

JANE

- JANE (Looking at uniform) Red and yellow! Primary colours! Oh, South Kensington!
- DUKE We didn't design our uniforms, but we don't see how they could be improved.
- JANE No, you wouldn't. Still, there is a cobwebby grey velvet, with a tender bloom like cold gravy, which, made Florentine fourteenth century, trimmed with Venetian leather and Spanish altar lace, and surmounted with something Japanese—it matters not what—would at least by Early English! Come, ~~maidens~~. *Ladies*

- JANE ** Simpering Servant* The fickle crew have deserted Reginald and sworn allegiance to his rival, and all, forsooth, because he has glanced with passing favour on a ~~puling~~ milkmaid! Fools! of that fancy he will soon weary—and then I, who alone am faithful to him, shall reap my reward. But do not dally too long, Reginald, for my charms are ripe, Reginald, and already they are decaying. Better secure me ere I have gone too far!

DUKE

(Enter DUKE, listlessly, and in low spirits.)

- DUKE Here I am! (Sighs)
- COLONEL Come, cheer up, don't give way!
- DUKE Oh, for that, I'm as cheerful as a poor devil can be expected to be who has the misfortune to be a duke, with a thousand a day!
- MAJOR Humph! Most men would envy you!
- DUKE Envy *me*? Tell me, Major, are you fond of toffee?
- MAJOR Very!
- COLONEL We are all fond of toffee.
- ALL We are!
- DUKE Yes, and toffee in moderation is a capital thing. But to live on toffee—toffee for breakfast, toffee for dinner, toffee for tea—to have it supposed that you care for nothing *but* toffee, and that you would consider yourself insulted if anything but toffee were offered to you—how would you like *that*?
- COLONEL I can quite believe that, under those circumstances, even toffee would become monotonous.
- DUKE For "toffee" read flattery, adulation, and abject deference, carried to such a pitch that I began, at last, to think that man was born bent at an angle of forty-five degrees! Great heavens, what is there to adulate in me! Am I particularly intelligent, or remarkably studious, or excruciatingly witty, or unusually accomplished, or exceptionally virtuous?

- COLONEL You're about as commonplace a ~~young man~~ *Duke* as ever I saw.

ALL You are!

- DUKE Exactly! That's it exactly! That describes me to a T! Thank you all very much! Well, I couldn't stand it any longer, so I joined this second-class cavalry regiment. In the army, thought I, I shall be occasionally snubbed, perhaps even bullied, who knows? The thought was rapture, and here I am.

ANGELA

- PATIENCE** What on earth does it all mean? Why does he love me? Why does he expect me to love him? He's not a relation! It frightens me!
- (Enter ANGELA)
- ANGELA** Why, Patience, what is the matter?
- PATIENCE** Lady Angela, tell me two things. Firstly, what on earth is this love that upsets everybody; and, secondly, how is it to be distinguished from insanity?
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- ANGELA** Poor blind child! Oh, forgive her, Eros! Why, love is of all passions the most essential! It is the embodiment of purity, the abstraction of refinement! It is the one unselfish emotion in this whirlpool of grasping greed!
- PATIENCE** Oh, dear, oh! (Beginning to cry)
- ANGELA** Why are you crying?
- PATIENCE** To think that I have lived all these years without having experienced this ennobling and unselfish passion! Why, what a wicked girl I must be! For it *is* unselfish, isn't it?
- ANGELA** Absolutely! Love that is tainted with selfishness is no love. Oh, try, try, try to love! It really isn't difficult if you give your whole mind to it.
- PATIENCE** I'll set about it at once. I won't go to bed until I'm head over ears in love with somebody.
- ANGELA** Noble girl! But is it possible that you have never loved anybody?
- PATIENCE** Yes, one.
- ANGELA** Ah! Whom?
- PATIENCE** My great-aunt—
- ANGELA** Great-aunts don't count.
- PATIENCE** Then there's nobody. At least—no, nobody. Not since I was a baby. But *that* doesn't count, I suppose.
- ANGELA** I don't know. Tell me all about it.

SAPHIR

- ANGELA** (seeing them) Oh, Saphir—see—see! The immortal fire has descended on them, and they are of the Inner Brotherhood—perceptively intense and consummately utter. (The Officers have some difficulty in maintaining their constrained attitudes.)
- SAPHIR** (in admiration) How Botticellian! How Fra Angelican! Oh, Art, we thank thee for this boon!
- COLONEL** (apologetically) I'm afraid we're not quite right.
- ANGELA** Not supremely, perhaps, but oh, so all-but! (To SAPHIR) Oh, Saphir, are they not quite too all-but?
- SAPHIR** They are indeed jolly utter!
- MAJOR** (in agony) I wonder what the Inner Brotherhood usually recommend for cramp?
- COLONEL** Ladies, we will not deceive you. We are doing this at some personal inconvenience with a view of expressing the extremity of our devotion to you. We trust that it is not without its effect.
- ANGELA** We will not deny that we are much moved by this proof of your attachment.
- SAPHIR** Yes, your conversion to the principles of Aesthetic Art in its highest development has touched us deeply.
- ANGELA** And if Mr. Grosvenor should remain obdurate—
- SAPHIR** Which we have every reason to believe he will—
- MAJOR** (aside, in agony) I wish they'd make haste.
- ANGELA** We are not prepared to say that our yearning hearts will not go out to you.
- COLONEL** (As giving a word of command) By sections of threes—Rapture! (All strike a fresh attitude, expressive of aesthetic rapture).
- SAPHIR** Oh, it's extremely good—for beginners it's admirable.

PATIENCE

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- GROSVENOR** Patience! Can it be that you don't recognise me?
- PATIENCE** Recognise you? No, indeed I don't!
- GROSVENOR** Have fifteen years so greatly changed me?
- PATIENCE** Fifteen years? What do you mean?
- GROSVENOR** Have you forgotten the friend of your youth, your Archibald?—your little play-fellow? Oh, Chronos, Chronos, this is too bad of you!
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- PATIENCE** Archibald! Is it possible? Why, let me look! It is! It is! It must be! Oh, how happy I am! I thought we should never meet again! And how you've grown!
- GROSVENOR** Yes, Patience, I am much taller and much stouter than I was.
- PATIENCE** And how you've improved!
- GROSVENOR** Yes, Patience, I am very beautiful! (Sighs)
- PATIENCE** But surely *that* doesn't make you unhappy?
- GROSVENOR** Yes, Patience. Gifted as I am with a beauty which probably has not its rival on earth, I am, nevertheless, utterly and completely miserable.
- PATIENCE** Oh—but why?
- GROSVENOR** My child-love for you has never faded. Conceive, then, the horror of my situation when I tell you that it is my hideous destiny to be madly loved at first sight by every woman I come across!
- PATIENCE** But why do you make yourself so picturesque? Why not disguise yourself, disfigure yourself, anything to escape this persecution?
- GROSVENOR** No, Patience, that may not be. These gifts—irksome as they are—were given to me for the enjoyment and delectation of my fellow creatures. I am a trustee for Beauty, and it is my duty to see that the conditions of my trust are faithfully discharged.
- PATIENCE** And you, too, are a Poet?
- GROSVENOR** Yes, I am the Apostle of Simplicity. I am called "Archibald the All-Right"—for I am infallible!
- PATIENCE** And is it possible that you condescend to love such a girl as I?
- GROSVENOR** Yes, Patience, is it not strange? I have loved you with a Florentine fourteenth-century frenzy for full fifteen years!
- PATIENCE** Oh, marvellous! I have hitherto been deaf to the voice of love. I seem now to know what love is! It has been revealed to me—it is Archibald Grosvenor!

GROSVENOR

Enter GROSVENOR

GROSVENOR It is very pleasant to be alone. It is pleasant to be able to gaze at leisure upon those features which all others may gaze upon at their good will! (Looking at his reflection in hand mirror). Ah, I am a very Narcissus!

Enter BUNTHORNE moodily

BUNTHORNE It's no use; I can't live without admiration. Since Grosvenor came here, insipidity has been at a premium. Ah, he is there!

GROSVENOR Ah, Bunthorne! come here—look! Very graceful, isn't it?

BUNTHORNE (taking hand mirror) Allow me; I haven't seen it. Yes, it is graceful.

GROSVENOR (re-taking hand mirror) Oh, good gracious! not that—this—

BUNTHORNE You don't mean that! Bah! I am in no mood for trifling.

GROSVENOR And what is amiss?

BUNTHORNE Ever since you came here, you have entirely monopolised the attentions of the young ladies. I don't like it, sir!

GROSVENOR My dear sir, how can I help it? They are the plague of my life. My dear Mr. Bunthorne, with your personal disadvantages, you can have no idea of the inconvenience of being madly loved, at first sight, by every woman you meet.

BUNTHORNE Sir, until you came here I was adored!

GROSVENOR Exactly—until I came here. That's my grievance. I cut everybody out! I assure you, if you could only suggest some means whereby, consistently with my duty to society, I could escape these inconvenient attentions, you would earn my everlasting gratitude.

BUNTHORNE I will do so at once. However popular it may be with the world at large, your personal appearance is highly objectionable to *me*.

GROSVENOR It is? (Shaking his hand). Oh, thank you! thank you! How can I express my gratitude?

BUNTHORNE By making a complete change at once. Your conversation must henceforth be perfectly matter-of-fact. You must cut your hair, and have a back parting. In appearance and costume you must be absolutely commonplace.

GROSVENOR (decidedly) No. Pardon me, that's impossible.

BUNTHORNE Take care! When I am thwarted I am very terrible.

GROSVENOR I can't help that. I am a man with a mission. And that mission must be fulfilled.

BUNTHORNE I don't think you quite appreciate the consequences of thwarting me.

GROSVENOR I don't care what they are.

BUNTHORNE Suppose—I won't go so far as to say that I will do it—but suppose for one moment I were to curse you? (GROSVENOR quails) Ah! Very well. Take care.

GROSVENOR But surely you would never do that? (In great alarm)

BUNTHORNE I don't know. It would be an extreme measure, no doubt. Still—

GROSVENOR (Wildly) But you would not do it—I am sure you would not. (Throwing himself at BUNTHORNE'S knees, and clinging to him) Oh, reflect, reflect! You had a mother once.

BUNTHORNE Never!

GROSVENOR Then you had an aunt! (BUNTHORNE, affected) Ah! I see you had! By the memory of that aunt, I implore you to pause ere you resort to this last fearful expedient. Oh, Mr. Bunthorne, reflect, reflect! (Weeping)

BUNTHORNE (aside, after a struggle with himself) I must not allow myself to be unmanned! (Aloud) It is useless. Consent at once, or may a nephew's curse—

GROSVENOR Hold! Are you absolutely resolved?

BUNTHORNE Absolutely.

GROSVENOR Will nothing shake you?

BUNTHORNE Nothing. I am adamant.

GROSVENOR Very good. (Rising) Then I yield.

BUNTHORNE Ha! You swear it?

GROSVENOR I do, cheerfully. I have long wished for a reasonable pretext for such a change as you suggest. It has come at last. I do it on compulsion!

BUNTHORNE

BUNTHORNE Ah! Patience, come hither. I am pleased with thee. The bitter-hearted one, who finds all else hollow, is pleased with thee. For you are not hollow. *Are you?*

PATIENCE No, thanks, I have dined: but—I beg your pardon—I interrupt you.

BUNTHORNE Life is made up of interruptions. The tortured soul, yearning for solitude, writhes under them. Oh, but my heart is a-weary! Oh, I am a cursed thing! Don't go.

PATIENCE Really, I'm very sorry—

BUNTHORNE Tell me, girl, do you ever yearn?

PATIENCE (Misunderstanding him) I earn my living.

BUNTHORNE (Impatiently) No, no! Do you know what it is to be heart-hungry? Do you know what it is to yearn for the Indefinable, and yet to be brought face to face, daily, with the Multiplication Table? Do you know what it is to seek oceans and to find puddles?—to long for whirlwinds and yet to have to do the best you can with the bellows? That's my case. Oh, I am a cursed thing! Don't go.

PATIENCE If you please, I don't understand you—you frighten me!

BUNTHORNE Don't be frightened—it's only poetry.

PATIENCE Well, if that's poetry, I don't like poetry.

BUNTHORNE (Eagerly) Don't you? (Aside) Can I trust her? (Aloud) Patience, you don't like poetry—well, between you and me, *I* don't like poetry. It's hollow, unsubstantial-unsatisfactory. What's the use of yearning for Elysian Fields when you know you can't get 'em, and would only let 'em out on building leases if you had 'em?

PATIENCE Sir, I—

BUNTHORNE Patience, I have long loved you. Let me tell you a secret. I am not as bilious as I look. If you like, I will cut my hair. There is more innocent fun within me than a casual spectator would imagine. You have never seen me frolicsome. Be a good girl—a very good girl—and one day you shall. If you are fond of touch-and-go jocularities—this is the shop for it.

PATIENCE Sir, I will speak plainly. In the matter of love I am untaught. I have never loved but my great-aunt. But I am quite certain that, under any circumstances, I couldn't possibly love *you*.

BUNTHORNE Oh, you think not?

PATIENCE I'm quite sure of it. Quite sure. Quite.

BUNTHORNE Very good. Life is henceforth a blank. I don't care what becomes of me. I have only to ask that you will not abuse my confidence; though *you* despise me, I am extremely popular with the other young ladies.

PATIENCE I only ask that you will leave me and never renew the subject.

BUNTHORNE Certainly. Broken-hearted and desolate, I go. (Recites)
"Oh, to be wafted away,
From this black Aceldama of sorrow,
Where the dust of an earthy to-day
Is the earth of a dusty to-morrow!"
It is a little thing of my own. I call it "Heart Foam". I shall not publish it. Farewell! Patience, Patience, farewell!

COLONEL

- COLONEL** (Attitude) Yes, it's quite clear that our only chance of making a lasting impression on these ~~young~~ ladies is to become as aesthetic as they are.
- MAJOR** (Attitude) No doubt. The only question is how far we've succeeded in doing so. I don't know why, but I've an idea that this is not quite right.
- DUKE** (Attitude) I don't like it. I never did. I don't see what it means. I do it, but I don't like it.
- COLONEL** My good friend, the question is not whether we like it, but whether they do. They understand these things—we don't. Now I shouldn't be surprised if this is effective enough at-a distance.
- MAJOR** I can't help thinking we're a little stiff at it. It would be extremely awkward if we were to be "struck" so!
- COLONEL** I don't think we shall be struck so. Perhaps we're a little awkward at first—but everything must have a beginning. Oh, here they come! 'Tention!
- They strike fresh attitudes, as ANGELA and SAPHIR enter
- ANGELA** (seeing them) Oh, Saphir—see—see! The immortal fire has descended on them, and they are of the Inner Brotherhood—perceptively intense and consummately utter. (The Officers have some difficulty in maintaining their constrained attitudes.)
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