings in one melody after another—and soon the various subjects are woven together into a discussion which interests us intellectually and pleases us artistically.

Shaw was always deeply interested in the *sound* of words as well as in their sense and meaning. As a young man he learned shorthand and always wrote his plays in it for his secretary to type out in longhand. This choice of shorthand as a working language was due both to its time-saving advantages and to its being based on phonetics, which always uses the same symbol for the same spoken sound. Ordinary written English is extremely illogical in spelling, a confusing variety of different sounds being represented by the same letters, e.g. cough=kof, but plough=plow, and dough=doh, etc. This makes English harder to learn and use than it might be if a separate letter or symbol were used for every sound. Shaw spent a good deal of time trying to persuade English people to adopt an enlarged alphabet. He also wrote one of his most popular plays, *Pygmalion*, on the subject of correct pronunciation, and he directed that after he died a considerable part of the large fortune he left should be used to finance any genuine scheme for bringing into common use his enlarged alphabet and reformed spelling. But the British have so far shown no inclination to adopt Bernard Shaw's system.

From 1905, when *Man and Superman*, his first great play,

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was performed, Shaw was the world's most famous living playwright, though he long remained unpopular with those who disliked his advanced views and his wish to reform society. Nevertheless it was at length widely recognized that he stood second only to Shakespeare among all the British playwrights, and his writings were known and valued in all countries long before he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

Glimpses of the religious side of Shaw's nature appear in the majority of his plays, and very clearly in *Saint Joan*, where he took Joan of Arc both as a heroine of history and as a heroine of faith. She helped to free the land of France from the English armies in the fifteenth century, and she would obey only the voice of God which, she declared, spoke to her privately. She therefore refused to submit to the authority of priests and princes when they wanted her to behave contrary to what she believed God had told her, and she was burned as a heretic, as Shaw himself probably would have been if he had lived in Joan of Arc's century, for he had the same stubborn belief in the right of individual judgement based on the voice of conscience.

Though he did not enjoy foreign travel and went abroad very little—until his friends, especially his wife, persuaded him to visit Soviet Russia in 1931 and to go in 1932-33 on a voyage round the world, during which he visited Bombay,—Shaw was in the widest sense an internationalist. In exile from his own land and living in England, for whose people he had curiously mixed feelings of affection, respect, and derision, he was without racial prejudices and looked on all nations with a cool and impartial eye. He did not care particularly for any one nation as a political unit, but he was benevolent to all humanity as a matter of principle. In his eyes most political leaders were blunderers, insufficiently

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educated in the art of ruling, which he regarded as the highest art of all.

In spite of his intense interest in political affairs, however, Shaw will almost certainly be remembered in the future much more by his plays than by his ideas on government and public affairs. He wrote fifty plays, long and short, but his other writings (which include *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* and *Everybody's Political What's What*) are of much greater total length. The Prefaces which he added to most of the plays when they came to be printed are among the best prose essays that can be found anywhere in English literature, but their connection with the plays to which they are attached is often slight.

Shaw died in 1950 in his ninety-fifth year, having produced his last important play, *The Apple Cart*, some twenty years before, in 1929. The height of his fame was reached with *Saint Joan* in 1923, and it is most probable that this and several other of his plays will always be more highly thought of than *Back to Methuselah* (1922), which he himself regarded as his masterpiece.

*Back to Methuselah*, an enormously long work in five parts, fails as a play for more reasons than can be discussed within the limits of this Introduction. Its importance among Shaw's works comes from the clear statement of his 'gospel' in the Preface, and its working-out (much less clearly) in the dialogue of the five parts of the play. His gospel of Creative Evolution and his belief in the Life Force were opposed to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by Natural Selection. In Darwin's theory the Survival of the Fittest comes about through the killing-off of the weak by the strong, but the idea of Shaw's Creative Evolution is that the fittest are those who survive by superior intelligence and by the exercise of will power. Shaw held that if we desire with

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passionate strength of will to be better and finer people and to live longer, in fact to be changed into Supermen, and if that strength of will is passed on to our descendants, what we desire will ultimately be brought about. The nations would then be ruled in wisdom and virtue, and war and all other evils would vanish from the earth.