

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays* (1922)

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**KING LEAR AT HORDLE  
AND  
OTHER RURAL PLAYS**

*by*  
**BERNARD GILBERT**

LONDON: 48 PALL MALL  
W. COLLINS SONS & CO. LTD.  
GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

[NP]

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*Manufactured in Great Britain*

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TO  
KATHLEEN AND PIXIE

[NP]

NOTE

Separate Acting Editions of each of the six Plays, *King Lear*, *Eldorado*, *Gone for Good*, *The Hordle Poacher*, *The Old Bull*, and *To Arms*, can be obtained from the Publishers— *King Lear* at 1/-, and the others at 6d. each.

For permission to act the same, application must be made to the Publishers at 48 Pall Mall, London, S.W.1. The fee is 10s. 6d. for the one-act Plays and £1 1s. 0d. for the three-act Play, and this should be sent with the application.

No permission is needed for reciting the Monologues and Duologues.

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DISTRICT INFORMATION

BLY DISTRICT

*Villages and Populations*

ASHBY-HOLME	565
BELTON	384
BUNKER'S HILL	198
CARRINGTON	476
CAXTON-IN-THE-WOLD	269
CHURT	148
COLD HARBOUR	71
FIRBY	397
FLEET ST. ANDREWS	516
FLETTON	886
HERRIES ST. JAMES	235
HIGH MORTON	482

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HOLT-IN-THE-MARSH	456
HORDLE	437
KYME	274
LOW BARNET	510
MARSHFELLOWTOWN	289
NORTH WINCH	368
OUSELEY	580
PANTACKS	412
PLATTS HOLE	322
RILBY	391
SNITTERWOOD	378
SOUTH WINCH	610
STONY POTTON	389
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STOW	294
TANVATS	478
THORPE TILNEY	301
TOPHAM	295
TUMBY	505
WASHOVER	480
WONG	268
WORLBY	593

*Note.*—Populations given are those of the villages only, and not of the parishes, which are larger in each case.

*Places on Map but not in Bly District*

BOURN, Large village; railway station.

CHAPEL, Village.



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DALEHAM, Large village.

LINGAY, Small village.

LITTLE NOCORT, Large village.

LONG MARTIN, Large village.

NEW HOLLAND, Small village.

OLD LAXBY, Village.

SILDYKE, Very large village.

TETBY, Small village; railway station.

*Places mentioned but not on Map*

ALKHAM, Village; railway station; S.W. from Topham.

BARKSTON, Seaport and manufacturing city; 188,000 inhabitants; 31 miles S.W. from Bly.

FRISTON, Market town; 3852 inhabitants; E. from Sildyke; Market day, Monday.

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GORLBY, Market town; 2908 inhabitants; W. from Kyme; Market day, Wednesday.

WINKERSFIELD, Market town, 4948 inhabitants; N.E. from Herries; Single line railway to Belton Junction; Market day, Friday.

PRINCIPAL SEATS

BLINKHORN HOUSE. — Lord Blinkhorn.

BLY COURT. — Cyril Tunny, Esquire, M.P.

CAXBY MANOR. — Maj.-Gen. Herbert Fielder-Walsingham, J.P.

CHURT PARK. — Sir Edmund Tunny, Bart., J.P.

COWSLEY. — Marquis of Cowsley.

FLETTON TOWERS. — Earl of Fletton.

HERRIES HALL. — Lord Herries.

KYME CASTLE. — Lord Kyme.

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MARSH HOUSE. — Lord Marshfellowton.

PANTACKS MANOR. — Christopher Harbord, Esquire, J.P.

POTTON OLD HALL, Honble. Mrs. Neville.

STOW MANOR. — Honble. Gerald Spencer-Wells, J.P.

STOW PARK. — Robert Morley, Esquire, J.P.

WASHOVER HOUSE. — Dudley Armitage, Esquire, J.P.

WINCH PRIORY. — Jefferson Stang, Esquire, J.P.

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PREFACE ON RURAL ART

THE first thirty years of my life were spent in a village, and in that period I heard no music later than Mendelssohn, saw no plays more intellectual than Gilbert and Sullivan, and met only one man who had the slightest interest in literature. The entertainments which were given to us on winter evenings can only be described as vapid. Drama was always popular, and probably the peasant can receive art in this manner more easily than in any other. When Goethe was asked how the German language and art might be fostered in Poland, he answered, "Not so much by schools and books, but by travelling companies that will give homely little plays to interest the villagers."

My early experiences were sad. We asked for bread and were given stones; the only plays supplied being insipid stories about the squire's son and the vicar's daughter, with a chorus of mythically respectful peasantry. This was very disheartening, because we required entertainment in the long winter evenings as a set off against the activities of the chapels, which ran prayer meetings, guilds, lantern shows, and missionary lectures without end. The public-houses, of course, catered for their own company, and there were the nightly gatherings in the shops of the cobbler and barber; but these, however delightful, were somewhat restricted. Now and again choral societies would be started, but these exhausted themselves in ambitious attempts to perform sugary cantatas.

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We wanted drama, however, more than anything else.

I was already acquainted with Shaw, Ibsen, and Suderman, and beginning to feel a strong inclination to produce *Candida*. At this point an enthusiast from the nearest market-town came with a company of amateurs, and gave a musical play which delighted everybody. "But why don't you give us something *good*?" said I; at which he smiled. "Your village doesn't want what you call good plays," said he. "It would hate them, and in any case, you have your cast to consider." "All right," said I, "then why not do some of the little folk plays of Synge or Tolstoy?" But he had never heard of either, and the discussion meandered into the desert. At last, in despair, I sat down to try to write something that would give me satisfaction to produce. My first attempt was built on the old story of the father who leaves his belongings to his quarrelsome sons, arranging that one of them should divide everything into two heaps, and the other should have the first pick. It was quite easy, as I was using characters whom I knew by heart. There was no difficulty, either, about production, because the blacksmith, the cobbler, the carpenter's daughter, etc., all acted their own parts, wherein they had nothing to do but behave and speak exactly as they would under the given circumstances.

The first play proved an immense success, a certain amount of which was due, I fear, to my appearance in mutton-chop whiskers and an ancient top-hat. Still, they liked it, and so did the actors, who were extraordinarily good, if they could be said to have "acted" at all; and I began to see myself the

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pioneer of a great movement. But I couldn't get it to spread. If we took our company to other villages, we were more than welcome; but that was all: it went no farther.

Dramatic entertainments are usually managed in a village by girls who want to appear as the daughter of the vicar or the squire, or even the duke. Plays about common labourers are looked on as vulgar, and those like mine, which had no love-making, were the last in the world which they wanted to produce. This, after all, is natural.

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Townspeople like to see truthful reproductions of rural life, and can bear an occasional release from *Chu Chin Chow*, but villagers want plays about marquises, their town houses, and their love affairs. Cottage life doesn't appeal to them nearly as much as what goes on in Park Lane.

I had come up against the great trouble of the creative artist in the country. It doesn't need him. But a community cannot have artists in its midst without some appreciation of art. In order to get peasant plays, Yeats had to take Synge from a garret in Paris and pack him off to the Arran Isles, where he produced good work, and at least one great play; but he wouldn't have done that had he not been maintained and encouraged by outsiders.

Whether the community needs the artist at all is a question which has been discussed through the ages, and I don't propose to touch on it here, except to remark that, without a chronicler, generation follows generation into oblivion; their heroes and their feats are unregarded, and they vanish from the scene for ever.

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Rural England is full of humour and strong originality, and with encouragement, an immense amount of village art would spring out of the soil. I have known many peasants endowed with the creative faculty who would, under better conditions, have blossomed; but the lack of appreciation condemned them to sterility. Our villages have Shakespeares who never find a stage, Bunyans who never reach a publisher, and Chaucers whose tales remain verbal.

In putting forward these plays, which constitute Volume II. of my *Old England Series*, it is necessary to draw attention to the fundamental difference between these works on the rural scene. In Fletton village, each person revealed himself, setting forth his impulses as they arose; and the sex instinct naturally played a prominent part; but, where the peasants are shown in action in the plays, that instinct as a motive is practically absent.

The drama of our cities is based upon sex repression, and consists almost entirely of Romeo and Juliet, spiced with sentimental meanderings and self-torturings to

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fill in the picture between attraction and fulfilment. An Eastern proverb says, “When an Arab sees a woman he wants, he takes her.” The maxim of our dramatic art is, “When an Englishman sees a woman he wants, let him be hindered, baffled, and delayed until no one can bear it any longer, and then let them come together with a quick curtain.”

When Lafcadio Hearn settled in Japan and began to teach literature to Japanese students, he found, to his bewilderment, that practically the whole of the poetry, drama, and novels of the Occident were sealed books to his pupils. They could understand the language, but the underlying sentiments — the fabric

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of the whole — were beyond their comprehension. The Japanese marry when they reach adolescence, with the result that the sexual means no more to them than any other physical function. They lead normal sex lives, and are free from the malady of repression which blights the Western world. Hearn was startled by the conclusion at which he arrived, that practically the whole of Occidental art is based upon, and woven around, sex repression.

Sex is open and above-board in a village where, as the doctor points out in *Old England*, “there is no repression; the natives obeying immediately their impulses of Preservation and Reproduction, and living as naturally as savages.” These impulses are basal, and neither of them are ideally beautiful, as they work out in everyday life; but it is only in the city, where the sex instinct is glossed over with sickly sentimentality, that it becomes evil.

City writers generally view our villages as incredibly innocent “sweet Auburns”: assemblages of thatched roofs, topped with a spire and flanked by a hall. They see work going on at a leisurely pace, poultry occupying the streets, red-cheeked children at play, and feel that here indeed is the “simple life.” When they discover with what brutal plainness the two great impulses of human nature take effect, they call the villages licentious; but their state is far healthier than that of our cities, which are — with regard to sex — cesspools scented to hide their smell.

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The scene of these plays is a section of three to four hundred square miles, offered as an example of rural England, uncontaminated by city civilisation. This district is purely imaginary, but will, I think, be found true to most parts, and typical of the whole.

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Reference to the map shows it running up from the sea, through successive belts of marsh, fen, sand, heath, moor, and limestone, embracing most kinds of soil and methods of cultivation, and nearly all classes of countrymen.

In the fens and marshes the soil is rich, and from five to ten times as high in price as the heath and wold. There are few baronial seats; partly because of the price of the land; partly because, only having been recently reclaimed, they never came under the old feudal sway; partly because they were parcelled into small lots when drained; and, finally, because the peasantry are fierce individualists who cling to their holdings at all cost. William the Conqueror found these districts a hornet's nest nearly a thousand years ago, and they have changed but little.

The high-land labourers are more servile; they have no chance of starting small holdings on that thin soil, which can only be farmed successfully in large tracts. Their land is well-wooded, with great stretches of grass, and lends itself to hunting and shooting and picturesque homes; and it is there that the Feudal Barons reign supreme.

In *Old England* I took the largest village in the centre of my district, and tried to give a comprehensive view at one moment on one day, of the whole. In my Plays, the first volume of which (up to the war) is now published, I have drawn upon other villages, so that, taken in conjunction with *Old England*, and the volumes that are to follow, the reader may envisage the diversity of the rural scene.

I offer these plays, hoping that they may find

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their way to village stages, and encourage others to write for their own people of what they know most intimately. The Community Theatre grows apace in America, despite the fact that no village there is so mean as to lack its cinema; and if such a movement can be assisted here, it will be a great step forward.

CAPEL-LE-FERNE,

1922.

[NP]

KING LEAR AT HORDLE

A Play in Three Acts

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PREFACE TO *KING LEAR AT HORDLE*

THESE Plays speak for themselves; they are little pictures of village life, drawn without any intention or moral or lesson of any kind. *King Lear at Hordle* arose from my desire to present the ancient unfilial motif. It was no use giving Shakespeare's, because our hard-headed villagers, who judge everything in the light of experience, would look on it as plain nonsense and its protagonists as idiots. I once heard one of them give his views after he had read Shakespeare's *Lear*. He expressed briefly and simply the view that I afterwards found in an article from Tolstoy's biting pen. He said, "It's all moonshine."

Turgenieff did a wonderful *Lear of the Steppes*, and if it were not that the fabric of his story is rather Asiatic than European, one could use it; but there is a great gulf between the Russian peasant and his English brother.

The English peasant has a strain of doggedness and a strain of almost pathetic affection for his own, but, never far below the surface, is the thread of shrewdness combined with humour. This prevents the overgrowth of sentimentality, and it is this which to me distinguishes him from the peasants of Balzac, Turgenieff, and Synge, in whom predominate strains of miserliness, savagery, and malice. Humour runs in a



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strong tide through the market-place, the barber's shop, the inn, and wherever our villagers meet. Their conversation is shot with it, and the tales that they continually tell are not like the town-workers' stories —

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dull anecdote enlivened at the finish with a flash of obscenity; but are thickly humorous throughout.

What distinguishes our peasant is this shrewd, good-natured fun, the solid personality, the sidelights on neighbours, the sly pokes in the ribs, and the loud guffaws. In the village every one knows everything about everybody, and nothing is hid. It is the democracy of the Feudal System, of which we obtain such wonderful glimpses in Chaucer, Defoe, and Burns.

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KING LEAR AT HORDLE

ACT I

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ACT I

*Extract from County Directory*

HORDLE, a village of 437 inhabitants. Apart from the Waste, there is no large landowner, the parish being divided into small properties. Church—All Saints. Vicar — Rev. J. King. Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Chapels. “Flower Pot” Inn (H. Dodsworth). “Green Man” Inn (E. Pinder). “Welcome Stranger” Inn (N. Lack). Two beerhouses. The parish is almost entirely contained by the River Brent, River Roan, and Hordle Brook. HORDLE WASTE, the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, is a large expanse of sandy soil, abounding with gorse, and unfit for cultivation. HORDLE



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BRIDGE is the only one over the Brent, between Bly and the Gulland. ROUNDHEAD RISE is the slope leading up from Fletton Bridge. Local legend says the Ironsides charged the Cavaliers here, driving them through Fletton into the marshes.

*The curtain rises at 3.30 one Wednesday afternoon in the early autumn, to show the front room of a small house in the village of Hordle. There is nothing else on the ground floor except the kitchen, which is reached by a door on the left. The house borders on the village street, which runs parallel with the back of the stage, and passing vehicles can be seen through a long, low*

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*window on the right of the hack wall. Access to the street is by a door on the extreme left of the window, and between door and window stands an old grandfather clock. Across the right-hand corner is one of the stuffed horsehair sofas with very shiny seats, beloved of villagers. The left wall of the room is occupied by the door into the kitchen, two uncomfortable cane chairs, and a large sideboard. A circular walnut table is covered by a white cloth on which is laid a meal that would warm the heart of any but a confirmed dyspeptic. The piece de resistance is an enormous pork pie, flanked by a solid slab of cold fat bacon, and a colossal home-made cake. The remainder of the table is occupied by a silver teapot, a cruet, cups, saucers and plates, bread, two sorts of jam, cheese, celery, a large jar of pickles, sugar, and milk. The fireplace in the centre of the right-hand wall has a cheerful blaze, and an old arm-chair is drawn up against it with its back to the window.*

*The house falls between two stools: being modern, it has none of the charm of the old-fashioned cottage, neither has it any of the conveniences of a town villa. The only thing to be said in its favour is that its rooms are fairly large.*

*The cottage of Mrs. Parrott, Jacob Toulson's friend, neighbour, and housekeeper, is almost exactly opposite the sitting-room window. To the left of Mrs. Parrott's cottage is a narrow plot of open ground with fence and gate, separating her from the Flower Pot Inn, which is directly opposite Jacob's kitchen. This open space is*

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*the entrance to a large grass field behind the Flower Pot where the village Feast is held each year.*

*As the curtain rises, the street door is opened to admit a middle-aged widow, bearing in her hand a dish on which reposes a chine of pork stuffed with herbs: the*

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*great rural delicacy. A short, stout, comfortable soul, with bright eyes and a high colour, she is wearing a cotton blouse, a black skirt, and a white apron. She looks round, then puts her dish down on the table, and as she does this the kitchen door opens to admit the master of the house. Jacob Toulson, now bordering on seventy, looks his age as he crosses the room towards his armchair, being small and somewhat wizened, with gray hair, a short gray beard, and a pronounced stoop. He is dressed in a snuff-coloured suit of good stout cloth, about twenty-five years old. This is his best suit, as is emphasised by the combined collar-and-front and the black, ready-made bow, in which, for many years, he has graced the pulpit of the Primitive Methodist Chapel. He hasn't changed from his heavy hob-nailed boots into slippers, because he doesn't wear slippers: going to bed in his stockinged feet. Slippers, night-shirts, and tooth-brushes are luxuries in Hordle.*

*There must be no mistake, however, about Jacob's standing. He is not a labourer, although he began life as one; but by incredible industry and parsimony — which meant working an average of fourteen hours a day for six days a week for nearly sixty years, and spending nothing whatever on pleasure or comfort — he became not only a small-holder, but ultimately reached the height of rural ambition as a peasant proprietor. But industry, however immense or untiring, is not sufficient to raise a man above his neighbours in a smallholding community where every one works their hardest from light to dark; and one sees in his lined face the shrewdness by which he has achieved bargains as well as saved pence. As is usual with such men, prosperity came towards the end of his career. Until fifty he was comparatively poor, but a lifetime's petty dealing in*

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*pigs and poultry, carrots and potatoes, had taught him reliance on his judgment, and a timely purchase of cottage property and subsequent handsome re-sale had proved to him that he could make a hundred pounds far more easily by his brains than by his knotted hands.*

*That Jacob is now dressed in his Sunday attire, and that a fire is burning in the front room are signs that something extraordinary is taking place. There are no idlers in Hordle, just as there are no gentlefolk or rich people. The parish is entirely cut up into small freehold property. There is no resident doctor, and even the Vicar is a "character" who rides at steeplechases and walks a pedigree stallion. Hordle is a nugget of English individualism lying between the civilisation of the market town of Bly and the feudal system represented by the Earl of Fletton; and if its natives are rough and known as "Hordle Hounds", they are as fiercely independent as their forefathers a thousand years back.*

*There is an air of intense expectation about Jacob, and his life-long habit of impassivity does not prevent him fidgeting now. He straightens the table-cloth and squares the text on the wall. This attempt at mural decoration is framed in an old-fashioned black beaded wood, and its wording, HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER, stands out in red letters on a white ground. The only other pictures are enlargements of Jacob's daughter and son-in-law, taken before they emigrated.*

*As Jacob lowers himself into his arm-chair, he glances at the grandfather clock.*

*Mrs Parrott: Here's your chine, Mester Toulson, stuffed ready for this grand occasion. (She gives a few finishing touches to the table, and stands back to*

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*survey it.)* I don't think I've forgotten anything. They'll be main and hungry after their long journey, but I think we've got enough. (*She turns the pie lovingly round.*) And if they've seen as well baked a pie as that in America, I shall be astonished.

*Jacob:* Thank 'ee kindly, Missis Parrott; thank 'ee kindly. It's a welcome fit for any king.

*Mrs. Parrott:* What could be more seasonable at the Feast than a pig?

*Jacob:* Specially when you've fed him his vittles all the year round, and watched him grow from a little grunting sucker to a fair and proper size. Of all the parts of a pig, the fry's as good as any.

*Mrs. Parrott (smacking her lips):* Give me the pies all brown and tasty from the oven.

*Jacob:* I've a weakness for stuffed chine myself.

*Mrs. Parrott (rapturously):* Then there's the sausage meat, and the spare ribs, and the collard rhind, and the feet, and the head, and all the tasty little bits from odd corners.

*Jacob:* And the hams and flitches what hangs from the kitchen baulk all the summer until they're mellow.

*Mrs. Parrott:* And the bladders of lard swinging side by side with the plum puddings, like apples on a tree.

*Jacob (responding with the sonorous fervour of an archdeacon):* There's nothing bad about a pig; least- ways, I've never found it; and I've seen the death and latter end of many a hundred. Of course, things isn't what they was. In my young days not one cottage but had its pig ready by the Feast, so that the killers were working night and day, and the loud cries

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of dying pigs went on all the week, without ever stopping.

*Mrs. Parrott (with a holy look):* A pleasant sound, surelie! I loves to hear it.

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*Jacob*: I can remember, when I was only *that* high, seeing them lay on the cratches after they'd been scalded and scraped, all clean and white and beautiful. Beautiful! (*He pauses and shakes his head.*) But them days is long gone by.

*Mrs. Parrott*: You enjoy a bite though, yet, Mester Toulson. I've seen you doing your share not so very long since.

*Jacob (shaking his head)*: Not the same as when I was young.

*Mrs. Parrott (sighing)*: Ah, well! We can't stop young for ever, so what's the good of bothering.

*Jacob*: When I was twenty, I could sit down to a lump of fat bacon four fingers thick and not hold my knife until all was gone. I wish I was twenty again.

*Mrs. Parrott*: I'd better pop this chine on to one of your dishes, and then I can take mine away with me. (*She gets a dish out of the sideboard and transfers the chine.*)

*Jacob*: Very kind and neighbourly you always was. Missis Parrott, and how I should have got on without you looking after me these last few years I don't rightly know. When my darter gets home, she'll thank you properer than I can.

*Mrs. Parrott*: What time do they get here?

*Jacob (looking at the clock)*: They'll be here any minute now. I've sent Henry Dodsworth's covered carriage to Bly station for them.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Like real gentlefolk!

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*Jacob*: Nothing's too good for my Matilda.

*Mrs. Parrott (sweeping up the hearth)*: It'll be a goodish while since you've seen them.

*Jacob (impressively)*: It's nine year this very day since they went.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Is it as much as that?

*Jacob*: Nine year it is since Matilda married Albert Rowett and sailed to Canada.

*Mrs. Parrott*: I remember it as if it were yesterday.

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*Jacob:* They've done wonderful well this last three year, in a business at Toronto.

*Mrs. Parrott:* So you was telling me.

*Jacob:* Of course, I never wanted her to go, but Albert was so set on it there was no standing against him. Seeing how awkward old Mester Rowett turned when they got married, maybe it was the best thing they could have done for themselves.

*Mrs. Parrott (glancing queerly at him):* Maybe it was.

*Jacob:* Not as anybody wouldn't have been lucky as married a managing woman like my Matilda.

*Mrs. Parrott (abruptly):* I think you' do now. I must be getting along. *Jacob:* Wait a bit, Missis Parrott. Don't be in such a hurry. This is a very special day for me. Sit down and warm yourself.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Well—just a minute then... but no more. (*She sits down.*)

*Jacob:* Of course, I'll own as it was a lift in one way. Me having been a day labourer does make a difference, and at that time, as you know, I hadn't drawn together the bits of property as I have now.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You've done well lately, and no mistake. I was only saying to my boy Dick last Sunday

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morning, when he was cleaning his gun in the back kitchen: Mester Toulson has everything as a soul can want, I says. He has more than enough for his needs — and nobody can be richer than that; he's a land-owner with a tenant — and what more can the Earl of Fletton himself say; and last of all, he's nobody to worry him in his home — he's king in his own castle.

*Jacob:* I've nothing to grumble about; nothing to grumble about. All the better for my Matilda, and (*he looks at Mrs. Parrott meaningly*) them what may come after.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You don't mean to say as you're a grandfather?

*Jacob:* Not yet, but we all know as native air works wonders.



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*Mrs. Parrott:* Nine year to-day! Lok-a-mussy-me! And you've never heard from them from that day till now?

*Jacob:* They did write at first, to say how well they was doing, but it's a long way for letters, and after a time we never heard nothing at all.

*Mrs. Parrott:* What brought them home at last, then?

*Jacob:* From what her letter said, it was young Rook of Fletton as met them out there and telled 'em as my missis had passed away, and then my kindhearted Matilda wrote straight off to say as they should sell up everything and come home without any delay to look after me in my old age. What do you think of that for a darter?

*Mrs. Parrott (sucking her lip):* Young Bill Rook, was it?

*Jacob:* To give up all when they was prospering

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so, and come this long journey to look after their poor old father!

*Mrs. Parrott:* You'd wonder how it was they'd never come over to see you before; them being so prosperous.

*(All this time Jacob has been getting in and out of his chair, prowling about the room, and even listening to the clock to see if it has stopped. Now and again he displaces things on the table which Mrs. Parrott promptly replaces.)*

*Jacob:* Well, you see, my old missis — rest her bones! — was a Badley and liked her own way, and Matilda was just such another. Besides — they couldn't leave their business.

*Mrs. Parrott (looking totally unconvinced):* I see.

*Jacob:* They'll not be long now.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You must have been looking forward strangely to seeing her again.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob:* When she was little she was the joy of my life, running about all day long.

*Mrs. Parrott:* How well I remember her as a little 'un in our kitchen, pulling the wings off flies as fast as she could catch 'em.

*Jacob:* She was thirty-one when she married, and now she's forty. It doesn't seem possible.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You'll hardly know her again.

*Jacob:* When children's gone, you miss 'em. When you're old, there's none like your own flesh and blood.

*Mrs. Parrott:* There's none ever plagues you half as much.

*Jacob:* They may plague you, and yet... they're

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your own. Ain't you weaned 'em and worried over 'em; ain't you toiled in the daytime and sorrowed in the night-time for 'em? When you don't want nobody else, you still wants them.

*Mrs. Parrott:* That must be the reason why brothers always falls out. They say as the worst quarrels is in families.

*Jacob:* And yet... at the last... you want your own. They may have worried you and nagged you, but... you want 'em. You want 'em to close your eyes for you just the same as you want to lie among your own kin in the cemetery.

*Mrs. Parrott:* That's all very well for you, what doesn't see your relations every day. If your darter hadn't been thousands of miles away all these years, you might have sung a different tune. If it comes to that, you didn't set such a *great* store by her when she was cook at Fletton Manor. As for closing eyes — my old man used to close mine every Saturday night with his fist. Families is right enough for men, but women doesn't have such a fine time.

*Jacob (shaking his head):* You want your own, Missis Parrott. You want your own. (*He looks at the clock.*) Their train must have been late. (*He takes a telegram off the mantelpiece and reads out:*) “Arrive Bly 2.53. — Matilda.” (*He pricks up his ears.*)



The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

What's that?

*Mrs. Parrott (looking out of the window):* It's only Cartwright Burrows, going to serve a summons on some poor soul. (*She turns round.*) You won't want me to pop in and clear up this evening, Mester Toulson?

*Jacob:* Well — of course — when Matilda's here, she'll see to everything.

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*Mrs. Parrott (picking up the mustard pot and looking into it):* I shan't be wanted then, and that's a fact.

*Jacob:* You'll always be welcome, Missis Parrott, and Matilda will thank you properer than I can for what you've done in your kind way since my poor missis was took to glory.

*Mrs. Parrott (going into the kitchen with the mustard pot):* I don't want no thanks. You'll not see a deal more of me in this house.

*Jacob:* Oh, I hope so. (*He darts to the window, but returns disappointed.*)

*Mrs. Parrott (standing in the kitchen doorway and stirring the mustard):* A new missis doesn't want any help to manage. They don't like it.

*Jacob:* A kinder hearted girl than my Matilda never breathed.

*Mrs. Parrott:* That may be.

*Jacob:* You'll see.

*Mrs. Parrott:* I dare say I shall. (*She takes a final glance round to see if everything is ready.*) I dare say I shall.

*Jacob:* How I've longed and longed for the sight of her face. Every time the Feast's come round and all my old cronies has gathered here to taste the frummetty and the mince pies as you've been good enough to get ready — every time, I say, it's been like a knife stuck through me not to have any of my own kin here. I've longed for this day.

*Mrs. Parrott (rather shortly):* You must have done.

*Jacob (going to the front door and looking out):* It seems too good to be true. I'd begun to fear of late as I should die before I see her again.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Mrs. Parrott:* Henry Dodsworth won't hurry his

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old mare with the roads as they are now. That carriage of his takes some pulling.

*Jacob:* They'll be ready for their tea when they do come.

*Mrs. Parrott:* I've no doubt *he* will: them Rowetts was always good trenchermen. (*She picks up the kettle, shakes it, and puts it on the fire.*)

*Jacob:* I've got something better'n tea to welcome 'em with. Something as'll make 'em feel *really* at home.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Oh! What's that, Mester Toulson?

*Jacob* (rubbing his hands): It's a secret, that's what it is. It's a surprise for them.

*Mrs. Parrott* (*deeply offended*): Oh, well I Of course, it's not my business. (*She tosses her head and picks up her dish.*) I must be getting off. I shan't come in again, Mester Toulson, unless you send for me.

*Jacob* (*holding out his hand to stop her*): There'll be no difference at all. Missis Parrott; no difference at all. I shall have my old friends in for the Feast supper next Tuesday night as usual, and though you won't have the trouble of cooking it this time, I hope you'll have the pleasure of eating it — and your boy Dick — as you've done so often before.

*Mrs. Parrott:* We'll see. We'll see. What's yon?

*Jacob:* It's their wheels. (*He darts to open the front door, almost upsetting Mrs. Parrott, and disappears. The door slams after him, and Mrs. Parrott hurries to the window.*)

*Mrs. Parrott:* My eye! How she's altered. She looks a deal sharper than she used to, which is saying something... He looks as though he could do with a good square meal. (*She disappears into the*

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*kitchen, and the yard door is heard to hang. Simultaneously, the front door opens to admit Matilda Rowett, her husband Albert, and old Jacob.)*

*(There can be no possible doubt about the relation between this couple, for if ever there were a dominant wife and a passive husband, here they are. Matilda is a tall, big-boned woman of forty, with neutral colouring, long pointed nose, and thin lips. She is wearing a felt hat and a ready-made serge costume, and is carrying a heavy blanket coat that was evidently bought for the voyage. Her strong and rather unpleasant face is not redeemed by the forced air of amiability with which she now advances. Albert Rowett, who carries two new canvas suit-cases, is a loosely built fellow of five-and-thirty, with a big flat face, and rather shifty brown eyes. His character is obvious at a glance: slow, stupid, sheepish, good-natured, and weak. He is wearing a soft felt hat, a heavy tweed suit of American cut, and cheap, block-toed American shoes of yellowish leather.*

*Both Albert and Matilda were born and bred in H or die, and, though nine years' wandering has to some extent modified their speech, they will soon slip back again into the old intonation.*

*Matilda puts her coat on the sofa, and Albert stands the suit-cases in front of the grandfather clock, whilst Jacob closes the door.)*

*Jacob: How you have altered! Let's have a good look at you.*

*Matilda (giving him a loud kiss): You don't look a day older, Dad. (She stands back and glances round the room.) And the place hasn't altered a bit.*

*Albert (who has been standing sheepishly by, puts*

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*out his hand): Very pleased to see you, Mister Toulson.*

*Jacob (gripping his hand): And welcome you are, my boy, now you've brought my darter home again.*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert (very politely):* I hope your health's good, sir.

*Jacob:* Well enough, and my spirits too, this happy day. I only wish my poor missis was alive to enjoy it with me. (*He turns to Matilda, who is examining the table with the eye of an experienced cook.*) Tea's all ready, my dearie, and I expect you'll be wanting it.

*Matilda:* Why, Dad, what a feast you've got for us. (*She lifts up the dish with the pork pie on it, turns it round and puts it down again, while Albert fidgets hungrily around the table.*) And I don't think I've ever seen a better crust than this.

*Jacob:* That's Missis Parrott. You remember her — (*he points with his thumb*) — just across the road. She's looked well after me ever since your poor mother died.

*Albert:* Didn't her husband used to mend the roads?

*Jacob:* That's right; and now her boy Dick has the job and lives with her.

*Matilda (peering into the teapot):* I'd better make the tea, hadn't I, Dad?

*Jacob:* Do, my dear. The kettle's on the boil.

*Albert (unable to contain himself any longer, and giving voice with rapturous fervour):* Stuffed chine!!!

*Matilda (making tea):* Fancy! Charles Pinion's dead!

*Jacob:* Mr. Pinion? Oh, yes. And his grandson has the Priory.

*Matilda:* And Bannister Hides has that lovely

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Manor. I couldn't believe my ears when Mr. Gilbert told me.

*Jacob:* Mister Gilbert?

*Matilda:* Gilbert Pinion — we saw him on Bly platform.

*Albert (removing his eyes from the table with an effort):* Henry Dodsworth's done well. He has a groom now. And fancy Eli Gunn retiring here, and —

*Matilda:* Wait till we've had tea, Albert, and then Dad'll tell you all the news.

*Albert (fervently):* Yes, yes! Let's have tea.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*(Albert pushes Jacob's arm-chair to the table with its back to the window, Matilda sits with her back to the fire, and Albert faces her. Before seating himself Jacob rests his hands on the edge of the table, shuts his eyes and says in his pulpit voice. For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful, to which Matilda says Amen, whilst Albert, who had caught up the bread knife and started to cut off a hunk and been stopped by a glare from Matilda, also says Amen, and resumes work. Whilst Matilda pours out the tea, Jacob takes up the carving knife and fork and turns to Albert.)*

*Jacob: Now, my boy; stuffed chine, or pork pie?*

*Albert (looking from one to the other in an agony of indecision): I think, maybe —*

*Matilda (passing Jacob his cup of tea and interrupting): You help yourself first, Dad.*

*(Jacob draws the pork pie towards him, and is about to stick the fork into it, when he changes his mind and puts the knife and fork down on the dish.)*

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*Jacob: No! It's no good. I can't wait. (He pushed his chair hack and rises to his feet.)*

*Matilda (anxiously): What is it, Dad?*

*Jacob: It's a surprise I've got for you, dearie. Something to make you feel really at home. I was going to leave it till we'd had tea, but I can't wait. I must fetch it now — it's upstairs. (He passes behind Albert, and goes into the kitchen. No sooner has he left the room, than Albert seizes the pie with one hand and his knife with the other.)*

*Matilda: You put that down, Albert, and wait for Dad.*

*Albert (reluctantly obeying): I'm just about starving, I am. What's the harm in beginning without him? We're at home now, aren't we?*

*Matilda: There's two things you've got to remember: Dad's got to be humoured all roads up, and you've got to keep your mouth shut about happenings in*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Canada. Dad is glad to see us now, and he's got to be kept in a good temper, come what may. It won't be easy, if I remember anything of the old man.

*Albert:* Oh! We're to be the grateful prodigals, are we?

*Matilda:* Yes, we are. (*Albert makes a wry face.*) Should you like to be back in Toronto?

*Albert:* No, I shouldn't, and that's a fact. (*He looks round.*) This isn't so dusty after what we've had lately. Snug, I call it. Can't I start now, old girl? (*Matilda shakes her head firmly.*) I wonder what the old man's surprise packet can be.

*Matilda:* Mother's Bible, or something of that sort. Look at them! — (*pointing to the text and the enlarged photographs*). Those are his treasures.

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*Albert:* Sentimental: that's what you are! (*He glances at the ceiling.*) Whatever's that?

*Matilda:* He's moving his old chest. (*Thoughtfully*) I wonder what he's getting.

*Albert:* Maybe it's money. (*He lowers his voice.*) I say, do you think my old Dad ever suspected us?

*Matilda:* If he did, he wouldn't have told anybody: he was too proud. Anyway, he's dead now. (*Emphatically*) Forget it!

*Albert:* There's not much hid in these villages. Everything comes to light sooner or later.

*Matilda:* I know you'll always blame me for it. (*This is evidently a sore subject, and Matilda is ready to say a great deal more, but fortunately for Albert they hear Jacob coming down the stairs, and when he enters they are peacefully stirring their tea.*)

*Matilda* (*taking the saucer off Jacob's cup, where she had placed it*): Come on, Dad, I've kept your tea hot for you.

(*Jacob is holding a long envelope in one hand and a wash-leather bag in the other. He sits down and shows the envelope to Matilda.*)

*Jacob:* What do you think this is?



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda:* I don't know, I'm sure, Dad. Your will, maybe.

*Jacob:* Better 'n that. Better'n that. Wills is neither here nor there. They mean children longing for the old 'uns to pop off. I know! Ain't I seen it many and many a time? You won't have heard, but things have been looking up with me since you left. I've saved a bit here and there, and now — this house belongs to me.

*Matilda:* Well, you do surprise me. Dad. Of course, we shouldn't hear. But I'm very glad for your sake.

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*Jacob:* And not only this house, but the field as it stands on goes with it. Seventeen acre!

*Matilda:* However did you manage it?

*Jacob:* Hard work, my dear, hard work! You remember I had an allotment; and about the time you married I got a field to myself. One thing came with another; there was two good years with potatoes and carrots; then I did a bit of dealing, and about that time I had a bit of luck over some cottage property as I bought and sold again. And so — here's seventeen acre of good grass land and the house, and not a penny of mortgage on it.

*Matilda:* Why — you're rich. Dad!

*Jacob:* Tchah! But though I say so, it's a good paddock. Forty-six pounds sixteen shillings an acre I paid for it, and two hundred and seventy-three for the house, not counting the cost of the writings. (*He draws out a paper from the envelope.*) It's all down here in a Deed of Gift made out in your name, my dear, and as soon as I put my name to it, it's your property. (*Albert, who has been surreptitiously eating morsels of cheese, pauses at this with a large piece on his knife in mid-air.*)

*Matilda:* I couldn't take it, Dad.

*Jacob:* You'll have to. 'Cos why — I'm going to sign it here and now.

*Matilda:* No, no! (*Albert is about to protest, but thinks better of it, and puts the cheese in his mouth.*) It wouldn't be right.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob:* As I says to Lawyer White, when I went to see him at Bly about it, my darter's giving up a beautiful home and business in Canada, and sacrificing everything to come and look after her poor old Dad, so I can't do less, I says, than try and make it up to

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her. Of course, he was full of objections — lawyers always is — that's what they're for — but I never listened to him. I had to be firm with him, mind you. If you won't do it, I says at last, I must go across the road to Lawyer Ferrett. That rounded him up sharp.

*Matilda:* White? Wasn't he lawyer to Albert's father?

*Jacob:* I believe he was, now you call it to mind. His darter has married one of the young Todds of Fletton. He did his best to get me not to do it: wanted me to wait; but I turned stunt in the end, and so — here we are — all ready for my name to go where it's put in pencil. (He suddenly remembers the wash-leather bag, which he raises and shakes.) And here's the bit of ready money as I always keep on hand. I don't hold much with banks. Here you are, my dearie. (*He passes it to Matilda.*) You're going to keep house now and manage everything.

*Matilda* (putting her arms round *Jacob's* neck): I told Albert!

*Albert* (with a fat wedge of cake in his hand): What did you tell me?

*Matilda* (giving him a meaning look as she returns to her chair): Didn't I tell you, when you grumbled at our selling out at such a sacrifice? Didn't I say we must go home to look after Dad whatever it cost us, and as we should get paid for it in the next world?

*Albert:* You did, you did.

*Jacob* (rhapsodically, pointing to the text on the wall): Ay, my gel! Them as bides by *that* never has cause to repent it.

*Matilda* (bringing him back to business): If you're set on signing it now, you'll be wanting witnesses, won't you?

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob:* You're no use, because you're the party concerned, and it's best not to have your husband because he is your husband, but — I'll tell you what — if you pop across the road to Mrs. Parrott's, she'd come.

*Matilda:* I'll go and fetch her. *(She hurries out of the front door, secreting the wash-leather bag on her person as she goes. As the door closes, Albert swiftly cuts a hunk of pork pie and begins to bolt it, unnoticed by Jacob, who is practising his name on the tablecloth with the handle of his fork.)*

*Jacob:* I'm not a very good scholar. You see, I never had no education, but I can read anything if I'm not hurried, and I can manage to sign my name. That's the great thing, after all, isn't it? *(Albert, far beyond the possibility of speech, nods his head.)* My old fist looks as well on a cheque as the best scholar's in Hordle. What's learning without money: it's straw without corn. Give me the cash, and you can have all the book learning. Pass us yon inkpot off the sideboard, boy, and there's a pen on the chimney-piece. *(Albert gets these and puts the pen in the bottle.)* Lawyer White says it's maybe a good thing not to be able to sign your name too fast. It's as well to look seven or eight times before you leap, he says. *(Mrs. Parrott enters, followed by Matilda.)*

*Matilda (shutting the door):* Here she is, Dad. I told her you'd not want her more than a minute.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Did you want me, Mester Toulson?

*Jacob:* I just want you to witness me signing my name to this here paper, Mrs. Parrott, if you'd be so kind.

*Mrs. Parrott (backing towards the door):* I'd rather not.

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*Jacob:* Why ever not?

*Mrs. Parrott:* If you'll excuse me.

*Matilda:* But what's your reason?

*Mrs. Parrott (ignoring Matilda, and looking at Jacob):* I don't like putting my name to no papers.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda:* If the woman doesn't want to oblige you, Dad, you'd better send for some one as is a bit more neighbourly.

*Jacob:* Oh, but I'm sure Mrs. Parrott will oblige me.

*Matilda:* Perhaps she thinks she's binding herself to something. Witnesses don't have anything to do with what's inside a paper, do they?

*Jacob:* Certainly not! If you don't want to do it, Mrs. Parrott, of course I'll send for somebody else, but I'd a deal rather it was you. It's only to say you've seen me sign my name.

*Mrs. Parrott (staring openly at the paper, where the words, DEED OF GIFT, stand out in the boldest lettering):* If you're set, you're set, and nothing'll stay you; but must you cut your throat with your own hand?

*Jacob:* You don't know what you're talking about, Missis Parrott.

*Mrs. Parrott:* I can guess, though, and (*nodding at the Deed*) I'd sooner see you do anything than that.

*Jacob:* But it's my own idea.

*Mrs. Parrott:* That makes no better of it.

*Matilda (barely able to contain herself):* Aren't we wasting our time, Dad?

*Mrs. Parrott (solemnly):* Look before you leap, Jacob Toulson.

*Jacob (pointing at her with the pen):* Will ye or won't ye?

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*Mrs. Parrott (nodding her head reluctantly):* But it's against my will, mind that!

*(As Jacob prepares himself for the great business of signature, Matilda, who has a piece of blotting-paper ready, slides it across the body of the Deed to prevent Mrs. Parrott reading it.)*

*Mrs. Parrott (tossing her head angrily):* You needn't be so cunning. Anybody can guess what it is.

*Matilda:* You do seem to know all that goes on here.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Jacob (looking up):* Nobody could have been kinder to me than Missis Parrott's been, Matilda, and I told her as you'd thank her properly when you got home.

*Mrs. Parrott (bridling):* I don't want her thanks: I won't have 'em.

*Matilda:* I hope I shall know how to repay Mrs. Parrott for all that she's done.

*(The two women exchange a look of enmity as Jacob dips the pen again in the inkpot and continues his signature. All eyes being on the Deed, Albert, who has stealthily carved the stuffed chine, puts a large helping on a plate and carries it to the sideboard. Jacob, having at last finished, Mrs. Parrott adds her name, after which the old man blots the Deed and presses it fondly into Matilda's hand, clasping both his own round hers.)*

CURTAIN.

[NP]

KING LEAR AT HORDLE

ACT II

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ACT II

THE KITCHEN A WEEK LATER: EARLY MORNING

*Jacob Toulson's kitchen is as large as his sitting-room, and looks larger because its walls are white-washed. The street wall at the back has a window on the right, with a dingy, ragged lace curtain strung across its lower half. On the left of the window is an old dresser, piled with dirty crockery and kitchen utensils. In the left wall near the front of the stage is a badly-fitting door opening into the back-yard, on which hangs a filthy roller towel. The remainder of the left wall is occupied by a steep, carpetless staircase of unpainted deal. Under the head of these stairs is a door into the pantry and scullery, which adjoin the kitchen and have an attic above. A kitchen range occupies the centre of the right wall. Any one facing this range has a large cupboard on*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

his left, and the door into the front room on his right. The kitchen table in the centre of the floor is a solid deal affair, occupied, like the dresser, with an assortment of unwashed crockery. From the appearance of both dresser and table, it is evident that Matilda has been entertaining on an ambitious scale. The floor, of bare, uneven brick, is occupied by two plain kitchen chairs, a number of empty beer bottles, and several pairs of uncleaned boots and shoes. Jacob's treasured text from the front room has been poked under the dresser, where it leans against the wall partly hidden by a stone jar.

Immediately opposite the window is the door of the Flower Pot Inn. The open ground to the right of the

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inn is now the entrance to the Feast, and is occupied by sweet stalls. It is not yet ten o'clock, so there is little activity in either the Flower Pot or the Feast ground, but occasional hoarse shouts can be heard from the latter, where Julius Morgan's white top hat is much in evidence.

Jacob Toulson is sitting huddled up on one of the hard chairs, with his back to the window. The other chair stands by the table. He has on corduroy trousers, heavy hob-nail boots (dirty and unlaced), a knitted cardigan jacket, and an ancient tweed coat of no discoverable colour. His coarse gray flannel shirt is surmounted by a knotted red handkerchief. His feet are resting on the fender, and he has a torn shawl round his shoulders. There is only a glimmer of fire, and the old man is coughing heavily. Anything more cheerless than the kitchen range could not be imagined, for yesterday's ashes have not been cleared away, and the tops of the oven and the boiler are covered with dirty saucepans.

There is a discreet knock at the yard door, and then a louder one, of which Jacob takes no notice. There is a still louder knock, and then the door opens slowly for Mrs. Parrott to peep in. She looks cautiously round, comes inside, glances through the open room door to see if any one is there, then returns to shut the yard door and advances towards Jacob, who is watching her apathetically.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Mrs. Parrott (in a low voice):* Be you alone, Mester Toulson?

*Jacob (coughing):* Ay, Missis Parrott.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Being as I hadn't seen you for a week, I thought it would be only neighbourly to nip across and find how you was getting on. (*Jacob coughs and nods his head.*) I knows my place, of course, and

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don't want to mix up with grand folk, but as I'd heard how you'd moved I thought maybe I might be able to get a word with you.

*Jacob:* Very kind you always was, Missis Parrott.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Very grand was the company you had last night for your Feast supper, far beyond the likes of me. Mrs. Key from the shop can't talk of nothing but the fine dishes and the flowers, and wine on the table, instead of beer like common folk, fit for Parson King himself. (*She pauses, but Jacob makes no answer.*) Everybody's talking about them going to church, and Parson coming to call, all grand and proper. Of course, you couldn't hardly expect them to go to the Primitives. (*She pauses again, but Jacob only coughs.*) You must have been proud to have such fine company and high living in your house.

*Jacob:* I've nought to do with such goings on. I come in here out of the road of 'em.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Mrs. Key said as how you'd settled down in the kitchen quite baffled by all the new ways and grand doings. (*She looks hard at Jacob, who only coughs.*) But maybe that's a lie. (*A pause.*) Of course, it's quieter here.

*Jacob:* Ay, it's quiet.

*Mrs. Parrott (looking round):* It's a bit draughty for your back. (*Jacob draws the shawl closer round him.*) It blows cruel under that door when the wind lays across Hordle Waste. Why don't you move t'other side?

*Jacob:* It's worse that side.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Draughts is worritting things. How's the lumbago?

The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

Rural Plays (1922)

*Jacob (trying to make the shawl meet across his chest):* The cold lays hold of me.

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*Mrs. Parrott:* Yon's a beautiful fire in there (*nodding her head in the direction of the front room*), and your old chair waiting for you snug and comfortable. You'd better slip back now. (*Jacob shakes his head.*) There isn't going to be no company this morning, is there? (*He shakes his head again.*) Come on, then. This kitchen will be the death of you. (*Jacob shakes his head more firmly, and then has such a terrible fit of coughing that Mrs. Parrott loses all patience. She squares herself and plants her hands firmly on her hips, whilst her somewhat bantering air completely vanishes.*) We've been friends for nigh on forty year, Jacob Toulson, and I've a right to speak out. I will speak out. I've come on purpose. (*She pauses, whilst Jacob huddles closer over the fire.*) You'll soon be in your grave if this goes on.

*Jacob:* Tchah!

*Mrs. Parrott:* You wanted her home to close your eyes, and that's exactly what she's going to do. (*She pauses for a reply, but as Jacob only grunts, she goes on again.*) I've heard plenty about what's been going on this last week. I warned you in yon very room. I warned you solemn. You wouldn't heed me, though: you must make yourself over to her body and soul, and now you're finding out what it means. You're not good enough for their fine company, so you've had to creep in here out of their genteel way. As for your *old* friends, what always used to be with you for the Feast, they daren't come anywhere anigh the house now.

*Jacob:* You're wrong, Mrs. Parrott, you're wrong. They'd have been just as welcome if they'd called. (*Mrs. Parrott looks at him scornfully.*) Every bit!

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*Mrs. Parrott:* Wrong, am I? What are you doing here, then, in this draughty hole?



The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

Rural Plays (1922)

*Jacob*: I'm more comfortable by myself. (*He coughs heavily.*)

*Mrs. Parrott*: You look it!

(*All this time Mrs. Parrott has been moving about the kitchen, examining in turn the various centres of dirt and confusion. She has now reached the dresser and seen the text underneath. Bending down, she pulls it out, holds it up at arm's length, and reads it silently. Jacob, happening to look round at this moment, turns hastily back again, as Mrs. Parrott with a cluck and a toss of her head, puts the text back under the dresser and continues her tour.*)

*Jacob (turning round after she has left the dresser)*: I've been very happy, Missis Parrott, since my darter come home, believe me or not as you will. I've nothing to do now but sit against the fire. All my cares and troubles are took off my shoulders.

*Mrs. Parrott*: What cares? What troubles?

*Jacob (trying a fresh gambit)*: Of course, them Rowetts is better born than me, what was only a day labourer; and they have different friends; but I couldn't want to alter that, could I? As Matilda says, they must start as they mean going on.

*Mrs. Parrott*: You're not good enough, then, for the Rowetts and their friends?

*Jacob*: As Matilda says, I shall be far more comfortable in this here chimney-comer, where I can do exactly what I like when I like, than sitting on the edge of a chair in yon tidy room.

*Mrs. Parrott*: It's only a week since you were sitting there very comfortable waiting for them.

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*Jacob (angrily)*: I've never spent a happier week.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Of course not! Anybody could see that with half an eye! You couldn't help it with such grand folks about. I expect though, this house won't be big enough for them, after their fine home in Canada. Seeing as they sold it — and their

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

great business — on purpose to come home, they must have brought a rare fortune with them.

*Jacob (evasively)*: When you make a forced sale — as Matilda says — things doesn't fetch a deal.

*Mrs. Parrott (sitting down and leaning impressively towards him)*: Jacob Toulson, be you a fool, or be you not?

*Jacob*: But they don't. (*Mrs. Parrott sniffs scorn-fully; Jacob shivers.*) I don't feel over grand this morning.

*Mrs. Parrott*: How can you, in this draughty kitchen, with your coughing and your lumbago? But I'll soon have you back in the room again, and then you'll feel better.

*Jacob (crossly)*: I don't want to go, I keep on telling you.

*Mrs. Parrott (suddenly struck with an idea)*: You haven't said anything to her about that field of yours down by Piatt's Hole, have you?

*Jacob*: No... why?

*Mrs. Parrott*: Being as you don't farm it yourself, she's hardly likely to have heard. (*She compresses her lips thoughtfully.*) I lay I'll soon have you back. (*As Jacob shakes his head, she leans forward and taps him on the knee.*) I'm going to tell her she hasn't got all your property from you yet, and she'll soon come rushing round then. You'll be back in yon room,

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waited on hand and foot, before you can say Jack Robinson.

*Jacob (aroused by this)*: You shouldn't say such things, Missis Parrott, to hurt my feelings, because you know how I feel about Matilda. It would make no difference to her at all. Not a scrap.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Wait and see!

*Jacob (angrily)*: I wanted her home. What's it matter to anybody anyway?

*Mrs. Parrott (imperturbably)*: If they was to pack off, you wouldn't be so anxious to have them back again, should you?



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Jacob:* You judge other folk's families by your own. I say they've been very good to me.

*Mrs. Parrott:* I can see that for myself. But just wait till I've told her about yon field by Platt's Hole.

*Jacob (starting furiously forward):* Why can't you leave me alone, and mind your own business? Do you think I can't manage my own affairs at my time of life, and stick up for myself? Leave me alone: I'm all right. *(He coughs.)* Interfering between a man and his darter! *(He coughs again.)* Have I found fault? There's nothing the matter. *(He is doubled up by a violent fit of coughing which so exhausts him that, when it passes, he can only say in a feeble voice):* I want my medicine. *(As he hobbles towards the staircase, Mrs. Parrott follows and watches him climbing. The bedroom over the sitting-room is reached by passing through the bedroom over the kitchen, which is reached from the stairs by a door on the right at the top. A door on the left opens into the small attic over the scullery. Jacob opens the right-hand door and starts to go in, then recollects himself and withdraws, opening, this time, the left-hand door.)*

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*Mrs. Parrott:* Oh! Ho! They've shoved you in the attic, have they? But I might have guessed. *(As she raises her arms with an expressive gesture, she hears a step in the hack-yard, and moves towards the dresser. Albert Rowett enters, yawning, unshaven,*

*without a collar, and evidently fresh from the Flower Pot.)* Morning, Mister Rowett!

*Albert:* Good morning, Mrs. Parrott. *(Albert is speedily losing his American accent. Even a week on his native heath has driven it nearly away.)*

*Mrs. Parrott:* I just called to fetch my toasting fork as I lent Mester Toulson the day you come home.

*Albert (politely):* Oh, yes! Can I find it for you?

*Mrs. Parrott:* I was just casting round... why, there it is! *(She takes it from where it is hanging beside the fireplace.)* You'll be getting nearly settled by now.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert* (standing with his back to the fire): Very comfortable indeed, thank you.

*Mrs. Parrott*: It must be nice to be mester in your own house.

*Albert*: But it's not my house, you know.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Tchah! You men are all alike for pretending. Don't tell me!

*Albert*: But it's not, Mrs. Parrott. Oh, no!

*Mrs. Parrott*: Haven't you got the mester's chair in yon room, and the mester's bed upstairs in the mester's bedroom? And don't you braunge forth abroad on the street with your hands in your pockets, or sit on yon bench by the Flower Pot spitting like any king?

*Albert* (*uneasily*): We haven't made any difference at all. Not a bit! We don't want to.

*Mrs. Parrott*: No!... I've noticed that. (*She glances at Jacob's vacant chair.*)

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*Albert* (*following her glance*): The old boy's moved in here, but that's entirely his own doing. He thought he'd be more comfortable; and I dare say he is.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Ah!

*Albert*: As for me being master — why! — (*there is a pause while he fills and lights his pipe.*)

*Mrs. Parrott*: This must be a change from Canada.

*Albert* (*with deep satisfaction*): It is that!

*Mrs. Parrott*: To have a comfortable home and regular meals is worth anything, isn't it?

*Albert* (*with great feeling*): It is! It is! (*He pulls himself up.*) For them poor folks as had no regular home.

*Mrs. Parrott* (looking at his waistcoat): You're filling out already.

*Albert* (*fiddling with his pipe*): We had a beautiful home in Toronto. (*He extends his hand with the pipe in it.*) Much bigger than this. Much!

*Mrs. Parrott*: You'd be sorry to leave it, then?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert:* I don't know about that, so much. After all... Canada isn't home, is it? (*He strikes a match.*) Toronto's all right — in its way — but give me Hordle.

*Mrs. Parrott:* If you made your home there, I should have thought as you was at home.

*Albert (shaking his head):* Ah! But it's not the same. (*He becomes absent-minded and begins to hum a song, then stops and says rather dreamily:*) How the Feast brings everything back again. When I was a boy, I used to think of nothing else for months and months. (*His attention is drawn to some one passing he window.*) Why, there's Soldier John! Not altered a bit!

*Mrs. Parrott:* Well, I must be going. (*She moves to the door, toasting-fork in hand.*) It's very good

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of you, Mester Rowett, to talk to a poor woman whose buried husband worked on the roads, while you have such fine relations.

*Albert (putting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat):* Pooh! I don't take no stock in all that nonsense. (*There is a noise of violent coughing from the attic which makes them both glance at the stairs.*)

*Mrs. Parrott:* I was going to ask the old gentleman if he'd like a drop of my cough mixture. I could hear him barking all the way across the street last night, and I expect now the wind's got into the east, as his lumbago's bothering him as well.

*Albert:* I think he's all right. He doesn't complain.

*Mrs. Parrott:* He never does; but he can't stand a draught. Doctor Berry says as draughts will be the certain death and end of his mortal journey. That's why he used to sit in yon room, snug by yon fireside, whenever he wasn't feeling very well.

*Albert (uneasily):* I haven't heard him coughing — till now.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You haven't listened very hard, then.

*Albert:* He's never said a word to us.

*Mrs. Parrott:* If he were ailing, this kitchen would be a death-trap for him. It'll finish him off in no time. You can't get out of the draughts here, nowhere not nohow.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert:* I'll speak to Matilda about it. You see, he's so set on being in this kitchen, we can't keep him out. As Matilda says, we must humour him. (*Fired with good intentions, he picks up the coal bucket and empties its contents on to the fire, extinguishing the last spark.*)

*Mrs. Parrott:* And so you can't keep him out... of this. (*Albert shakes his head.*) He must have changed

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greatly. But being as he's took to sleeping in yon draughty old attic, what isn't fit for fowls let alone human beings, I suppose he must have changed a good deal... in a week.

*Albert (very uneasily):* I must be going. (*He moves to the room door.*) I'll speak to Matilda about it.

*Mrs. Parrott:* The village is all talking.

*Albert (turning abruptly):* Eh? Talking about what? What for?

*Mrs. Parrott:* Can't mind their own business, I expect. But there — none of them thinks as the poor old gentleman is long for this world — now.

*Albert:* What do they mean by that?

*Mrs. Parrott:* I only hear what people says.

*Albert (forcing a laugh):* Do they think we're going to kill him, then?

*Mrs. Parrott (in a graveyard tone):* This draughty old kitchen'll do that for you before Christmas.

*Albert (picking up some half-charred sticks from the hearth, and poking them into the dead fire, then standing up as if he had rectified everything):* Of course, it's about it.

*Mrs. Parrott:* As I says to *Fred* Barley's missis; it makes little difference to them, I says, whether he dies or not. They're not waiting for dead men's shoes, I says.

*Albert:* No, thank goodness!

*Mrs. Parrott (looking at him innocently and speaking in a suave tone):* It isn't as if you was expecting to have yon rich field down by Piatt's Hole, is it?

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Rural Plays (1922)

*Albert:* Field! What field?

*Mrs. Parrott:* You know all about that. His

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cousin Ned's family expect to have it, so it won't bother you at all.

*Albert (advancing towards Mrs. Parrott):* Cousin Ned's family! Here — what field are you talking about? Do you mean the one as this house stands on?

*Mrs. Parrott:* You know very well what field I mean.

*Albert:* I don't, no more than a babe unborn. What field?

*Mrs. Parrott:* That one as he owns down by Piatt's Hole, of course.

*Albert:* I've never heard naught about it, and I'm sure Matilda hasn't either.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Mind you, it isn't everybody as does know about it, because he bought it private from Mester Key — at the shop — just before he died, and lets it to young *Albert* Hodgson from Fletton. It's a very rich field of the best black fen soil — nineteen acres and a rood — as cost him nigh on fifty pounds an acre. They say as young *Albert* pays sixty-five shillings an acre rent.

*Albert (excitedly):* Down by Piatt's Hole, do you say?

*Mrs. Parrott:* Right at the bottom of the fen, just where the Roan runs into the Brent. (*She listens.*) Well — I must be off. Good-day to you, Mester Rowett. (*She goes out by the yard door.*)

(*Matilda enters from the sitting-room, with a basket on her arm. Although she is dressed in the clothes in which we last saw her, she presents an altogether more prosperous appearance. This is partly due to the good food she has been enjoying for the last week; partly*

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

*to release from the anxiety that has dropped from her shoulders for the first time in nine years, and partly to the fact that she is now a woman of property and able to hold her head high in her native Hordle.)*

*Matilda (sharply):* Who's that?

*Albert:* It's only Mrs. Parrott, from over the way.

*Matilda:* Interfering old cat! She's been trying to marry Dad ever since Mother died, but her chance has gone now. (She clears with difficulty a corner of the table to make room for her basket.)

*Albert:* She'd only come to fetch a toasting-fork as she'd lent the old boy.

*Matilda:* You shouldn't have let her in, poking her nose into my affairs. I can't get the place cleared up after a Feast supper in five minutes, single-handed. Why didn't you make a start on this mess while I was away? And you've let the fire out.

*(Albert tries to appease her by packing the dirty crockery closer together, but is disheartened by the fall and smash of a plate. He returns to the fire and changes the conversation. Matilda begins to clear the dirty crockery from the table and dresser into the scullery, talking to Albert the while.)*

*Albert:* She's not been nigh the place since she signed that Deed, and then you fetched her in yourself. *(Curiously.)* Where did you put it?

*Matilda:* Never you mind. It's safe.

*Albert:* You ought to let Lawyer White have it, I say.

*Matilda:* You say a deal too much. I never know what you'll be letting out.

*Albert (doggedly):* Let Lawyer White have it, I say. You know where you are, then.

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*Matilda (lowering her voice):* I don't trust that Lawyer White: he knows too much for me. I've got the Deed safe, and that's all we want. You've got your old coat on again.

*Albert:* Oh, blow!

*Matilda:* And you haven't shaved yet.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert:* I can't always be genteel. I'd almost sooner be back in Canada.

*Matilda:* Go and change it this minute, and put your collar on. We have a position to keep up now.

*Albert:* A fine position!

*Matilda (sniffing in his direction):* And the sooner you drop your pothouse friends, the better.

*Albert:* Pothouse friends! Who do you mean?

*Matilda:* All of them.

*Albert (drawing himself up and trying to snub the low-born Toulson):* They're good enough for me, and they ought to be for you.

*Matilda:* They're not, and you've got to drop them. I haven't brought you home to lounge about in the Flower Pot all day long. It's a deal too handy for you, my lad.

*Albert:* You leave my friends alone.

*Matilda:* I've just heard all about you and those two young Dodsworth girls at the Feast last night.

*Albert:* I only took 'em on the roundabouts.

*Matilda:* And whose money were you spending on them?

*Albert (again trying to change the conversation):* Let's be happy now we've fallen on our feet. It was mighty lucky we met young Rook when we did. What licked me was your not wanting to come home at first.

*Matilda:* Young Rook didn't think of mentioning

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at first about Dad having got a bit of property together.

*Albert:* That's what altered your tune, was it?

*Matilda:* Don't be a fool! Young Rook wouldn't have lent us the money to come home with, if it hadn't been for that.

*Albert:* I thought it was just his friendliness, him coming from the same place; or next door, as you might say.

*Matilda:* As if *that* would have made any difference.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert:* It seems like a nightmare now, doesn't it? Wandering about from pillar to post like lost sheep on Hordle Waste.

*Matilda:* And whose fault has it all been?

*Albert:* You've called yourself to be missis, anyway.

*Matilda:* And a goodish tool I've had to work with!

*Albert:* You've had your own way ever since the start, and chance the ducks. There's my sister got every penny of the old man's money, and (*boiling over furiously*) that wretched little Siggs standing in *my* shop door. What did Ada say when you got me to write and ask her to lend us a hundred pounds to set ourselves up with over there? Why — that the old man had charged her solemnly never to do nothing of the sort, but to tell me as how I'd made my own bed and must lie on it.

*Matilda:* I'd like to know where we should have been in Toronto if it hadn't been for my earnings. You'd have been singing on the streets.

*Albert:* My old Dad most certainly thought everything was your fault. The only time I saw him, after our wedding, he said to me, You've married a bad bitch, Albert, and much good may it do you. A fool! That's what he called me.

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*Matilda:* And so you are, and always have been, and always will be. And just mark this (*rapping the table with her hand*), you're not going to spend your time in the Flower Pot, You're going to work.

*Albert (expostulating plausibly):* What you don't understand, Matilda, is that I don't go to the Flower Pot just to drink, or see any girls, or anything of the sort. You don't expect I'm going to start labouring work, do you? I'm going into the cattle dealing, like Henry Dodsworth's done. He's got on wonderful, has Dodsworth. Things has changed in Hordle since we left, and the place is run now by him, and Eli Gunn, and Bob Cutts.

*Matilda:* Bob Cutts, indeed!

*Albert:* Let me tell you Bob Cutts is a great man, and will go into Parliament one of these days.

The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

Rural Plays (1922)

*Matilda:* Understand this, *Albert:* we're property owners, now — and Conservatives.

*Albert (in a horrified tone):* Your Dad'll never stand for that, nor yet Hordle neither.

*Matilda:* You don't think I'm going to spend the rest of my days in Hordle, do you?

*Albert:* That's as may be; but while we stop here we've got to mind our P's and Q's.

*Matilda (having unpacked her groceries on to the table, now starts to put them into the cupboard. At Albert's words, however, she turns attentively.)* What do you mean by that?

*Albert:* I was only telling you last night about the way you're treating the poor old boy, and now the village is crying shame.

*Matilda:* Who takes any notice of Hordle gossip?

*Albert:* Plenty of folks. I knew they would; I said so, when you shoved him into this kitchen, just

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because of his *low pothouse* ways, as you're so fond of calling everything that doesn't suit you. It was a mistake, and you'll have to have him back again.

*Matilda:* I shan't do anything of the kind.

*Albert:* Doctor Berry says draughts is poison to him, and this kitchen is as full of draughts as an egg is of meat. And that attic's worse.

*Matilda:* You mind your own business.

*Albert (fuming):* We shall see who's the fool. Maybe it isn't me this time.

*Matilda:* We can see now.

*Albert:* You'll have us rantanned if you're not careful. It would have been better, I say, if we had waited a bit before we went to church. It hardly seems right to me for the Parson to be calling, when your Dad preaches at the Primitives. (*He pauses,*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*but Matilda ignores his remarks.*) Besides, we ought to be careful here — of all places — or we shall be raking things up we don't want disturbed.

*Matilda:* When I want your advice, I'll ask for it. As for that *Mrs. Parrott*, I'll soon put an end to her spying.

*Albert:* But you can't stop her talking, nor yet the village. You know what Hordle is. They're talking about nothing else.

*Matilda (facing him squarely):* Look here, my man, you're very fauce this morning. What's it all about? Come on: let's have it.

*Albert (backing down):* I only said as how all the village was talking, and it's true. It's no good your going on at me for it. (*He nods towards the sitting-room.*) Why not put him back for a bit, to quieten them?

*Matilda:* I won't for you, nor yet all the village. We've a lot of way to make up, and we're going to

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start as we mean keeping on. What with his disgusting habits, and your copying him, we're put to shame before everybody that calls. I didn't know where to look the other day when *Mrs. Gunn* called, with him spitting in the fire. I won't have it.

*Albert:* Oh, come now! He's none so bad as all that. *Mrs. Gunn's* nothing to shout about, nor yet *Parson King*, if it comes to that, with his stallions and racehorses.

*Matilda:* All parsons is respectable; and don't let me catch you talking to that *Parrott* woman again.

*Albert:* But she's useful. I got a bit of news out of her just now as is very interesting to us.

*Matilda:* Rubbish! (*Albert turns sulkily away. She waits a minute.*) What was it?

*Albert:* Oh, nothing! (*Matilda looks at him.*) But you're not always right. (*Matilda continues to look at him, and having kept her waiting as long as he dare, he brings out the news.*) It seems that the old boy owns another field besides this. (*He*

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*points to the yard door with his thumb.*) Down by Piatt's Hole: twenty acre of the richest fen land.

*Matilda (contemptuously):* I don't believe a word of it. We should have heard before now.

*Albert:* It's true enough. Old Ned Toulson's family reckon they're going to have it.

*Matilda:* Oh, they do, do they! How came she to tell you all this?

*Albert:* I drew it out of her. (*Matilda laughs.*) I know how to handle these village folk better'n you do, as a matter of fact.

*Matilda:* What's land worth down the fen?

*Albert:* Getting on for sixty pounds an acre.

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*Matilda (calculating):* That's — that's —

*Albert (unctuously):* Twelve hundred pounds! Eli Gunn says the Mullens are buying up all the land round there, and the price keeps rising.

*Matilda:* Who said that about old Ned's family?

*Albert:* Mrs. Parrott. She said it was took for granted.

*Matilda (thoughtfully):* I wonder what that woman's up to. She's got something up her sleeve.

*Albert:* Oh, no, she hasn't! I drew it out of her. She didn't want to tell me. (*Matilda, with contempt too great for words, bangs the cupboard door and returns to the table.*) The old boy must have saved and scratched a nice lot together these last few years, mustn't he? He'd hardly the price of a pipe of tobacco when we went to Canada. I wonder how —

*Matilda (who has caught a sound from the attic, suddenly interrupts):* Just run upstairs into the front bedroom, Albert, and fetch down that big screen and put it round the arm-chair in there. (*She nods at the sitting-room door.*)

*Albert (unwillingly):* What screen?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda (sharply):* There's nothing in the room but our suit-cases and that screen.

*Albert:* But I don't want it: there's no draught in there. (*Matilda looks at him so fiercely that he ceases to object, and hastily shambles up the stairs. Matilda reaches a tumbler down from the dresser, wipes it out with her apron, unlocks the bottom cupboard, and produces a bottle of whisky from which she pours a liberal helping. She replaces the bottle, locks the cupboard again, and is pouring hot water into the tumbler as Jacob comes, coughing, down the stairs. Putting the tumbler on the table, she steers him across the floor, sits him down in*

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*his chair, arranges the shawl round his shoulders, and begins to coax the fire.)*

*Matilda (speaking in a low, soothing voice):* Your cough's worse, Dad. (*Jacob, coughing, nods his head.*) This kitchen's very draughty. You didn't tell me you weren't well. I can't think it's doing you much good sitting here in this cold, especially when the wind's so sharp.

*Jacob (holding out his hands to the dead fire):* The wind was very cold last night.

*Matilda (going to the yard door and putting her hand down to the threshold, then coming back to Jacob):* Why, it's enough to turn a windmill! You mustn't stop here with that cough. (*Jacob says nothing. Albert is clumsily descending the stairs with the screen, and as he reaches the bottom, Matilda continues:*) We'll have you in the room yonder. I've got the screen ready to pop round your arm-chair for you, and then you'll be as right as rain. (*She takes him by the arm.*) Come along. (*Jacob shakes his head obstinately, while Albert stands with the screen awaiting fresh orders.*) Why ever not?

*Jacob:* I'll stop here now.

*Matilda:* You'll not stop anywhere very long with a cough like yours, in this draught. Come along, now, Dad. (*She again tries to coax him out of his chair, but Jacob, huddled up and coughing, refuses to move. Matilda, suddenly altering her tactics, speaks to Albert:*) Bring that over here. Be careful. That's it! (*She arranges the*

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

screen around Jacob's chair.) Pop into the front room and fetch the door mat to lay across that crack (pointing to the bottom of the yard door), then bolt the door top and bottom.

*Albert:* But how shall I get in and out of the yard?

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*Matilda:* Through the front door, of course.

*Albert (astonished):* With my muddy boots?

*Matilda (hustling him):* And then move Dad's things out of the attic into the front bedroom. (*Albert, too stupefied for words, fetches the door mat and places it in front of the yard door; then bolts it. Matilda, meantime, darts into the sitting-room and returns with the hearth-rug which she puts under Jacob's feet, whilst Albert stares open-mouthed.*) There! That'll be more like. You'll be as snug as snug.

*Jacob (mumbling to himself):* It's too late, now.

*Matilda (who has gone to the table, turning quickly round):* What did you say, Dad?

*Jacob:* Nothing.

(*As the curtain falls, Matilda is pressing the hot whisky upon the coughing Jacob, who hesitates, but finally takes it from her; whilst Albert watches the proceeding greedily.*)

CURTAIN.

[NP]

KING LEAR AT HORDLE

ACT III

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ACT III

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

THE KITCHEN: THREE DAYS LATER: EARLY EVENING

*(The curtain rises on the same scene, but a great change has come over the kitchen. There is a clean white cloth on the table, around which stand three cane chairs. A heavy curtain has taken the place of the dirty towel on the yard door, the dresser is clean and tidy, gone are the bottles and boots, the range has been black-leaded, and its top is empty, except for an iron kettle that squats on a cheerful fire. The window has a fresh curtain and a blind, and an oil lamp stands lighted on the table. Jacob's text is hanging on the wall, between the window and the dresser. The old man is seated by the fire, but he is in his comfortable arm-chair, with a thick shawl round his shoulders and a pillow behind his back. The screen and hearth-rug stand as they did when the curtain fell.)*

*Mrs. Parrott is walking round the kitchen, examining in turn all these changes. She glances now and again at Jacob, who is smoking a long clay pipe and regarding her uneasily from time to time. Jacob's cough is better, and he is looking altogether brighter.)*

*Mrs. Parrott:* What a change, surelie! *(Jacob puffs his pipe.)* Nothing too good for the old man, eh? Ah, well! What a thing it is to have a kind darter. *(Jacob puffs his pipe.)* Good enough for the Parson himself. *(She counts the chairs.)* One — two —

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three — I see! We all have our meals here now, do we! Tch! Tch! We tend to our poor old Dad hand and foot, do we! Next thing we shall have our bed down here by the fire. *(Jacob shakes his head.)* But, of course, you don't sleep in the attic, now. *(Jacob makes no sign.)* P'raps you don't want to talk?

*Jacob:* I'm very pleased to see you, Missis Parrott, same as I always was.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Don't you know why I've called?

*Jacob:* Out of your kindness to an old friend, no doubt.

*Mrs. Parrott:* I shouldn't never have set foot in her house without being asked.

*Jacob:* I thought, maybe, you'd just come in to see how I was, Missis Parrott.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Albert Rowett asked me to come and cheer you up a bit.



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Jacob*: Very thoughtful is Albert, sometimes.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Your darter sent him.

*Jacob (his face lighting up)*: Did she now. I happened to mention only this morning as I hadn't seen you this last few days.

*Mrs. Parrott*: If you wanted the weathercock off the church steeple, she'd send Albert up for it... now; and if you fancied the tail off Joshua Bembridge's bull, Albert would be started off with a knife directly. (*Jacob looks at her doubtfully.*) Jacob Toulson, be you such a fool? (*fiercely*). You know as well as me what all this means. (*She waves her arm.*)

*Jacob*: Always harping on the same tune.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Huh!

*Jacob*: Just 'coz you had a hard time with your own family, you think all others is the same.

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*Mrs. Parrott*: I see her coming home from Bly market this afternoon in Jeff Sharples's van, dressed up like any queen.

*Jacob (warmly)*: Supposing she does know about that other field — that's what you mean, of course — you told her about it, no doubt. (*Mrs. Parrott shakes her head, but Jacob continues shrewdly*): Well, you told *Albert*, then. Does that stop her from being my darter? (*Mrs. Parrott compresses her lips and looks at the text.*) You're regular set against Matilda, and all what she does is wrong.

*Mrs. Parrott*: It may be so.

*Jacob (bracing himself for a thumping lie)*: If you must know, I've told her I was keeping that field for a surprise in my will; so it's making no difference: no difference at all.

*Mrs. Parrott*: She can't even wait till you're gone!

*Jacob*: What for, woman, do you try to poison me against my own flesh and blood? All I've got left.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Something's made a strange difference, seemingly.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob*: As Matilda says, it was really because she thought — with all that fine company — and the Vicar calling — (*he catches Mrs. Parrott's eye and ceases*).

*Mrs. Parrott*: I dares you to say it, Jacob Toulson.

*Jacob (evasively)*: As Matilda says, they've both been real upset in their minds ever since, to think as I might have took it the wrong way.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Oh! And why don't you go back into the room again, then?

*Jacob*: What do you want, woman?

*Mrs. Parrott*: Nothing of yours, Jacob Toulson.

*Jacob (apologetically)*: I didn't mean that. (*He*

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*puffs at his pipe.*) But if I'm satisfied, what does it matter?

*Mrs. Parrott*: Be you satisfied?

*Jacob*: Of course I be!

*Mrs. Parrott*: Wait till that other field's gone.

*Jacob*: They'd never ask it. I know she wouldn't.

*Mrs. Parrott*: She will; and you know it.

*Jacob*: If she did... I'd own you was right.

*Mrs. Parrott*: So all this is just to make up for their... mistake, is it? (*She waits, but Jacob makes no answer.*) When you've signed away that other field, and the paper's fast locked away with the first one —

*Jacob (defiantly interrupting her)*: Supposing I did. (*Mrs. Parrott laughs shortly.*) Can't I show my trust in my own flesh and blood?

*Mrs. Parrott (producing a letter and looking strangely at Jacob)*: Read that!

*Jacob (recoiling)*: I don't want to read no letters.

*Mrs. Parrott*: It's from that same young Rook what they met in Canada.

*Jacob*: Then I don't want to see it.

*Mrs. Parrott*: Afraid, be you? (*She pauses, but Jacob makes no answer.*) Writ to his folks, he has, and they've lent it me to show you.

*Jacob*: What for?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Mrs. Parrott:* To save you.

*Jacob (rising, smashing his clay pipe to the floor, and speaking savagely):* I don't want saving, woman. There's nothing to be saved from. Why the devil can't folks mind their own business? Interfering between me and mine!

*Mrs. Parrott (undismayed by this outburst):* You was good to Smith Rook and his missis once.

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*Jacob (lowering his brows):* And do they want to pay me back by making mischief between me and my darter?

*Mrs. Parrott:* He writes to say how he came across the Rowetts in Toronto. Albert was out of work, and had been for a long time, and your *Matilda* was cook in a eating-house. He says they never so much as inquired about the old folks, whether they was dead or alive, until he happened to mention as you had thriven so amazing of late. (*Jacob feels behind him for his chair.*) And then your darter borrowed money of him to come home. He had a long talk on the quiet with *Albert* before they left, and found as they'd been stravaging about this last three year from one job to another, without a penny piece to their name. (*Jacob's knees give way, and he sinks into the chair.*) So all that talk about selling up a grand business and a fine house was a lie from beginning to end.

*Jacob (summoning all his courage):* He's got a spite agen 'em.

*Mrs. Parrott:* He must have!

*Jacob:* Everybody's down on her.

*Mrs. Parrott:* So all their giving up — (she pauses, to let the point sink home).

*Jacob (in a low voice):* If it was true — poor critters — they hid their trouble and their shame the same as everybody does. I'd made my mind up what to do about this property before they got here at all, so what they said had nothing to do with it.

*Mrs. Parrott:* You never knew what happened when they bolted to Canada, did you?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob (indignantly):* They never bolted. Everybody knows they went because of Albert. He wouldn't

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settle in Hordle. When he married my darter and his old dad cut him off without a farthing, what was they to do?

*Mrs. Parrott:* There's a lot more in it than that. I had the truth from old Wilmot Rowett himself.

*Jacob:* What? When?

*Mrs. Parrott:* Didn't I nurse him in his last illness? He made me promise never to tell nobody unless there was some extry-ordinary good reason, but said as somebody ought to know the rights of it. (She lowers her voice.) Do you know why he didn't leave a penny piece to *Albert*, but willed everything to his darter — Missis Siggs as is now?

*Jacob:* He thought as *Albert* had married below him.

*Mrs. Parrott:* It wasn't nothing of the sort.

*Jacob:* Just because *Matilda* was cook at Fletton Manor: as if old Missis Rowett was anything better when he fetched her from Snitterwood.

*Mrs. Parrott:* No fairer man than old Mester Rowett ever breathed. Hard he was as nails, but always fair. (She pauses.) Less than a month after they'd been married, while they were stopping in this very house, she egged *Albert* on to steal eighty pounds of the old man's money.

*Jacob (white with fury):* It's a lie!

*Mrs. Parrott:* Nobody ever called Mester Rowett a liar. He found it out the next morning, but they'd left for Canada before he was up. When he come down, his safe was empty, and there was *Albert's* pipe laying close beside it; and he found *Albert's* old bedroom window had been forced open.

*Jacob (swallowing with difficulty):* Why do you blame it on *Matilda*?

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**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Mrs. Parrott:* Because old Mester Rowett did. He says to me, my boy's completely in her power, he says. Of course he was disappointed, because he wanted Albert to marry his cousin Thompson's eldest darter, in Fletton; but there was more than that. He got out of Albert why they went off to Barkston to get married unbeknown to anybody. She scared him into it by telling him he'd got to save her good name; but nobody's ever heard of them having any family. (*Jacob starts convulsively from his chair, and tries to speak; then sinks back again, Mrs. Parrott steps towards him anxiously, but he waves her away.*) I didn't want to hurt you, but if your darter gets that other field, you'll be worse off than ever. Don't you see? You'll be ten thousand times worse off then.

*Jacob:* I waited so long for her — (*he speaks to himself in a low voice, and the only words that can be heard are*) — nobody to care —

*Mrs. Parrott (in great distress):* Mester Toulson! It's better to be sorrowful in comfort, than sorrowful in rags. You can't have things just as you want 'em. Nobody can't in this world.

*Jacob:* I wanted her back.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Don't 'ee take on so.... Children's like that.

*Jacob:* It's sharp... it's sharp! (*He stands up, in such trouble that Mrs Parrott, unable to say more, can only raise her hands and drop them helplessly. Jacob sinks Mrs. Parrott goes quietly out through the sitting-room door. There is silence for a moment, then, as Mrs. Parrott is heard closing the front door, he stands up again. His face is set now, and his mouth tightly closed, so that he looks grim and shrewd. He*

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*takes a fresh clay pipe from the mantel-shelf, reseats himself, fills and lights the pipe, and sits staring into the fire. At this moment a jovial voice is heard in the street outside, singing "The Farmer's Lass." The front door opens, and Albert, softening his voice, comes through into the kitchen. Seeing Jacob, he pauses in the doorway, and the song ceases. Jacob looks hard at him, and then nods.)*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

As I was go –ing to the fair, I met a farmer’s lass.  
Says I to her, “My pretty dear, I cannot let you pass”  
Says she to me, “You must a – gree to let me on my way;  
If late I be, oh! dear y me! what would my mother say?”

*Albert:* I hope I'm not disturbing you.

*Jacob (dryly):* Not a bit. Come and sit down by the fire.

*Albert (who is slightly tipsy and very flushed):* I don't want warming; it's cooling I want. *(He sits down at the table with his back to the dresser, and begins to hum another verse of “The Farmer's Lass.” Jacob moves his arm-chair so that he can look squarely at Albert.)*

*Jacob:* When you went to Toronto, *Albert*, was that plumbing business — as you bought with your savings — was it all ready fixed up?

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*Albert (who has abruptly ceased his humming):* Ready fixed up? Yes. Why?

*Jacob:* A real going concern, was it?

*Albert:* Yes, certainly.

*Jacob (drawing his chair nearer Albert, and addressing him sharply):* What street was the shop in?

*Albert:* Street?

*Jacob:* Yes. What street?

*Albert (all at sea, and trying to gain time):* Street... I don't rightly remember what street it was.

*Jacob (leaning forward and speaking very firmly):* Rubbish! You must know.

*Albert (scratching his head in despair, and making a dash for it):* Well... it was Bly Avenue.

*Jacob:* That would be homelike.

*Albert:* It was. Oh, yes! Very!

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Jacob*: And was it a good business?

*Albert (who is sober now, and growing steadily more uneasy)*: Well — er — yes. Middling!

*Jacob*: Good premises?

*Albert (wiping his forehead with a coloured handkerchief)*: Yes; fairish.

*Jacob*: And a fine big house, you said. Was that in Bly Avenue as well?

*Albert*: I ought to be going. (*He begins to rise.*) I've somebody waiting for me.

*Jacob (in a sharper tone than Albert has ever heard him use)*: Sit down!

*Albert (sitting promptly)*: I say, you are a one-er for asking questions. You're as bad as my old governor used to be. Why, you've broke your pipe.

*Jacob*: Was it a very fine house, Albert?

*Albert*: Rather! Rooms and rooms. (*He waves his arm*)

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*Jacob*: How was it, then, that everything sold so badly?

*Albert (wiping his forehead again)*: That's business, you know. All ups and downs.

*Jacob*: Still... in a city like Toronto, I should have thought you'd have made more than enough to have paid your debts. How came you to have such a dolch of debts?

*Albert (looking round for help)*: You must ask Matilda. She knows all about it.

*Jacob*: But I'm asking you. (*He moves still nearer to Albert*): You ran the business and made all the debts, didn't you?

*Albert*: Ah! But you see, Matilda always saw to everything, really.

*Jacob*: What did you do, then?

*Albert*: Business isn't like farming, you know. It's all mixed up like *that*. (*He twiddles his fingers in the air.*) You never know where you are.

*Jacob*: I dare say you wouldn't. Where did young Rook run across you?

*Albert*: In the street. I was out walking one day.

*Jacob*: Oh! Not particular busy that day, wasn't you?



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Albert:* Well — no! Not then. It was a holiday.

*Jacob:* A holiday! I see! And so you shut up the shop?

*Albert (desperately):* It was the Oddfellows. You know the Oddfellows.

*Jacob:* Oh, yes! I know the Oddfellows.

*Albert:* They're very strong in Toronto; very strong. And when it's their club feast, all the shops have to shut. They force 'em.

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*Jacob (noting with interest this colonial custom):* And Matilda, I suppose, would be looking after the big house in Bly Avenue. Or was she having a holiday too, on account of the club feast?

*Albert:* Oh, no I She was always at home. It took a lot of looking after, that house. Servants are very hard to come by, over there.

*Jacob:* She always was a good cook, wasn't she?

*Albert:* Eh? Oh — you mean before we got married.

*Jacob:* And since. (*Albert by now has shrunk several sizes. He is nailed to his chair by Jacob's eye. Now and again he tries to light his pipe, but the match always goes out. Jacob takes a long puff of smoke and begins afresh.*) What was it, Albert, that set your father so dead against Matilda?

*Albert:* I don't rightly know.

*Jacob:* It must have been something powerful to make him leave everything to your sister. Young Siggs runs the old business — just like you run yours in Toronto — only it pays him. That business ought to have been yours by rights. How do you account for it?

*Albert:* Well, he was a contrary old chap — a regular nailer. He took a turn against Matilda for some reason — and once he did that, nothing would move him.

*Jacob:* So you don't know the reason?

*Albert:* No, I don't.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob:* Of course, Albert, I never asked you how it was you went off and got wedded unbeknown to any one, because it takes two to do a job of that sort; but folks talk in Hordle the same as in other places.

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Maybe worse. And many has wondered how it was. (*He pauses, hut there is no reply.*) You went off to Canada without a deal of cash, of course. Matilda had a bit saved up, but that wouldn't last long.

*Albert:* No, it didn't.

*Jacob:* There's one thing, though: you never had the expense of a family.

*Albert:* No, thank goodness!

*Jacob:* You never had any children at all, did you?

*Albert (hesitating):* Well... no.

*Jacob:* I suppose you'd 'a known if you did have any?

*Albert:* Yes... I suppose so. Though —

*Jacob:* Though what?

*Albert:* When we first went to Canada, we — she — almost fancied she was going to have a baby, but —

*Jacob:* A false alarm, eh?

*Albert:* That's it! A false alarm!

*Jacob:* You knew that before you sailed, didn't you?

*Albert (nervelessly):* I don't rightly remember.

*Jacob:* I suppose your father didn't know anything about what Matilda — what you've just mentioned?

*Albert:* Oh, dear me, no! At least, I don't think so. It's such a long time ago.

*Jacob:* And you really can't understand why your Dad cut you off without a penny, though he must have known that you left England with hardly any money in your pockets, and was expecting a child, in the bargain?

*Albert (in the last miserable extremity):* No... I can't.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*(The front door opens, and Matilda's step is heard*

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*in the sitting-room. Released from the spell, Albert slips from his chair and fades up the stairs. As Matilda enters, she catches sight of Albert's feet on the top step. Jacob has turned round to the fire again; his eyes are dull, and his shoulders are drooping. Matilda has evidently been to call on some neighbour, for she is still dressed in the best clothes in which she went to Bly market. She looks suspiciously round the kitchen, then advances towards Jacob and straightens the hearthrug, picking up the fragments of pipe and throwing them in the fireplace.)*

*Matilda:* Comfortable, Dad?

*Jacob (not looking up):* Middling.

*Matilda:* You've got plenty of tobacco, haven't you? *(She peeps into the jar on the mantelpiece.)* Your feet's not cold, are they? *(Taking off her hat and coat.)* Your cough's much better anyway, Dad. It looks as though you'll be able to go to chapel with us to-morrow, after all.

*Jacob (looking up astonished):* Why! I thought you'd took a pew at church?

*Matilda (who is on her way to the sitting-room with her outdoor things, pauses at the door, and shakes her head slowly):* Oh, no! Only once, just to show ourselves. The old ways are good enough for me. *(She disappears for an instant to return empty-handed.)* Who plays the harmonium now, Dad?

*Jacob:* Jock Bavin's darter, Nell.

*(Matilda goes to the cupboard and gets a bundle of knitting. She then fetches a jug from the dresser, puts her ball of wool into it, sits down at the table in the chair vacated by Albert, and unfurls the knitting. It looks*

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*suspiciously like a woollen comforter in process of manufacture for Jacob.)*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda:* What's *Albert* been rambling about?

*Jacob:* Nothing much. Only telling me all about Toronto.

*Matilda (all her suspicions aroused):* What's he been telling you about Toronto?

*Jacob:* Oh! Quite a lot.

*Matilda (beginning to knit):* You mustn't take any notice of *Albert*. He rambles and wanders along, and isn't responsible for what he does say.

*Jacob:* He's been telling me some queerish things.

*Matilda:* I'm afraid he's had rather more than is good for him. That was always his weakness, you know — too fond of good company. Of course, you can't take any notice of a word he says, when he's like that.

*Jacob:* No?

*Matilda:* I'm glad he's had sense enough to go and try to sleep it off.

*Jacob:* He did seem a bit upset, now you come to mention it.

*Matilda (reassured):* Ah! Just what I thought. (*Looking hard at Jacob's back, and hesitating*) I almost wish we'd never come home.

*Jacob (unmoved):* Oh!

*Matilda:* You did think something of me before, but now you're that set against me, you won't sit in the room with us.

*Jacob:* Rubbish!

*Matilda:* Well, you don't, do you?

*Jacob:* And who's doing's that?

*Matilda:* You know, Dad, it was only for one night. You know very well, you'd have been uncomfortable

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with *Albert's* fine friends and their ways. You said so yourself. (*She pauses.*) Now everybody's against us.

*Jacob:* Oh, are they?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda:* It's all that Mrs. Parrott. (*She looks at him, hut he takes no notice, and she continues*) And then... you don't trust us. You don't trust me.

*Jacob:* Oh, don't I?

*Matilda:* You kept it a secret about that field at Piatt's Hole. It seems as if you were afraid to let me know about it.

*Jacob:* Don't talk like a fool, girl.

*Matilda (taking out her handkerchief):* It's not very nice to have that sort of thing thrown in your face.

*Jacob:* What are you rambling about? What sort of thing? Who's throwing things in your face?

*Matilda:* Why... everybody.

*Jacob:* I don't know what you mean.

*Matilda:* They say yon give with one hand and take back with the other.

*Jacob:* Well, it's a lie, isn't it?

*Matilda:* What else is this?

*Jacob:* Is what?

*Matilda:* Keeping that field a secret.

*Jacob:* If you must know, I meant it for a surprise for you, after I was gone, or else I should have put it on the same Deed as this house.

*Matilda:* Instead of which it's thrown in my teeth the first week I land as it's promised to old Ned's family.

*Jacob:* That's neither broke your nose nor blacked your eyes, has it?

*Matilda (wiping her eyes):* I tell Albert not to listen to all the jealous talk that goes on. It's making him lose his sleep.

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*Jacob:* That's easy mended.

*Matilda:* Easy mended? Do you mean that you'll make that field over to me as well — now? (*She rises excitedly.*)

*Jacob:* That would be one way, certainly.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Matilda (rushing to him):* It would shut their mouths. (*Throwing her arms round his neck.*) But you always was a good, kind old Dad. (*She kisses him loudly.*) I shouldn't care a bit then.

*Jacob (holding his pipe carefully out of her way):* Shouldn't you, now?

*Matilda:* Not a bit! It would show those gossiping old cats that you do really care for me after all; and that you do trust me.

*Jacob:* It would!

*Matilda (rearranging his shawl, and then returning to her knitting):* I felt sure you'd do it, if you saw it in the right light.

*Jacob:* You always was very clever, Matilda.

*Matilda (chaffingly):* I'm your daughter, you see.

*Jacob:* There's something in that.

*Matilda (trying the comforter round his neck):* Yes! I said to Albert, I said, Dad won't see us put on, Albert. He'll set us right before the village in a minute, when I tell him how things stand. (*She stands back to see how much longer the comforter must be.*) And so, to-day at Bly, I got Lawyer Walton to draft another bit of a deed for you to sign, and finish it off.

*Jacob (looking at her):* Did you now?

*Matilda:* So as to save you any trouble.

*Jacob:* That was thoughtful of you.

*Matilda:* Of course, I shouldn't have said anything,

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nor even thought about it, if it hadn't been spread all over the village first.

*Jacob:* No, I suppose not.

*Matilda:* And so (*removing the comforter and rearranging the shawl lovingly round his shoulders*) I thought... if you'd just sign this... we should all be happy and comfortable together again.

*Jacob:* That would be nice.

*Matilda:* Of course it would.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob*: But I'd meant to keep it and leave it to you in my will.

*Matilda*: You said as you didn't believe in folks waiting for dead men's shoes, didn't you, Dad?

*Jacob*: I didn't mean you to know anything about it, you see.

*Matilda*: But now we *do* know, you wouldn't want it to be like that, should you? It makes such unpleasantness. It'll be far better now this way, won't it?

*Jacob*: I dare say it might.

*Matilda*: I *knew* you'd understand. (*She darts into the front room, and returns immediately with a long envelope.*) There, Dad! Here it is! (*She puts it on the table, and reaches up to the mantelpiece.*) And here's the ink. If we get it done, it'll be done with.

*Jacob*: It would!

*Matilda (drawing paper from envelope)*: There you are, then! (*going to the dresser*) And there's the pen and the blotting-paper. (*She takes Jacob's arm and half helps, half forces him out of his chair. He hobbles to the table, and seats himself.*) Let's see — we shall want a witness again, shan't we? I suppose we'd better have Missis Parrott again, don't you think, Dad? She's handy. (*She goes to the foot of the stairs*

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*and shouts*) Albert! Al-bert! (*The thud of Albert's feet leaving the bed is heard, and the bedroom door opens.*)

*Albert (with great reluctance)*: What is it?

*Matilda*: Just go across the road, and ask Missis Parrott to step this way — say Dad wants her particular.

*Albert (descending with relief, but glancing uneasily at Jacob)*: Right-o! (*He hurries out.*)

*Matilda (to Albert as he goes)*: Particular! (*To Jacob*): She'll be here in a minute, Dad.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jacob (who has been studying the Deed, spells out slowly):* In consideration of his natural love and affection for his said darter. *(He looks up.)* This isn't like the other paper.

*Matilda:* That it is, Dad. Just the same.

*Jacob:* No, it isn't.

*Matilda:* Yes, it is.

*Jacob (shaking his head):* I say it's not! *(He pushes the Deed away from him.)*

*Matilda (anxiously, picking it up):* What's the matter with it? Lawyer Walton drew it up.

*Jacob:* I couldn't never sign nothing no different. Lawyer White drew t'other one up for me according to my careful instructions; but this is different. I've no truck with Lawyer Walton.

*Matilda (worried):* It's the same, word for word. I'll show you. *(She hurries into the sitting-room, and returns with the old Deed in one hand, and her bunch of keys in the other.)* Look at that, now, for yourself.

*Jacob (drawing the old Deed from its envelope, and placing it alongside the new one, whilst Matilda watches him):* Don't be in such a hurry, lass. Lawyer White says *never hurry*, and I reckon he's about right. *(He looks up.)* That reminds me, lass, Missis Parrott'll

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maybe not be at home just now. She's always a long time shopping on Saturday evenings. We shall have to wait till Monday, shan't we? *(He places one Deed on top of the other, and begins to fold them up together.)*

*Matilda (putting out her hand to stop him):* I'll soon get somebody. You finish looking them two over till I come back. *(She hurries out of the kitchen, leaving her knitting on the table beside the jug.)*

*(Jacob listens until the front door bangs; then seizes the old Deed and tears it into strips; then proceeds methodically to tear each strip into fragments. He heaps these on to the blotter, looking at the fire; but before he can get out of his chair, he hears*

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*steps returning. He seizes the jug and turns it upside down, when the ball of wool drops on to the table: then, raising the blotting-paper, he pours the fragments of the old Deed into the jug and replaces the wool. He returns the jug to its original position on the table, and when Matilda enters, followed by Mrs. Parrott and Albert, is again studying the new Deed.*

*Mrs. Parrott was caught in the nick of time, for she has on a small hat, trimmed with black jet, and a three-quarter length black coat with various jet ornaments over a black skirt, and is carrying an old fish basket that she uses as a shopping bag.)*

*Matilda (breathlessly): I've found her. She hadn't gone after all.*

*Albert (indignantly): We was just coming out of the door when you got there.*

*Mrs. Parrott: What is it, Mester Toulson? What did you want me for?*

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*Jacob (looking at her stolidly): Nothing as I knows on. Missis Parrott.*

*All together (vehemently):* { *Mrs. Parrott: You sent for me, didn't you? She said as you wanted me most particular, or I shouldn't have come.*  
*Albert: You said as I was to say as Dad wanted her most particular. You told me to fetch her.*  
*Matilda: What's that? What do you mean, Dad? Yes, he does want you, Mrs. Parrott. He said he did.*

*(In the sudden silence that follows, they all stare at Jacob, who says nothing, but goes on reading the new Deed, following the words with his finger. Matilda recovers first.)*

*Matilda (to Mrs. Parrott): It's only to witness another paper.*

*Mrs. Parrott (starting back): Not again! Not for nobody! The last were plenty. Don't ask me, Mester Toulson.*

*Jacob (still reading): I won't.*

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*Matilda*: Why... what's amiss, Dad? You asked us to fetch Missis Parrott. (*She puts her finger on the Deed.*) It is all right, isn't it?

*Jacob*: I don't know so much.

*Matilda*: Well, but is it?

*Jacob*: It might be, and then again, it might not.

*Matilda*: Then what's amiss?

*Jacob*: Nothing as I knows on, so far.

*Matilda*: That's all right, then. (*To Mrs. Parrott*) Just come this way, my good woman.

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*Mrs. Parrott* (*who has been listening with the liveliest interest*): No, I won't. (*She prepares to leave.*) What do you mean by hindering me with such tales. Mester Toulson says to your face he doesn't want me, and that's plenty.

(*Whilst Mrs. Parrott is speaking, Jacob lifts the new Deed up from the table to turn it over, and Matilda at once misses the old Deed, which she had thought was lying under the new one, as it was when she went out. She glances round the room, and under the table, then glares at Jacob as a dreadful suspicion creeps over her. She leans across the table, gripping the edge with her hands, and the situation becomes so tense that Mrs. Parrott, who had reached the door, thinks better of it and comes back to the table.*)

*Matilda*: Where's the other one?

*Jacob*: Eh? What other one?

*Matilda* (*sharply*): The other Deed. The one you signed last week.

*Jacob* (*speaking with a dull drawl*): The-one-as-I- signed-last-week?

*Matilda* (*unable to control her voice*): Where is it, I say?

*Jacob* (*speaking as in a dream*): The other Deed? (*He grasps the handle of the jug and raises it from the table.*) The one as I signed last week? (*As he tilts the jug,*

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*Matilda's ball of wool rolls out, followed by the fragments of paper, which flutter all over the table and on to the floor.)* What Deed did I sign last week?

*Matilda (screaming):* What! You've tore it up?

*(Mrs Parrott raises her hands in a glorious silence,*

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*whilst Albert makes a sudden gesture with his fist.)*

*Jacob (standing up and speaking in a firm, clear voice):* I'd rather be mester in my own house, again.... Somehow I think it's better to be mester in your own home.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Glory be!

*Matilda (venting her passion on Albert):* This wouldn't have happened if you'd been quicker: you great fool!

*Mrs. Parrott (still unctuously):* Glory be!

*Matilda (turning on her):* Clear out of this house.

*Mrs. Parrott (folding her arms):* It isn't your house, and you can't order me out of it — now.

*Albert (to Matilda):* You've done it this time. I reckoned you would, one of these days.

*Matilda (to Jacob):* It's against the law, you wicked old man. You can be locked up for that, and I'll have you locked up, too.

*Jacob:* So you shall, my dear... if you can prove as I ever signed anything.

*Mrs. Parrott:* Prove as he signed anything? Oh, lor! *(She is convulsed with laughter.)*

*Matilda (pouncing on Mrs. Parrott):* And you were witness. You're in it as well.

*Mrs. Parrott (firmly and loudly):* I never see nobody sign nothing, never.

*Matilda (with a last effort):* I'll have the law on you both.

*Albert (seizing her roughly by the arm):* Don't be such a fool, woman. You've made a mess of it — now shut up!

*Jacob (speaking with the voice of authority):* Bring

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my chair into the front room, Albert, and we'll see about the other things later on. I've had enough of this kitchen. (*Jacob takes his text down from the wall, and delivers the final blow.*) I shall do as I like with my own property, and the better you and Albert behave, the more likely you'll be to have something left you. Please yourselves: but mester in my own house I'm going to be as long as I live.

(*The tide sets towards the room door. Albert goes first carrying the arm-chair, Jacob follows with his text under his arm, and his pipe in his mouth, whilst Mrs. Parrott, picking up the pillow which Albert has dropped, follows him triumphantly. They file through the room door, and Matilda is left alone staring after them.*)

CURTAIN.

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A TANVATS NIETZSCHE

A Duologue

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PREFACE TO *A TANVATS NIETZSCHE*

NIETZSCHE and Tolstoy, who have come to stand in the Western World as protagonists of the Christian and Pagan creeds, will be found here dressed in a rural setting. The age-long struggle sways backward and forward, and just now it looks as if the Pagans are going to have a turn, for the recent war gave the idealists a dreadful blow. When their turn comes again, machinery will have ousted the horse, just as the horse ousted the ox (as a toiler), and probably the end of the century will see a

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humanitarian campaign to abolish all animals and birds in order to save them from suffering.

The thought of a countryside without animals is enough to daunt most people, yet coming events cast their shadow. I have told in *Old England* how a Liberal candidate started a vegetarian farm, and if the experiment foundered in a gale of laughter, this was merely the fate of every pioneer. The war brought to the national attention the astonishing fact that one pound of beef from a fat bullock takes (to produce it) the equivalent of sixty-four pounds of dried grain; whilst mutton and pork are also outrageously expensive, in a lesser degree. I am no vegetarian, but, in face of the steadily increasing cost of world food production, and the certainty that this increase will continue, I do not think that the pig, the sheep, and the bullock will last much longer than the British Empire. They are too costly.

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A TANVATS NIETZSCHE

*Extract from County Directory.*

TANVATS, a village of 478 inhabitants, on Gulland estuary. Here is the Grand Sluice and Tanvats Pumping Station. There is a swing bridge at the Sluice. Tanvats Marsh is the property of the Gulland Commission. Church — St. Margaret. Vicar — Rev. H. Jessop. Primitive Methodist Chapel. “Wheatsheaf” Inn (T. Pinner). “Spotted Cow” Inn (Harvey Williams).

The scene of this Play is down in Tanvats Marsh, one beautiful Spring morning. As it is half-past nine, John Hind has stopped ploughing-in his potatoes, to have his lunch of bread, fat bacon, and beer; and his son stands talking to him whilst he eats. The two horses are grazing by the side of the dyke, steam rising from their backs, and the sun glints on the share of the hilling-plough, which divides each ridge and covers up the potatoes. One- half of the field is finished, whilst the seed potatoes lie uncovered in the furrows of the other half, awaiting their turn.

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Behind the two men is the Grand Sluice and the chimneys of the pumping stations of Tanvats and New Holland. The River Gulland, which is the main waterway of the whole district, is really a canal: the water being above the level of the country around. The land is drained by a system of dykes whose water is lifted into the main arteries by steam pumps at convenient

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spots. Where the main rivers approach the sea, big sluice gates open and close with the tide. If any of the artificial banks break under too great a load of water, in a wet winter, there is a local flood.

The horizon on the left is the bank of the Gulland Estuary; on the right, beyond the remains of the Old Roman sea-bank are the marshes of Fleet, Holt, and Pantacks; in front the land runs level to the new sea-bank. The tide being out, a mingled smell of mud and salt comes from the mud flats. Wild-fowl fly overhead, and on the freshly ploughed part of the field seagulls and plover are seeking their food in separate flocks.

JOHN HIND, a small working farmer, rents the place which his fathers have held since it was first cultivated, some two centuries ago. This pure-bred Saxon is short and sturdy, and has never had a day's illness in his life. He calls himself a churchman, though he never attends; and a Conservative, though he does not bother to vote. His strong common-sense, tenacity, and simpleness of heart cannot be said to distinguish him because they are characteristic of so many of his neighbours; but they set him apart in striking contrast to his son.

John's wife, Sophia, is the daughter of a Russian refugee, Michael Ostroff, who escaped in a ship bound for the neighbouring seaport town of Barkston, and, having money, settled down in Tanvats to nurse back his health and avoid attention. He married the only daughter of William Hodgson, a Tanvats farmer, and now lies beside her in the churchyard.

Michael Joseph Hind, the only child of John and Sophia, educated himself by a County Council scholarship at Bly Grammar School, and, by the aid of further



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scholarships, is now well advanced in his studies for the scholastic profession. He is astonishingly clever, and his parents are exceedingly proud of him, but there is a queer strain which at times terrifies them. Michael Joseph is of average height, and very thin. He is dressed in a black serge suit, with a stiff collar and black tie, and would be indistinguishable in any gathering of young Russian students in London.

*John.*

What is it, Joe? Your mother's lost her sleep,  
And so have I:

What dog has been a-worrying your sheep?

“You don't think it would hardly interest me?”

You mean, of course, as I'm too old to see:

Why, bless your heart! When you've reached sixty- five

There's precious little as you can't contrive.

I says to her, when she begun to weep,

“Now, then, what is it. Missis, anyhow?

Is it the wind in the chimney, or yon old cow?

She'll not calve afore mom —

Or I'll eat her horn —

And I *do* know about stock, as you'll allow;

For we've never lost a heifer nor yet a sow,

Though I'm not so strong on sheep;

So, Missis, don't you toss and tave a-that-how,

Or else I shan't be up at five to plough.”

“It's not the wind, says she, nor yet the chimney,

Nor yet my sins;

It's Joe, our lad, who bothers me so much;

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He did to-day;

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He knows too much for me: what can I say?

It's no use arguing, for he has you pinned,

His words are biting as the cold East Wind;

So strange and wild, so sad and yet so true,

They seem to pierce you through.”

“You know, I says, as I'm agen book laming,

It's good for nowt. I've given you every warning,

But you must egg him on to read away:

Why! I should very soon be off my feed

If I'd a set and read like him all day,

The same as you've encouraged in yon loft

Wi' pen and ink, till he may well be soft.

He's all he wants; if laming drives him mad,

If books — the devil take 'em — be that bad.

You've nowt to do but chuck 'em in the drain,

And stop them maggots gnawing at his brain.”

*Michael Joseph.*

“I've watched the horses, Father, on our farm,

Watered, well fed, and never fearing harm;

So long as they keep toiling all the day,

Granted the gift of living: that their pay.

Born in the spring,

Gambolling foals, in meadows sweet they fling

Until at last the harness comes: the bit

Is forced between their teeth: the iron bit!

Poor hopeless slaves

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

Whose fathers galloped over open plains  
Free as the wind across the sea, their manes  
Flung backward on the breeze like streaming waves;  
Gallant and wild they ran, unknown of men,  
Their life a true one, worth the living then;  
But, now, if horses pondered —  
Instead of standing by the stable door

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With ever-patient eyes that dreaming, wondered —  
Instead of dreaming there for evermore —  
They'd trample on and kill the young they're rearing,  
By one sharp cut the ghastly cord to sever;  
So that when they are dead no horses ever  
Should toil and slave in horrible endeavour,  
But end a life that's never worth the bearing.”

*John.*

“Stop, Joe! I couldn't listen to such words as that,  
Folks doesn't say such things; they'd never do;  
The roof would fall, the lightning strike us through;  
You make me dizzy:  
Do you expect as I'm to pull the plough  
While Tinker strolls inside the “Spotted Cow”  
And has a pint wi' Lizzie?  
I couldn't stand such things, not interfering;  
Why!... Providence itself might be in hearing:  
Slaves... kill their foals... life not worth bearing...  
It's blasphemy— that's fiat!”

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*Michael Joseph.*

“Father! I feel our life is lacking worth —  
That's my disease;  
That I shall nevermore find rest nor ease  
Nor quietness, because on this strange earth  
The meek, the kind, the mercifullest people  
Are ground by fate and trodden in the dust —  
Their hopes all withered and their dreams a-rust:  
While selfishness, and vice, and horrid lust  
Are mounted on the top of every steeple.  
The pious workers of each age have preached  
That this our world is worthless, only reached  
As one of Zion's stages — half-way there —

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That we have no abiding city here;  
That this is but a vale of tears below;  
A place of woe!  
And so they dream some compensating scheme,  
A heaven in which some kindly One stands fast  
To balance up and make all clear at last;  
Explain how sorrow came to be about,  
How cruelty crept out,  
Who sanctioned evil,  
And who designed this diabolic revel,  
This demon rout — this worse —  
This devil's dance of our mad universe.  
For I can see no token of that One,  
No smiling Providence when day is done,  
No kindly Ruler watching from the sky,

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No One to hear our cry;  
Nor sign of sanity nor wise domain —  
Nothing but evil in one sad refrain.  
Ruled by a blind and heartless madness,  
Toiling to eat the bread of sadness.  
Stooping to drink the tears of sorrow,  
Hopelessly waiting each to-morrow.  
Working with hate for some dread master  
Who, if we halt, but flogs the faster:  
Not by our will — who could pretend to care —  
We live and work because the whip is there.  
Perhaps this old earth's our master; what we fancy  
Is only rocks and soil and trees and stones,  
This air and land and sea, these dead men's bones,  
By some wild necromancy  
This earth, this ancient globe, may be our master!  
Our horses cannot know who is their lord:  
The carter, they imagine, owns the farm;  
They think the angry voice will do them harm,

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They heed the word that falls from human lip,  
But more they fear the stinging of the whip  
That drives them from the manger to the cart;  
Yet... how can they distinguish man apart?  
Just so, perhaps, we cannot see our Master,  
He being much too huge for us to see:  
The trees, the grass, and all that grows — his hair;  
The lightning and the storm — his rude embrace;  
Mountains and valleys — scars upon his face;

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Outbreathing fire and smoke, he strides alone

Across the void on errand unbeknown,

Some matter that by us can ne'er be guessed,

We, who are less than dust upon his breast:

For we are not his children, as it seemed;

This world is not as we so fondly dreamed;

Counting ourselves his children, whereas, rather,

Earth is our cruel master, not our father.

Poor, hopeless slaves!

For whom is nothing better, nothing ever,

No paradise, no heaven whatsoever.

Now, therefore, like our horses, lacking thought,

By some strange master snared, alas! and caught,

We toil at his unfathomable aim:

What shame!

To slave for this old wrinkled cruel earth

Who binds us in his iron chains from birth:

Yet if we had the wit to cogitate,

We mortals should decide to end our state,

Place bounds upon this weary universe,

Revoke for ever deluded Adam's curse,

Defy our master with a dying breath,

Cheat this old earth, this Juggernaut of death;

This Gordian knot of life and time dissever,

And, at one blow, strike off our chains for ever.

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*John.*

“I don't mind that, now, Joe; it blows away;

I've felt myself a-that-how, in my day;

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

I can remember as a youngish chap  
At times, life wasn't hardly worth a rap:  
It's nobbut baggerment; it passes off  
Like the green sickness or a winter's cough.  
Never you mind about the weak and poor,  
They're just like cast-off sheep, no less, no more,  
No good to nobody as ever I could see,  
The sooner dead the better;  
Look at me!  
Am I a rick-backed horse, a toiling slave?  
Am I a-longing for an early grave?  
Don't I enjoy my life? A-course I do,  
And if you hark to me, Joe, so will you.  
Our parson says I'm nobbut a heathen chap;  
But what he says don't bother me one scrap;  
I'm quite content wi' what my fathers done;  
We carries on from father down to son.  
All your ideas, Joe, comes from books,  
Or them old rooks, the parsons — drat 'em!  
(*Somebody* scrat 'em) —  
Wi' their caws of sin and their tales of woe,  
And their better worlds where the righteous go;  
What better world d'ye want than this?  
A farm to till, a wife to kiss,  
A son to follow, good health to enjoy —  
You couldn't want nothing no better, my boy.  
So listen to me, Joe —  
Burn them old books,  
Forget them old rooks;  
Jump on the nag when the sun's popping out,  
When the frost in the air makes you shiver and shout;



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Full gallop a mile

In the old-fashioned style.

Then tell me if living ain't well worth the while.”

The customary twenty minutes is over, and the farmer, placing his stone bottle and knapsack under his folded coat, clucks to Tinker and Lizzie and sets off down the next ridge. The earth divides before the double share, and turns over in waves upon the potatoes on either side. Michael Joseph stands watching the horses as they recede; and the scene gradually fades.

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ELDORADO  
A Play in One Act

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PREFACE TO ELDORADO

SOMETIMES an industry, after centuries of smooth sailing, will burst forth volcanically in a night. There was the Tulip craze in Holland, when fabulous sums were realised; though this was not inexplicable, for tulips are the pets of wealthy men: but potatoes are plebeian things, articles of the kitchen, and how could a single tuber sell for a hundred pounds?

Each variety of potato has only a short life, after which, in some mysterious way, its vigour ebbs and it quietly peters out. The breeding and selection of new kinds, therefore, is of importance. Potatoes suffer from the dreadful *Phylophthera Infestans*, which in a night will blight thousands of acres, and the appearance of a variety that will resist disease is a thing that every grower dreams about. New varieties of potatoes are

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obtained by cross-fertilisation, and when a promising one appears, it soon spreads across the country, maintaining its position for fifteen to twenty years; after which it loses its strength and is supplanted by a newcomer. A generation ago, the Ashleaf, the Skerry, and the Magnum Bonum were universal favourites; but they are now extinct as field varieties, and linger only in kitchen gardens.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, three unfavourable seasons coincided with the decay of the chief existing varieties, and there was a loud demand for new ones. A noted potato breeder in Scotland, named Findlay (introducer of the famous

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Up-to-date) brought out several to meet this demand, and those who were fortunate enough to secure early parcels sold their crop for seed purposes at remunerative rates. To sell the whole of a crop at twenty pounds a ton for seed, instead of three pounds a ton for the table, was immensely stimulating; and when, at the crucial time, Mr. Findlay announced that he had a variety called Eldorado (sinister name!) which would eclipse all others, each grower was determined to be in first. It was this that fired the rocket.

The Potato Boom was the most astonishing incident of British agriculture. It arose naturally, reached an astounding height, and collapsed suddenly. Farmers are accustomed to huge prices for pedigree animals, and sums exceeding a thousand pounds have been paid for rams, bulls, and stallions; so that a high figure for pedigree potatoes from which to breed improved and profitable stocks was but a step in the same direction. This explains why the most conservative body of men in our country fell victims to a frenzy without parallel in agricultural history.

Not only were values inflated, but they seemed capable of infinite extension; and the most ridiculous reports were circulated. It was said that Findlay's next would cost a thousand pounds a pound, and make its possessors millionaires. The boom had become a bubble, and single tubers were sold by public auction in Lincoln market-place to excited bidders. The purchasers of Eldorados forced them in hot-houses, and sold off the potted plants at two guineas each. Every one speculated; new varieties came forth weekly; syndicates were formed to exploit them,

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and all the desperate scheming and sheer lunacy of the South Sea Bubble rose to the surface. I was growing potatoes then, and at the height of the Boom established a world-record by selling a single Eldorado tuber for one hundred pounds. World records are hard to come by, and I cling to the only one I am likely to get, and of which indeed, I am unlikely to be dispossessed.

The following summer was favourable for the potato crop. There was a huge yield, and prices fell everywhere. It is the same with all booms: a period of scarcity raises prices, speculation and inflation follow, until the thing is overdone, and excessive production sets in. Shares, potatoes, or whatever else is being gambled in, suddenly become unsaleable; all are sellers, none are buyers; there is a scene of panic and the edifice collapses like a house of cards. The Potato Boom had soared beyond the scarcity that gave it birth and stimulated its growths and when its foliage filled the rural heaven, my stouthearted friend, Titus Kime (a well-known potato merchant) took a running kick at its trunk; and lo, it was rotten! He declared, in the Press, that the Eldorado was not a new variety at all. This proclamation came like a thunderclap: the Boom crashed with dramatic suddenness, and in a few weeks the new varieties were unsaleable. Those unfortunates who had purchased expensive potatoes for forward delivery refused to accept them, and there was a whirlpool of lawsuits over contracts.

When the dust cleared, and the Eldorados, Pearls, Diamonds, Discoverys, Northern Stars, Southern Stars, Queen of the Veldts, and Million Makers had been given to the pigs, because no one would buy

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them, agriculture settled down once more to its ordinary routine. The fantastic happenings appeared so dreamlike to the hard-headed farmers who had taken part in them, that they concluded it must have been a dream; and the great Potato Boom faded quickly into oblivion.

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## ELDORADO

*Extract from County Directory*

CARRINGTON, a village at the foot of the Wolds (476 inhabitants) on the River Sow. The principal landowners are Lord David Herries of Herries Hall, and James Watson, Esquire. Church — St. Peter. Vicar — Rev. W. Martin. Wesleyan Chapel. “The Case is Altered” Inn (James Garvey). “The Nelson Arms” (B. Snow). Railway Station — Belton Junction. Carrington Wood is noted for its primroses. Three great moors — Caxton, Carrington, and Worlby meet here.

*(The curtain rises one fine March morning on the combined sitting and dining-room of Jim Watson’s farmhouse in the village of Carrington. It doesn’t look much like a farmhouse, because it happens to be the bottom story of a disused windmill. The mill is a very substantial circular brick building, quite sixty feet high. Its ground floor is raised above the yard outside to the height of a wagon bottom, and when the outer door (which is in the centre at the back) is opened, a fine view is obtained across Caxton Moor to where Keal Hill rears its head several miles away. The floor of the living-room is of boards, and so is the ceiling, which is supported by stout beams, from which hang an oil lamp, a fine ham, bunches of dried herbs, and strings of onions. The circular brick wall is white-washed, presenting a rough*

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*appearance, and the only attempts at ornament are a couple of the highly coloured almanacs given away by country tradesmen. Light is obtained from two windows placed high up; one on the extreme left, the other halfway round on the right. Their deep ledges draw attention to the great thickness of the wall. Between the front door and the left-hand window is a smaller door, opening into a shed (once a stable) which serves as*

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*kitchen and scullery. Between the right-hand window and the front door, a step ladder, close to the wall, leads to a trap-door in the ceiling. A stout rope hangs from a hook beside this trap. A clumsy deal table stands in the centre of the floor, with a chair drawn up on its left. Under the windows two large wooden bins have been converted into cupboards, and wooden shoots run from the top of these to the ceiling. A mill-stone lying on the floor on the extreme right, serves as the base of an iron stove, whose pipe passes through the wall just under the ceiling. An arm-chair occupies a square of cocoanut matting by the stove, and two plain wooden chairs stand on either side of the scullery door. On one of these is a small lidded egg-basket. A square piece of zinc is nailed to the floor in front of the scullery door, and exactly over this is a second trap-door with two flaps, through a hole in the centre of which hangs an endless chain reaching nearly to the floor. The front door is a very stout affair, with long iron hinge-plates, an iron bar, and a latch. On the extreme left, a shaft with pulley wheels is fixed to the wall.*

*A melancholy whistling is heard outside, and a young man, coming up the steps to the front door, enters the room and goes to the stove. Henry Watson is a well-built fellow of about twenty, wearing a Norfolk jacket, tweed breeches, and cycling stockings. As he stands holding*

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*his hands out over the top of the stove, a high-pitched querulous voice comes from above.)*

*Voice:* Is that you, Henry?

*Henry:* Yes, Dad.

*(A creaking of hinges is heard, the right-hand trapdoor is raised, and James Watson, grasping the rope, descends the ladder backwards. He is a small, thin man, in tight cloth trousers, with a tightly-fitting coat of snuff-coloured cloth which he wears buttoned up to his chin. His grizzled beard is short and straggly, and his scanty*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*moustache reveals a mean upper lip. The half-top hat he is wearing may have been black when it was fashionable a generation earlier, but is now green with age. His eyes are small and close together, and his whole appearance is mean and withered.)*

*James:* Well — did you tell 'em what I said?

*Henry:* Yes.

*James:* And what did they say?

*Henry (laughing shortly):* Said as they never expected nothing else.

*James:* Oh, they did, did they! The bone idle rackapelts! Beer! Beer! Do they think I've got Jackstraw's brewery in the mill-yard? Here I've found 'em a whole gallon — amongst six of 'em, mind you — nearly a quart apiece — only three days ago, and now they want more! If they'd turn teetotal and wear blue ribbons, instead of deafening me with their yauping for beer, I should think something of 'em. Did you tell 'em they could fill their bottles with cold tea?

*Henry:* Ay! I said I'd take it to them!

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*James:* Were they thankful? What did they say?

*Henry (grinning):* I don't hardly like to repeat it.

*James:* Out with it.

*Henry:* They said you wasn't named "Cheap Jim" for nothing.

*James:* The shucky mawkins! If they come and beg on their bended knees for cold tea, they shan't have it now — not a drop! I'll dock their wages!

*Henry:* Then they'll go away and we shan't get our potatoes planted.

*James:* As soon as we're a bit slacker, I will!

*Henry:* You can't cut 'em down any more, Dad. We've only got the oldest hands now — what nobody else won't have. It takes 'em most of their time to draw their breath, and they hoe that careful you can see the weeds grown up behind 'em almost as thick as they are in front.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*James:* Young chaps is no use. If you get a good 'un, he won't stop; and if you get a bad 'un, you don't want him. In my young days, we never had no trouble at all. They were pleased to earn fifteen pence a day, and would very near go down on their knees for it. Nowadays, they want us to go down on our knees to get them.

*Henry (interrupting him):* Tom Harrod came back with me from the field, to fetch another bag of super- phosphate. He knows where it is, in the shed — Oh, yes, and they want another fork!

*James (anxiously):* They use that manure as if it was sand. What do they think I'd made of!

*Henry:* If we don't put manure *in* the ground, we shan't get any crop out. This isn't fen land.

*James:* They use too much. I'll tell him they

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must be more careful. (*He makes towards the front door.*)

*Henry (stopping him):* What about that fork?

*James:* Fetch one from the top — the one with the cracked shaft.

(*Henry goes up the steps and disappears through the trap-door. Fainter hangs record his ascent to the fourth story. As James reaches the front door, the scullery door opens and his daughter Betsy hurries out and stops him.*)

*Betsy:* I haven't got any potatoes for dinner.

*James (trying to get away from her):* Well, get some.

*Betsy:* I'm not going through that mucky yard any more. Why can't we have a bag of eaters kept up here, same as you promised.

*James:* All right! I'll see to it. (*He breaks loose and runs down the steps into the mill yard.*)

*Betsy (calling from the top of the steps):* I'm waiting for them! (*She comes inside, shuts the door, and goes to the stove to make the fire up. Betsy Watson is an*



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*obstreperous lass of eighteen, with a keen (and constantly outraged) sense of justice. She wears black hand-knitted stockings, a very old and torn tartan skirt, a spotted blue and white blouse, and down-at-heel black walking shoes, whose broken laces are mended with twine. She has on a dirty white apron, and her sleeves are rolled up. Her mass of straight dark brown hair is thrown on to the top of her head to be secured there by two or three hairpins. Under favourable circumstances, Betsy would be a good-looking girl, but constant nagging by her father has made her sullen.*

*There is a knock on the door, and Betsy, wiping her hands on her apron, goes to open it. The Watsons'*

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*next-door neighbor, Widow Burrows, stands on the doorstep.)*

*Mrs. Burrows:* Is your father at home, Betsy?

*Betsy (in a pleased tone):* Why, Mrs. Burrows! Come inside.

*(Emma Burrows carries on the market gardening business of her late husband Nathan, with the help of her two sons, Joe and Abel. She is a biggish woman of over fifty, with iron-gray hair, humorous hazel eyes, dark rather bushy eyebrows, and a moustache. She wears a black bonnet, trimmed with beads, a full black mantle, heavy with jet trimmings, and a very full black skirt which would sweep the floor but for the fact that she has pinned it up in several places with safety pins, thus displaying her stout elastic-sided boots. She has clearly put on her best clothes to pay a call.)*

*Mrs. Burrows (looking round with intense interest):* I've never been in since your Dad made this into a house.

*Betsy:* I'm ashamed for anybody to come in, Mrs. Burrows — mind that chain! What Mother would have said to us living in a broken-down windmill, when that great Manor House belongs to us, I don't know.

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Mrs. Burrows:* And your poor mother such a strict Methodist! It's enough to make her turn in her grave to have the *Parson* living *in* her house. You'd think they'd build a decent vicarage.

*Betsy:* Dad's made a laughing stock of us. The boys shout after me when I go into the village.

*Mrs. Burrows:* When the sails was blown down in that great storm, folks did reckon as your father

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would be too mean to put 'em up again, specially as there's another mill so near — but nobody dreamt as he'd come to live in it. After all, though, it's a deal more comfortable than I'd have thought. (*She puts her head into the outhouse.*) And this is your scullery, is it?

*Betsy (sulkily):* And kitchen as well. I'm nearly blown away with the draughts in there.

*Mrs. Burrows (returning):* I suppose you sleep in the room over this?

*Betsy (sarcastically):* Oh, no I That's the best and driest floor, and so it's packed with potatoes.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Potatoes! Good gracious! Well, I'm glad your Dad's got some left, because that's what I came to see him about.

*Betsy:* We've any amount. They're stored up in bags and hampers and chitting-boxes: that's why we've got a fire. I might starve on the coldest day if it wasn't for them.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Where do you sleep, then?

*Betsy:* Dad and Henry have the room over the potatoes, and I'm in the one over that, and then there's one full of apples, and tools, and such-like. The top's empty, 'coz the roof's all broken in.

*Mrs. Burrows:* You must get a good view up there.

*Betsy:* I can see Kyme Castle and Sildyke Church on a fine day. They say you can see Barkston, but I never have.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I should be afraid of rats in a place like this!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Betsy*: Oh, bless you, we keep a dog on purpose to catch them. He has to earn his keep, does Jack.

*(The front door is opened, and James Watson returns.)*

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*Betsy hastily retreats to the scullery and shuts her door.)*

*Mrs. Burrows*: Good-morning, Mr. Watson.

*James*: Good-morning, *Mrs. Burrows*. Sit you down. How are things going with you now?

*Mrs. Burrows*: Middling! You know what a struggle I've had since Nathan died. If it hadn't been for brother-in-law Japhet coming over from Kyme now and again, I don't know how I should have managed.

*James*: Anybody 'ud be pleased to help you, *Mrs. Burrows*.

*Mrs. Burrows*: Then why didn't you lend me a horse and cart last week, when I was stuck fast?

*James (earnestly)*: I would have done in a minute, only we couldn't manage it. I haven't nearly enough horses.

*Mrs. Burrows*: You should get more, then.

*James*: They eat so much. When it rains, they stand in the stable eating and eating, without ever stopping to take breath. I can't bear to see 'em. Every champ costs me a ha 'penny.

*Mrs. Burrows (sarcastically)*: I wonder you don't give 'em less.

*James*: I do, as far as I dare, but the brutes only eat their bedding and nag the mangers.

*Mrs. Burrows (coming to business)*: What I came to see you about, Mr. Watson, was for a bag of your Early Rose potatoes. You've got some, haven't you?

*James*: Only a few. They're awful scarce this year.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Mrs. Burrows:* I saw yours when they was growing. A rare nice patch they looked.

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*(Henry conies down the steps with the fork, and hurries out, with a nod to Mrs. Burrows.)*

*James:* They're shy yielders, them Early Rose. Almost grown out, they are, like all potatoes as lives too long. Why! I can remember 'em when I was a lad only so high *(he puts his hand near the floor.)* They're nearly all gone now — all them good old sorts — Magnum Bonum, Beauty of Hebron, Myatt's Ashleaf — beautiful potatoes they was, flowery and as sweet as butter.

*Mrs. Burrows (impatiently):* Yes, yes. But can I have a bag of your Early Roses? They come before anything else in my garden.

*James:* I don't think you'll get any, anywhere.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Why?

*James:* They're so scarce. Tim Williamson of Fletton asked me at Bly Market last Saturday if I had any. He let out that there was very few about, and they're going to a famine price.

*Mrs. Burrows:* What! He told you that when he was trying to buy some?

*James (scornfully):* Of course not! That was after I told him I hadn't any to spare.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Oh, I see! But I only want one bag. You'll let me have that.

*James:* I'm afraid I can't.

*Mrs. Burrows:* That's only a dodge to put the price up. Come on! What's the figure?

*James:* I really can't spare 'em.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Unless I pay three times what they're worth?

*James:* You'll not do that, Mrs. Burrows; you're the closest buyer for miles round Carrington.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

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*Mrs. Burrows:* And you're the hardest seller this side the Gulland. How much?

*James (suddenly turning serious and speaking slowly):* Very well, then! I'll let you have a bag as a great favour, being as you're a neighbour and a widow.

*Mrs. Burrows:* How much?

*James:* That'll be all right. Leave the price to me. I shan't hurt you.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I shan't let you. What's the price?

*James:* Twelve shillings.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Twelve shillings a bag! Rubbish!

*James:* That's it, anyhow.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I shall never pay it.

*James:* Just as you like. Business is business. You want my potatoes — then you'll have to pay my price for 'em.

*(Henry enters from the yard, and stands by the scullery door, waiting until the old man is free. He plays idly with the endless chain.)*

*Mrs. Burrows:* I guessed what was up when you wanted me to leave the price. Heaven help anybody as did that! *(Rising.)* Keep your Early Roses. I'll chit some of my Duke of Yorks instead.

*James (imperturbably):* As you like, Missis.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I'll get brother-in-law Japhet to send me a bag.

*James:* The carriage'll kill 'em.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I'd as leave pay the money to the railway as to you, you old skinflint.

*Henry (picking up his cue):* We haven't many bags of Early Roses left, Dad.

*James:* I thought not!

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*Mrs. Burrows:* Then keep 'em.

*James (as she reaches the door):* I'll knock you threepence off.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Now you're getting rash! But I won't rob you. Brother-in-law Japhet will send me some. It isn't long since he sent a couple of pounds of some new fangled sort for me to try.

*Henry:* What was they called, Mrs. Burrows?

*Mrs. Burrows:* Elderberry.

*Henry:* Elderberry?

*Mrs. Burrows:* It was Elder something — either bush or berry. I've got it! Fennell's Elderberry! Brother-in-law Japhet often sends me odd things down as he gets to try. Good-day, Mr. Watson!

*James:* Good-day to you, Mum!

*Mrs. Burrows (closing and then reopening the door):* I'll give you four and ninepence for a bag. (James shakes his head.) Five shillings, then.

*James:* Twelve shillings is my — no — I said threepence off. I'll tell you what I'll do, Mrs. Burrows; I'll call it eleven and sixpence. (*Mrs. Burrows, in answer, hangs the door.*) She'll come back. She's bound to have 'em.

(*Ever since Mrs. Burrows mentioned the two pounds of potatoes "of some the name of "Elderberry," he had gone to the nearest bin, unfolded a newspaper that lay on it, and studied it with care.*)

*Henry (looking up excitedly):* Dad!

*James:* What?

*Henry:* When Widow Burrows said "Elder-some- thing," it came to me all of a sudden what she meant.

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And when she said Fennell's Elderberry, I was certain. I read about it this morning, here.

*James*: Who's been wasting their money buying papers? Have you?

*Henry*: It's to-day's *Bly Chronicle* that Bill Saunders lent me when I was out this morning. It's here, in black and white, all about the Potato Boom.

*James*: I'm sick of hearing all that cat-blash about folks getting a pound apiece for potatoes. Now, is it likely? Who'd be fool enough to give it?

*Henry (reading)*: "The excitement in the potato trade continues. At Bly Market there was only one topic of conversation. The promise of the new varieties — Sutton's Discovery, Johnson's Diamond, Northern Star—"

*James (hanging the table)*: The lies they tell makes my hair stand straight up.

*Henry*: It's not all lies, Dad. Just listen! "Northern Star has proved a gold-mine to its lucky owners." (*James was about to protest against this waste of time, but these words cause him to relapse into his chair and listen carefully.*) "And every one is alert to secure the next favourite and make a rapid fortune. Mr. Findlay, who brought out the Up-to- Date, Evergood, Royal Kidney, and Northern Star, is reported to have a greater than all these up his sleeve. He sent several lots out, last spring, for trial, to various friends, who are most enthusiastic as to its possibilities. As the quantity is so limited the demand is enormous, and from a sovereign a pound they have risen, in a week, to the unheard price of forty pounds a pound. The new-comer promises to live up to its name of Eldorado."

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*James*: We could have done with some of them, Henry. Forty sovereigns for a pound!

*Henry*: Don't you see, Dad — that's the very name. That's what Widow Burrows was trying to say: Fennell's Elder something — Findlay's Eldorado. She's got some!



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*James (starting up):* Do you think so, boy?

*Henry:* I'm sure of it. The paper says, "Several small lots were sent out for trial," and Japhet Burrows's master. Lord Kyme, as is President of some big Society, would be the first to get them.

*James:* Well, that's a skelcher. Do you think it's true, Henry?

*Henry (still looking at the paper):* Here's something else. "As we go to press, we learn that a stone of Eldorados has been sold by a local firm of potato merchants — Messrs. F. Mullen & Son, to Mr. Titus Ambrose of Holt-in-the-Marsh at the incredible price of one hundred sovereigns per pound. The cheque for £1400 is now on view in the window of our fortunate townsmen, and is the centre of the utmost excitement."

*James:* A hundred sovereigns a pound for potatoes! I shall never believe it.

*Henry:* The cheque is stuck up in Mullen's office window in Bly Market Place. You can't get away from that.

*James:* Fourteen hundred pounds for a stone of potatoes! (*Suddenly*) —

*Henry!* What's Widow Burrows going to do with her two pound?

*Henry (promptly):* Sell 'em for two hundred pounds, or else do the same as Moses Bellamy did last year with a pound of Northern Stars. He put them in his greenhouse, at Fletton, took the sprouts off into pots.

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and kept on at that, planting the cuttings out in his garden, till he got two hundredweights from his pound.

*James:* If I had any, I should *sell*, Henry.

*Henry:* They'll go dearer yet.

*James:* We've got to have them Eldorados. That woman couldn't use two hundred pounds: it 'ud be the ruin of her.

*Henry:* You wouldn't give that price?

*James:* What do you take me for? She knows nothing about that (*nodding at the paper*) yet.

*Henry:* She soon will.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*James:* Then we must move at once. Slip round and say as I've considered to let her have them Early Roses after all. Tell her to come in straight away and look at 'em — pick her own bag — and then mention her Eldorados, casual-like, and get her to bring them in here to show me.

*Henry:* She'd smell a rat.

*James:* Not if you're crafty, Henry. You must be wily with her. Say we reckon we've got some of the same sort and should like to compare 'em. Be quick now, and don't you come back without her. (Henry hurries out.) A hundred sovereigns! Two hundred sovereigns! Fourteen hundred sovereigns! It's enough to craze anybody. It's a corker! (*Betsy comes out of the scullery with a plate of hones.*)

*Betsy:* Where's them potatoes I asked you for an hour ago?

*James (who is studying the Chronicle):* You don't mean to say as you've never fetched none?

*Betsy (crossing to front door):* Didn't you promise to see about it?

*James:* I've plenty to think about, earning your

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living for you. Why didn't you go and fetch 'em yourself, when you saw it had slipped my memory?

*Betsy (standing on the platform outside the front door, whistling and throwing the bones down into the yard):* There you are, Jack! (*She comes back into the room without closing the door.*) I'm not going paddling through that mucky yard for nobody.

*James:* You do what you're told.

*Betsy:* Why can't I have some of them Early Roses from upstairs? Goodness knows, there's plenty!

*James (looking up from his paper):* I'll knock your head off if you touch them. They're valuable.

*Betsy:* I'm tired of this. Nothing but grumbling from morning till night, while I do a servant's work without any pay. I should be better off if I was out at service.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*James:* You ungrateful mawkin! After all I've done for you! If I hear anything of that again, out you go, neck and crop.

*Betsy:* That'll suit me down to the ground. I'll go to Doctor Walker's at Bly then. I see in the Chronicle that he wants a girl.

*James:* Think I should have a darter of mine in service! Just you slip off and get them potatoes. (*He goes to the door and looks cautiously out.*)

*Betsy:* I'm not going through all that dirt again for nobody. Just look at my shoes! (*She holds her foot out, but James takes no notice, so she stamps into the scullery, slamming the door.*)

*James:* Drat that Henry! Where's he got to? I ought to have gone myself. There they come! She's bringing them! (*Retreating from the door, he sits down in his arm-chair and is poking the fire when*

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*Henry and Mrs. Burrows come up the steps, Mrs. Burrows has a paper bag in her hand.*)

*Mrs. Burrows:* You've changed your mind, then?

*James (turning round):* I've considered, Mrs. Burrows, what you said about being neighbourly — and a widow — and I've decided after all, there's something in it.

*Mrs. Burrows (suspiciously):* I'm to have a bag at my price, am I?

*James:* What was your offer?

*Mrs. Burrows (promptly):* Five shillings.

*James (staring at the hag in Mrs. Burrows's hand):* It's fair murder. I wouldn't do it if you wasn't a widow.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I'll pay for 'em before you change your mind again. Where's my purse. (*She puts the hag of potatoes down on the table, and feels for her purse.*)

*James:* What have you got there?

*Mrs. Burrows (producing a purse from her pocket):* Them's the fancy potatoes as brother-in-law Japhet sent me. Your *Henry* says he thinks you've got some of the same sort, and would like to compare them.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*James (going to the table):* There isn't two pounds there, surely?

*Mrs. Burrows:* They come in separate bags. I didn't bother to bring both. (*She empties the potatoes out on to the table. One rolls over the edge, hut Henry catches it, with a horrified face.*) Nice colour aren't they?

*James (picking up the largest of the five tubers with religious care):* Nothing to shout about.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Look at their deep eyes!

*James:* All the worse for cooking. They waste so much.

*Mrs. Burrows:* But the shape of them!

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*James:* Wouldn't be many to a root, I lay!

*Mrs. Burrows:* Don't you like 'em, then?

*James:* No, I don't. No good at all! (*He turns away, then comes back, fascinated*): No good at all!

*Mrs. Burrows:* Brother-in-law Japhet thought they was worth my trying, anyway, and he ought to know his trade.

*James:* Gardening isn't farming, though. What's all right for the gentry's table wouldn't answer for the likes of us. These wouldn't do for field growing.

*Mrs. Burrows (beginning to put the potatoes back in the bag):* Deary me!

*James (poking the fire):* If you take my advice, you'll chuck 'em to the pigs.

*Mrs. Burrows:* That would be a waste, Mr. Watson.

*James:* Betsy was bothering me just now for some potatoes for dinner. She might as well cook them, and I'll tell you how they eat.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I shouldn't like them to be cooked.

*James:* It's all they're fit for, I assure you.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Brother-in-law Japhet wouldn't like it.

*James (feeling in his pocket):* It'll save Betsy getting messed up. I'll give you tuppence for 'em — that's over two shillings a stone.

*Henry (chiming in):* Nearly twenty pounds a ton!

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*James (holding out coppers):* There's threepence ha'penny. There you are! I shouldn't do it, only the gel's been worrying me so. *(He takes the bag from Mrs. Burrows and puts the coppers on the table.)*

*Mrs. Burrows:* I couldn't, really.

*James:* Why not?

*Mrs. Burrows:* Brother-in-law Japhet wanted me to grow 'em, and he wouldn't like it.

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*James:* I'll give you sixpence, then.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Brother-in-law Ja —

*James (bursting out irritably):* Confound brother-in-law Japhet! Keep your potatoes!

*Mrs. Burrows (taking the bag from him):* I think he'd rather I planted 'em. *(She sees the largest tuber in James's hand and reaches out for it.)* Thank you!

*James (waving her off):* Wait a minute! *(He looks carefully at the Eldorado):* I don't know, after all, as they mightn't answer in our garden, Henry. I almost think, Mrs. Burrows, as I will set 'em and see how they turn out.

*Mrs. Burrows:* You said they wasn't any use at all, just now.

*James:* I think so still, only I like to try new things. Look here! I'll give you a peck of Early Rose in exchange.

*(Mrs. Burrows' s suspicions have now come to a head. She looks at James, then at Henry, then at the bag in her hand, and with tightened lips reaches for the largest Eldorado that James still clasps.)*

*James:* Is that a bargain?

*Mrs. Burrows:* I'll plant 'em myself. Brother-in-law Japhet sent them on purpose.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*James (edging away from her):* You've got a pound left, ain't you? We can both try 'em. I'll give you two pecks of Early Roses.

*Mrs. Burrows (still holding her hand out):* No, I'll keep them. Give us hold of that.

*James:* Don't be in such a hurry. I'll do you a level swop — the bag of Early Roses as you want so bad, for this pound.

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*Mrs. Burrows:* Brother-in-law Japhet wouldn't have sent them if they hadn't been something extra special.

*James:* What do you want then, woman?

*Mrs. Burrows:* My potato. (*She seizes the one in old Watson's hand, drops it into the hag, and turns to go. James hurries between her and the door.*)

*James:* Now look here, Mrs. Burrows; I'll buy 'em if you'll be ruly and set a price. Come now, what is it?

*Mrs. Burrows (looking at him for a moment in silence):* What about them seven young pigs as I tried to buy from you, and you wouldn't part with?

*James:* I told you I couldn't sell them. Their father won a prize at Barkston Show.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I bid you nineteen shillings apiece.

*James:* But they're not for sale.

*Mrs. Burrows:* If you offered to give me that sack of Early Roses for this pound (*she holds the hag up, and James puts his hand out eagerly*), and throw in that litter of black pigs; I might consider it.

*James:* What! My prize pigs! You're crazed! Talk sense, woman. If you'd asked for one now —

*Mrs. Burrows:* You'd have closed with me, shouldn't you? You're strange and keen for this pound of potatoes. (*Henry, who has been making signs to his father behind Mrs. Burrows' s hack, sits down suddenly, the picture of despair.*)

*James:* Keen? Me? Not a bit! Keep 'em! Keep 'em!

The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

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*Mrs. Burrows:* I'm going to.

*James (catching her arm):* Be reasonable, woman. I'll try and buy them.

*Mrs. Burrows:* I am reasonable. As you said a

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bit since: business is business, and if you want my potatoes, you've got to pay my price for them.

*James:* My prize pigs! I couldn't.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Then good-day to you! (*As she puts her hand on the latch, Henry signals wildly to his father.*)

*James:* All right! They're yours.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Oh, no! Not now. You should have took my offer when I made it.

*James:* Look here! Say straight out what you do want.

*Mrs. Burrows (coming back to the table):* I want that sack of Early Roses, the litter of black pigs (*she points to the ham hanging from the beam*), that ham (*she considers for a moment*)... and thirty shillings.

*James:* You never said nothing about a ham and thirty shillings.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Is it a deal? I shan't wait.

*James (wildly):* Yes, drat you!

*Mrs. Burrows (putting the Eldorados on the table):* There you are, then. Where's the money?

*James (putting the money on the table):* You — you— (*he chokes with spleen*).

*Mrs. Burrows (calmly):* Hook my ham down, Henry, and don't bruise it.

*James:* I'll do that. Fetch a bag of Early Roses down, and then tell young Fox to drive them pigs across. (*Henry hurries upstairs, whilst James gets on a chair and hooks down the ham.*)



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*(Mrs. Burrows (taking the ham):* This is a nice mellow ham, this is. Better 'n the scrawdy bacon as I've been having for breakfast lately.

*James:* You've done me this time, Missis.

*Mrs. Burrows:* You pleased yourself. Do you

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Want to run back? *(James shakes his head.)* I've been a fool; that's what I've been! I see it now. You'd have given more.

*James:* No, you hard nailer! You've shaved me clean. My prize pigs!

*(The left-hand trapdoors are lifted, and as Henry calls "Below, there," James walks across to the chain, which begins to move. As a sack of potatoes swings into sight, James steadies the chain, and when the bag reaches the floor, unfastens the slip hook from its neck and lays the bag over on its side. Henry closes the trapdoors.)*

*James:* What about the other pound?

*Mrs. Burrows:* I wouldn't sell them for no money.

*James:* Oh, yes, you would!

*Mrs. Burrows:* I tell you I wouldn't... I wouldn't take twenty pounds for 'em.

*James:* Twenty pounds!

*Mrs. Burrows:* No, I wouldn't. Brother-in-law Japhet —

*James:* Take ten.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Now, is it likely? You've given me more for that pound. *(Henry comes down the steps, goes over to the zinc plate, takes hold of the bag of Early Roses, and with an adroit jerk, throws them over his shoulder, and walks out of the door with them.)* You must think me a fool.

*James:* All right, then! Twenty pound!

*Mrs. Burrows:* Certainly not! I said I wouldn't take twenty pounds; and I won't. They're not for sale.

*James:* Oh, we know all about that. Everything has its price.

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*Mrs. Burrows (picking the ham off the table and going to the door):* That's just where you're wrong. I shall keep my pound and see what happens.

*James (contemptuously):* What do you know about new sorts of potatoes?

*Mrs. Burrows (turning in the doorway):* Nothing at all. But I know a good deal about you, Jim Watson. (*Looking to the left, towards the road.*) There goes my prize pigs.

*James:* Thirty pounds, then!

*Mrs. Burrows (shaking her head scornfully):* I should have took sixpence for them potatoes, only your eyes were so greedy. I may be only a woman, but I can tell when you're anxious. It's nice to get the best of you, just for once. (*Carrying the ham in front of her, she descends the steps and disappears. James stares after her with a discomfited air; then recollects himself, goes to the table, picks up the bag, and reads aloud, FINDLAY'S ELDORADO. He looks round thoughtfully, and his eye falls on the egg-basket standing on the chair. He takes out the tubers one by one, placing them in the basket.*

*James:* I'll fetch my cash box down and lock 'em in that. I could keep 'em in yon cupboard by the stove: it 'ud be warm there. (*He goes up the steps. As the trap-door closes behind him, the scullery door opens, and Betsy is seen in the doorway, standing in a defiant attitude, with her hands on her hips. But there is no one to defy, so, with a toss of her head, she makes for the front door, to be brought to a standstill by the sight of the basket of potatoes.*)

*Betsy (with great scorn):* Five potatoes for three people! (*Holding up her apron, she tilts the potatoes in and replaces the basket. Its lid falls down. Betsy*

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

*returns to her stronghold and closes the door. The trap-door opens, and James comes down with a large cash-box under his arm. As he reaches the floor, Henry hurries in from the yard.)*

*Henry (excitedly):* We've got 'em!

*James (pulling out a bunch of keys and trying to find one that will fit the cash-box):* At a price.

*Henry:* It was all your own fault. You should have closed with her quicker. *(He sees the empty paper bag that James has replaced on the table):* Where are they?

*James:* In that basket; but I'm going to lock 'em up in this — if I can find the key. Here! just see if you've one that'll fit it.

*Henry (producing a hunch):* It must go under our bed, Dad. Suppose anybody stole them.

*James:* Don't, boy. You make me all of a sweat. I wish I had an iron safe.

*Henry:* You couldn't get the other pound, then?

*James:* No, confound all widows! Hallo!

*(Mrs. Burrows is seen hurrying up the steps. She enters the room, still carrying the ham, which she plants on the table.)*

*James (uneasily):* Back again, Mrs. Burrows?

*Mrs. Burrows:* You thief. Robbing a poor widow! But I'll show you up; I'll expose you if you don't give me my Eldorados back. Where are they? *(Henry, at her first word, edged away from the table, and now stands with his back to the egg-basket, hiding it from view.)*

*James:* What's this all about?

*Mrs. Burrows:* What's it all about? You know

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very well what it's all about. This telegram was waiting at the door when I got home — from brother- in-law Japhet. *(She holds up a telegram and reads: JUST HEARD ELDORADOS SENT YOU WORTH TWO HUNDRED POUNDS. LOCK THEM UP. COMING ONE THIRTY-FIVE. — JAPHET.)* You scanny rascal — you knew it.

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

*James*: I don't know what you mean.

*Mrs. Burrows*: You just give 'em back to me. Where are they?

*James*: Bought and paid for.

*Mrs. Burrows (pushing the ham across the table towards him)*: You can have your pigs and all the rest of your kelter back again. Where's my Eldorados?

*James*: Business is business, Mrs. Burrows. You thought you'd diddled me — well, you didn't, that's all! Anyway, you've got one pound left.

*Mrs. Burrows*: I want them both. What will brother-in-law Japhet say?

*James*: I've nothing to do with your brother-in-law Japhet, nor him with me, neither.

*Mrs. Burrows*: Oh, haven't you? Wait till he comes: he'll wring your neck — you little ferret!

*James*: I shall have him locked up if he comes brawling here.

*Mrs. Burrows (a little daunted, remembering Japhet's ungovernable temper)*: We don't want no policemen interfering.

*James*: Then be ruly! A bargain's a bargain, and it's no use chuntering. (*He pushes the ham back.*)

*Mrs. Burrows*: You lied to me so — saying you wanted 'em for your dinner!

*James (pulling his purse out)*: Here! One — two — three sovereigns. All I've got. I'll throw that in if

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you hold your noise and call it quits. If you don't, Henry fetches Tom Arch. You know how hot-tempered your brother-in-law is, and if you go and sing a song to him about this, there's bound to be a row, and he'll get locked up as sure as eggs is eggs. (*He holds out the money to her.*) Come on, now! It's no use roaring.

*Mrs. Burrows (wavering)*: Make it ten pounds.

*James (sharply)*: Not a copper more. Take it or leave it.

*Mrs. Burrows (taking the cash and picking up her ham)*: But I don't know what I shall tell brother-in-law Japhet!

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*James:* You can come away from that chair now, Henry.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Oh, that's where they was! (*She steps across and raises the basket lid.*) Why, it's empty!

*Henry and James (rushing forward and shouting together):* What!

*James:* She's took 'em. Hold her, Henry.

*Mrs. Burrows:* Don't be a fool. How could I, with you gaping at me all the time?

*James:* I put 'em in there out of the bag. I'll swear I did. (*The two men search frantically, whilst Mrs. Burrows watches with interest, hut there are so few places in which to look that in a very short time they are staring blankly at each other. The scullery door opens and Betsy appears with a saucepan in her hand, evidently disturbed by the noise.*) *Betsy!* I put some potatoes in that basket. Have you seen them?

*Betsy:* In that basket?

*James:* Yes. Wake up! Have you moved them?

*Betsy:* Of course I moved them.

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*James (with an air of enormous relief):* Where have you put them? Where are they?

*Betsy:* Where are they? (*Holding the saucepan under James's nose.*) They're here, of course. Where do you think?

Together { *James:* Ruined! My Eldorados. My prize pigs!  
*Henry:* Oh, my hat, Betsy. What have you done?  
*Mrs. Burrows:* Well, I never. If she hasn't gone and peeled them!

*Betsy (to Mrs. Burrows):* Of course I peeled them! (*To her father:*) Didn't you put them there for me?

(*James and Henry are speechless.*)

*Mrs. Burrows:* Serve you right! Serve you right! You said you wanted them for your dinner, and you've got them. (*She opens the door.*) Ten pounds a mouthful! I HOPE YOU'LL ENJOY YOUR DINNER! (*She closes the door.*)

CURTAIN.

[NP]

THE WICKED MAN

A Melancholy Rhapsody

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THE WICKED MAN

*Extract from County Directory*

MARSHFELLOWTON, *a village of 289 inhabitants, on the road from Fletton to Daleham. The parish is owned almost entirely by Lord Marshfellowton. Church — St. Peter. Rector — Rev. W. Austin. "Cromwell Arms" Inn (T. Nutt). One beer shop.*

ANTHONY KEW (known to everybody as "Pinch" ) is hoeing weeds in a field of barley on the farm of his master, Edmund Chadwick of Marshfellowton. Of all occupations, hoeing must surely be the most monotonous, for there is no mate on the next bench to speak to; the work is automatic, the legs and arms moving in a slow rhythm; and when the long day comes to an end, you seem to have made no impression upon the field: especially if it is one of fifty-seven acres like that in which Anthony is working.

The sight is depressing to the sociologist, who wants Anthony to be a class-conscious citizen and not a machine; exasperating to the botanist, who wants weeds exterminated (like wolves and hydrophobia), as they so easily could be, in a generation; and shocking to the engineer, who would run an electric cable round every field, fit a cross wire on runners, equip all the field implements with trolley arms, and manage each farm with one engineer and an assistant. But the Feudal System is slow, and hasn't moved in this respect since fields were first cultivated. The hoe, the plough, and the wheel-barrow are said to

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be the only implements that have never been altered since they were invented.

That great game-preserved, Lord Marshfellowton, owns nearly the whole of the parish, but only visits it for the shooting. He doesn't encourage cottage building, nor has he yet agreed to sell a plot of land for either a Wesleyan or a Primitive Methodist Chapel, and although the parish is an extensive one, its nonconforming inhabitants go to Pantacks for their religion. Once a month Anthony Kew delivers a sermon in the Wesleyan Chapel at Pantacks. He is fond of preaching, and on his free Sundays visits the surrounding chapels. Being a Wesleyan, he is, of course, a stout adherent to the cause of Temperance — by which is meant an ardent Prohibitionist. In rural England these two are practically synonymous. It is only lack of imagination that prevents Anthony from announcing to Farmer Chadwick that he has a conscientious objection to hoeing pedigree barley, which is going to make the Devil's drink. He is sincere enough, and has refused an offer of two shillings a week more money from Harold Turpin, a small farmer who values the steady way in which Anthony works, but keeps, alas, an off-licence beerhouse.

As he walks up the barley-field, Anthony has a good view of the (to him hateful) village of Fletton, standing out against the sky. Fen villages go back to the days when the land was unreclaimed, and were built upon the highest points of ground, to be safe and dry in the worst winters. When Anthony walks down the field, he faces the high bank of Fletton Delph, which runs through Marshfellowton parish to the Fifty-Foot Drain. The Delph is being cleaned out.

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and now and again Anthony sees an unpleasantly well-known figure appearing over the top of the bank with a wheel-barrow full of sludge. The surface water, in the Fens, runs naturally into small dykes and drains, and from these into main-drains, whence it is raised by water-wheels into the delphs and rivers, from ten to twenty feet above the



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

surface of the surrounding country. These waterways have very little fall, and must be cleaned out at fairly frequent intervals.

The man who causes Anthony such perturbation is Tom Bavin of Fletton. Anthony married Florence Coulson of Fletton, and knows the village only too well, for his peace of mind. Tall and thin, with a permanently soured expression, as if he had watched the grapes too long, he hoes monotonously up and down his field, facing alternately the Delph bank and that village where Tom Bavin and Leah Williamson — the Fletton witch's daughter — live without the benediction of the church.

*Anthony Kew.*

But Where's the Ten Commandments,

Where is the Bible gone.

If that blaspheming Bavin

Can nobble all the fun?

What is the good of Chapel,

And all good things denying,

If that rampageous rascal

Can prosper so by lying?

Although he has no regular job

He's always lots of cash,

While me, what toils the livelong day,

Can't never cut no dash.

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Then here's the pubs he's always in,

He simply haunts them dens of sin

To fill his-self with beer;

I gets no profitable deals;

I've only water wi' my meals:

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*Rural Plays (1922)*

I does without, I keeps away,  
I passes by and goes to pray;  
No drink for me — no fear!  
But is it fair, and is it right  
That him be rousing every night?

His home ain't like a drunkard's den,  
He never seems afeard his-sen  
Although he leads a wicked life:  
His Leah really ain't his wife —  
Yet she's a bonny, pleasant lass  
What's plump, and smiling when you pass;  
Their bairns don't seem to mind the shame,  
Folks call 'em “Bavin” just the same;  
Why aren't they all in sore disgrace?  
You'd think as she would hide her face,  
And all her bastards bow their head,  
Instead of which, they look well-fed:  
It don't seem right to me at all  
If folks ain't punished when they fall.

His Leah's bonnier than Flo;  
If Thomas cared to have a go  
I'd swap him any day —  
No! No!  
I mean to say I loves my Flo  
What's bore me children as she ought  
In lawful wedlock rightly brought,  
Tho' flat of chest and sharp of nose,

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And somewhat given to her woes;  
Yet she would never leave me here,  
And Thomas wouldn't swap — I fear!

That Bavin — drat his ugly face!  
He fairly seems to own the place;  
He's much more popular than me:  
There's lots as I can't bear to see.  
He's wrong all through, from head to foot,  
His soul must be as black as soot,  
And yet his life is full of fun;  
Look at the things what he has done!  
If I want tuppence, I've to seek,  
I earn but fifteen bob a week.

Of course, he'll frizzle fine in Hell  
While I am peeping down the well;  
But why not have a good time here?  
Why should the Devil have the beer,  
And all the girls and all the sweets,  
While we must pray on narrow seats?  
'Coz—  
S'posing —  
Only s'posing, mind —  
If I should wake up dead, to find  
As after all, there weren't no Hell —  
Oh, what an everlasting sell!  
I wouldn't mind no Heaven yon side,

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

'Tis only Chapel, glorified,  
But if there ain't no burning Hell  
Where I can hear Tom Bavin yell,  
Then I should lose it all, both ways:  
The very thought's enough to craze!  
And, sometimes in the lonesome night,

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I wonder, almost, if I'm right,  
If after all the Bible's true,  
And if I mightn't risk it too:  
I really — almost — but there's Flo,  
She'd certain never let me go!

I'll have to hold the narrow way,  
And trust to Resurrection Day.

Fortifying his resolution with a drink of cold tea, and sharpening the blade of his hoe with a file, Anthony takes one more dubious look at the spire of Fletton Church, and goes on with his hoeing.

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GONE FOR GOOD

A Play in One Act

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GONE FOR GOOD

*Extract from County Directory*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

BELTON, a small village of 384 inhabitants. Railway station — Belton Junction, on line from Bly to Frist on. Single-line railway from Winkersfield joins main line here. Belton Brook rises on Belton Heath and runs into River Gulland. Principal landowner — Watson Tyler, Esquire, of Low Bamet. Church — St. Swithin. Rector — Rev. W. Defries. Wesleyan Chapel. “Hen and Chicken” Inn (Nicodemus Kennington). One beershop.

*(The curtain rises at half-past eight one September evening, to show the corner of a courtyard just off the main street of Belton. The spectator has a half-front view of two cottages, standing at an angle to each other: Mill Cottage on the left, and Poplar Cottage on the right. Their garden fences continue parallel with the cottage fronts for a short space, to meet the fence of a field at the extreme hack of the stage.*

*Mill Cottage has a thatched roof with low, projecting eaves, and its front is whitewashed. It is the usual labourer's cottage, with a front door (on the extreme right) opening into its one sitting-room; and a kitchen behind. There is a small window to the left of the door, and a very low but larger window upstairs in the centre of the wall. In front is a stone causeway, a swallow's nest hangs under the eaves, a broken scraper stands beside the door, a rabbit skin hangs on the wall, and a rusty*

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*horse-shoe is nailed over the door. The lower window is packed with plants, and the lower half of the bedroom window is screened by a limp lace curtain. The general effect is rather dirty, and entirely picturesque. Rain drips from the thatch to soak into the causeway, and what with the small, tightly-closed windows, and a pig-sty opposite the back door, only seven yards from the well which supplies the Bowles family with all their water, the whole affair is calculated to give the inhabitant of any garden suburb a syncope. But Andrew Clarke, the Inspector of Nuisances from Bly, always hurries through Belton on his motor-cycle, and the inhabitants live to a ripe old age.*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Poplar Cottage, where the Crofts dwell, presents an entire contrast, being built of red brick with slate tiles. Its causeway is also of red brick, its four windows are hung with highly-starched lace curtains, tied back with bright red ribbon, the door in the centre of the wall has a polished brass knocker, and the door scraper is black-leaded. From what little can be seen of the respective gardens, they match the cottages. The Bowles have an array of old-fashioned flowers, whilst the Crofts have vegetables. The setting sun throws a golden light on to the stubble and the stooks of sheaves in the wheatfield behind. Beyond this field are Joe Barnes's windmill and the row of poplars from which our cottages take their names.*

*A woman comes round the corner of Mill Cottage and crosses the court. Jane Croft is a big, fair woman of florid colouring, light brown hair with rather a pretty wave, and attractive of her type. She does not wear a hat, being very vain of her hair, which she is continually fingering. She is wearing brown shoes, thin open-work stockings to match, and a floral print dress of bright*

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*blue. Her husband, Timothy Croft, a trap-hawker, who is much older than Jane (who is 27), met her when she was a barmaid at the famous Dead Man's Inn, and they have been married about a year. Jane is carrying a dark brown shopping basket full of groceries. As she reaches her door, she pauses, and looks back at Mill Cottage.)*

*Jane Croft (speaking to herself): I wonder if Henry Bowles has gone to bed? He said he shouldn't wait, but it's not nine yet. (She takes a step towards Mill Cottage, then stops and looks at her basket consideringly.) No! I'll give him his groceries in the morning. (She turns back to her own door and puts her hand on the latch, when the sound of footsteps across the court makes her look round again.)*

*(Susan Bowles, Henry's wife, is of average height, very dark in colour, and inclined to be too thin. Her fierce jealousy, which has been the cause of continual trouble between her and her husband, has recently culminated in a serious breach. She*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*is wearing black stockings and shoes, a fawn raincoat, under which can be seen glimpses of a tweed skirt and a white silk blouse, and a smart burnt straw hat trimmed with flowers. She is carrying a pilgrim basket by its strap, and an umbrella with a gaudy handle. Advancing along her own causeway, and giving a peep through the window as she passes, she reaches her door and sets down the pilgrim basket.)*

*Jane Croft (stepping forward on to her causeway):* Why! It's Mrs. Bowles... come back!

*Susan Bowles (turning to face Jane):* Haven't I a right to come to my own house?

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*Jane:* Certainly! Why not! But you said, when you went away three weeks ago, as you'd gone for good, and as nothing should ever make you set foot on that doorstep again (*Mrs. Bowles withdraws her foot hastily from the step*) whilst your husband was there. Fancy your coming back to him, so soon!

*Susan:* Who said I'd come back to him? I wouldn't, for all as he could offer me.

*Jane:* My husband was saying only this morning how we missed your voice. It does make a difference not to be hearing you all night long like we used to.

*Susan (taking a step towards Jane):* When did you ever hear me all night long, Jane Croft?

*Jane:* Many and many a time.

*Susan:* You never did — less you listened at the window.

*Jane:* We couldn't help hearing; you talked so loud.

*Susan:* That's a lie!

*Jane:* It doesn't matter now, anyway, because — (*she half turns away*).

*Susan:* Because what?

*Jane (looking hack):* Because the new housekeeper talks so quiet that we can't hear her at all.



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Rural Plays (1922)

*Susan (becoming excited)*: New housekeeper! Has one come already? I only saw the advertisement this morning, in the Bly Chronicle. (*She takes a newspaper out of her coat pocket, unfolds it, and reads aloud*): WANTED FOR A WIDOWER A HOUSEKEEPER NOT TOO OLD. — BOWLES, MILL COTTAGE, BELTON.

*Jane*: A widower!

*Susan (looking at her own door)*: A widower!

*Jane*: Not too old.

*Susan*: Not too old! Umm! If it hadn't been

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for that, I suppose you'd have tried yourself. (*Scornfully*): You're used to waiting on men, aren't you?

*Jane*: Oh! Bless your life! My nose is out of joint altogether.

*Susan*: What's she like? When did she come?

*Jane (slowly)*: What's she like? When did she come?

*Susan (impatiently)*: Is she dark or fair, old or young, tall or short?

*Jane*: I only saw her for a minute, yesterday, when she came.

*Susan*: But what's she like?

*Jane*: Oh! You know the sort of thing: fair hair, blue eyes, plump figure. A young widow, I should fancy. Very pleasant she seemed as she chatted with your husband on the doorstep before she went in.

*Susan*: Went in!

*Jane*: Timothy reckoned as it *would* be nice for your man to have somebody like that to look after him.

*Susan*: Oh, did he?

*Jane*: Not, of course, as your man deserves it after the way — as you say — he treated you.

*Susan*: And who's fault was it more than *yours*?

*Jane*: You've always been jealous, Susan Bowles, but you've had no occasion.

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Rural Plays (1922)

*Susan*: Jealous! Jealous of you, you common creature! Not I! (*She turns to her own door.*)

*Jane*: Then why were you always quarrelling with me, and why did you go away?

*Susan*: That's my business. You mind yours.

*Jane*: I always have done, except at nights — when you kept us awake.

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*Susan*: You want something to keep you awake, I reckon, with a husband like your poor little Timothy.

*Jane (ignoring the thrust)*: But this woman's as still as a mouse. Timothy reckoned last night as they must be nice and snug to keep so quiet.

*Susan*: I'll see about that! (*She raps loudly on her door.*) I'll give her young widow! (*She looks hack and sees Jane watching.*) You can go in now.

*Jane*: So can you... I don't think! (*She opens her door, then stands to watch.*)

(*Susan raps again, hut there is no reply. She knocks louder, with the same result; then rattles the latch and shakes the door. She hurries to the window, looks through, listens, and taps sharply on the pane; then returns to the door and rattles it noisily calling out "Henry."*)

*Jane (taking advantage of a lull)*: You'll have to call louder than that.

*Susan (ignoring her)*: Hen-ry — HEN-RY — HEN-RY!

*Jane*: That's better! Just a little bit louder.

*Susan (whirling round with such a fierce air that Jane draws inside, and nearly closes her door)*: Clear off! Go in!

*Jane (peeping out as Susan stops)*: Of course, if you don't want me to help you shout. (*Susan makes a threatening gesture with her umbrella.*) Hark! Is that the widow laughing? (*She closes her door.*)

*Susan (marching back)*: I'll give her widow! I'll make her laugh the wrong side of her face. (*She hammers on the door with both fists. The sash of the bedroom window*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*is pushed up, and Henry Bowles looks out. He is a tall, loosely built wagoner, with blue eyes, ruddy, clean-shaven countenance, and fair curly hair.*

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*All that we can see of his clothes are a tweed coat and a red handkerchief, knotted round his neck.)*

*Henry:* Hallo! What's up?

*Susan:* It's me! Open this door.

*Henry:* Oh, it's you, is it?

*Susan:* Come down and open this door.

*Henry:* What for? What do you want?

*Susan:* Never you mind what I want. You open this door.

*Henry:* But I do mind.

*Susan (rattling the latch):* Look sharp!

*Henry (shaking his head):* Couldn't be done, Missis, couldn't be done.

*Susan (incredulously):* What's that?

*Henry (still shaking his head):* Couldn't be done, nohow.

*(The Crofts' bedroom window on the left opens quietly and Jane pokes her head out. In a few moments, she is leaning right out, not to miss anything.)*

*Susan:* I'll break in, if you don't.

*Henry:* You can't break in. The police'll see to it, if you do.

*Susan:* It's my home, and you're my husband. I've a right to come in if I want.

*(Louder)* Open it, I say.

*Henry:* But what for?

*Susan:* Because I want to come in, you great fool!

*Henry:* Oh, no, you don't! You left me of your own free will. You went home to your mother at High Morton, saying as you'd *gone for good*, and a lot of I don't know what else. I asked you to stay and be ruly; but *no!* Now you come here in the middle

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of the night, wanting the door opened, and when I say *what for*, you don't give no proper reason. Do you want to come back for good?

*Susan*: To live with a toad like you! Not likely!

*Henry*: Then, what do you want?

*Susan*: I — I want the things that belong to me.

*Henry*: What things?

*Susan*: Lots of things.

*Henry*: You've had them all. I sent them by Carrier Jackson to Bly a week last Saturday, and you must have got them by now.

*Susan*: Not all of them, you didn't.

*Henry*: What's left, then?

*Susan*: My bicycle, for one thing.

*Henry*: It isn't yours.

*Susan*: Yes, it is.

*Henry*: Oh, no, it's not!

*Susan*: How can you lie so, Henry Bowles, when you know it's mine?

*Henry*: I paid for it, and chance the ducks.

*Susan*: With the egg money what belonged to me.

*Henry*: That it never did.

*Susan*: I wonder you're not afraid of the lightning striking you.

*Henry*: You can lie as fast as a horse gallops, *you* can.

*Susan (crescendo)*: It's my bicycle; it's mine; it's mine; it's mine.

*Henry (leaning right forward and speaking persuasively)*: Now, look here: we've argued that bicycle over and over and over again, about a thousand times, until we've both been as hoarse as crows, and we haven't never agreed about it. I'll tell you what I'll do — I'll have it valued to-morrow morning by

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
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Joe Webster, and then I'll pay you half of what he values it at, and we shall be rid of all this jangling.

*Susan*: Do you think I'm going to let another woman ride my bicycle, what I bought and paid for with my hard-earned money? *Not likely!*

*Henry (wearily)*: Is there anything else belongs to you?

*Susan (after a pause)*: No.

*Henry*: Then if I was you, I should go off home. You're late enough as it is, and *I'm* dog tired.

*Susan*: You — open — this — door.

*Henry*: And the night air's bad for my throat, the doctor says.

*Susan*: Open this door.

*Henry*: The bicycle isn't here. It's having a puncture mended at Joe Webster's.

*Susan*: Ready for her? *(She shakes the door violently)* Come down and let me in.

*Henry*: If you say you're my wife, and you're sorry for going off, and want to come back, and will behave different in future, of course I should consider it, but otherwise I'm not going to have anything to do with you.

*Susan*: If you think that slut's going to ride my bicycle, you're very much mistook.

*Henry*: What are you raving about?

*Susan*: Your fancy housekeeper, as you've got in there.

*Henry*: I haven't got no such person in this house.

*Susan*: Yes, you have, but she won't be there long, because I'm going to have her out.

*Henry*: I tell you there's nobody here but me.

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Susan:* What's the good of lying so, when I know all about her. Besides, haven't I seen your advertisement here in the Chronicle? (*She holds up the paper.*) Isn't this yours?

*Henry:* Certainly it is. I can't keep house by myself. I don't know what I should have done these three weeks, if it hadn't been for Mrs. Croft being good enough to keep an eye on things for me.

*Susan:* Ha! Just what I thought. She wanted me out of the way, the jade. She always hankered after you, and this proves it. Open this door!

*Henry:* If you don't give me some good reason, I shan't.

*Susan:* You will!

*Henry:* I think I'll say good-night. It's getting late. (*He draws his head in and shuts the window. At this moment Susan catches sight of the watching Jane.*)

*Susan:* Now, then! What do you want?

*Jane:* I thought you'd want to thank me for looking after your house while you was away.

*Susan:* Take your painted face in, and shut your window.

*Jane:* I hardly expected any thanks, somehow, and now there's a new housekeeper he won't want me any more, will he? (*Susan, who had stepped into the middle of the courtyard, flings away at this.*) If you're going to stay there all night, I could lend you a blanket. (*She withdraws.*)

(*Susan drums steadily on her door with both fists, shouting at the top of her voice for Henry, until the window is flung angrily open, and he again looks out. He has removed his coat, and is now in a coarse gray flannel shirt and red braces.*)

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*Henry:* I'm going to move into the back bedroom, so as I shan't hear you, but you'll have the neighbours fetching the constable, and then you'll spend the night in Barnet lock-up; disturbing of 'em like this.

*Susan:* You open this door.

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Henry*: Oh!... (*words fail him*). Go home!

*Susan*: Not while that woman's here, I shan't.

(*Henry heaves a weary sigh, realising the futility of argument. Susan's voice becomes pathetic.*) And I can't get back so far this time of night.

*Henry*: Your Aunt Maria lives at Churt — and that's no distance.

*Susan*: I'm too ill to move. Besides, she's deaf: I couldn't make her hear.

*Henry*: You can stay on the doorstep and welcome. (*At this moment the door of Poplar Cottage quietly opens, and Jane is seen standing in the doorway with knitting in her hand.*)

*Susan (clutching at the wall as if about to faint)*: I shall die if I do.

*Henry*: You shall have a proper funeral. There is a bit of insurance, isn't there?

*Susan (loudly)*: You shan't touch a ha' penny of it, you miserable rat! (*Henry stares gloomily at her, but says nothing.*) If you don't let me in (*with a sob*) I shall go and drown myself.

*Henry (leaning right out)*: Of course, if you feel like that, it's a good way out of your troubles.

*Susan (crying)*: And then folks will know who's to blame.

*Henry*: We've had a nice sup of rain, and there'll be a good nine foot of water down by Platt's Hole: it would do you beautiful.

*Susan*: Will you let me in?

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*Henry*: Don't you get tired of saying the same thing over and over and over again?

*Susan*: You shan't have a housekeeper.

*Henry*: But I must.

*Susan*: You shan't.

*Henry*: What *am* I to do then?

*Susan (after a considerable pause, during which Jane has been leaning right out of her door)*: I'd sooner come back myself.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Henry*: Oh, would you?

*Susan (picking up her basket)*: So come down and open.

*Henry*: Hold hard a bit. Let's have a clear understanding. You say you're coming back for good?

*Susan*: Ye-es.

*Henry*: Then who does the bicycle belong to?

*Susan (instantly)*: Me.

*Henry (beginning to draw his head in)*: Then goodnight to you.

*Susan (dropping the basket)*: Hey!

*Henry*: Well?

*Susan (sulkily)*: All right!

*Henry*: My bicycle?

*Susan (snarling)*: Yes.

*Henry (leaning right out again)*: If you come back, we're not going to have any more nagging if I step round to the Hen and Chickens to see a friend?

*Susan*: No-o.

*Henry*: And no more scenes if I speak to Jane Croft or any other woman, 'coz I'm sick of it?

*Susan*: Oh! — all right.

*Henry*: And I shan't be kept awake half the night to hear about what you think I've done amiss in the daytime?

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*Susan*: You will if you don't behave yourself,

*Henry (firmly)*: Then I'd sooner have a housekeeper.

*Susan (pausing)*: All right! Let me in now. *(She picks up her basket once more.)*

*Henry*: What about my smoking in the house?

*Susan (dropping the basket with a thump)*: I can't stand up any longer.

*Henry*: Then sit down. There's plenty of room.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Susan*: You never used to be like this. What's changed you?

*Henry*: Living alone, maybe.

*Susan*: I do feel so queer. Open the door, quick.

*Henry*: But what about the smoking?

*Susan*: Oh, anything you like! Do open the door.

*Henry (leaning farther out, and settling himself comfortably on the window-sill)*: And who's going to light the fire on Sunday mornings?

*Susan*: It's your job: you know it is.

*Henry*: It's a housekeeper's job.

*Susan*: Are you going to torment me all night, you great brute?

*Henry*: You see, my dear, all these little things ought to be settled before a couple gets spliced, but they never think about them then — at least the fellow doesn't — and after that, it's too late. What about the fire, now?

*Susan*: You're a coward to treat a poor woman so. (*Henry waits.*) Very well, you beast. (*Wearily*) Is there anything else? 'Coz let's have it and be done.

*Henry*: I don't think there's anything else... no — that's all! On them conditions I'm willing to open the door.

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*Susan*: And turn out that widow straight away?

*Henry (glancing behind him into the room)*: What... at this time of night?

*Susan (furiously)*: This very minute.

*Henry*: Oh!... Very well, then. On them conditions as we've conned over, I takes you back.

*Susan*: Take me back?

*Henry*: Yes.

*Susan*: You don't take me back. It's me that's coming back.

*Henry*: Oh, no, it isn't! I'm inside, you're outside. Do you agree to all them conditions?

*Susan (dejectedly)*: I suppose I shall have to.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Henry*: Then that's a bargain!

*(Henry draws his head in. Susan waits impatiently until the door is unbarred, and the moment it is opened, she seizes her husband by the arm, jerks him out into the courtyard, and darts into the house. Henry stands openmouthed at the sudden attack, then turning round, catches sight of Jane, who nods and smiles. Henry is now fully visible for the first time, and is found to be wearing corduroy trousers and carpet slippers in addition to the shirt, braces, and handkerchief that we have already seen at the window.)*

*Henry (walking across to Jane)*: I've done all as you told me.

*Jane*: Well, I said it would be all right if you followed my directions. But mind you hold her to her bargain.

*Henry*: I will that.

*Jane*: As you have come down, you'd better have your groceries. I suppose this is the last time I shall have to go shopping for you.

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*Henry*: I should have been in a rare hole without you, and no mistake.

*Jane*: I'll run in and fetch them. Wait a minute. *(She disappears into her house.)*

*Susan (poking her head out of the upper window)*: Where is she?

*Henry*: Who?

*Susan*: The widow!

*Henry*: What widow?

*Susan*: Your fancy housekeeper, of course!

*Henry*: I've told you twenty times there ain't no such person.

*Susan*: You can't deceive me.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Henry:* All right, find her. (*Susan's head disappears. The door of Poplar Cottage reopens, and Jane steps out with her basket of groceries, and gives to Henry a tin of salmon, a pound of rice, a pound of sugar, a loaf, and a bottle.*)

*Henry:* And how much do I owe you for these, Mrs. Croft?

*Jane:* Mr. Coy's booked them to you. (*Laughing*) Do you think she's found the widow yet?

*Henry:* I doubt it. (*He laughs too.*)

*Jane:* I suppose you're off round to the Hen and Chickens, now?

*Susan (suddenly appearing in her doorway):* Where's the widow what came yesterday in answer to your advertisement?

*Henry:* Her? Oh! she didn't stop.

*Susan (stepping outside):* Didn't stop?

*Henry:* She said she wasn't able to come for another week, but if the place was open then, she'd be pleased to take it.

*Susan:* Are you telling the truth?

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*Henry:* Well, you've looked for yourself, haven't you?

*Susan (as the truth dawns on her, looking at Jane):* All right, my girl, you wait!

*Jane:* Did you speak to me, Mrs. Bowles?

*Susan:* I'll be even with you yet.

*Jane:* Then you'll have to come and do a good deal of housework for me, as well as cook a lot of meals: won't she, Mr. Bowles?

*Susan:* Don't you dare speak to my husband.

*Henry:* Here, hold on! You promised me there wasn't going to be any of that. That's against our agreement.

*Susan:* I never made no such agreement.

*Henry:* Oh, yes, you did!

*Jane:* And I heard you.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Henry*: So let's have no more of that.

*Susan (to Jane)*: Oh, you think you're clever, don't you?

*Jane*: Yes... middling.

*Susan*: It's all your doing. Think I can't see: but just wait a bit! (*She seizes Henry by the arm and marches him towards their door. Henry, having groceries under both arms, is at a disadvantage, and can offer no resistance. As they reach their door, Jane calls out, "Hey! Mr. Bowles!"*)

*Henry (turning his head with difficulty)*: Well?

*Jane*: Do you want to sell your old bicycle? (*She laughs and closes her door without waiting for an answer.*)

(*Susan pushes Henry into the cottage, and slams the door behind her with a tremendous bang.*)

CURTAIN.

[NP]

OLD TIMES

A Memory

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OLD TIMES

*Extract from County Directory*

THORPE TILNEY is a village of 301 inhabitants. The principal landowners are the Earl of Fletton, and Messrs. Mullen & Son, of Ely. Thorpe Croft is the residence of Arbuthnot Wardle, M.P. Church — All Saints. Rector — Z. Baker. "Chequers" Inn (Ben Goulton). One beer shop.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

SUDDEN fortunes are not made by farmers, but when he gets on good soil and times are propitious, the farmer who starts in a small way has a great advantage over the townsman who rises in business. The townsman's wife and family see to it that his rate of living rises with his income, but the farmer makes no change, and practically the whole of his profits remain in his farm.

His son, however, makes a change, and thus it is that you may find in well-appointed farm-houses the ex-labourer grandfather smoking by the kitchen fireside, whilst the master of the house goes to market in a motor-car, and the grandson is being educated at the High School in the nearest town.

Such a contrast was to be seen at Thorpe Tilney Manor, where Kenneth Ham's father, old David, just going into his ninetieth year, spent all the time he could with little Rufus, when the lad was not at Bly Grammar School. The small boy and the

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old man were great friends, to the annoyance of Mrs. Kenneth, who was unable, however, to keep old David from doing whatever he wanted. She had always been ambitious for her only son since her brother Hubert Hardy (the literary schoolmaster of Thorpe) prophesied a brilliant future for his prize scholar.

Although Thorpe Tilney lies down in the Gulland Fens, it considers itself rather an aristocratic village, partly because Arbutnot Wardle, the local member of parliament, lives at Thorpe Croft, and partly because one-half of the parish is owned by the Earl of Fletton. It is true that Messrs. Mullen & Son (the firm of potato growers and merchants) have bought a large block of the richest land in the fen, and are rumoured to be trying to buy the remainder. Their influence grows daily, because they farm on a new and startling scale, and employ a great deal of labour, but Kenneth Ham, who is the largest tenant of the Coote family in Thorpe, declares stoutly that they will never get another acre.

Old David Ham wears a good but ancient tweed suit which Mrs. Kenneth can't get him to change for a better. He is a hale old man, though slightly deaf. Thanks to an

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

outdoor life, his hair, though snow-white, is very thick; and never having learnt to read or write, his eyesight is still good.

Little Rufus is eleven, and looks like any other well-to-do farmer's son. It is a beautiful Saturday morning to be afield, but Rufus, unfortunately, brings home every Friday night a mass of homework which has to be done on Saturday, because his mother won't allow him to do it on Sunday. He sits, therefore, in the summer-house with his books spread before him.

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whilst Grandfather, seated near him in the sun, smokes a clay pipe and looks at Rufus with enormous pride. At Grandfather's feet lies Sandy, the old sheep-dog, fast asleep, and evidently dreaming of hunting, from the spasmodic movements of his nose and feet. Rufus would willingly barter his education and all his prizes at that moment for a swim in the Delph with the village boys, whose shouts can be heard in the distance. At last he can bear it no longer, and, closing his book, looks across at Grandfather.

*Rufus.*

I wish I'd lived in bygone days,  
When you, Grandfather, were a boy,  
'Coz things were pleasant everyways  
With nothing to annoy;  
While now, there's only work and work;  
I have to slave like any Turk.  
Those were the times, and no mistake,  
With highwaymen about,  
And orchards ready to be robbed  
(No bobbies looking out);  
And, best of all, no silly schools  
With masters, and their sticks and rules.  
The winters then were something like,



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

It must have froze, surelie,  
With skating weeks and weeks on end  
And snowdrifts ten feet high:  
Our frosts, they hardly hold a day,  
And my good skates, they rust away.  
Our Fens were mostly flooded then  
The winter-time all through.  
So you could fish and boat about

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Just as you wanted to;  
Or go a-shooting geese and ducks;  
There's nothing now to shoot but rooks.  
Besides that there was heaps of sport:  
Eel-fishing down a dyke,  
Hérons and snipe and water-fowl,  
Or perhaps an old jack pike;  
And, best of all, the duck decoy,  
When you. Grandfather, were a boy.

*Grandfather David.*

So that's your game, is it, my lad;  
Dissatisfied you be?  
Just listen, and I'll make you glad  
You wasn't young wi' me;  
Or, if I can't persuade you, then  
I'll take your place and start again.  
My father was a labourer  
And I was one of ten;  
He earned but fourteen-pence a day

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

(And pleased to get it, then):

How did he do? I cannot say;

He never knew his-sen.

You get your meals three times a day,

Your clothes is good to tell;

We mostly breakfasted on sop

(All other meals as well):

Sometimes, if things were extr'y good

We got a taste of better food.

The clothes I wore would make you laugh

If you could see 'em now;

I never had a pair of boots

Until I went to plough —

(And then I used to lunch on roots)

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We managed anyhow.

The waste of water as you want

Is drained, and smiles away

Wi' crops of corn and clover plant,

Wi' taates and meadow hay;

All finding work for every lad

At wages as 'ud scared my dad.

The grass-roads and the cattle tracks

Is gone, and in their place

Here's splendid roads, on which all day

You ride wi' smiling face;

And as for schooling, why my lad,

I should have only been too glad.

All o' your father's labourers

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

On beef and bacon's fed;  
They never pine nor live on sop,  
Nor hungry slive to bed  
To huddle up as close as sheep.  
And cry their-sens all cold to sleep.  
The winter-time's all right for you,  
Wi' clothing thick and warm;  
I had to pulfer turnips.  
Or slink about the farm  
Wi' icy hands and steaming breath:  
I very nearly froze to death  
'Coz I were only seven then,  
Yes, it were cruel hard;  
You rides your pony 'cross the Fen  
To go to school, my lad,  
But off to work I had to run  
Three mile afore the day begun.  
You've everything as you can wish  
Wi' but a hand to raise;  
So don't you come to me at all

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Wi' such a foolish craze.  
Because they wasn't good, my boy;  
They was the "bad old days!"

At this moment, Mrs. Ham is seen coming down the garden path, and Rufus falls desperately to work, whilst Grandfather closes his eyes as though asleep.

[NP]

## THE HORDLE POACHER

A Play in One Act

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## THE HORDLE POACHER

*Extract from County Directory*

HOLT-IN-THE-MARSH is a village of 456 inhabitants.

MARSH HOUSE, the seat of Lord Marshfellowton, who owns much of the parish, is occupied by his Agent, Evelyn Wincey, Esquire. Titus Ambrose, Esquire, is a large landowner here. The two great Fen waterways, the Old Cut Drain, and the Fifty Foot Drain, meet at Holt Sluice. Holt Marsh, a stretch of grazing land flooded in winter, is drained by Holt Creek, a partly natural, partly artificial watercourse, which discharges into the sea through the Old Roman Bank at Fleet St. Andrew's Sluicegate. There is a foal fair here in September. Church — Holy Trinity. Rector — Rev. A. Moxey. Wesleyan Chapel. "Bottle and Glass" Inn (Gregory Ingamells). "Carpenter's Arms" Inn (J. Frost). "Black Horse" Inn (L. Ford).

*(The curtain rises early one November morning on the kitchen of a gamekeeper's cottage which stands at the end of a lane off the main road from Fletton to Holt-in- the-Marsh. The kitchen is a large one, with a brick floor and white-washed walls. In the centre of the right wall is a door into the sitting-room. On the left of this door is a mangle, and on its right a dresser. The fireplace and a large cupboard occupy the left wall. The back wall*

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**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*has a door on the right and a window on the left commanding the garden, at the end of which is seen the very high bank of the Fifty Foot Drain, which takes its name from its width and runs as straight as if it had been drawn with a ruler from Winch Brook to the Great Sluice at Tanvats.*

*Ellen Hudson, the keeper's wife, standing behind a wash-tub in the centre of the floor, with her sleeves rolled up, is a big woman, thirty-one years of age, bursting with health. She has straight black hair, combed off her forehead and knotted at the back, bright brown eyes, and rosy cheeks of a hard plumpness that only long outdoor life can give. She is wearing a rather faded print frock, and an apron of coarse brown sacking. Behind her are a basket of already washed articles and a rinsing tub on a stool. Between her and the dresser stands a small zinc bath heaped up with clothes awaiting their turn, on the top of which lies a soiled print gown. An armchair is drawn up to the fire.*

*A man is seen passing the window.*

*The door opens, and Tom Hudson enters with a gun under his arm. He threads his way across the kitchen to the fireplace, nearly knocking the washing basket over, and puts his gun against the wall beside the cupboard.)*

*Ellen: Hey! Mind where you're stepping! (Tom sits down by the fireside without speaking. He is between thirty-five and forty years of age, of middle height, broad-shouldered and muscular, and is wearing an old velveteen jacket, a dark-red knitted waistcoat, cloth breeches, leather leggings, stout shooting boots, and a fiat tweed cap.)* What's up? Don't sit there like a frog with one leg. I didn't mind so much last night, 'coz I thought you

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was done up, but I'm too busy to do with it this morning.

*Tom: It's Mester Wincey.*

*Ellen: What's wrong with him?*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Tom:* He sent for me yesterday afternoon up to Marsh House to say as he wasn't very well satisfied.

*Ellen (wringing out the article she is washing, and throwing it into the basket):* Oh, isn't he.

*Tom:* I felt like telling him to get suited with somebody else.

*Ellen (starting on a tablecloth):* We can't afford to move about the country every week. What's he want to grumble about, anyway?

*Tom:* The same old tale — poaching.

*Ellen:* Why doesn't he give you more help, then?

*Tom:* That's what I say; but he goes on about the reputation as I brought from Cowsley, and the great wage he's giving me for his lordship.

*Ellen:* Great wage? (*turning to him.*) What great wage?

*Tom (hanging up his cap on a peg):* That's what he calls it.

*Ellen (resuming her washing):* Huh! Twenty-three shillings and a cottage, without so much as an outhouse to do a bit of washing in! The man as built this place never had no wife, I know.

*Tom:* He says he got me to come to Holt to put down the poaching — as if I didn't know that!

*Ellen:* Well, you've stopped most of it, haven't you?

*Tom:* I could stop the lot if I had a bit more help. The place got so bad under the last man that anybody but me would have been flummuxed altogether;

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yet the Agent reckons I'm going to get it all made right in about ten minutes.

*Ellen:* He must be a fool!

*Tom (fiercely):* He talks as soft as a turnip.

*Ellen:* What's tittled him up just now?

*Tom:* Why — night before last somebody got into yon spinney at the end of the lane — the one we're so careful over — and helped himself.

*Ellen:* Oh! Where was you?

The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

Rural Plays (1922)

*Tom:* T'other end of the Estate — up by Fletton Woods.

*Ellen:* Who was it? Do you know?

*Tom:* I've a good idea.

*Ellen:* Oh! Who?

*Tom:* A chap as is stopping at the Bottle and Glass; a regular loafing fellow. Toby Morton says he's been boasting as how he could give any keeper a lesson, and should take what he wanted where he liked. (*He fetches his gun, and starts to clean it with a rag from his pocket.*)

*Ellen:* And can't you catch him?

*Tom:* He's as full of craft as a wagon-load of monkeys with their tails burnt off. Keeper Jackson of Fletton told me all about him. I had young Walter Bealby watching the Bottle and Glass all yesterday, but he didn't stir an inch, and when night come, I went down myself.

*Ellen:* And what happened?

*Tom:* I watched the front door, and Walter watched the back, but he must have got out without either of us seeing him.

*Ellen:* How did he manage that?

*Tom:* That's more than I can tell you. The lad swore as he didn't go out by the back, and I know

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him to be a smart boy. Anyhow, he got out, and what's more, went to the same spinney again.

*Ellen:* He didn't!

*Tom:* He did. And what's more'n that, he must have been at work inside while I stood on the road listening, because when I found as he didn't come out after ten o'clock, I walked to the spinney and waited there for a nice time, but I never heard as much as a squeak! I tell you, Nell, I'm about bottled.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Ellen (drying her hands on her apron, poking the fire, and putting the kettle on):* Well, well, have a bit of breakfast, and you'll feel ever so much better. You've been worrying out yonder on an empty stomach, and nothing's worse than that.

*Tom:* Yon chap's took my appetite away.

*Ellen (crossing to the dresser and reaching down a cup, saucer, and plate):*  
Do you know who he is?

*Tom:* Barley, they call him, and he comes from Hordle.

*Ellen:* A "Hordle Hound," is he? Have your breakfast, anyway. I can get it ready in a minute.

*Tom (rising and getting his gun):* No, not yet. I'll go and look at yon new eel trap first; then, maybe, I shall feel more like it.

*Ellen:* You have to catch poachers with the game on them, don't you?

*Tom (sarcastically):* That's all!

*Ellen (thoughtfully):* There must be some way of nailing him.

*Tom (bursting out):* I've a good mind to go to the Bottle and Glass and crack his head for him.

*Ellen:* No, no! You must catch him.

*Tom:* How?

*Ellen:* By craft.

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*Tom:* You mean put salt on his tail?

*Ellen:* The folks in these Fens, Tom, is different to them as we've been used to in yon Wolds. They're a cunning lot, and the only way to match 'em is to be cunninger still.

*Tom:* That's all very well, but how can I deal with a score at once? Everybody down here has either a dog or a gun, and most of 'em has both. All the Agent says is, "Come, Hudson, be sharp; show 'em what you're made of," as if I were forty men all rolled into one. It's enough to sicken a cat.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Ellen:* You go and look at your eel trap, and when you come back I'll get your breakfast. Oh, yes — while you're out there, you might have a look at the end clothes post. It's wembling about till I can hardly hang the things up.

*Tom:* All right!

*Ellen:* And don't worry yourself any more. We shall catch this man before we've done.

*Tom (in the doorway):* Ay! I've no doubt we shall — leastways, *you* will. You'll be up to-night by yon spinney, and when he comes creeping up a dyke, *you'll* nab him single-handed, no doubt. And then the Agent'll make *you* keeper in my place.

*Ellen (calmly):* Maybe I could catch him, Tom Hudson, and maybe I couldn't; but mark my words — there's more done in this world by using your wits than by losing your temper.

*Tom (savagely):* Anybody 'ud think as you'd been one of Solomon's three hundred wives! (*He slams the door behind him.*)

*Ellen:* Tch! Tch! I do believe some husbands think they've all the sense, and us women isn't fit for anything but washing clothes. (*She scrubs vigorously.*)

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I wish I'd been a man. I'd have learned some of 'em, that I would. They don't think a woman's work is anything at all, but I should like to see them setting themselves to it. (*A man is seen passing the window, and there is a knock at the door.*) Who's that?

(*The door opens gently to show Fred Barley. He is about the same age and height as Tom Hudson, hut not nearly so well developed, so that he looks smaller. He is quick in his movements, and rather ferretty in appearance, having reddish hair and red brown eyes. His trousers (which appear to have been made of sailcloth) are hitched up by straps under the knees, his boots are very heavy and dirty, and a linen bag is slung over his shoulder.*)

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Fred:* Good-morning, Missis! I've lost my way somehow. Can you set me right again?

*Ellen (scrutinising him closely):* How come you to lose your way?

*Fred (stepping into the kitchen and closing the door behind him):* This is the awkwardest country for a stranger as I ever did see. There's nothing but marshes and rivers, and being neither a bird nor a fish, I'm stopped at every turn.

*Ellen:* You aren't a pedlar, are you?

*Fred (putting his bag on the floor):* I've been working on the big Sluice at Tan vats, but I had a disagreement with the foreman, and left.

*Ellen:* Are you tramping the country, then?

*Fred:* I heard as a very big farmer this way was short of hands, and I'm off to him for a job.

*Ellen:* Who might that be?

*Fred:* Ambrose — Titus Ambrose of Holt.

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*Ellen:* Oh, him! You're not far away — only a matter of a couple of miles, but how did you get down this lane?

*Fred:* Some great fool of a roadman told me to take the first turning to the right.

*Ellen:* He meant the next turning. This isn't a road, it doesn't lead anywhere. What sort of a place are you after?

*Fred:* I don't care a deal what it is: wagoner, groom, gardener, ploughman, potato picker, or foreman — I can turn my hand to anything.

*Ellen:* How is it you don't stop in one place, if you're so clever?

*Fred:* When my master's satisfied, I'm not; and when I'm satisfied he isn't; and so we soon part.

*Ellen:* Rolling stones gathers no moss, young fellow.

*Fred (warming his hands at the fire):* I don't want to gather no moss. I aren't a toadstool.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Ellen:* You don't sound as if you wanted to find a deal of work, either. Where do you come from?

*Fred:* Hordle.

*Ellen (taking a surreptitious glance at his hag):* Hordle! Oh!

*Fred:* What's the matter with Hordle?

*Ellen:* It's a rum place, isn't it?

*Fred:* It's a good place.

*Ellen:* Umm!

*Fred:* It is, for all your umming.

*Ellen:* Then what did you leave it for?

*Fred:* For a change. Could you give me a drop of drink. Missis? I'm as dry as a fish what's been caught three weeks.

*Ellen:* I'll give you a drink as you haven't tasted

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for many a long day. *(She goes to the dresser and pours him out a glass of water.)*  
There you are — Adam's grog!

*Fred (taking a very small sip and giving her back the glass):* Thank you kindly, Missis; and now I must be off. *(He picks up his bag.)*

*Ellen:* Don't you want any more?

*Fred:* No, thanks. I'm hardly used to it, and it might go to my head. *(He turns to the door.)*

*Ellen:* Don't be in such a hurry. I'm glad of a bit of company. If you'll sit down for a few minutes, I'll see if there's a drop of my elderberry wine left.

*Fred (sociably):* I don't mind if I do. *(He returns to the fire, putting his bag under the chair, and making himself comfortable, whilst Ellen glances anxiously out of the window for signs of her husband as she goes to the cupboard. She fills a tumbler half-full of home-made wine, and gives it to Fred.)*

*Ellen:* There you are. Try that!

*Fred (smacking his lips):* That's a bit of all right, that is!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Ellen:* What did you say your name was?

*Fred:* Barley — Fred Barley.

*Ellen (recommencing her washing):* Then let me warn you, Mr. Barley from Hordle, as you're not in No Man's Land now. The land round here all belongs to Lord Marshfellowton, and the game's strictly preserved.

*Fred (amiably):* Well, what's that matter to you — your husband isn't the Lord, is he?

*Ellen:* I was only warning you.

*Fred:* What I say is — game's game, and belongs to them as can get it. These lords has no right to preserve it at all.

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*Ellen:* Folks can do what they like with their own, can't they?

*Fred:* The land ought to belong to them as lives on it.

*Ellen (taking a covert glance out of the window):* You're a Radical, I can easy see.

*Fred:* No — Labour. We're going to split these great estates up, and then I shall have a little farm. I'm all for a bit of land, I am.

*Ellen:* Them that has small holdings works a deal harder than you've ever done, my man.

*Fred (ignoring this):* As Bob Cutts says — game's wild, and should belong to them as can catch it.

*Ellen:* You'd better tell that to the keepers.

*Fred:* Keepers! I care naught for keepers.

*Ellen:* Don't you, now?

*Fred:* I don't. A lot of mucky sneaking fellows, I calls 'em, as earns their keep by spying on their neighbours!

*Ellen:* Oh, that's it, is it?

*Fred:* We care for nobody at Hordle, neither lords nor earls. They tell me this Marshfellowton's as savage at preserving game as old Rupert Harbord was. Reckon

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

they're above the law, don't they, these landowners! I'd as leave give one a broggle with a stick as look at him.

*Ellen:* You're a nice sort to come here for work.

*Fred:* Why? Isn't there anybody round here as does a bit of poaching?

*Ellen:* Plenty. But our Agent's got a brand new keeper to put a stop to it.

*Fred:* I heard all about this fine keeper last night.

*Ellen:* Oh, where were you?

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*Fred:* Stopping at the Bottle and Glass — by the cross-roads.

*Ellen (looking out of the window):* A low place!

*Fred:* That's as may be, but they've good ale. *(He finishes his wine, and says politely):* Though it isn't up to this, of course. Anyway, I heard all about this keeper, and so I went to have a look at him.

*Ellen:* Did you see him?

*Fred:* No, I didn't, and what's more, he didn't see me.

*Ellen:* He would have done if you'd been up to any tricks.

*Fred (sarcastically):* Would he now?

*Ellen:* He would, and quick I

*Fred:* Indeed!

*Ellen:* And if you try any of your games here, you'll be in jail before you can say "knife."

*Fred:* I'm glad to know that, Missis, because, being a stranger in these parts, and not knowing the ways about here, I might easy have got myself into trouble.

*Ellen:* You easy might!

*Fred:* 'Coz if any old keeper was to come nosing round, and happened to look in this here bag of mine *(he stoops down and opens its mouth to show the contents to Ellen)*, they might get a wrong idea altogether, mightn't they?

*Ellen (putting her hands on her hips):* Well!

The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other

Rural Plays (1922)

*Fred (closing the bag):* Anybody might fancy as there was a brace of birds in there, mightn't they?

*Ellen (in pretended admiration):* You rascal!

*Fred:* If that brand new keeper was to see 'em, he wouldn't like it at all, would he?

*Ellen:* Where did you get 'em?

*Fred:* I found 'em on the road.

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*Ellen:* That's all a bag of moonshine, that is.

*Fred:* P'raps it is, and p'raps it isn't; anyway, I found 'em.

*Ellen:* I don't believe a word of it. You're no poacher. You're not half sharp enough. Somebody's given 'em to you.

*Fred (rising to the bait):* Oh, have they! Then let me tell you they came out of that Spinney at the end of the lane.

*Ellen:* You must be an old hand. Have you ever been before the Bench at Bly?

*Fred:* What do you take me for? You might catch Soldier John asleep, but not a Hordle man napping. Well, I must be off! You said down this lane, and the first to the right, didn't you? Isn't there a nearer way?

*Ellen:* There's no way at all past this house, unless you swim the Fifty Foot, and that's full to the top of the bank.

*Fred (picking up his bag and rising):* Well, thankye kindly, Missis. Should you like a hare, now. (*He half opens the bag*), for your drop of drink and your good advice?

*Ellen (sharply):* No — I don't want it.

*Fred:* She's as plump as butter, and would go well with a bit of fat bacon.

*Ellen:* You mustn't leave it here.

*Fred (advancing on Ellen amorously):* Pop it into your pantry, and you can give me a kiss for it, if you like.

*Ellen:* A little less of your chelp, my man!



**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Fred (closing his bag):* All right. Missis! No offence! You needn't have neither, if you don't want. *(He half opens the door, then closes it quickly and quietly,*

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*and returns to Ellen, speaking in quite a different tone.)* I say, Missis, who's that man standing in your garden?

*Ellen (glancing carelessly towards the window, hut not moving from her tub):* I don't know. What's he look like?

*Fred:* He's got a gun under his arm.

*Ellen (going to the window):* Why, that's the very chap you were talking about — the new keeper.

*Fred:* This is no place for me, then. Which way can I get without him seeing me?

*Ellen:* There isn't any way — I told you.

*Fred (looking very anxious indeed):* He's after me, I reckon. Can't I slip out of your front door and across the fields?

*Ellen:* There's no cover anywhere. Besides, they're all flooded, and you couldn't run across them.

*Fred:* What am I to do, then?

*Ellen:* I don't know.

*Fred:* Oh, but Missis, do help us. *He's coming.*

*Ellen (picking up the soiled print gown):* Here! Slip this on, and pretend you're washing, and I'll go into the sitting-room out of the way. He doesn't know me — and you keep your back to him.

*Fred (holding the gown up helplessly):* But it'll never hide me.

*Ellen:* That it will! Hold your arms up! *(She slips the gown on him.)* There you are! *(She ties her apron round him, and picking a sun-bonnet out of the basket, puts it on his head.*

*Fred:* Ugh! It's all wet.

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Ellen*: That's better than going to jail. Now roll your sleeves back, and start washing.

*(As Fred begins scrubbing desperately, Ellen slips)*

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*quietly to the window, and beckons urgently to her husband.)*

*Fred*: Am I all right?

*Ellen (crossing to the sitting-room door)*: Yes, as long as you keep on scrubbing, and don't let him see your face. *(She goes into the sitting-room, leaving the door ajar.)*

*Fred*: But it's all sky-wannock — it's slipping — hey! Missis! *(He hitches the gown up and straightens the bonnet, then remembers, with horror, his bag of game. Shuffling desperately to the chair, he picks it up, looks wildly round, hears a step outside the door, and drops it into the wash-tub. When the door is opened and Tom Hudson enters, Fred is bent over the wash-tub hard at work. Ellen, peeping out of the sitting-room door, with a finger on her lips, points to Fred's feet. Tom, noticing Fred's boots, nods to Ellen and grins.)*

*Tom*: Good-morning, Missis! It's a fine day for the time of year.

*Fred (without looking up, and in a hoarse voice)*: Morning.

*Tom*: You're a bit hoarse to-day. Missis, aren't you?

*Fred (bending lower over the tub)*: What do you want?

*Tom*: I'm looking for a poaching fellow as come this way. Have you seen anything of him? *(Fred shakes his head.)* He couldn't get past, unless he's drowned himself in the Fifty Foot. Maybe he has.

*Fred*: Maybe.

*Tom*: But that wouldn't do at all. I want to catch him alive, and get him before our Agent. He'll poach him on toast. *(He goes closer.)* Why, Missis, your bonnet's wet. You'll catch your death of cold!

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*Fred*: I'm used to it.

*Tom*: It would give me the rheumatics something awful. (*Fred grunts scornfully.*) You must be a tough old dame! (*He pauses to admire Fred's gown.*) Why, Missis, you've got some rare stout boots on!

*Fred* (trying to hide his feet): I suffer so from corns. They're my poor husband's.

*Tom*: Is he dead?

*Fred*: Yes.

*Tom*: I'm very sorry to hear that! (*Fred shakes his head mournfully.*) Oh, cheer up, Missis! You'll easy find another — a well-built woman like you.

*Fred*: Never.

*Tom*: Never say die! If you're lonely, I'll keep you company a bit. (*He slips his arm round Fred's waist. Ellen, convulsed with laughter, claps her hand over her mouth.*)

*Fred* (edging away from Tom, and clutching at his bonnet): Gie ower!

*Tom* (stepping back): Why! You've got trousers on! Are they your poor husband's as well?

*Fred* (giving his gown a hitch): Yes! (*He washes harder than ever.*)

*Tom*: You might give us a kiss. Take your bonnet off, so as I can see your pretty face.

*Fred* (waving one arm threateningly behind him, and bending lower over the wash-tub): Be off wi' you! (*Ellen is threatened with hysterics.*)

*Tom* (purple with suppressed laughter): Don't take on so. It were only my fun.

*Fred* (forgetting, in his desperation, his assumed sex and speaking in his natural voice): Clear out of my house, you great vagabond!

*Tom*: But it ain't your house!

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*Fred*: What do you mean?

*Tom*: Well, you see — it happens to be my house.

*Fred*: What! (*He starts hack in alarm, and the sun-bonnet falls on to his shoulders as he tears the apron violently off.*)

*Ellen* (*coming right into the room, wiping her eyes, as Tom steps hack to guard the outer door.*) He makes a fine lass, doesn't he? (*Fred takes a quick step towards the door, trying to get the gown off, hut it sticks fast over his head.*)

*Tom* (*with his hack to the door*): You'd better help him out, Nell, or he'll end your frock.

(*Fred, walking backwards, still enveloped in the gown, comes to the washing basket and promptly sits down in it. Ellen hurries to him and helps him out of her gown, and unties the sun-bonnet.*)

*Ellen*: Steady on, you great ummy-dummy!

*Fred* (*struggling out of the basket*): Well, I'm blowed!

*Ellen*: You're the one as always gets the best of keepers! (*Looking round*): Why! Where's he put his bag?

*Tom*: What bag?

*Ellen*: He's got a hare and a brace of birds, what he's owned come out of yon Spinney.

*Tom* (*stepping forward excitedly*): That's what I want to see! Where have you put it?

*Fred* (*glancing uneasily at the wash-tub*): I ain't got no bag!

*Ellen* (*who has caught his glance*): What! you never ... (*going to the tub and fishing out the hag*), you mucky toad! (*throwing it along the floor to Tom*) You mucky toad!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

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*Tom (taking up the hag, and looking into it with immense satisfaction, as Fred falls dejectedly into the chair by the fire):* Never mind. Missis. We've got our own back, thanks to you!

*Fred:* Done — by a woman! I'll never have no truck with another as long as I live.

*Ellen:* And a very good thing for them if you don't. (*She goes to her wash-tub.*) Take him away, Tom. (*She ties the apron round her.*) Take him off, and let me get on with my business: I've been hindered enough as it is. (*She recommences her washing.*)

CURTAIN.

[NP]

FINISHED

A Tragedy

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FINISHED

*Extract from County Directory*

HERRIES ST. JAMES, *small village of 235 inhabitants on the top of the Wolds. Railway station (Herries and Tethy). Herries Hall is the seat of Lord Herries, who owns nearly the whole parish. The River Skirth, a small tributary of the Gulland, rises here. A monastery dedicated to St. James was founded here in the time of Henry II., and was richly endowed; holding a considerable part of the market town of Winkersfield with its tithes. Some picturesque ruins, including one side of the refectory, still remain. Its*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*revenues, at the Dissolution, were estimated at One hundred and twenty-eight pounds. Church — St. James. Rector — Rev. E. C. Worthington-Elliott. "Ship" Inn (N. Gubbins). "Saracen's Head" (G. Machen). Here is a Primitive Methodist Chapel.*

THE ground slopes steadily downward from Herries to the sea, and on a clear day, with a pair of glasses, one can follow the tiny River Skirth down to its junction with the Gulland below Worlby; and the Gulland down past Tanvats Sluice to the sea.

Farming is a very different matter in the Wolds from farming in the Fens. There is hardly any soil here — a few beggarly inches above the chalk, on which the grass has no hold against a hot summer. There is very little ploughed land to be seen, for nearly

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the whole of the Wolds are grass, over which flocks of sheep graze at their will. Where the soil is thicker, an excellent malting barley is raised, and fetches top prices in the local markets; and, of course, turnips must be grown somehow for the sheep's winter feed. In the Fens, the difficulty is to get rid of the water, but up here, the difficulty is to retain it, for it passes through the porous soil like a sieve.

Farmers don't get rich very quickly (apart from wars, and other exceptionally favourable times), but on the other hand, they don't get poor very quickly. The difference between farming and business is, curiously enough, that farmers are not struck down by the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, as the business man may be. I say "curiously," because no one can forecast the weather, and it would seem impossible for a farmer to guard himself against disaster; but, through the course of centuries, the routine of farming has been so planned for each kind of soil, as to guard the cultivator against unknown dangers by a balance of crops set out to meet all occasions. If there is a drought, the roots suffer, but the corn thrives; if there is a wet summer, the converse is the case; and if crops are altogether scanty, then, as a rule, local prices will be higher than in a year of plenty.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

Our cities know many honest business men who have failed because competition from their fellows was too keen, or because they were squeezed out by some combine, but it is almost impossible to find a farmer who has been ruined, except directly by his own fault. The fault is mostly overdrinking. One does not reckon here, of course, the retired business men from the towns who settle on the land to teach the inhabitants better ways of farming, because their

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doom is self-evident. Apart from drinking, almost the whole of the remainder of ruined farmers are those who cling obstinately to the old ways when these have been too long superseded. These either own their own farms (left by their parents) or are tenants on an old-fashioned estate, and the process of their dislodgement is slow and painful.

Judah Overton is a small farmer — that is to say, small for the Wolds, because his 316 acres would have made him a large farmer down in the Fens. He is a tall, stout man of over sixty, with a high colour, who moves, speaks, and thinks very slowly. “Easygoing “ is the expression that altogether suits him, and easily he has gone since he came here from Topham, on his marriage with Susan Mogridge, thirty-three years ago. His father's death left him comfortably off, and, being fortunate enough to miss the disastrous 'seventies, he was able to slip into the tenancy which he has held since then. He would have held it until death, but unfortunately, a Mr. David Davids, feeling that the time had come for him to take his first step into the ranks of the aristocracy, devoted a share of his coal-begotten wealth to the purchase of a peerage, and part of the remainder to buying Herries Hall and its estate. Being a shrewd business man. Lord Herries left a fair sum behind him in the collieries of Wales, to be on the safe side.

This event was particularly unfortunate for Judah. Lord Herries, not being yet accustomed to the ways of Land Barons, appointed a highly trained Scotch Agent to look after his estate, instead of — as is customary — making that post a sinecure for a poor relation. Neither Donald Harris the Agent, nor Lord Herries, is able to see the point of going without rent whilst



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laying out good money on repairs and improvements, as old Squire Porter had done, and as so many of the Land Barons proper do in bad times; and the end for poor Judah has at last arrived.

Susan Overton is a tiny woman, with a querulous expression, who has nagged her husband all their married life, but not in the right direction; so that instead of driving him to amend his ways, she has driven him into the arms of Nathan Gubbins at the "Ship" Inn, where he has always found appreciation. Having no children to round off her comers, Susan has spent a great deal of time in making the farmhouse clean, polished, and uncomfortable, which again has not been without its effect on her husband, who likes comfort above all things.

Their household effects are piled up on a wagon which that good neighbour. Farmer Pickering, has lent them. The sale that followed the bankruptcy has left them with nothing except the few pieces of furniture which Susan had bought-in with her savings. They are moving to a cottage outside the village, which Lord Herries, taken aback by the extraordinarily sudden collapse and astonishingly hollow state of Judah, has let him have for a time.

Susan is perched on the top of the wagon, arranging things beneath her like a hen, and never quite settling where to place her parrot cage. The wagon is drawn up by the side of the house, and Judah stands on the doorstep. He is not looking across the garden hedge at Susan or the wagon, but backward over the farmyard; and, as is not unnatural at this moment, is making a survey of his life at the Hall Farm.

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*Judah Overton.*

This is the finish, then! I've got to go!  
To leave my dear old home at last! And so  
I may as well get on and say good-bye

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

To th' old place: I never thought, sure-lie,  
Twould ever come to this, as I should see  
Myself a-leaving. Lok-a-daisy-me!

It's thirty year — and more — since I were wed  
To Susan yonder: what a time we had!  
We come to this ere place, all spick and span,  
Wi' furniture enough to scare a man,  
And everything went like a wedding bell;  
But now — I'm 'fraid it isn't quite so well.

At first we went on beautiful to see,  
For things turned out as lucky as could be;  
The harvests all went right, the crops was good,  
And money flowed just like it always should;  
I had such horses then as beat 'em all.  
But now — my poor old things can hardly crawl.

I don't know what it was as brought me down;  
Nobody doesn't; luck begun to frown,  
And things went somehow crooked altogether,  
Like an old tree as couldn't stand the weather,  
Wembling this way and that as the wind blowed,  
Until, at last, you see it overthrown.

That hailstorm started it five year ago;  
You see my luck was out that day, and so,  
Somehow, I had forgotten to insure!  
That crippled me: then things went all awry;  
My horses lamed themselves — no reason why;  
The beast and sheep all started off to die.

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My luck was out, you can't say more'n that;  
There's nowt but luck in farming — you may scrat  
And tue yourself to death, while others go  
Trotting straight past you: it just happens so.  
Look at that Abel Pratt, the gorming hound,  
The meanest mawkin ever could be found!

He goes to chapel, never drinks no beer,  
No baccy gets anigh him, doesn't swear;  
At singing hymns on Sunday hard he labours;  
But all the other days, he robs his neighbours:  
If he can get to Heaven — well — I fear  
I never wants to go and join him there.

I hates the sight of him, the mucky toad!  
I hardly likes to pass him on the road;  
He always manages to sell his corn  
A shilling more'n other folks has known;  
Sometimes he's careful, other times he's rash,  
But every time alike he's full of cash.

And worst of all, he has so much to say,  
Preaching and buzzing through the livelong day,  
Poking his nose into all my affairs,  
And brogging me wi' his teetotal airs  
To sign the pledge. 'Twould be a nice-ish tale  
If I could never taste a drop of ale!

The Salamanca Corpus: *King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

For what should I do then when night come on.

If my old corner at the “Ship” was gone?

I've had that seat this thirty year — and more —

Next to the fire, close behind the door;

I couldn't part with that, for, d'ye see,

It's been just like a second home to me.

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And though I'm moving to a cottage, yet

The landlord says he doesn't mind one bit;

We've spent our evenings there so pleasantly,

I'm welcome just the same, although I be

A labourer 'stead of a master now,

And soon shall be a-f olio wing the plough.

But as for that young Pratt, I ask you true,

Which on us is the best man of the two?

Who's the most popular, who's liked the best,

Who has most friends? I leave it to the rest:

There's a good word for me on every lip,

But Pratt — he dossent step inside the “Ship”

There's *Susan* shouting — “Eh? What's that you say,

“Time we was off — awaiting here all day?”

Of course I'm ready, has been this long while.

Besides, it's little more'n half a mile.

Hold on a minute, Susan; now, don't cry;

I've only got across the road to slip,

To look at my old friends inside the “Ship”:

They value me, and wants to say good-bye.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

Closing the door, Judah walks across the road. Susan, folding her arms and tightening her lips, rehearses in silence the scene which will take place when he returns.

[NP]

THE OLD BULL

A Play in One Act

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THE OLD BULL

*Extract from County Directory*

PANTACKS, a village of 412 inhabitants, on the main road from Bly to Barkston. Christopher Harbord, Esquire (Pantacks Manor), is sole landowner. The parish is drained by Pantacks Delph, which runs into the Old Cut. Church — St. Giles. Vicar — Rev. K. Treffry. Wesleyan Chapel. Primitive Methodist Chapel. "Labour in Vain" Inn (Wm. Smithson). "Loggerheads" Inn (F. West). "Rose and Crown" Inn (B. Tarry).

*(The curtain rises on the Grange kitchen in the village of Pantacks, one January morning. The Grange is one of the very old farmhouses, and its kitchen would gladden the eyes of an American. The open fireplace, with seats inside the chimney, has a peat fire on its hearthstone which hums with a thick blue fragrant smoke. Inside and around the chimney are various hooks, chains, and racks for hanging kettles and pots, smoking bacon, etc.; and there is a spit, long unused, but still carefully cleaned. On the mantelpiece is a collection of brass: candlesticks of various sizes and shapes, an oval tobacco box, and two snuffers complete with trays. The oak beams that support the ceiling are dark with the smoke of generations, and from them hang fitches of bacon, hams, bladders of lard, two muskets, and a rifle. The wall paper, of floral design, has*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*fortunately toned down into keeping with the fine specimen of a grandfather clock and the copper warming-pans. The floor is of*

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*stone slabs without any covering. The furniture is of black oak, and if Pantacks were not down in the Gulland Marshes, the Elmitts would, before now, have learned its value. The table in the centre, the arm-chair, and two small chairs beside it, and four others around the walls, together with the beautiful dresser, would draw a tempting offer.*

*The fireplace is in the centre of the back wall, and has on each side a casement window with leaded panes and deep window-seats. There is a door to the farmyard in the left wall, and beside it another door opens into what the Elmitts call their "second kitchen," where all the cooking is done. Between these doors hangs a whole range of polished metal dish covers.*

*Sarah Tinsley is closing the door of a cupboard in the right-hand corner. She is an elderly woman, and has been at the Grange since she was a girl of fourteen. When Mrs. Elmitt died, Sarah became housekeeper as well as cook and general servant. A tiny woman, with scanty white hair, bright blue eyes, and cheeks like rich wrinkled pippins, she is restless, energetic, sharp-voiced, and altogether birdlike. She comes forward with a bottle of sherry which she places on a tray on the dresser, together with three wine-glasses and a biscuit barrel. Whilst she is doing this, Tom Bones, the old farm foreman, comes in from the yard. Five feet high, and nearly as broad, with a rim of white whisker meeting his stubble hair, a waddling gait, and a wrinkled, leathery skin, Tom looks exactly like one of the farm animals. He wears dirty boots and leggings, a discoloured smock, and an indescribable hat.)*

*Bones: I've took some of your hot water, Missis, for Brutus.*

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Sarah*: Your Jack said he wasn't very grand last night. What's the matter with him?

*Bones*: Colic, I reckon. Pedigree bulls has tender stomachs. It was a queer thing, him being took ill the very day of the poor Mester's funeral, wasn't it? He thought the world of that old bull!

*Sarah*: No wonder! Look what he paid Mester Dane for him.

*Bones*: He's worth double that to-day. A wonderful bull! When I fetched him from Fletton, Albert Cook said he was the most promising youngster as they'd ever bred. I wonder who's going to have him. Was there a Will?

*Sarah (looking round apprehensively)*: I'm afraid not. Mester Smithson's coming across directly to talk to the two boys, and then we shall know how things stand.

*Bones*: I hope to goodness there is a Will! If there ain't, they say as the eldest takes all.

*Sarah*: That would be very unfair to Mester James.

*Bones (dubiously)*: Mester Charles is giving orders all round as if he owned everything. You don't think he does, do you?

*Sarah*: I don't feel very easy about it, but we shall know soon. Have you seen Mester James this morning?

*Bones*: He's been round as usual, but he hardly spoke a word.

*Sarah*: He's feeling the Mester's death very much.

*Bones*: I know which I'd sooner have in the old gentleman's place. (*Sarah puts her finger to her lips.*) I don't care if anybody does hear: drinking and gambling and carrying on. If Mester Charles is boss, it'll be a sad day for us all.

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*Sarah*: It will indeed! But we must hope for the best. I suppose, anyhow, you'll have to flit from the Dovecote into one of the cottages.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bones (gloomily):* There's nothing but changes. Only t'other day Squire Rupert died, as had been at the Manor ever since I was a lad; and now our good old Mester's gone. Squire Christopher's turning everything upside down with his new-fangled ideas, till nobody knows if they're standing on their heads or their heels.

*Sarah:* We *shall* know which, if there isn't a Will: we shall be on our heels — out in the road — for all our years of service.

*Bones:* Who'd look after the old bull if I was gone, I don't know.

*Sarah:* And me, what nursed him from the very first! But he's never cared for nobody but himself, hasn't Mester Charles.

*Bones:* The poor Mester sent for me only last Monday, as ever was. Bones, he says, you must take care of Brutus when I'm gone. You understand him, he says; and I telled him I would as long as I had breath in my body.

*Sarah:* What was the good of telling you that, if he didn't leave Brutus to Mester James?

*Bones:* You should have reminded him to make a Will.

*Sarah:* That was likely, wasn't it? Our Mester wasn't one as you could say things to — like you can to Mester James.

*(The yard door opens and James Elmitt enters. He is a tall, thin fellow of four-and-twenty, who stoops slightly; dressed in his Sunday blacks.)*

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*James:* How's Brutus now, Tom?

*Bones:* We've just been fomenting of him, Mester James, and going to give him another directly.

*James:* If he isn't better by dinner, we'll wire to Fletton for Enderby Hicks. It's unfortunate being Barkston Show to-morrow.

*Bones:* I know he'd a took the first prize.

*James (sitting down in the ingle-nook and lighting a cigarette):* Well, he can't go, and that's certain! But it's no good worrying about it, Tom; there'll be another day.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bones*: I'll go and have another look at him. (*Shaking his head mournfully*): I'm sure he'd a took the first prize. (*He waddles toward the yard door.*)

*Sarah*: We shall be wanting some more turf, Mester James. We must keep a good fire up, this cold weather.

*James*: We shan't run short of that, shall we, Tom?

*Bones*: We took enough out of the Fen last summer to keep us going for three winters. (*Exit.*)

*Sarah (going nearer to James)*: Did you find a Will?

*James (shaking his head slowly)*: We've hunted everywhere, high and low; but I'm afraid Father left it too late.

*Sarah*: That wasn't like the poor dear Mester.

*James*: I can't understand it at all. Sarah. When he told me that "things would be all right," I never gave it another thought.

*Sarah*: What about Lawyer White? Your father always went to him.

*James*: If he'd had a Will, we should have heard from him before now.

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*Sarah (lowering her voice)*: You don't think it's been done away with? (*James shakes his head, and Sarah is about to say something further, when she hears steps coming down the stone corridor, and taking from the table the cloth with which she had dusted the wineglasses, retires into her own kitchen. As she closes the door, Charles Elmitt enters on the right, and crosses to the yard door, whistling as he goes. He sees James in the ingle-nook and stops.*)

(*The eldest son of the dead farmer is inclined to stoutness, although not much older than his brother, and if it were not for his out-of-door life would already begin to look bloated. His clothes have been cut by Noel Andrews — the Bly sporting tailor — and his leggings are highly polished.*)

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Charles (in a jeering voice, giving James a sharp poke with his riding whip):*

Now then, wake up, sloomy sides; you're always dreaming.

*James (staring into the fire):* I was thinking of the poor old Governor.

*Charles (leaning against the fireplace, opposite James):* Your thinking won't bring him back to life.

*James:* He was a good father to us, Charles.

*Charles (sneering):* You'll find it more important to be a good brother to me, now.

*James (aroused by this, and coming out of the inglenook):* Oh, why should I?

*Charles:* The sooner you realise *that*, the better for you.

*James:* I don't know why you're talking like this. Father said he'd provided for me.

*Charles:* I'll tell you once for all what he did, and

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then you'll know. The dividing of the property is left entirely in my hands, as the eldest. Those were the old man's very words.

*James:* But he told me I was provided for.

*Charles:* So you are! He left it to me to provide for you, so let's have no nonsense.

*James:* We'll see what Uncle William says.

*Charles (seeing the sherry, and helping himself):* Uncle William! He always wants to shove his nose into everything. He said he was coming over this morning to talk to us, and I shall listen to what he says... but that's all!

*James:* I can't understand it.

*Charles:* Perhaps you expected to be left in one of the farms. (*Laughing*) I'm master now, and I can tell you things are going to be very different. We've been cluttered up long enough with a lot of doddering old fools like Bones and Casswell.

*James (horrified):* You won't sack Bones! Father said there wasn't a more trusty man with stock this side the Gulland. He's worked here all his life.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Charles:* Time he had a change then. The old man pleased himself, and I'm going to do the same.

*James:* Father promised Bones he shouldn't be pushed on one side: I heard him.

*Charles:* I've nothing whatever to do with other folk's promises. If Bones was to square himself up and be civil, I might keep him.

*James:* He's too old to alter now. But what's his manners amount to?

*Charles:* A good deal too much for me. I'm blowed if the men isn't getting to be as good as the masters nowadays, I don't know as they aren't better off than us,

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*James:* You wouldn't change places, though.

*Charles (filling his pipe):* I've seen our chaps that close together on a stack that they couldn't move their forks for fear of brogging one another. But I'll alter that!

*James:* They may be slow, but they're steady. Don't be too sharp, Charles.

*Charles:* And don't you be so fauce, Jimmy. You'll have as much as you can manage to keep your own place, without sticking up for that lazy gang. *(The conversation ceases on the appearance of Sarah from her kitchen. She hesitates which to address, and looks tactfully between them as she speaks.)*

*Sarah:* There's a man by the name of Patchett from Mester Titus Ambrose's wants to know where you want the threshing machine putting.

*Charles (authoritatively):* Go and arrange it with him, Jimmy. We shall want him here first. *(James goes out, and Charles takes another glass of sherry. Sarah is about to protest, but thinks better of it. Charles seats himself in the arm-chair, which he pushes back from the table.)*

*Sarah:* Where's the black tie you wore at the funeral, Mester Charles?

*Charles:* I've something better to do than sit and mope in blacks. *(Stretching his legs out luxuriously)* A rare farmer Jimmy would make! A foreman's all he's fit for, and that's what he's going to be. I've been planning things out a bit this morning, Sarah.

*Sarah (non-committally):* Oh!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Charles*: I can do as I like now everything belongs to me; and one of the first things is, I'm going to be married right away!

*Sarah*: Not directly after the funeral, surely?

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*Charles*: I shall put Jimmy in the Dovecote farmhouse instead of Bones, and, if he likes, you can keep house for him.

*Sarah*: Will the Squire let you keep both farms? Your father said he was the only farmer on any estate round here as was allowed to have two such houses; and that was only on account of his taking the Dovecote over in the bad times, when nobody else would have it.

*Charles*: I know how to manage the Squire. I'm going to straighten things up all round, and shan't let any silly old ideas stand in *my* way, any more than he's done. That yew's coming down.

*Sarah*: Mester *Charles*, you can't do that! The old tree was here in your great-grandfather's time.

*Charles*: I don't care a damn about that! It shades the front windows, and it's coming down now — right away! You'll hear it directly. (*Flabbergasted by this piece of news, Sarah goes through the door on the right to see for herself what is happening in the front garden. Charles rises and pours himself out a third glassful of sherry as Bones enters from the yard.*)

*Bones (bluntly)*: What's this our Jack tells me about the old bull being got ready to go to the Show?

*Charles (tossing off the sherry)*: Say Sir, when you speak to me.

*Bones*: What for?

*Charles*: Because I'm master.

*Bones*: Oh!... all right!

*Charles (sitting down and trying to look like his father used to)*: Now then, what is it you want?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bones:* What's this our Jack tells me about the old bull being got ready to go to the Show?

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*Charles:* Haven't I just told you to say *Sir*, when you speak to me?

*Bones:* He's not fit to go to no Shows.

*Charles:* That's for me to say.

*Bones:* Mester James has had a look at him, and says he can't go.

*Charles (furiously):* What the devil is it to do with you or him? I say he is going.

*Bones:* You must be crazed.

*Charles (recovering himself):* I've told you what to do, and that's plenty.

*Bones:* That's all very well, but you don't know nothing about *bulls*. I was tending to 'em before you was ever thought of.

*Charles:* Yes, you're old-fashioned enough.

*Bones:* You won't find many as knows more about stock than me, and chance the ducks! Old Mester had sense enough to let me alone. *Bones*, he says to me many a time. *Bones*, you might almost have been a bull yourself. Of course, you can cut old Brutus up and make soup of him, but if you want to do yourself any good you must harken to me.

*Charles:* And if you want to do yourself any good you'll do what I tell you. (*A dull crash is heard, and the kitchen shakes slightly.*)

*Bones:* What's yon? (*Before Charles can answer, Sarah comes in from the corridor, looking very upset.*)

*Sarah:* It's down! It's down!

*Charles:* Of course, it's down!

*Sarah:* You mark my words, Mester Charles, cutting that old yew down'll bring you no luck.

*Bones:* You don't mean to say —

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Charles* (violently): You'd better both of you understand right away that I'm mester here now. You're

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too fond of forgetting your places. I don't want any back talk from *servants*, and I'm not going to have it.

*Sarah* (*losing control*): What do you know about servants; trying to lord it over everybody? And me what nursed you as a baby — a nasty-tempered one you was and all.

*Charles* (*trying hard to look dignified*): That's enough, Sarah.

*Sarah* (*with immense scorn*): Sitting there, trying to look like your father! It isn't five minutes since you was running about in petticoats and squalling for me to pick you up.

*Charles* (*losing all control*): Get out of this kitchen. I'll sack you!

Together { *Sarah*: Sack me! What's been here since I was fourteen!  
We'll see what Mester Smithson says to that!  
*Bones*: Steady on, Mester Charles, steady on! You can't run at things a-that-ow!  
*Charles* (*shouting at the top of his voice to try and drown them*): Shut up! Clear out! Shut up!

(*At the height of the tumult, the yard door opens and William Smithson comes in, followed by James. Uncle William, the landlord of the "Labour in Vain" Inn, is also an auctioneer and valuer, and looks entirely prosperous. He is dressed in a blue suit of good cloth, and has mutton-chop whiskers, gray hair, and a comfortable paunch. There is a mourning-band round his left arm, and another round his wide-brimmed bowler. He takes instant command of the situation, speaking in a powerful bass voice.*)

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**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Uncle William*: Hallo! Hallo! What's all this noise about?

*Sarah*: The new mester's sacking everybody.

*Charles*: I will, if they don't shut up.

*Uncle William (putting his hand up for order, and seating himself in the arm-chair at the table, whilst the others cluster round him)*: Now tell me all about it. (This request is immediately fatal.)

Together { *Charles*: I'm mester here, aren't I? What I say is law, and the sooner everybody gets settled down to that, the better.  
*Sarah*: He's no business to go on so soft, trying to turn me out int the street, what's been here since I was fourteen.  
*Bones*: I'm all for bulls, I am, but if you don't treat 'em fair, what can you expect but trouble.  
*James ( to Sarah)*: Now, now, **Sarah**, wait a minute! (To *Bones*): Be quiet, Tom!

*Uncle William (banging his fist on the table and uttering a terrific roar)*: NO! NO! NO! NO! (Uncle William's bellow is so terrible that it brings them all to a standstill. More cautious this time, he points his finger at Charles, and says, Now, Charles, you first.)

*Charles*: I'm master here, and I'll have no cheek from nobody.

*Sarah*: You started it, talking about getting rid of Mester James and me and Tom, and going and chopping the old yew down.

*Charles*: I shall do just what I like. I'm master. *Uncle William*: How do you know you're master?

*Bones*: Ay!

*Sarah*: Ah!

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*Charles*: I know right enough. There's no Will, and everything's mine.

*James*: It's a poor lookout for me, then, Uncle.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Uncle William*: That's what I've come to talk about.

*Charles (arrogantly)*: You can talk, all of you, but to ease your minds I'll tell you that Father said he was leaving the dividing of the property in my hands as the eldest. *(All look aghast, except Uncle William.)* So that's all there is about it!

*Uncle William*: Have you done, *Charles*?

*Charles*: Yes, I have.

*Uncle William*: Then I'll begin. *(Unbuttoning his coat, he draws a long, sealed envelope from an inner pocket.)* I'll now read your Father's Will.

*Charles*: What's that?

*James*: I felt sure there was one.

*(Bones and Sarah midge each other.)*

*Charles*: How came you to have it — all this time?

*Uncle William*: I am Executor *(He pauses to let this sink in.)* Your Father gave me this Will just before Christmas, when he began to feel he wasn't going to get better, and he charged me to say nothing about it to any one until after the funeral. *(He glances at Charles.)* He said he didn't want to have any wrangling over his dead body.

*Charles*: Well! It makes no difference. I've told you what's in it. *(He looks at Bones and Sarah, and indicates by a jerk of his head that they are both to leave. They turn to go.)*

*Uncle William*: No! You both stop here.

*Charles*: I'm not going to have servants listening to my private affairs.

*Uncle William (blandly)*: They're mentioned in the Will.

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*Charles (staggered)*: Oh!... But they needn't hear it all.

*Uncle William*: They've as much right to hear it all as you have.

*Charles (sulkily)*: Let's have it then.

*Uncle William*: All in good time. *(He takes his glasses out of their case and puts them on.)* When you're my age and weight, my lad, you won't hurry. *(He breaks open the seal, draws the Will out of its envelope, and begins to read.)* "This is the Will

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

of me, Ernest Elmitt, farmer, of Pantacks. Squire Harbord has been kind enough to say that my sons may carry on the two farms, so I leave all my property to be divided by my eldest son, Charles, according to the instructions below. There is the live and dead stock and implements for 386 acres at the Grange Farm, and the live and dead stock and implements for 293 acres at the Dovecote Farm, the money at the Old County Bank at Bly, the furniture at the Grange, and anything else that may belong to me at my death. Lastly, my pedigree bull, Brutus, who will make anybody's fortune if taken care of. (*Bones nods his head so violently that Sarah has to restrain him.*) Whichever of my sons takes the Dovecote shall pay to my faithful foreman, Tom Bones, the sum of One hundred pounds whenever he leaves, and whichever takes the Grange shall do the same for my faithful servant, Sarah Tinsley. But I hope neither of them will go as long as they live. (James quietly pats Sarah on the back.) All my property mentioned above is to be divided by my son Charles into two lists, and — (*Uncle William pauses dramatically*) and my son James shall have the first pick.”

*Charles:* I don't believe a word of it. Father told

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me different. He said I was to divide things up just as I liked.

*Uncle William:* So you do! It says so, doesn't it?

*Charles (overtaxed):* Oh!... That's all right, then.

*Uncle William:* Let me finish. “These lists shall be signed by both my sons and handed to William Smithson, my wife's brother. I have appointed William to be my Executor, and leave to him the sum of Twenty-five pounds and Grandfather Abraham's brass tobacco box. Signed at Bly in the presence of Arthur Dickinson, lawyer's clerk, and Samuel Lupton, lawyer's clerk. — Ernest Elmitt.”

*Charles:* That Will was never drawn by a lawyer, and I don't believe it will hold water. I'm the eldest son, and I know what Father told me.

*Uncle William:* Your father wrote that Will himself, Charles, and took it to Lawyer White for him to look it over. Lawyer White, of course, wanted to put it in long legal words, but your father wouldn't have that. He said he wanted it to be his own

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

words in his own writing, so as there could be no wrangling about what he meant. I'll pay you your proper fee, he says to Lawyer White, for making my Will, but I don't want it altering unless there's anything in it as isn't water-tight. Lawyer White conned it over and owned — at the finish — as it was a good Will, and it wouldn't profit any one to try and upset it.

*Bones:* You take Brutus, Mester James.

*Charles (venting his rage on Bones):* Clear out! I'll sack you!

*Uncle William:* So you're taking the Dovecote, are you?

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*Charles:* What do you mean?

*Uncle William:* Bones goes with the Dovecote. If you take that, you can sack him all right, so long as you pay him his hundred pounds.

*Sarah:* So you'd no right to have that old yew cut down, after all!

*Charles (in a fighting rage):* Who asked you to speak, you vixen?

*Sarah:* You're not my mester, thank goodness!

*Charles:* I am mester, and I'll sack you as well.

*Uncle William:* Then it's the Grange you're going to have, is it? (*Charles looks puzzled.*) You can't very well sack *Sarah* unless you take the Grange.

*Sarah:* And give me my hundred pounds.

(*Charles by this time is completely befogged; and looks it. The others laugh at his predicament.*)

*Charles:* It's a lot of rot, and I'm damned if I'm going to stand it. You can all go —

*Uncle William (interrupting him sharply):* That's enough, Charles, I won't have it.

*Charles:* Oh, won't you?

*Uncle William:* No, I won't! I'm master here at present.

*Charles:* Oh, no, you're not!

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*Uncle William*: Yes, I am. I'm executor, and I'm going to execute without fear or favour; so let's get to business. You make your two lists out. (*James has whispered in Sarah's ear, and she now produces a packet of writing paper, a pen, and a bottle of ink, which she puts on the table.*)

*Charles (sulkily)*: All right, then!

*Sarah*: You won't want us any more, Mester Smithson, shall you?

*Uncle William*: No, thank you, Sarah. (*He glances*

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*at the dresser, and Sarah, seeing the look, gives an exclamation of dismay, and fetches the tray of refreshments from the dresser.*) Get out two more glasses, Sarah.

(*Whilst Sarah fetches these, James reaches down the oval tobacco box from the mantelpiece, and gives it to Uncle William, who looks at it affectionately and drops it in his coat pocket. He then pours sherry into the five glasses, and they all drink. Sarah then goes out.*)

*Charles (to Bones, who is following Sarah)*: Just hang about a few minutes, Bones; I may want to know something about the stock. (*Bones nods shortly, and goes out, muttering to himself about the old hull wanting him.*)

*Uncle William (to Charles, who is sitting on the left of the table, sucking the end of his pen)*: Come along, Charles. We're waiting.

*Charles*: How can I, with you both staring at me like stuck rats! (*He scratches his head, licks the pen nib, writes something on one of the two sheets of paper in front of him; then looks up.*) You wouldn't want the biggest house to live in, Jimmy. (*James says nothing to this.*) If the two farms were the same size, it would be easy. (*Irritably*) Say something, can't you?

*James*: There's nothing for me to say. You make your lists out, and I'll take which I want.

*Uncle William (taking more sherry)*: That's it. Make the lists out, Charles.

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*(Charles scratches his head again, gives the pen another dip in the ink, then stares hopelessly at the paper. As*

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*this doesn't get him any further, he turns in his chair and shouts " Bones." Bones comes in unwillingly, still muttering about the bull.)*

*Charles:* How many sheep are there in the far field by Isaac Cheetham's?

*Bones:* There's 87 in the grass field, and 93 in the fallows, but one of them died yesterday, and I aren't sure but what we shan't lose another before the day's done. That's the worst of sheep! Give me a good bull, I say. *(Charles writes, whilst Bones speaks in a hoarse whisper to James.)*

*Bones:* You pick the old bull, Mester James.

*James (hushing him):* We'll see, Tom.

*Bones (refusing to be hushed):* I'm all for bulls, I am.

*Charles:* Which of the farms does that new Yankee binder go with?

*Bones:* Sometimes one, and sometimes t'other.

*Charles:* Yes, but which of 'em does it *belong* to?

*Bones:* This year we had her first at the Grange; last year she was first at the Dovecote, and the year afore that we lent her first to George Baldock.

*Charles (throwing down his pen and rising):* How the devil can I put everything down on two lists! *(He stares angrily at the others; then reseats himself, takes two fresh sheets of paper, and scribbles hastily on the top of each.)* That's it. Here you are, Jimmy! *(He offers one of the papers to James, who takes it.)* I stop here in the Grange and keep Brutus, while you go to the Dovecote.

*Uncle William:* Have you put that on your lists, Charles? *(Charles nods.)* Then let's have a look at them. *(James hands his to Uncle William promptly,*

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and Charles does the same reluctantly. Uncle William examines the lists in turn, reading out, "The Dovecote Farm and all that goes with it;" and " the Grange Farm and all that goes with it, including the pedigree bull, Brutus.") That's your two lists, is it?

*Charles:* Yes!

*Uncle William:* Very well, then: James, you have the first pick.

*Charles (hastily):* Oh, no, he doesn't! He takes what I offer him.

*Uncle William (firmly):* James has the first pick.

*Charles:* He isn't going to have the Grange, nor yet Brutus.

*Uncle William:* He is, if he picks them.

*Charles:* Then I shall put Brutus on the Dovecote list.

*James (promptly):* Then I can pick the Dovecote.

*Charles (snatching up both lists):* You won't!

*Uncle William:* That's what the Will says, Charles — he has the first pick.

*Bones (unable to restrain himself):* Stick to the old bull, Mester James, and he'll stick to you. He's a good 'un.

*Sarah (who is now standing in the doorway, taking a step forward and pulling at Bones' s smock):* Be quiet!

*Bones:* I'm all for bulls, I am.

*Uncle William (rapping on the table):* This won't do! Charles, you must offer James the choice, according to the Will, and then abide by it.

*Charles (as the full horror of the situation dawns upon him):* Do you mean to say that, however I draw the lists up, Jimmy can pick which he likes?

*Uncle William:* That's what the Will says.

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*Charles:* Well, I'm damned! (*He sits down again, and presently begins to make two fresh lists.*)



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*Bones*: Don't you let old Brutus go, Mester James. (*Sarah tries to keep him quiet.*) But it's the old bull.

*Sarah*: It's the old goat, I think — you and your whiskers!

*Bones*: He's worth his weight in gold. You don't know that old bull, or you'd talk different. (*A voice is heard outside, calling urgently for "Mester Bones." Tom, hearing this, turns and hurries out into the yard.*)

*Charles* (*putting down his pen with an air of relief*): There you are! I've done 'em!

*Uncle William*: And are you prepared to abide by them?

*Charles*: Yes!

*Uncle William*: Then, James, you look at them carefully and make your choice. (*James leans over Charles's shoulder to look at the two lists. Charles's hand is resting casually on the bottom of one of the sheets, and when James tries to get it away, Charles holds it down.*)

*James*: I want to see what's at the bottom of that.

*Uncle William* (*very sharply*): Now then, Charles.

*James* (*taking it up as Charles releases it*): I thought so! He was hiding Brutus. I'll have this list.

*Charles* (*snatching it from him*): Oh, no, you won't!

*Uncle William* (*speaking in his sternest and most formidable manner*): Charles, you're behaving like a child, and I'm not going to stop here all the morning to be made a fool of. Do you think we're all idiots?

*Charles* (*in despair*): I can't make any more lists out. Jimmy, you take the Grange, and I'll take the Dovecote and Brutus. That's as fair as I can do.

*James*: Well — that's the fairest offer we've had yet.

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*Uncle William*: Let's see it down on paper. (*Charles writes again on two fresh sheets and hands them to James.*)

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*James:* Yes, I think that's about fair. (*He considers for a moment; then turns to Uncle William*): I'll stop here in the Grange.

*Charles:* And I go to the Dovecote and take Brutus.

*Uncle William:* I suppose you do know, James, that Colishaw Bell offered your father six hundred and seventy guineas for Brutus, at Holt Foal Fair last September?

*James:* I was there with Father — but I'd like to stop in the old home.

*Uncle William:* Very well, then. Are you both agreed on that?

*James:* Yes, Uncle. (*Charles nods.*)

*Uncle William:* Well... I don't think you could have done it much evener, taking everything all round. Now you must both sign your names underneath these lists, and Sarah and I'll witness the signatures. (*All sign. Uncle William folds up the two lists and puts them with the Will into the envelope.*) Now I must turn it all over to Lawyer White.

*James (to Sarah):* Won't poor old Tom be disappointed?

*Sarah:* I'm very thankful as you've got the old home, Mester James.

*Uncle William:* I must get off to Bly (*the door bursts open and Bones waddles in from the yard at top speed, the picture of consternation.*)

*Bones:* The old bull, the old bull! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! The old bull! All: What? What's the matter? What is it?

*Bones:* When I went out to him, he just raised one horn in the air, as much as to say good-bye, then

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shut his eyes. Now he lays yonder with his tail straight out, and never a breath in his body. I never ought to have left him. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What would the old Mester have said?

*Charles:* That alters everything. Give me the lists back. (*He tries to snatch the envelope.*)

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*Uncle William* (holding him off, and tucking the envelope away into his inner pocket): Oh, no, my boy! (*He buttons up his coat.*) When you'd signed the lists, you both stood at your own risk. You can't change any more.

*Sarah*: Cutting down that old yew hasn't brought you any luck, Mester Charles.

*Bones* (*speaking sadly and slowly*): There wasn't another bull like him nowhere. We shall never see his likes again.

CURTAIN.

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VNiVERSITAS  
STVDII  
SALAMANTINI

BONFIRE NIGHT

A Dramatic Episode in Three Scenes

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PREFACE TO *BONFIRE NIGHT*

*Extract from County Directory*

SOUTH WINCH, *village* (610 inhabitants), on River Bark. Winch Brook rises here. Winch Common. Church — St. Benedict. Rector — Rev. T. Underwood. Wesleyan Chapel. Primitive Methodist Chapel, "Fox and Hounds" Inn (J. Jolly). "Star" Inn (Sam Meek). "Three Gleaners" Inn (Mrs. F. Love).

THE worsting of the "mean" man by natural events is a favourite story in all villages. He is not outmanoeuvred by somebody else, because that could only be done by one meaner and more cunning than himself (who would then supplant him), and, moreover, the mean man doesn't expose himself to the mischances that befall his fellows. It is in the taking of no risks that his success lies, and the innumerable tales told, at his expense, picture him as being "done" by the irony of fate.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

The "mean" man of the English village must not be taken for a miser, who is a town product and hoards coin; for he doesn't finish any better off than he begins; he merely conserves, with meticulous care, that which is handed to him by his parents. He is not so unlike his fellows as to be called abnormal, but he carries the habit of "carefulness" to an altogether higher pitch than they, and is apt to make an art of it. He is always a farmer, because the rest of the

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rural community are dependent upon the goodwill of their fellows.

Habit and temperament mark us for their own by middle-age, and the "mean" man is almost invariably thin, small, and wizened. There are close lines about his eyes and mouth, and his voice is thin and piping. The "mean" man of South Winch, therefore, needs no further description than that his name is Henry Caudle, and that he is known everywhere as "Cheap" Henry.

The other protagonist, Eli Baker, is postmaster and storekeeper. Eli is a big, well-nourished man, fond of everything good to eat and drink. Of a bustling disposition, he takes the leading part in all communal affairs, and considers himself the uncrowned king of the place.

South Winch is partly in the Fens, and partly in the high land, and the village itself stands well up above the surrounding country. From the top of Winch Hill, by the windmill, a splendid view is obtained of the Fens. This hill — the scene of the play — is in Winch Common, notable as being the only one in that part of the country to escape the Enclosure Acts. History merely mentions that the South Winch Act was withdrawn, but does not state that it was owing to a quarrel, two centuries old, between the great feudal families of Kyme and Cowsley, whose estates meet here.

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SCENE I

'Twas Coronation Day!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Down in South Winch was noise and bustle;

The oldest folk got in a hustle,

Tumbling in each other's way.

One week ago in solemn talk,

Like geese around a cabbage stalk

Our elders gathered, firmly bent

To dignify the great event;

Some wanted lamps by night to blaze,

Some hankered monuments to raise,

Others were for a peal of bells,

Or dreamed of temperance hotels.

But Eli Baker firmly rose,

With ruddy cheeks and purple nose,

Amid that hubble-bubble crew,

Declaring lamps would never do

'Coz them what left the pubs at night

Would rather manage wi'out a light;

And all the other cranks, he said,

They wanted standing on their head;

If 'twas to be a day of joy,

Then let 'em feast, both man and boy:

Beef and ale!

That's the tale!

Beef by the round and beer by the pail!

The labourers shouted and threw up their hats,

Whilst the Blue-ribbons stared at each other like rats,

Declaring as they shouldn't never agree

To the taking of anything stronger than tea;

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

But when it was over they settled it fair  
That each one should have what he wanted — or dare —  
And so on this day of all days in the year  
We was jolly and happy and full of good cheer,  
Including that marvel to all of his neighbours —  
What never had rested before from his labours —  
What never was known for to chatter or dawdle —  
You know who I mean — “Cheap” Henry Caudle.  
He took the prizes everywhere —  
The meanest man in all the Shire —  
Even that caution, “Close” Dick Wray,  
Could learn from Henry any day;  
“Close” Dick it was that fitted stock  
With spectacles of greenish glass,  
Then gave 'em straw, the artful cock,  
Them thinking they was eating grass.  
Of all the mean 'uns in the land  
Our Henry was the master-hand;  
(As for “Careful” Watson of Carrington Mill,  
Our Henry left him standing still.)  
He'd never smiled nor joked afore,  
His face was like a cellar door,  
His legs were thin, his lips as well,  
His clothes they hung... they nearly fell:  
But now he fairly opened out,  
He laughed and talked and jumped about.  
Till all the folk were fair perplexed  
And wondered what would happen next.

SCENE II

The day wore on as it begun

*Rural Plays (1922)*

With sports and games and heaps of fun;

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The oldest women could be seen  
A-dancing on the village green;  
The band was there with merry jig,  
While Sailor Barlow won a pig  
By climbing up the greasy mast —  
He fell and fell, but won at last.  
The beef was good, the beer was prime,  
We'd never had so grand a time;  
And when the dusk began to fold  
Then everybody, young and old,  
Drew up towards Joe Bristow's Mill  
Above the village, on the hill:  
The highest point of ground by far,  
Where, round a barrel full of tar,  
The straw and wood were piled on high,  
Ready to leap across the sky.  
The dusk crept up without a sound,  
And owls were screeching all around,  
As, standing with a ready match,  
“Cheap” Henry, studying his watch,  
Had pushed himself to be the first,  
While Eh Baker, fit to burst,  
Was shoved into the second row;  
Poor chap! He simply had to go,  
For Henry stood the king contest,  
And all, astonished, gave him best  
To see him so transmogrified:



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

He glared about with awful pride  
Upon the neighbours gaping round,  
Who stared at him without a sound.  
He saw the village down below,  
His stacks all lying in a row  
(His farm was close beside the Mill:  
No floods could touch him on that hill);

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His pride was awful to behold,  
It turned poor Eli Baker cold....  
The hour came — he closed his watch  
And, with a flourish, struck the match.  
Across the dark from place to place  
The fires were spreading soon apace,  
Until we saw the encircling night  
With winking points of flame alight;  
Across the Fen, along the Wold,  
That fiery signal swiftly rolled;  
It flashed across the Gulland Flats  
From Ouseley Village to Tanvats;  
It climbed along the Gulland's ridge  
Through Barnet, Churt, and Worlby Bridge;  
Thence o'er the lonely moors to race,  
From Carrington to Stow apace;  
Around, about it flew, until  
It finished up on Real's high hill.  
We stood upon a point of ground  
Higher than anything around;  
“We beat 'em all, we lick the lot,”

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Said Henry, getting rather hot;

“We larn 'em how, a-course we do,

“As good as any other two.”

He rushed about, he plied his rake,

He shouted for the dead to wake,

And when he spied a sturdy boy

Who carried in his arms with joy

A faggot, for to feed the beacon,

Said he, as solemn as a deacon,

“Come, lads, you do as he's begun,

And there's a penny for every one.”

The boys ran off, and soon returned

Like laden bees; the faggots burned;

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While all the neighbours, hushed and still,

Saw miracles upon that hill

As Henry gave his pence away:

A sight for Coronation day!

A thing enough to raise the dead!

His nephew cried, “You're off your head,”

But Henry didn't care a bit;

“Come on, my boys, we'll give 'em it,

We'll show 'em how, we'll top the lot,

And make a blaze to cook their pot.”

They did!

They did!

The stars were hid!

That bonfire blazed and flamed away

Until the night was turned to day,

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Till all the other fires about  
Were clean out-faced and dwindled out;  
And when they all was dead and still  
Ours flared away beside the Mill,  
Whose shadow, jumping on the ground,  
Showed sails that moved, but never round;  
And when, at last, we left to sup,  
Still Henry raked the ashes up,  
Whilst all the neighbours, fairly dazed,  
Could talk of nought but Henry — crazed.

SCENE III

Uprising, with a dreadful yawn,  
“Cheap” Henry scrambled out at dawn  
To see his men were prompt at work,  
Afraid as some of them might shirk.  
Like one who's had a fearful dream

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And wakes remindful of his scream,  
He had a vague idea of horror,  
But couldn't guess on that to-morrow  
What could have clouded him with sadness,  
His memory flitted with his madness;  
He only knew that something wrong  
Had overcome his head — so strong —  
And straight into his yard he sped;  
Then, all at once, he stopped like dead.  
His stack of firewood, gathered prime.  
Provision for the winter-time,

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Each faggot neatly trimmed and tied,  
Carefully laid and tinder-dried,  
A sight for sluggards lacking care,  
A lesson clear...  
Oh, Heaven! Where?  
He blinked his eyes —  
It wasn't there!

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TO ARMS!  
A Play in One Act

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TO ARMS!  
*Extract from County Directory*

HIGH MORTON, village (482 inhabitants) on the River Kyme, a tributary of the Brent. Church — All Saints. Vicar — Rev. G. Walker. Primitive Methodist Chapel. "White Hart" Inn (H. Grigsby). "Load of Hay" Inn (Williamson Hardy). Morton Heath lies S. of the village, and is noted for its ironstone deposits. A light railway runs from the Heath Quarry to Winch Station.

*(The play takes place one Saturday afternoon at the end of September, 1914, in the cottage of Eli Cooper, at High Morton. All the land in and around High Morton belongs to the Marquis of Cowsley, except certain dwellings in the village owned by Jeffrey Willows, a Liberal shopkeeper. Eli lives in one of these, and was joined about a year ago by Jack Cooper, his newly married grandson. In spite of its smallness, Jack and his wife are very glad to live with the old man, because housing is a terrible problem. Deposits of ironstone have been discovered on Morton Heath, where they are*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*being developed by the Morton Ironstone Company, who have built a light railway to Winch Station. The Marquis of Cowsley gave a lease to the Company without reflection, and would now do almost anything to cancel it, despite the increasing revenue that it brings him. Besides upsetting the farmers, the Quarries disturb the*

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*rural workers politically. At the last election Cyril Tunny only just held the seat for the Conservatives against the Liberal candidate, Robert Morley. The letting of cottages, therefore, to men who work in the Quarries has been stopped, not only by the Marquis, but by Lord Kyme, whose estate meets that of the Marquis here.*

*Eli's cottage dates from the beginning of things. Not only is it immeasurably ancient, but, owing to the facts that it has no garden; that if it fell down no modern dwelling could be raised on its tiny site; and that, under local conditions, not another inch of ground is obtainable, this venerable relic is patched and propped in every conceivable way. Its walls are a mixture of clay, mud, and pebbles, with beams appearing here and there. The ground floor consists of one large room, with a door on the right from the street, one on the left into a lean-to scullery, and a small window to the left of the street door. There is a step-ladder on the left, passing through a hole in the ceiling. The floor is of much worn brick, whilst the fireplace is not a fireplace at all in any modern sense of the word. Peat is burning on the brick floor close to the wall at the back of the cottage, and the chimney opens itself above to receive the smoke, being stepped out from below on either side, and becoming a chimney proper four feet from the ground. The walls and ceiling are very much discoloured with smoke, as might be expected from the primitive fireplace. There is no fender or hearth, but loose bricks form a rough kerb around the smouldering peat, over which hangs a three-legged iron pot.*

*Eli is sitting in a wooden arm-chair on the left of the hearth, smoking a clay pipe, whilst Jack's wife, Nancy, is stooping over an old wooden cradle on his*

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**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)**

*left. There is a small table folded away under the stepladder, two rush-bottomed chairs, an old-fashioned chest of drawers between the window and the street door, a corner cupboard behind the arm-chair, and a dresser in the right-hand corner. A clothes-horse stands on the extreme right of the fire, hung with tiny garments.*

*Eli Cooper is a widower of seventy-nine, tall and wonderfully vigorous for his age, but bent with a life-time's toil. He has snow-white hair, and brown eyes, and his long beard gives him a patriarchal appearance. Nancy is about twenty, and Robin, her baby boy, is four months old.)*

*Nancy:* Jack's a long time. I do wish he'd come back.

*Eli:* I ain't seen him since dinner. *(A drum is heard in the distance.)* What's yon?

*Nancy:* It's the Club Feast. The Foresters are marching round with the band from Topham, Grandad.

*Eli:* Many's the time as I've marched in front of 'em; me and Tom Taylor carrying the great banner. A strange weight it was and all, when there was a wind. *(He beats time to the drum.)* Tom always gave me the heaviest end.

*Nancy:* You'll hear the band directly: I hope it won't wake baby.

*Eli:* It gets in your blood, a drum does. You've never heard a band blaring forth when the soldiers is marching past, and the drums — the drums — *(he beats time)*.

*Nancy (crossing to the window):* I do wish he'd come back. I don't feel a bit easy about him.

*Eli:* Mrs. Williamson said when she left the milk

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as how she'd heard in the village as the Kayser had fell off horseback and broke his neck.

*Nancy:* I only hope he has, and then this war would soon stop.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Eli:* Tchah! What's the Kayser?

*Nancy:* He's the worst man that ever lived; that's what he is.

*Eli:* Twenty thousand Kaysers rolled in a heap could never come anigh of Boney.

*Nancy:* You never *saw* him, did you?

*Eli:* Of course not! But Father used to talk about him. He always said as if Boney had been English born, he'd a led the poor against the rich, and then they wouldn't never have enclosed our Commons.

*Nancy:* It's you as Jack gets his ideas from, Grandad. (*She looks out of the window again.*)

*Eli:* And my father and grandfather before me.

*Nancy:* It was being in that foundry at Bly amongst them socialists as made him so violent.

*Eli:* That's being shut away from the sun. What can you expect from fellows that never see the sun all day?

*Nancy:* If he doesn't come back directly, I'm going out to look for him. It's this meeting I'm so nervous about.

*Eli:* What meeting?

*Nancy:* The Marquis's Agent's coming with Mr. Morley and Mr. Bell to talk to the Foresters in the paddock behind the "Load of Hay," to get them to enlist; and I'm afraid that Jack may say something rash.

*Eli:* He doesn't hold with it, no more than me.

*Nancy:* All the men at the Quarries think so much of Jack. They'll do anything he tells them, and I'm

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afraid he'll say something that'll get him into trouble. Constable Ellis was talking to him when he went out this morning.

*Eli:* If he goes to jail, it'll only be following his family.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Nancy:* If he would keep himself to himself, it would be all right; but he won't, and that leads to trouble.

*Eli:* That it does, lass. Nobody knows better'n me, what's been in jail for the very same thing. They hadn't no mercy on the poor in my young days. All my life I've been put on because I wouldn't keep my mouth shut.

*Nancy:* I don't want Jack in jail. If you tell him to keep quiet. Grandad, he will. He takes notice of nobody else. *(The street door opens, and Jack Cooper enters, looking very like a gipsy with his swarthy complexion, thick curly black hair, and large brown eyes. He has always been a restless lad. When he was seven-teen he went to the Bly Wagon Works, but as soon as the Quarries were opened, he returned home to Morton, and now holds a good position on the light railway.)*

*Nancy (kissing him):* What a long time you've been.

*Eli:* Any news, lad?

*Jack:* Not a deal; and what there is, is mostly lies. *(Through the open door comes the sound of the band playing "Rule Britannia.")* Never shall be slaves! *(He closes the door.)* What are we, then?

*Eli:* You see, lad, all them as meant being free went to America.

*Jack:* It's Australia now. *(He lights his pipe.)* All this yapping makes me sick! Never shall be slaves, indeed! We sweat our lives away without any

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pleasure except seeing Robert Morley, Esquire, in his fine motor and his fur coat! It's all right for him, and Colishaw Bell, and our Marquis: they're rolling in money, and ready enough to run all over the county, getting us fellows to go and fight for their property, their country: 'coz it is theirs, isn't it? Doesn't a few hundreds of 'em own England?

*Eli:* You're no good in this country, boy. The sooner you're out of it the better.

*Jack:* And I'm going as soon as I can get, for I can't breathe here. Enlist! If I went and got shot, defending that Morley's property, what would happen to Nancy and the kid?

*Eli:* The workhouse.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jack:* Mean, mean, mean as muck!

*Eli:* They always has been. You clear off as soon as you can. All my mates went, as were any good.

*Jack:* They might have stopped here and freed this country instead.

*Eli:* The rich is over-strong here, boy. Their roots goes too far in the soil, and there's no moving 'em. That's why all the working men is slaves.

*Jack:* Didn't they ever fight?

*Eli (aroused):* We had a song we used to sing at our meetings as stirred your blood like a drum. *(He repeats with great fire)* "When wilt Thou save Thy people, Lord God of battles, when?"

*Jack:* A lot of good that was!

*Eli:* "The people, Lord, the people; not thrones nor arms, but men." How we used to shout that!

*Jack:* And what came of it?

*Eli:* There was times when we carried all before

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us. When I was working in Northampton, we had that giant Bradlaugh. Like a Hon he was, and what a voice! We would-a died for him.

*Jack:* And what came of it?

*Eli (sadly):* Nothing!

*Jack:* I thought so! All talk!

*Eli:* The rich is over-strong, boy.

*Jack:* I'd as leave fight against them as the Germans any day.

*Eli:* You'll most certainly end in jail. You're aiming straight for it, same as I did. *(He rises from his chair and goes upstairs.)*

*Nancy (who has been sitting by the cradle darning socks, now coming forward):* You will be careful what you say. Jack, won't you?

*Jack:* I'll be careful to say what I mean.

*Nancy:* And then they'll lock you up, and you'll lose your job.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jack:* Let 'em!

*Nancy:* Remember, you've got a family now.

*Jack:* That's not going to make me a slave.

*Nancy:* If we go to Australia, you can do as you like; but if you get into trouble here, I don't know what would become of us. Baby's not old enough for me to go out to work, yet.

*Jack:* All our chaps is waiting to see what I'm going to do.

*Nancy:* What did Ellis say to you this morning?

*Jack:* Nothing much!

*Nancy:* Was he warning you?

*Jack:* That rotten little Edmund Bell's been talking about me. Ellis is fair enough, mind you; but young Bell and that old bully, his dad, and the Marquis's Agent all run together in a pack. They

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reckon if they can get me to enlist, all the other chaps will follow.

*Nancy:* Well, so they would, wouldn't they?

*Jack:* That's just why I shan't.

*Nancy:* So long as you don't say anything out there, they can't meddle with you, can they?

*Jack:* They're beginning to say I'm a coward, because I won't 'list, but I'll show 'em who's the coward.

*Eli (coming downstairs):* You're following in your grandfather's footsteps.

*Nancy (holding his arm):* Jack! Promise me you won't get yourself into trouble.

*Jack:* I can't promise you that, Nancy. If they think they're going to put on me, let 'em try, that's all! (*A knock at the door startles them.*)

*Nancy (terrified):* That's the policeman!

*Jack (defiantly):* Who's there?

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*(The door opens, and a beautifully dressed gentleman enters the cottage. Robert Morley is a Jew millionaire soap manufacturer. His grandfather, Moses, came over from Germany with a vast knowledge of chemistry; his father, Samuel, with incredible industry, built up an enormous business; and Robert, at thirty-nine, is a worthy descendant of his ancestors. He bought Stow Park because it was cheap, meaning to use it for a time and sell it again; despising his compatriots who tried to creep into society. But environment is having its effect, and his foot is on the ladder which will carry him into the House of Lords. Even now, he is much nearer a baronetcy than he realises. He is a formidable opponent to the Cowsleys and Kymes over the Quarries, but when he has bought more land, and his sons and*

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*daughters are thinking of getting married, the game will be up. He will find himself a grandfather to young aristocrats and will be completely absorbed into the Feudal System.)*

*Jack (to Nancy): It's Morley.*

*Morley: May I come in?*

*Jack: Yes. Grandad, this is Mr. Morley from Stow Park. (Eli nods to the newcomer.)*

*Morley (looking at Jack): Mr. John Cooper, I believe. You work at the Quarries, don't you?*

*Jack: That's right — on the railway.*

*Morley (to Eli): I dropped in, Mr. Cooper, on my way to the recruiting meeting this afternoon*

*Eli: Then sit down.*

*Morley (glancing at the chairs, and deciding that they are too dusty): Thank you, I'd rather stand. (He places his case behind the door.)*

*Eli: And what's your business here, Mr. Morley?*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Morley:* I really called to see your grandson, who has such great influence amongst the workers at the Quarries with which I have the honour to be connected.

*Jack:* You mean you own 'em.

*Morley:* Far from that, Mr. Cooper, far from that: they are owned, like everything else round here, by the Marquis of Cowsley.

*Jack:* What? But he's against 'em. Everybody says so.

*Morley:* We lease the ground from the Marquis, and he draws a royalty for every ton that comes out.

*Jack:* Well, I'm damned!

*Eli:* Ah! Them landowners: they draw their toll without a stroke of work!

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*Jack:* They're like all capitalists, eh, Mr. Morley?

*Morley:* The subject of land tenure is one on which my views are well known.

*Eli:* It's well known as you bought Stow Park from Lord Hardeville.

*Jack:* And you won't deny you're chairman of the Quarries?

*Morley:* I am one of a number interested in the development of the neighbourhood, especially when so much local —

*(The street door is flung open; a loud voice calls "Anybody at home?" and a farmer steps inside.)*

*Colishaw Bell, J. P., Alderman and Gulland Commissioner, is a great farmer living in Stony Potton. He is a large, stout man, getting on for sixty, with full eyes, a close-cropped heard, a brisk manner, and a loud voice. He is dressed in a Norfolk Jacket, riding breeches, and leggings, and a flat tweed cap.)*

*Nancy (aside to Jack):* Why, it's old Mr. Bell.

*Bell (catching sight of Morley):* Oh! I'll look in later.

*Eli:* Step in, Mr. Bell.

*Morley:* Yes, don't go, don't go!

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bell*: I dare say we're both on the same errand, from what Edmund says. Keeping all right, Eli?

*Eli*: Yes, thankye! Sit down.

*(Bell sits on the nearest chair, regardless of dust. Nancy, with an exclamation of dismay, takes a jug from the dresser and hurries out of the street door.)*

*Morley*: Go on, Mr. Bell: it's your turn.

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*Bell*: No, no! You get on with the good work. You're more used to talking than me.

*Morley*: We've never spoken from the same platform before, have we?

*Bell*: I should say not indeed!

*Morley (speaking rapidly and suavely)*: I was telling Mr. Cooper that nothing matters now, except this terrible war into which we have been forced. *(Bell nods his head approvingly.)* We want — I speak after consultation with Captain Wilfred Coote — we want to get the largest possible recruitment from this neighbourhood, and felt that if you *(looking at Eli)* and your grandson would help by advice and example, there is no possible doubt but that the great influence which you are both acknowledged to exert, would have the utmost effect.

*Eli (baffled by Oriental fluency)*: What does he want, Jack?

*Jack*: He wants me to enlist, and you to make a speech.

*Morley*: If you would join us on the platform, and if your grandson would announce his intention of enlisting, there are, I am told, nearly a hundred young fellows — most of whom work in the Quarries

*Bell*: Yes, blast 'em! Only the old and the cripples go on the land now.

*Morley (continuing)*: They look on you as their leader *(turning to Jack)*, and with your undoubted excellent

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*Jack:* Stow all that! It's no go! I'm not going to fight for your property, and that's all there is about it.

*Morley:* What you hardly realise, Mr. Cooper, is that Labour stands and falls here with Capital.

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*Jack:* That's all rot! You told us all that at the Wagon Works.

*Morley:* Well, then — let us say, with the plant, buildings, and money of the shareholders. If the Germans land here, we have orders to blow up all our machinery at the Quarries, and wreck everything. Where does Labour stand then?

*Jack:* They'll never get here: our Navy'll stop 'em.

*Morley:* I've come straight from London, and I can tell you — in confidence — that there is nothing whatever to prevent a surprise landing, when a fearful amount of damage would be done. Things are difficult enough now: we had a great bother to get the cash for this week's wages for the Quarries. Business is going to be very awkward, and what we have to do is to get the war over as soon as possible. Who would have thought to see the day in England when banks didn't know whether they would cash your cheques or not. It cuts at the root of everything.

*Jack:* You've done your best to keep us fellows down; you've seen as we've never had any property to own; and now you want us to go and fight for your millions.

*Morley:* Every one will have to help — as he can. My health, alas, forbids my fighting, but my time and money I offer freely to the country.

*Jack:* How old are you?

*Morley:* I don't see

*Jack (interrupting sharply):* How old are you?

*Morley:* Thirty-nine.

*Jack:* And what's wrong with you?

*Morley:* I regret to say I am constitutionally

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

delicate. A long-standing nervous dyspeptic complaint has made —

*Jack (interrupting again):* I'll make you an offer. You say if I join up, there's a lot as will follow me.

*Morley:* So I am told.

*Jack:* So they will. I could get over a hundred in a week, and I'll do that — if you'll join at the same time.

*Morley:* What! In the ranks?

*Jack:* Anywhere you like, so long as you go to the Front and don't slive about at home. —

*Morley:* My health

*Jack:* Damn your health! There's nothing wrong with you but coddling.

*Morley:* I'm too old.

*Jack:* That's easy got over, they tell me.

*Morley:* You're hardly practicable, Mr. Cooper.

*Jack:* Yes or no?

*Morley:* It's out of the question. You don't realise what rests on my shoulders. How could you? (*He recovers himself.*) I was going to say that not only would your place be kept open for you at the Quarries, but that I would make up out of my own pocket the difference between your army pay and your present wages, and when you return

*Jack:* Clear out!

*Morley:* I don't quite understand your attitude.

*Jack (advancing towards him):* You will if you don't get out of this cottage.

(*Morley's hand is already on the latch, and at this, opening the door, he steps out, closing it quietly after him. No sooner has he gone than Bell bursts into loud laughter.*)

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bell*: That's rich, that was: you had him proper, the dirty Jew! They always funk when it comes to fighting. No guts, they haven't. Why doesn't he go back to London, instead of trying to set up here as a "gentleman"?

*Jack (grimly)*: He hasn't been told the truth for many a long day, I'll bet.

*Bell*: That he hasn't, and properly you did it. I only wish our Agent could have heard you.

*Jack*: Trying to bribe me! And talking about his health!

*Bell*: He's gone off with his tail between his legs! (*He lights a cigar, and stretches his legs out comfortably.*) But now — what about it?

*Jack*: About what?

*Bell (taking another cigar out of his vest pocket and holding it out to Jack, who refuses it)*: Of course, I think you treated that Jew turncoat quite right. Why, he's nothing but a German himself. But I'm not a German nor a Jew, nor yet a director at your Quarries — the devil seize 'em — and I don't think you'd ask me to march alongside you with a gun at my age. Not as I wouldn't, twenty years ago. I very nearly did join the Yeomanry in the Boer War, only my poor missis was almost at death's door; and it wasn't so urgent in them days. But this is different.

*Nancy (entering with a jug of milk)*: Mr. Morley says he's left his bag here. (*Sure enough, the attaché case is standing behind the door, forgotten in the hurried exit.*) I said I'd take it to him.

*Jack*: You'll do nothing of the kind.

*Bell*: I shouldn't keep it here, Jack. He'll say you've meddled with it. You let it go now — I can prove it's not been opened.

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*Nancy*: Yes, let me take it.

*Jack*: No, I'll take it myself. (*He goes out with the case.*)

*Bell (addressing himself earnestly to Eli)*: It's been all right, Eli, while we've been fighting niggers and Boers thousands of miles away; but now it's come to our very

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

door. All the farmers have been warned as they may have to clear out at a minute's notice.

*Eli:* Tchah!

*Bell (with great seriousness):* But they have, I tell you! On the word, we set off through Kyme and Gorbly, down the Spend Valley, driving our livestock along with us — if we can — and setting fire to everything we leave behind. It's serious.

*Eli:* It won't bother me a deal: I can carry most of my belongings with me.

*Bell:* You don't lay that to *my* door, do you?

*Eli:* Yes, I do!

*Bell (laughing):* And how do you make that out?

*Eli:* If you farmers paid your labourers a decent wage, you'd have less, and they'd have more.

*Bell (indignantly):* I've never paid less than anybody else.

*Eli:* You're all tarred with the same brush. *(An explosion is heard in the distance.)*

*Bell:* What's yon?

*Nancy:* It's only the Quarries.

*Bell:* I thought it was something else. I heard just now as the Germans had been bombarding Barkston; and they say they're expecting them to land on Sildyke Marsh. We don't want 'em here, do we?

*Eli:* Them as has property doesn't.

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*Bell:* Nor yet them as has babies. *(He glances at the cradle.)* They pick them up on their bayonets, and chuck 'em into the burning cottages just as if they was tossing hay. *(Nancy takes her baby out of the cradle and holds him in her arms. Bell, seeing that he has made a point, presses it home.)* Come, Eli, it's you as that lad takes notice of. At a word from you he'll join up, and all them stout young chaps from the Quarries will follow him.

*Eli:* And the farms?

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Bell:* I'm not going to keep any single chap in my employ another day. They'll have to join up, or take the sack. All the tenants on the Estate are agreed on that.

*Eli:* That means forcing 'em.

*Bell:* Certainly not! We shan't employ 'em, that's all. They won't get jobs anywhere else — we'll see to that. The young married fellows will come next: we can put pressure on them easier than we can on the single chaps.

*Eli:* Quite right, Mr. Bell: I know all about the pressure as you can bring to bear. I've been under it most of my life. Your Agent has tried more than once to get Willows to turn me out of this very cottage; only he happens to be the wrong colour, and doesn't look to your lot for his living.

*Bell:* I know nothing of that.

*Eli:* Remember who you're talking to. I know all about it.

*Bell:* You wouldn't rake up little things, now, Eli, when the Germans are at our very door. If my good word's any use, you shall have it, and the lad as well. I dare say we could easy arrange —

*Eli (sharply):* You needn't begin that. We didn't

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have it from Morley, and we don't want it from you. I'm not a fool!

*Bell:* But you're an Englishman.

*Eli:* You farm three thousand acres, Colishaw Bell. Your four sons all have farms as well; and they're all young. Your lad Edmund, here, at the Manor, is a fine stout young chap: is he going?

*Bell:* Oh, come, Eli! You know just as well as I do that farmers can't go. How could they? We can't have the land going to rack and ruin when every ounce of food'll be wanted.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*Eli:* Some of you seems to be able to find time to take fresh jobs on, in spite of all your land. I hear as you've been made Government horse buyer at two thousand a year.

*Bell:* Rubbish! It's less than a thousand.

*Eli:* I don't think less food 'ud be grown if your four lads joined up.

*Bell:* Come now, Eli; talk sense!

*Eli:* I will. If you'll send two of your four boys, I'll answer for it that my lad shall go as well.

*Bell (starting out of his chair very angrily):* I told the Agent you were a cross-hopped old devil; but he would have me come and see you. Do you think important businesses and farms can be stopped like that? Captain Coote has instructions from London that farmers are not to be hindered more than is absolutely necessary.

*Eli:* I've no doubt you'll all hang together to the bitter end. Anyway, I've said it: you send two of your four, and I'll send my only one: he's all I have left.

*Bell (in his most bullying tone):* Let me tell you

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this: if your lad doesn't join up, but goes on talking against recruiting — we've proof of it — he'll be locked up before this day's over. And what's more, you'll find yourself without a roof to your head. Willows has come to his senses at last.

*Eli (furiously):* It 'ud be a very good thing for all of us if the Germans did come and clear you out, you sweating, bullying coward.

*Bell (still more furiously):* You shall pay for this, you lying old devil!

*Nancy:* This village would be a lot safer for young girls if your Edmund did go to the war. He's worse than any German.

*Bell (exploding into hysterical rage, and yelling at the top of his powerful voice):* I'll have you up for slander, you lying little bitch! You and your damned husband and your doddering old fool of — *(As if shot in mid-air, when leaping on his prey. Bell stops short and collapses into a horrified silence. The unlatched front door*

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other**

**Rural Plays (1922)**

*has swung open, disclosing some one standing on the threshold. In the street is a motor-car with two servants in livery.)*

*The Stranger:* Mr. Cooper, I believe.

*Eli:* That's my name.

*The Stranger (stepping inside):* I don't think you know me, Mr. Cooper: my name is Cowsley. I was coming to a meeting in place of my nephew, who is suddenly prevented, and took the occasion of calling upon you first — if I may come in.

*Eli (rising):* Yes: sit down. (*Nancy hurriedly whisks a chair forward, which the Marquis takes from her hand, saying, "Allow me."*)

*The Marquis (to Eli):* Pray don't disturb yourself, Mr. Cooper.

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*(They both sit down on opposite sides of the fire. In the meantime, Bell, who hasn't uttered a sound since the Marquis appeared, edges quietly out of the door, and closes it after him. John Roderick Henry Torrington Walpole Berners, Marquis of Cowsley, aged seventy-nine, is by far the greatest landowner in this part of the country. His family is one of the oldest in the peerage. It would take too long to enumerate his titles and offices, but the shadow of his greatness stretches across the wolds and moors from Gorbly to Bly, and from Bly to Winkersfield. Tall and erect, with an aquiline nose, gray eyes, and silver hair, he is clearly the original of which Robert Morley is the imitation.)*

*Eli:* Have you come to threaten us like him (jerking his head contemptuously towards the street door), or bribe us like the Jew?

*The Marquis:* Neither, Mr. Cooper.

*Eli:* Then what brings you to my cottage, Marquis of Cowsley?

*The Marquis:* To talk with you for a few moments, if you will allow. (*Eli nods his head, and the two old men sit facing each other, presenting a striking contrast. The one is marked by his great courtesy, serenity, detachment, and taking for granted the condition of things in which he finds himself at the top, and every one in their due place.*

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

*The other stands for the dispossessed peasant; the class which, since the Enclosure of the Commons, has had the labours and duties of the Feudal System without its rights and privileges.)*

*The Marquis:* We are two old men, Mr. Cooper. In time of national danger, all must stand together.

*Eli:* It's easy for you to stand anywhere — you live in a palace.

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*The Marquis:* Where we are born is the affair of our ancestors.

*Eli:* My father was shot by one of your gamekeepers, and my grandfather was hanged by your grandfather — and his friends.

*The Marquis:* I'm afraid I don't follow you, Mr. Cooper.

*Eli:* My father was shot poaching — as they called it — on the very ground that your grandfather stole from the people of Caxton. My grandfather was hanged for agitating against one of you landowners getting an Act passed to take his home and living away from him.

*The Marquis:* That must have been in some other county, I presume.

*Eli:* Your grandfather stole the Commons away from over twenty villages round here, and you, Marquis of Cowsley, are rich and powerful because of that. As for me — I've been persecuted by you and yours all my life. What stake have I in this country?

*The Marquis:* As much as I or any other man. Flesh and blood are the greatest stake that any one can have. In time of war, all men are equal.

*Eli (fiercely):* Shall the children of the Spoiled fight for the children of the Spoiler?

*The Marquis:* There are wrongs in all countries, but when war breaks out, such questions must go into abeyance. A house divided within itself will surely fall.

*Eli:* Who are you sending to fight for your property?

*The Marquis:* My only son fell in the Boer War.

*Eli:* Taking the Boers' land from them!



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

*The Marquis*: You will hardly say that we are the

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aggressors this time, seeing that we have gone to war on behalf of Belgium, and have nothing to gain.

*Eli (stubbornly)*: Who have you sent to fight for your property?

*The Marquis*: My only grandson.

*Eli*: Ay! You landowners are ready to fight for your own — I'll give you your due: not like yon precious pair who came sneaking and blustering here, wanting my lad to defend 'em while they and their lads stopped at home and got richer. (*The Marquis bows his head, but says nothing.*) After a war, things is worse than ever. We fight for you, and you grudge us a pension.

*The Marquis*: We don't fight for ourselves, but for our country, Mr. Cooper.

*Eli*: My father taught me to fight oppression. His father taught him that; and they died as they lived.

*The Marquis*: My father taught me to do my duty. That was handed to him from his ancestors.

*Eli*: I've never bent my head to evil, nor bowed to any man.

*The Marquis*: I have bowed before the King, and am prepared to die as I have lived — in my place.

*Eli*: You stand for oppression.

*The Marquis*: I stand for England: each in his place, and a place for each.

*Eli*: Where is my place, then?

*The Marquis*: You have rebelled from birth.

*Eli*: But the rebels shall prevail, Marquis of Cowsley.

*The Marquis (rising)*: I can say no more, Mr. Cooper.

*Eli (also rising, and standing very straight)*: I'm

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*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

just as proud of my name and family as you. If my grandson's killed, there's no one left to carry on the name of Cooper — except that youngster. (*He nods at the baby in Nancy's arms.*)

*The Marquis:* My grandson was the only one left of my family, Mr. Cooper; and I have to-day heard of his death. He left no children. (*He goes out.*)

*Nancy:* Oh, Grandad!

*Eli:* I'm sorry I said what I did — now. Did you know?

*Nancy (shaking her head):* That'll be Major Roderick. Isn't it terrible? I don't know how he can have the heart to come to the meeting.

*Eli:* He wouldn't let anything stand in the way of his duty. (*He pauses.*) Girl! Jack'll have to go.

*Nancy:* I don't think he will.

*Eli:* Them two jackals'll think they've scared us into it, but I can't help that. We can't be outdone by him.

*Nancy:* If he doesn't 'list, I expect he'll go to jail. But how are you going to persuade him?

*Eli:* If he doesn't, I'll go myself to shame him. I can carry a gun yet. (*The door opens and Jack enters hurriedly, looking excited. A burst of cheering comes through the open door.*)

*Nancy:* Whatever's happening?

*Jack:* That Captain Coote's made a rare speech: straight from the shoulder. He said he's not going to stop here raising volunteers. He's off to the Front. (*Louder cheering is heard.*)

*Eli:* They're getting warmed up.

*Jack:* Ernest Wiles says seventeen joined up at Caxton yesterday, and Kimmy Brooks is swaggering yonder on the platform as if he was a general. We

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can beat Caxton with one hand; and we will too, even if we haven't a Marquis.

**The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other Rural Plays (1922)**

*Nancy:* Jack! The Marquis was in here to see Grandad just now, and says Major Roderick's killed.

*Jack:* I met him in his motor: he looked rare and upset.

*Nancy:* Major Roderick was the last of the family.

*Jack:* Morton's not going to be left behind by Caxton.

*Nancy:* What are you going to do, then?

*Jack:* Why, join, of course. What else? We're all going to join. You wouldn't want to stop me, Nancy, would you?

*Nancy:* I don't want you to go. *Jack,* but — (*the heating of a drum is heard*).

*Jack:* Aren't I right. Grandad?

*Eli (who has put his hat on):* I'm off to the meeting. Yon noise makes me feel as if I was fifty years younger — and if I was, I should join up. Come on, boy — the drum's calling!

(*Eli goes out; Jack gives Nancy a kiss and hurries after him; and Nancy is left standing with the baby in her arms, looking after them.*)

CURTAIN.

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**GONE TO THE WAR**

A Scene from History

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**GONE TO THE WAR**

*Extract from County Directory*

WONG, village (268 inhabitants). Railway Station. Church — St. Paul. Vicar — Rev. W. Isaacs. "Royal Oak" Inn (F. Webber). Principal landowner — Marquis of Cowsley.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

TOWNSMEN can't realise what Separation Allowances meant to the countryside. For the first time for a century and a half (and probably very much longer) the wives and children of our agricultural labourers were well-fed and sufficiently clothed; enjoying what to the town worker would have been a minimum of living, but to them was undreamed of luxury. Of course, it is all a question of values. It is difficult, for instance, for townspeople to appreciate the immense boon conferred on rural labourers by Old Age Pensions, which swept our workhouses clear of everything but tramps at one stroke. Seven-and-six a week, before the war, didn't sound much to a Londoner, but in the village it meant that the old folk could lodge with one or other of their married children, and spend their last days in comfort by the cottage fireside, instead of being exiled to the workhouse and dying there, as exiles are wont to do, in despair.

If our agricultural labourers suffered from sweated wages through the nineteenth century, their wives and children certainly got their own back during the war, for the scale of allowances calculated as the

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least that England dare allow her town workers, was wealth in the country cottage.

Another war would be popular with many families of rural workers, who have, since the Armistice and the abolition of the Minimum Wage Boards, begun to relapse into the bad old times of semi-starvation. The husbands, too, are getting to feel that they wouldn't mind another 1914. Trench warfare wasn't much of a hardship to men who spend their lives in peace-time working in the coldest weather, and are accustomed to being wet through or pretty well frozen as a matter of routine.

City thinkers, curiously enough, are also coming to the conclusion, that not only is war the unavoidable outcome of modern conditions, but that it seems to be the only way in which a highly industrialised country can organise itself to maintain its population with anything like decency. If it is true that war is not only the pre-destined end of our Trading regime, but the only escape from its rigour, then indeed we may expect a time of strife before that regime has given way to some other.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other  
Rural Plays (1922)*

Mrs. Tom Mayfield is neither a philosopher nor a socialist, but she is well aware of what is happening to her: and with good reason! She is seated in the kitchen of her cottage in the village of Wong, surrounded by ten children, who are the survivors of thirteen births; which proves that, as things go, she is a very good mother. A baby of five months lies on her lap, and the eldest girl is looking after the infant twins. Others are playing about the floor with a collection of cheap toys, and a cripple boy sits in his little chair by the fire, poring over a picture book. Mrs. Mayfield is carving generous slices from

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a loaf, and applying margarine and jam to the same, to keep her family going.

Wong Heath, on which the Mayfields' cottage stands, slopes gently down to the River Brent. From where Mrs. Mayfield sits, she can see through her open door the Royal Oak Inn, and the grove of trees surrounding the beautiful Manor House where her husband's master, Jeremiah Sharp, is spending his declining years. The retired merchant (whose son James carries on his business in Bly) is a good master, as rural masters go; but ninety-five years in Bly and Wong have prevented him from being different from his neighbours, and he has never been able to pay more than the current rate of wages.

Neither Mrs. Mayfield nor her husband have any grudge against old Mr. Sharp. If they have lived all their lives below Seebohm Rowntree's level of bare subsistence, they are used to it; they never expected anything else; and are no worse off than other labourers who are careless enough to have large families.

Old Mr. Sharp has had plenty of time to ponder over these and other things since he retired to cultivate the farm that goes with the Manor House. He has been much more exercised, indeed, than the Mayfields, but what can he do, except — almost by stealth — be kind to his serfs with presents of coal and the like, without which the ten little Mayfields would never all have been kept alive. He has watched the nineteenth century nearly from start to finish, and come to the conclusion that nothing matters very much in the long run. He lives in comfort in his lovely home, pays his rent regularly to th Marquis of Cowsley's Agent, goes to church, owes no

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man money, and feels on the whole prepared to meet his Creator.

Meantime, Mrs. Mayfield, taking advantage of a lull, delivers herself of her views. She is a big, dark woman, and must have been good-looking before thirteen births had their effect. She is wearing a cotton blouse, a well-worn skirt, and a blue and white spotted overall. All the children have stout boots, and her turn is coming — if only the war doesn't stop.

*Elizabeth Mayfield.*

He's gone to the war, he's gone to the war,  
I don't care a rap if I see him no more;  
He walloped me regular Saturday night,  
When he collared his wages and always got tight;  
I'm sure I prefer to be single by far  
Now he's gone to the war, now he's gone to the war.

His wages was thirteen and sixpence a week,  
Wi' extry in harvest; but that was to seek;  
A cottage — nowt else — made up all our pay,  
And when you've ten children, that's not much a day:  
He gave me nine shillings; it didn't go far:  
But now I have plenty — he's gone to the war.

A little bit more'n a shilling a day,  
To feed 'em and clothe 'em and bills for to pay;  
The grocer he hated me going to shop,  
And as for the butcher — we lived upon sop!  
Water and bread, water and bread,  
On plenty of water our children was fed.

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We was always in debt 'coz we couldn't keep out,  
Except at the pub where no credit's about;  
If I wanted to find him I knew where to go —  
To that old “Royal Oak” — wi' his mates in a row!  
I slaved at my work while he sung in the bar,  
But I'm getting it back now he's gone to the war.

The sergeant popped in, and he saw half a dozen —  
My Tom, Arthur Bates, Walter Jones, and his cousin:  
“There's plenty of vittles and little to do,  
Wi' a suit of good clothes and a medal or two”:  
They all joined together to have a last drink,  
And that sergeant he snapped 'em before they could wink.

He told me about it: I said nowt the while,  
I had to look solemn and try not to smile,  
Because I should get — so the *Chronicle* said —  
Nearly two quid a week, and no husband to feed:  
“You can send me a quid, and still save on the rest,”  
I nodded my head and said that would be best.

“Each week you can send it, I'll leave my address,  
And when the war's done, I'll come back to you, Bess”:  
So then he set off to the Barracks full sail,  
Wi' cheering and shouting and plenty of ale;  
I cried till he'd gone; then set off for to seek  
The man what was handing out two quid a week.



*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

Two quid a week! Two quid a week!

Who wouldn't sell husbands for two quid a week!

No drink and no bother, no quarrelsome brutes

What's nasty and dirty and sleeps in their boots;

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I pretended to cry, but I laughed in my cheek —

I'd swap forty husbands for two quid a week.

He came home on Saturday the colour of chalk,

They'd very nigh killed him, to judge by his talk;

He'd marched and he'd sweated wi' no chance to shirk,

Not since he was born had he done such queer work;

He cried like a baby to get in the door,

And when it was Monday he cried all the more.

He's gone to the war, he's gone to the war,

I shan't care a rap if I see him no more;

Ten children is plenty to take your attention,

Though sewing machines is a useful invention;

I can buy what I want, wi' no husband to keep,

I'm as happy as happy on two quid a week.

There's only one trouble as troubles me now,

And that's how much longer them Germans can go;

They've stood it a year, and my children looks grand,

We've clothes and we've boots and we've money in hand;

If the war should stop now, it would be most distressing,

For one thing is certain — it's just been a blessing.

*The Salamanca Corpus: King Lear at Hordle and Other*

*Rural Plays (1922)*

If anything happens, I draw on a pension —  
Not two quid a week, but it's still worth attention:  
Of course, if the war would keep on a few years,  
I shouldn't be bothering then wi' no fears;  
There would be enough saved to flit into the Fen,  
And when *Tom* come home, he could marry again.

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There never was known such good times for to be,  
Wi' two quid a week I'm in clover, you see;  
Every now and again Tom writes home for his quid —  
Says he'll never come back if I don't do his bid:  
But I shan't care a rap if I see him no more,  
He can stop where he is, now he's gone to the war.

Putting the baby on a pillow in a soap-box, Mrs. Mayfield begins to get the dinner ready, and restore some order in the noisy kitchen. A mist coming up from the sea, crosses the marshes and gradually spreads over Wong Heath, blotting out the Royal Oak, the Manor House, the cottage, and Mrs. Mayfield from our sight. But when nothing can be seen, the shouts of the children may still be heard.

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WHO'S WHO

INHABITANTS OF THE BLY DISTRICT

MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME

AMBROSE, Titus, Farmer and Merchant, Holt.

ANDREWS, Noel, Tailor, Ely.

ARCH, THOMAS, Constable, Carrington.

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ARMITAGE, DUDLEY, Landowner, Washover House.

AUSTIN, W., Rector, Marshfellowton.

BAKER ELI, Postmaster, South Winch.

BAKER, Z., Rector, Thorpe Tilney.

BALDOCK, GEORGE, Farmer, Pantacks.

BARLEY, FRED, Labourer, Hordle.

BARLEY, MRS. F., *Née* Toulson, Wife, Hordle.

BARLOW, "SAILOR," Labourer, South Winch.

BARNES, JOE, Miller, Belton.

BATES, ARTHUR, Labourer, Wong.

BAVIN, JOCK, Bailiff's man, Hordle.

BAVIN, NELL, Daughter, Hordle.

BAVIN, TOM, Labourer, Fletton.

BEALBY WALTER, Keeper's lad, Holt.

BELL, COLISHAW, Farmer, Stony Potton.

BELL, MRS. C., Dead, Wife, Stony Potton.

BELL, ALGERNON, Farmer, Caxton.

BELL, CYRIL, Farmer, Stow.

BELL, EDMUND, Farmer, High Morton.

BELL, RALPH, Farmer, Snitterwood.

BELLAMY, Moses, Market Gardener, Fletton.

BEMBRIDGE, JOSHUA, Farmer, Hordle.

BERNERS, COL. JOHN, Dead, Cowsley.

BERNERS, MAJ. RODERICK, Dead, Cowsley.

BERRY, JOSEPHUS, Doctor, Fletton.

BLINKHORN, LORD, Landowner, Blinkhorn House.

BONES, TOM, Farm foreman, Pantacks.

BONES, JACK, Son, Pantacks.

BOWLES, HENRY, Wagoner, Belton.

BOWLES, MRS. SUSAN, *Née* Cook, Wife, Belton.

BRISTOW, JOE, Miller, South Winch.

BROOKS, NEHEMIAH, Labourer, Caxton.

BURROWS, CARTWRIGHT, County Court Bailiff, Bly.

BURROWS, JAPHET, Head gardener, Kyme Castle.

BURROWS, NATHAN, Dead, Market gardener, Carrington

BURROWS, MRS. EMMA, Widow, Market gardener, Carrington.

BURROWS, ABEL, Son, Carrington.

BURROWS, JOE, Son, Carrington.

CASSWELL, HERBERT, Labourer, Pantacks.

CLAUDLE, HENRY, Farmer, South Winch.

CHADWICK, EDMUND, Farmer, Marshfellowton.

CHEETHAM, ISAAC, Farmer, Pantacks.

CLARKE, ANDREW, Inspector of Nuisances, Bly.

COOK, ALBERT, Herdsman, Fletton.

COOK, MARIA, Dressmaker, Churt.

COOK, MRS. N., Smallholder's wife. High Morton.

COOPER, ELI, Cottager, High Morton.

COOPER, JACK, Grandson, High Morton.

COOPER, NANCY, Jack's wife. High Morton.

COOPER, ROBIN, Jack's baby. High Morton.

COOPER, ABEL, Dead, Eli's father.

COOPER, JOHN, Dead, Eli's grandfather.

COOTE, CAPT. WILFRED, Regular Army, Bly.

COULTON, BEN, Publican, Thorpe Tilney.

COWSLEY, MARQUIS OF, Landowner, Cowsley.

COY, HENRY, Postmaster, Belton.

CROFT, TIMOTHY, Trap hawker, Belton.

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CROFT, MRS. JANE, Née Welch, Wife, Belton.

CUTTS, BOB, Tailor, Hordle.

DANE, ANTHONY, Stock Breeder, Fletton.

DEFRIES, W., Rector, Belton.

DICKINSON, ARTHUR, Lawyer's clerk, Bly.

DODSWORTH, HENRY, Publican, Hordle.

DODSWORD, ALICE,, Daughter, Hordle.

DODSWORTH, MABEL, Daughter, Hordle.

ELLIS, W., Police constable, High Morton.

ELMIT, ERNEST, Dead, Farmer, Pantacks.

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ELMITT, MRS. E., Dead, Wife, Pantacks.

ELMITT, CHARLES, Son, Farmer, Pantacks.

ELMITT, JAMES, Son, Farmer, Pantacks.

ELMITT, ABRAHAM, Dead, Ernest's grandfather, Pantacks.

ELMIT, BERTRAM, Dead, Abraham's father, Pantacks.

FERRET, PHINEAS, Solicitor, Fletton and Bly.

FIELDER-WALSINGHAM, HBT., Landowner, Retd. Maj. General, Caxby Manor.

FLETTON, EARL OF, Landowner, Fletton.

FORD, L., Publican, Holt.

FOX, BERT, Farm lad, Carrington.

FROST, J. Publican, Holt.

GARVEY, JAMES, Publican, Carrington.

GRIGSBY, H., Publican, High Morton.

GUBBINS, N., Publican, Herries.

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GUN, ELI, Farmer, Hordle.

GUNN, MRS. E., *Née* Overton, Wife, Hordle.

HAM KENNETH, Farmer, Thorpe Tilney.

HAM, MRS. K., *Née* Hardy, Wife, Thorpe Tilney.

HAM, RUFUS, Son, Thorpe Tilney.

HAM, DAVID, Kenneth's father, Thorpe Tilney.

HAM, MOSES, Dead, David's father. Labourer.

HARBORD, RUPERT, Dead, Landowner, Pantacks.

HARBORD, CHRISTOPHER, Landowner, Pantacks Manor.

HARDEVILLE, LORD, Dead, Stow Park.

HARDY, HUBERT, Schoolmaster, Thorpe Tilney.

HARDY, WILLIAMSON, Publican, High Morton.

HARRIS, DONALD, Estate agent, Herries.

HARROD, TOM, Labourer, Carrington.

HERRIES, LORD DAVID, Landowner, Herries Hall.

HICKS, ENDERBY, Vet. surgeon, Fletton.

HIDES, BANNISTER, Farmer, Fletton.

HIND, JOHN, Farmer, Tanvats.

HIND, MRS. J., *Née* Ostroff, Wife, Tanvats.

HIND, MICHAEL JOSEPH, Son, Tanvats.

HODGSON, ALBERT, Smallholder, Hordle.

HODGSON, WM., Dead, Farmer, Tanvats.

HUDSON, TOM, Gamekeeper, Holt.

HUDSON, MRS. ELLEN, *Née* Peters, Wife, Holt.

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INGAMELLS, GREGORY, Publican, Holt.

ISAACS, W., Vicar, Wong.

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JACKSON, SAUL, Carrier, Belton.

JACKSON, WALTER, Gamekeeper, Fletton.

JACKSTRAWS, Brewers, Ely.

JESSOP, H., Vicar, Tanvats.

JOLLY, J., Publican, South Winch.

JONES, WALTER, Labourer, Wong.

KENNINGTON, NICODEMUS, Publican, Belton.

KEW, ANTHONY, Labourer, Marshfellowton.

KEW, MRS. A., *Née* Coulson, Wife, Marshfellowton.

KEY, RICHARD, Dead, Hordle.

KEY, MRS. R., Widow, Postmistress, Hordle.

KING, J., Vicar, Hordle.

KYME, LORD, Landowner, Kyme Castle.

LACK, N., Publican, Hordle.

LOVE, MRS. F., Widow, Publican, South Winch.

LUPTON, SAMUEL, Lawyer's clerk, Bly.

MACHEN, G., Publican, Herries.

MARSHFELLOWTON, LORD, Landowner, Marsh House.

MARTIN, W., Vicar, Carrington.

MAYFIELD, TOM, Labourer, Wong.

MAYFIELD, MRS. T., *Née* Petchell, Wife, Wong.

MAYFIELD, RICHARD, Labourer, Wong.

MEEK, SAM, Publican, South Winch.

MORGAN, JULIUS, Circus proprietor, Barkston.

MORLEY, ROBERT, Landowner, Stow Park.

MORLEY, SAMUEL, Dead, his father.

MORLEY, MOSES, Dead, his grandfather.

MORTON, TOBY, Labourer, Holt.



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MOXEY, A., Rector, Holt.

MULLEN & SON, Merchants, Bly.

NEVILLE, HONOURABLE, MRS., Landowner, Potton Old Hall.

NUTT, TOM, Publican, Marshfellowton.

OSTROFF, MICHAEL, Dead, Russian refugee, Tanvats.

OSTROFF, MRS. M., Dead, *Née* Hodgson, Tanvats.

OVERTON, JUDAH, Farmer, Herries.

OVERTON, MRS. J., *Née* Mogridge, Wife, Herries.

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PARROT, GEORGE, Dead, Roadmender, Hordle.

PARROT, MRS. G., Widow, Hordle.

PARROT, DICK, Son, Roadmender, Hordle.

PATCHETT, WALTER, Labourer, Holt.

PICKERING WM., Farmer, Herries.

PINDER, EDWARD, Publican, Hordle.

PINION, CHARLES, Farmer, Fletton.

PINION GILBERT, Artist, Bly.

PINION, LAURENCE, Farmer, Fletton.

PINNER, T., Publican, Tanvats.

PORTER, HENRY, Dead, Landowner, Herries.

PRATT, ABEL, Farmer and dealer, Herries.

ROOK, SMITH, Smallholder, Fletton.

ROOK, MRS. S., *Née* Tow, Wife, Fletton.

ROOK, BILL, Son, Farmer, Canada.

ROWETT, THOMPSON, Farmer, Fletton.

ROWETT, ANNIE, Daughter, Fletton.

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ROWETT, WILMOT, Dead, Hordle.

ROWETT, MRS. W., Dead, *Née* Quillam, Hordle.

ROWETT, ALBERT, Son, Hordle.

ROWETT, MRS. MATILDA, *Née* Toulson, Albert's wife, Hordle.

SAUNDERS, WILLIAM, Market gardener, Carrington.

SHARP, JEREMIAH, Retired merchant, Wong.

SHARP, JAMES, Merchant, Bly.

SHARPLES, JEFF, Carrier, Fletton.

SIGGS, WM., Ironmonger, Hordle.

SIGGS, MRS. W., *Née* Rowett, Wife, Hordle.

SMITHSON, WM., Auctioneer and Publican, Pantacks.

SNOW, B., Publican, Carrington.

“SOLDIER” JOHN, Pedlar, Name unknown, No home.

SPENCER-WELLS, HON. G., Estate agent. Stow Manor.

STANG, JEFFERSON, Landowner, Winch Priory.

TAYLOR, TOM, Dead, Labourer, High Morton.

TARRY, B., Publican, Pantacks.

TINSLEY, SARAH, Housekeeper, Pantacks.

TODD, DAVID, Farmer, Fletton.

TODD, MRS. D., *Née* White, Wife, Fletton.

TOULSON, JACOB, Peasant proprietor, Hordle.

TOULSON, MRS. J., *Née* Badley, Dead, Wife, Hordle.

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TOULSON, EDWARD, Smallholder, Hordle.

TREFFRY, K., Vicar, Pantacks.

TUNNY, SIR EDMUND, BT., Landowner, Churt Park.

TUNNY, CYRIL, M.P., Bly Court.

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TURPIN, HAROLD, Farmer, Marshfellowton.

TUTT, SERGEANT, Recruiting sergeant, Bly.

TYLER, WATSON, Farmer, Low Barnet.

UNDERWOOD, THEOPHILUS, Rector, South Winch.

WALKER, F., Doctor, Bly.

WALKER, G., Vicar, High Morton.

WALTON, F., Solicitor, Bly.

WARDLE, ARBUTHNOR, M.P., Thorpe Tilney.

WATSON, JAMES, Farmer, Carrington.

WATSON, MRS. J., *Née* Coulson, Dead, Wife, Carrington.

WATSON HENRY, Son, Carrington.

WATSON, BETSY, Daughter, Carrington.

WEBBER, "FINNY," Publican, Wong.

WEBSTER, JOE, Blacksmith, Belton.

WEST, F., Publican, Pantacks.

WHITE, SEEBHOM, Solicitor, Bly.

WILES, ERNEST, Labourer, High Morton.

WILLIAMS, HARVEY, Publican, Tanvats.

WILLIAMSON, TIM, Merchant, Fletton.

WILLIAMSON, BETTY, "Witch," Fletton.

WILLIAMSON, LEAH, Daughter, Fletton.

WILLIAMSON, MRS., Widow, High Morton.

WILLOWS, JEFFRY, Shopkeeper, High Morton.

WINCEY, EVELYN, Estate agent, Holt.

WORTHINGTON-ELLIOTT, E. C., Rector, Herries.

WRAY, "CLOSE" DICK, Farmer, Piatt's Hole.

WRAY, JOSEPH, Carrier, South Winch.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT

*King Lear at Hordle* is Volume II. of the series that Mr. Gilbert is writing about his "District." Volume I. has already appeared under the title of *Old England*, particulars of which will be found below.

*Messrs. Collins hope to publish Volume III. — a long novel — in the autumn of 1922, under the title of TYLER OF BARNET; dealing with another of the villages of the Ely "district" Those who have read Volumes I. and II. will meet many old friends in Volume III.; they will recognise the local references, and feel thoroughly at home before they have finished many chapters. In the preface to his novel the author explains exactly what he is doing in his series, and there can be few who will not read it with attention and interest. If Mr. Gilbert's thesis is correct, he is embarked upon a venture which may be the opening of a new movement in literature.*

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OLD ENGLAND  
A God's-Eye View of a Village  
by

BERNARD GILBERT

Royal 8vo, Full Cloth

Price 20/- net

This book is unique in English literature both in conception and treatment. The author presents a whole community to the reader, taking for his subject our largest social unit — an English village — where everybody knows everything about every one. He has taken a typical village during one day of the war and given a camera obscura presentment of the multitudinous intrigues, ambitions, desires, disputes, relationships, and interests which thread its fabric so closely. There is no hero or heroine, for the

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author presents some hundreds of characters, each all important to himself. These speak their own thoughts, and throw starting sidelights on their neighbours; and from the whole, a picture of a village community takes definite shape. The author has snapped his village at one instant on one day, so that there is no "action." The village is frozen motionless whilst the reader inspects each inhabitant. There is no sentimentalism, no "kailyard" gloss; the villagers expressing themselves with immense force from the Earl to the mole-catcher. Mr. Gilbert is doing intensively for the English countryside what Balzac did for his nation on a great scale. Not only is each of the array of characters set forth vividly, but the larger problems of the countryside are illuminated from various angles. Two maps show the parish with

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the various farms, etc., and the village, with every house and cottage indicated by name. Fifty genealogical trees explain the relationships of the villagers, and a Who's Who and General Index give the fullest information about the several hundred characters involved. What is extraordinarily interesting about Mr. Gilbert's experiment is the fact that by these various contrivances of his art he has so thickened his picture that he has actually given it three dimensions instead of the two dimensions to which literature heretofore has been confined. He has taken three years to write this book, and it is the fruit of a lifetime's close observation. In his preface he says that in his youth he was taught that there was an omniscient Being to whom everything was present at each instant, and it was this state of complete comprehension with which he wished to endow the reader. Such a state presupposes a knowledge of each character and each relationship and a simultaneous view of every one of a vast complexity of interweaving strands. It is the ancient democracy of the Feudal System, the one which has stayed longest in our history and which has its roots deeper and more firmly in the soil of Old England than town-dwellers can guess or know. All who were born in the country or have any interest in rural life and problems must be interested in *Old England*.

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IV. THE CANTOS

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PRESS NOTICES

THE FIELD

Squire and His Relations

Inadequate though it be to substitute for the title of *Old England*, which Mr. Bernard Gilbert has chosen for his ordnance-plan description of an English village, such a paraphrase as "Squire and His Relations," there is justification for it, because Mr. Gilbert, beginning with the Earl at the Towers, who is the Squire of the imaginary "Fletton," and ending with Old George Jenkins, who is its centenarian, meticulously weighs and exhibits the relations of every inhabitant of the village to every other. The Earl has sons and a daughter; the daughter is married to a relative, who is the agent; there is a parson and his wife; there are farmers, tenant or independent; publicans, shopkeepers, labourers, servants, a doctor, a lawyer, the village constable and inspector, the manager of the local branch bank... and all, or nearly all, revolve about the Earl and the Great House. If that were all, the account of these dependencies and relationships might be ingenious, but it would be one-sided. There is a great deal more. In the village of Fletton Mr. Gilbert takes some 190 people. He makes them all speak. They speak their thoughts, sometimes about themselves, but more often in respect of their neighbours. Does that sound dull? It is not; it is as enthralling as a game of patience or a jig-saw puzzle, for Fletton being, as the old English village commonly is, a place where every one knows everything (and more) that every one else does, or proposes to do, the sum of these soliloquies is to present the complete drama of the village's life, with its interplay of intrigues, ambitions, desires, disputes, and interests. For his purpose Mr.

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Gilbert freezes the village into immobility at a given moment during one of the war years, when an aeroplane is flying overhead; and the aeroplane is a symbol, because we see the village, as it were, with the lid off and all its activities suspended, though waiting next minute to go on. The reader may forecast the future of the people of the village, since Mr. Gilbert has presented him with the complete

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materials of its past and present; but the intriguing thing about the problem is to get quite clearly into one's own mind the interplay and facets of the characters. Their own immediate affairs are, of course, their chief preoccupation, but Mr. Gilbert makes use of their calling or interest to exhibit the views on wages, on allotments, on large farms and small, on tenure and cultivation, on Church and Chapel and local politics, which are held by farmer or labourer, landowner or tenant. It is a remarkable piece of work. We know nothing like it, and nothing which is so likely to provoke contradiction and dislike as well as admiration. We confess ourselves the admirers of it, because of the powers of observation and of irony which invest it. Our criticism takes the form of calling into question Mr. Gilbert's own sub-title, which is that of "A God's-Eye View of a Village." God would know more of the goodness in men's hearts; He would not have been so inveterate to observe the inner vileness of the poor people made in His image.

THE BYSTANDER

Here you have, set out in prose, *vers libre* or rhymed verse, a series of static pictures of the inhabitants of an English village, as they were at a given moment during the war.

Now these pictures, which bear such close relationship to one another, are the work of a man who obviously knows the countryside as well as he knows his own soul; of a man, too, who is not afraid to speak out. Critics there will be, who will accuse him of too cynical an outlook. Your English village, they will say, is not the secretly amorous, hypocritical, selfish, narrow-minded community that Mr. Gilbert makes out



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his “Fletton” to be. Possibly not on the surface, but — underneath, human nature is not always so lofty as the moralists would like you to believe. There are all sorts of people in Fletton, and you are shown them, not as they appear to be to their neighbours, but as in truth they actually are. In any case, whether the outlook be cynical or not, after reading this truly astonishing production, you feel that you know Fletton to its marrow-bone — if a village can be said to have a marrow-bone. (Whether you will want to live there is another question.) It is a place of a thousand stories which gradually and most dramatically emerge. There is a general index of inhabitants, and genealogical tables, which must have given the author endless trouble; but they add not a little to your interest and understanding *Old England* is like no other book that ever was, and must ultimately win through to success.

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THE YORKSHIRE OBSERVER

The result has been to produce what I dare call one of the most remarkable books of our time. Mr. Gilbert has given us, without hero, heroine, plot, or apparent attempt at cohesion, a stark realism which recalls (though without his atmosphere of phantasmagoria) Dostoevsky, which, however it is read, impresses mightily that the village “is a self-contained cosmos, a large family,” and embodies life universal. As is felt after reading the Russian master, when this book is put down it seems as though, after having a peep at pulsating life, a veil is drawn, and though the view is now concealed, we feel that the life is going on and on. That achievement itself shows the very highest art.

Mr. Gilbert confesses to some thirty years' intimacy with village life. His work, with its involved cross-references and genealogies, and, above all, the masterly way of letting each speaker create his own type and atmosphere, clearly indicates that this is no hurried, week-end holiday impression. Fletton, as this village is called, has people we all know. The schoolmaster who sums up everybody; the small farmer with

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his eyes on a bigger holding, one when the owner dies or fails; the blacksmith — in this instance he wants to cut the chestnut-tree down because people ask if he is the one who inspired the poem; the squire, an earl in this village; the land-hungry cottager; the misunderstood dreamer who has to go elsewhere; the oldest inhabitant; the freeholder who hates game from the “ estate “; the poacher, banker, the local antiquary, post-mistress, vicar, vicar's wife. Free Church devotees, the pig-killer, the returned emigrant, the shopkeepers who dread the coming of the big store, and a whole gallery of others.

Truth is always stranger than fiction, and Fletton, like every village, has unusual types. We read of the ignorant mother who burnt her dead son's poems “lest any one should bring it up against him.” The student who has knowledge of astronomy is regarded in his own family no higher than the village simple — his mother with seventeen children regrets only his birth!

One is tempted to quote extensively from the sayings of these types. Briefly, some may be given. Thus the astronomer: “These villagers are vegetables in face and life. They look like cabbages, talk like cabbages, think, act, and feel like cabbages, and are as ignorant and brutish as Basutos. The sky has no wonder for them, the heavens no depth; for them no Galileo lived, no Newton laboured, and even my poor achievements are unknown; they hear I star-gaze,

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and think the moon has ' touched ' me, but however slow the march of Time, science will reach this Feudal back-water, making a clean sweep of cottages, peasants, gentlemen farmers, game laws, brainless earls, and uneconomic holdings.”

Those who have seen horses' sores black-leaded, tails docked, and the like, will appreciate the London school teacher in Fletton, who says, “It's not men's sensuality, it's their cruelty that horrifies me. I suppose because I'd never dreamt of it. They torture dumb animals all day long, and every farm is like the old Inquisition.” The vicar with a low stipend will understand this parody on Tom Hood: “Pinch, pretend, and struggle, struggle, pretend, and pinch, while your heart aches, and your boots always want mending.”

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*Old England* can be read at one sitting like a story. It can be read to the plan of following one person referred to by another — and the “Who's Who” and genealogical tables at the end are invaluable for this method. However read, and even if questioned on the aspects just criticised — as it will be — it is one of the most comprehensive books on English village life written. There is a graphic simplicity which could be the work only of a master craftsman.

All the same, when my book on village life is written, if ever it is written, it will be kinder and more generous, even if it be less true. H.

GLASGOW: W. COLLINS SONS AND CO. LTD.

