

Pillars of society

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eBooks@Adelaide The University of Adelaide Library University of Adelaide South Australia 5005 DRAMATIS PERSONAE Karsten Bernick, a shipbuilder. Mrs. Bernick, his wife. Olaf, their son, thirteen years old. Martha Bernick, Karsten Bernick's sister. Johan Tonnesen, Mrs. Bernick's younger brother. Lona Hessel, Mrs. Bernick's elder half-sister. Hilmar Tonnesen, Mrs. Bernick's cousin. Dina Dorf, a young girl living with the Bernicks. Rorlund, a

schoolmaster. Rummel, a merchant. Vigeland and Sandstad, tradesman Krap, Bernick's confidential clerk. Aune, foreman of Bernick's shipbuilding yard. Mrs. Rummel. Hilda Rummel, her daughter. Mrs. Holt. Netta Holt, her daughter. Mrs. Lyng. Townsfolk and visitors, foreign sailors, steamboat passengers, etc., etc. (The action takes place at the Bernicks' house in one of the smaller coast towns in Norway) ACT I. SCENE. – A spacious garden-room in the BERNICKS' house. In the foreground on the left is a door leading to BERNICK'S business room; farther back in the same wall, a similar door. In the middle of the opposite wall is a large entrance-door, which leads to the street. The wall in the background is almost wholly composed of plate-glass; a door in it opens upon a broad flight of steps which lead down to the garden; a sun-awning is stretched over the steps. Below the steps a part of the garden is visible, bordered by a fence with a small gate in it. On the other side of the fence runs a street, the opposite side of which is occupied by small wooden houses painted in bright colours. It is summer, and the sun is shining warmly. People are seen, every now and then, passing along the street and stopping to talk to one another; others going in and out of a shop at the corner, etc. In the room a gathering of ladies is seated round a table. MRS. BERNICK is presiding; on her left side are MRS. HOLT and her daughter NETTA, and next to them MRS. RUMMEL and HILDA RUMMEL. On MRS. BERNICK'S right are MRS. LYNGE, MARTHA BERNICK and DINA DORF. All the ladies are busy working. On the table lie great piles of linen garments and other articles of clothing, some half finished, and some merely cut out. Farther back, at a small table on which two pots of flowers and a glass of sugared water are standing, RORLUND is sitting, reading aloud from a book

with gilt edges, but only loud enough for the spectators to catch a word now and then. Out in the garden OLAF BERNICK is running about and shooting at a target with a toy crossbow. After a moment AUNE comes in quietly through the door on the right. There is a slight interruption in the reading. MRS. BERNICK nods to him and points to the door on the left. AUNE goes quietly across, knocks softly at the door of BERNICK'S room, and after a moment's pause, knocks again. KRAP comes out of the room, with his hat in his hand and some papers under his arm.] Krap: Oh, it was you knocking? Aune: Mr. Bernick sent for me. Krap: He did – but he cannot see you. He has deputed me to tell you – Aune: Deputed you? All the same, I would much rather – Krap: – deputed me to tell you what he wanted to say to you. You must give up these Saturday lectures of yours to the men. Aune: Indeed? I supposed I might use my own time – Krap: You must not use your own time in making the men useless in working hours. Last Saturday you were talking to them of the harm that would be done to the workmen by our new machines and the new working methods at the yard. What makes you do that? Aune: I do it for the good of the community. Krap: That's curious, because Mr. Bernick says it is disorganising the community. Aune: My community is not Mr. Bernick's, Mr. Krap! As President of the Industrial Association, I must – Krap: You are, first and foremost, President of Mr. Bernick's shipbuilding yard; and, before everything else, you have to do your duty to the community known as the firm of Bernick & Co.; that is what every one of us lives for. Well, now you know what Mr. Bernick had to say to you. Aune: Mr. Bernick would not have put it that way, Mr. Krap! But I know well enough whom I have to thank for this. It is that damned American boat. Those fellows expect to get work done

here the way they are accustomed to it over there, and that – Krap: Yes, yes, but I can't go into all these details. You know now what Mr. Bernick means, and that is sufficient. Be so good as to go back to the yard; probably you are needed there. I shall be down myself in a little while. – Excuse me, ladies! [Bows to the ladies and goes out through the garden and down the street. AUNE goes quietly out to the right. RORLUND, who has continued his reading during the foregoing conversation, which has been carried on in low tones, has now come to the end of the book, and shuts it with a bang.] Rorlund: There, my dear ladies, that is the end of it. Mrs. Rummel: What an instructive tale! Mrs. Holt: And such a good moral! Mrs. Bernick: A book like that really gives one something to think about. Rorlund: Quite so; it presents a salutary contrast to what, unfortunately, meets our eyes every day in the newspapers and magazines. Look at the gilded and painted exterior displayed by any large community, and think what it really conceals! – emptiness and rottenness, if I may say so; no foundation of morality beneath it. In a word, these large communities of ours now-a-days are whited sepulchres. Mrs. Holt: How true! How true! Mrs. Rummel: And for an example of it, we need look no farther than at the crew of the American ship that is lying here just now. Rorlund: Oh, I would rather not speak of such offscourings of humanity as that. But even in higher circles – what is the case there? A spirit of doubt and unrest on all sides; minds never at peace, and instability characterising all their behaviour. Look how completely family life is undermined over there! Look at their shameless love of casting doubt on even the most serious truths! Dina [without looking up from her work]: But are there not many big things done there too? Rorlund: Big things done – ? I do not

understand – . Mrs. Holt [in amazement]: Good gracious, Dina – ! Mrs. Rummel [in the same breath]: Dina, how can you – ? Rorlund: I think it would scarcely be a good thing for us if such “ big things” became the rule here. No, indeed, we ought to be only too thankful that things are as they are in this country. It is true enough that tares grow up amongst our wheat here too, alas; but we do our best conscientiously to weed them out as well as we are able. The important thing is to keep society pure, ladies – to ward off all the hazardous experiments that a restless age seeks to force upon us. Mrs. Holt: And there are more than enough of them in the wind, unhappily. Mrs. Rummel: Yes, you know last year we only by a hair’s breadth escaped the project of having a railway here. Mrs. Bernick: Ah, my husband prevented that. Rorlund: Providence, Mrs. Bernick. You may be certain that your husband was the instrument of a higher Power when he refused to have anything to do with the scheme. Mrs. Bernick: And yet they said such horrible things about him in the newspapers! But we have quite forgotten to thank you, Mr. Rorlund. It is really more than friendly of you to sacrifice so much of your time to us. Rorlund: Not at all. This is holiday time, and – Mrs. Bernick: Yes, but it is a sacrifice all the same, Mr. Rorlund. Rorlund [drawing his chair nearer]: Don’t speak of it, my dear lady. Are you not all of you making some sacrifice in a good cause? – and that willingly and gladly? These poor fallen creatures for whose rescue we are working may be compared to soldiers wounded on the field of battle; you, ladies, are the kind-hearted sisters of mercy who prepare the lint for these stricken ones, lay the bandages softly on their wounds, heal them and cure them. Mrs. Bernick: It must be a wonderful gift to be able to see everything in such a

beautiful light. Rorlund: A good deal of it is inborn in one – but it can be to a great extent acquired, too. All that is needful is to see things in the light of a serious mission in life. [To MARTHA:] What do you say, Miss Bernick? Have you not felt as if you were standing on firmer ground since you gave yourself up to your school work? Martha: I really do not know what to say. There are times, when I am in the schoolroom down there, that I wish I were far away out on the stormy seas. Rorlund: That is merely temptation, dear Miss Bernick. You ought to shut the doors of your mind upon such disturbing guests as that. By the “ stormy seas” – for of course you do not intend me to take your words literally – you mean the restless tide of the great outer world, where so many are shipwrecked. Do you really set such store on the life you hear rushing by outside? Only look out into the street. There they go, walking about in the heat of the sun, perspiring and tumbling about over their little affairs. No, we undoubtedly have the best of it, who are able to sit here in the cool and turn our backs on the quarter from which disturbance comes. Martha: Yes, I have no doubt you are perfectly right. Rorlund: And in a house like this, in a good and pure home, where family life shows in its fairest colours – where peace and harmony rule – [To MRS. BERNICK:] What are you listening to, Mrs. Bernick? Mrs. Bernick [who has turned towards the door of BERNICK’S room]: They are talking very loud in there. Rorlund: Is there anything particular going on? Mrs. Bernick: I don’t know. I can hear that there is somebody with my husband. [HILMAR TONNESEN, smoking a cigar, appears in the doorway on the right, but stops short at the sight of the company of ladies.] Hilmar: Oh, excuse me – [Turns to go back.] Mrs. Bernick: No, Hilmar, come along in; you are not disturbing us. Do you want

something? Hilmar: No, I only wanted to look in here – Good morning, ladies.
[To MRS. BERNICK :] Well, what is the result? Mrs. Bernick: Of what? Hilmar:
Karsten has summoned a meeting, you know. Mrs. Bernick: Has he? What
about? Hilmar: Oh, it is this railway nonsense over again. Mrs. Rummel: Is it
possible? Mrs. Bernick: Poor Karsten, is he to have more annoyance over
that? Rorlund: But how do you explain that, Mr. Tonnesen? You know that
last year Mr. Bernick made it perfectly clear that he would not have a railway
here. Hilmar: Yes, that is what I thought, too; but I met Krap, his confidential
clerk, and he told me that the railway project had been taken up again, and
that Mr. Bernick was in consultation with three of our local capitalists. Mrs.
Rummel: Ah, I was right in thinking I heard my husband's voice. Hilmar: Of
course Mr. Rummel is in it, and so are Sandstad and Michael Vigeland," Saint
Michael", as they call him. Rorlund: Ahem! Hilmar: I beg your pardon, Mr.
Rorlund? Mrs. Bernick: Just when everything was so nice and peaceful.
Hilmar: Well, as far as I am concerned, I have not the slightest objection to
their beginning their squabbling again. It will be a little diversion, any way.
Rorlund: I think we can dispense with that sort of diversion. Hilmar: It
depends how you are constituted. Certain natures feel the lust of battle now
and then. But unfortunately life in a country town does not offer much in that
way, and it isn't given to every one to [turns the leaves of the book
RORLUND has been reading]. " Woman as the Handmaid of Society. " What
sort of drivel is this? Mrs. Bernick: My dear Hilmar, you must not say that.
You certainly have not read the book. Hilmar: No, and I have no intention of
reading it, either. Mrs. Bernick: Surely you are not feeling quite well today.
Hilmar: No, I am not. Mrs. Bernick: Perhaps you did not sleep well last night?

Hilmar: No, I slept very badly. I went for a walk yesterday evening for my health's sake; and I finished up at the club and read a book about a Polar expedition. There is something bracing in following the adventures of men who are battling with the elements. Mrs. Rummel: But it does not appear to have done you much good, Mr. Tonnesen. Hilmar: No, it certainly did not. I lay all night tossing about, only half asleep, and dreamt that I was being chased by a hideous walrus. Olaf [who meanwhile has come up the steps from the garden]: Have you been chased by a walrus, uncle? Hilmar: I dreamt it, you duffer! Do you mean to say you are still playing about with that ridiculous bow? Why don't you get hold of a real gun? Olaf: I should like to, but – Hilmar: There is some sense in a thing like that; it is always an excitement every time you fire it off. Olaf: And then I could shoot bears, uncle. But daddy won't let me. Mrs. Bernick: You really mustn't put such ideas into his head, Hilmar. Hilmar: Hm! It's a nice breed we are educating up now-a-days, isn't it! We talk a great deal about manly sports, goodness knows – but we only play with the question, all the same; there is never any serious inclination for the bracing discipline that lies in facing danger manfully. Don't stand pointing your crossbow at me, blockhead – it might go off! Olaf: No, uncle, there is no arrow in it. Hilmar: You don't know that there isn't – there may be, all the same. Take it away, I tell you ! – Why on earth have you never gone over to America on one of your father's ships? You might have seen a buffalo hunt then, or a fight with Red Indians. Mrs. Bernick: Oh, Hilmar – ! Olaf: I should like that awfully, uncle; and then perhaps I might meet Uncle Johan and Aunt Lona. Hilmar: Hm! – Rubbish. Mrs. Bernick: You can go down into the garden again now, Olaf. Olaf: Mother,

may I go out into the street too? Mrs. Bernick: Yes, but not too far, mind.

[OLAF runs down into the garden and out through the gate in the fence.]

Rorlund: You ought not to put such fancies into the child's head, Mr.

Tonnesen. Hilmar: No, of course he is destined to be a miserable stay-at-home, like so many others. Rorlund: But why do you not take a trip over

there yourself? Hilmar: I? With my wretched health? Of course I get no consideration on that account. But putting that out of the question, you forget that one has certain obligations to perform towards the community of which one forms a part. There must be some one here to hold aloft the

banner of the Ideal. – Ugh, there he is shouting again ! The Ladies: Who is shouting? Hilmar: I am sure I don't know. They are raising their voices so

loud in there that it gets on my nerves. Mrs. Bernick: I expect it is my husband, Mr. Tonnesen. But you must remember he is so accustomed to addressing large audiences. Rorlund: I should not call the others low-voiced, either. Hilmar: Good Lord, no! – not on any question that touches their pockets. Everything here ends in these petty material considerations. Ugh!

Mrs. Bernick: Anyway, that is a better state of things than it used to be when everything ended in mere frivolity. Mrs. Lyngé: Things really used to be as

bad as that here? Mrs. Rummel: Indeed they were, Mrs. Lyngé. You may think yourself lucky that you did not live here then. Mrs. Holt: Yes, times

have changed, and no mistake, when I look back to the days when I was a girl. Mrs. Rummel: Oh, you need not look back more than fourteen or fifteen

years. God forgive us, what a life we led! There used to be a Dancing Society and a Musical Society – Mrs. Bernick: And the Dramatic Club. I remember it

very well. Mrs. Rummel: Yes, that was where your play was performed, Mr.

Tonnesen. Hilmar [from the back of the room]: What, what? Rorlund: A play by Mr. Tonnesen? Mrs. Rummel: Yes, it was long before you came here, Mr. Rorlund. And it was only performed once. Mrs. Lyngé: Was that not the play in which you told me you took the part of a young man's sweetheart, Mrs. Rummel? Mrs. Rummel [glancing towards RORLUND]: I? I really cannot remember, Mrs. Lyngé. But I remember well all the riotous gaiety that used to go on. Mrs. Holt: Yes, there were houses I could name in which two large dinner-parties were given in one week. Mrs. Lyngé: And surely I have heard that a touring theatrical company came here, too? Mrs. Rummel: Yes, that was the worst thing of the lot. Mrs. Holt [uneasily]: Ahem! Mrs. Rummel: Did you say a theatrical company? No, I don't remember that at all. Mrs. Lyngé: Oh yes, and I have been told they played all sorts of mad pranks. What is really the truth of those stories? Mrs. Rummel: There is practically no truth in them, Mrs. Lyngé. Mrs. Holt: Dina, my love, will you give me that linen? Mrs. Bernick [at the same time]: Dina, dear, will you go and ask Katrine to bring us our coffee? Martha: I will go with you, Dina. [DINA and MARTHA go out by the farther door on, the left.] Mrs. Bernick [getting up]: Will you excuse me for a few minutes? I think we will have our coffee outside. [She goes out to the verandah and sets to work to lay a table. RORLUND stands in the doorway talking to her. HILMAR sits outside, smoking.] Mrs. Rummel [in a low voice]: My goodness, Mrs. Lyngé, how you frightened me! Mrs. Lyngé: I? Mrs. Holt: Yes, but you know it was you that began it, Mrs. Rummel. Mrs. Rummel: I? How can you say such a thing, Mrs. Holt? Not a syllable passed my lips! Mrs. Lyngé: But what does it all mean? Mrs. Rummel: What made you begin to talk about – ? Think – did you not see that Dina was in the room? Mrs.

Lynge: Dina? Good gracious, is there anything wrong with – ? Mrs. Holt: And in this house, too! Did you not know it was Mrs. Bernick's brother – ? Mrs. Lynge: What about him? I know nothing about it at all; I am quite new to the place, you know. Mrs. Rummel: Have you not heard that – ? Ahem! [To her daughter] Hilda, dear, you can go for a little stroll in the garden? Mrs. Holt: You go too, Netta. And be very kind to poor Dina when she comes back. [HILDA and NETTA go out into the garden.] Mrs. Lynge: Well, what about Mrs. Bernick's brother? Mrs. Rummel: Don't you know the dreadful scandal about him? Mrs. Lynge: A dreadful scandal about Mr. Tonnesen? Mrs. Rummel: Good Heavens, no. Mr. Tonnesen is her cousin, of course, Mrs. Lynge. I am speaking of her brother – Mrs. Holt: The wicked Mr. Tonnesen – Mrs. Rummel: His name was Johan. He ran away to America. Mrs. Holt: Had to run away, you must understand. Mrs. Lynge: Then it is he the scandal is about? Mrs. Rummel: Yes; there was something – how shall I put it? – there was something of some kind between him and Dina's mother. I remember it all as if it were yesterday. Johan Tonnesen was in old Mrs. Bernick's office then; Karsten Bernick had just come back from Paris – he had not yet become engaged – Mrs. Lynge: Yes, but what was the scandal? Mrs. Rummel: Well, you must know that Moller's company were acting in the town that winter – Mrs. Holt: And Dorf, the actor, and his wife were in the company. All the young men in the town were infatuated with her. Mrs. Rummel: Yes, goodness knows how they could think her pretty. Well, Dorf came home late one evening – Mrs. Holt: Quite unexpectedly. Mrs. Rummel: And found his – No, really it isn't a thing one can talk about. Mrs. Holt: After all, Mrs. Rummel, he didn't find anything, because the door was locked on the inside.

Mrs. Rummel: Yes, that is just what I was going to say – he found the door locked. And – just think of it – the man that was in the house had to jump out of the window. Mrs. Holt: Right down from an attic window. Mrs. Lynge: And that was Mrs. Bernick's brother? Mrs. Rummel: Yes, it was he. Mrs. Lynge: And that was why he ran away to America? Mrs. Holt: Yes, he had to run away, you may be sure. Mrs. Rummel: Because something was discovered afterwards that was nearly as bad; just think – he had been making free with the cash-box... Mrs. Holt: But, you know, no one was certain of that, Mrs. Rummel; perhaps there was no truth in the rumour. Mrs. Rummel: Well, I must say – ! Wasn't it known all over the town? Did not old Mrs. Bernick nearly go bankrupt as the result of it? However, God forbid I should be the one to spread such reports. Mrs. Holt: Well, anyway, Mrs. Dorf didn't get the money, because she – Mrs. Lynge: Yes, what happened to Dina's parents afterwards? Mrs. Rummel: Well, Dorf deserted both his wife and his child. But madam was impudent enough to stay here a whole year. Of course she had not the face to appear at the theatre any more, but she kept herself by taking in washing and sewing – Mrs. Holt: And then she tried to set up a dancing school. Mrs. Rummel: Naturally that was no good. What parents would trust their children to such a woman? But it did not last very long. The fine madam was not accustomed to work; she got something wrong with her lungs and died of it. Mrs. Lynge: What a horrible scandal! Mrs. Rummel: Yes, you can imagine how hard it was upon the Bernicks. It is the dark spot among the sunshine of their good fortune, as Rummel once put it. So never speak about it in this house, Mrs. Lynge. Mrs. Holt: And for heaven's sake never mention the stepsister, either! Mrs. Lynge: Oh, so Mrs. Bernick has a

step-sister, too? Mrs. Rummel: Had, luckily – for the relationship between them is all over now. She was an extraordinary person too! Would you believe it, she cut her hair short, and used to go about in men's boots in bad weather! Mrs. Holt: And when her step-brother, the black sheep, had gone away, and the whole town naturally was talking about him – what do you think she did? She went out to America to him! Mr. Rummel: Yes, but remember the scandal she caused before she went, Mrs. Holt. Mrs. Holt: Hush, don't speak of it. Mrs. Lyngé: My goodness, did she create a scandal too? Mrs. Rummel: I think you ought to hear it, Mrs. Lyngé. Mr. Bernick had just got engaged to Betty Tonnesen, and the two of them went arm in arm into her aunt's room to tell her the news – Mrs. Holt: The Tonnesens' parents were dead, you know – Mrs. Rummel: When, suddenly, up got Lona Hessel from her chair and gave our refined and well-bred Karsten Bernick such a box on the ear that his head swam. Mrs. Lyngé: Well, I am sure I never – Mrs. Holt: It is absolutely true. Mrs. Rummel: And then she packed her box and went away to America. Mrs. Lyngé: I suppose she had had her eye on him for herself. Mrs. Rummel: Of course she had. She imagined that he and she would make a match of it when he came back from Paris. Mrs. Holt: The idea of her thinking such a thing! Karsten Bernick – a man of the world and the pink of courtesy, a perfect gentleman, the darling of all the ladies... Mrs. Rummel: And, with it all, such an excellent young man, Mrs. Holt – so moral. Mrs. Lyngé: But what has this Miss Hessel made of herself in America? Mrs. Rummel: Well, you see, over that [as my husband once put it] has been drawn a veil which one should hesitate to lift. Mrs. Lyngé: What do you mean? Mrs. Rummel: She no longer has any connection with the family, as

you may suppose; but this much the whole town knows, that she has sung for money in drinking saloons over there – Mrs. Holt: And has given lectures in public – Mrs. Rummel: And has published some mad kind of book. Mrs. Lyngé: You don't say so! Mrs. Rummel: Yes, it is true enough that Lona Hessel is one of the spots on the sun of the Bernick family's good fortune. Well, now you know the whole story, Mrs. Lyngé. I am sure I would never have spoken about it except to put you on your guard. Mrs. Lyngé: Oh, you may be sure I shall be most careful. But that poor child Dina Dorf! I am truly sorry for her. Mrs. Rummel: Well, really it was a stroke of good luck for her. Think what it would have meant if she had been brought up by such parents! Of course we did our best for her, every one of us, and gave her all the good advice we could. Eventually Miss Bernick got her taken into this house. Mrs. Holt: But she has always been a difficult child to deal with. It is only natural – with all the bad examples she had had before her. A girl of that sort is not like one of our own; one must be lenient with her. Mrs. Rummel: Hush – here she comes. [In a louder voice.] Yes, Dina is really a clever girl. Oh, is that you, Dina? We are just putting away the things. Mrs. Holt: How delicious your coffee smells, my dear Dina. A nice cup of coffee like that – Mrs. Bernick [calling in from the verandah]: Will you come out here? [Meanwhile MARTHA and DINA have helped the Maid to bring out the coffee. All the ladies seat themselves on the verandah, and talk with a great show of kindness to DINA. In a few moments DINA comes back into the room and looks for her sewing.] Mrs. Bernick[from the coffee table]: Dina, won't you – ? Dina: No, thank you. [Sits down to her sewing. MRS. BERNICK and RORLUND exchange a few words; a moment afterwards he comes back into the room, makes a pretext

for going up to the table, and begins speaking to DINA in low tones.] Rorlund: Dina. Dina: Yes? Rorlund: Why don't you want to sit with the others? Dina: When I came in with the coffee, I could see from the strange lady's face that they had been talking about me. Rorlund: But did you not see as well how agreeable she was to you out there? Dina: That is just what I will not stand Rorlund: You are very self-willed, Dina. Dina: Yes. Rorlund: But why? Dina: Because it is my nature. Rorlund: Could you not try to alter your nature? Dina: No. Rorlund: Why not? Dina [looking at him]: Because I am one of the "poor fallen creatures", you know. Rorlund: For shame, Dina. Dina: So was my mother. Rorlund: Who has spoken to you about such things? Dina: No one; they never do. Why don't they? They all handle me in such a gingerly fashion, as if they thought I should go to pieces if they – . Oh, how I hate all this kind-heartedness. Rorlund: My dear Dina, I can quite understand that you feel repressed here, but – Dina: Yes; if only I could get right away from here. I could make my own way quite well, if only I did not live amongst people who are so – so – Rorlund: So what? Dina: So proper and so moral. Rorlund: Oh but, Dina, you don't mean that. Dina: You know quite well in what sense I mean it. Hilda and Netta come here every day, to be exhibited to me as good examples. I can never be so beautifully behaved as they; I don't want to be. If only I were right away from it all, I should grow to be worth something. Rorlund: But you are worth a great deal, Dina dear. Dina: What good does that do me here? Rorlund: Get right away, you say? Do you mean it seriously? Dina: I would not stay here a day longer, if it were not for you. Rorlund: Tell me, Dina – why is it that you are fond of being with me? Dina: Because you teach me so much that is beautiful. Rorlund: Beautiful?

Do you call the little I can teach you, beautiful? Dina: Yes. Or perhaps, to be accurate, it is not that you teach me anything; but when I listen to you talking I see beautiful visions. Rorlund: What do you mean exactly when you call a thing beautiful? Dina: I have never thought it out. Rorlund: Think it out now, then. What do you understand by a beautiful thing? Dina: A beautiful thing is something that is great – and far off. Rorlund: Hm! – Dina, I am so deeply concerned about you, my dear. Dina: Only that? Rorlund: You know perfectly well that you are dearer to me than I can say. Dina: If I were Hilda or Netta, you would not be afraid to let people see it. Rorlund: Ah, Dina, you can have no idea of the number of things I am forced to take into consideration. When it is a man's lot to be a moral pillar of the community he lives in, he cannot be too circumspect. If only I could be certain that people would interpret my motives properly. But no matter for that; you must, and shall be, helped to raise yourself. Dina, is it a bargain between us that when I come – when circumstances allow me to come – to you and say: " Here is my hand, " you will take it and be my wife? Will you promise me that, Dina? Dina: Yes. Rorlund: Thank you, thank you! Because for my part, too – oh, Dina, I love you so dearly. Hush! Some one is coming. Dina – for my sake – go out to the others.[She goes out to the coffee table. At the same moment RUMMEL, SANDSTAD and VIGELAND come out of BERNICK'S room, followed by Bernick, who has a bundle of papers in his hand.] Bernick: Well, then, the matter is settled. Vigeland: Yes, I hope to goodness it is. Rummel: It is settled, Bernick. A Norseman's word stands as firm as the rocks on Dovrefjeld, you know! Bernick: And no one must falter, no one give way, no matter what opposition we meet with. Rummel: We will stand or fall

together, Bernick. Hilmar [coming in from the verandah]: Fall? If I may ask, isn't it the railway scheme that is going to fall? Bernick: No, on the contrary, it is going to proceed – Rummel: Full steam, Mr. Tonnesen. Hilmar [coming nearer]: Really? Rorlund: How is that? Mrs. Bernick[at the verandah door]: Karsten, dear, what is it that – ? Bernick: My dear Betty, how can it interest you? [To the three men.] We must get out lists of subscribers, and the sooner the better. Obviously our four names must head the list. The positions we occupy in the community makes it our duty to make ourselves as prominent as possible in the affair. Sandstad: Obviously, Mr. Bernick. Rummel: The thing shall go through, Bernick; I swear it shall! Bernick: Oh, I have not the least anticipation of failure. We must see that we work, each one among the circle of his own acquaintances; and if we can point to the fact that the scheme is exciting a lively interest in all ranks of society, then it stands to reason that our Municipal Corporation will have to contribute its share. Mrs. Bernick: Karsten, you really must come out here and tell us – Bernick: My dear Betty, it is an affair that does not concern ladies at all. Hilmar: Then you are really going to support this railway scheme after all? Bernick: Yes, naturally. Rorlund: But last year, Mr. Bernick – Bernick: Last year it was quite another thing. At that time it was a question of a line along the coast – Vigeland: Which would have been quite superfluous, Mr. Rorlund; because, of course, we have our steamboat service – Sandstad: And would have been quite unreasonably costly – Rummel: Yes, and would have absolutely ruined certain important interests in the town. Bernick: The main point was that it would not have been to the advantage of the community as a whole. That is why I opposed it, with the result that the inland line was

resolved upon. Hilmar: Yes, but surely that will not touch the towns about here. Bernick: It will eventually touch our town, my dear Hilmar, because we are going to build a branch line here. Hilmar: Aha – a new scheme, then? Rummel: Yes, isn't it a capital scheme? What? Rorlund: Hm! – Vigeland: There is no denying that it looks as though Providence had just planned the configuration of the country to suit a branch line. Rorlund: Do you really mean it, Mr. Vigeland? Bernick: Yes, I must confess it seems to me as if it had been the hand of Providence that caused me to take a journey on business this spring, in the course of which I happened to traverse a valley through which I had never been before. It came across my mind like a flash of lightning that this was where we could carry a branch line down to our town. I got an engineer to survey the neighbourhood, and have here the provisional calculations and estimate; so there is nothing to hinder us. Mrs. Bernick [who is still with the other ladies at the verandah door]: But, my dear Karsten, to think that you should have kept it all a secret from us! Bernick: Ah, my dear Betty, I knew you would not have been able to grasp the exact situation. Besides, I have not mentioned it to a living soul until today. But now the decisive moment has come, and we must work openly and with all our might. Yes, even if I have to risk all I have for its sake, I mean to push the matter through. Rummel: And we will back you up, Bernick; you may rely upon that. Rorlund: Do you really promise us so much, then, from this undertaking, gentlemen? Bernick: Yes, undoubtedly. Think what a lever it will be to raise the status of our whole community. Just think of the immense tracts of forest-land that it will make accessible; think of all the rich deposits of minerals we shall be able to work; think of the river with one waterfall

above another! Think of the possibilities that open out in the way of manufactories! Rorlund: And are you not afraid that an easier intercourse with the depravity of the outer world – ? Bernick: No, you may make your mind quite easy on that score, Mr. Rorlund. Our little hive of industry rests now-a-days, God be thanked, on such a sound moral basis; we have all of us helped to drain it, if I may use the expression; and that we will continue to do, each in his degree. You, Mr. Rorlund, will continue your richly blessed activity in our schools and our homes. We, the practical men of business, will be the support of the community by extending its welfare within as wide a radius as possible; and our women – yes, come nearer ladies – you will like to hear it – our women, I say, our wives and daughters – you, ladies – will work on undisturbed in the service of charity, and moreover will be a help and a comfort to your nearest and dearest, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf.[Looks around him.] Where is Olaf today? Mrs. Bernick: Oh, in the holidays it is impossible to keep him at home. Bernick: I have no doubt he is down at the shore again. You will see he will end by coming to some harm there. Hilmar: Bah! A little sport with the forces of nature Mrs. Rummel: Your family affection is beautiful, Mr. Bernick! Bernick: Well, the family is the kernel of society. A good home, honoured and trusty friends, a little snug family circle where no disturbing elements can cast their shadow – [KRAP comes in from the right, bringing letters and papers.] Krap: The foreign mail, Mr. Bernick – and a telegram from New York. Bernick [taking the telegram]: Ah – from the owners of the “ Indian Girl”. Rummel: Is the mail in? Oh, then you must excuse me. Vigeland: And me too. Sandstad: Good day, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: Good day, good day, gentlemen. And remember, we have a

meeting this afternoon at five o'clock. The Three Men: Yes – quite so – of course. [They go out to the right.] Bernick [who has read the telegram]: This is thoroughly American! Absolutely shocking! Mrs. Bernick: Good gracious, Karsten, what is it? Bernick: Look at this, Krap! Read it! Krap [reading]: " Do the least repairs possible. Send over ' Indian Girl' as soon as she is ready to sail; good time of year; at a pinch her cargo will keep her afloat. " Well, I must say – Rorlund: You see the state of things in these vaunted great communities! Bernick: You are quite right; not a moment's consideration for human life, when it is a question of making a profit. [To KRAP:] Can the " Indian Girl" go to sea in four – or five – days? Krap: Yes, if Mr. Vigeland will agree to our stopping work on the " Palm Tree" meanwhile. Bernick: Hm – he won't. Well, be so good as to look through the letters. And look here, did you see Olaf down at the quay? Krap: No, Mr. Bernick. [Goes into BERNICK'S room.] Bernick [looking at the telegram again]: These gentlemen think nothing of risking eight men's lives – Hilmar: Well, it is a sailor's calling to brave the elements; it must be a fine tonic to the nerves to be like that, with only a thin plank between one and the abyss – Bernick: I should like to see the ship-owner amongst us who would condescend to such a thing! There is not one that would do it – not a single one! [Sees OLAF coming up to the house.] Ah, thank Heaven, here he is, safe and sound. [OLAF, with a fishing-line in his hand, comes running up the garden and in through the verandah.] Olaf: Uncle Hilmar, I have been down and seen the steamer. Bernick: Have you been down to the quay again? Olaf: No, I have only been out in a boat. But just think, Uncle Hilmar, a whole circus company has come on shore, with horses and animals; and there were such lots of passengers. Mrs.

Rummel: No, are we really to have a circus? Rorlund: We? I certainly have no desire to see it. Mrs. Rummel: No, of course I don't mean we, but – Dina: I should like to see a circus very much. Olaf: So should I. Hilmar: You are a duffer. Is that anything to see? Mere tricks. No, it would be something quite different to see the Gaucho careering over the Pampas on his snorting mustang. But, Heaven help us, in these wretched little towns of ours. Olaf [pulling at MARTHA'S dress]: Look, Aunt Martha! Look, there they come! Mrs. Holt: Good Lord, yes – here they come. Mrs. Lynge: Ugh, what horrid people! [A number of passengers and a whole crowd of townsfolk, are seen coming up the street.] Mrs. Rummel: They are a set of mountebanks, certainly. Just look at that woman in the grey dress, Mrs. Holt – the one with a knapsack over her shoulder. Mrs. Holt: Yes – look – she has slung it on the handle of her parasol. The manager's wife, I expect. Mrs. Rummel: And there is the manager himself, no doubt. He looks a regular pirate. Don't look at him, Hilda! Mrs. Holt: Nor you, Netta! Olaf: Mother, the manager is bowing to us. Bernick: What? Mrs. Bernick: What are you saying, child? Mrs. Rummel: Yes, and – good Heavens – the woman is bowing to us too. Bernick: That is a little too cool – Martha [exclaims involuntarily]: Ah – ! Mrs. Bernick: What is it, Martha? Martha: Nothing, nothing. I thought for a moment – Olaf [shrieking with delight]: Look, look, there are the rest of them, with the horses and animals! And there are the Americans, too! All the sailors from the " Indian Girl"! [The strains of " Yankee Doodle, " played on a clarinet and a drum, are heard.] Hilmar [stopping his ears]: Ugh, ugh, ugh! Rorlund: I think we ought to withdraw ourselves from sight a little, ladies; we have nothing to do with such goings on. Let us go to our work again. Mrs. Bernick: Do you think we

had better draw the curtains? Rorlund: Yes, that was exactly what I meant.

[The ladies resume their places at the work-table; RORLUND shuts the verandah door, and draws the curtains over it and over the windows, so that the room becomes half dark.] Olaf [peeping out through the curtains]:

Mother, the manager's wife is standing by the fountain now, washing her face. Mrs. Bernick: What? In the middle of the marketplace? Mrs. Rummel: And in broad daylight, too! Hilmar: Well, I must say if I were travelling across a desert waste and found myself beside a well, I am sure I should not stop to think whether – . Ugh, that frightful clarinet! Rorlund: It is really high time the police interfered. Bernick: Oh no; we must not be too hard on foreigners. Of course these folk have none of the deep-seated instincts of decency which restrain us within proper bounds. Suppose they do behave outrageously, what does it concern us? Fortunately this spirit of disorder, that flies in the face of all that is customary and right, is absolutely a stranger to our community, if I may say so – . What is this! [LONA HESSEL walks briskly in from the door on the right.] The Ladies [in low, frightened tones]: The circus woman! The manager's wife! Mrs. Bernick: Heavens, what does this mean? Martha [jumping up]: Ah – ! Lona: How do you do, Betty dear! How do you do, Martha! How do you do, brother-inlaw! Mrs. Bernick [with a cry]: Lona – ! Bernick [stumbling backwards]: As sure as I am alive – ! Mrs. Holt: Mercy on us – ! Mrs. Rummel: It cannot possibly be – ! Hilmar: Well! Ugh! Mrs. Bernick: Lona – ! Is it really – ? Lona: Really me? Yes, indeed it is; you may fall on my neck if you like. Hilmar: Ugh, ugh! Mrs. Bernick: And coming back here as – ? Mrs. Bernick: And actually mean to appear in – ? Lona: Appear? Appear in what? Bernick: Well, I mean – in the circus – Lona: Ha, ha, ha! Are you mad,

brother-inlaw? Do you think I belong to the circus troupe? No, certainly I have turned my hand to a good many things and made a fool of myself in a good many ways – Mrs. Rummel: Hm! Lona: But I have never tried circus riding. Bernick: Then you are not – ? Mrs. Bernick: Thank Heaven! Lona: No, we travelled like other respectable folk, second-class, certainly, but we are accustomed to that. Mrs. Bernick: We, did you say? Bernick [taking a step for-ward]: Whom do you mean by “ we”? Lona: I and the child, of course. The Ladies [with a cry]: The child! Hilmar: What? Rorlund: I really must say – ! Mrs. Bernick: But what do you mean, Lona? Lona: I mean John, of course; I have no other child, as far as I know, but John, or Johan as you used to call him. Mrs. Bernick: Johan – Mrs. Rummel [in an undertone to MRS. LYNGE]: The scapegrace brother! Bernick [hesitatingly]: Is Johan with you? Lona: Of course he is; I certainly would not come without him. Why do you look so tragical? And why are you sitting here in the gloom, sewing white things? There has not been a death in the family, has there? Rorlund: Madam, you find yourself in the Society for Fallen Women. Lona [half to herself]: What? Can these nice, quiet-looking ladies possibly be – ? Mrs. Rummel: Well, really – ! Lona: Oh, I understand! But, bless my soul, that is surely Mrs. Rummel? And Mrs. Holt sitting there too! Well, we three have not grown younger since the last time we met. But listen now, good people; let the Fallen Women wait for a day – they will be none the worse for that. A joyful occasion like this – Rorlund: A home-coming is not always a joyful occasion. Lona: Indeed? How do you read your Bible, Mr. Parson? Rorlund: I am not a parson. Lona: Oh, you will grow into one, then. But – faugh! – this moral linen of yours smells tainted, just like a winding-sheet. I am accustomed to the air of the prairies,

let me tell you. Bernick [wiping his forehead]: Yes, it certainly is rather close in here. Lona: Wait a moment; we will resurrect ourselves from this vault. [Pulls the curtains to one side] We must have broad daylight in here when the boy comes. Ah, you will see a boy then that has washed himself. Hilmar: Ugh! Lona [opening the verandah door and window]: I should say, when he has washed himself, up at the hotel – for on the boat he got piggishly dirty. Hilmar: Ugh, ugh! Lona: Ugh? Why, surely isn't that – ? [Points at HILDAR and asks the others]: Is he still loafing about here saying " Ugh"? Hilmar: I do not loaf; it is the state of my health that keeps me here. Rorlund: Ahem! Ladies, I do not think – Lona [who has noticed OLAF]: Is he yours, Betty? Give me a paw, my boy! Or are you afraid of your ugly old aunt? Rorlund [putting his book under his arm]: Ladies, I do not think any of us is in the mood for any more work today. I suppose we are to meet again tomorrow? Lona [while the others are getting up and taking their leave]: Yes, let us. I shall be on the spot. Rorlund: You? Pardon me, Miss Hessel, but what do you propose to do in our Society? Lona: I will let some fresh air into it, Mr. Parson. ACT II

[SCENE. – The same room. MRS. BERNICK is sitting alone at the work-table, sewing. BERNICK comes in from the right, wearing his hat and gloves and carrying a stick.] Mrs. Bernick: Home already, Karsten? Bernick: Yes, I have made an appointment with a man. Mrs. Bernick [with a sigh]: Oh yes, I suppose Johan is coming up here again. Bernick: With a man, I said. [Lays down his hat.] What has become of all the ladies today? Mrs. Bernick: Mrs. Rummel and Hilda hadn't time to come. Bernick: Oh ! – did they send any excuse? Mrs. Bernick: Yes, they had so much to do at home. Bernick: Naturally. And of course the others are not coming either? Mrs. Bernick: No,

something has prevented them today, too. Bernick: I could have told you that, beforehand. Where is Olaf? Mrs. Bernick: I let him go out a little with Dina. Bernick: Hm – she is a giddy little baggage. Did you see how she at once started making a fuss of Johan yesterday? Mrs. Bernick: But, my dear Karsten, you know Dina knows nothing whatever of – Bernick: No, but in any case Johan ought to have had sufficient tact not to pay her any attention. I saw quite well, from his face, what Vigeland thought of it. Mrs. Bernick [laying her sewing down on her lap]: Karsten, can you imagine what his objective is in coming here? Bernick: Well – I know he has a farm over there, and I fancy he is not doing particularly well with it; she called attention yesterday to the fact that they were obliged to travel second class – Mrs. Bernick: Yes, I am afraid it must be something of that sort. But to think of her coming with him! She! After the deadly insult she offered you! Bernick: Oh, don't think about that ancient history. Mrs. Bernick: How can I help thinking of it just now? After all, he is my brother – still, it is not on his account that I am distressed, but because of all the unpleasantness it would mean for you. Karsten, I am so dreadfully afraid! Bernick: Afraid of what? Mrs. Bernick: Isn't it possible that they may send him to prison for stealing that money from your mother? Bernick: What rubbish! Who can prove that the money was stolen? Mrs. Bernick: The whole town knows it, unfortunately; and you know you said yourself. Bernick: I said nothing. The town knows nothing whatever about the affair; the whole thing was no more than idle rumour. Mrs. Bernick: How magnanimous you are, Karsten! Bernick: Do not let us have any more of these reminiscences, please! You don't know how you torture me by raking all that up. [Walks up and down; then flings his stick away from him.] And to

think of their coming home now – just now, when it is particularly necessary for me that I should stand well in every respect with the town and with the Press. Our newspaper men will be sending paragraphs to the papers in the other towns about here. Whether I receive them well, or whether I receive them ill, it will all be discussed and talked over. They will rake up all those old stories – as you do. In a community like ours – [Throws his gloves down on the table.] And I have not a soul here to whom I can talk about it and to whom I can go for support. Mrs. Bernick: No one at all, Karsten? Bernick: No – who is there? And to have them on my shoulders just at this moment! Without a doubt they will create a scandal in some way or another – she, in particular. It is simply a calamity to be connected with such folk in any way! Mrs. Bernick: Well, I can't help their – Bernick: What can't you help? Their being your relations? No, that is quite true. Mrs. Bernick: And I did not ask them to come home. Bernick: That's it – go on! " I did not ask them to come home; I did not write to them; I did not drag them home by the hair of their heads! " Oh, I know the whole rigmarole by heart. Mrs. Bernick [bursting into tears]: You need not be so unkind – Bernick: Yes, that's right – begin to cry, so that our neighbours may have that to gossip about too. Do stop being so foolish, Betty. Go and sit outside; some one may come in here. I don't suppose you want people to see the lady of the house with red eyes? It would be a nice thing, wouldn't it, if the story got out about that – . There, I hear some one in the passage. [A knock is heard at the door.] Come in! [MRS. BERNICK takes her sewing and goes out down the garden steps. AUNE comes in from the right.] Aune: Good morning, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: Good morning. Well, I suppose you can guess what I want you for? Aune: Mr. Krap

told me yesterday that you were not pleased with – Bernick: I am displeased with the whole management of the yard, Aune. The work does not get on as quickly as it ought. The “ Palm Tree” ought to have been under sail long ago. Mr. Vigeland comes here every day to complain about it; he is a difficult man to have with one as part owner. Aune: The “ Palm Tree” can go to sea the day after tomorrow. Bernick: At last. But what about the American ship, the “ Indian Girl, ” which has been laid up here for five weeks and – Aune: The American ship? I understood that, before everything else, we were to work our hardest to get your own ship ready. Bernick: I gave you no reason to think so. You ought to have pushed on as fast as possible with the work on the American ship also; but you have not. Aune: Her bottom is completely rotten, Mr. Bernick; the more we patch it, the worse it gets. Bernick: That is not the reason. Krap has told me the whole truth. You do not understand how to work the new machines I have provided – or rather, you will not try to work them. Aune: Mr. Bernick, I am well on in the fifties; and ever since I was a boy I have been accustomed to the old way of working – Bernick: We cannot work that way now-a-days. You must not imagine, Aune, that it is for the sake of making profit; I do not need that, fortunately; but I owe consideration to the community I live in, and to the business I am at the head of. I must take the lead in progress, or there would never be any. Aune: I welcome progress too, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: Yes, for your own limited circle – for the working class. Oh, I know what a busy agitator you are; you make speeches, you stir people up; but when some concrete instance of progress presents itself – as now, in the case of our machines – you do not want to have anything to do with it; you are afraid. Aune: Yes, I really am afraid, Mr.

Bernick. I am afraid for the number of men who will have the bread taken out of their mouths by these machines. You are very fond, sir, of talking about the consideration we owe to the community; it seems to me, however, that the community has its duties too. Why should science and capital venture to introduce these new discoveries into labour, before the community has had time to educate a generation up to using them? Bernick: You read and think too much, Aune; it does you no good, and that is what makes you dissatisfied with your lot. Aune: It is not, Mr. Bernick; but I cannot bear to see one good workman dismissed after another, to starve because of these machines.

Bernick: Hm! When the art of printing was discovered, many a quill-driver was reduced to starvation. Aune: Would you have admired the art so greatly if you had been a quill-driver in those days, sir? Bernick: I did not send for you to argue with you. I sent for you to tell you that the "Indian Girl" must be ready to put to sea the day after tomorrow. Aune: But, Mr. Bernick – Bernick: The day after tomorrow, do you hear? – at the same time as our own ship, not an hour later. I have good reasons for hurrying on the work. Have you seen today's paper? Well, then you know the pranks these American sailors have been up to again. The rascally pack are turning the whole town upside down. Not a night passes without some brawling in the taverns or the streets – not to speak of other abominations. Aune: Yes, they certainly are a bad lot. Bernick: And who is it that has to bear the blame for all this disorder? It is I! Yes, it is I who have to suffer for it. These newspaper fellows are making all sorts of covert insinuations because we are devoting all our energies to the "Palm Tree." I, whose task in life it is to influence my fellow-citizens by the force of example, have to endure this sort of thing cast in my

face. I am not going to stand that. I have no fancy for having my good name smirched in that way. Aune: Your name stands high enough to endure that and a great deal more, sir. Bernick: Not just now. At this particular moment I have need of all the respect and goodwill my fellow-citizens can give me. I have a big undertaking on, the stocks, as you probably have heard; but, if it should happen that evil-disposed persons succeeded in shaking the absolute confidence I enjoy, it might land me in the greatest difficulties. That is why I want, at any price, to avoid these shameful innuendoes in the papers, and that is why I name the day after tomorrow as the limit of the time I can give you. Aune: Mr. Bernick, you might just as well name this afternoon as the limit. Bernick: You mean that I am asking an impossibility? Aune: Yes, with the hands we have now at the yard. Bernick: Very good; then we must look about elsewhere. Aune: Do you really mean, sir, to discharge still more of your old workmen? Bernick: No, I am not thinking of that. Aune: Because I think it would cause bad blood against you both among the townsfolk and in the papers, if you did that. Bernick: Very probably; therefore, we will not do it. But, if the "Indian Girl" is not ready to sail the day after tomorrow, I shall discharge you. Aune [with a start]: Me! [He laughs.] You are joking, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: I should not be so sure of that, if I were you. Aune: Do you mean that you can contemplate discharging me? – Me, whose father and grandfather worked in your yard all their lives, as I have done myself – ? Bernick: Who is it that is forcing me to do it? Aune: You are asking what is impossible, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: Oh, where there's a will there's a way. Yes or no; give me a decisive answer, or consider yourself discharged on the spot. Aune [coming a step nearer to him]: Mr. Bernick, have you ever

realised what discharging an old workman means? You think he can look about for another job? Oh, yes, he can do that; but does that dispose of the matter? You should just be there once, in the house of a workman who has been discharged, the evening he comes home bringing all his tools with him.

Bernick: Do you think I am discharging you with a light heart? Have I not always been a good master to you? Aune: So much the worse, Mr. Bernick. Just for that very reason those at home will not blame you; they will say nothing to me, because they dare not; but they will look at me when I am not noticing, and think that I must have deserved it. You see, sir, that is – that is what I cannot bear. I am a mere nobody, I know; but I have always been accustomed to stand first in my own home. My humble home is a little community too, Mr. Bernick – a little community which I have been able to support and maintain because my wife has believed in me and because my children have believed in me. And now it is all to fall to pieces.

Bernick: Still, if there is nothing else for it, the lesser must go down before the greater; the individual must be sacrificed to the general welfare. I can give you no other answer; and that, and no other, is the way of the world. You are an obstinate man, Aune! You are opposing me, not because you cannot do otherwise, but because you will not exhibit ‘the superiority of machinery over manual labour’.

Aune: And you will not be moved, Mr. Bernick, because you know that if you drive me away you will at all events have given the newspapers proof of your good will.

Bernick: And suppose that were so? I have told you what it means for me – either bringing the Press down on my back, or making them well-disposed to me at a moment when I am working for an objective which will mean the advancement of the general welfare. Well,

then, can I do otherwise than as I am doing? The question, let me tell you, turns upon this – whether your home is to be supported, as you put it, or whether hundreds of new homes are to be prevented from existing – hundreds of homes that will never be built, never have a fire lighted on their hearth, unless I succeed in carrying through the scheme I am working for now. That is the reason why I have given you your choice. Aune: Well, if that is the way things stand, I have nothing more to say. Bernick: Hm – my dear Aune, I am extremely grieved to think that we are to part. Aune: We are not going to part, Mr. Bernick. Bernick: How is that? Aune: Even a common man like myself has something he is bound to maintain. Bernick: Quite so, quite so – then I presume you think you may promise – ? Aune: The “ Indian Girl” shall be ready to sail the day after tomorrow. [Bows and goes out to the right.] Bernick: Ah, I have got the better of that obstinate fellow! I take it as a good omen. [HILMAR comes in through the garden door, smoking a cigar.] Hilmar [as he comes up the steps to the verandah]: Good morning, Betty! Good morning, Karsten! Mrs. Bernick: Good morning. Hilmar: Ah, I see you have been crying, so I suppose you know all about it too? Mrs. Bernick: Know all about what? Hilmar: That the scandal is in full swing. Ugh! Bernick: What do you mean? Hilmar [coming into the room]: Why, that our two friends from America are displaying themselves about the streets in the company of Dina Dorf. Mrs. Bernick [coming in after him]: Hilmar, is it possible? Hilmar: Yes, unfortunately, it is quite true. Lona was even so wanting in tact as to call after me, but of course I appeared not to have heard her. Bernick: And no doubt all this has not been unnoticed. Hilmar: You may well say that. People stood still and looked at them. It spread like wildfire through the town – just

like a prairie fire out West. In every house people were at the windows waiting for the procession to pass, cheek by jowl behind the curtains – ugh! Oh, you must excuse me, Betty, for saying “ ugh” – this has got on my nerves. If it is going on, I shall be forced to think about getting right away from here. Mrs. Bernick: But you should have spoken to him and represented to him that – Hilmar: In the open street? No, excuse me, I could not do that. To think that the fellow should dare to show himself in the town at all! Well, we shall see if the Press doesn’t put a stopper on him; yes – forgive me, Betty, but – Bernick: The Press, do you say? Have you heard a hint of anything of the sort? Hilmar: There are such things flying about. When I left here yesterday evening I looked in at the club, because I did not feel well. I saw at once, from the sudden silence that fell when I went in, that our American couple had been the subject of conversation. Then that impudent newspaper fellow, Hammer, came in and congratulated me at the top of his voice on the return of my rich cousin. Bernick: Rich? Hilmar: Those were his words. Naturally I looked him up and down in the manner he deserved, and gave him to understand that I knew nothing about Johan Tonnesen’s being rich. “ Really, ” he said, “ that is very remarkable. People usually get on in America when they have something to start with, and I believe your cousin did not go over there quite empty-handed. ” Bernick: Hm – now will you oblige me by – Mrs. Bernick [distressed]: There, you see, Karsten! Hilmar: Anyhow, I have spent a sleepless night because of them. And here he is, walking about the streets as if nothing were the matter. Why couldn’t he disappear for good and all? It really is insufferable how hard some people are to kill. Mrs. Bernick: My dear Hilmar, what are you saying P Hilmar: Oh,

nothing. But here this fellow escapes with a whole skin from railway accidents and fights with California grizzlies and Blackfoot Indians – has not even been scalped – . Ugh, here they come! Bernick [looking down the street]: Olaf is with them too! Hilmar: Of course! They want to remind everybody that they belong to the best family in the town. Look there! – look at the crowd of loafers that have come out of the chemist's to stare at them and make remarks. My nerves really won't stand it; how a man is to be expected to keep the banner of the Ideal flying under such circumstances, I – Bernick: They are coming here. Listen, Betty; it is my particular wish that you should receive them in the friendliest possible way. Mrs. Bernick: Oh, may I, Karsten. Bernick: Certainly, certainly – and you too, Hilmar. It is to be hoped they will not stay here very long; and when we are quite by ourselves – no allusions to the past; we must not hurt their feelings in any way. Mrs. Bernick: How magnanimous you are, Karsten! Bernick: Oh, don't speak of that. Mrs. Bernick: But you must let me thank you; and you must forgive me for being so hasty. I am sure you had every reason to – Bernick: Don't talk about it, please. Hilmar: Ugh! [JOHAN TONNESEN and DINA come up through the garden, followed by LONA and OLAF.] Lona: Good morning, dear people! Johan: We have been out having a look round the old place, Karsten. Bernick: So I hear. Greatly altered, is it not? Lona: Mr. Bernick's great and good works everywhere. We have been up into the Recreation Ground you have presented to the town. Bernick: Have you been there? Lona: " The gift of Karsten Bernick, " as it says over the gateway. You seem to be responsible for the whole place here. Johan: Splendid ships you have got, too. I met my old schoolfellow, the captain of the " Palm Tree. " Lona: And you have built a

new school-house too; and I hear that the town has to thank you for both the gas supply and the water supply. Bernick: Well, one ought to work for the good of the community one lives in. Lona: That is an excellent sentiment, brother-inlaw, but it is a pleasure, all the same, to see how people appreciate you. I am not vain, I hope; but I could not resist reminding one or two of the people we talked to that we were relations of yours. Hilmar: Ugh! Lona: Do you say " ugh" to that? Hilmar: No, I said " ahem. " Lona: Oh, poor chap, you may say that if you like. But are you all by yourselves today? Bernick: Yes, we are by ourselves today. Lona: Ah, yes, we met a couple of members of your Morality Society up at the market; they made out they were very busy. You and I have never had an opportunity for a good talk yet. Yesterday you had your three pioneers here, as well as the parson. Hilmar: The schoolmaster. Lona: I call him the parson. But now tell me what you think of my work during these five