

The Great Broxopp

BY A. A. MILNE
FOUR CHAPTERS IN HIS LIFE

CHARACTERS

Broxopp.
Nancy (*his wife*).
Jack (*his son*).
Sir Roger Tenterden.
Iris Tenterden.
Honoraria Johns.
Ronald Derwent.
Norah Field.
Benham.
Mary.
Alice.

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The Scene is laid in the Broxopp home of the period.

Twenty-four years pass between Act I. and Act II., eighteen months between Act II. and Act III., and a year between Act III. and Act IV.

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The first performance of this play in London took place at the St. Martin's Theatre on March 6, 1923, with the following cast:

Nancy Broxopp Mary Jerrold. *Mary* Margaret Carter. *Broxopp* Edmund Gwenn. *Benham* J. H. Roberts. *Alice* Gwen Hubbard. *Honoraria Johns* Marjorie Gabain. *Jack Broxopp* Ian Hunter. *Iris Tenterden* Faith Celli. *Sir Roger Tenterden* Dawson Milward. *Norah Field* Beatrix Thomson. *Ronald Derwent* Richard Bird.

THE GREAT BROXOPP

ACT I

SCENE: *The GREAT BROXOPP'S lodgings in Bloomsbury; a humble room in late Victorian days, for BROXOPP has only just begun. He has been married for six months, and we see NANCY (the dear) at work, while her husband is looking for it. He is an advertising agent, in the days when advertising agents did not lunch with peers and newspaper proprietors. Probably he would prefer to call himself an "adviser to men of business." As we see from a large advertisement over the sideboard—drawn and lettered by hand (NANCY'S)—he has been hoping to advise SPENLOW on the best way to sell his suspenders. SPENLOW, we are assured, "gives that natty appearance." The comfort, says THE GREAT ONE, in an inspired moment:*

"The comfort is immense With Spenlow's great invention! Other makes mean Suspense, But Spenlow means Suspension!!"

Many such inspirations decorate the walls—some accepted, some even paid for—and NANCY is now making a fair copy of one of them.

MARY, the Broxopps' servant—NANCY thought they could do without one, but the GREAT BROXOPP wanted to be called "Yes, sir," and insisted on it—well then, MARY comes in.

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NANCY (*without looking up*). Yes, Mary?

MARY. It's about the dinner, ma'am.

NANCY (*with a sigh*). Yes, I was afraid it was. It isn't a very nice subject to talk about, is it, Mary?

MARY. Well, ma'am, it has its awkwardness like.

NANCY (*after a pause, but not very hopefully*). How is the joint looking?

MARY. Well, it's past looking like anything very much.

NANCY. Well, there's the bone.

MARY. Yes, there's the bone.

NANCY (*gaily*). Well, there we are, Mary. Soup.

MARY. If you remember, ma'am, we had soup yesterday.

NANCY (*wistfully*). Couldn't you—couldn't you squeeze it again, Mary?

MARY. It's past squeezing, ma'am—in this world.

NANCY. I was reading in a book the other day about two people who went out to dinner one night—they always dine late in books, Mary—and ordered a grilled bone. It seemed such a funny thing to have, when they had everything else to choose from. I suppose *our* bone—?

MARY. Grilling wouldn't do it no good, ma'am.

NANCY. Well, I suppose we mustn't blame it. It has been a good joint to *us*.

MARY. A good stayer, as you might say.

NANCY. Yes. Well, I suppose we shall have to get another.

MARY. Yes, ma'am.

NANCY. Would you look in my purse? (*MARY goes to the sideboard and opens the purse.*) How much is there?

MARY. Three coppers and two stamps, ma'am.

NANCY. Oh! (*Determined to be brave*) Well, that's fivepence.

MARY. They are halfpenny stamps, ma'am.

NANCY (*utterly undone*). Oh, Mary! What a very unfortunate morning we're having. (*Coaxingly*) Well, anyhow it's fourpence, isn't it?

MARY. Yes, ma'am.

NANCY. Well, now what can we get for fourpence?

MARY (*stolidly*). A turkey.

NANCY (*laughing with complete happiness*). Oh, Mary, don't be so gloomy about it. (*Collapsing into laughter again*) Let's have two turkeys—two tuppenny ones.

MARY. It's enough to make any one gloomy to see a nice gentleman like Mr. Broxopp and a nice lady like yourself starving in a garret.

NANCY. I don't know what a garret is, but if this is one, I love garrets. And we're not starving; we've got fourpence. (*Becoming practical again*) What about a nice chop?

MARY. It isn't much for two of you.

NANCY. Three of us, Mary.

MARY. Oh, I can do all right on bread and cheese, ma'am.

NANCY. Well then, so can I. And Jim can have the chop. There! Now let me get on with my work. (*Contemptuously to herself as she goes on with her drawing*) Starving! And in a house *full* of bread and cheese!

MARY. Mr. Broxopp is not the sort of gentleman to eat a chop while his wife is only eating a bit of cheese.

NANCY (*with love in her voice and eyes*). No, he isn't! (*Proudly*) Isn't he a *fine* man, Mary?

MARY. Yes, he's a real gentleman is Mr. Broxopp. It's queer he doesn't make more money.

NANCY. Well, you see, he's an artist.

MARY (*surprised*). An artist? Now that's funny, I've never seen him painting any of his pictures.

NANCY. I don't mean that sort of an artist. I mean he's—— (*Wrinkling her forehead*) Now, how did he put it yesterday? He likes ideas for their own sake. He wants to educate the public up to them. He doesn't believe in pandering to the public for money. He's in advance of his generation—like all great artists.

MARY (*hopefully*). Yes, ma'am.

NANCY (*pointing to the advertisement of Spenlow's suspenders*). Now, there you see what I mean. Now that's what the artist in Mr. Broxopp feels that a suspender-advertisement *ought* to be like. But Mr. Spenlow doesn't agree with him. Mr. Spenlow says it's above the public's head. And so he's rejected Jim's work. That's the worst of trying to work for a man like Mr. Spenlow. He doesn't understand artists. Jim says that if *he* saw an advertisement like that, he'd buy ten pairs at once, even if he never wore anything but kilts. And Jim says you can't work for men like that, and one day he'll write advertisements for something of his own.

MARY. Lor, ma'am! Well, I've often wondered myself if it was quite decent for a gentleman like Mr. Broxopp to write about things that aren't spoken of in ordinary give-and-take conversation. But then——

NANCY (*with pretty dignity*). That is not the point, Mary. An artist has no limitations of that sort. And—and you're interrupting me at my work.

MARY (*going over to her and just touching her lightly on the shoulder*). Bless you, dearie, you *are* fond of him, aren't you?

NANCY. Oh, I just love him. (*Eagerly*) And he must have that chop to himself, Mary, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write him a little note to say I've been invited out to dinner—and who do you think is going to invite me? Why, you! And we'll have our bread and cheese together in the kitchen. Won't that be fun? (*Suddenly looking tragic*) Oh!

MARY. What's the matter, ma'am?

NANCY. Why, perhaps he'll go out again directly after dinner and then I shan't have seen him all day! (*After thinking it over*) No, Mary, I shall have dinner with him. (*Firmly*) But I shall say I'm *not* hungry. (*There is a sound of whistling on the stairs.*) Listen, there's Jim! Oh, Mary, go quickly! He hasn't seen me for such a long time and he'll like to find me alone.

MARY (*sympathetically*). I know, ma'am.

[*She goes out.*

(*The GREAT BROXOPP comes in. He wears a tail-coat of the period, a wide-awake hat, and a spreading blue tie—"The Broxopp tie" as it is called in later years. He is twenty-five at this time, but might be any age, an impetuous, enthusiastic, flamboyant, simple creature; candid, generous; a gentleman, yet with no manners; an artist, yet not without vulgarity. His beliefs are simple. He believes in himself and NANCY; but mostly in himself.*)

BROXOPP. Nancy!

NANCY. Jim! (*She flies into his arms.*)

BROXOPP (*releasing himself and looking at his watch*). Two hours and twenty minutes since I kissed you, Nancy.

NANCY. Is that all? It seems so much longer.

BROXOPP (*comparing his watch with the clock*). You're right; I'm a little slow. It's two hours and twenty-three minutes. I must have another one. (*Has one.*)

NANCY. Oh, Jim, darling, it's lovely having you back. But you're early, aren't you? Tell me what's been happening.

BROXOPP (*trying to speak indifferently*). How do you know anything has been happening?

NANCY (*excitedly*). Then it *has*! I knew it had! I felt it. Tell me quickly! (*With a sudden change*) No, don't tell me quickly, tell me very, very slowly. Begin from the very beginning when you left here after breakfast. (*Pleadingly*) Only just tell me first that it *is* good news.

BROXOPP (*with an air*). Madam, you see in front of you the Great Broxopp.

NANCY. Yes, but you've told me that every day since we've been married.

BROXOPP (*momentarily shaken, but quickly recovering*). But you believed it! Say you believed it!

NANCY. Of course I did.

BROXOPP (*strutting about the room*). Aha, *she* knew! She recognised the Great Broxopp. (*Striking an attitude*) And now the whole world will know.

NANCY. Is it as wonderful as that?

BROXOPP. It is, Nancy, it is! I have been singing all the way home. (*Seriously*) Nancy, when we have lots of money I think I shall learn to sing. An artist like myself requires to give expression to his feelings in his great moments. Several people on the bus objected to my singing. I'm afraid they were right.

NANCY (*awed*). Are we going to have lots of money one day? Oh, quick, tell me—but slowly right from the beginning. (*She arranges his chair for him.*) Or would you rather walk about, dear?

BROXOPP (*sitting down*). Well, I shall probably have to walk about directly, but—Where are *you* going to sit?

NANCY (*on the floor at his knees*). Here.

BROXOPP (*earnestly*). Nancy, you must get me out of my habit of sitting down before you are seated. It isn't what a gentleman would do.

NANCY (*patting his hand*). It's what a husband would do. That's what wives are for—to make their husbands comfy.

BROXOPP. Well, dear, never hesitate to tell me any little thing you notice about me. I never drop my aitches now, do I?

NANCY (*smiling lovingly at him*). Never, darling.

BROXOPP (*complacently*). Very few people could have got out of that in a year. But then (*raising his hand with a gesture of pride*) Broxopp is not like—— Dear me, have I been wearing my hat all the time?

NANCY. Yes, darling, I love you in your hat.

(*A little upset, BROXOPP takes it off and throws it on the floor.*)

BROXOPP (*pained*). Darling, you should have told me.

NANCY. I love you so—just as you are. The Great Broxopp. Now then, begin from the beginning.

BROXOPP (*his confidence recovered*). Well, after breakfast—a breakfast so enormous that, as I said to you at the time, I probably shouldn't require any dinner after it——

NANCY (*hastily*). Yes, darling, but I said it first, and I really meant it. (*Carelessly*) I don't know how it is, but somehow I feel I shan't be at all hungry for dinner to-day.

BROXOPP. Nancy, what *is* for dinner to-day?

NANCY (*as though dinner were a small matter in that house*). Oh, chops, bread and cheese and all that sort of thing. (*Eagerly*) But never mind dinner now—go on telling me.

BROXOPP. Nancy, look at me and tell me how many chops you have ordered?

NANCY (*bravely*). I thought perhaps one would be enough for you, dear, as you weren't very hungry, and not being hungry myself—

BROXOPP (*jumping up*). I thought so! The Great Broxopp to dine off one chop! The Great Broxopp's wife to dine off no chops! (*He leans against the wall in a magnificent manner, and with a tremendous flourish produces a five pound note*) Woman, buy five hundred chops! (*Producing another five pound note with an even greater air*) Five hundred tons of fried potatoes! (*Flourishing a third note*) Five million bottles of tomato sauce! (*Thumping his heart*) That's the sort of man I am.

NANCY. Jim! Have you earned all this?

BROXOPP (*disparagingly*). Tut! That's nothing to what is coming.

NANCY. Fifteen pounds! (*Suddenly remembering*) Now what would you *really* like for dinner?

BROXOPP (*going over to her and taking her hands*). Nancy, you believed in me all the time. It has been weary waiting for you, but now—(*answering her question*) I think I should like a kiss.

NANCY (*kissing him and staying very close*). Of course I believed in you, my wonderful man. And now they'll all believe in you. (*After a pause*) Who believed the fifteen pounds? Was it Mr. Spenlow?

BROXOPP. Spenlow? Bah! (*He strides across the room and tears down the Spenlow advertisements.*) Spenlow comes down—like his suspenders. *Facilis descensus Spenlovi.* (*Dramatically*) I see the man Spenlow begging his bread from door to door. I see his wife's stockings falling in swathes about her ankles. I see——

NANCY. Darling!

BROXOPP. You're quite right, dear. I'm being vulgar again. And worse than that—uncharitable. When we are rich, we will ask the Spenlows to stay with us. We will be kind to them; we will provide them with suspenders.

NANCY (*bringing him back to the point*). Jim! (*She holds up the money.*) You haven't told me yet.

BROXOPP (*carelessly*). Oh, that? That was from Fordyce.

NANCY. The Fordyce cheap Restaurants?

BROXOPP. The same. I had an inspiration this morning. I forced my way into the office of the man Fordyce, and I took him on one side and whispered winged words into his ear. I said (*dramatically*) "Fordyce fills you for fivepence." It will be all over London tomorrow. "Fordyce fills you for fivepence." What an arresting thought to a hungry man!

NANCY. Shall we have dinner there to-day, dear?

BROXOPP. Good heavens, no! It is sufficient that I drag others into his beastly eating-house. *We* will dine on champagne, regally.

NANCY. Darling, I know you are an artist and mustn't be thwarted, but—there's the rent—and—and other days coming—and——

BROXOPP (*dropping into his chair again*). Nancy, come and sit on my knee. (*With suppressed excitement*) Quick, while I'm sitting down. I shall be wanting to walk about directly. This room is too small for me. (*She comes to him.*) Nancy, it has been a hard struggle for you, I'm afraid.

NANCY. I've loved it, Jim.

BROXOPP. Well, that's over now. Now the real fun is beginning. (*Triumphantly*) Nancy, I'm on my own at last. Broxopp is on his own! (*He puts her down impetuously and jumps up.*) I look into the future and what do I see? I see on every hoarding, I see on the side of every omnibus, I see dotted among the fields along the great railway routes these magic words: "BROXOPP'S BEANS FOR BABIES."

NANCY (*carried away*). Darling!

BROXOPP. Yes! I have begun. And now the world will see what advertisement can do in the hands of an artist. Broxopp's Beans for Babies!

NANCY. But—(*timidly*) do babies like beans?

BROXOPP (*confidently*). They will. I can make them like anything. I can make them *cry* for beans. They will lean out of their little cradles and hold out their little hands and say: "Broxopp. I want Broxopp. Give me my beans."

NANCY (*seeing them*). The darlings. (*Business-like*) Now tell me all about it.

BROXOPP (*really meaning to this time*). It began with—Ah, Nancy, it began with *you*. I might have known it would. I owe it, like everything else, to you.

NANCY (*awed*). To me?

BROXOPP. To you. It was the nail-brush.

NANCY. The nail-brush?

BROXOPP. Yes, you told me the other day to buy a nail-brush. (*Looking at his fingers*) You were quite right. As you said, a gentleman is known by his hands. I hadn't thought of it before. Always tell me, darling. Well, I went into a chemist's. Fordyce had

given me fifteen guineas. I had the odd shillings in my pocket and I suddenly remembered. There was a very nice gentlemanly young fellow behind the counter, and as sometimes happens on these occasions, I got into conversation with him.

NANCY (*smiling to herself*). Yes, darling.

BROXOPP. I told him something of my outlook on life. I spoke of the lack of imagination which is the curse of this country, instancing the man Spenlow as an example of the type with whom we artists had to deal. He interrupted me to say that he had found it so, too. A patent food which he had composed in his leisure moments—I broke in hastily. “Tell me of your food,” I said. “Perhaps,” and I smote my breast, “perhaps *I* am the capitalist for whom you look.”

NANCY. The five hundred pounds!

BROXOPP. The five hundred pounds. The nest-egg which I had been keeping for just such a moment. In a flash I saw that the moment had come.

NANCY (*a little frightened*). Then we shall never have that five hundred pounds behind us again.

BROXOPP. But think of the thousands we shall have in front of us! Millions!

NANCY. We seemed so safe with that in the bank. My little inheritance. No, darling, I’m not disagreeing. I know you’re quite right. But I’m just a little frightened. You see, I’m not so brave as you.

BROXOPP. But you will be brave *with* me? You believe in me?

NANCY. Oh, yes, yes. (*Bravely*) Go on.

BROXOPP (*going on*). He told me about his discovery. A food for babies. Thomson’s Food for Babies, he called it. (*Scornfully*) No wonder nobody would look at it. “The name you want on that food,” I said, “is Broxopp.” Who is Thomson? Anybody. The next man you

meet may be Thomson. But there is only one Broxopp—the Great Broxopp. (*With an inspired air*) Broxopp’s Beans for Babies!

NANCY (*timidly*). I still don’t quite see why beans.

BROXOPP. Nor did he, Nancy. “Mr. Thomson,” I said, “this is *my* business. *You* go about inventing foods. Do I interfere with you? No. I don’t say that we must have this, that, and the other in it. All I do is to put it on the market and advertise it. And when I’m doing that, don’t you interfere with *me*. Why beans? you say. Exactly! I want the whole of England to ask that question. Beans for Babies—what an absurd idea! Who *is* this Broxopp? Once they begin talking like that, I’ve got them. As for the food—make it up into bean shape and let them dissolve it. Or no. Leave it as it is. They’ll talk about it more that way. *Lucus a non lucendo*. Good-morning!”

NANCY. What does *that* mean?

BROXOPP (*off-handedly*). It’s Latin, dear, for calling a thing black because it’s white. Thomson understood; he’s an educated man, he’s not like Spenlow.

NANCY. And do we share the profits with Mr. Thomson?

BROXOPP. He’ll have to take some, of course, because it’s his food. I shall be generous to him, Nancy; don’t you be afraid of that.

NANCY. I know you will, darling; that’s what I’m afraid of.

BROXOPP (*carelessly*). We shall have an agreement drawn up. (*On fire to begin.*) It will be hard work for the first year. Every penny we make will have to be used again to advertise it. (*Thumping the table*) But I can do it! With you helping me, Nancy, I can do it.

NANCY (*adoringly*). You can do it, my man. And oh! how proud I shall be of helping you.

BROXOPP. And the time will come when the world will be full of Broxopp Babies! I look into the future and I see—millions of them!

NANCY (*coming very close*). Jim, when I am all alone, then sometimes I look into the future, too.

BROXOPP (*indulgently*). And what do you see, Nancy?

NANCY. Sometimes I seem to see *one* little Broxopp baby.

BROXOPP (*with a shout*). Nancy! You mean——

NANCY. Would you like to have a little one of your very own, Jim?

BROXOPP. My darling! It only needed this! (*He takes her in his arms.*)

NANCY. My husband!

BROXOPP (*releasing her*). A Broxopp—to carry on the name! A little Broxopp! Nancy, he shall be the first, the pioneer of all the Broxopp Babies! (*Carried away*) I see him—everywhere—sitting in his little vest——

NANCY (*seeing him too*). His little vest!

BROXOPP. Holding out his little pudgy hand——

NANCY. His little pudgy hand!

BROXOPP. And saying to all the world (*he hesitates, and a sudden triumphant inspiration gives him the words*) “I am a Broxopp Baby—are you?”

(*They gaze eagerly into the future, BROXOPP seeing his million babies, NANCY seeing her one.*)

ACT II

SCENE: *A sitting-room in the GREAT BROXOPP’S house in Queen’s Gate. Being the room in which he is generally interviewed, it is*

handsomely furnished, as befits a commercial prince. The desk with the telephone on it, the bookcase, the chairs and sofa, the mantelpiece are all handsome. But what really attracts your eye is the large picture of the baby, looking at you over the end of his cot, and saying: "I am a Broxopp baby—are you?" At least, he says so on the posters; this is the original, in a suitable gold frame, for which JACK BROXOPP sat twenty-three years ago.

(BENHAM, the new butler, is discovered answering the telephone.)

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BENHAM *(at telephone)*. Hello.... Mr. Broxopp is not here for the moment, sir. Can I take a message?... To ring Mr. Morris up some time this morning. Yes, sir.... Thank you, sir. *(He walks back to the door and meets ALICE coming in.)*

ALICE. Oh, Mr. Benham, I was looking for you. There's a young woman, name of Johns, just come to see the master. Would you wish to show her up yourself, Mr. Benham? You see we're not used to a gentleman with us downstairs. It's all so new to us. When you were with His Grace——

BENHAM. Who is this young woman?

ALICE *(giving card)*. She comes from one of the newspapers.

BENHAM *(reading)*. "Miss Honoria Johns. Contributor to *The Queen* and other leading journals." *(Contemptuously)* What does she want? An interview?

ALICE. She didn't say, Mr. Benham, but I expect that's what she wants.

BENHAM. I'll send her away. Bless you, I had to send hundreds of them away when I was with His Grace.

ALICE *(alarmed)*. Oh, but I don't think Mr. Broxopp would like that.

BENHAM (*staggered*). Do you mean to say that he wants to be interviewed?

ALICE. Oh, I'm sure he does. But I suppose he's gone to his office. Oh no, he hasn't, because there's his hat.

BENHAM (*scandalised*). His hat? Has he only got one hat?

ALICE. Only one that he wears. What the papers call the "Broxopp hat."

BENHAM (*to Heaven*). If anybody had told me a year ago that I should take service in a house where we only wore one hat—but there! God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.

ALICE. Oh, but it isn't as if Mr. Broxopp was just an ordinary gentleman. You mustn't think that, Mr. Benham.

BENHAM. You all make too much of your Mr. Broxopp, my girl. After all, who is he? What's his family?

ALICE. Well, there's only Mr. Jack, of course.

BENHAM (*contemptuously*). Mr. Jack isn't "family," my girl. Mr. Jack is "hissue." Not but what Mr. Jack is very well in his way. Eton and Oxford—I've nothing to say against that, though I happen to be Cambridge myself. But who's the family? Broxopp! There isn't such a family.

ALICE. Well, but I'm sure he's very rich, Mr. Benham.

BENHAM. Rich, yes, but what does he *do* with his money? Does he hunt or shoot? Does he entertain? Has he got a country-house?

ALICE (*sticking to it*). I'm sure you couldn't find a nicer gentleman than Sir Roger Tenterden who lives next door, and came to dinner here only last Tuesday with his daughter.

BENHAM. Tenterden? Ah, now that *is* family, my girl. That's the best I've heard of your Mr. Broxopp as yet. But you mustn't stand

talking here all the morning. Just go down and tell that young woman to wait until I send for her. They're used to waiting.

ALICE. Yes, Mr. Benham.

[She goes out.]

BENHAM (*picking up hat delicately and putting it down again*). One hat—and what a hat!

(BROXOPP comes in. Very much the BROXOPP that we know, though his hair, moustache, and beard are greying slightly, and his face is more lined. He still wears a broad-tailed coat and a spreading blue tie, though he probably pays more for them nowadays.)

BROXOPP. Well, Benham, what is it?

BENHAM. A gentleman rang up, your Grace—I beg your pardon—“Sir,” I should have said.

BROXOPP. Call me your Grace if it's any comfort to you, Benham.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

BROXOPP. Settling down all right?

BENHAM. I am quite comfortable, sir, thank you.

BROXOPP. I'm afraid you feel that you have come down in the world?

BENHAM. In a sense, yes, sir.

BROXOPP. Well, you'll have to climb up again, Benham, that's all. Did you ever read a little book—you can get it at all bookstalls—called *Broxoppiana*?

BENHAM. In a general way, sir, I read nothing later than Lord Lytton.

BROXOPP (*genially*). Well, this is by Lord Broxopp—a few suggestive thoughts that have occurred to me from time to time—with photograph. On page 7 I say this: “Going there is better fun than getting there.” I’ve got there, Benham. You’re just going there again. I envy you.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.... I wonder if I might take the liberty of asking your advice, sir, in a matter of some importance to myself.

BROXOPP. Why not?

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

BROXOPP. What is it? You want to get married?

BENHAM (*shocked*). Heaven forbid, sir.

BROXOPP. Well, Benham, I’ve been married twenty-five years, and I’ve never regretted it.

BENHAM. I suppose one soon gets used to it, sir. What I wanted to take your advice about, sir, was a little financial matter in which I am interested.

BROXOPP. Oh!... I’m not sure that you’re wise, Benham.

BENHAM. Wise, sir?

BROXOPP. In asking my advice about little financial matters. I lost five thousand myself last month.

BENHAM (*alarmed*). Not in West Africans, I trust, sir?

BROXOPP. God knows what it was in. Jack said they were going up.

BENHAM. I’m sure I’m sorry to hear it, sir.

BROXOPP. You needn’t be. That sort of thing doesn’t worry me (*with a snap of the fingers*) that much. I’d sooner lose five thousand on the Stock Exchange than lose one customer who might have

bought a five shilling bottle of Broxopp's Beans, and didn't. You should speak to Sir Roger the next time he comes to dinner. He's gone into the City lately, and I daresay he can put you on to a good thing.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir. It would be very condescending of him. Would you like me to brush your hat, sir?

BROXOPP. I should like you to tell me who this gentleman was who rang up.

BENHAM. Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. A Mr. Morris. He wishes you to communicate with him this morning, sir, if convenient.

BROXOPP. Morris? Ridiculous fellow. All right, Benham.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

(He picks up the hat and goes out as BROXOPP goes to the telephone.)

BROXOPP *(at telephone)*. Central 99199 ... yes.... Is Mr. Morris in? Broxopp speaking.... Yes.... Hullo, is that you, Mr. Morris? Broxopp speaking.... Yes, I've got your letter.... Oh no, no, no, I don't care how good the offer is. I don't want to sell.... Well, you see, I happen to be interested in Broxopp's Beans.... Yes, yes, of course, but I mean artistically interested. It's my work, Morris; it's what I live for. I am much too fond of it to want to share it with anybody.... That's final, Morris.... Well, look here, if your man is as keen as all that to buy Broxopp's Beans I'll tell you what I'll do. *(He looks up at NANCY as she comes in, and nods affectionately to her, and then goes on speaking down the telephone.)* I'll let him have one of the large bottles for two and ninepence. Ha, ha, ha! *(Greatly pleased with himself)* Good-bye, Mr. Morris. *(He puts back the receiver, and says to NANCY)* Morris has a man who wants to buy Broxopp's Beans. I said I'd let him have one of the large bottles for two and ninepence. Rather good, Nancy, wasn't it? We must put it in the next edition of *Broxoppiana*. *(Thoughtfully)* I'm not often funny. *(He kisses her hand and leads her to the sofa.)*

NANCY. Dear one ... aren't you going to the City this morning?

BROXOPP (*on the sofa with her*). I don't know. There's not much to do just now. Besides (*tapping his button-hole*), how could I go?

NANCY (*getting up*). Oh, you baby. Have you been waiting for me to put that in? (*She goes to a bowl of carnations and takes one out.*)

BROXOPP. Well, I couldn't go without it, could I? Broxopp without his pink carnation—what would they say in the City? And after you'd put it in for me for twenty years, how could I put it in for myself?

NANCY (*giving it the final touch*). There!

BROXOPP (*looking from it to her with a satisfied smile*). Now, then, give me a kiss, and perhaps I'll go.

NANCY. You're only a boy still, Jim; much younger than Jack.

BROXOPP. Oh, Jack's just at the age when they're oldest. He'll grow out of it. Now then, what about that kiss?

NANCY. Keep young, Jim. (*She kisses him and he takes her in his arms.*)

Enter BENHAM noiselessly.

BENHAM (*addressing the ceiling*). I beg your pardon, sir. (*They disengage hastily.*) But there's a young woman called from one of the newspapers. I think she desires an interview for the journal with which she is connected. Or something of that nature, sir. (*He hands BROXOPP her card.*)

BROXOPP. Ah, yes. Well, show her up then.

BENHAM. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out.*]

BROXOPP (*indignantly*). What I say is this, Nancy. If a man can't kiss his own wife, on his own sofa, without being interrupted, he isn't

living in a home at all; he's living in an hotel. Now, I suppose that the dignified gentleman who has just left us despises us from the bottom of his heart. His Grace would never have been so vulgar as to kiss his *own* wife on the sofa.

NANCY. It doesn't matter very much, Jim, does it? And I expect we shall get used to him.

BROXOPP. I don't know why we ever had the fellow—except that Master Jack thought it went better with Eton and Oxford. Eton and Oxford—was that your idea or mine?

NANCY. Yours, dear.

BROXOPP. Oh! Well, the only thing they taught him there was that his father's tie was the wrong shape.

NANCY (*carried back as she looks up at the picture*). There never was a better baby than Jack.

BROXOPP (*looking at the picture too*). Yes, he used to like my tie in those days. He was never so happy as when he was playing with it. Funny how they change when they grow up. (*Looking at his watch*) What are you doing this morning?

NANCY (*getting up*). All right, darling. I'm going. I know you like being alone for interviews.

BROXOPP (*going to the door with her*). But you must come in, Nancy, at the end. That went well last time. (*Quoting*) "Ah," said Mr. Broxopp, as a middle-aged but still beautiful woman glided into the room, "here is my wife. My wife," he went on, with a tender glance at the still beautiful woman, "to whom I owe all my success." As he said these words——

NANCY. Oh, I expect this one won't write that sort of rubbish.

BROXOPP (*indignantly*). Rubbish? I don't call that rubbish.

NANCY. Well, then, nonsense, darling. Only—I rather like nonsense.

(NANCY goes out. Left alone, the GREAT BROXOPP gets ready. He spreads out his tie, fingers his buttonhole, and sees that a volume of Shakespeare is well displayed on a chair. Then he sits down at his desk and is discovered by MISS JOHNS hard at it.)

BENHAM *(announcing)*. Miss Johns.

(BENHAM goes out, leaving MISS JOHNS behind; a nervous young woman of about thirty, with pince-nez. But BROXOPP is being too quick for her. He has whisked the receiver off, and is busy saying, "Quite so," and "Certainly, half a million bottles," to the confusion of the girl at the Exchange.)

BROXOPP. Sit down, Miss Johns, won't you? If you'll excuse me just a moment—*(Down the telephone)* Yes ... yes, C.O.D. of course.... Good-bye. *(He replaces the receiver and turns to her.)* Well, Miss Johns, and what can I do for you?

MISS JOHNS *(nervously)*. You saw my card, Mr. Broxopp?

BROXOPP. Did I? Then where did I put it? You're from——?

MISS JOHNS. Contributor to *The Queen* and other leading journals.

BROXOPP. Yes, yes, of course. *(Encouragingly)* And you—er——

(He comes away from the desk, so that she can see him better. A little dazzled, she turns away, looks round the room for inspiration, and catches sight of the picture.)

MISS JOHNS *(impulsively)*. Oh, Mr. Broxopp, is that IT?

BROXOPP *(proudly)*. My boy Jack—Eton and Oxford—when he was a baby. You've seen the posters, of course.

MISS JOHNS. Who hasn't, Mr. Broxopp?

BROXOPP. I always say I owe half my success to Jack. He was the first Broxopp baby—and now there are a million of them. I don't know whether—er—you——?

MISS JOHNS (*coyly*). Oh, you flatter me, Mr. Broxopp. I'm afraid I was born a little too soon.

BROXOPP. A pity, a pity. But no doubt your relations——

MISS JOHNS. Oh yes, my nephews and nieces—they are all Broxopp babies. And then I have always felt specially interested in Broxopp's Beans, Mr. Broxopp, because I live in (*archly*) Bloomsbury, Mr. Broxopp.

BROXOPP. Really? When my wife (*he looks towards the door in case she should be choosing that very opportune moment to come in*), to whom I owe all my success—when my wife and I were first married——

MISS JOHNS (*eagerly*). I know, Mr. Broxopp. You see, that's what makes me so interested. I live at Number 26, too, in the floor below.

BROXOPP. Now, now, do you really? Well, I declare. That's very curious.

MISS JOHNS. I've only been there the last few months. But the very first thing they told me when I took the room was that *the* Mr. Broxopp had begun his career in that house.

BROXOPP (*pleased*). Ah, they remember!... Yes, that was where I began. There was a man called Thomson ... but you wouldn't be interested in *him*. He dropped out very soon. He had no faith. I paid him well—I was too generous, my wife said. But it was worth it to be alone. Ah, Miss Johns, you see me now in my beautiful home, surrounded by pictures, books—(*He picks up the Shakespeare and reads the title*) “The Works of Shakespeare” (*and puts it down again*)—costly furniture—all that money can buy. And perhaps you envy me. Yet I think I was happier in those old days at Bloomsbury when I was fighting for my life.... Did you ever read a little book called *Broxoppiana*?

MISS JOHNS. Now, isn't that funny, Mr. Broxopp? I bought it only last Saturday when I was going down to my brother's in the country.

BROXOPP. Well, you may remember how I say, "Going there is better fun than getting there." It's true, Miss Johns.

MISS JOHNS (*proud of knowing it*). Didn't Stevenson say something like that?

BROXOPP (*firmly*). Not in my hearing.

MISS JOHNS. I mean *the* Stevenson. I think he said, "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

BROXOPP. Yes—well, that's another way of putting it. To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive. So Stevenson found it out, too, did he? Well, he was right.... All those years when I was building up Broxopp's Beans I was happy, really happy. I'm a fighter. I like taking the public by the throat and making them look at me. That's over now. I've got 'em almost too tame. They come and eat the Beans out of my hand. And though my success has given me something—a comfortable home—servants to wait upon me—butlers and what not—the best authors to read—(*he picks up the Shakespeare and puts it down again*)—even a son from Eton and Oxford to gladden my old heart—yet I miss something. I miss the struggle of those early days when my dear wife and I (*he has another look at the door just in case*) set out together hand in hand to beat the world. (*Sighing*) Ah, well! (*In a business-like voice*) Now what can I tell you about myself, Miss Johns? Pray, don't be afraid of making any notes that you like.

MISS JOHNS. I shall remember what you said, Mr. Broxopp, without taking any notes.

BROXOPP. Ah, well, you must please yourself about that. (*Looking at his watch*) Now, then, I'm waiting for you.

MISS JOHNS. I—— (*She hesitates.*)

BROXOPP (*kindly*). Perhaps you're not used to interviewing? This is the first time you've done it, eh?

MISS JOHNS. Well, I don't do it, as a rule. And I'm afraid——

BROXOPP. Well, perhaps I can help you with it. You must send me your manuscript. My wife (*he looks at the door with a frown—what has happened to her?*) to whom I owe so much, was my first interviewer—ah, that was many years ago. She picked up a guinea for it, but that wasn't the important thing. It was the publicity. “A Talk with one of our Commercial Princes”—I don't suppose the Editor had ever even heard of me. (*Chuckling*) Ah, but we bluffed him. Lord, how we piled it on. “Tell me, Mr. Broxopp, I said——” that was my wife. “Mr. Broxopp leant against his marble mantelpiece——” that was me—“and fingered the well-known Broxopp tie——” (*indicating it*) same one as this. “Ah, my dear boy, he said——” The dear boy was my wife, of course—she signed herself N. R. Chillingham, her maiden name; you women weren't so popular on the Press in those days—we pretended she was a man. “Ah, my dear boy, he said, and I shall never forget the look which came over his rugged face——” my wife didn't like rugged, but I insisted; sounded more like a commercial prince——“there is only one secret of success, and that is hard work.” (*With a sigh*) Ah, well, those days are over. Happy days! The world seems to have grown up since then. (*Looking at his watch*) Well, Miss Johns?

MISS JOHNS (*very nervous*). Mr. Broxopp, I don't know how to tell you. I didn't really come to interview you at all to-day.

BROXOPP (*staggered*). But your card——

MISS JOHNS. Oh, I am on the Press, and please, Mr. Broxopp, I shall certainly write an article—perhaps two articles—about what you've told me, and I do live in the house where you used to live, and I was so interested in you, but—— (*She hesitates.*)

BROXOPP (*mollified by the two articles*). Well?

MISS JOHNS (*making another effort*). You see, I used to live with my brother in the country. And he has a small farm. And then I came

to London. And he has invented a chicken food and it is so good, and I told him I'd ask you if—— You see, I felt that I knew you because of where I lived—I wondered—(*Taking the plunge*) Mr. Broxopp, did you ever think of doing anything besides Broxopp's Beans?

BROXOPP (*nodding to himself*). You wondered if I'd take up this food? Put it on the market? Boom it?

MISS JOHNS. Oh yes!

(*He thinks it over and then shakes his head slowly.*)

BROXOPP. You're too late, Miss Johns.

MISS JOHNS. Oh, has somebody else——

BROXOPP. Twenty-four years too late. Now, if you'd come to me twenty-four years ago——

MISS JOHNS. But I was only six then. (*Hastily*) I mean, about six.

BROXOPP. Yes, if you'd come to me then—— (*Thoughtfully*) Broxopp's Beans for Brahmas—Yes, I would have made that go. But not now. It wouldn't be fair to the babies. I couldn't do 'em both justice. (*More to himself than to her*) You see, Broxopp's Beans for Babies—it isn't just my living, it's my whole life.

MISS JOHNS (*getting up*). I'm afraid I oughtn't to have mentioned it.

BROXOPP. Oh, that's all right. You'll never get on if you don't mention things. (*Shaking hands*) Well, good-bye. Mind, I shall expect to see that article—two, didn't you say? And if there's anything else you want to know—— (*He stops beneath the picture on his way with her to the door*) A pretty baby, wasn't he?

MISS JOHNS. Lovely!

BROXOPP. Yes, my wife and I—— (*The door begins to open*) Ah, here she is. (*He keeps his attention on the picture*) Nancy, we were just looking—— Hullo, Jack!

JACK (*coming in*). Sorry. Are you engaged? (*He sees them beneath that beastly picture, and a look of resigned despair comes into his face—he shrugs his shoulders.*)

BROXOPP (*to MISS JOHNS*). My boy Jack. Eton and Oxford.

(*And he looks it, too—except perhaps for his hair, which is just a little more in keeping with his artistic future than his educational past.*)

MISS JOHNS (*now completely upset*). How do you do? It's so nice to see the—I mean, we were just looking—but I mustn't keep you, Mr. Broxopp—and thank you so much, and I'm so sorry that you—but of course I quite understand. Good-bye! Good-bye! (*And she hurries out.*)

JACK (*strolling towards the sofa*). Bit nervous, isn't she?

BROXOPP. You frightened her.

JACK (*sitting down*). Fleet Street—and all that?

BROXOPP. Yes. (*Looking round the room*) Where's my hat?

JACK. I say, you're not going?

BROXOPP. Must. Got to work, Jack. (*Looking at him mischievously*) When are you going to begin?

JACK (*airily*). Oh, as soon as I've got the studio fixed up.

BROXOPP. You still want to be an artist?

JACK. Well, dash it, I've only just begun wanting. You've had twenty-five years of Broxopp's Beans—and—and I suppose you still want to go on, don't you?

BROXOPP (*smiling*). Well, that's true. Where's my hat?

JACK. I say, never mind about that beastly hat. You've got to stay at home this morning. I want to talk to you.

BROXOPP (*looking up from his search*). Hullo, boy, what's the matter?

JACK. I say, do sit down—I keep losing sight of you. (*BROXOPP sits down obediently.*) That's better.

BROXOPP. Well?

JACK (*defensively*). Well?

BROXOPP. What's happened?

JACK. What do you mean—happened?

BROXOPP. Well, what is it you want to tell me?

JACK. I didn't say I wanted to tell you anything. I just said, "Let's have a talk." I don't see why a father and a son shouldn't have a little talk together sometimes.

BROXOPP. Neither do I, Jack. Only I thought perhaps it wasn't done. Bad form and all that.

JACK. Oh, rot!

BROXOPP. You see, I don't want you to be ashamed of me.

JACK (*uneasily*). I say, I wish you wouldn't talk like that.

BROXOPP. Oh, but I mean it. You see, I'm very proud of *you*, Jack.

JACK (*with a smile*). You're much prouder of your blessed beans, aren't you? Own up.

BROXOPP. Well, you were born about the same time, but I've always had more control over the beans.

JACK (*nervously*). You know, I rather wonder sometimes, now that we've decided that I'm not going into the business, that you don't chuck it yourself, and retire into the country. It's worth a good bit, I should think, if you did want to sell it.

BROXOPP. Would you invest the money for me?

JACK (*with a smile*). Well, I own I had a bit of rotten luck last time, but I daresay I'd do it as well as you would.

BROXOPP. That's not saying much. I don't profess to watch the markets.

JACK. Neither do I, only young Archie happened to say that he'd heard from a man whose uncle knew a fellow who—— Well, it just didn't come off, that's all. But Sir Roger knows all about that sort of thing. He'd do it for you.

BROXOPP. Well, if I ever do want to sell it, I daresay I'll consult Sir Roger, but that won't be for a long time yet. (*He gets up*) Well——

JACK (*jumping up hastily*). No, look here, you mustn't go yet. We've only just begun to talk. (*Pushing him back into his chair*) That's right.

BROXOPP (*good-humouredly*). Is this a conspiracy to keep me away from the office, or what?

JACK (*plunging at it*). Dad, you see before you the happiest man in the world——

BROXOPP (*surprised*). Oh!

JACK. Only, it's dashed difficult. (*Having another shot*) What do you think Mother's doing at this moment?

BROXOPP. Just what I've been wondering. I wanted her in here.

JACK. Yes, well, she's upstairs, introducing herself to her future daughter-in-law.

BROXOPP. Jack! Who?

JACK. Iris Tenterden. (*But he can't help being self-conscious about it.*)

BROXOPP (*eagerly*). My dearest Jack! So that's what you've been trying to get out all this time! (*He comes forward with both hands held out*) But I'm delighted!

JACK (*more moved than he cares to show*). Thanks, Dad!

BROXOPP (*pulling himself up humorously*). Tut, tut, I was forgetting. (*Formally*) May I congratulate you, Mr. Broxopp?

JACK (*smiling*). Silly old ass!

BROXOPP (*sitting on the sofa with him*). But this is wonderful news. Why aren't you more excited? (*Apologetically*) I mean as excited as Eton and Oxford will permit?

JACK. You do like her?

BROXOPP. Certainly. She has a way of—a way of—Well, I can't put it into words, Jack, but she's the only one of your friends who has told me frankly that she doesn't like my tie. The others try to convey the impression that I'm not wearing a tie at all—that I am in Holy Orders, or if not in Holy Orders, have a very large beard which— (*He indicates with his hand how such a beard would completely cover his tie.*)

JACK. Well, but your tie is a bit—well, *you* know, I mean frankly, isn't it?

BROXOPP (*smiling*). Yes, but so am I a bit—well, *you* know, I mean frankly, isn't it? If I hadn't been, you would never have gone to Eton and Oxford. But don't think I don't like Iris. I do—immensely. Well, if you're as happy together as Nancy and I have been, you'll do. Twenty-five years, Jack, and I always say that—

JACK. Good old Dad. She's a ripper, isn't she?

BROXOPP. She'll do you a lot of good. But tell me more about it. When did you first discover that she was—a ripper?

JACK. Oh, months ago, but we only fixed it up at that dance last night. I pushed round this morning to see Sir Roger and talk things over. He's coming round for a pow-wow directly.

BROXOPP. My boy married! And it seems only yesterday that your mother and I were just beginning to keep house together, and there was no Jack at all.

JACK. Well, of course, it seems longer ago than that to me.

BROXOPP (*looking at the picture*). "I am a Broxopp baby, are you?" Perhaps one of these days there may be——

JACK. Steady on, Dad. You're not going to talk to Iris like that, I hope.

BROXOPP (*with a laugh*). I shall be strictly proper and respectable, my boy. Not a word shall escape my lips of which you would disapprove.

JACK. You know what I mean. When a young girl has only just got engaged, you don't want to start talking about——

BROXOPP. Say no more. And so Sir Roger is coming round too, is he?

JACK. Yes.

BROXOPP. What does *he* say about it?

JACK (*knowing that it's got to come now*). Well, that's just it. You see Iris and I—I mean he and I—well, of course I always thought so—I mean I don't want you to think that Iris—though naturally she agrees with me—well, we think, I mean I think—oh, thank the Lord—here *is* Iris.

(IRIS comes in with NANCY—tall, cool, confident, with something of the boy in her; utterly honest and unafraid. But even if you don't like these qualities, you forgive her because she is lovely.)

NANCY. Jack's told you, Jim?

BROXOPP. Yes, the rascal. Iris! *(He holds out his hands to her.)*

IRIS *(taking them)*. Daddy Broxopp! Bend down. *(He bends towards her and she kisses him gently on the forehead.)* There! You don't mind being called Daddy Broxopp? Nancy doesn't mind; I mean being called Nancy. I've been talking it over with her, and she's going to let me call her Nancy because she's so young and pretty.

BROXOPP *(enjoying it)*. And I'm not young and pretty?

IRIS. No, you're middle-aged and Broxoppy. It's a nice thing to be.

BROXOPP *(taking her hands again)*. Thank you for thinking her young and pretty.

NANCY. I don't feel very young, with a big son wanting to get married.

IRIS. He? He's only a baby. *(She blows a kiss to the picture.)*

JACK *(resigned)*. Oh, Lord!

BROXOPP. Well, Iris, if you're as happy together as Nancy and I have been, you'll do. Twenty-five years we have been married, and I always say that if it hadn't been for Nancy——

NANCY *(stopping him)*. Yes, dear.

IRIS. If it hadn't been for Nancy, there wouldn't have been a Jack for me to marry.

BROXOPP *(joining in the general laughter)*. Well, that's true. And what does Sir Roger say about it? *(The laughter stops suddenly. JACK and IRIS look at each other.)* Hullo, he does say something about it?

NANCY. I think we'd better sit down, darling, and——

(She leads the way to the sofa. They sit down.)

BROXOPP. Well, what is it? Jack's been trying to get something out for the last five minutes.

IRIS. Jack, you're a coward. I wasn't. I told Nancy.

JACK. Oh, all right then.... Look here, Dad, you'll think me a beast for what I'm going to say, but I want you and Mother to understand that it's not just a sudden idea put into my head by—*(he looks at IRIS and goes on)* by Sir Roger, but it's what I've felt for years.

BROXOPP. Well?

(NANCY takes his hand and presses it.)

JACK. Well, then—I'm—I'm—— *(From the heart)* Well, I'm simply *fed up* with Broxopp's Beans.

BROXOPP *(surprised)*. But you haven't had them since you were a baby.

JACK *(seeing the opening)*. Haven't had them? Have I ever stopped having them? Weren't they rammed down my throat at school till I was sick of them? Did they ever stop pulling my leg about them at Oxford? Can I go anywhere without seeing that beastly poster—a poster of me—me, if you please—practically naked—telling everybody that I love my Beans. Don't I see my name—Broxopp, Broxopp, Broxopp—everywhere in every size of lettering—on every omnibus, on every hoarding; spelt out in three colours at night—B-R-O-X-O-P-P—until I can hardly bear the sight of it. Free bottles given away on my birthday, free holidays for Broxopp mothers to celebrate my coming of age! I'm not a man at all. I'm just a living advertisement of Beans.

BROXOPP *(quietly)*. I think that's putting it a little too strongly, Jack.

(NANCY presses his hand and strokes it gently.)

JACK. I know it is, but that's how I've felt sometimes. Of course I know that if it hadn't been for Broxopp, I'd be sitting on a high stool and lucky to earn thirty bob a week. But you must see my side of it, Dad. I want to paint. How can any one called Broxopp be taken seriously as an artist? How can I make any sort of name with all those Beans and babies overshadowing me and keeping me out of the light? I don't say I'm ever going to be a great painter, but how do I stand a chance as things are? "Have you seen the new Broxopp?" What's that going to mean to anybody? Not that I've painted a picture, but that you've brought out a new-sized bottle, or a full strength for Invalids, or something.

BROXOPP. I think you exaggerate, Jack.

JACK. I know I do. But you can't get over it that it's going to be pretty rotten for me. It's always been rotten for *me*—and now it's going to be rotten for Iris.

BROXOPP. Is it, Iris? You'd tell me the truth, I know.

IRIS. I want to marry Jack, Daddy Broxopp. But I don't want to marry the Beans. I told Nancy so.

NANCY (*to BROXOPP*). I do understand, dear.

JACK. I don't want you to think that Iris put this into my head. It's always been there.

IRIS (*frankly*). I expect I brought it out, though.

BROXOPP. And what does Sir Roger say about it?

JACK. Sir Roger says that his grandson is not going to have a name that every Tom, Dick and Harry gapes at on the hoardings.

IRIS. I ought to explain that Jack wants to marry *me*, not Father's way of expressing himself. I told Father so.

JACK. Still, you do see his—well, our point of view? Don't you, Dad?

NANCY. Oh yes, dear.

BROXOPP. Certainly, my boy.

JACK (*relieved*). Good man. I thought you would.

BROXOPP (*getting up*). The only thing I'm wondering is whether there is any chance of your seeing mine.

JACK (*surprised*). Yours?

BROXOPP (*on his own hearth—THE GREAT BROXOPP—but speaking quietly*). I was educated at a Board school, Iris—I daresay you've noticed it. I used to drop my aitches—I don't think you've noticed that—Nancy got me out of it. I wear funny clothes—partly because it is in keeping with the name I have made for myself; partly, I daresay, because I've got no taste. But, you see, at fourteen, the age at which Jack went to Eton, I was earning my own living. I took a resolve then. I told myself that one day I would make my name of Broxopp famous. I made it famous. My name; Broxopp. Well, that's all. That's my point of view. But don't think I don't see yours.

(*IRIS looks at him wonderingly and then goes over and sits by NANCY'S side.*)

IRIS. You must be very, very proud of him.

NANCY. I am, dear; he knows it.

JACK (*miserably*). Well, of course, when you talk like that, you only make me feel an utter beast.

IRIS (*with a sigh*). The only thing is that the utter beast feeling might pass off. Whereas the feeling about Broxopp's Beans never will. It's a rotten thing to say, but I expect it's true.

(There is a moment's silence, broken by the arrival of SIR ROGER TENTERDEN. He is a magnificent-looking man, with a military moustache and tight-fitting black tail-coat with a light waistcoat. His manner is superb—the sort of manner that can borrow a thousand pounds from anybody and leave the creditor with the feeling that he has had a favour conferred upon him. He is an intense egotist, although his company does not always realise it.)

The three BROXOPPS are distinctly overawed by him; JACK, of course, less than the other two.)

BENHAM *(enjoying it)*. Sir Roger Tenterden!

[Exit BENHAM.]

TENTERDEN. How do you do, Mrs.—ah—Broxopp?
(Metaphorically they all stand to attention.)

NANCY. How do you do, Sir Roger?

TENTERDEN. How do, Broxopp? Ah, Jack—Iris.

NANCY. Where will you sit, Sir Roger?

TENTERDEN. Don't trouble, I beg you. *(The best chair is ready for him.)* I shall be all right here. *(He sits down.)* You will forgive me for intruding upon you in the morning, but having just heard the great news—well, we must congratulate each other—eh, Mrs. Broxopp?
(He smiles pleasantly at her.)

NANCY *(smiling too)*. Indeed, we must.

BROXOPP *(flattered)*. That's very good of you, Sir Roger. I need hardly say how delighted I am that Jack and—er—your Iris should have——

TENTERDEN. Quite so, quite so. Well, they've fixed it up between themselves without consulting *us*, Mrs. Broxopp—quite right too, eh, Iris?—eh, Jack?—*(he gives them his pleasant smile)*—but we old people must come in at the end and have our say. Eh, Broxopp?

BROXOPP. Very glad to talk over anything you like, Sir Roger. Of course, I should give Jack a suitable allowance——

TENTERDEN (*holding up a protesting hand*). Ah, well—that—I have no doubt whatever—I, too, would see that my daughter—but all that can be arranged later. That goes without saying. But naturally there are also other matters which will require to be discussed. I don't know if Jack——

IRIS. You mean about the Beans? I told Daddy Broxopp.

TENTERDEN (*blankly*). You told—ah?

IRIS. Daddy Broxopp.

BROXOPP (*with a proud smile*). What she is pleased to call me, Sir Roger.

TENTERDEN. Oh—ah—yes. Quite so. Well there, we all understand the position. (*With his pleasant smile*) That clears the ground, doesn't it, Mrs. Broxopp?

NANCY. It's much better to have things out.

TENTERDEN. You put it admirably. It was with that purpose that I came round this morning. Jack had given me a hint of his feelings and—well, naturally, I had my feelings, too. It is a matter which, after all, concerns me very closely.

BROXOPP (*puzzled*). Yes?

TENTERDEN. Surely, my dear Broxopp! Iris's child, Jack's child, would be—*my* grandson!

IRIS. Father always looks well ahead. They have to in the City—don't they, Father?

TENTERDEN (*kindly*). My dear Iris, we have to do many things in the City, as Mr. Broxopp knows——

BROXOPP. Oh, I know nothing of your part of the City. I'm not a financier. It's no good coming to *me* for a good investment.

TENTERDEN (*with a bow*). Then may I hope that you will come to me if ever you should want one?

BROXOPP (*taken aback*). Thank you. It's very good of you, Sir Roger.

TENTERDEN. Not at all. But I was saying that we need not talk about the City now. In all walks of life we have to look ahead. And I have to ask myself this, Mrs. Broxopp. Is "Roger Broxopp" a desirable name for—my grandson?

IRIS (*to JACK*). Father's got as far as the christening now. I shall have another baby directly.

JACK (*miserably*). I wish he wouldn't.

BROXOPP. I see your point of view, Sir Roger. Don't think that I don't see it.

TENTERDEN (*bowing*). That is very generous of you. And I think it is important. There is—ah—a poster to which my attention has naturally been called, saying—ah—"I am a Broxopp baby, are you?" I think—— (*He looks enquiringly at BROXOPP.*)

BROXOPP. That's right, Sir Roger. I thought of that twenty-five years ago. Do you remember, Nancy?

NANCY (*pressing his hand*). I remember, Jim.

TENTERDEN. An excellent poster for its purpose, I have no doubt, Mrs. Broxopp. An excellent picture, no doubt, of Master Jack at that age. (*He smiles at JACK.*) But seeing that all babies are pretty much alike——

NANCY (*quickly*). Oh no!

TENTERDEN (*with a charming bow*). Who would contradict a woman on such a question? Let me say rather that since, to the undiscerning male, all babies are alike, there would be the danger, the very serious danger, that people might suppose the words beneath the picture to have been uttered by—(*he pauses dramatically*) my grandson!

IRIS. Roger Broxopp.

TENTERDEN. Exactly. A Broxopp baby. (*To BROXOPP*) Of course I am saying nothing against the food, which is, I am sure, admirably suited for its purpose. I am merely looking at the matter in the interests of—my grandson.

BROXOPP. Quite so, Sir Roger, quite so. You see that, Nancy?

NANCY. Oh yes, dear.

TENTERDEN. Well, my friend Jack has been talking it over with me. I think we agree that for Mr. Broxopp to retire from the business—and I am sure he has well earned his rest after all these years of strenuous work—for him to retire and settle down in the country, would not altogether meet the case. The name of Broxopp would continue with the business—one could not get away from it. (*To BROXOPP*) I think I am right in saying that?

BROXOPP. Undoubtedly, Sir Roger. The name *is* the business.

TENTERDEN. That was my view. So our friend Jack and I think that something more must be done. A question merely of another name. He has suggested, my dear Mrs. Broxopp (*with a bow*), your name, Chillingham.

BROXOPP. I don't quite understand.

TENTERDEN. Merely that you should start your new life—freed from the cares of business—as—ah—Chillingham.

BROXOPP. Oh!

IRIS (*to herself*). Roger Chillingham.

TENTERDEN (*charmingly to NANCY*). A name I should be proud for my grandson to bear. I seem to remember a Chillingham in the Coldstream with me years ago. Are yours military people?

NANCY (*eagerly*). Oh yes! My father was a sergeant-major in the Wiltshires.

TENTERDEN (*bearing it gallantly*). Ah! A younger branch, no doubt. But it is a good name, Chillingham. After all, why should the wife always take the husband's name? Eh, Mrs. Broxopp? Why should not the husband take the wife's, the son take the mother's... Jack Chillingham to Iris Tenterden. And a handsome couple, are they not? I shall be proud of my grandson.

IRIS (*amused, as always, by her father*). Say something, Jack. A few words of thanks.

TENTERDEN. You agree with me, Jack?

JACK (*mumbling*). I've been telling Father.

BROXOPP. Of course, I quite see your point of view, Sir Roger. Don't think that I don't see it perfectly. *You* see it, don't you, Nancy?

NANCY. Oh yes, dear. I should be very proud for you to take my name. Just as I was very proud to take yours.

TENTERDEN. Charmingly put, Mrs. Broxopp. But alas! It is no longer your husband's name. He has been too generous with it. He has given it to the world. That is what I have to think of—for my grandson. (*He gets up*) Well, Mrs. Broxopp, I have to thank you for listening to me so courteously, and I need not tell you how glad I am that we see eye to eye in this matter. Broxopp, we must have a talk some day in the City. And if I can be of any assistance to you in the matter of your investments, or in any other particular, pray regard me as entirely at your service.

BROXOPP. It's very good of you, Sir Roger.

TENTERDEN. Not at all. Jack, you're dining with us to-night, I understand. If you can spare him, Mrs. Broxopp. Well, I must get along to the City. Busy times just now. Good-bye, and again my apologies for interrupting your morning.

NANCY. Good-bye, Sir Roger. *(She rings the bell.)*

TENTERDEN. Then I shall be seeing you one of these days, Broxopp. Good-bye! *(He goes beautifully out.)*

(There is silence after he has gone. The BROXOPPS are a little overwhelmed.)

Then BROXOPP goes over to the fireplace, and stands with his back to it. In this position he feels more like himself.)

BROXOPP. Well, Jack?

(JACK says nothing. IRIS goes over to NANCY and sits beside her.)

IRIS. He's a little overwhelming, isn't he? But you get used to it—and then you aren't overwhelmed.

NANCY. Iris!

IRIS. Nancy thinks I'm too modern. She's afraid that when we go out together, everybody will say, "What a very fast creature Mrs. Broxopp's elder sister is!"

BROXOPP. Mrs. Chillingham's elder sister, isn't it?

IRIS. So it is, Daddy Chillingham.

JACK *(getting firmly to his feet)*. Look here, Dad, if you don't change yours, I don't change mine. But if you think you have given the Beans a good run for their money, and you like to sell out and settle down in the country as Chillingham, well, I'll say thank you. Iris and I have got precious little right to ask it, and Sir Roger has got no right at all——

IRIS (*rising and protesting in the TENTERDEN manner*). Surely, my dear Broxopp, I have a right to consider—my grandson!

JACK. Shut up, Iris, for a moment—no right at all, but—but I'll thank you. Only I'm not going to be Chillingham while you and Mother are Broxopp. I've made up my mind about that.

IRIS. And I'm not going to be Tenterden while all of you are Chillingham. I've made up my mind about that.

BROXOPP. Is there any reason why I shouldn't keep on the business as Chillingham?

JACK (*doubtfully*). N—no.

IRIS. As long as you make Jack a good allowance.

JACK. Shut up, Iris.

IRIS. Well, that's what it comes to, darling. We may as well be honest about it.

NANCY (*to IRIS*). Don't make it too hard for him. And, of course, Jim will make him an allowance until his painting brings him in enough for both of you.

BROXOPP (*after a pause*). Jack, does Eton and Oxford allow you to kiss Iris sometimes?

IRIS. *I* allow him to.

BROXOPP. Well, there's an empty drawing-room upstairs. You will probably be interrupted by a gentleman called Benham. But if you tell him you aren't married to each other, he won't mind.

JACK (*awkwardly*). Oh, it's all right—very decent of you, but——

IRIS (*getting up and taking him firmly by the arm*). Come along.

JACK. Yes, but hadn't we better——

IRIS. Jack, do you really think Daddy Broxopp is being tactful?

JACK. Well, of course it's——

IRIS. Oh, my dear, we aren't the only pair of lovers in the house. Can't you see that *they* want to be alone?

JACK (*stuttering*). Oh—oh! (*She leads him away.*)

BROXOPP (*smiling*). She'll teach you a lot, my boy.

IRIS (*stopping beneath the picture with the unwilling JACK*). Good-bye, Baby Broxopp!

(*She blows a kiss to it and they go out. BROXOPP goes over to his wife and sits on the sofa with her. She takes his hand.*)

NANCY. Darling, do you mind very much?

BROXOPP. I wonder if Jack's painting is ever going to come to anything.

NANCY. He must find that out for himself, mustn't he? We can't help him.

BROXOPP. Iris is a fine girl; I like a girl who tells the truth.

NANCY (*smiling to herself*). I don't think you'd have liked her to write your advertisements.

BROXOPP (*chuckling*). Well done, Nancy. You've got me there.

NANCY. Say you liked me doing them.

BROXOPP (*gravely*). I liked you doing them. I've liked everything you've ever done for me.... All the same, Nancy, we *were* truthful. Artistically truthful. An artist is a man who knows what to leave out.

Did I say that in *Broxoppiana*? (*Remembering suddenly that there will never be another edition*) Oh, well, it doesn't matter now.

NANCY. You won't mind very much? We've had our time. It's Jack's time now.

BROXOPP. Yes, we've had our time. Twenty-five years. After all, we've had the best of the fun, Nancy. Sir Roger is quite right about the name. It has been a handicap to Jack—I can see it now. It mustn't be a handicap to Jack's son.

NANCY. There's no reason why you shouldn't keep on with the business if you like.

BROXOPP (*doubtfully*). I don't think Sir Roger——

NANCY. But it's for *you* to decide.

BROXOPP (*jumping up*). No, I'll do the thing handsomely! You didn't marry a baronet, Nancy, an old county name, but there's a Broxopp way as well as a Tenterden way. I do my things the Broxopp way, and the Great Broxopp is not the man for half-measures. We'll make a clean sweep of it all. We'll rest—you and I together in the country—Mr. and Mrs. Chillingham. You've given me everything, you won't mind giving me your name?

NANCY (*entranced by him*). Jim, you *are* the Great Broxopp!

BROXOPP (*entranced by himself*). I am! (*He takes her hands and lifts her out of the sofa.*) Propose to me, Nancy!

NANCY (*shyly*). Jim, I love you; will you marry me and live with me in the country and take my name?

BROXOPP. I will. (*He kisses her, puts her back in the sofa and goes to the telephone. It is good-bye now to the Beans.*) Central 99199.... Hullo, is Mr. Morris in? Broxopp speaking ... *Broxopp* speaking.... Good heavens, haven't you ever heard the name of Broxopp before? For the last time—(*he looks up at NANCY*) for the last time, Nancy—(*down the telephone very firmly*) Broxopp speaking!

ACT III

SCENE: *The big hall in the country place which MR. CHILLINGHAM (né BROXOPP) has bought. Through the open front doors can be seen a hint of the drive and the park beyond. It was JACK who chose it, and he has done the GREAT BROXOPP rather well; there was no such view from that third floor in Bloomsbury.*

It is about four o'clock in the afternoon. Hidden away in a big arm-chair sits NORAH FIELD, deep in a book. She is about twenty, wears a very short tweed skirt and very serviceable country shoes, has very decided opinions, and no hesitation at all about expressing them. RONNY DERWENT comes in. RONNY is also twenty, but younger than NORAH, and with no views on life other than that one's hair ought to be kept well down. Without seeing NORAH, he rings the bell, and lights a cigarette while waiting for BENHAM to attend to him.

Enter BENHAM

* * * * *

RONNY. Oh, I want a whisky and soda, please, Benham.

BENHAM. Yes, sir.

NORAH (*from her chair*). You don't really want one, Ronny.

RONNY. Good Lord! I didn't know you were there.

NORAH. Mr. Derwent won't have a whisky and soda, Benham; you can get him a glass of water if he's thirsty.

RONNY. Look here, Norah—— (*She looks at him, and he ends up weakly*) Oh, very well.

BENHAM. Will you have the glass of water, sir?

RONNY (*sulkily*). No, thanks.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

[*BENHAM goes out.*]

RONNY. I didn't know you were here, Norah. All the same, I don't know why I shouldn't have a drink if I want one.

NORAH. I can't stand the way you children are always wanting to drink. You've done nothing to make you thirsty.

RONNY. If you knew a bit more, you'd know that it's doing nothing that makes you thirsty. Talk to me and I'll struggle on without it. What are you reading?

NORAH. Nobody you've ever heard of, Ronny. A man called Meredith.

RONNY. Oh! Any good?

NORAH (*looking at him with a smile*). In his way. A different way from the *Winning Post*, you know.

RONNY (*wanting to be fair*). Oh, well, there's no accounting for tastes. Now, what do you think I found old man Chillingham reading last night?

NORAH (*returning to her book*). Don't know.

RONNY. *Broxoppiana*. Ever heard of it?

NORAH. I've seen it on the bookstalls.

RONNY. *Broxoppiana*. That's the name of the heroine, I suppose. And no better than she should be, if you ask *me*, because, when old man Chillingham saw I was looking, he slipped the book into his pocket and pretended to be very busy over another one.

NORAH. And I suppose you looked over his shoulder and found out what that one was too?

RONNY. Well, if you want to know, I didn't. I knew what it was without looking over his shoulder. It was *The Science of Dry Fly Fishing*. Old man Chillingham trying to be a sportsman in his old age.

NORAH (*shutting her book*). I think you had better have that whisky and soda, Ronny; at any rate, it will prevent you trying to discuss your host with another of his guests.

RONNY. Rot, old girl. Jack's my host.

NORAH. This is not Jack's house.

RONNY. Then why did Iris write to me as if it was? "Dear Ronny, do come and spend a few days with us.—Yours sincerely, Iris Chillingham." How's that, eh?

NORAH (*patiently*). It is Mr. Chillingham's house, but Mrs. Chillingham has been away for a few weeks. So Iris is playing hostess. I happened to mention that I had a disreputable little boy-cousin called Ronald Derwent, and she very kindly——

RONNY. Not so much of it, Norah. I knew Iris before you did, and I knew Jack as soon as you did. And if it's old man Chillingham's house, all I can say is that old man Chillingham has got a pretty taste in claret.

NORAH. Really, Ronny, to hear you talk about claret, anybody would think that you were grown up. Whereas we all know what you do with your threepence a week every Saturday. Pear-drops, my lad, pear-drops.

RONNY (*grimly*). Very well, Norah, you've done for yourself.

(*He seizes a cushion and advances upon her. She jumps out of the chair and runs to the other side of the hall, picking up a cushion on the way.*)

NORAH. You'll get your hair ruffled if you aren't careful.

RONNY. You'll be lucky if you have any hair left by the time I've finished with you. (*He hurls a cushion at her.*)

NORAH. Oh, rotten shot!

(*He goes to the sofa to get more cushions, and dodges behind it as she flings hers at him. They are interrupted by BENHAM, who is crossing the hall with whisky and papers for SIR ROGER.*)

RONNY (*who is about to throw a cushion*). All right, Benham. You go on.

BENHAM (*politely*). After you, sir. (*The cushion whizzes past his head at NORAH*) Thank you, sir.

(*He goes on to the morning-room. By the time that he returns the combatants have disappeared, leaving most of their ammunition behind them. As he crosses by the window, BROXOPP is seen approaching from the outside. BROXOPP is now the complete country gentleman, with fishing outfit. But he looks unhappy in his new clothes, and he is not the BROXOPP he was.*)

BROXOPP. Ah, Benham.

BENHAM (*taking his things*). Any sport, sir?

BROXOPP. No.... That is to say, *I* didn't have any. I can't speak for the fish. They may have enjoyed it.

BENHAM. I've heard gentlemen say that it can be a very attractive recreation, even when (*he looks into the obviously empty basket*)—as in this case, sir.

BROXOPP. To a man who really enjoys fishing—as I am told I do—no doubt that is so.

BENHAM. Yes, you're quite an enthusiast, sir.

BROXOPP. So they assure me, Benham. Golf is another pastime to which—I understand—I am devoted. (*He looks in astonishment at the disordered hall, with its overturned chairs and scattered cushions*) Has anything been happening?

BENHAM (*as he begins to restore the place to order*). Nothing at all out of the way, sir.

BROXOPP. Oh!

BENHAM. Quite a feature of the best country-house life, sir, as you might say. The younger members of the party are often extremely partial to it. In this case, sir, Mr. Derwent and Miss Field were letting off their high spirits with a few cushions. It brought back the old castle days very pleasurably, sir.

BROXOPP. Yes.... Yes.... They come back, the old days, don't they, Benham?

BENHAM. They do, indeed, sir.

BROXOPP (*with a sigh*). Yes. Mrs. Chillingham has not arrived yet, I suppose?

BENHAM. No, sir. Is she expected back this afternoon?

BROXOPP. Of course she is. The 4.10. (*Looking at his watch*) I suppose the train was late. Didn't Mr. Jack tell you about sending in the car?

BENHAM. I have not had any instructions myself, sir, but no doubt he informed Rogers. He was down at the stables after lunch with Mr. Derwent.

BROXOPP. Ah, yes.... Well, I'll go and wash. (*He moves off.*)

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

[*He goes out.*]

(BROXOPP is still in the hall, putting a cushion or two straight, when RONNY comes back, his hair rather ruffled.)

RONNY. Hullo! Any luck?

BROXOPP *(wishing to be fair to the sport)*. Compared with yesterday—yes.

RONNY. What happened yesterday?

BROXOPP. I fell in.

RONNY *(tittering)*. Bad luck. I'm not frightfully keen on fishing myself—I prefer golf. We're having a foursome after tea; I expect you'd rather practise by yourself, wouldn't you?

BROXOPP. Thank you, I shall not be playing golf after tea to-day.

RONNY. I thought you were so frightfully keen. Jack said so.

BROXOPP. Ah, well, Jack would know. But, you see, Mrs. Chillingham will be here directly——

RONNY *(surprised)*. Oh, is she coming back?

BROXOPP *(nodding)*. Yes. She has been away three weeks now, staying in London with her sister. She'll be glad to get back. She is very fond of the country, you know. And this house.

RONNY *(kindly)*. Well, it isn't half a bad place really. I don't know what the shooting's like.

BROXOPP. Very good, Jack's friends tell me.... Well, I must go and wash, if you will excuse me, Mr. Derwent.

RONNY *(with a nod)*. Righto.

[BROXOPP goes out.]

(RONNY lights a cigarette and goes across to the billiard-room door and opens it.)

RONNY. Good Lord, haven't you finished yet?

JACK *(from inside)*. This very minute as ever is.

(IRIS and JACK come out together)

RONNY. Who won?

IRIS. Jack gave me twenty-five and—— My dear Ronny, what *have* you been doing to your hair?

RONNY *(looking at himself in the glass—horrificed)*. Good Lord, I oughtn't to be seen like this.

[He hurries out.]

JACK. It's all right, we won't tell anybody. I suppose I was as young as Ronny once, but it must have been a long time ago. *(He goes to the bell and rings it)* Shall we have tea in here?

IRIS. If you like.

JACK. I suppose Dad isn't back yet.... Oh, Lord!

IRIS. What is it, darling? Have you been bad?

JACK. I'm a blessed idiot.

Enter BENHAM.

BENHAM. Yes, sir?

JACK. Benham, is any one meeting the 4.10?

BENHAM. I have given no instructions in the matter myself, sir.

IRIS. Jack, do you mean to say that nobody is meeting Nancy?

JACK. Kick me if you like, darling. It's my fault entirely. (*Looking at his watch*) Send the car at once, Benham. It will probably be too late, but it can bring the luggage along.

BENHAM. Yes, sir. Rogers informs me that he only requires the level five minutes when meeting trains—unhampered, as you might say.

JACK (*to IRIS*). I'm afraid she'll walk through the woods, you know. (*To BENHAM*) We'll have tea in here.

BENHAM. Yes, sir. [*Exit BENHAM.*]

IRIS. Jack, you *have* been bad.

JACK. After all, darling, it's only a mile by the short way, and it's a jolly afternoon. There won't be anything about it in the papers.

IRIS (*shaking her head at him*). Oh, Jack! (*She sits on the arm of his chair*) Jack, don't you think it's time we had a house of our own? This has been very jolly for a few months, but—you *do* want to get started on your work, don't you?

JACK. Of course I do, sweetheart. Only, we can't begin till we get the studio, can we?

IRIS. London's full of studios, lazy one.

JACK. Yes, but you don't realise how important it is to an artist to get the exact surroundings. Now that we've found *the* studio in *all* London, and the man who's in it happens to be leaving in six months, it's absurd to go looking about for another. It's simply a question of waiting.

IRIS. Six months?

JACK. Well, if we're lucky, he might die suddenly.... You should read your Bible more. Moses, or somebody, said that no husband ought to do any work for a year after he's married. I quite agree with him.

(*Playing with her hair*) Did I ever tell you that I much prefer your hair to the stuff you see hanging in shop windows in Bond Street?

IRIS (*softly*). Do you?

JACK. It's all fastened on quite naturally, isn't it?

IRIS. I think it must be.

JACK. Wonderful hair.... Did I ever tell you that I like your eyes much better than the ones you see lying about in fishmongers' shops next to the ice?

IRIS (*smiling*). Do you?

JACK. They've got so much more expression.... Did I ever tell you—
—Hullo, here's tea. (*BENHAM comes in*) Has the car gone, Benham?

BENHAM. Yes, sir.

JACK. Good. Let's hope the train's late.

BENHAM (*arranging the tea*). I'm afraid it is not very likely, sir. I remember His Grace once commenting on the curious fact that, whenever one particularly wished a train to be late, it was invariably punctual.

JACK. His Grace seems to have been a highly original thinker.

BENHAM. Yes, sir, he was very well tolerated in the family.

JACK. Well, this must seem rather a holiday for you after the intellectual life at the Castle. You must make the most of it, Benham.

BENHAM. Thank you, sir.

IRIS. Is Mr. Chillingham back yet?

BENHAM. Yes, madam. He will be down directly. Sir Roger is engaged in the morning-room, madam, with the financial papers, and will not require tea.

IRIS. Thank you.

BENHAM. Thank you, madam. [*He goes out.*]

IRIS. I wonder what Father's up to now?

JACK (*carelessly*). Losing Dad's money for him, I expect.

IRIS (*seriously*). Jack, you don't really mean that?

JACK (*laughing*). Of course not, darling. What's the matter with giving me some tea? We needn't wait for Dad. (*To NORAH and RONNY as they come in*) Come along. You're just in time.... Ah, now you look quite nice again, Ronny.

(*They all sit round the tea-things.*)

IRIS. What had you been doing to him, Norah?

NORAH. I told him he wasn't grown-up yet, and he tried to prove he was by throwing cushions at me.

JACK. That's a nasty one, Ronny. You'll have to write to your solicitors about that.

RONNY. Now, look here, I don't want any more of it, Norah. I'm older than you, anyway. And Jack and Iris aren't exactly bald yet.... What about that foursome after tea?

IRIS (*doubtfully*). Well, I'm not quite sure if I——

RONNY. If you're thinking about Mr. Chillingham, he doesn't want to play. I asked him.

IRIS (*relieved*). Oh well, then, that's all right. He wants to wait for Nancy, I expect. Bless them!

NORAH. I'm not at all sure that I approve of this old-fashioned sentiment about married life.

JACK. I say, this is rather alarming.

(BROXOPP comes in, and stands waiting, awkwardly.)

NORAH. Women will never be properly free——

RONNY *(offering plate)*. Oh, Lord! have a bun!

NORAH *(taking one)* ——until it is recognised that marriage——

JACK *(seeing BROXOPP)*. Hullo, Dad, what luck?

BROXOPP *(sitting in an uncomfortable chair a little way from the table)*. Ah, tea.

JACK. Fish rising?

BROXOPP. They may have risen, Jack, but if so they went back again. *(Looking at his watch)* The train's very late. She ought to have been here by now.

IRIS. There was some mistake about the car, dear. She will be here directly. *(She gives BROXOPP his tea.)*

BROXOPP. Thank you, thank you.

NORAH. I was just saying, Mr. Chillingham, that women will never be properly free until it is recognised that marriage is only an intellectual partnership in which both the contracting parties have equal rights. Of course, I can hardly expect you to agree with me.

BROXOPP *(looking blankly at her)*. I'm afraid I——

RONNY. Agree with you? I should think not, indeed. If you knew a little more about the world——

NORAH. My dear Ronny, the only world that *you* know is bounded on the north by Newmarket, on the south by the Savoy, on the east by the Empire, and on the west by the *Winning Post*.

IRIS. You'll have to write to your solicitors again, Ronny.

JACK. I say, Norah, you mustn't say things like that without warning. Must she, Dad? Bread and butter? (*He offers the plate to BROXOPP, who takes a piece.*)

BROXOPP (*bewildered*). I'm afraid I hardly——Thank you.

IRIS. Was that original, Norah?

NORAH. Perfectly. Why not? I suppose Jack thinks that all the clever things must be said by men. I don't know what you feel about it, Mr. Chillingham——

BROXOPP. I—er——

JACK. Then, all I can say is, that you must have bribed Ronny to lead up to it.

IRIS. They might go on at the Palladium as “Ronald and Norah,” Ronald leaning over the piano in white gloves.

JACK. Norah in a smile and shoulder-straps threatening to return to Dixie.

NORAH (*to BROXOPP*). This, Mr. Chillingham, is the marriage of intellect on an equal basis, which I was advocating just now.

BROXOPP. You—er—were advo——?

JACK. Ronny, it's *your* turn to say something brilliant.

RONNY. No, thanks, I'll leave that to Norah's husband. When they are living in intellectual companionship together, they can fire off epigrams at each other all day long. What a life! Don't you agree with

me, Mr. Chillingham? Have another bun, won't you? (*He takes one himself.*)

BROXOPP. Miss Field was talking about the marriage of intellects. I remember. (*To RONNY with the bun plate*) No, thank you.

NORAH. Don't eat too many, Ronny. We've got to beat them afterwards, you know. You're not playing, Mr. Chillingham?

BROXOPP. No, I think I——

JACK. Beat us, indeed! I should like to see you do it.

RONNY. Well, you will, Jack, old boy.

IRIS (*to BROXOPP*). You'll want to wait for Nancy; won't you, dear?

RONNY. Do play if you'd like to, you know. Of course, it will dish the foursome rather.

BROXOPP. Thank you, Mr. Derwent, but I shall be waiting for Mrs. Chillingham.

NORAH. I was saying just now, Mr. Chillingham, that I don't altogether approve of married people——

JACK. Help! She's leading up to her epigram again.

BROXOPP. Yes, Miss Field? You were saying——?

RONNY. I say, don't encourage her; we've had it all once. (*To IRIS, as he gets up*) Are you ready?

IRIS. I think so; aren't we, Jack? (*To BROXOPP*) Will you have some more tea, dear?

BROXOPP. Not now, thank you, Iris. I'll wait for Nancy.

JACK (*finishing his tea*). I say, what's the hurry? I've only just begun.

RONNY. Rot. Come on.

IRIS (*getting up*). I'll have half-a-crown on it, Norah.

NORAH. Done.

RONNY. You, too, Jack?

JACK. Rather!

RONNY. Good man! What about Mr. Chillingham? Care to bet against us? I'll give you five to four as you're a friend.

BROXOPP. No, I think not, thank you, Mr. Derwent.

RONNY. Perhaps you're wise. You wouldn't have a chance. (*To the others*) Come along.

IRIS. Benham will make you some fresh tea, dear. Give Nancy a special kiss from me.

BROXOPP. Thank you, Iris, I will.

NORAH (*at the door*). The whole question of kissing seems to me—
—

RONNY. Oh, come off it. (*He drags her away.*)

JACK. Cheer-oh, Dad! You and Mother might come along and watch us if you've nothing better to do. (*To RONNY, in front*) All right, we're coming.

[*They go out.*]

(*Left alone, BROXOPP rings the bell, and then sits down in rather a bewildered way.*)

BENHAM comes in.

BROXOPP. We shall want some fresh tea for Mrs. Chillingham when she comes in.

BENHAM. Yes, sir. I think I saw her just coming through the rose-garden, sir.

BROXOPP (*jumping up and going to the door*). Coming through the—you don't mean to say that—— Why, Nancy! (*He brings her in*) Benham, get that fresh tea at once!

BENHAM (*going to tea-table*). Yes, sir.

NANCY. How are you, Benham? Isn't it nice to be back! Yes, I should like some tea, please. And you had better send the car for my luggage.

BROXOPP. Your luggage? You don't mean——

BENHAM. The car has gone, madam.

NANCY. Ah, that's right.

[*BENHAM goes out.*]

BROXOPP (*horrified*). Nancy, you weren't met?

NANCY. No, darling. I suppose there was some mistake.

BROXOPP (*throwing up his hands in despair*). I thought I could leave that much to Jack. Well, let's have a look at you. (*He holds her at arms' length*) And they forgot all about you!

NANCY. Oh, but I enjoyed my walk, you know. The woods, Jim! You never saw anything like them just now.

BROXOPP. Oh, well, nothing matters now you're here. (*He kisses her.*) Do you know Miss Norah Field, Nancy?

NANCY. I expect she was at the wedding, wasn't she? Iris told me she wanted to ask her here. Is she nice?

BROXOPP (*kissing her again*). She doesn't approve of kissing.

NANCY (*sitting down at the tea-table*). Perhaps she's never tried. (*Enter BENHAM.*) Tea! how nice! You must have it with me, Jim.

BROXOPP (*firmly*). I'm going to.

BENHAM. Is there anything more, madam?

NANCY. No, thank you. Are you quite well, Benham?

BENHAM. Yes, thank you, madam. Pretty well, considering.

NANCY. That's right.

[*BENHAM goes out.*

(*As soon as they are alone NANCY blows BROXOPP a kiss, and then pours out tea.*)

NANCY. Well, how has everybody been getting on without me?

BROXOPP (*tapping his chest*). Me?

NANCY. You, and everybody. I suppose Sir Roger is still here?

BROXOPP. Oh yes.

NANCY. Well, all of you. Have you been very lonely without me?

BROXOPP. Very.

NANCY. The one letter I had from Iris seemed to say that you were all enjoying yourselves very much. What have *you* been doing? You didn't tell me much about yourself.

BROXOPP. Oh, fishing, golf—all the usual things. Talking to Jack and his friends. (*Grimly*) They are wonderful talkers.

NANCY (*proudly*). So are you, Jim.

BROXOPP (*shaking his head*). The world is getting too quick for me. When I talk I like to finish what I have to say. I never seem to have a chance now.... But never mind about me. Tell me about yourself. How's old London looking?

NANCY (*smiling*). Just the same.... Where do you think I was yesterday?

BROXOPP (*excitedly*). Broxopp's?

NANCY (*shaking her head*). No—but not far wrong. Bloomsbury way.

BROXOPP. Number 26?

NANCY. Yes! I happened to be that way, and I thought I'd go past the door, and there was a board up on the third floor, so I went in and asked to look over the rooms—pretended I was just married. There they were, just the same—and I did wish you had been with me.

BROXOPP (*with a laugh*). We've climbed a bit since those days.

NANCY. We always knew we should, didn't we?

BROXOPP. And I began as an errand-boy at fourteen! Let Mr. Ronny Derwent beat that if he can!

NANCY. I'm sure Mr. Ronny Derwent couldn't.

BROXOPP (*casually*). And you didn't happen to look in at Broxopp's at all?

NANCY. Oh no. I don't suppose anybody would have known me.

BROXOPP (*eagerly*). Old Carter would—I suppose he's still there. They wouldn't get rid of Carter. He always used to remember how you came up the first day we opened the office, and I'd had lunch sent in—do you remember?—and a bottle of champagne. The first

champagne you'd ever had—do you remember, Nancy?—and how frightened you were when the cork came out?

NANCY (*gently*). I remember, Jim.

BROXOPP. I thought perhaps you might just have passed by outside—on your way somewhere. (*Wistfully*) I suppose you still see the same—the same advertisements everywhere? Have we—have they got any new ones?

NANCY. I didn't notice any.

BROXOPP (*nodding his head*). They can't do better than the old ones. (*After a pause*) Of course, there are new ideas—(*he gets up and walks about*)—there was one I was thinking of this morning when I was out—nothing to do with me now—I just happened to think of it. (*He is carried away by it as he goes on*) I don't know if you've ever seen a man drawing on a film—you see a few lines first, which mean nothing, and then gradually it begins to take shape. Well, you'd have your posters like that—altering every week. A large poster with just a few meaningless lines on it. Everybody would wonder what it meant. They'd all talk about it. Next week a curve here and there, a bit of shading somewhere. People get more and more interested. What is coming? And so it goes on. And then, in the last week, the lines all join together, some of them become writing, you see “BROXOPP'S”—— (*He breaks off, pulls himself together, and says casually*) The idea just came to me this morning when I was out. Of course, it's nothing to do with me now. (*He gives a little laugh and sits down again.*)

NANCY (*who has been listening raptly*). It's a wonderful idea.

BROXOPP (*pleased*). Not bad, is it? (*With an effort*) However, that's nothing to do with it, now.

NANCY (*with a sigh*). No, not now.

BROXOPP. And how did you leave Emily?

NANCY. Oh, she was very well. She sent her love to you.

BROXOPP. That's good. And did you bring me an evening paper?

NANCY (*smiling*). Of course I did. (*She takes it out of her bag*)
Knowing what a baby you are.

BROXOPP (*apologetically*). There's something about an evening paper—— You know, Nancy, I think I miss my evening paper more than anything. (*He opens it*) So much more happens in an evening paper. Of course, this is an early edition.... And so Emily was well, was she? That's good.

NANCY. They'd had rather a fright about their money. There was a Building Society—I forget its name—all the advertisements said it was a wonderful investment——

BROXOPP. They didn't put their money into it?

NANCY. They were just going to when——

BROXOPP. That's all right. Because here you are—in the Stop Press News. (*Reading*) “Great City Failure. Collapse of Excelsior Building Society.” Was that the one?

NANCY. Jim! (*Trying to remember*) Excelsior—no, I don't think—— Well, it doesn't matter, because they didn't put their money in, anyhow. A friend warned them——

BROXOPP. Funny how everybody thinks he can make money in the City without working for it. People used to say to me, “You're a business man.” I used to say, “I'm not a business man. I'm an artist. I have large ideas. I *employ* business men.” Same way I employ Sir Roger. He knows; I don't. I am above all that.

NANCY. I've been thinking about Sir Roger. *Does* he know?

BROXOPP (*a little alarmed*). What do you mean, Nancy?

NANCY. Of course, he's quite honest, but I think sometimes we've been rather foolish in letting him have so much to say in the investing of your money. I suppose you keep an eye on things for yourself, Jim?

BROXOPP (*hastily*). Yes, yes, of course I do.... He is a little difficult to—er—I mean he *has* rather a way with him, which—— But I must certainly go into things with him. You're quite right, Nancy. I'm not going to let Sir Roger or any one else play ducks and drakes with the money which *I* earned.

NANCY. The money on which we were going to retire so happily.

BROXOPP (*with a sigh*). Yes!

NANCY (*with a sigh*). Yes! (*They are silent for a little.*) No more anxieties, no more hard work. Just a happy, quiet life, all the day to yourself, doing whatever you liked.

BROXOPP (*less heartily*). Er—yes. Yes.

NANCY. Fishing——

BROXOPP (*doing his best*). Yes.

NANCY. Golf——

BROXOPP (*looking at her and looking away again*). Yes.

NANCY. Talking to Jack's friends—(*BROXOPP doesn't exactly say anything*) enjoying yourself from morning till night.

BROXOPP. You, too, Nancy. A house always full of people—plenty of servants to look after—bazaars to open—society——

NANCY (*with a sigh*). Yes!

(*They are silent again. Then BROXOPP—sure that they are alone—brings his chair a little nearer to Nancy's.*)

BROXOPP. You know, Nancy, sometimes I have hoped—I mean, I have thought—that perhaps Sir Roger—that perhaps he is being a little reckless—a little foolish—that perhaps——

NANCY (*eagerly*). Oh, Jim! Do you think he is?

BROXOPP. Supposing he came to me and said, “The fact is, Brox”—I mean Chillingham—“the fact is, Chillingham, things haven’t turned out quite as I expected, and—er—we have had losses.” I should say, “That’s all right, Sir Roger, I don’t blame you; you have done your best.” And even if it meant giving up the house, and——

NANCY. And the fishing, and the golf——

BROXOPP. Er—exactly. I shouldn’t reproach him.

NANCY. No, dear.

BROXOPP (*drawing his chair still closer and speaking eagerly*). Suppose we found that we only had £1000 a year left—I mean after we’d provided for Jack and Iris——

NANCY (*surprised*). A thousand?

BROXOPP. Well, six hundred. I’m only supposing. Six hundred. Enough for just a little house—well, where shall we say? I—I don’t think the country, do you?

NANCY. Well, of course, I *do* like the country, Jim, but——

BROXOPP. The worst of the country is that people will come and stay with you. One is never alone.

NANCY. Yes.... And you *must* have your evening paper.

BROXOPP (*with a shrug*). Oh, well.... Now, I thought of a little house, Streatham way, as it might be. You’re in touch with everything—you get the papers—you have neighbours who don’t come and live with you, but drop in when you want them—you can get to London easily, and yet, at the same time—— Or Norwood, say.

NANCY. Norwood, yes.

BROXOPP. I daresay I should join the Borough Council. I've no doubt I could give them a few ideas——

NANCY. Of course you could.

BROXOPP. I daresay it isn't often they have an artist on the Borough Council. And then there would be a Norwood Literary and Debating Society, no doubt. They might care about a lecture on modern methods of advertising, or something of the sort—a reading from *Broxoppiana*, maybe—one way and another there would be plenty to occupy us. What do you say, Nancy?

NANCY (*thoughtfully*). I think perhaps £800 a year would be safer.

BROXOPP. Well, we should want a couple of servants, I suppose. You could manage with a couple?

NANCY. Oh yes!

BROXOPP. Say £80 a year for the rent—with a bit of a garden—you'd like that, wouldn't you?—rates, taxes, say another——

(But at this moment, when they are just moving into the house, SIR ROGER comes in. In some confusion, the BROXOPPS get to their feet.)

TENTERDEN. Ah, Mrs. Chillingham, so you're back! Welcome home!

NANCY. How do you do, Sir Roger?

TENTERDEN. A pleasant visit, I hope?

NANCY. Very, thank you. But I'm glad to be home again.

TENTERDEN. With so beautiful a house, who would not?

BROXOPP. Oh, we're very comfortable here—aren't we, Nancy?

NANCY. I've always liked the country.... Have you had tea, Sir Roger?

TENTERDEN. Yes, yes, thank you, all I want. Been busy all day, Mrs. Chillingham. A great nuisance, business, on a day like this. And when there is so much that is attractive all around one. And there's your lucky husband—no cares at all—goes off fishing— By the way, Chillingham, what luck?

BROXOPP (*carelessly*). Oh, about the usual.... Er—I was—er— wanting to talk to you, Sir Roger, about—er—

TENTERDEN. My dear friend, by all means.

NANCY (*preparing to go*). Well, I must take off my things. And you can talk business together. But don't keep him too long, Sir Roger, because I want him.

(*TENTERDEN is moving politely to the door, but BROXOPP does not move.*)

BROXOPP (*with a smile*). You're my business partner, Nancy. I've no secrets from you. If you don't mind, Sir Roger?

TENTERDEN. It is just as Mrs. Chillingham wishes.

NANCY. You can always tell me afterwards, Jim.

BROXOPP. Nonsense, we may want your help. (*To TENTERDEN*) I remember once putting a little money into a mine, which a friend had spoken well of. My wife was very much against it—do you remember, Nancy? She said that it would be much safer in the bank. Well, she was quite right.

NANCY (*sitting down again*). Of course I was. (*With a smile of remembrance*) But do you remember what fun we had watching the papers to see whether it went up or down?

BROXOPP. Yes ... it went down.

TENTERDEN. Ah, what mine was that?

BROXOPP. Oh, I really forget now. Some Welsh gold-mine, I believe.

TENTERDEN. Yes. I think I could have given you a word of warning about Welsh gold-mines, Chillingham, if you had consulted me.

BROXOPP. This was long before we had the pleasure of knowing you, Sir Roger.

TENTERDEN. Ah, a pity, a pity!

NANCY. That's why we're so glad to have your help now. I should never have trusted Jim with all the money he got from Broxopp's Beans.

TENTERDEN (*wincing at the hated word*). All the money he—ah—retired with. Yes. Well, I hope, Chillingham, I really hope that we shall be able to do something for you before very long.

BROXOPP. Well, I left it to you, Sir Roger. But naturally I like to know how things are going on. How are those oil shares?

TENTERDEN. Oil! Oil! Ah yes! Well, we have lost a little there. (*With a charming smile*) You know how it is, Mrs. Chillingham. One loses a little here, and picks up a little more there.... Yes, I have been disappointed over the oil.

NANCY. I always think that something safe, however little interest it pays, is—is safest.

TENTERDEN. Safer than losing it, my dear Mrs. Chillingham—all women will agree with you there—but not so pleasant as winning a little more. Your husband sold his business at an unfortunate time. Our hand was forced; we had to sell; we had to take the price they offered. Naturally your husband felt that a little speculation before investing—— And had it come off——

BROXOPP (*sharply*). Had it come off, you say?

TENTERDEN. Exactly. As you know, my dear Chillingham, one loses a little here and picks up a little there. In the end, one finds that one has picked up a good deal more than one has lost. If one knows the ropes, Mrs. Chillingham.

BROXOPP (*fiercely*). How much of my money have you lost?

TENTERDEN (*gently*). I think, Chillingham, that that is hardly the way to put it. I am not (*with a bow*) an absconding solicitor.

NANCY. (*To JIM*) Dear one!

BROXOPP. I beg your pardon, Sir Roger. But I understood——

TENTERDEN (*beautifully*). My dear Chillingham, of course, of course. I will let you have a note of your investments this evening. Naturally you will wish to conduct your business yourself in the future, or to take other advice.

NANCY. Oh, but I'm sure Jim didn't mean to suggest——

TENTERDEN (*smiling*). That I was a knave? No, hardly. But that I was a fool! Eh, Chillingham? Oh, I think so. I think so.

BROXOPP (*very uncomfortably*). Sir Roger—you see—of course I don't——

TENTERDEN (*holding up his hand*). Please, please don't say any more. If anything, the apology should come from me. I have lost your money. (*To NANCY, charmingly*) Yes, Mrs. Chillingham, a good deal of it. And a good deal of my own, too. Fortunately I have already taken steps to recover it. What we lose on the oil, we gain on—shall I say the cocoanuts?

NANCY (*prompting him*). Jim! “That's all right, Sir Roger....”

BROXOPP (*with an effort*). That's all right, Sir Roger. I don't blame you. You have done your best.

TENTERDEN (*amazed that there should have been any thought of blame*). I'm afraid that I haven't made myself clear. When I say cocoanuts——

NANCY. Sir Roger, has my husband lost much of his money?

TENTERDEN. My dear Mrs. Chillingham, five minutes ago I should not have used the word "lost" at all. It was just, if I may put it so, the opening skirmish in a campaign. One does not say that a campaign is lost because at the first few shots—— (*He shrugs his shoulders.*)

NANCY. Yes, I understand.... And the cocoanuts——?

TENTERDEN. A manner of speaking. Actually (*he beams at them both*) a Building Society. Our motto is—Excelsior!

BROXOPP (*jumping up*). The Excelsior? My money is in that?

TENTERDEN. All, my dear Chillingham. And safe as—shall I say houses? But, of course, whether you leave it there or not is now a matter for your own judgment. Between ourselves, Mrs. Chillingham, I shall be glad to be relieved of the responsibility. (*Looking through the window*) Beautiful weather we're having just now. The young people are out enjoying themselves, I suppose? Golf, what? No cares, no responsibilities—lucky young people! (*He gives them a pleasant nod and goes out.*)

(*BROXOPP and NANCY stand looking at each other.*)

BROXOPP. Well, Nancy?

NANCY. Well, Jim?

BROXOPP (*with a bitter laugh*). Funny, isn't it?

NANCY (*smiling*). Well, it is rather.

BROXOPP (*with a groan*). Funny! I said six hundred a year—you said eight hundred—and now we shall have tuppence.

NANCY. That's what makes it rather funny.

BROXOPP. Sir Roger's a fool, but I'm a worse one to have trusted him.

NANCY. There'll be something left.

BROXOPP. And yet—I daresay I'd do it again. There were those Tenterdens and Jack. They wanted me to give up things for them—my name, my home, my business. Well, I wasn't going to give grudgingly. Let them have it all, I said. Let Sir Roger play the fool with my money, let Jack choose my house for me, let Iris fill it with her friends. It was their show this time. That's the way I have to do things—the large way. It—it appeals to me somehow, Nancy. Well, you know me—you married that sort of man.

NANCY. I'm glad I married that sort of man.

BROXOPP. And now he's let you down.

NANCY. There'll be something left. We were just saying——

BROXOPP (*shaking his head*). There's Jack to remember. We must give him his chance—he may be a genius—my son—(*as an afterthought*) your son—why not?

NANCY. Yes, dear.... If we only had five hundred a year, it wouldn't be—I could make you comfortable—even four hundred——

(She is already adding up the butcher's bills, and the baker's bills, and the servant's wages—only one servant ... when BROXOPP breaks in on her thoughts.)

BROXOPP. Nancy!

NANCY. Yes, Jim.

BROXOPP. I'm just over fifty.

NANCY. Yes, Jim.

BROXOPP. And you?

NANCY. Just under fifty.

BROXOPP. M'm.... A hundred between us.

NANCY. I don't feel that we're a hundred, do you?

BROXOPP. No. Still, there it is. Will you mind very much?

NANCY. Mind what?

BROXOPP. Beginning again at fifty?

NANCY (*a little frightened now*). Do you mean—working again?

BROXOPP. Yes. Looking for work again. Trying to earn a living again. Will you mind very much?

NANCY (*coming close*). N—no, dear.

BROXOPP. Not frightened?

NANCY (*coming closer*). N—no, dear.

BROXOPP (*valiantly*). After all, what I have done, I can do!

NANCY (*now much more bravely*). Yes, dear.... (*After a pause*) It was funny my going into Number 26 this morning.

BROXOPP. What?

NANCY. The rooms at 26 are empty—our old rooms—I told you.

BROXOPP (*eagerly*). Go back to them?

NANCY. Well, there they are.

BROXOPP (*dropping into a chair*). Beginning again at fifty.... It will be a hard struggle.

NANCY. Yes, dear.

(They are sitting side by side now, looking in front of them at that struggle. He follows it in his mind.... There must be something pleasing in the prospect of it, for the frown slowly becomes a smile. Still smiling, he gives a sidelong glance at NANCY. Curiously enough, she too is not altogether miserable. But as their eyes meet they pull themselves together with a start, and BROXOPP frowns heavily and speaks again.)

BROXOPP. A hard struggle.

NANCY (*sternly*). A hard struggle.

(Again they look in front of them at it, and again there seems to be something in the prospect not unattractive. Once more their eyes meet, but this time they do not try to hide from each other what their hearts are saying. They are saying quite unmistakably, "What fun!" Hand in hand they sit there, waiting for it to begin.)

ACT IV

SCENE: *BROXOPP is back at No. 26. The room looks much the same as it did those many years ago, but it has been improved by one or two pieces of furniture saved from the wreck.*

The BROXOPPS are out, and SIR ROGER TENTERDEN is waiting for the return of one of them. He is getting impatient. He looks at his watch and decides that he can wait no longer. He picks up his hat, and is on his way to the door, when NANCY comes in with some parcels in a string bag.

* * * * *

NANCY (*taken by surprise*). Oh, how you startled me!... Why, it's Sir Roger!

TENTERDEN. I must apologise——

NANCY (*smiling*). So must I. I've been shopping. And it's the maid's afternoon out.

TENTERDEN (*a little blankly*). Oh—ah—yes. They told me down below to come up and—ah——

NANCY. That's right. I just went out to get some kidneys. (*She holds up a parcel, and SIR ROGER shudders.*) I haven't bought kidneys for I don't know how many years; it feels quite strange. Do come and sit down. How's Iris? We haven't seen her lately. (*She leads the way to the table and puts the bag down on it.*)

TENTERDEN. Well, it was really about Iris that I ventured to come and see you so informally, Mrs. Chillingham. I happened to have a business appointment just across the road, and—ah——

NANCY. How nice of you!

TENTERDEN. Is Iris quite well?

NANCY. Oh, I think so. Jack seems to be very busy. We have a note from him every now and then saying that they will come and see us when his picture is finished.

TENTERDEN. Ah! So he's painting. Excellent.

NANCY. They've a studio in St. John's Wood. But surely Iris must have told you?

TENTERDEN. I assure you, Mrs. Chillingham, that Iris has not condescended to communicate with me since—ah——

NANCY. Since we lost all our money.

TENTERDEN. Since that very unfortunate Excelsior business. Upon my word, I don't know what the City is coming to nowadays. With so many rogues about, it is almost impossible for a gentleman to make an honest living. However, things have been looking up lately. (*Smiling to himself*) Oh yes, looking up—decidedly. But then I knew they would. I only wish, my dear Mrs. Chillingham, that your husband could have been participating in my good fortune.

NANCY. Well, we had no money left, you see.

TENTERDEN (*holding up a hand*). Don't think I am blaming your husband. Pray don't think that. I assure you, I quite understand. And so Jack is painting? Making quite a good living by it, what? You relieve my mind considerably, Mrs. Chillingham. I shall go away happy now. I shouldn't have liked to think that my daughter was uncomfortable. What a thing it is to be born with such a gift! Lucky Jack! And Mr. Chillingham, I trust, quite well?

NANCY. Very well indeed, thank you. He hasn't looked so well for a long time.

TENTERDEN. Excellent, excellent. And making his fortune again, I've no doubt. I'm delighted to hear it. Well, Mrs. Chillingham, I must be getting on. I am most relieved to hear your good news. Remember me to your husband, please, and tell him that if, at any time, he wants a good investment, I shall only be too delighted to be of any service. No, don't thank me. I should be only too glad to. It would be a privilege. (*He shakes her warmly by the hand*) Good-bye, good-bye.

[*He goes out magnificently.*]

(*As soon as she has recovered, NANCY takes off her hat and goes to the table to work. She is drawing an advertisement for BROXOPP, as we can see by the way she bites her pencil and frowns to herself.*)

A cheerful voice, singing a song without words, is heard outside, and the GREAT ONE comes in. He is wearing the old sombrero—the Broxopp hat—and (a novelty this) a pale grey tail-coat and trousers. He carries two or three parcels in his hand.)

BROXOPP. Nancy!

NANCY (*jumping up*). Jim!

BROXOPP. My darling! Just wait a moment till I put down these parcels.... Now then! (*He holds out his arms and she comes to him. After he has kissed her, he says solemnly*) I've thanked Heaven every day since we've been here that I can kiss you now without being observed by butlers. Another one! (*He kisses her again, and then holds her at arms' length*) All right?

NANCY. Of course I am.

BROXOPP (*taking off his hat*). I met Sir Roger just outside.

NANCY. Did you speak to him?

BROXOPP. I said "Hallo!" and he said, "Ah, Chillingham, Chillingham!" Has he been here?

NANCY. Just to ask after Iris and (*smiling*) to say how glad he was that you were making your fortune again.

BROXOPP. Did you tell him that I was making my fortune again?

NANCY. He told himself. I didn't say anything.

BROXOPP. Well, it's true. I'm going to. And what have *you* been doing?

NANCY. Shopping. And—(*looking rather sadly at her drawing*)—and Ajax. (*She sits down to it again.*)

BROXOPP. Ajax?

NANCY. Ajax defying the lightning.

BROXOPP (*pleased*). Ah, that was a good idea, wasn't it? (*Declaiming*) "Ajax defied the lightning. Why? Because he knew that

he was insured against fire with the West End Insurance Company.”
(*Going over to her work*) Have you been doing that for me?

NANCY. Yes, darling, but I can't get Ajax properly. He doesn't look as though he's defying anything.

BROXOPP (*looking at Ajax*). No, he doesn't, does he? Yet what a touch you had with suspenders in the old days!

NANCY (*sadly*). I think suspenders must be easier than Ajaxes—unless, perhaps, it's because I'm getting old.

BROXOPP (*indignantly*). Old? You get younger every day.

NANCY. Of course, in a way it's fun beginning all over again——

BROXOPP. Fun! It's Life! Did you ever hear of a man called Stephenson? He invented the first steam-engine. He said, “To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.” Just what I've always said myself. Going there is better fun than getting there. We got there once, Nancy, and now we are going there again.

NANCY. But we're twenty-five years older.

BROXOPP. And twenty-five years wiser, and twenty-five years more in love with each other.

NANCY. Yes, but what I'm rather afraid of is that we've had—well, fifteen years of *spending* money, and——

BROXOPP. You needn't be afraid. We're going to have money to spend again. But we'll have the fun of making it again first. (*With an air*) Madam, you see before you The Great Chillingham!... (*A little hurt*) You don't say anything.

NANCY (*at her drawing again*). Darling! (*But how she would have flown to him twenty-five years ago!*)

BROXOPP. Perhaps it is as well. The Great Chillingham is not yet before you. I spoke too soon. (*He begins to undo the parcels.*)

NANCY (*mechanically*). Yes, darling.

BROXOPP. Wait! (*He opens the parcels—a Chillingham grey hat and a Chillingham pink tie are disclosed*) Permit me, madam, to introduce to you the Chillingham hat and the Chillingham tie! (*He holds them up.*)

NANCY (*wistfully*). There has never been more than one Broxopp baby!

BROXOPP. This is not babyiness; it's business. I called on the Aquavim people to-day—the Brain Tonic for Tired Workers. I announced that I was willing to undertake the entire management and reconstruction of their business for them. They declined. I then said that temporarily, and until greater opportunities offered, I might be induced to advertise their poison for them. They replied that they no longer wrote their own advertisements; they were written for them by eminent authors, actors, painters, soldiers, and statesmen, in exchange for a few bottles and the publicity which it brought them. I said modestly that, if it came to that, I myself was at one time not unknown in the world of commerce. The manager looked at my card again, and regretted that he could not seem to recall the name of Chillingham. That opened my eyes, Nancy, and I decided that all the world should know (*putting on the bowler hat and striking an attitude*) The Great Chillingham! But you'll see it better directly, when I've got the tie on.

NANCY (*going to him*). Say you don't regret Broxopp very much!

BROXOPP. Does an artist regret selling a picture after he has painted it? I made the name of Broxopp, and when I had made it, I sold it. Now I'm going to make the name of Chillingham. I can make any name—with you helping me, Nancy.

NANCY (*hopefully*). Of course you can. (*Twenty-five years ago how certain she would have been!*) Have you decided what we shall make the name of Chillingham famous about?

BROXOPP (*offhand*). Well, well, there's no hurry. I shall find something. I shall think of something directly. Don't let us be in a

hurry. (*Taking off his hat and regarding it*) I think the new hat is striking—don't you? But keep the old one, Nancy. When the story of my life comes to be written, the author may wish to see it personally. Well, I'll go and put the tie on.... But I was forgetting. Who do you think I saw to-day?

NANCY (*eagerly*). Not Jack?

BROXOPP. Jack.

NANCY. But why didn't you tell me? How is he? How is he looking?

BROXOPP. You'll see for yourself directly. He and Iris are coming round this afternoon.

NANCY. How nice! Then I suppose his picture is finished. How is Iris?

BROXOPP. He didn't tell me anything, except that he was coming. We were both of us in a hurry. Well, I'll go and put on this tie. On this day The Great Chillingham was born. [*BROXOPP goes out.*]

(*NANCY returns to Ajax, but she has hardly begun to do anything to it when there is a gentle tap at the door.*)

NANCY. Come in!

IRIS (*her head round the door*). May I come in?

NANCY. Oh, Iris! And I'm not dressed or anything. (*She gets up.*)

IRIS. Well, I'm not very grand myself. (*Kissing her*) You look as young as ever, Nancy. Is Jack here?

NANCY. No. He's coming, isn't he?

IRIS. He was going to meet me here. (*Looking round the room she says sadly*) Oh, Nancy!

NANCY. Why "Oh, Nancy!"?

IRIS. To see you in this room—after what you're accustomed to.

NANCY (*smiling*). But I'm accustomed to this. This is where we lived before Jack was born.

IRIS. I know. And now Jack and I have brought you back to it.... Do you forgive me?

NANCY. I shan't if you talk so foolishly.

IRIS. You'll never forgive Father, of course. Neither shall I. I told him so.

NANCY. Yes. I'm not sure that you ought to have.... You see, Jim wasn't happy at the Manor House. I thought at first that he might manage to be, but he wasn't. And now here we are, dear, and Jim is as happy as can be.

IRIS. And is Nancy?

NANCY (*a little sadly*). Well, of course, I do love the country. (*With a sudden smile*) But this is fun, you know. It's like a second honeymoon.

IRIS. Oh, Nancy!... And how is Daddy Broxopp getting on?

NANCY. Oh, we shall be all right. He'll get hold of some idea soon. Come and take off your hat. You mustn't be a visitor. (*There is a knock at the door*) There! That's Jack!

Enter JACK.

JACK (*announcing himself*). The Return of the Prodigal!

NANCY. Oh, Jack, how nice to see you again, dear!

JACK (*kissing her*). How *are* you, darling? You look remarkably blooming. (*Shaking hands with IRIS*) How do you do, madam?

IRIS. How do you do, sir?

NANCY. Iris is just coming into my room. We won't be long.

JACK. Right. Where's Dad?

NANCY. He'll be here in a moment.

JACK. Good man. *(He opens the door for them. To IRIS)* You haven't broken the bad news yet?

IRIS. No.

NANCY. Jack! There's nothing——?

IRIS *(smiling)*. It's all right, dear. It's only a little discovery we've made.

NANCY. There are plenty of discoveries to be made when you are poor.

[NANCY and IRIS go out together.]

(JACK wanders round the room and comes to the unfinished Ajax on the table.)

JACK *(catching sight of it)*. Good heavens! who's this? *(Looking at it carefully)* It can't be anybody at the Club.

(Enter BROXOPP, in hat and tie, with a terrific air. The GREAT CHILLINGHAM! He pulls up at seeing only JACK.)

BROXOPP. Hallo, boy. So you've come.

JACK. Hallo, Dad.

BROXOPP. Iris here?

JACK. Yes, she's in with mother.

BROXOPP. How are you getting on? We haven't seen much of you lately.

JACK. Well, we've all been working so hard. (*Going up to him*) You're looking extraordinarily bright, Dad. (*He puts an arm affectionately round his father's shoulder and fingers the Chillingham tie*) Who's your lady friend?

BROXOPP (*with dignity*). Have you never heard of the Chillingham tie, boy?

JACK. Never. Is that it?

BROXOPP. It is. (*Simply*) It will be heard of one day.

JACK (*smiling*). I'm sure it will. I can almost hear it now. (*Patting him affectionately*) Dear old Dad—I've been a rotten son to you, haven't I? (*He drops into a chair.*)

BROXOPP (*considering it fairly*). No, I won't say that, Jack. You were a very good son to me when you were a baby. You did a lot for the Broxopp business, and I used to like telling people in the City all the funny little things you said. Besides, you made your mother very happy. And then, when you were growing up, I used to enjoy talking about my boy at Eton and my boy at Oxford. One way and another I've got a good deal of happiness out of you.

JACK. And then, when I was grown up, you suddenly found that I was a selfish beast.

BROXOPP. You can't expect father and son to see things the same way. One or the other has got to be selfish. It's generally the father.... Well, and how's the picture? Finished?

JACK. Wait till Iris comes in. We've decided to tell you our sad story hand in hand. Besides, while we've got the chance, there's something I want you to tell *me*.

BROXOPP. Well, what is it?

JACK. Well, then—as man to man—how are you getting on?

BROXOPP. As man to man, Jack, I am really happy again.

JACK. Yes, I know, but I didn't ask if you were happy. I asked you how you were getting on.

BROXOPP (*refusing to be cornered*). This is the life I like, my boy. It's harder than it was when I first began, but I made good once, and I can do it again. (*Thumping the table*) I like doing it.

JACK (*plaintively*). Yes, but you still haven't told me how you are getting on.

BROXOPP. Don't you worry about *me*. I'll make my fortune again long before you make yours with painting.

JACK. Yes, you might well do that... Look here, you gave me £500 a year out of the wreck. Did you leave anything for yourself?

BROXOPP. Of course I did. Don't you worry about me. The moment will come and I shall seize it. Just at present I am looking round. Don't you worry about *me*.

JACK. Well, all I can say is you're a sportsman, and good luck to you.

NANCY and IRIS come in.

IRIS. Hallo, Daddy Broxopp.

BROXOPP (*kissing her*). Hallo, my girl. You haven't called me that for a long time.

IRIS. I know. Let's try and forget that. Are you going to forgive me? She has.

BROXOPP. Forgive you for what?

IRIS. Well, for not having been an orphan for one thing.

NANCY (*shaking her head at her with a smile*). Iris!

IRIS. And for putting a lot of nonsense into Jack's head, and making an utter mess of things.

JACK. My dear girl, any nonsense in my head came there of itself; it wasn't put in by you.

IRIS. Well, there it was, anyhow. The fact is, Daddy Broxopp, we've made a discovery in the last few months.

BROXOPP. Hallo, what's that?

IRIS. Well, it's rather important. Are you ready, Jack? (*Taking JACK'S hand*) We have discovered——

JACK. Once, finally and for all——

IRIS. That Jack Chillingham——

JACK. *Né* Broxopp——

IRIS. Cannot paint.

JACK. He cannot paint.

JACK and IRIS (*together*). He cannot, cannot paint.

NANCY (*knowing what it feels like*). Oh, Jack, what a disappointment for you!

BROXOPP. How did you discover it, boy?

JACK. By regarding my latest masterpiece in a dispassionate light. You ought to have seen it, Dad. It was called "The First Meeting of Henry V. with Katherine of France."

IRIS. I sat for Katherine.

JACK. She also stood for Henry V. I wish you had seen her as Henry V.; it would have been a surprise for you.

IRIS. I was jolly good.

JACK. It was going to be my Academy picture. That was why I chose that subject. It was the dullest I could think of. Unfortunately, when I had finished it, I regarded it in a dispassionate light, and—(*frankly*) it was rotten.

IRIS. Very rotten.

JACK. Very, very rotten.

NANCY. Oh, poor Jack! I understand how you must have felt.

JACK. Well, then, we put our heads together.

IRIS (*leaning her head against his*). Like this.

JACK. And decided that we were taking your money under false pretences.

IRIS. Because, you see, he cannot paint.

JACK. He cannot paint.

JACK and IRIS (*together*). He cannot, cannot paint.

BROXOPP. Well, what are you going to do, then?

IRIS (*surprised*). Give you back your money, of course.

BROXOPP. Don't be silly. I didn't mean that. What work are you going to do?

JACK (*wandering round the room*). Well, that's rather the question. Iris thought—(*He stops suddenly at the sight of his mother's drawing*) Oh, Lord, here's this again. What on earth——?

BROXOPP (*off-handedly*). Just a rough sketch for an advertisement—a little idea of mine—Ajax defying the lightning—your mother was—
— Well, then, Jack, you—

JACK (*looking up at his mother reproachfully*). Mother, darling!

NANCY. Oh, Jack, Ajaxes are so hard.

JACK (*sitting down and picking up the pencil*). Oh, but—Iris, you'll have to stand for Ajax. Imagine Dad's the lightning and defy him like the dickens. (*Beginning to draw*) Right foot out a bit more. Hands behind the back, I think. Keep the head well up—as though you thought nothing of him.

IRIS. Daddy Broxopp, I defy you. (*She gives a glance at JACK to make sure he is not looking, blows a hasty kiss to BROXOPP, and hastily resumes her defiant attitude.*)

JACK (*drawing*). You'd find yourself much safer with a model, Mother, even for a rough sketch. You get so much more life into it.

NANCY. Oh, Jack, I wish I could draw like that.

IRIS. He isn't bad, is he?

JACK (*still at it*). Keep your head up.... I can't draw—but when I say I can't draw, I don't mean the same as when I say I can't paint. You see—Listen!

(*A loud knocking is heard at the outer door.*)

IRIS (*nodding her head at BROXOPP*). That's you, Daddy Broxopp. You did the lightning so well that you've brought on the thunder.

NANCY. Oh, I'd better go. The maid's out.

JACK (*getting up*). No, you don't; I'll go. It's Dad's lady friend—I'll bet you what you like—come to see his tie. Perhaps I can buy her off on the mat.

[*He goes out.*

IRIS (*relaxing*). Well, I suppose he won't want Ajax any more. (*She goes over to look at the sketch*) Doesn't he draw nicely? (*To BROXOPP*) That squiggly bit is you. (*Looking from one to the other*) No, I shouldn't recognise you.

BROXOPP (*picking up the sketch*). Yes, that's the way to draw. (*To NANCY*) All the same, darling, I shall never forget the way you drew those suspenders in the old days. There was something about them—
—

JACK and MISS JOHNS come in.

JACK (*protesting as he comes in*). Oh, but I assure you I remember you perfectly. Mother, this is Miss Johns. You remember her, don't you? (*He doesn't himself at all.*) She was—er—in the old days—don't you remember——?

NANCY (*holding out her hand*). How do you do, Miss Johns? It's very nice of you to come and see us now. (*Hopefully to BROXOPP*) Jim, you remember Miss Johns?

BROXOPP (*the only one who does, and he can't place her for the moment*). Delighted to see you again, Miss Johns. Of course, I remember you perfectly. (*He looks at her with a puzzled expression.*)

MISS JOHNS. It's very good of you to remember me, Mr. Broxopp—I mean Chillingham. I can hardly expect you to. I only just came because I'm your neighbour, and—(*looking round her awkwardly*)—but perhaps you'd rather I——

BROXOPP. Oh, not at all. You know Jack's wife, don't you? (*They bow to each other.*) Sit down and tell us what you have been doing lately.

(*She sits down. JACK wanders back to his sketch and IRIS goes with him, looking over his shoulder as he touches it up.*)

MISS JOHNS. You know, I don't believe you do remember me, Mr. Broxopp—I beg your pardon, I mean Mr. Chillingham.

BROXOPP (*grimly*). I don't, but I'm going to. (*He looks at her with a frown.*)

NANCY (*kindly, as MISS JOHNS is obviously getting uncomfortable under BROXOPP'S gaze*). Darling one——

BROXOPP. Wait! (*Thumping his hand with his fist*) I've got it! (*Pointing to her*) You interviewed me on that day—of course, I remember you now.

MISS JOHNS. Oh, Mr. Brox—Oh, how wonderful of you to remember when you must have been interviewed so often.

BROXOPP. Yes, but you were the last person to interview The Great Broxopp. You heard that I had changed my name?

MISS JOHNS. Oh, I was so sorry! I heard about it all, and how you—
—

BROXOPP. Oh, well, you mustn't pity us too much. We're quite happy here, aren't we, Nancy?

NANCY. This is where we began, you know, Miss Johns.

BROXOPP. Why, of course she knows. I remember your saying that you lived on the floor below. And are you still on the same paper?

MISS JOHNS. Yes, but—er—— (*She is obviously uncomfortable.*)

BROXOPP. But they don't want an interview with The Great Chillingham? (*With utter confidence*) They will, Miss Johns, they will.

MISS JOHNS (*enthusiastically*). Oh, I'm sure they will.

BROXOPP (*suddenly*). How's your brother?

MISS JOHNS (*very much flattered*). Oh, do you remember him? How wonderful you are!

BROXOPP (*struggling with his memories*). Yes—I remember. He had some invention—what was it?—a Chicken Food, wasn't it?

MISS JOHNS. Yes, that was it. Fancy you remembering!

BROXOPP. Oh, I have a wonderful memory. My wife would tell you. (*Garrulously*) Yes, I remember your telling me about this food which he had invented. You wanted me to take it up. I said—now, what was it I said?—I said——

JACK (*looking up alertly*). What's happened to that Chicken Food?

MISS JOHNS. Er—nothing. He hadn't the money—he didn't know how——

BROXOPP (*still talking*). “Yes,” I said, “if you had come to me twenty years earlier——”

JACK (*sharply*). Where is your brother now? In the country?

MISS JOHNS (*frightened*). Yes!

JACK. Can you get him up to London?

MISS JOHNS. Y—yes. I think——

IRIS (*excitedly*). Jack!

BROXOPP. What is it, boy?

JACK. How far away is it? Can you get him up at once? This evening?

MISS JOHNS. I—I think—it's in Surrey——

JACK. Send him a telegram now—don't be afraid of a long one—I'm paying for it. (*Taking out half-a-crown*) Here you are. (*Going with her*)

to the door) That's right, now, off you go. Remember, I've got to see him to-night. Got that? Good!

[*She goes out, overwhelmed.*]

NANCY (*the hostess*). Jack, dear!

BROXOPP. What is it, boy?

JACK. You said the moment would come. It has come. (*In the BROXOPP manner*) Chillingham's Cheese for Chickens!

IRIS (*eagerly*). Yes, yes! What fun!

BROXOPP. Are you suggesting that I should take up this food—patent it—put it on the market?

JACK. I—you—we—all of us. You're in it, Iris?

IRIS. Rather!

BROXOPP. But—but——

JACK. Chillingham's Cheese for Chickens. It's the idea of a century.

NANCY. But do chickens like cheese?

IRIS (*firmly*). They've got to like this.

BROXOPP (*doubtfully*). Yes, yes, why cheese, boy?

JACK. Why not?

BROXOPP. Er—well——

JACK. We'll have a hen sitting on an enormous egg—this is where *I* come in, drawing the posters. Above, Chillingham's Cheese for Chickens. Underneath, Makes Hens Lay.

BROXOPP. Does it make them lay? I thought Chicken Food only made chickens grow.

JACK (*grimly*). If we say that it makes them lay, it makes them lay.

IRIS. It's a question of faith, Daddy Broxopp. If the hen knows you have faith in her, she will respond. She's jolly well got to.

JACK. That's right. We're not going to stand any nonsense from a Buff Orpington.

BROXOPP. Jack, are you serious about this?

JACK (*surprised*). Serious? Good Lord, yes.

BROXOPP (*nervously*). It's a risk. What do you say, Nancy?

NANCY. I'm used to risks, dear.

JACK (*excitedly*). Of course it's a risk. That's what makes it such fun. By Jove, to be really doing something at last! Makes Hens Lay! A Poultry Farm in every back-garden! Eggs on every breakfast-table. Chillingham eggs!

IRIS. Chillingham and bacon for breakfast, Daddy Broxopp.

BROXOPP (*shaking his head*). It's a risk. It will want a lot of capital. What do you say, Nancy?

NANCY. We've got a little left.

IRIS. There's what you gave Jack. We can do it on that, can't we?

JACK. Of course we can.

BROXOPP (*unnerved*). I—I must think it over. One wants to think things over. There's no hurry, after all. One naturally wants to look round a little before deciding. *If* we decide on this, Iris, then——

JACK. Who was that fellow you were so keen on—came over from the office when you were ill—young chap—wrote your letters for you—what was his name?

BROXOPP. Driver?

JACK. Driver. That's the chap. How can I get hold of him? Is he still at the office?

BROXOPP. They'd know his address, anyhow.

JACK. He's good, isn't he?

BROXOPP. Excellent. You remember, Nancy, my telling you that I was going to promote him as soon as——

IRIS. What do you want him for?

JACK. Business manager. Terribly keen. We must have somebody like that.... What about offices?

BROXOPP (*vaguely*). Offices?

NANCY. We went to Pritchard the agents. In Victoria Street somewhere——

JACK (*getting into his hat and coat*). That's *your* job, Iris. Get orders for half-a-dozen—three to four rooms, I should think. Central. We'd better make the stuff down at this chap's place to start with—enlarge whatever plant he's got. I'll go after Driver, while you're Pritcharding.

IRIS (*getting her things together*). Right. Pritchard, Victoria Street. What number?

JACK. Telephone book at the chemist's round the corner.

IRIS. Righto. (*To NANCY*) Good-bye, dear.

JACK (*to NANCY*). We shall have supper with you, dear, so see that there's some food. So will Miss Johns and her brother, probably. Food for six at eight, say. But we'll be back before that, I expect. So long. (*He goes to the door.*)

IRIS. Good-bye, Daddy Broxopp. We're making our fortune again.

BROXOPP (*still bewildered*). Yes, but, Jack—Jack, you mustn't—

JACK (*a last shout from the passage*). That's all right, Dad, leave it to me!

(*The door slams. They are gone. BROXOPP and NANCY are alone together. He is unhappy; she feels that he is unhappy. They sit there, saying nothing....*)

BROXOPP (*almost to himself*). What did I call myself? The Great Chillingham. (*With a sad, disillusioned little laugh*) The Great Chillingham!

NANCY (*comforting him*). Darling!

BROXOPP. I said that the moment would come. It came. I said that I would seize it. (*He shrugs his shoulders.*)

NANCY. You were going to. Jack was too quick for you.

BROXOPP. No. I was afraid.... I'm getting old.... I talk and I talk, and then when the moment comes—(*Sadly*) The Great Chillingham!

NANCY. You wanted to think it over—of course you did.

BROXOPP. Was there ever a Great Broxopp? Or was it just a fluke, Nancy, twenty-five years ago?

NANCY. No, no!

BROXOPP. Then why—?

NANCY (*with a sigh*). It was twenty-five years ago.

BROXOPP. Yes. Never again. On this day The Great Chillingham died. (*He drops his head into his hands.*)

NANCY. But something else was born. (*He shakes his head.*) (*She says quietly*) Yes, Chillingham—and Son.

(Slowly he raises his head and looks at her. His eyes begin to light up. He rises, slowly. There is a smile about his mouth now. He is seeing himself as the Head of CHILLINGHAM AND SON. Look—he is striking an attitude! All is saved. NANCY regards him fondly. CHILLINGHAM AND SON.)