

MR. TODD

A MORALITY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ROSA MUNDI"

In Memoriam

LILITH

Obiit Kal. Mai. 1906

MR. TODD

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GRANDFATHER OSSORY (*eighty-one*)

ALFRED OSSORY (*fifty*), *his son, a shipowner*

EMILY OSSORY (*forty-five*), *his wife*

EUPHEMIA OSSORY (*eighteen*), *his daughter*

CHARLEY OSSORY (*ten*), *his son*

GEORGE DELHOMME (*twenty-four*), *of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

DIONYSUS CARR (*thirty-four*), *Professor of Experimental Eugenics in the
University of Tübingen ; and*

MR. TODD

THOMAS, *a footman*

A HOSPITAL NURSE

SCENE : *The sitting-room in OSSORY'S house in Grosvenor Square.*

TIME : *Midday.*

The persons are in correct morning dress, except the invalid GRANDFATHER, who is in a scarlet dressing-gown, with gold embroidery, and CARR, who affects a pseudo-Bohemian extravagance. He wears a low collar, a very big bow-tie of gorgeous colours, a pale yellow waistcoat, a rich violet lounge suit with braid, patent leather boots, pale blue socks. But the refinement and breeding of the man are never in question. His hair is reddish, curly, luxuriant. He is clean-shaved, and wears an eye-glass with a tortoiseshell rim.

TODD has a face of keen pallor; he is dressed in black, with a flowing black cape, black motor-cap. He gives the impression of great age combined with great activity.

ACT I

GRANDFATHER *sunk in melancholy in his arm-chair*; MRS. OSSORY *red and weeping*; OSSORY (*a British heavy father*) *grief-stricken*; EUPHEMIA *sobbing at the table*; CARR and DELHOMME *cold and hot respectively in their expression of sympathy*. MR. TODD *is at the door, his cloak on, his hat in his hand*.

OSSORY. It is kind of you to have come so far to break the sad news, my dear sir. I hope that we shall see you again soon under—under—under happier circumstances.

[TODD *bows very low to the company as if deeply sympathizing; but turning his face to the audience, smiles as if at some secret jest. The actor should study hard to make this smile significant of the whole character, as revealed in the complete play; for TODD does not develop through, but is explained by, the plot. TODD goes out; OSSORY follows, and returns in a minute. There is no sound in the room but that of EUPHEMIA'S sobs.*

OSSORY [*returning, throws himself into a chair near the door*]. Dear me! dear me! Poor, poor Henry!

DELHOMME. In the very flower of his life. . . .

CARR [*solemnly*]. Truly, my dear sir, in the midst of life we are in death.

THE EQUINOX

[EUPHEMIA *looks up and darts a furious glance at him ; for she knows that he is mocking British solemnity and cant.*

DELHOMME. Crushed—crushed in a moment—

MRS. OSSORY [*very piously*]. Without a warning. Ah well, we must hope that— [Her voice becomes a mumble.

DELHOMME. I will bid you good morning ; I am sure you will not wish strangers to intrude upon your grief. If there is anything that I can do—

MR. OSSORY [*conventionally*]. Pray do not leave us yet, Monsieur Delhomme. Lunch is just ready.

DELHOMME. I really think that I should go.

[*He shakes hands.*

MRS. OSSORY. Good morning. We are so grateful for your sympathy and kindness. [*He turns to the old man.*] Grandfather is asleep.

[DELHOMME *shakes hands coldly with CARR, wondering why he does not offer to come with him. He goes to*

EUPHEMIA.

EUPHEMIA. [*Jumps up and gives her hand, hiding her tear-stained face. She has a slight lisp.*] Good morning, monsieur. [*He bends over her hand and kisses it.*

DELHOMME. Always my sympathy and devotion, mademoiselle.

EUPHEMIA. Thank you—thank you.

[*Her real attitude to him is listlessness bordering on aversion, but constrained by politeness ; he mistakes it for modesty striving with young love.*]

DELHOMME. Good morning, Mr. Ossory. Anything I can do, of course ; anything I can do.

MR. TODD

OSSORY. Thank you, my dear lad. Anything you can do, of course—I will let you know at once. By the way, you haven't asked her yet, I suppose?

DELHOMME. Not yet, sir. I am rather diffident: I do not care to precipitate affairs.

OSSORY. Well, I am really very anxious to see her future assured. And you know our proverb, "The early bird catches the worm." [*Points to him, and over his shoulder to her.*] There's our scientific friend, eh?

DELHOMME. Oh, I'm not afraid of him. A *farceur*, no more, though sometimes a pleasant one.

OSSORY. *Tu t'en f*—, *ça, mon vieux chameau? Quoi?*

DELHOMME [*very disgusted at OSSORY'S vulgarity, which mistakes argot for chic*]. Well, sir, as soon as I can find a favourable opportunity—

OSSORY. Grief is a good mood to catch them in, my boy. I know! I know! I've been a bit of a dog in my time.

[*Shakes hands as they go out.*]

DELHOMME [*returning*]. One word in your ear, sir, if I may. It's purely instinctive—but—but—well, sir, I mistrust that man Todd!

OSSORY. Thanks: I believe you may be right.

DELHOMME. Good-bye, sir!

OSSORY. Good-bye.

MRS. OSSORY [*rising*]. Alfred, that man is a devil!

OSSORY. What, little Delhomme?

MRS. OSSORY. Of course not, Alfred. How can you be so silly? Todd!

OSSORY. Why, whatever do you mean?

MRS. OSSORY. I don't mean anything but what I say.

THE EQUINOX

He's a devil; I'm sure of it. I know it was his fault, somehow.

OSSORY. Nonsense, nonsense, my dear! He was not even in the car.

MRS. OSSORY. It was his car, Alfred.

OSSORY. You're a fool, Emily.

CARR. I think Mr. Ossory means that we could hardly hold him responsible if one of his steamers ran down a poor polar bear on a drifting iceberg.

MRS. OSSORY. I know I'm quite unreasonable; it's an instinct, an intuition. You know Saga of Bond Street said how psychic I was!

[During the next few speeches CARR and EUPHEMIA correspond by signs and winks.]

GRANDFATHER. When I was in Australia forty-four years ago there was a very good fellow of the name of Brown in Ballarat. Brown of Buninyong we used to call him. I remember——

MRS. OSSORY *[bursting into tears]*. How can you, grandpa? Can't you realise that poor Henry is dead?

GRANDFATHER. Henry dead?

MRS. OSSORY. Didn't you hear? He was run over by Mr. Todd's motor-car this afternoon in Piccadilly.

GRANDFATHER. There, what did I tell you? I always disliked that man Todd from the first moment that I heard his name. Dear, dear! I always knew he would bring us trouble.

OSSORY. Well, this doesn't seem to have been his fault, as far as we can see at present. But I assure you that I share

MR. TODD

your sentiments. I have heard very ill things said of him, I can tell you.

MRS. OSSORY. Who is he? Does any one know? A man of family, I hope. How dreadful for poor Henry if he had been run over by a plebeian!

OSSORY. Well, we hardly know—I wonder if his credit is good. [*His voice sinks to a whisper as the awful suspicion that he may be financially unsound strikes him.*]

CARR [*sharply, as if pained*]. Oh, oh! Don't suggest such a thing without the very best reason. It would be too terrible!

[*This time EUPHEMIA laughs.*]

OSSORY. My dear boy, I deliberately say it. I have the very best of reasons for supposing him to be very deeply dipped. Very deeply dipped.

CARR. [*Hides his head in his hands and groans, pretending to be overwhelmed by the tragedy. Looks up.*] Well, I was told the other day that he held a lot of land in London, and has more tenants than the Duke of Westminster!

OSSORY. Well, we'll hope it is true. But in these days one never knows. And he leaves a very unpleasant impression wherever he goes. If I were not an Englishman I should say that the feeling I had for him was not very far removed from actual fear!

CARR. Well said, sir. Hearts of oak in the City, eh?

[*OSSORY glares at him suspiciously. EUPHEMIA both enjoys the joke and is angry that her father is the butt of it.*]

EUPHEMIA. Well, I'm not afraid of him—I think I rather like him. I'm sure he's a good man, when one knows him.

THE EQUINOX

CARR. Oh, Todd's a good sort! I think I must be going, sir.

EUPHEMIA. I wish you would stay and help me with the letters, Mr. Carr. We shall have a great deal to do in the next day or two.

CARR. Well, if you really wish it, I will try and be of what service I can.

[CARR, *with his back to the audience, laughs with his hands, behind it.*

MRS. OSSORY. That is indeed kind of you, Professor!

[CARR'S *hand-laugh grows riotous.*

GRANDFATHER. Where is Nurse? I want my whisky and milk.

MRS. OSSORY. [*Rings.*] I shall go down to lunch, Alfred. Lunch when you like, please, everybody. I fear the house will be much upset for a day or two. You must go down to the mortuary at once. I am really too upset to do anything more.

CARR. [*Over L. To EUPHEMIA.*] She hasn't done much yet!

EUPHEMIA. What a brute you are!

MRS. OSSORY. And we can't possibly go to the dear Duchess on Friday!

CARR [*almost in tears*]. Forgive my seeming callousness! On my honour, I never thought of that. "Sunt lachrymæ rerum."

[*A nurse and a footman appear. The latter wheels GRANDFATHER out of the room, using the greatest care not to shake him.*

MR. TODD

GRANDFATHER. Oh, my sciatica! You careless scoundrel, you're shaking me to pieces! Emily, do get a gentler footman. Oh! Oh! Nobody cares for the poor old man. I am thrown on the dust-heap. Oh, Emily, may you suffer one day as I suffer! Oh! Oh! Oh!

[The nurse comes forward and soothes him.]

NURSE. You must really be more careful of my patient, Thomas.

THOMAS. I humbly beg pardon, miss. I think the balls is gritty, miss. I'll ile 'em to-morrow.

GRANDFATHER. There, you see, Nurse is the only one that loves me. I should like to marry you, Nurse, eh? And cut 'em all out?

MRS. OSSORY. *[Glares at Nurse in silence, not trusting herself to speak to her.]* Now, grandpa, don't be silly! You know how we all love you! *[She goes to the chair and shakes it, unseen.]* Thomas, there you are again! How can you be so thoughtless?

GRANDFATHER. Oh! Oh! Oh!

[They get him out of the room.]

MRS. OSSORY *[returning]*. Good-bye, Mr. Carr. It is so good of you to help.

CARR. Not at all, Mrs. Ossory, not at all. I am only too glad. You should try and get a nap after lunch.

MRS. OSSORY. I will—I really think I will. *[Exit.]*

CARR. *[Closes the door, turns to EUPHEMIA, executes a quiet hornpipe, goes to EUPHEMIA, holds out his arms.]* Sweetheart!

EUPHEMIA. How dare you! How can you! With poor Uncle Henry lying dead!

THE EQUINOX

CARR. Why have a long Latin name if you mean to play the English hypocrite? Who was poor Uncle Henry? Did you love poor Uncle Henry so dearly as all that? How old were you when your father quarrelled with poor Uncle Henry? About two and a half! The only thing you can know about poor Uncle Henry is that poor Uncle Henry once tickled your toes. [EUPHEMIA *gives a little scream of horror.*] Enough humbug about poor Uncle Henry! . . . Sweetheart!

EUPHEMIA. Mine own!

[*They embrace and kiss with great intensity.*]

EUPHEMIA. Unhand me, villain! . . .

But one has to be decent about one's relations. Even the humbug of it is rather fun.

CARR. There speaks the daughter of Shakespeare's country. I am sure the Bacon imbroglio was a consummate practical joke on somebody's part. As I see the joke, I take no side in the controversy!

But we should look on the bright side of things!

[*Pompously.*]

Poor Uncle Henry, dead and turned to clay,
May feed the Beans that keep the Bile away.
Oh that whom all the world did once ignore
Should purge a peer or ease an emperor!

EUPHEMIA. But where is the bright side of our love?

CARR. Why, our love!

EUPHEMIA. Cannot you, cannot you understand?

CARR. Not unless you tell me!

EUPHEMIA. I can't tell you.

MR. TODD

CARR. —Anything I don't know.

EUPHEMIA. Oh, you laugh even at me!

CARR. Because I love you. So I laugh at humanity: if I took men seriously I should have to cut my throat.

EUPHEMIA. So you don't take me seriously either?

CARR. If I did, I should have to cut——

EUPHEMIA. What?

CARR. My lucky!

EUPHEMIA. What a dreadful expression! Where do you learn such things?

CARR. I notice you don't have to ask what it means.

EUPHEMIA. Stop teasing, darling!

CARR. I'm not teething! That's what I complain of; you always treat me as a baby!

EUPHEMIA. Come to his mummy, then!

CARR. You're not my mummy! That's what I complain of; you always treat me as a Cheops, ever since that night on the Great Pyramid!

EUPHEMIA. [*Hides her head in his bosom.*] Oh shame, shame!

CARR. Not a bit of it! Think of the infinite clearness of the night—

“The magical green of the sunset,
The magical blue of the Nile.”

The rising of the great globed moon—the stars starting from their fastnesses like sentries on the alarm—the isolation of our stance upon the summit—the faery distance of Cairo and its spear-sharp minarets—and we—and we——

EUPHEMIA. Oh me! Oh me!

CARR. Shall I remind you——

THE EQUINOX

EUPHEMIA. Must *I* remind *you* ?

CARR. No ; my memory is excellent.

EUPHEMIA. Of what you swore ?

CARR. I swore at the granite for not being moss.

EUPHEMIA. You swore to love me always.

CARR. The champagne at the Mena House is not champagne ; it is—the cork of it is labelled “ Good intentions.”

EUPHEMIA. Then you didn't mean it ?

CARR [*kissing her*]. Am I, or am I not—a plain question as between man and man—loving you now ?

EUPHEMIA. Oh, I know ! But I am so worried that everything most sure seems all shaken in the storm of it ! I was glad—glad, glad !—when that Mr. Todd came in with his news, so that I could have a real good cry. [*Very close to him, in a tragic whisper.*] Something has happened—something is going to happen.

CARR. And something has not happened—I knew it was a long time since we missed a week. By the way, have you heard the terrible news about Queen Anne ? Dead, poor soul ! Never mind, silly, you told me most dramatically, and it shall be counted unto you for righteousness.

EUPHEMIA. I think you're the greatest brute in the world—and I love you.

CARR. How reciprocal of you !

EUPHEMIA. Sweet !

CARR. On my honour, I haven't a single chocolate on me. Have a cigar ?

[*Business with case.*]

EUPHEMIA. Be serious ! You must marry me at once.

CARR. Then how can I be serious ? I understand from a gentleman named Shaw that marriage is only a joke—no,

MR. TODD

not Shaw! Vaughan, or Gorell Barnes, or some name like that!

EUPHEMIA. But you will, won't you?

CARR. No, I won't, will I?

[Sings.] "I have a wife and bairnies three,

And I'm no sure how ye'd agree, lassie!"

EUPHEMIA. What? [She releases herself.

CARR. Well, the wife's dead, as a matter of fact. Her name was Hope-of-ever-doing-something-in-the-Wide-Wide. But the bairns are alive: young Chemistry, already apt at repartee—I should say retort; little Biology, who's rather a worm between you and me and the gate-post; and poor puny, puling, sickly little Metaphysics, with only one tooth in his upper jaw!

Oh, don't cry! I love you as I always did and always shall. I'll see you through it somehow!

But don't talk foolishness about marriage! We are happy because when I come to see you I come to see you. If we were living together you would soon get to know me as the brute who grumbles at the cooking and wants to shut himself up and work—[mimicking her voice] "And I wouldn't mind so much if it were work, but all he does is to sit in a chair and smoke and stare at nothing and swear if any one comes in to ask him if my darling new old rose chiffon moiré Directoire corsets match my eau-de-Nil suede tussore appliqué garters." See?

EUPHEMIA. But—hush!

[She flies away to the other end of the room. The door opens. Enter THOMAS.

THE EQUINOX

THOMAS. Mr. Delomm would like to see you for a moment on urgent business.

[The lovers exchange signals privately.]

EUPHEMIA. Show him up.

THOMAS. Yes, miss. *[THOMAS goes out.]*

CARR. I will go and get a snack. Trust me—love me—

EUPHEMIA. I will—I do.

[They embrace. CARR goes to the door—turns.]

CARR. Love me—trust me.

[EUPHEMIA flies to him, kisses him again, nods.]

EUPHEMIA. I will—I do—I love you—I trust you.

CARR. Sweetheart! *[They kiss, furtively, as if hearing footsteps.]* So long!

[She retreats into the room, and blows him a kiss.]

CARR *[outside, loudly]*. Good morning, Miss Ossory!

EUPHEMIA *[sinking into a chair, faintly]*. Good-bye—no, no! Till—when?

[She is almost crying, but sets her teeth and rises.]

THOMAS *[opening the door]*. Mr. Delomm.

[Enter DELHOMME.]

DELHOMME. I am a thousand times sorry to intrude upon your grief, Miss Ossory, but—

EUPHEMIA. Uncle Henry was nothing to me.

DELHOMME. In any case, I should not have spoken to you, but my Embassy has suddenly called me. I am to go to Constantinople—I may be a month away—and—I want to see you first.

EUPHEMIA. Of course, to say good-bye. It is sweet of you to think of us, Monsieur Delhomme.

MR. TODD

DELHOMME. Of you—of thee. How difficult is the English language to express subtle differences!

You must have seen, Miss Ossory—

EUPHEMIA [*dully*]. I have seen nothing.

DELHOMME. May I speak?

EUPHEMIA. What is this? Oh!

DELHOMME. I need not tell you, I see. My unspoken sympathy and devotion—

EUPHEMIA. Spare me, I pray you.

DELHOMME. I must speak. Mademoiselle, I am blessed in loving you. I offer you the sympathy and devotion of a lifetime.

EUPHEMIA. I beg you to spare me. It is impossible.

DELHOMME. It is the truth—it is necessary—I should kill myself if you refused.

EUPHEMIA. My father—

DELHOMME. Your respected father is my warmest advocate.

EUPHEMIA. You distress me, sir. It is impossible.

DELHOMME. Ah, fairest of maidens, well I know your English coyness and modesty! [*Taking her hand.*] Ah, give me this pure hand for good, for ever! This hand which has been ever open to the misery of the poor, ever closed to box the enemies of your country!

EUPHEMIA. It is not mine!

DELHOMME. I do not understand. I am too worn a slave in the world's market for my fettered soul to grasp your innocence. Ah! you are vowed to Our Lady, perhaps? Yet, believe me—

EUPHEMIA. Oh, sir, you distress me—indeed you distress me!

THE EQUINOX

DELHOMME. I would not brush the bloom from off the lily—and yet——

EUPHEMIA. My God!—Monsieur Delhomme, I am going to shock you. Oh! Oh!

[She buries her face in her hands. He starts back, surprised at the turn things are taking, and at the violence of her emotion and of its expression.]

DELHOMME. What is it? Are you ill? Have I——

EUPHEMIA. *[Steady and straight before him.]* I am another man's—his—his mistress. There!

[He reels, catches a chair and saves himself. Her breast heaves; swallowing a sob, she runs out of the room.]

DELHOMME *[Utterly dazed]*. I—I—oh, my God! My father! My God! I thought her—oh, I dare not say it—I will not think it. *[On his knees, clutching at the chair.]* My God, what shall I do? She was my life, my hope, my flower, my star, my sun! What shall I do? Help me! help me! Who shall console me? *[He continues in silent prayer, sobbing].*

[The door opens; MR. TODD steals into the room on tiptoe, bends over him and whispers in his ear. The expression of anguish fails from his face; a calm steals over him; he smiles in beatitude and his lips move in rapture. He rises, shakes TODD by the hand; they go out together.]

[GRANDFATHER wheeled into the room by THOMAS, CHARLEY walking by him. The servant leaves them.]

GRANDFATHER. Bitter cold, Charley, for us old people!

MR. TODD

Nothing right nowadays! Oh, my poor leg! Bitter, bitter cold! I mind me, more than sixty years ago now—oh dear! oh dear! run and tell Nurse I want my liniment! Oh dear! oh dear! what a wretched world. Sciatics—like rats gnawing, gnawing at you, Charley.

CHARLEY. You frighten me, grampa! Why doesn't Mr. Carr come and play with me?

GRANDFATHER. He has gone out with your mother. He'll come by-and-by, no doubt. Run and fetch Nurse, Charley! [CHARLEY runs off.]

Oh dear! I wish I could find a good doctor. Nobody seems to do me any good. It's pain, pain all the time. Nurse! can't you tell me of a good doctor? For oh! for oh! [*he looks about him fearfully; his voice sinks to a thrilled whisper*] I am so afraid—afraid to die! Is there nobody—

[*Enter TODD, and stands by his chair, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder. He looks up.*]

I wish you were a doctor, Mr. Todd. You have such a soothing touch. Perhaps you are a doctor? I can get nobody to do me any good.

[TODD *whispers in his ear. The old man brightens up at once.*]

Why, yes! I should think that would relieve me at once. Very good! Very good!

[TODD *wheels him out of the room, the old man laughing and chuckling. Enter OSSORY and EUPHEMIA, talking.*]

OSSORY. I want to say a word, girlie, about young Del-

THE EQUINOX

homme. Er—well, we all grow older, you know—one day—er—ah! Nice young fellow, Delhomme!

EUPHEMIA. I refused him twenty minutes ago, father.

OSSORY. What? How the deuce did you know what I was going to say? Bless me, I believe there may be something in this psychic business after all!

EUPHEMIA. Yes, father, I feel I have strange powers!

OSSORY. But look here, girlie, why did you refuse him? *Reculer pour mieux sauter* is all very well, don't you know, but he gives twice who gives quickly.

EUPHEMIA. That's the point, father. If you accept a man the first time he asks you it's practically bigamy!

OSSORY. But—little girl, you ought to accept him at once. He will make you an excellent husband—I wish it. [*Pompously.*] It has ever been the desire of my heart to see my Phemie happily mated before I lay my old bones in the grave.

EUPHEMIA. But I don't love him. He's a quirk.

OSSORY. Tut! Nonsense! Appetite comes with eating.

EUPHEMIA. But I don't care for *hors d'œuvre*.

OSSORY. Euphemia, this is a very serious matter for your poor old father.

EUPHEMIA. What have you got to do with it? Really, father—

OSSORY. I have everything to do with it. The fact is, my child—here! I'll make a clean breast of it. I've been gambling, and things have gone wrong. Only temporarily, of course, you understand. Only temporarily. But—oh, if I had only kept out of Fidos!

EUPHEMIA. Is it a dog? [*Whistles.*] Here, Fido, Fido! Trust, doggie, trust!

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OSSORY. That's it! they won't trust, those dogs! To put it short—[*a spasm of agony crosses his face*—Good Lord alive, *I'm* short! If I can't find a couple of hundred thousand before the twelfth I'll be hammered.

EUPHEMIA. And so——?

OSSORY. Very decent young fellow, little Delhomme. I can borrow half a million from him if I want it; but I don't care to unless—unless things—unless you——

EUPHEMIA. I'm the goods, am I? You old bear!

OSSORY. I know, Phemie, I know. It's those damned bulls on Wall Street! How could I foresee——

EUPHEMIA. At least you might have foreseen that I was not a bale of cotton.

OSSORY. But I shall be hammered, my dear child. We shall all have to go to the workhouse!

EUPHEMIA. [*coldly*]. I thought mamma had three thousand a year of her own.

OSSORY. That's just what I say. The workhouse!

EUPHEMIA. My dear father, I really can't pity you. I think you're a fool, and you've insulted me. Good morning!
[*She goes out.*]

OSSORY. Oh, the disgrace of it, the shame of it! She little knows—— How will the Receiver look at that Galapagos turtle deal? Receivers are damned fools. And juries are worse. Ah, Phemie, so little a sacrifice for the father who has given all for you—and she refuses! Cruel! Cruel! Which way can I turn? Is there nobody whose credit—— Let's think. Jenkins? No good. Maur? Too suspicious—a nasty, sly, sneaking fellow! Higginbotham, Ramspittle, Rosenbaum, Hoggenger, Flipp, Montgomery, MacAn—no, hang it!

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no hope in a Mac—Schpliechenspitzel, Togahening, Adams, Blitzenstein, Cznechzaditzch—no use. I wonder where I caught that cold! Who the devil is there that I could ask?

[*Enter THOMAS—OSSORY'S back toward door.*

THOMAS. Mr. Todd. [*Enter TODD—OSSORY doesn't turn.*

OSSORY. I can't see him, Thomas. [*Turns.*] I beg your pardon, Mr. Todd. The fact is, I'm damnably worried over pay-day. I really don't know you well enough to ask you, perhaps, but the fact is, I've a good sound business proposition which I must put before some one, and I believe you're the very man to help me. Now——

[*TODD takes him by the shoulder and whispers in his ear.*

Why, really, that is good of you—damned good of you! Why, damme, sir! you're a public benefactor. Come, let us arrange the preliminaries——

[*They go out, OSSORY clinging tightly to TODD'S arm.*

Enter MRS. OSSORY and CARR, dressed for walking.

MRS. OSSORY. She cut me! You saw it! She cut me absolutely dead!

CARR. Possibly she didn't see you.

[*As MRS. OSSORY is not looking, he employs a gesture which lessens the likelihood of this, by calling attention to her bulk.*

MRS. OSSORY. I know she saw me. My only Duchess!

CARR. There's better duchesses in Burke than ever came out of it, Mrs. Ossory. By the way, unless rumour lies, the jade! you can fly much higher than a paltry Duchess!

MRS. OSSORY. Why, why, what do you mean? Oh, dear Professor, how sweet of you! Or are you joking? Somehow

MR. TODD

one never knows whether you are serious or not! But you wouldn't make fun of my embarrassments—Society is so serious, isn't it? But, oh do! do tell me what they say!

CARR. Well, Mrs. Ossory—you know our mysterious friend?

MRS. OSSORY. Mr. Todd?

CARR. Yes. Well, they say that—he is a King in his own country.

MRS. OSSORY. And I've always disliked and distrusted him so! But perhaps that was just the natural awe that I suppose one must always feel, even when one doesn't know, you know. I wonder, now, if we could get him to a little dinner. One could always pretend one didn't know who he was! Let me see, now! Caviar de sterlet royale——

CARR. Consommé royale, sole à la royale, timbale royale à l'empereur, bouchées à la reine, asperges à la royale, haunch of royal venison—can't insult him with mere baron of beef—pouding royale, glace à l'impératrice, canapé royale—you'll be able to *feed* him all right!

MRS. OSSORY. How clever you are, Professor! Thank you so much. Now who should we ask to meet him?

CARR. I rather expect you'll have to meet him *alone*!

MRS. OSSORY. *Tête-à-tête*! But would that be quite *proper*, Professor?

CARR. How very English!—all you English think that. But—royalty has its own etiquette.

[*Enter* CHARLEY.

Come along, Charley boy, and show me how the new engine works!

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Never mind that old frump of a Duchess, Mrs. Ossory—perhaps Mr. Todd may call. *[Goes out with CHARLEY.]*

MRS. OSSORY. I do hope he meant it. But he's such a terrible man for pulling legs, as they call it.—I can't think where Euphemia picks up all her slang!—If that plain, quiet man should really be a crowned King! Oh! how I would frown at her! Ah! ah! Somebody coming.

[Enter THOMAS.]

THOMAS. Mr. Todd.

[Enter TODD.]

MRS. OSSORY. Oh, my dear Mr. Todd, I am so glad to see you! I'm in such distress! You will help me, won't you?

[TODD bows, smiles, and whispers in her ear. She smiles all over. TODD offers his arm. She goes out on it, giggling and wriggling with pleasure. Enter

EUPHEMIA.

EUPHEMIA. I wonder where mother is! No, I don't want her. I'm too happy. How I love him! How proud I am—when another girl would be so shamed! I love him! I love him! Oh, what a world of ecstasy is this! To be his, and he mine! To be—oh! oh! I cannot bear the joy of it. I want to sit down and have a good cry. *[Sits, crying and laughing with the joy of it.]* Oh, loving Father of all, what a world Thou hast made! What a gift is life! How much it holds of love and laughter! Is there anything more, anything better? I cannot believe it. Is there anything, anybody that could make me happier?

THOMAS. Mr. Todd.

[Enter TODD.]

EUPHEMIA. Good afternoon, Mr. Todd! So glad to see you! Why, how strange you look! What have you to say to me?

[TODD whispers in her ear.]

MR. TODD

EUPHEMIA. How splendid! You mean it? It is true? Better than all the rest! Come, come!

[She throws her arm round his neck and runs laughing out of the room with him.]

[Enter CARR and CHARLEY, a toy steam-engine puffing in front of them; they follow on hands and knees. The engine stops at the other end of the room.]

CHARLEY. Oh, my poor engine's stopped!

CARR. You must pour more spirit into it.

[CHARLEY goes to the cupboard and gets it, busying himself until CARR'S exit. CARR sighs heavily, and sits down thoughtfully.]

Todd's been too frequently to this house. Well, Charley and I must get on as best we can. Life is a hard thing, my God!

“ Meantime there is our life here. Well?”

It seems sometimes to me as if all the world's wisdom were summed up in that one Epicurus phrase. For if Todd has solved all their problems with a word, at least he supplies no hint of the answer to mine. For I—it seems I hardly know what question to ask!

Oh, Charley boy, the future is with you, and with your children—or, can humanity ever solve the great secret? Is progress a delusion? Are men mad? Is the great secret truly transcendental? We are like madmen, beating out our poor brains upon the walls of the Universe.

Is there no Power that might reveal itself?

[Kneels.] Who art Thou before whom all things are equal,

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being as dust? Who givest his fame to the poet, his bankruptcy to the rich man? Who dost distinguish between the just and the unjust? Thou keeper of all secrets, of this great secret which I seek, and have nowise found! This secret for whose very shadowing-forth in parable I, who am young, strong, successful, beloved, most enviable of men, would throw it all away! Oh Thou who givest that which none other can give, who art Thou? How can I bargain with Thee? What shall I give that I may possess Thy secret? O question unavailing! For I know not yet Thy name! Who art Thou? Who art Thou?

THOMAS [*opening the door*]. Mr. Todd. [*Enter TODD.*

CARR [*rising*]. How are you? I'm afraid you find me distracted! Listen: all my life I have sought—nor counted the cost—for the secret of things. Science is baffled, for Knowledge hath no wings! Religion is baffled, for Faith hath no feet! Life itself—of what value is all this coil and tumult? Who shall give me the secret? What is the secret?

[TODD *whispers in his ear.*

Why, thanks, thanks! What a fool I have been! I have always known who you were, of course, but how could I guess you had the key of things? Simple as A B C—or, rather, as A! And nothing to pay after all! “For of all Gods you only love not gifts.” [*Ushers TODD to the door.*] I follow you.

[TODD *smiles kindly on him. They go out.*

[*The child turns; and, finding himself alone, begins to cry.*

CHARLIE. My nice man has gone away. Old Todd has taken him away. I think I hate that old Todd!

[*Enter TODD.*

MR. TODD

I hate you! I hate you! Where is my nice man?

[TODD *whispers in his ear.*

Oh, I see. It is when people get to be grown-ups that they don't like you any more. But I like you, Mr. Todd. Carry me pick-a-back!

[TODD *takes CHARLIE on his shoulder, and goes dancing from the room, the boy crowing with delight.*

CURTAIN.

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THE EQUINOX

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